

PAUL'S ARGUMENTS FROM CREATION IN  
1 CORINTHIANS 11:8–9 AND 1 TIMOTHY 2:13–14:  
AN APPARENT INCONSISTENCY ANSWERED

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For many Bible students, pastors, and scholars the main reason for not allowing women to hold the office of pastor (i.e. elder or overseer)<sup>1</sup> is primarily based on Paul's arguments from creation in 1 Tim 2:13–14. It is maintained that Paul's prohibition cannot be limited due to cultural conditions since Paul does not argue from culture but from creation. He argues from the order of creation ("For it was Adam who was created first, then Eve") and from the order of accountability in creation ("Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived"). Based on Paul's reasoning, it is therefore concluded that women cannot "teach or have authority over men" in the context of the local church.

But can the above method of interpretation also be applied to 1 Cor 11:8–9 where Paul employs similar arguments from creation to bolster his position? In the context of 1 Corinthians 11 Paul demonstrates that women need to have their heads covered while praying or prophesying. To prove his point, he argues from creation that the woman was created *from* man ("For man does not come from the woman, but the woman from man") and *for* man ("For man was not created for the woman but the woman for the man"). The question must then be raised if it is inconsistent to reject Paul's appeal for women to wear head coverings and, at the same time, affirm his command for women not to teach or have authority over men since in both contexts Paul uses virtually the same reasoning.

This apparent inconsistency is raised by Keener when he writes, "Although many churches would use arguments [from the order of creation] to demand the subordination of women in all cultures, very few accept Paul's arguments [in 1 Cor 11:8–9] as valid for covering women's heads in all cultures."<sup>2</sup> He continues,

[T]he same argument Paul uses in one passage for forbidding women to teach he uses in another passage to argue that married women . . . must cover their heads in church. In the one passage, Paul does not want the women of a certain

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<sup>1</sup> For a defense of the terms "elder" and "overseer" referring to the same office, see Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 19.

congregation to teach; in the other passage, he wants the women of a certain congregation to cover their heads. We take the argument as transculturally applicable in one case, but not so in the other. This seems very strange indeed.<sup>3</sup>

Keener, however, is not alone in pointing out this apparent inconsistency. In a similar vein Groothuis comments, “If Paul’s creation-order rationale here [in 1 Timothy 2:13] renders universal and transcultural the prohibition of women teaching authoritatively, then why doesn’t Paul’s creation-order rationale for women’s head coverings (1 Cor. 11:6–9) make the wearing of headgear a universal and transcultural requirement for women in church?”<sup>4</sup>

This article will analyze Paul’s arguments from creation in the above mentioned texts and seek to demonstrate that it is not inconsistent to reject the need for women to wear head coverings while still affirming that women are not to teach or have authority over men. The reason for this distinction is that in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul only indirectly uses the argument from creation to affirm head coverings for women. The direct application of his reasoning is to show that creation affirms gender and role distinctions between men and women—and in the Corinthian context that distinction needed to be upheld through head coverings. Therefore, Paul’s argument from creation to show that men and women are distinct cannot be culturally relegated. The application of that principle (i.e. head coverings), however, can change with culture. In contrast, the argument from creation in 1 Timothy 2 applies directly to Paul’s prohibition and therefore is transcultural.

#### I. THE BROAD CONTEXT OF PAUL’S ARGUMENTS FROM CREATION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 11:8–9

In order to demonstrate effectively that Paul’s underlying concern in 1 Corinthians 11 is gender and role distinctions and not merely head coverings, it will be helpful to investigate the reason why some Corinthian Christians were seeking to eliminate distinctions between men and women. From the evidence found in 1 Corinthians, it appears that the Corinthians were basing their Christianity on an erroneous view of spirituality caused by an embrace of over-realized eschatology.<sup>5</sup> This doctrine affirms that the kingdom of God has come in all its fullness and therefore rejects the notion that the kingdom has “not yet” fully arrived. It places an over-emphasis on the Spirit and spiritual gifts and neglects some of the more practical aspects of the

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 219.

<sup>5</sup> See Anthony C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *NTS* 24 (1978) 510–26; Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 34; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 33–36; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 498; *idem*, “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 158–59; Jason David BeDuhn, “‘Because of the Angels’: Unveiling Paul’s Anthropology in 1 Corinthians 11,” *JBL* 118 (1999) 317–18.

Christian life (such as building up others).<sup>6</sup> How did the Corinthians come to embrace such a teaching when Paul had spent so much time with them? Although we cannot answer this question with absolute certainty, the best answer is that they based their understanding of the *eschaton* on Paul's teaching itself. Perhaps some believed they were simply carrying Paul's teaching to its logical conclusion. Others may have determined that Paul simply had not been consistent or radical enough in following the consequences of his own "realized eschatology."<sup>7</sup>

During his prolonged visit of a year and a half to Corinth on his second missionary journey, it seems likely Paul taught the Corinthians that in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28, ESV).<sup>8</sup> They would have learned that in Christ we have died to sin and the law and are resurrected to newness of life (Rom 6:3–8; 7:4–6; cf. Eph 2:5; Col 2:12; 3:1–3). It is also possible that the catchphrase "all things are lawful" (1 Cor 10:23) is something Paul himself had originally taught the Corinthians. Their abuse of this phrase, however, forced Paul to offer the needed corrective, "but not all things are profitable or edify."<sup>9</sup> The influence of over-realized eschatology either directly or indirectly caused most of the problems that Paul seeks to correct in his first epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>10</sup> This thesis can be demonstrated by a quick survey of some of the problems that are revealed in Paul's letter.

One of the first problems Paul addresses is the Corinthians' false understanding of the Christian ministry. Apparently, lines of division were drawn as various group gave allegiance to its leader (1 Cor 1:11–13; 3:3–4; 4:6–7). Paul's criticism of them is that they are not as "spiritual" as they have been led to think. As spiritual people they should have been able to comprehend the things of the Spirit. Instead, based on their current behavior, Paul rebukes them by characterizing them not as "spiritual," but as "fleshy" (1 Cor 3:1).

<sup>6</sup> Thiselton argues "that distortions or imbalance in the area of eschatology stand in a direct casual relationship to errors about the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit" ("Realized Eschatology" 512). He continues, "An over-realized eschatology leads to an 'enthusiastic' view of the Spirit" (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> So Thiselton, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Towner suggests that 1 Cor 7:2–16; 11:3–16; and 14:33b–35 can be viewed as a sort of "commentary" on Gal 3:28 (*Goal* 35–36). He later adds that "the apostle's instructions strongly suggest that an enthusiastic understanding of the equality tradition in Corinth needed to be brought back into balance" (ibid. 36). Also see Scroggs who views 1 Cor 7:17–27 as an explicit commentary on Gal 3:28 since Paul discusses the pairs of Greek/Jew, slave/free, and male/female in precisely the same order (Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," *JAAR* 40 [1972] 293).

<sup>9</sup> That the Corinthians were susceptible to misinterpret Paul's teaching is evidenced by their misunderstanding his admonition for them not to associate with immoral people. Paul meant for them not to associate with immoral people who call themselves "brothers," but they were confused and began to disassociate themselves from the immoral people of the world (1 Cor 5:9–11). Thiselton suggests they reasoned that "the immoral" could not mean Christians, since Christians were beyond the scope of the law" but "the 'natural' man remained condemned as one who still belonged to the pre-eschatological era of the law" ("Realized Eschatology" 516).

<sup>10</sup> Towner claims that over-realized eschatology "runs as a thread throughout the letter" (*Goal* 34).

