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Women in the Church: A Response to Kevin Giles

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In a surprising tribute to the influence of *Women in the Church* in Australia, K. Giles has recently subjected the work to an extensive two-part critique in the present journal.[1] In a publication that asks that book reviews generally be limited to 500 to 1500 words, a 38-page article devoted to one single book is certainly remarkable. Seeking to turn the tables, Giles claims that it is not the egalitarian reading of 1 Tim 2:9-15 that is novel, but the position taken by the contributors to *Women in the Church,* despite their claim that their position is generally in line with the historic view.[2] Giles's critique of the argument of this book as 'novel', however, is itself 'novel'. A fair share of reviews (not counting mentions in articles and commentaries) have appeared, but Giles's is the first to take issue with its position on the

1 'A Critique of the "Novel" Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, *Women in the Church.* Part I', *EQ* 72:2, 2000, 151-67 and 'A Critique of the "Novel" Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, *Women in the Church.* Part II', EQ 72:3, 2000, 195-215. Unless otherwise indicated, all page numbers referring to Giles given below are to this two-part critique.

2 Giles's application of the term 'novel' to our interpretation is apparently in reaction to Yarbrough's claim to the same effect for egalitarian interpretations on p. 178; see below.

grounds that it is 'novel'.[3] Has Giles identified a flaw all previous commentators have missed?[4]

Essentially, Giles contends that the stance taken by the contributors to *Women in the Church* does not align itself closely enough with that of previous (ancient as well as more recent) commentators to be properly labeled 'historic'. A twofold basic response can be lodged in regard to this argument. First, Giles's charge rests on an exaggerated claim not actually made in the book and is therefore unjustified (see further below); yet whether properly called 'historic' or not, the position advocated by the contributors to *Women in the Church* is certainly more in line with previous interpretations of 1 Tim 2:9-15 until recent times than the egalitarian position. Second, in the end the primary issue is not one of proper or improper labels, but the question of which position – egalitarian or non-egalitarian – more closely adheres to the scriptural message itself. To help adjudicate this issue was, in fact, the primary concern of our book.

Giles disputes this. He claims that '[a]ll the essays in this book are deductive in nature' and that the authors 'are presenting evidence for what is already believed to be true' (152). He is essentially asserting that the arguments set forth in *Women in the Church* are all circular: they assume what they only pretend to show by use of evidence and argument. Against him it must be strongly maintained that the detailed historical analysis and painstaking exegesis conducted in var-

3 Note that I. H. Marshall calls our book 'the most mature, scholarly defence of this position' (*Pastoral Epistles* [ICC; Edinburgh, 1999], 438, n. 85); W. D. Mounce refers to it as one of 'the best presentations of the complementarian interpretation of the text' (*Pastoral Epistles* [WBC 46; Nashville, 2000], 103); and D. A. Carson considers it 'the most technically competent study of this passage now available' (*The Inclusive Language Debate* [Grand Rapids, 1998], 207, n. 21). Note the concession made even by the egalitarian scholar Alan Padgett, 'The Scholarship of Patriarchy (on 1 Timothy 2:8-15): A Response to Women in the Church, eds. Köstenberger, Schreiner & Baldwin', *Priscilla Papers* 11/1 (Winter 1997), 28, in an otherwise critical review, '[I]t is certainly true that the great consensus of Christian thinkers from the Patristic to the early modern period have held to an absolute reading of this text [i.e. indicating universal application]. Should we then dare to oppose the consensus of the Church, and the teaching of the ages?' Padgett answers 'yes', but he does not object that the argument of *Women in the Church* is 'novel'.

4 Note the concession made even by the egalitarian scholar Alan Padgett, 'The Scholarship of Patriarchy (on 1 Timothy 2:8-15): *A Response to Women in the Church*, eds. Köstenberger, Schreiner & Baldwin', *Priscilla Papers* 11/1 (Winter 1997), 28, in an otherwise critical review, '[I]t is certainly true that the great consensus of Christian thinkers from the Patristic to the early modern period have held to an absolute reading of this text [i.e. indicating universal application]. Should we then dare to oppose the consensus of the Church, and the teaching of the ages?' Padgett answers 'yes', but he does not object that the argument of *Women in the Church* is 'novel'.

ious chapters (especially the first three) cannot be properly called 'deductive'. In fact, at least some of the book's contributors once held Giles's views and changed their mind based on the kind of evidence and argument that *Women in the Church* contains.[5]

Whether Giles is willing to acknowledge this or not, good evidence weighs against his outlook. It is not simply a matter of blind belief defending what it already thought. In any case, attaching the label 'deductive' to an opposing viewpoint is an inadequate substitute for proper engagement of its theses on the basis of argument and evidence. Polemic is concerned about labels; scholarship ought to be concerned about evidence and truth.[6]

Chapter-by-chapter critique

In his chapter-by-chapter critique, Giles actually has few problems with the first three chapters of *Women in the Church.* He agrees with S. M. Baugh that there probably never was a 'feminist Ephesus'. He concurs with H. S. Baldwin's assessment of the semantic range of *authenteō.* He even accepts my analysis of the syntactical pattern in 1 Tim 2:12 involving *oude* ('neither . . . nor').[7] Disagreements begin to surface, however, with D. Gordon's argument that 1 Tim 2:9-15 is binding on Christians today. Giles registers several objections (154).[8]

First, the church does not obey Paul's injunctions on the care of widows in 1 Tim 5:3-16, because in our culture widows are 'not nec-

5 See the comments by T. R. Schreiner and R. W. Yarbrough in *Women in the Church,* 106 and 196; see also D. Doriani's remarks on p. 213.

6 Whatever the proper label for the kind of interpretation set forth in *Women in the Church* is, it is certainly not 'postmodern', another label used by Giles to describe this position (195). In fact, the belief in the importance and power of evidence underlying the argument of this volume may strike many as resembling modernity much more closely than postmodernity. Ascribing the label 'postmodern' to *Women in the Church* betrays either ignorance of the term's conventional usage or polemic that is blind to (or deliberately misrepresents) the actual hermeneutic underlying opposing viewpoints.

