

DEACONS, LEADERSHIP, AND AUTHORITY

Introduction

“There is neither male nor female; all are one in Christ Jesus, so why can’t my wife teach the men’s Sunday school class?” Sooner or later every pastor is going to have to deal with answering a question similar to this one. Even if a church is conservative and would never have a female pastor, there still may be questions about female Sunday school teachers over men, female mixed-group leaders, and female deacons. These are questions that church leaders must be able to answer well if they are going to effectively lead God’s church in an increasingly antichristian culture. This paper will specifically hone in on the office of deacon in the church. The study of the deacon is an important subject to understand because it forces us to look at how God has ordered his church; it forces us to make decisions about what we understand biblical leadership to mean; it forces us to understand male and female relationships according to the Bible, and it helps us understand the relationship of Christ and the church.

First, we will take an overview look at the texts dealing with the office of deacon. Second, we will observe how the early church handled the office of deacon when it comes to females. Then, we will take a more in-depth look at the controversial and pertinent texts that help form our understanding of what it means to be a deacon. Lastly, we will look at the texts that discuss biblical authority, how they apply to the office of deacon, and make practical application from them.

Biblical Texts Concerning Deacons

The noun *διάκονος* (deacon) occurs twenty-nine times in the New Testament and six times in the Septuagint. Out of the twenty-nine occurrences in the New Testament, there are

only three instances where the word is translated “deacon” (Philip. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12).¹ Two of those three instances occur in the same paragraph and all three are mentioned in the context with ἐπισκόποις (elders). In every other occurrence in the New Testament, the noun διάκονος is translated “servant” or “minister” (The words “servant” and “minister” are synonymous and are used interchangeably for variation in the English translations.). Jerome’s Latin Vulgate also uses the Latin word *minister* (servant or minister) to translate the Greek noun διάκονος. It is crucial to note that Jerome used a different Latin word to translate διάκονος in Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12.² Instead of using the typical word *minister* (servant) to translate διάκονος, he used the Latin word *diacon* (deacon or cleric of minor orders). These observations help us to see that διάκονος is being used differently in Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12 than it is in all the other occurrences in the Bible. The reason for the difference is due to the fact that Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12 are talking about the second office (elder being the first office) in church government, namely, the office of deacon.

The vast majority of scholars seem to agree that the office of deacon is an official position in the government of the local church. In Philippians 1:1, Paul opens the letter with a greeting to “all the saints who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” (Phil 1:1, ESV). This text tells us that at least the church at Philippi knew what overseers (elders) and deacons were because Paul makes no explanation for his words here and seems to expect his readers to know exactly what he meant. We get a fuller development of what a deacon is in 1 Timothy 3 where Paul discusses the qualifications of elders and deacons in the context of church order (Phil 2:1-3:13). We know that Paul is talking about order in the church not only by the context of verses 2:1-3:13, but also because Paul says he is writing these things to Timothy so that one may know how one ought to behave in the house of God (1 Tim 3:14-15). While this text shows us

¹Some scholars will claim that διάκονον in Roman 16:1 should be translated “deacon.” It is the conclusion of this author that “deacon” is an improper translation for Romans 16:1. This verse will be addressed later in the paper so please refer to that section for the explanation.

²Jerome uses the word *puerum* to translate διάκονος in Mk. 9:35, but like the Latin noun *minister*, *puerum* simply means “servant.”

the qualifications for deacons, we still do not have a very clear description of what a deacon does until we read Acts 6:1-7.

Acts 6:1-7

While the noun *διάκονος* is not used in Acts 6, most scholars agree that we see in Acts 6 the embryonic stage of the diaconate. John Calvin was in fact so bold as to say, “Luke declareth here upon what occasion, and to what end, and also with what rite, deacons were first made.”³ Again, the noun *διάκονος* is not used in this passage, but the noun *διακονία* “service” is used twice, and the verb *διακονέω* “to serve” is also used. In these verses, Luke describes how the apostolic church handled a problem that was causing disunity. Acts 6:1 tells us that the church was growing in those days and a complaint by the Hellenists (Jews who were influenced by the Greek language and culture) arose against the Hebrews (Jews more faithful to Hebrew culture) because the Hellenist widows were being neglected in the daily *διακονία* “distribution.” It is important to notice here that the problem was *not* a lack of *διακονία* “service” or “distribution.” Distribution was already taking place (Acts 6:1). The problem was that the distribution which was taking place was being done in an ungodly fashion—it was being done in a biased manner. The problem was not racism but partiality due to cultural backgrounds. The apostles recognized the problem and had the authority to remedy the dispute with their own hands, but doing so would cause them to neglect their primary duty—the study and teaching of God’s Word (Acts 6:2).⁴ Therefore, the apostles directed the church to choose seven *ἄνδρας* “men” from the body to *καταστήσομεν ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης* to “put in charge of this task” (Acts 6:3). The verb *καταστήσομεν* is the future active indicative form of the verb *καθίστημι* which means “to assign someone a position of authority.”⁵ This would mean that these deacons

³John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, (Translated by the Calvin Translation Society, Christian Classics Ethereal Library [online]), http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_vol36/htm/xiii.htm.