They were using “worldly wisdom” which led them to devalue the cross of Christ and over-value the importance of human leaders (including Paul). Yet, at the same time, some began to develop a negative view of Paul’s ministry and his legitimacy as an apostle of God. Because of their over-realized eschatology, the Corinthians bought into the idea that God’s people, and especially apostles, should not suffer (also see 1 Cor 9:1–19). Since they believed that God’s kingdom had come, they viewed it as weakness if a believer experienced hardships and trials. Therefore, they began to look at Paul’s ministry with disdain since he was suffering so much and living a humiliating life. Thus, Paul tries to reorient their thinking to a future perspective by instructing them not to pronounce judgment on him but to wait for the Lord’s return when God will judge the heart of man (1 Cor 4:5). It is at this point in the epistle that Paul uses sanctified sarcasm to rebuke this mindset of the Corinthians. He writes,

You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. . . . We are fool’s for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. (1 Cor 4:8, 10–13)<sup>11</sup>

The intent of Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians becomes abundantly clear when he commands them to enter into his suffering. He states, “Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:16). To put it in Luther’s words, the Corinthians had adopted the theology of the glory, but rejected the theology of the cross. Paul, then, was calling them back to a theology of the cross since the kingdom of God, although present, had not yet fully arrived.

Next, Paul responds to reports of fornication in the church. According to chapter 5, someone in the church was sleeping with that person’s mother-in-law, and according to chapter 6, some were visiting prostitutes. How could the church allow such immoral behavior? Could it be that they took Paul’s teaching that “all things are lawful” to an extreme? Perhaps they reasoned that since they were “spiritual” and had received the fullness of God’s blessing evidenced by the presence of certain spiritual gifts, they were now living beyond the realm of the old order, namely the law. Thus, some were taking Paul’s teaching on freedom to its logical end. Paul’s words, however, are clear. He rebukes the Corinthians by asking them, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor 6:9). They believed that they had already received the kingdom, but Paul reminds them that the kingdom of God is also a future reality and that only those who live godly lives will be partakers of that kingdom.

The Corinthians also had an improper view of marriage. In their letter to Paul they state, “It is good for a man not to touch [i.e. have sexual relations

<sup>11</sup> All Scripture citations are taken from the NASB unless otherwise noted.

with] a woman" (1 Cor 7:1). Based on their faulty view of true spirituality, they began to think that even in the context of marriage it was good for a man to refrain from having sexual relations with his wife. Apparently, there was considerable pressure within the church to abstain from sex within marriage (1 Cor 7:3–7) or even to dissolve existing marriages (1 Cor 7:8–16). There is also the possibility that some were encouraging "virgins" who were already promised in marriage not to follow through with their commitment to marry (1 Cor 7:25–38). The Corinthians might have based their conclusions on Paul's life and teachings. They might have reasoned: "Since it is good for believers not to marry at all (like the Apostle Paul), then maybe it is also good to practice abstinence within marriage. And if it is too difficult to practice abstinence within marriage, then perhaps believers should divorce—especially if their spouse is an unbeliever."<sup>12</sup> What would cause the Corinthians to come to such a conclusion? Again, the best answer seems to be their over-emphasis on the present reality of God's kingdom. To them, marriage belonged to the age that was passing away. It is entirely possible, and even likely, that they knew Jesus' teaching that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30).<sup>13</sup> Thus, in their attempt to be like the angels, some doubted the validity of marriage.

In chapters 8–10 Paul instructs the Corinthians with regard to eating food that had been offered to idols. Although they had the right knowledge concerning God and foods,<sup>14</sup> Paul criticizes them because they let their knowledge dictate their behavior instead of love. They had good teaching but misappropriated it in their lives. Thus, Paul rebukes them by stating, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies" (1 Cor 8:1). According to Paul, the key is not what you know but letting your knowledge be shaped by love so that it builds up and does not tear down. Later, Paul corrects the Corinthians again by teaching them that even the "knowledge" that we have now is imperfect and will only become complete in the future *eschaton* when Christ returns (1 Cor 13:8–9).

In the second half of chapter 11, Paul strongly admonishes the Corinthian church for their abuse of the Lord's Supper. While some were eating in abundance and even getting drunk, others were being ignored and going hungry.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Corinthians were not only neglecting the poor, but in doing so, they were contradicting the very unity they were proclaiming in

<sup>12</sup> Fee accurately sums up the position of the Corinthians: "Since you yourself are unmarried, and are not actively seeking marriage, and since you have denied *porneia* in your letter to us, is it not so that one is better off not to have sexual intercourse at all? After all, in the new age which we have already entered by the Spirit, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Why should we not 'be as the angels' now? Besides, since the body counts for nothing, if some wish to fulfill physical needs there are always the prostitutes" (*First Epistle to the Corinthians* 276).

<sup>13</sup> This saying is also found in Mark 12:25 and Luke 20:35 in slightly varied forms.

<sup>14</sup> They rightly believed that "there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one" (1 Cor 8:4) and that "food will not commend us to God" since "we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat" (1 Cor 8:8).

<sup>15</sup> Thiselton suggests that the Corinthian's abuse of the Lord's Supper was probably caused by a misunderstanding of the eschatological feast of the marriage supper of the Lamb ("Realized Eschatology" 521–22). While this hypothesis is possible, it is probably forcing the data a bit too far.

the breaking of the one loaf (cf. 1 Cor 10:16). Paul, therefore, rebukes the Corinthians and warns them to consider carefully what it means to partake of the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>16</sup> Once again, the Corinthian's actions and their perceived spirituality became separate entities. Because of their misunderstanding of true spirituality, they failed to do that which built up others and instead were concerned only with furthering their personal agenda. Thus, Paul encourages them to judge themselves so that they do not receive the future judgment of God.

The use and value of spiritual gifts was also a problem in the Corinthian church as some were over-emphasizing certain gifts, especially the ability to speak in tongues.<sup>17</sup> The root cause for their abuse of such gifts again stems from their over-realized eschatology. Since they were already like the angels, neither sex in the present (chap. 7), nor a body in the future (chap. 15) was needed. They believed that the proof of their spirituality was their ability to speak angelic languages (cf. 1 Cor 13:1).<sup>18</sup> Paul, however, emphasizes the need for edification, especially in a worship service. In this section Paul also prohibits women from voicing their opinions concerning prophecies during the worship service (1 Cor 14:33–35). This is perhaps an indication of some women who were seeking to eliminate all male-female distinctions.

Finally, Paul comes to perhaps the most important issue in his letter—the resurrection. Paul is dismayed that there were actually some who were denying the future resurrection of believers (1 Cor 15:12). They reasoned that since they already possessed the Spirit and the gift of tongues, they had entered into true spirituality. As a result, they already began a form of angelic existence “in which the body was unnecessary, unwanted, and would finally be destroyed.”<sup>19</sup> For them, life in the Spirit meant a final ridding of the body, not so much because it was evil, but because it was inferior to a purely spiritual existence. Thus, the idea of a resurrected body would have been completely rejected as being absurd and unnecessary. Paul, of course, rejects their reasoning and informs them that the kingdom cannot fully come until all of God's enemies are defeated, including the last enemy—death. It is only when death is defeated and believers are given new bodies that Christ will be able to hand over the kingdom to the Father so that God will be “all in all.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> To eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner (1 Cor 11:27) is probably the same as eating and drinking without discerning the “body” (1 Cor 11:29), which in the context most likely refers to eating and drinking in such a way that neglects part of the body of Christ. That is, their celebration of the Lord's Supper was causing the poor to be humiliated and thus was not done in a way that honored their unity in Christ.

<sup>17</sup> That Paul is seeking to deemphasize speaking in tongues is demonstrated by the fact that it is placed at the conclusion of each list of gifts in chapter 12 (vv. 8–10, 28, 29–30). But when he wants to specifically criticize this gift, it is listed first (13:1; 14:6).

<sup>18</sup> Fee believes that Paul's reference to “speaking the tongues of angels” in 1 Cor 13:1 indicates that the Corinthians were emphasizing speaking in tongues because they viewed it as a sign of their spirituality and the fact that they resembled the existence of the angels themselves (“Praying and Prophecy” 158).

<sup>19</sup> Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 715.