7 However, by way of special pleading, Giles maintains that 'People, even apostles, break grammatical rules at times' (153), so that *oude* may function differently in the present passage than everywhere else in attested contemporaneous Greek literature. This is, of course, possible, but highly unlikely. In my extensive research in both biblical and extrabiblical Greek literature, I found no evidence of anyone 'breaking the rules' in his or her use of *oude.* It seems that even Giles himself does not trust this kind of reasoning, for he later (212) floats the possibility that both *didaskein* and *authentein* are to be understood negatively – in keeping with the pattern of usage I presented in my article (but see note 28 below).

8 In some of the following arguments I depend on material made available to me by D. Gordon (dated September 27, 2000).

essarily destitute, or in need of male protection'.[9] So why should the teaching of 1 Tim 2:9-15 be considered normative? Apart from the question of whether it is accurate to say that the church today neglects the charge to care for widows – it seems that most widows in our culture are already cared for – this is a curious argument indeed. For the contemporary church's disobedience toward one biblical command can hardly be used as an argument against the validity of another. Even if it were true that the church today by and large neglects the biblical injunction to care for needy widows, should we also set aside the teaching of 1 Tim 2:9-15 regarding the role of women in the church? Certainly not. Rather, applying Gordon's criterion, today's churches should obey the abiding principle found in 1 Tim 5:3-16: to care for widows in need who meet certain qualifications. This, in turn, is part of an even larger transcultural principle: that God himself is compassionate toward those who are destitute and therefore calls his covenant community to be similarly compassionate toward the destitute in their midst.

Second, Giles points out that men today do not pray 'with lifted hands', and women do not 'literally obey' Paul's instructions on dress. So why abide by Paul's comments against women teaching or exercising authority over men in the church in 1 Tim 2:12? Once again, Giles fails to apply the principle set forth by Gordon (not to mention his lack of acknowledgment of Schreiner's extensive discussion of this issue; see below). In the case of 'lifted hands', the abiding principle is united prayer without strife, with 'lifting up hands' probably serving as an idiomatic expression for prayer, just as 'washing the feet of the saints' in 1 Tim 5:10 represents an idiom for Christian service.

In the instance of women's dress, Giles's language ('literally obey') again reveals that he misses the underlying principle of 1 Tim 2:9-10: modest dress that is in keeping with a focus on a woman's inner godly disposition. In his extensive discussion of this issue (pp. 117-21), Schreiner clearly distinguishes between 'apply[ing] the principle' and 'literal practice' and identifies as normative 'the principle that women should not dress ostentatiously or seductively' (121). By failing to acknowledge Schreiner's distinction and speaking merely of literal obedience, Giles erects a strawman rather than fairly interacting with the view actually taken by the contributors of *Women in the Church*. Contrary to Giles, the Pauline injunction of avoiding ostentatious dress continues to be relevant today; so are vv. 11-15.

9 Incidentally, it is unclear why Giles adds 'in need of male protection' here. Gordon does not refer to this, and it doubtful that Paul conceived of the issue in these terms.

Third, Giles points out that today unmarried men are ordained while Paul 'insists' that overseers and deacons be married. Again, this is fallacious: Paul does not 'insist' on married officeholders in the church, he rather *assumes* that they will usually be married and on the basis of this general assumption stipulates certain requirements. I am not aware of many interpreters (if any) who take Paul's requirement of marital faithfulness for overseers and elders as a prohibition of unmarried office-holders in the church. Then again, even if the church today were to violate Paul's command not to ordain single men, should this be used as an argument to disregard other Pauline injunctions as well? Certainly not; we would still need to deal with 1 Tim 2:9-15.

Fourth, Giles says that 'church teachers are not necessarily paid double to other ministers' today (154). However, again the problem is improper exegesis. Rather than referring to literal 'double payment', the passage probably means that church leaders are worthy of 'double honor', that is, respect *as well as payment*, 'especially those whose work is preaching and teaching' (1 Tim 5:17). This principle that 'a worker is worthy of his wages' (1 Tim 5:18), asserted by both Jesus (Luke 10:7) and Paul (1 Tim 5:18; cf. 1 Cor 9:6-19), is certainly of abiding value and is recognized widely today, in principle if not in practice. And note again the flawed logic of an argument that says just because the church today fails to obey a given injunction in the Pastorals it need not heed another. 1 Tim 2:9-15 cannot be disqualified on these grounds either.

Fifth, Giles contends that slavery 'definitely is grounded on a general norm, Christ's own willingness to serve no matter what the cost' (154). It is unclear where Giles finds this 'general norm' in 1 Tim 6:1-2. Rather, there the existence of slavery is simply assumed and regulated for those who are believers. Against Giles's repeated contention, it must be maintained that Scripture does not 'endorse' slavery (which would imply that the Bible teaches that slavery is good or at least ethically unobjectionable); it rather *regulates* it for the simple reason that it was a fact of life in the first century. Moreover, despite the abolition of slavery, the kinds of principles set forth in 1 Tim 6:1-2 continue to be relevant in a derivative sense with regard to employer-employee relationships today. Again, there is no reason to set aside 1 Tim 2:9-15 just because 1 Tim 6:1-2 is alleged no longer to apply today.

Sixth, Giles disagrees with Gordon's contention that 1 Tim 2:9-15 is binding today because it is grounded on 'the entire created and fallen order' (vv. 13-14). For 1 Cor 11:2-16 likewise appeals to creation and 'no one' takes this command as binding today (*an extravagant claim*), while the 'fallen order' ought to be transcended in

Christ. The difficulty is, of course, that 1 Cor 11:2-16 also appeals to the 'nature of things' (v. 14: *physis*: Corinthian cultural more?; cf. Gal. 2:15) and universal contemporary church practice (v. 16), so that the issue is considerably more complex than Giles's statement suggests. In 1 Tim 2:9-15, unlike 1 Cor 11:2-16, no such additional appeals are made, and one should not use the complexities of interpreting 1 Cor 11:2-16 to set aside Paul's appeal to creation in 1 Tim 2:13.