⁴A parallel can be drawn between the apostles and elders because elders later fulfill the same role (as far as teaching and governing the church is concerned) that the apostles were fulfilling at this early stage in the church (1 Thess 5:12-13; 1 Tim 4:13-14; 5:17; 2 Tim 4:1-2; Titus 1:5; 9-11, 13; 2:1, 7, 15).

⁵Fredrick William Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature: 3rd Ed.*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 492.

would be an authority over others serving in this mercy ministry.⁶ This would be a problem if there were men working under the authority of a female deacon since 1 Tim 2:12 forbids women to have authority over men in the context of the church. It is vital to observe the fact that the apostles did *not* direct the congregation to appoint seven ἀνθρώπους “men in general” or “men and women.” To the contrary, Luke records that the apostles instructed the church to appoint seven ἄνδρας which means “adult men.”⁷ If ever there were an appropriate time for women to serve in the office of deacon, this was that opportunity. After all, it is the ministry to widows (who by definition are women) over which these deacons were being put in charge. Paul demonstrates that women are to teach other women (Titus 2:3-4). Women are often more gentle and nurturing than men, and that character quality would seem especially helpful in ministering to widows, and yet, the apostles called the assembly to pick out seven adult men to be put into the position of authority for this duty.

In the selection of these men, it is interesting to note that their character is the focus for their qualifications. They had to have a good reputation, be full of the Spirit, and be full of wisdom (Acts 6:3). It is easy to understand why these deacons needed to be men of good repute for they were going to be representing the church in an official capacity. They were going to model servant leadership to the church and exemplify Christian character to an observing world. Not only were they to have good reputations; they needed to be full of the Spirit and of wisdom. The church needed men who were full of the Spirit because they needed men who could govern this duty in a godly manner, unlike the prejudiced people who were handling the distribution previously (Acts 6:1). They also needed to be full of wisdom because they were going to be making decisions with limited resources. They needed to be able to discern the most appropriate distribution in order to be fair to all the widows. Deacons have to take responsibility and make authoritative decisions about how these tasks are to be accomplished. As servant leaders they

⁶It is not a novel idea to recognize that deacons have a type of authority vested in their office. See APPENDIX 1 for a list of modern and ancient scholars who affirm that deacons maintain a position of authority.

⁷Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 79.

will be encouraging, directing, and delegating to others what they deem best to accomplish the ministry in a godly fashion. In this type of leadership, deacons are not like army captains who bark out orders while others do the work; no, they will be more like army sergeants who roll up their sleeves and get in the trenches with the troops and lead by example. When deacons serve like this, they fulfill their biblical mandate and allow the elders time to focus on their most important task—to study and teach God’s Word in order that God might be glorified and disciples might increase (Acts 6:2, 7).

Female Deacons In The Early Post Apostolic Period

We recognize that disciples have continued to increase even to this day by the mere fact that the church is still here two thousand years later.⁸ Church history shows us how the church has grown and how it has had to be reformed in the process. Historical studies cannot ultimately resolve theological debates (Scripture is still our authority), but they are helpful to see how the early church handled the subject of deacons, and more specifically, female deacons. Chapter ten in Dan Doriani’s book *Women and Ministry* shows that calls for women’s ordination to the pastorate were almost unheard of until the latter half of the twentieth century when feminism arose.⁹ In fact, since the dawn of feminism, female theologians have been organizing think-tanks in an attempt to discover Christian teaching based on complete equality of all the people of God in regards to role.¹⁰ The feminist ideology has been successful in many protestant denominations (in fact 30 out of 33 denominations ordain women to pastoral roles).¹¹ Feminists, however, often view the ordaining of female deacons as a blind alley for women and a type of tokenism so biblical churches must understand well the Scripture’s teaching on male and female roles in regard to church government.

⁸This does not mean that the church has done everything correctly, but God has seen fit to grow his church in spite of its inadequacies.

⁹Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003), 116, 147-74.

¹⁰Richard L. Rashke, *The Deacon In Search of Identity*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 48.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 48.

The first historical text that many claim to refer to female deacons is found in Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan around AD 112. Pliny was governor of Bythinia, a province in the Eastern Roman Empire. He wrote this letter because he was unsure how to deal with Christians in his province. Pliny normally executed Christians if they did not renounce their faith, but their numbers grew so large that he decided to find out what they taught.¹² It is this context within which we read Pliny's words.