<sup>20</sup> Summarizing the situation in Corinth, Murphy-O'Connor writes, “They thought of themselves as possessing a ‘wisdom’ which made them ‘perfect’ and fully ‘mature.’ They had been raised to a

II. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF PAUL'S ARGUMENTS  
FROM CREATION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 11:8–9

Based on the above examples, we should not be surprised that in the first half of chapter 11 the real issue at stake is something more than head coverings. The more important issue is the Corinthians' desire to eliminate creational gender and role distinctions.<sup>21</sup> Because of their over-realized eschatology, some women wanted to minimize or erase the distinction between genders and be like the angels now.<sup>22</sup> Thus, they were seeking to assert their new-found freedom by disregarding a common cultural custom (i.e. head coverings for women while worshiping), something their society would consider disgraceful.<sup>23</sup> The Corinthians' position would have been strengthened by misapplying Paul's teaching that men and women were equal in Christ (cf. Gal 3:28). Therefore, Paul's main concern is not head coverings, since that was merely a cultural outworking of an unchanging truth—God created men and women differently (and this distinction is not eliminated when we become Christians).<sup>24</sup>

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spiritual sphere in which everything material was irrelevant. This conviction was confirmed and intensified by the presence of unusual spiritual gifts. . . . [T]hey adopted the position that no corporeal action had any moral value. Hence, in their eyes, everything was permissible. They could sleep with whom they liked, and eat what and where they pleased. . . . They approved of incest and raised no difficulties when men and women attired themselves in ways which obscured their sexual difference. Naturally, this group denied the resurrection because they could see no point in the restoration of a body" (Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* [New Testament Message 10; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979] xiii).

<sup>21</sup> Schreiner summarizes, "The fundamental principle is that the sexes, although equal, are also different." He continues, "Now, in the first century, failure to wear a covering sent a signal to the congregation that a woman was rejecting the authority of male leadership. Paul was concerned about head coverings only because of the message they sent to people in that culture" (Thomas R. Schreiner, "Head Covering, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* [ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991] 138).

<sup>22</sup> Garland suggests a different situation that was creating problems in the congregation: "In a worship service in a private home, the women may not have thought of themselves as being out in public. . . . Paul assumes that they should regard such a service as 'going out in public,' and they should be attired accordingly" (David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003] 521). One wonders, however, if Paul would have given such a carefully argued response based on God's design in creation if he merely needed to say, "Attending a worship service is the same as being in public."

<sup>23</sup> For a survey of women's head coverings in antiquity, see Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives* 22–31.

<sup>24</sup> Collins summarizes Paul's argument from creation: "Because God has created the human genders in different ways a distinction is to be maintained when the community assembles for worship" (Raymond Collins, *First Corinthians* [SacPag 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999] 402). Likewise, Murphy-O'Connor writes, "We are forced to conclude that he sees dress, not as a problem in itself, but as symptomatic of something deeper." He then adds that Paul's "hidden agenda concerns the differentiation of the sexes. Women should be women, and men should be men, and the difference should be obvious" (*1 Corinthians* 106). I disagree, however, with Murphy-O'Connor's interpretation that "head" = "source" in 1 Cor 11:3 and his claim that the issue of men's dress/hair was just as much a problem in the church as women's. Also see Thiselton who follows Murphy-O'Connor that Paul is addressing not only the way women were dressing, but also the way men were dressing (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000] 805).

In defending the current need for gender and role distinctions, and thus head coverings, Paul offers three arguments. He argues from creation (vv. 7b–9), from nature (vv. 14–15), and from practice (v. 16). The most significant argument, and the one we are most concerned with in this article, is his argument from creation.<sup>25</sup> In 1 Corinthians 11:7–9 Paul writes,

For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

Paul first gives the reason why a man should not wear a head covering: he is the image and glory of God (v. 7). Seeking to explain this statement, in verse 8 Paul then alludes to the creation account in Gen 2:21–23 where it is recorded that Eve was created after Adam. In 1 Cor 11:9 Paul gives further evidence of how a woman is the glory of man by alluding to Gen 2:18 where Eve is created for Adam to be his helpmate. What is absolutely crucial in understanding the use of Paul's arguments from creation in verses 8–9 is that he is not directly using these verses to make the case that head coverings are needed for women when they pray or prophesy. In other words, Paul does not say, "A woman must have her head covered when she prays or prophesies. For man does not come from the woman, but the woman from man and man was not created for the woman but the woman for the man." Rather, Paul uses the creation account in Genesis to affirm his previous statement that "the woman is the glory of man." Even in verse 7 when Paul explains why a man must not cover his head ("since he is the image and glory of God"), the focus is not so much that a head covering is in itself wrong, but on the disgrace or shame it brings. Thus, it is misleading and inaccurate to claim that Paul uses an argument from creation to affirm the need for women to wear head coverings. Instead, Paul appeals to creation to demonstrate the differences between men and women that God established from the beginning—and violating these distinctions brings shame instead of glory. By covering his head the man brings shame on Christ (since he is the image and glory of God) and by not covering her head the woman brings shame on man (since she is the glory of man).

The position that Paul's main concern in this passage is gender and role distinctions is supported by a number of clues found in the context of this passage. First, the fact that Paul introduces his arguments the way he does makes little sense if head coverings are Paul's main concern. In verse 3 Paul begins by saying, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." That something more important is at stake seems obvious since Paul relates the functional relationship between man and Christ, woman and man, and Christ and God. In their relationship, the man has authority over the woman just as Christ has authority over the man and God the Father has authority over Christ the Son. Based on the understanding that "head" refers

<sup>25</sup> Paul's argument from creation is his main argument because he summarizes his argument after verse 9 and then only gives additional arguments later to bolster his position.



to "authority over,"<sup>26</sup> it seems likely that the underlying problem involves not only gender distinctions, but also role distinctions. Functionally, the wife is under the authority of her husband and therefore needs to demonstrate her submissiveness by wearing a head covering.

Second, Paul's comparison of a woman who prays or prophesies without a head covering to a woman with a man's haircut also signifies that the main issue at stake is gender and role distinctions and not merely the wearing a piece of cloth on one's head. In 1 Cor 11:6 Paul explains, "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head." Just as it is wrong for a woman to blur the gender distinctions by wearing a man's hairstyle, so too it is wrong for a woman to blur such distinctions by not covering her head while praying or prophesying. Paul presses this analogy by saying if a woman wants to disgrace both herself and her husband by having a man's hairstyle, then she might as well go all the way and shave off all her hair.<sup>27</sup> This comparison, then, demonstrates that Paul is not so much concerned about what one wears or does not wear, but the meaning or message that is conveyed by one's appearance.

Third, Paul's argument from nature in verses 14 and 15 likewise suggests that God's creational gender/role distinctives are in view. In these verses we read, "Does not even nature (φύσις) itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering." By using the term "nature," Paul is not referring to culture or "social conventions,"<sup>28</sup> but is referring to God's design in creation (cf. Rom 1:26–27).<sup>29</sup> God created men and women

<sup>26</sup> For a defense that "head" should be understood as "authority over," see Wayne A. Grudem, "Does *Kephale* Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *TrinJ* 6 (1985) 38–59; *idem*, "Appendix 1: The Meaning of *Kephale* ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 425–68; *idem*, "The Meaning of κεφαλή ('Head'): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged," *JETS* 44 (2001) 25–65 (also in *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than One Hundred Disputed Questions* [Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004] 552–99).

<sup>27</sup> So Schreiner, "Head Coverings" 130–31. Keener admits this view as a possibility. He writes, "Perhaps . . . Paul opposes the removal of symbolic gender distinctions; an uncovered head and short hair have precisely this point in common: both reflect a disregard for customary marks of gender identification" (*Paul, Women & Wives* 35). He is quick to limit his view, however, by claiming, "This is a case of distinguishing the two . . . not of ranking one over the other" (*ibid.* 45). Based on Paul's introductory comments in verse 3 concerning man being the head of the woman, it seems that part of the gender distinction must include role distinction.

<sup>28</sup> So Garland, *1 Corinthians* 509. Garland seems to change his understanding of "nature" when he summarizes Paul's argument. He concludes, "Nature has given women hair as a glorious, natural cover. . . . Therefore, women should follow the lead of nature, as defined by social decorum, and cover their heads" (*ibid.* 531).