Moreover, the basic principle underlying 1 Cor 11:2-16 is much the same as that of 1 Tim 2:9-15: the necessity of women's submission to men's ultimate leadership in the church. Giles argues that Christians are to transcend the 'fallen order' in Christ. Yet rather than relativizing 1 Tim 2:12, this argument actually establishes Paul's injunction as permanently valid. For as Paul contends in v. 14, it is precisely because the fall resulted from Eve's transgression of her proper creational boundaries that Christian women ought to respect the parameters set by the Creator with regard to their churchly activities. Paul is not advocating *following* the fallen order; to the contrary, he *warns against repeating what led to the fall*, so that once again the Creator's will is respected by Christian women in the church.[10]

I must conclude that Giles either does not understand Gordon's (and Schreiner's) distinction between normative principles and particular commands in Scripture or that he refuses to accept it owing to his conviction that 'a text such as 1 Tim 2:9-15 does not apply in our age' (210). Rightly applied, however, this device enables the interpreter to discern Paul's underlying concern which is in each case of permanent validity. Moreover, in several instances careful exegesis helps answer Giles's objections, which are often merely addressed at surface difficulties that can be resolved by proper interpretation of Paul's intended message.[11]

Giles's own alternative is to appropriate three principles from an essay by J. Green in *Hearing the New Testament*, who in turn adapts these from D. Scholer's 'Contours of an Evangelical Feminist Hermeneutics':[12] (1) Determine the relative amount of emphasis given a subject in the biblical witness; (2) Determine the degree to

10 Giles's argument also overlooks the fact that many of Paul's particular injunctions are addressed to the yet-fallen circumstances we find ourselves in; we must submit to the (unbelieving) civil authorities (Rom 13), which will hardly be required in the eschaton; we must forgive one another now (Eph 4:32), but we will have no occasion to do this in the eternal state.

11 On matters of exegesis, see my forthcoming commentary on the Pastoral Epistles in the New Expositor's Bible Commentary and the recent commentary by W. D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville, 2000).

12 See p. 154 of Giles's response. Cf. *Hearing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1995), 425, with reference to Scholer's article in *Catalyst* 15 (1989), 2 and 4.

which the biblical witnesses are uniform and consistent on a given issue; (3) Determine the degree to which a writer's cultural situation provides him or her with only one option (or limited options) within which to work. But these principles are open to serious objections.

First, the terms 'relative' and 'emphasis' are potentially ambiguous and may render this principle unworkable in practice. Even more damaging is the fact that important issues in Scripture may only be mentioned a few times, but this hardly means that they should not be obeyed by the church. This is true especially since the principle fails to give adequate consideration to the salvation-historical dimension in Scripture. Examples of this are baptism or the Lord's Supper, neither of which enjoy a substantial 'relative amount of emphasis'. But both are dominically instituted and hence the Church rightly continues to perform these rites. As in textual criticism, biblical passages on a given topic ought to be weighed, not merely counted. The issue is not how frequently a matter is addressed, but by what principle, or enduring norm. For these reasons the usefulness of the first principle is seriously questioned.

Second, making the degree to which the biblical witnesses are uniform and consistent on a given issue the determinative factor of interpretation can be problematic as well, especially because once again this procedure fails to give due weight to redemptive-historical considerations. Abraham and Moses as well as subsequent generations of the Israelites were required to be circumcized; yet Paul argues forcefully that circumcision must not be required for membership in the church at Galatia. Should we therefore argue that Scripture is largely consistent (except for Paul in Galatians) that circumcision be observed and require it today? And how would this principle have worked for Paul in whose case Scripture (the OT) consistently did argue for circumcision? Again, it is preferable to look for the norms in which particular exhortations are grounded, and to continue to require that these norms be observed, even if the particular circumstances change.

Third, determining the degree to which a writer's cultural situation provides her with only one option (or limited options) with which to work seems hardly workable in practice. Are not all cultural situations limited? Is not every circumstance in life a comparatively-limited circumstance? But ethical norms and theological realities can be germane to many different situations. Regarding the destitute widows of chapter 5, for instance, is the church entirely free from this exhortation simply because, in the first century, the church was the 'only' option for the relief of such widows? I think not. The enduring truth of God's compassion for the destitute and indigent is transcultural, and the church in every culture remains called to imitate the God

she worships by caring for the indigent and destitute in her midst.

In response to Schreiner's essay, Giles expresses difficulty with the notion that Paul allows women to prophesy while commanding them not to teach or exercise authority over men. However, this seems to be the clear implication of 1 Cor 11 and 1 Tim 2:9-15.[13] Moreover, the distinction between prophecy and teaching is established from Paul himself (cf. 1 Cor 12:28-29; 14:6; Rom 12:6-7; Eph 4:11). It must be noted that it is methodologically inappropriate to appeal to Luke in order to define Pauline terms. Arguably, the Lukan evidence, rightly interpreted, does not contradict the distinction between prophecy and teaching established by Paul. As to Schreiner's interpretations of 1 Tim 2:14 and 15, I am not prepared to defend them, since I myself do not agree with them and have indicated this elsewhere.[14] However, these differences in the interpretation of vv. 14 and 15 in no way mitigate our common position on v. 12. In fact, they provide evidence against Giles's claim that our book is 'deductive' from beginning to end.