I thought therefore the more necessary to try and find the truth of the matter by torture as well, (and that) from two female slaves [*ancille*] who were called deaconesses [*ministrae*]. I discovered nothing more than a perverse and contumacious superstition.¹³

The problem with this quote is that, to the English reader, it appears to be a clear-cut example of female deacons existing in the church a short period of time after the apostolic church. Notice, however, that the person who translated this letter chose (apparently arbitrarily) to translate the Latin word *ministrae* as "deaconesses." The translation "deaconesses" does not fit the general use of the word *ministrae* nor does it fit the context of Pliny's letter. *Minstrae* is the feminine plural form of the Latin noun *minister*. The general use of the word *minister* is either translated "servant" or "minister" (both meaning the same thing). For example, the early Latin Vulgate uses the word *minister* to mean "servant" every single time the Greek word *διάκονος* is used as something other than the official office of deacon in the New Testament.¹⁴

It is also difficult, given the tone of Pliny's letter and his disposition towards Christians, to think that Pliny was referring to the female slaves as church office holders. It makes sense in this context that these Christian slaves would refer to themselves as servants of Christ (Hopefully, most of us would refer to ourselves the same way.). It also makes sense that Pliny, in repeating his findings to Trajan, would refer to these female slaves as servants and give no further explanation. No further explanation would be needed. In Pliny's low view of Christians (note he tortured them) and a low view of slaves in the class structure, it makes sense

¹²William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 46, The Pastoral Epistles*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 210.

¹³Ep. 10.96, as cited in Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 210.

¹⁴Interestingly, Jerome translated the Greek noun *διάκονος* with a different Latin word (*diaconis* and *diaconos*) in verses where the office of deacon was being spoken about (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12).

for slaves to refer themselves as “servants.” Pliny may have even mentioned that the slaves were “called servants (*ministrae*)” to draw attention to the idea that the people following this strange religion saw themselves not as freedom fighters, but as lowly servile people who follow a bloody cult. Furthermore, these slaves were women. Greek culture did not hold women in high esteem at this time.¹⁵ Surely, Pliny would have been even more disgusted with Christianity if he found that female slaves were holding office in church government. He had no problem referring to Christianity as a “perverse and contumacious superstition.” It seems, from Pliny’s own haughty disposition, that if he had meant to say that these female slaves were church officers, then he would have made it more clear, and he probably would have expressed disgust about that fact as well. Given the general usage of the Latin word *minister*, the cultural context of the time, and Pliny’s biased disposition, this author has concluded that Pliny’s letter to Emperor Trajan is not an extra-biblical example of female deacons.

While Pliny’s letter probably does not describe females holding the office of deacon, Clement, the Bishop of Alexandria in the Eastern Empire, unmistakably refers to διακόνων γυναικῶν “women deacons” sometime around AD 190.¹⁶ Origin (AD 185-254), Clement’s disciple, also supported the idea of women deacons.¹⁷ As two of the earliest proponents of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, Clement and Origin’s hermeneutical abilities should not be leaned on very heavily. Beyond Clement and Origin, the early Christian writers are silent on the subject of female deacons. As William Mounce points out, “Even Ignatius, who almost constantly talks about the church hierarchy of bishop, presbyter, deacon has nothing to say about deaconesses. Polycarp is likewise silent.”¹⁸

In the third century, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a pseudo apostolic written tradition, has quite a bit to say about women deacons. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* was written in Syria of the Eastern Empire. Mounce summarizes this text’s teaching on deaconesses.

¹⁵John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Bibles, 1997), 1863.

¹⁶Mounce, 211.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

The basic picture is that deaconesses perform some of the functions of their male counterparts; yet their duties are restricted to serving the needs of women in the church, including baptism and anointing, teaching the newly baptized, and going “into the houses of the heathen where there are believing women, and to visit those who are sick, and to minister to them in that of which they have need, and to bathe those who have begun to recover from sickness” . . . They supervise the seating of women in the worship service and keep men from entering the women’s section in church. The motivating forces seem to be the need for decency, especially in the East where the separation of the sexes was more important.¹⁹

With the decline of adult baptism, Everett Ferguson points out that one of the important functions of deaconesses became unnecessary.²⁰ Both Ferguson and Mounce conclude that the apparent absence of deaconesses in the West and the description of the duties for the female deacons in the East for the first four centuries suggest that the order of deaconess was an Eastern creation, and Mounce goes on to note that it was probably the result of social custom.²¹

Exegesis of Romans 16:1

As mentioned earlier, historical studies cannot ultimately resolve theological debates. Scripture must be our final arbiter in all things. Romans 16:1 is one of the two key verses referenced by scholars who believe the office of the female deacon is an appropriate and biblical one. The verse begins with a commendation of Phoebe by Paul (Rom 16:1). Phoebe is an outstanding Christian woman. She is a faithful servant in the church at Cenchreae and Paul urges the Roman Christians to welcome her and help her because she has helped many others, including Paul (Rom 16:1-2). Phoebe is probably a gentile because Φοίβη “Phoebe” is a gentile name which is taken from Greek mythology.²² Most scholars agree that she is probably the one carrying the letter because 1) she is obviously making a trip to Rome (hence the commendation to greet her), 2) she is mentioned first in this closing section, and 3) because some ancient subscriptions to the letter indicate this to be the case.²³ There are two reasons that Paul gives the

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity: 2nd ed.*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 322.