<sup>29</sup> According to some ancient writers, gender distinctions were considered part of nature and did not merely reflect social conventions. For example, Epictetus identifies hair as a distinguishing mark between men and women: "Can anything be more useless than the hairs on a chin? Well, what then? Has not nature used even these in the most suitable way possible? Has she not by these means distinguished between the male and the female?" (*Epict. Disc.* 1.16.10 [LCL]). He continues, "We ought to preserve the signs which God has given; we ought not to throw them away; we ought not,

with a natural sense of what is right and wrong, including the distinctions between genders. In this respect, nature teaches us that it is shameful for a man to appear like a woman by having long hair. Paul's argument from nature, then, does not directly prove that women must wear head coverings, but that the differences between men and women are part of God's creational design. Since the distinctions between men and women are part of God's plan, however, it is imperative for the Corinthian women to accept their role in society and wear head coverings.

Fourth, in verse 16 Paul states, "We have no other practice, nor have the churches of God." According to Paul, the wearing of head coverings was not limited to the church at Corinth but was a custom in all the churches in the Greco-Roman world. Such a universally accepted custom suggests the presence of an underlying principle governing the need for such a practice.

Fifth, it is important to notice the passive nature of a head covering. By its very function, a head covering was a sign or symbol that pointed to a greater reality.<sup>30</sup> It had no meaning in itself, but was a concrete expression of an intangible truth. Thus, Paul is not concerned about head coverings *per se*. Rather, he is concerned with the meaning that wearing a head covering conveys.

Paul's argument concerning head coverings in chapter 11 could be summarized or paraphrased as follows: Because of the Corinthians' embrace of over-realized eschatology, they were seeking to eliminate gender and role distinctions between men and women and live like they were already enjoying a heavenly existence. So they write to Paul and ask him, "Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?"<sup>31</sup> Paul's response is, "No,

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so far as in us lies, to confuse the sexes which have been distinguished in this fashion" (Epict. *Disc.* 1.16.14 [LCL]). Again he writes, "Are you a man or a woman?—A man.—Very well then, adorn as a man, not a woman. Woman is born smooth and dainty by nature [φύσει], and if she is very hairy she is a prodigy, and is exhibited at Rome among the prodigies. But for a man not to be hairy is the same thing, and if by nature [φύσει] he has no hair he is a prodigy, but if he cuts it out and plucks it out of himself, what shall we make of him? Where shall we exhibit him and what notice shall we post? 'I will show you,' we say to the audience, 'a man who wishes to be a woman rather than a man'" (Epict. *Disc.* 3.1.27–28 [LCL]).

<sup>30</sup> Grudem rightly comments, "All interpreters agree that head covering was a symbol for something else, and that Paul was concerned about it because of what that symbol meant" (*Evangelical Feminism* 333).

<sup>31</sup> There is some uncertainty as to why Paul is addressing the questions of head coverings in chapter 11. Is he responding to a question raised by the Corinthians in their letter or is he responding to some problem that he heard about related to this issue? Although we do not find the typical "now concerning" (περὶ δὲ) phrase which Paul uses to introduce a topic raised by the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12), there are at least two reasons to think Paul is responding to a question (so Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 810; BeDuhn, "Because of the Angels" 318–19; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 491–92; Fee apparently changed his view in "Praying and Prophecy" 144). First, his discussion of head coverings is found in the second half of the letter which deals mostly with Paul's responses to questions raised by the Corinthians (e.g. marriage [chap. 7]; food offered to idols [chaps. 8–10]; spiritual gifts [chaps. 12–14]; and the collection [chap. 16]. The topics of the Lord's Supper [chap. 11] and the resurrection [chap. 15], however, are probably problems in the church that Paul heard about). Second, and more significant, Paul's tone seems too mild for him to be responding to a problem he had heard about (cf. his discussion of the Lord's Supper). It is possible that the question the Corinthians wrote to him is found in verse 13

women need to wear head coverings when they pray or prophesy because in your culture that is one of the accepted cultural distinctions between men and women. God created men and women with different roles in society. For example, just as God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of every man, so, too, man is the head of woman. Therefore [based on God's creational distinctives], just as it is wrong for a man to cover his head while praying or prophesying since that shames Christ, so, too, a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered shames man [since she is ignoring God's creational gender/role distinctions]. In doing so, she becomes like a woman whose hair is cut off and thus has a man's hairstyle. Therefore, a man should not cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, whereas the woman is the glory of man. What I mean by this<sup>32</sup> is that man did not come from the woman, but just the opposite, the woman came from man. Furthermore, man was not created for the woman, but the woman for man. Therefore, a woman should have a symbol of authority<sup>33</sup> on her head because of the angels.<sup>34</sup> But

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when Paul writes, "Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" According to BeDuhn's reconstruction, the Corinthians ask, "Why do we maintain distinctions between the apparel of men and women in the assembly? Why should some pray and prophesy with head covered while others do not? Have we not lost gender distinctions in the Lord? Have we not become like the angels? Can you provide us with reasons for this custom? Or can we safely abandon it in light of our new identity in Christ" ("Because of the Angels" 318–19).

<sup>32</sup> In verses 8–9 Paul is explaining his statements in verse 7 about man being the glory and image of God and the woman being the glory of man. This reading is following by the RSV which sets off verses 8–9 with a parenthesis (so Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 517; Schreiner, "Head Coverings" 133).

<sup>33</sup> While the Greek text does not say "symbol of authority" but merely "authority," the former interpretation seems to be the best reading of the text based on the context. In verse 7 Paul says, "A man ought not (οὐκ ὀφείλει) to cover his head," so we naturally expect him to conclude by stating, "A woman ought (ὀφείλει) to cover her head" (v. 10). Most egalitarians, however, maintain that Paul is merely saying that a woman should exercise authority over her own head. This view was popularized by Morna Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of I Cor 11:10," *NTS* 10 (1963/64) 410–16. But one wonders why Paul would give so much support to back his teaching if he is merely appealing to women to exercise their liberty with caution. After stating that the most straightforward interpretation is that proposed by Hooker, Liefeld adds, "It would be difficult, however, to conclude that all of Paul's theology in this passage and his arguments about glory, shame and the importance of showing honor to one's husband lead simply to a statement that a woman can do as she pleases in this respect" (Walter L. Liefeld, "Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians," in *Women, Authority and the Bible* [ed. Alvera Mickelsen; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986] 145). One wonders, then, if Hooker's reading is really the most straightforward. Also see Schreiner who presents seven compelling reasons why Hooker's view should be rejected ("Head Coverings" 135–36).

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps Paul is using their argument against them. They claim that gender distinctions no longer apply since in their current existence they are striving to be like the angels who have no gender. Paul, however, turns their reasoning on its head by arguing that the very reason women need to wear head coverings is because the angels watch over and help enforce God's will on earth or are present during the worship services. BeDuhn suggests that Paul refers to angels in 1 Cor 11:10 precisely because he "is attributing the separate formation of woman from man to a creative act of angels, not of God" ("Because of the Angels" 308). Thus, according to BeDuhn, Paul is suggesting it is the angels' fault, not God's, that women were created inferior to men. Therefore, Paul is, in a sense, asking the Corinthians, "Do you aspire to be like angels? It is because of the angels that you find yourselves in this differentiated condition, because of their mediation of creation and the imperfection of their work" (ibid. 319).

remember, women are not independent of men nor are men independent of women. For although the woman originates from man, man is born through a woman—but all things come from God. What do you think? Does not God’s design in nature demonstrate that it is shameful for a man to have long hair? But if a woman has long hair it is not shameful since that is the way God created her. If you disagree with what I have just written, then you will be on your own since in all the churches women cover their heads while praying or prophesying.”