Yarbrough's essay on hermeneutics, according to Giles, contains '[n]othing very profound or detailed' (155). I disagree. Yarbrough's critique of the hermeneutic of Stendahl, Bruce, and others in their interpretation of NT gender passages is unusually penetrating.[15] Defending himself against Yarbrough's critique of his own position, Giles claims that 'modern critical studies of slavery in the Bible have confirmed that the biblical endorsement of slavery is pervasive and unquestioned' (158).[16] Thus the Bible is wrong in this regard, and we must apply content criticism to refute it. This is as revealing as to Giles's view of scriptural authority as it confirms the essential accuracy of Yarbrough's analysis. For it is the very content criticism Giles sees himself forced to apply to Scripture that Yarbrough is concerned to reject owing to the interpreter's undue usurpation of scriptural authority.

As to Yarbrough's underlying hermeneutic, Giles charges that he 'reverts to what may only be called a fundamentalist approach: what the text says must apply one for one in every place for all time' (156). This unsubstantiated assertion, however, ignores Yarbrough's explicit acknowledgment that 'there is a wide range of mediating positions

13 See W. Grudem, 'Prophecy – Yes, But Teaching – No: Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation without Governing Authority', *JETS* 30 (1987), 11-23.

14 '"The Crux of the Matter": Paul's Pastoral Pronouncements Regarding Women's Roles in 1 Timothy 2:9-15', *Faith & Mission* 14 (1996), 46, n. 52, 54, and 56 (forthcoming in *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* [New York, 2001]).

15 See esp. pp. 171-85.

16 Note again the strong word 'endorsement': see comments above and further discussion below.

between hard-core male dominance views and full-blown biblical feminist positions – even among those who claim the highest possible understanding of Scriptural authority'.[17] In fact, it is Giles who seems to call for a monolithic reading of 1 Tim 2:12: the way the church has always tended to read this portion of Scripture, with respect to women's function in pastoral office, must now be abandoned in favor of the postmodern West's social mores.

At least at one point Giles seriously misrepresents Yarbrough's position.[18] He claims that Yarbrough calls 'the whole drive to grant women equality of consideration' 'a disaster which has overtaken women' (157).[19] However, any reader of Yarbrough's essay (esp. pp. 160-67) will see that this is not what he is saying at all. The actual wording is, 'Disaster has overtaken women and children as divorce rates more than doubled from 1970 to 1980, eventually leveling off at a distressingly high rate'. The 'disaster' Yarbrough deplores is negative social consequences that seem to have accompanied new views of marriage, divorce, sexual identity, and even child nurture arising in the West since the 1960s, not 'the whole drive to grant women equality of consideration', as Giles claims.[20] Giles, for his part, chooses to ignore these negative social consequences entirely, consequences that independent researchers and even many feminist writers have acknowledged and begun to address with increasing frequency in recent years.[21]

In another dubious charge Giles faults Yarbrough for not dealing with Gal. 3:28, alleging that Yarbrough finds 'honestly dealing with the text . . . too difficult' (157). Yet Yarbrough explicitly states in his essay that 'this is not the place to handle several other significant

17 *Women in the Church*, 194.

18 At another place he resorts to improper ridicule (note that the following is *not* an argument) when he says that Yarbrough's 'rhetoric is so extravagant that one feels that he believes the whole future of Western civilisation stands or falls whether or not we get our exegesis right on 1 Timothy chapter 2' (156). If Giles thinks Yarbrough takes the issue too seriously, why does he write a 38-page response to *Women in the Church*?

19 With reference to Yarbrough in *Women in the Church*, 162.

20 Another instance of misrepresentation is Giles's statement that 'To claim that slavery is only a form of demanding work and not an evil is reprehensible in a supposedly scholarly work' (157) and his implication that Yarbrough says that 'if the Bible does endorse slavery it is not all that bad' (ibid.). Yarbrough does not claim or imply either of these things – I invite the reader to determine if this is a point Yarbrough makes in his essay – and to claim outrage at a non-existent contention is itself highly inappropriate. Nowhere does Yarbrough provide an 'apologetic for slavery', as Giles contends (158).

21 See e.g. 214, n. 57. But note, for example, the recent study by Judith S. Wallerstein et al., *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (New York, 2000).

issues of an integrative-theological kind, such as relating 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to Galatians 3:28' or other pertinent passages.[22] His assignment was a treatment of the hermeneutic of 1 Tim 2:9-15, not Gal. 3:28. In truth, it is Giles who fails to address Yarbrough's actual argument, namely, that Krister Stendahl's acceptance of secular Western society's 'belief in unlimited human freedom' as true – and the Bible's counsel about social order even in the church as wrong – is incompatible 'with a Christian view of revelation that takes the Bible as its authority'.[23] Nowhere in his two-part critique of *Women in the Church* does Giles explicitly address this crucial contention that he shares with Stendahl and has previously articulated as follows: 'The Bible is authoritative in matters of faith and conduct but not necessarily in science, or on how to order social relations'.[24] This failure to respond to Yarbrough's central charge in a 38-page response is puzzling indeed.[25]

As to Giles's charge that Yarbrough does not refuse Giles's central point, that is, 'that the Bible actually endorses slavery in principle and in practice' (158), a close reading of Giles's own contention in his previous article suggests this is not actually the central point Giles makes. In Giles's own words, 'If it can be shown that the Bible does in fact unambiguously endorse both the institution and the practice of slavery, although we cannot now accept slavery in any form [the assumed condition], *then we will have discovered something about the nature of biblical revelation which will help resolve the present debate about the status and role of women. We will have learnt that Scripture can endorse social structures no longer acceptable, just as we have learnt that the Bible can endorse scientific ideas no longer tenable. The Bible is authoritative in matters of faith and conduct but not necessarily in science, or on how to order social relations*'.[26] The above quote demonstrates that Giles's central con-

22 *Women in the Church*, 159. On the interpretation of Gal. 3:28, see my 'Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued', *WTJ* 56 (1994), 273-79; and the recent full-length treatment by R. Hove, *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute* (Wheaton, 1999).

23 *Women in the Church*, 182.

24 Kevin Giles, 'The Biblical Case for Slavery: Can the Bible Mislead? A Case Study in Hermeneutics', *EQ* 66 (1994), 4, cited by Yarbrough in *Women in the Church*, 185. Giles clearly has not changed his mind on this issue; his statement on p. 158 that 'modern critical studies of slavery in the Bible have confirmed that the biblical endorsement of slavery is pervasive and unquestioned' indicates that he is more committed to this position than ever.

25 I do not find the 'personal attack' with which Giles charges Yarbrough on pp. 185-90 of *Women in the Church*. I invite readers to read this portion and draw their own conclusions as to whether these pages contain 'personal attacks' or proper arguments with Giles's published, self-acknowledged positions.

26 Giles, 'Biblical Case for Slavery', 4 (emphasis added).

tention is the nature of biblical revelation and how this might 'help resolve the present debate about the status and role of women'. It is reasonable enough, then, that Yarbrough took up this point in his response.

Finally, Giles says that Yarbrough raises 'the bogey of Cartesianism' (157). This he does indeed, in that he raises the question of the propriety of reading the Bible too facilely in light of contemporary post-Christian Western culture. In fact, Yarbrough argues at length that this is precisely what has happened in the guild of biblical studies.[27] This concern is at the very heart of Yarbrough's essay, for it attempts to document just how agenda-driven purportedly 'scholarly' exegesis can be. Could it be an ultimately gospel-subverting agenda that is currently driving some handling of 1 Tim 2:12 and Gal 3:28 and related passages and not a sound reading of Scripture at all? Giles chooses not to respond to this, except to call it a 'bogey' (hardly an argument) and to endorse pursuing this direction of scholarship that Yarbrough's research indicates is primarily a faddish error to be avoided.[28]

In interaction with H. O. J. Brown's essay, last but not least, Giles takes exception to Brown's contention that egalitarian interpretations are reflective of 'an entire civilisation which has increasingly strayed from God's order of creation'. Yet, first of all, Brown's argument is surely correct that larger world view questions have a crucial bearing on the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15. There is ample evidence that Western civilization is indeed 'increasingly straying from God's order of creation', and since Paul's command in 1 Tim 2:12 is supported by an appeal to creation order in v. 13, it is entirely reasonable to ask whether the egalitarian denial of the overt message of v. 12 is related to the rebellion against various aspects of God's creation order by the larger culture.[29]

As D. Doriani points out in his appendix, the replacement of a concern for 'order' with the notion of 'freedom' is a pervasive characteristic of our day and may unduly influence contemporary interpretations of passages such as 1 Tim 2:9-15 that appear to restrict personal freedom for the sake of (divinely instituted) order.[30] To raise these issues is surely appropriate, indeed necessary, and the burden lies on egalitarians to show that their interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15

27 *Women in the Church*, 171-85.

28 Some of the above comments are based on Yarbrough's own response to Giles's charges, relayed to me in a personal correspondence dated September 29, 2000.

29 See on this question the interesting recent article by P. Jones, 'Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal', JETS 43 (2000), 443-69.

30 *Women in the Church*, 216-18.

is not a function of the spirit of the age but superior exegetically to the kind of view set forth in *Women in the Church.*

'Historic' or not?

After his chapter-by-chapter critique, Giles moves on to present what he claims is the 'true' historic interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15. By labeling the view held by the contributors to *Women in the Church* 'novel' Giles hopes to compel proponents of this view either to align themselves more closely with the often transparently sexist positions taken by certain Fathers or other interpreters – in which case the position is automatically discredited – or to deny them the legitimate claim to represent the church's historic position. This is an interesting polemical stratagem. Unfortunately, however, it is based on a claim the contributors to *Women in the Church* never intend to make, namely, that their view aligns itself with various corollaries of a traditional interpretation, such as the affirmation of women's ontological inferiority to men.

In fact, however, labeling the essential position advocated by the various contributors to *Women in the Church* 'historic' and the egalitarian viewpoint 'progressive' does not entail the sharing of these kinds of corollaries. Rather, the labels are merely used to provide a general description of the two major positions held by contemporary interpreters regarding biblical teaching on women's functions in ministry: one claiming that the exercise of teaching and ruling authority over men ought to be reserved for men, the other contending that people are to serve equally in all church functions regardless of gender. In this context, *Women in the Church* sets out not merely to restate a previously held 'historic' position but to provide an exegetical treatment of 1 Tim 2:9-15.[31] As the editors clearly state on p. 209, 'We are not committed to defending the historic view on women in the church merely because it is the venerable tradition of the church'.

Thus Giles's effort to recast the issue primarily as a dispute concerning what properly constitutes the 'historic' position of the church sidesteps the more important issue, 'What does the biblical

31 For this reason Giles's effort to show in detail how certain aspects of the stance taken by the contributors to *Women in the Church* do not align with the 'historic' position of the church is misdirected in principle. It was never the intention of these various contributors to claim agreement in every exegetical detail. In fact, the preface contains the explicit acknowledgment that, 'Despite this consensus on the basic meaning and application of the text, there remain some differences of opinion among the contributors regarding both the interpretation and application of the text' (10).

text actually say?' It also unduly ignores acknowledgments of a certain degree of variance between past views and the position set forth in *Women in the Church* such as 'that most leaders accepted the teaching of the church without giving sustained attention to women's issues' or 'that past discussions were often framed in terms that could demean women'.[32] Interestingly, at one point Giles acknowledges that 'Doriani outlines the truly historic position in some detail, and even at times notes how it differs from the position he and his co-authors adopt' (167). Yet Giles claims that Doriani's 'theological blinkers' blind him to the fact that his own interpretation is 'radically different' from this 'historic' position. Clearly, however, the charge that a book that includes a 55-page treatment of the history of interpretation on the passage of Scripture it addresses is so oblivious to the relation of its own argument to views held in the past that it grossly mischaracterizes this relationship seems counter-intuitive at the very outset and at the very least would call for much greater sophistication than Giles's response displays.