Paul’s argument, then, is that women must wear head coverings when praying or prophesying because of a more important underlying issue—God created men and women differently and we must not seek to eliminate such distinctions.<sup>35</sup> Summarizing Paul’s argument, Fee writes, “What lies behind [this passage] is not so much an act of insubordination as a deliberate casting aside of an external marker that distinguished women from men.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, while I believe Fee is for the most part correct, I do not think it is possible to separate the two items. That is, the deliberate casting aside of head coverings (which was a necessary external marker between men and women), was done not only because the women were expressing their new-found freedom in Christ and attempting to live a sort of heavenly existence like the angels, but in doing so they were rebelling against God’s created order which put the husband as the “head” or position of authority over his wife. This seems to be the best explanation of why Paul begins his discussion about head coverings by talking about the man being the head of the woman (v. 3), and why he bases his argument on God’s design in creation (vv. 8–9).

### III. THE BROAD CONTEXT OF PAUL’S ARGUMENTS FROM CREATION IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:13–14

We will now turn our attention from the situation at Corinth to that which was found in Ephesus at the time Paul writes his first letter to Timothy. After examining the situation in Ephesus based on clues from the epistle itself, we notice a similar situation behind the false teachings that existed in Corinth.<sup>37</sup> The cause of much, if not most, of the problems in Ephesus seems

<sup>35</sup> Schreiner summarizes, “Thus, we can conclude that Paul wants women to wear head coverings while praying or prophesying because to do otherwise would be to confuse the sexes and give the shameful impression that women are behaving like men” (“Head Coverings” 131). He later adds that “head coverings reflect the role relationship intended between man and woman” (ibid.).

<sup>36</sup> Fee, “Praying and Prophesying” 159. Thiselton likewise states, “Paul’s concern is not with subordination but with gender distinction (*First Epistle to the Corinthians* 805).

<sup>37</sup> Those who favor the idea that the situation in Ephesus was similar to that in Corinth include Towner, *Goal* 33–36; Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority over Men?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 181–82; Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 111. Moo, for example, notes that in both cases there was a denial of a physical resurrection, incorrect attitudes in regards to marriage, sex, and food, and inappropriate roles of women. He writes, “There is good reason to think that the problem in both

to be derived from an embrace of over-realized eschatology.<sup>38</sup> While the textual evidence in 1 Timothy is not as prevalent as that found in 1 Corinthians (making our conclusions less firm), the presence of over-realized eschatology provides a compelling link in understanding the nature of the false teachings in Ephesus.

The most important indication of over-realized eschatology in Ephesus is found in 2 Timothy 2:17 where we read that two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus, were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. It is uncertain, however, if this teaching was circulating when Paul wrote 1 Timothy. Nevertheless, the reference to Hymenaeus in 1 Tim 1:20 suggests the possibility that such teaching already existed in Ephesus. Based on a comparison of 1 Tim 6:20–21 and 2 Tim 2:15–18,<sup>39</sup> Towner claims, “At the center of the false teachers’ gnosis was the belief that the resurrection of believers had already occurred (2 Tim 2.18).”<sup>40</sup> Again, one wonders if such a belief is an offshoot of Paul’s teaching that believers have already been raised with Christ and now live in the newness of life (cf. Rom 6:3–8; Eph 2:5; Col 2:12; 3:1–3). The false teachers viewed their understanding or “knowledge” (*gnōsis*) of the resurrection as a “special insight” or “spiritual interpretation.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, the resurrection indicates a fundamental shift in the thinking of the false teachers who viewed salvation as something fully realized in the present.

There is also evidence of a type of dualism that lay behind some of the ascetic practices in Ephesus. While many of the earlier interpreters favored Gnosticism or Hellenistic philosophy as the cause of such dualism, many of the more recent interpreters link it to a carryover from Judaism set in the framework of a theology tainted by over-realized eschatology.<sup>42</sup> The evidence

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situations was rooted in a false belief that Christians were already in the full form of God’s kingdom and that they had accordingly been spiritually taken ‘out of’ the world so that aspects of this creation, like sex, food, and male/female distinctions, were no longer relevant to them” (“What Does It Mean” 181).

<sup>38</sup> Towner summarizes that “the major social problems addressed by the author are capable of being explained consistently as related to the over-realized eschatology” (*Goal* 42).

<sup>39</sup> 1 Tim 6:20–21: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith”; 2 Tim 2:15–18: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.” Towner points out three resemblances between these two passages: (1) in both cases Timothy is to pay careful attention to his treatment of the gospel (“guard what has been entrusted to you,” 1 Tim 6:20; “accurately handling the word of truth,” 2 Tim 2:15); (2) in each passage, the false doctrine Timothy is to avoid is described as “worldly and empty chatter” (τὰς βεβήλους κενοφονίας, 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16); (3) profession of the false gnosis (1 Tim 6:20) and the resurrection heresy (2 Tim 2:18) produced the same result—going astray (ἡστόγησαν) from the faith/truth (*Goal* 30).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>42</sup> The Jewish element of the false teaching in Ephesus can be seen in the following verses: 1 Tim 1:4 (cf. Titus 1:14); 1 Tim 1:7; 2 Tim 4:4 (cf. Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9).

of asceticism is primarily found in 1 Tim 4:3 where Paul warns Timothy concerning some who were forbidding marriage and were advocating abstaining from certain foods.<sup>43</sup> Based on the internal evidence of the epistle, Towner suggests that “it is safer to think of an ‘eschatological’ dualism, which regarded ‘foods’ (some at least) as belonging to the old order.”<sup>44</sup> The same connection can also be made with regard to marriage. With the arrival of the new age, marriage was viewed as that which belonged to the old order and was therefore unspiritual. Support for this view could have been drawn from the teachings of both Jesus and Paul (Matt 22:30; 1 Cor 7:1, 29–35). “Thus the ascetic tendencies of the heretics can be linked with a certain degree of confidence to the false notion that the resurrection had occurred.”<sup>45</sup>

How had the embrace of over-realized eschatology and resulting asceticism affected the situation at Ephesus? A possible scenario is that some women were being encouraged to downplay marriage and thus neglect roles that they were given by God at creation. By encouraging the women to abstain from marriage, the false teachers were thus encouraging women to forsake their traditional roles in relation to men.<sup>46</sup> That Paul is seeking to counter this tendency to disregard traditional roles in marriage is supported by the several passages which exhort women to accept a subordinate role to their husbands (e.g. 1 Tim 5:14–15; 2 Tim 3:6–7; cf. Titus 2:4–5). For example, Paul admonishes younger widows to marry, bear children, and manage their homes since “some have already turned aside to follow Satan” (1 Tim 5:15). Since Paul had already labeled the type of false teaching that forbids marriage as demonic (1 Tim 4:1), it is likely that Paul’s reference to following Satan means following the false teachers who promote Satan’s agenda.

#### IV. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF PAUL’S ARGUMENTS FROM CREATION IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:13–14

The situation at Ephesus, therefore, has many striking resemblances to the situation in Corinth. We have argued that over-realized eschatology was the main cause of most of the problems that Paul deals with in his respective letters to those churches. In addition to a spiritualized view of the resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Tim 2:17–18) and resulting embrace of asceticism (cf. 1 Corinthians 7; 1 Tim 4:1–5), in both places there was a disregard for proper dress code (cf. 1 Cor 11:2–16; 1 Tim 2:9–10) as well as an improper

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Titus 1:15 where Paul writes, “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure.” Because the previous verse mentions that the false teachers are following “the commandments men” (cf. Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7; Col 2:22) and the close parallel with Rom 14:14, it is likely that this verse also refers to some who were forbidding certain foods (so George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992] 301).