In fact, closer scrutiny shows that Giles's own presentation of the historic interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15 is repeatedly and demonstrably inaccurate. Is it really true that 'Chrysostom, Calvin, and many later commentators, argue that [vv. 9-10] are penned to direct men *and* women how [*sic*] lead in pray [*sic*]' (159; the alleged evidence cited by Giles evaporates when checked out).[33] Is it really a 'very strong possibility that Paul envisages women leading the assembled church in prayer', as Giles suggests (164), and if so, what is the evidence (Giles provides none)? Is it true that v. 13 has been *universally* taken to mean that women are 'ontologically inferior' to men (162),

32 *Women in the Church*, 219.

33 On Calvin, Giles refers to *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, 1964), 215. I consulted this work but found no reference to both men and women *leading* in prayer. Calvin comments on v. 9, 'As he commanded men to lift up pure hands, so now he gives instructions as to how women should prepare themselves for praying aright . . . for he holds . . . that in all places both men and women may have access to God'. Calvin thus affirms that both men and women are instructed by Paul on how to pray aright and that men and women both have access to God (incidentally, hardly betraying the viewpoint that women are ontologically inferior); but Giles' assertion that Calvin argued that vv. 9-10 are penned to direct men *and* women how to lead in prayer is false and nowhere substantiated in the reference he provides. The same can be said regarding Chrysostom ('Homily VIII', in *A Library of Fathers* [Oxford, 1843], 63-64), who writes, 'In like manner he says, I will that women approach God without wrath and doubting, lifting up holy hands'. All that Chrysostom infers is that 'likewise' in v. 9 indicates that the subject remains proper attitudes (and attire) at prayer. Yet once again, Chrysostom says nothing about women *leading* at prayer. This is Giles' own infererence, without any explicit (or implicit) indication of this in the text.

so that one can speak (as Giles does) of 'the historic view that God has made women ontologically inferior to men' (166)?[34]

If so, perhaps the contributors of *Women in the Church* should plead guilty to the charge that their interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15 is 'radically different' from the 'historic' view as Giles charges (167), because they certainly do not believe that women are ontologically inferior to men. However, as noted, the label 'historic' was chosen, not with regard to women's ontological relationship to men, but to indicate agreement with the traditional affirmation of certain constraints on women's operation in the church over against men. If, in Giles's own words, 'All commentators until recent times agree that here [v. 12] Paul forbids women in general from . . . teaching in church and having authority over men' (160), it is hard to see how the contributors of *Women in the Church* can be faulted for calling their own stance 'historic'. After all, this is precisely what they believe Scripture is teaching, in contrast to an egalitarian interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9-15. And since Giles himself strongly disagrees with more extreme forms of this view, why not be glad that the position represented by *Women in the Church* is not as objectionable as that of earlier interpreters?

'Novel' or not?

Giles claims that the 'novelty' of the position advocated in *Women in the Church* pertains particularly to three areas: (1) the argument from 'creation orders' [*sic*]; (2) the concept of 'role'; and (3) novel language.

In response to the first issue, one may distinguish between the 'order of creation' (Adam first, then Eve) and 'creation order' (the way the Creator designed his creation to function; Giles calls this the 'created order', 154). The NT, and here particularly Paul, uses both 'order of creation' and 'creation order' to substantiate certain ministry functions for men and women: 'order of creation' in 1 Cor 11:8 and 1 Tim 2:13, 'creation order' (by Giles's own admission, 154) in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and (negatively) in 1 Tim 2:14.[35] Hence the argument from 'order of creation' as well as from 'creation order' is not novel;

34 Doriani addresses this issue throughout his essay (see esp. *Women in the Church*, 217-18, 230-33, 239-43, 245-46, 253-56, and 259-62). Giles does not accept his reading of Aquinas (though he does not say why; 161, n. 62; an assertion is not an argument). On Calvin, Giles says that he believed 1 Tim 2:9-10 were 'penned to direct men *and* women how [*sic*] lead in pray [*sic*]' (159), a statement that does not exactly sound as if Calvin believed women were ontologically inferior to men.

35 Note also Paul's argument against homosexuality from creation order in Rom 1:24-27.

it is at least as old as Paul.

In fact, it is clear that Giles's main concern is not with the 'novelty' of this argument but with the argument itself in which he sees 'no logical force . . . whatsoever' (195). But by this Giles disagrees with Scripture – especially Paul, who writes in 1 Tim 2:13: 'For Adam was formed first, then Eve' – not just the contributors to *Women in the Church.* Moreover, he overlooks the important issue of primogeniture that assigned major significance to the firstborn.[36] Incidentally, Giles is mistaken when he thinks he detects a backing away from the 'order of creation' argument in favor of that from 'creation order' in *Women in the Church.* Just as Paul uses both kinds of rationale, so do the contributors to this volume.

Giles argues that 'Eden cannot give the ideal because there the devil was active and sin was possible' (199); for this reason we must look forward to the new heaven and the new earth rather than back to the created order. But is the devil not active and sin not possible today? Creation order is not transcended in Christ in the sense that it is now irrelevant; it is rather restored and once again made possible. According to Jesus, there will be no marriage in heaven; yet marriage, part of God's created order (Gen 2), is still practiced today. Are we to look forward to the eternal state and refrain from marriage already in the here and now? Giles's logic would seem to suggest this. In fact, his is an over-realized eschatology, not uncommon with those holding an egalitarian position.

Regarding the concept of 'role', Giles refers to W. Neuer's two-page excursus on role theory. Neuer's primary concern, however, is not so much with the concept of role itself as with the fact that sexuality is a deeper aspect of a person's being rather than merely being limited to roles people play apart from who they essentially are. The very fact that Neuer can object to this shallow usage of the term 'role' while strongly maintaining a position similar to the contributors to *Women in the Church* shows that the concept of 'role' is not integral to a non-egalitarian understanding of 1 Tim 2:9-15, and in any case the interpretation of v. 12 set forth in this volume is not dependent on role theory.