<sup>44</sup> Towner, *Goal* 37.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>46</sup> Moo explains, “The false teachers were encouraging women to discard what we might call traditional female roles in favor of a more egalitarian approach to the role relationships of men and women” (“What Does It Mean” 181).

understanding and use of their authority in the worship service (cf. 1 Cor 14:33–35; 1 Tim 2:12). In Ephesus, apparently some women were causing commotion in the church by their elaborate dress and their desire to teach. Paul, therefore, writes to Timothy and exhorts women to dress modestly and forbids them to teach and have authority over men.<sup>47</sup> While it is possible that women were being allowed to teach (and thus Paul writes to stop this from occurring), we do not know how extensive this problem was, nor is it certain that these women were teaching false doctrine.<sup>48</sup>

In 1 Tim 2:13 Paul gives his first reason why he does not permit women to teach or have authority over men in the context of the local church.<sup>49</sup> He states, “For it was Adam who was created first, and then Eve.”<sup>50</sup> Like Paul’s first argument in 1 Cor 11:8, it is an argument from the order of creation based on the account in Genesis (esp. Gen 2:7, 22). It should be noted that Paul does not first of all appeal to the Fall, but to God’s original design in creation. Why does Paul appeal to God’s design in creation to make his case?

<sup>47</sup> Keener argues that it is significant Paul does not assume that Timothy already knows this restriction related to women (*Paul, Women & Wives* 112; also see Groothuis, *Good News* 212–13). Surely, maintains Keener, it would not have been necessary for Paul to give Timothy this rule if it was an established and universal practice. But this argument is not as strong as it might first appear. First, Paul writes his letter not only to Timothy, but also, through Timothy, to the rest of the congregation (including who were seeking to violate Paul’s command). Throughout the letter, Paul conveys many truths to Timothy that he had already been taught and with which he was well familiar. Therefore, Paul does not write to Timothy to give him a new teaching, nor mainly to remind Timothy of his duties, but to give him the needed platform of authority to enforce the teaching that he already knew. Second, simply because Paul does not mention a certain practice in a letter to a church, does not mean that the practice did not exist. For example, the only place we have reference of a Pauline congregation practicing the Lord’s Supper is in Corinth. Are we to assume that since this practice is not mentioned elsewhere that other churches did not know about or practice this tradition? Another example can be drawn from the practice of women wearing head coverings. Although this custom is not mentioned elsewhere, it does not appear that the Corinthian congregation was alone in this practice since Paul says, “We have no other practice, nor have the churches of God” (1 Cor 11:16). Often Paul’s only teaching on a subject is preserved for us today because Paul was forced to correct a misunderstanding or abuse of that teaching. This is true for the situation at Ephesus. Paul was compelled to deal with the emerging problem of women who wanted to teach and have authority over men. The response Paul gives would have been his response in any church but only emerges in the context of the church at Ephesus since that is where the problem was.

<sup>48</sup> Towner comments, “Thus, although there does seem to be evidence of an emancipation movement or tendency among women in Ephesus, the evidence does not permit the conclusion that this was necessarily a specific goal of the false teachers nor that once enlisted women taught the heresy” (*Goal* 39; see also p. 216).

<sup>49</sup> Based on the context, it seems most likely that Paul’s prohibition for women teaching and having authority over men applies in the context of the congregational worship service (so Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 128; Schreiner, “1 Timothy 2:9–15” 113; contra J. M. Holmes, *Text in a Whirlwind: A Critique of Four Exegetical Devices at 1 Timothy 2.9–15* [JSNTSup 196; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000] 96–97).

<sup>50</sup> We strongly disagree with Holmes who suggests that verses 13–15 “concludes the whole of chap. 2, and vv. 8–12 in particular, having its chief focus on both genders” (*Text in a Whirlwind* 304). Furthermore, her interpretation that the γάρ in verse 13 is redundant and should not be translated since verses 13–15 represent Jewish tradition, and thus the faithful saying of 3:1, is not convincing (ibid. 299). It is much more compelling to give the γάρ of verse 12 its natural force which provides the reason or ground of the previous prohibition in verse 12.

The fact that Adam was created before Eve signifies that he is leader in their relationship.<sup>51</sup> But unlike 1 Cor 11:8 where Paul only indirectly argues that women must wear head coverings (i.e. the argument from the order of creation is given to explain how the woman is the glory of man), here Paul is arguing directly for the prohibition he gave in verse 12 since the ground for the prohibition immediately follows the command. In 1 Corinthians 11 the practice (head coverings) is dependent on culture, but the principle (gender distinctions) is transcultural. In 1 Timothy 2, however, “the principle cannot be separated from the form of behavior. In other words, for a woman to teach a man or to have authority over a man is, by definition, to void the principle for which Paul quotes the creation account.”<sup>52</sup> In this instance, there is no distinction between the underlying principle and the cultural expression of that principle.

Paul’s second argument, however, is different from his second argument in 1 Corinthians 11. In 1 Tim 2:14 Paul makes an allusion to Eve being deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Gen 3:6, 13): “It was not Adam who was deceived [ἠπατήθη], but the woman being deceived [ἐξαπατηθεῖσα], fell into transgression.” But exactly how does Eve’s deception demonstrate why women should not teach or have authority over men? There are at least three main options: First, Eve was deceived because women are more easily deceived or are more gullible than men. Few scholars favor this view since it seems unlikely that God intentionally created women more deceivable. Furthermore, the fact that Paul only prohibits women from teaching men suggests that women are allowed to teach other women and children (cf. 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15;

<sup>51</sup> Groothuis comments, “Derivation has nothing to do with the determination of authority and subordination” (*Good News* 127). Her position, however, does not seem to take into consideration Paul’s understanding of derivation. Later she writes, “The fact of the matter is that the temporal order of God’s creation of man and woman proves absolutely nothing about which one is the ‘boss!’” (ibid. 137). Again she adds, “Paul simply says that Adam was created first—which, in itself, is merely a statement of fact, not of theological principle” (ibid. 218). Paul, however, is not just stating a fact, he is making an argument for why women are not to teach or have authority over men, which involves a theological principle. While Webb is correct when he states, “It is entirely likely that Paul uses primogeniture logic in 1 Timothy 2:13 in order to establish his point about the status of men over women,” he is wrong in concluding that “it does not mean that a contemporary Christian should necessarily utilize or endorse this kind of logic and its subsequent practices today” (William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001] 136).

<sup>52</sup> Moo, “What Does It Mean” 191. Similarly, Schreiner maintains, “There are some instances in which the principle and practice (e.g., polygamy and homosexuality) coalesce. This is one of those cases” (“1 Timothy 2:9–15” 140). Köstenberger likewise writes that “the important difference between 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 1 Tim 2:8–15 is that in the latter passage it seems impossible to separate the principle (i.e. the woman’s functional subordination to the man in creation) from the way in which this principle is to be applied (i.e. for woman not to teach nor to exercise authority over man in the context of a congregation gathered for worship); neither are there any contextual cues limiting the application of 1 Tim 2:12 to the circumstances at hand” (Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued,” *WTJ* 56 [1994] 270). Grudem asserts that “leadership of the church by male elders [1 Tim 2:12; 3:2] is not a temporary *symbol* of some deeper reality, *but is the reality itself*” (*Evangelical Feminism* 337–38).



Titus 2:3–4). If women are more deceivable by nature, it is unlikely that Paul would permit them to teach at all. As a result, the issue at stake is not deceivability or intelligence, but God's design in the church.

Second, Eve was deceived by the serpent to eat the fruit, whereas Adam was not deceived by the serpent, but received the fruit from his wife. When Paul says that Eve was deceived and Adam was not, he simply means that the serpent approached Eve and not Adam. There is a broad sense in which all sin is "deception," and thus Adam also was deceived into eating. It is clear, however, that in this text Paul is specifically referring to the role of the serpent in deceiving Eve. According to Gen 3:13, Eve exclaims, "the serpent deceived [ἡπάτησέν, LXX] me."<sup>53</sup> Adam, however, could make no such claim since the serpent did not directly deceive him. Rather, he ate of the fruit from the initiative of his wife (Gen 3:6). The serpent, then, purposefully went against God's created order of authority by approaching Eve and not Adam. What is even more telling is that apparently Adam was with Eve during the temptation. Thus, the serpent broke God's "chain of command," whereby the husband was the "head" of the wife. As the head of the relationship, Adam should have intervened and spoiled the serpent's plan.<sup>54</sup> His failure, however, allowed Eve to be deceived and, at the same time, become the leader in their relationship. Consequently, verse 14 functions as a warning to the church not to let the "liberated" Ephesian women proclaim their independence from men and take on roles that were not intended by God.<sup>55</sup>

Third, Eve was deceived because she did not receive her information concerning the prohibition directly from God, but through her husband. Adam, however, was not deceived but willingly disobeyed God since he received his information directly from God (Gen 2:16). Today, many, if not most, egalitarians adopt this view and argue that since Eve received second-hand information, she had less "knowledge" than Adam and was therefore was less "educated." Consequently, they maintain that in 1 Tim 2:12, Paul is merely restricting *uneducated* women or women who were advocating false doctrine (due to their lack of education) from teaching and thus usurping authority or domineering men. Thus, Paul's prohibition does not apply to us since women are no longer among the "uneducated" of society. Affirming this position, Keener maintains that Eve was deceived because "she was not

<sup>53</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 2:14, where the same Greek word is used with reference to Adam not being deceived.