On using 'novel' language, I see nothing wrong with choosing one's words carefully, though I do object to Giles's repeated insinuations of deceptive intent in the use of language by the contributors of

36 This is explored by the recent master's thesis by T. K. Williams, 'The Reconciliation of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 with Galatians 3:26-29 in the Context of Women in Ministry: An Eschatological Tension' (2000; though I cannot endorse the central argument of this work).

Women in the Church (e.g. 'spin doctors', 203). In fact, it was precisely in order to accommodate the types of concerns raised by Giles that the labels employed in this volume are (with the exception of the first appendix) not 'egalitarian' and 'complementarian' but 'historic' and 'progressive'.[37] And no one accuses egalitarians of denying *all* differences between the sexes, yet they themselves would agree that they deny differences with regard to how men and women ought to function in the church.

Make no mistake about it: None of the contributors to *Women in the Church* wrote their essays out of timidity or in a covert effort to conceal their true convictions; for most, it was an act of considerable courage to identify with a position that is often discredited and not infrequently renders the scholar an object of discrimination. There is nothing covert about the position taken in this volume. As the conclusion clearly states, '[O]ur understanding of the text would prohibit women from functioning as teaching pastors or teaching elders/overseers of churches. In our context this means that women should not proclaim the Word of God from the pulpit to the congregation of the saints'.[38] The accusation that behind the publication of *Women in the Church* lurks a covert intention to manipulate by the use of misleading language must therefore be rejected.

Finally, Giles claims that the contributors to *Women in the Church* are guilty of 'proof-texting' rather than a comprehensive understanding of biblical theology and that a conservative understanding of 1 Tim 2:9-15 is at odds with Paul's overall practice of ministry (207-8). On the first issue, I believe that Paul himself would have been the first to maintain that his words in 1 Tim 2:9-15 are not merely an *ad hoc* ruling but in keeping with biblical theology at large. Why else quote or allude to antecedent Scripture (and the foundational opening chaps. of Genesis at that) in vv. 13-15?[39]

By contrast, Giles's own version of 'biblical theology' is one where Paul, after egalitarian beginnings (Gal.), in the Pastorals 'virtually abandons his egalitarian ideals because of the criticism of outsiders'

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37 Hence much of Giles's material on pp. 203-7 is not properly directed against *Women in the Church* but simply uses the book as a foil for Giles's general misgivings against non-egalitarian literature on the subject. By Giles's own acknowledgment, his critique is directed against '*Women in the Church* and its parallels' (203), but this surely is an undue and unfair generalization. How would Giles like to have his writings thrown in with all of 'egalitarian literature' and subjected to a cursory critique of 'guilty by association'?

38 *Women in the Church*, 210.

39 On this question, see already my discussion of 'An Arbitrary Distinction between "Paradigm Passages" and "Passages with Limited Application"', in 'Gender Passages in the NT', 273-79.

(213).[40] Was Paul really such a coward in his latter years? And is Paul's point in Gal 3:28 indeed egalitarian church ministry?[41] If Paul abandoned his ideals because of criticism, his earlier views seem rather naive. Did he think the Graeco-Roman world would accept his radical egalitarianism and then back off when he met resistance? And why would the principle of providing certain constraints regarding women not always be true in the Graeco-Roman world, rather than just in the Pastorals? Giles's version of 'biblical theology' can hardly lay claim to being exegetically superior to the notion that Paul was consistent in his affirmation of male headship in both the natural household and God's 'household', the church, and that his teaching and practice on this issue converge.[42]

Finally, Giles believes that Jesus taught and practiced egalitarianism. Thus he can charge that the stance taken by the contributors of *Women in the Church* 'worst of all subordinates women to men in direct contradiction of the teaching and example of Jesus' (210). If things were so clear, and the view taken in *Women in the Church* so transparently in contradiction to Jesus' 'teaching and example', why the debate? Giles does not say which teaching or example he has in mind. Is it that Jesus allowed himself be supported by women disciples (Lk 8:2-3)? That he healed and ministered to women as well as men? That women (like men) were commissioned as Jesus' witnesses? The reader is left to infer this. Yet even if these were the types of observations Giles has in mind, none of them necessarily proves that Jesus' teaching and example were egalitarian.

Perhaps most importantly, Giles does not deal with the question of why Jesus appointed twelve *men* as his apostles.[43] On the face of it, this

40 For a brief critique of this hermeneutic, see my 'Vielfalt und Einheit des Neuen Testaments', in *Das Studium des Neuen Testaments. Band 2: Spezialprobleme* (ed. H.-W. Neudorfer and E. J. Schnabel; Wuppertal, 2000), 234-35 (forthcoming in ET as 'Diversity and Unity in the NT', in the conference volume of the Wheaton 2000 theology conference; ed. Scott Hafemann; Downers Grove).

41 See my 'Gender Passages in the NT', 273-79.

42 See my recent essay on 'Women in the Pauline Mission', in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission* (ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson, Leicester, UK, 2000), 221-47, where I have dealt with Paul's practice of ministry with regard to women in some detail and where I find no evidence that Paul's teaching and practice on this issue are in conflict.