<sup>54</sup> God gave the command to Adam who was the responsible spiritual leader of their relationship. This view is confirmed by the fact that Adam was created first, that Eve was created to be Adam's helpmate, that Adam named Eve, and that when God came to Adam and Eve after they sinned, he called for Adam as the one who was the family representative (Gen 3:9).

<sup>55</sup> Affirming this view Moo writes, "Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3:13) precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the church at Ephesus proclaim their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn 'in quietness and full submission' (verse 11), seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (verse 12), they will make the same mistake Eve made and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church" ("What Does It Mean" 190).

present when God gave the commandment, and thus was dependent on Adam for the teaching. In other words, she was inadequately educated—like the women in the Ephesian church.”<sup>56</sup> Likewise Grenz comments, “Perhaps Paul is suggesting that Eve’s later creation provides a clue to why she was deceived. She was not present in the Garden when God gave Adam the command; thereby Eve serves as an analogy to the Ephesian women who are inadequately educated.”<sup>57</sup> Based on a similar analysis, Webb maintains that the underlying principle is: “*choose teachers/leaders who are worthy of high honor within the congregation.*”<sup>58</sup>

But does the previous interpretation of 1 Tim 2:13–14 fit with the Genesis account? Is the lack of education among the women of Ephesus really the problem that lies at the heart of Paul’s prohibition? Could the lack of education be the underlying issue for this text just as creational gender and role distinctions lay behind Paul’s admonition for women to wear head coverings? There are at least seven reasons why such a view must be rejected.

(1) Eve’s being dependent on Adam for teaching is not the same as being inadequately taught. If Adam told his wife the commandment from God, then was not Eve educated as much as Adam? Based on the Genesis account we know that Eve had been instructed by Adam. The serpent tempts Eve by saying, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Gen 3:1). Eve then responds with the words she had been taught from Adam, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die’” (Gen 3:2–3). On the one hand, if Adam failed to correctly teach Eve God’s command, then it is his fault that Eve was deceived since he was a bad teacher. If that is the case, then we can argue that men should not be teachers based on Adam’s poor example. Such an argument, however, is just the opposite of what Paul is saying and should therefore be immediately rejected.<sup>59</sup> The issue was not lack of knowledge, but lack of faith in God’s promises. Thus Eve’s deception was not based on her inferior knowledge or education, but on her willingness to let the words of the serpent hold more sway over her decisions than the word of God. On the other hand, if Eve failed to understand God’s instruction from Adam, then the assumption would be that she was mentally less capable than her husband. Based on reasons stated above, this view must also be rejected. Consequently, the answer to Eve’s deception cannot be based on what Eve did

<sup>56</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 116.

<sup>57</sup> Stanley J. Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995) 138.

<sup>58</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* 145.

<sup>59</sup> The additional phrase “or touch it” must have been added by Eve and not what Adam had communicated to her. We know from Genesis and Paul that it was the serpent who deceived Eve, not Adam. This additional requirement seems to signal that Eve added these words in order to make God’s commandment seem somewhat unreasonable and too demanding, which is often the first step in justifying one’s sin.

or did not know.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the deception does not lie in the fact that Eve did not know better, but that although she knew better, she was tricked into eating anyway.

(2) If Paul's point is that Eve sinned with less knowledge than Adam, then Adam is guilty of the greater sin.<sup>61</sup> Eve was merely deceived, whereas Adam sinned with full knowledge and therefore with a rebellious heart. Again, this view must be rejected since it does not support the point that Paul is trying to make—that the Ephesian women were not to teach the men. If Paul is trying to demonstrate that women should not teach men, then how does it help his argument to show that Adam committed the greater sin due to his superior knowledge? It would seem to prove just the opposite.

(3) There is no proof in 1 or 2 Timothy that women were actually teaching false doctrine since Paul never identifies a woman as a false teacher. He mentions only Hymenaeus (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17–18), Alexander (1 Tim 1:20), and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17–18). Although women are mentioned in the context of being led astray by the false teachers (1 Tim 5:13;<sup>62</sup> 2 Tim 3:6–7), they are never referred to as being the teachers themselves. Thus the position that women were teaching false doctrine is highly speculative.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, nowhere in the Genesis account is it suggested that Eve taught Adam. It is not convincing to argue that just as Eve taught Adam to eat the fruit bringing sin to mankind, so too, the uneducated women at Ephesus were teaching the men false doctrine bringing sin to the church. The focus in both Genesis and Paul is not that Eve taught Adam, but that Eve was deceived.

(4) If Paul meant to say that women are not permitted to teach since they are uneducated, then why not say that in those words?<sup>64</sup> Paul could have simply written, "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority

<sup>60</sup> Grudem notes, "Deficient education cannot be the meaning because the prohibition was so simple. How many years of education does one need in order to understand the meaning of, 'but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die?'" (*Evangelical Feminism* 295).

<sup>61</sup> We are not denying that Adam, as the representative head of all mankind, was guilty of the greater sin (cf. Rom 5:15–21), but merely that Paul is not arguing in this passage that Adam was more guilty since he knew something more than Eve.

<sup>62</sup> This text does not say that some women were "teaching things not proper to mention," but "talking about (*λαλοῦσα*) things not proper to mention."

<sup>63</sup> Giles suggests that "Paul commands women not to teach in church or exercise authority because certain women were teaching heresy" (Kevin Giles, "A Critique of the 'Novel' Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 Given in the Book, *Women in the Church*. Part II," *EvQ* 72 [2000] 211). Keener argues that Paul may not have wanted women to teach because "much of the false teaching in Ephesus was being spread through women in the congregation. This is not to say that women are more prone to lead others astray than men—the false teachers themselves seem to have been men. But in that culture the uneducated women seem to have provided a network the false teachers could use to spread their falsehoods through the congregations" (*Paul, Women & Wives* 111–12). Also see Groothuis, *Good News* 214; Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* 145; Grenz, *Women in the Church* 126, 132.

<sup>64</sup> If Paul's prohibition in verse 12 was not intended to be transcultural, how could he have said it differently than he did for us to understand it as such?

over men but to learn in quietness since uneducated women are more likely to be deceived and teach false doctrine.” Instead, Paul bases his reasoning on the order of creation. Keener writes, “Presumably, Paul wants [women] to learn so that they could *teach*.”<sup>65</sup> If Paul wanted to say what Keener claims, he did a terrible job of communicating his intentions.<sup>66</sup>

(5) Since there must have been some “educated” women in the Ephesian congregation at the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, it is unlikely that Paul would forbid such women from teaching simply because most women were uneducated. According to Acts 18:26, we know that Priscilla was well educated and was very likely in Ephesus at that time since she is mentioned as being there when Paul writes 2 Timothy (2 Tim 4:19). Baugh has convincingly demonstrated that it is misleading to maintain that all women were considered “uneducated” since they did not normally achieve high levels of formal education. Based on his extensive research, Baugh notes, “Few people in antiquity advanced in their formal education beyond today’s elementary school levels, including men like Socrates, Sophocles, and Herodotus.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, many of the more affluent women participated in private lectures. One of the reasons was that upper-class women often needed to be literate in order to manage large households. Based on the description of the manner in which some women were dressing with elaborate hairdos, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing (1 Tim 2:9; cf. 1 Tim 6:17–18), at least some of the women in the Ephesian congregation were upper-class and most likely some would have been considered “educated.” Would Paul make such a sweeping statement that would limit all women from teaching if some were indeed well qualified?<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul does not simply give in and placate to the dictates of culture. He does not say that women cannot pray and prophesy at all, but that they should do it in such a way that maintains a cultural distinction between men and women. Thus, Grenz rightly notes, “Paul does not direct [these ‘emancipated’ women in Corinth] to stop praying and prophe-

<sup>65</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 112. Groothuis likewise states, “In other words, the point of the illustration is that, in order to avoid deception and serious error, those who lack instruction in God’s Word (as did Eve and the Ephesian women) should defer to the expertise of those who are more thoroughly instructed (as were Adam and the male leaders in the Ephesian church). Thus, Paul’s intent in referring to Adam and Eve is not to say that women in general should submit to the spiritual authority of men, but that women—and, in principle, men as well—who do not have adequate spiritual understanding should defer to and learn from those who do” (*Good News* 222).

<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, one wonders if Paul would have written so cryptically when in 1 Corinthians 5 he had to clear up an issue in which the congregation misunderstood him (vv. 9–13). You would think that Paul learned his lesson so as to write clearly in order to avoid such misunderstanding again.

<sup>67</sup> S. M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 46.

<sup>68</sup> Schreiner states, “A prohibition against women alone seems to be reasonable only if *all* the women in Ephesus were duped by the false teaching” (“1 Timothy 2:9–15” 112). Grudem adds, “Even if *some* women were teaching false doctrine at Ephesus, why would that lead Paul to prohibit *all* women from teaching? It would not be fair or consistent to do so” (*Evangelical Feminism* 287). Furthermore, when Paul gives the qualifications for male teachers in chapter 3, he does not even mention the need for proper education.

syng in public, but cautions them to engage in these activities with due regard for norms governing proper attire.”<sup>69</sup> But why does Paul not use this line of reasoning in 1 Timothy 2? Why does he not tell the women to teach and have authority only if they do it without teaching false doctrine? Why does he seem to completely limit the public role of women in 1 Timothy 2 but refuse to do so in 1 Corinthians 11? Paul will let culture dictate certain elements in his teaching when they are superficial—like the wearing of head coverings. He realizes that some things are not as important as others and will accommodate when possible. But is it likely that Paul would restrict women from teaching or having authority simply because that culture says women should not do such things,<sup>70</sup> or because some women were uneducated or were teaching false doctrine? Paul will restrict freedoms or add certain qualifications when they are “irrelevant,” but it does not seem to be Paul’s style to give such a far-reaching command in order to accommodate or deal with a problem or abuse.

(6) If Paul’s prohibition is meant to address only women who were uneducated or teaching false doctrine, what about men who would fall into this same category? Are we to assume that they are permitted to teach heresy since they are not mentioned? Keener concludes that Paul’s principle “is that those who do not understand the Scriptures and are not able to teach them accurately should not be permitted to teach others.”<sup>71</sup> If that is the case, then why does Paul single out women? Surely they are not the only ones guilty of being uneducated or teaching false doctrine. What about the men who were leading others astray?

(7) The reason for Paul’s argument is based directly in creation. In other words, Paul’s appeal to the creation of Adam before Eve demonstrates the different roles that God had established based on creation. Therefore, the order of creation becomes the reason why Paul prohibits women from teaching men. Some argue that the γάρ (“for”) of verse 13 does not necessarily indicate that Paul’s prohibition is grounded or based on the creation account but that Paul simply provides a loosely connected illustration or analogy.<sup>72</sup> This interpretation, however, fits neither the normal usage of γάρ in the Pastoral Epistles nor is what one would expect in the context of Paul’s argument.<sup>73</sup> The command in verse 12 naturally anticipates the basis for that command in the subsequent verses. Therefore, the Genesis account gives

<sup>69</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church* 108.

<sup>70</sup> This view is held by Giles who maintains that Paul wants the Christians at Ephesus “to conform to the cultural norms of that age so as not to cause offence to outsiders” (“Critique, Part II” 214). What is even more troubling is Giles’s view that culture can take precedence over Scripture. He writes, “Our changed culture demands the exact opposite application of what was originally prescribed, if we are to be faithful to Scripture!” (ibid.).

<sup>71</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 120.

<sup>72</sup> Groothuis, *Good News* 216–17; Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 222.

<sup>73</sup> See 1 Tim 4:7–8, 16; 5:4, 11, 15, 18; 2 Tim 1:6–7; 2:7, 16; 3:5–6; 4:3, 5–6, 9–10, 11, 15; Titus 3:1–3, 9, 12; also see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 142.

the reasons for why a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man. It is based on creation and therefore transcends cultures.<sup>74</sup>

## VI. SUMMARY

The overarching thesis of this article is that Paul's arguments from creation in 1 Cor 11:8–9 are not directly given to mandate that women must wear head coverings. Rather, his arguments from creation are given to prove, or better, explain, how man is the image and glory of God and how the woman is the glory of man—i.e. to demonstrate that the gender and role differences between men and women are based on God's design in creation. Thus Christian women are not required to wear head coverings today when praying since the symbol of a woman's head being covered is different today than it was in the first century.<sup>75</sup> As a result, Paul's arguments from creation are only indirectly linked to the need for head coverings. The transcultural truth that undergirded Paul's admonition, however, still applies for us today: women are created differently than men and this distinction must be maintained in the church and in the family. In contrast, Paul's arguments from creation in 1 Tim 2:13–14 directly follow the prohibition for women not to teach or have authority over men. As a result, verses 13 and 14 are best taken as the grounds for that prohibition and thus are transcultural. Therefore, the command for women not to teach or have authority over men should be upheld in the church today.

<sup>74</sup> Groothuis claims, "It is inconsistent to regard the dress code in 1 Timothy 2:9 as culturally relative and, therefore, temporary, but the restrictions on women's ministry in 2:12 as universal and permanent" (*Good News* 214). But this argument fails to take note of the context of Paul's teaching since Paul clearly gives us the principle underlying his prohibitions when he says, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly" (1 Tim 2:9). Before he gives the culturally relative prohibitions, Paul first gives the universal principle behind them: women are to dress modestly and discreetly. Therefore, although the prohibitions of wearing braided hair, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing are culturally relative, the previous stated principle is not. Paul is not saying that tending to one's hair, wearing jewelry, or wearing clothes is wrong (note that Paul specifically says "expensive clothing" [ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ]). Rather, he is saying that modesty and discreetness should be maintained when giving consideration to how one appears in public. It is misleading, then, to claim that the dress code in 1 Timothy 2 is culturally relative without acknowledging that Paul does give us a transcultural principle. Furthermore, there are other examples where we find culturally relative issues mixed with transcultural principles (e.g. 1 Cor 16:20). To simply appeal to the context where a culturally relative issue exists and then claim that the whole context must be dealing with such issues is not good exegesis.

<sup>75</sup> This article has not addressed the nature of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11. This author favors the view held by Grudem that views prophecy as a spontaneous utterance and thus distinct from teaching or preaching. For a defense of this view, see Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982); *idem*, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (rev. ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2000); *idem*, "Prophecy—Yes, but Teaching—No: Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation without Governing Authority," *JETS* 30 (1987) 11–23; contra Thiselton who maintains that prophecy "should not be restricted to the uttering of some supposedly 'spontaneous' oracular utterance," but "denotes the public proclamation of gospel truth as applied pastorally and contextually to the hearers" (*First Epistle to the Corinthians* 826). Towner rightly states, "It should be pointed out that teaching, the activity prohibited here [in 1 Tim 2:12], and prophecy, an activity which (to judge from 1 Cor 11.4) Paul allowed women to take part in, were probably not equivalent" (*Goal* 215).