43 There may be a hint in his comment on p. 213 that Paul, '[l]ike Jesus', was 'counter-cultural in his affirmation of women' (note the ambiguous term 'affirmation of women'), 'as far as was possible at that time'. Are we to infer that Jesus refrained from choosing women among the Twelve simply as an accommodation to contemporary sensibilities? If so, this hardly coheres with Jesus' iconoclasm on other issues, such as the temple cleansing, healing on the Sabbath, association with 'sinners', etc. Apparently, according to Giles, this is a boundary even Jesus did not dare to cross.

is hardly an egalitarian move on Jesus' part. Rather, at this crucial juncture Jesus' example seems to cohere very well indeed with Paul's injunction in 1 Tim 2:12 that church offices entailing the bearing of ultimate responsibility for the church be limited to men. Surely the issue is less clear-cut as Giles makes it out to be, and mere assertions must not take the place of proper argument. Moreover, hermeneutically, Jesus' alleged egalitarian teaching and practice must not be used to eliminate later biblical revelation such as 1 Tim 2:12. After all, Jesus never directly commented on the issue of whether women are 'to teach or to have authority over a man' in the church; Paul did.

Interpreting 1 Timothy 2:9-15 contextually

In closing, Giles suggests two possible backgrounds underlying 1 Tim 2:9-15. The first is that 'Paul commands women not to teach in church or exercise authority because certain women were teaching heresy' (211). This is possible (though perhaps some women were simply teaching both men and women – though not necessarily heresy – when the church was assembled), even though all the named teachers in the Pastorals are male, and women are regularly portrayed as victims rather than perpetrators of false teaching.[44] Moreover, if Eve is a type of women teaching heresy, then it would follow either (1) that Adam miscommunicated God's command to her (highly unlikely) or (2) that Eve could not understand it (even more unlikely). The problem, therefore, is not that Eve promulgated false teaching (due to a wrong understanding), but that she was deceived.

Yet the primary shortcoming of Giles's suggestion here is its inherent reductionism: women teaching heresy becomes not only one possible reason for Paul's command but excludes a more permanent rationale. The suggestion also depicts Paul as sexist, for it implies that the apostle either believed only women were teaching heresy (which is highly unlikely) or, if both men and women were perpetrating false teaching, that Paul singled out only women who did, rather than mentioning all who were guilty of teaching heresy, whether male or female. Don Carson's remarks about another Pauline limitation on women are apropos in the present context as well: such limitation would be sensible only if '*all* the women and *only* women . . . were

44 Giles's argument that 1 Tim 2:12 be read as Paul forbidding women to teach heresy as well as to usurp authority (212) is syntactically possible but unlikely: 'teach' is lacking a negative qualifier (such as *heterodidaskalein* in 1:3 and 6:3), and Paul would hardly condone *men's* teaching of heresy while condemning it only in the case of women.

duped' which perhaps I may be excused for finding hard to believe'.[45]

What is more, Giles here substitutes a rationale not stated explicitly (or even implicitly) in the text for what the text explicitly says (vv. 13-14). How can this type of reading lay claim to interpreting 1 Tim 2:9-15 'contextually'? If 'contextual interpretation' means that the interpreter substitute his own preferred rationale for what is stated in the text, this hardly respects authorial intention or scriptural authority. In reality, this is not 'context' at all, but the interpreter's own inferred chosen background.

Second, Giles contends that in 1 Tim 2:9-15 'Paul asks [*sic*] the Ephesian women not to teach or exercise authority over men in church because he fears that the Gospel will be brought into disrepute if they continue to exercise the freedoms they had enjoyed' (213-14). Once again, the problem with this 'contextual' reading is that Paul says nothing of this kind in vv. 12-14. Rather, 1 Tim 2:9-15 is part of a section that concludes with Paul's statement in 3:15, 'I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth'. This solemn affirmation and description of the church hardly sounds like the culturally relative interpretation espoused by Giles. As long as the church is 'God's household', 'the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth', Paul's words have abiding relevance for his people.

At the end of his discussion, Giles tips his hand as to his primary objection to the interpretation set forth by *Women in the Church*: that such a view advocates the 'permanent subordination of women', which 'implies their inferiority' (not true) and constitutes discrimination (214). Throughout his critique, Giles links this view with social evils like slavery in the Old South, Apartheid, and even Nazi Germany.[46] Clearly, these are not exegetical or 'contextual' arguments. What drives Giles's interpretation is not primarily exegesis of the relevant texts but the conviction that either Scripture does not teach a non-egalitarian position or where it does it must not be given authoritative status.

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45 D. A. Carson, '"Silent in the Churches": On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem; Wheaton, 1991), 147, cited by Schreiner in *Women in the Church*, 137.

46 See, for example, pp. 204 and 197.

Conclusion

As mentioned, perhaps most significantly (and somewhat misleadingly), Giles's major presupposition, the one that led R. Yarbrough to critique Giles's work in *Women in the Church* in the first place, remains unacknowledged in his two-part critique. It is his contention that 'The Bible is authoritative in matters of faith and conduct but not necessarily in science, or on how to order social relations'.[47] 'Scripture can [and does] endorse social structures no longer acceptable' (just as it 'can endorse scientific ideas no longer tenable')[48] – Giles's prime example: slavery – so why should we heed its teaching on men's and women's ministries in the church?

At this point, of course, all exegetical argumentation becomes ultimately moot, for if one has already determined on presuppositional grounds that Scripture's teaching is not (necessarily) authoritative in a given area (e.g. it 'endorses' the evil of slavery), the true level of debate has been shifted from exegesis to one's view of Scripture. Is the view advocated by the contributors of *Women in the Church* accurately described as 'historic' or not, at least in a general sense? I continue to believe that it is. In the end, however, this is really a sideshow. The real question, I propose, is whether scriptural teaching on the present subject is authoritative or not, however interpreted. If not, why purport to argue about exegesis or the history of interpretation?

Abstract

In the present article one of the editors of *Women in the Church* responds to the two-part critique of this book published previously in this journal. The response takes up the various criticisms lodged against the book chapter by chapter. It also responds to the charge that the contributors to *Women in the Church* do not hold to the 'historic' position on the issue but present a 'novel' view. The primary burden of this response is to clear up misunderstandings, to defend the volume against unjust charges, and to subject the presuppositions underlying the critique of *Women in the Church* themselves to a critical examination.

47 'Biblical Case for Slavery', 185.
48 Ibid.