²¹Mounce, 211 and Ferguson, 322.

²²Douglas Moo, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle To The Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 16:1-2, n5.

²³Thomas Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 16:1-2.

Roman Christians for his commendation of Phoebe. She is a *διάκονον* “servant” of the church at Cenchreae (Rom 16:1), and she has been a *προσπάτις* “helper” of many, including Paul (Rom 16:2).

The word *διάκονον* is the biggest problem in this verse for some scholars. Despite the fact that the most reliable modern English translations (both formally equivalent and dynamically equivalent) unanimously translate *διάκονον* in this verse as “servant” (ESV, NASB, NKJV, and NIV), Doug Moo still tentatively wants to translate this word “deacon.”²⁴ Even though Moo opts for the word “deacon,” he admits that the word Paul uses here (*διάκονος*) “is one that is applicable to any Christian, for every Christian is a ‘servant’ or ‘minister’ of the risen Christ and of others. Paul may, then, simply be highlighting the fact that Phoebe has effectively ‘served’ the church to which she belongs.”²⁵ Not only is this concession statement that Moo made possible, it is probable. Paul often uses the noun *διάκονος* in the New Testament. He uses it to refer to the government as the “servant” of God (Rom 13:4), to Christ who became a “servant” to the circumcised (Rom 15:8), to himself and fellow laborers (1 Cor 3:5, Eph 3:7, 2 Cor 3:6, 6:4, Eph 3:7, 6:21, Col 1:7, 23, 25, 4:7, 1 Tim 4:6), and to those who are servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:15, 23). It is only Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12 which have the intention of the deaconate *office*. Moo’s reason for translating *διάκονον* as “deacon” is because of its genitive relationship with *τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς* “of the church at Cenchreae” (16:1). Moo asserts that *διάκονον* followed by “of the church” should be translated “deacon,” but he gives no reason why. The fact that *τῆς ἐκκλησίας* is a genitive has nothing to do with whether *διάκονον* should be “servant” or “deacon.” It is a simple genitive of possession. In other words, Paul is saying that Phoebe is “a servant belonging to the church at Cenchreae” or paraphrased, “a member of the church at Cenchreae.” No other texts in Scripture use that construction where Paul is talking about the office of deacon. Therefore, there is no warrant to follow Moo’s suggestion. However, there is a contextual reason in 1 Timothy 3:8, 12 and Philippians 1:1 to

²⁴Moo, 16:1.

²⁵Ibid., 16:1.

translate *διάκονος* as “deacon.” 1 Tim 3:8 and 12 are easy because the qualifications for the *διάκονος* are being spelled out in those verses, but there is another contextual clue. The clue is that Paul is listing these qualifications right after he lists the qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:1-7). In Philippians 1:1 Paul is greeting the church and specifically greets the officers of the church when he says “with the elders and deacons.” Whenever *διάκονος* is found in conjunction with *ἐπίσκοπος* “elder,” it should be translated “deacon.”

Douglas Moo is not the only conservative scholar who sees Phoebe as a deacon. Thomas Schreiner, author of the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, also perceives Phoebe as a deacon. He gives three reasons why: 1) 1 Tim 3:11 probably identifies women as deacons, 2) the designation “of the church in Cenchreae” probably suggests that Phoebe serves in some special capacity, and 3) the use of the masculine noun *διάκονος* also suggests that the office is intended.²⁶ 1 Timothy 3:11 will be dealt with in the next section of this paper and a full refutation of the idea that it contains female deacons will be presented there. But, for now, suffice it to say that if 1 Tim 3:11 is talking about women who are deacons, that does not necessitate an interpretation of “deacon” in Rom 16:1. For example, K. Romaniuk argues for women deacons in 1 Tim 3:11, but he also says that Phoebe in Rom 16:1 is not a deacon.²⁷ Schreiner’s second point is much like Moo’s except Schreiner goes on to point out that Romans 16:1 is the only place where the term *διάκονος* is linked with a particular local church. What Schreiner neglects to tell his readers is that this is also the *only* place in the New Testament where a named human being is linked with a particular church in a genitive relationship. The reason this needs to be mentioned is because a single occurrence is not a legitimate witness to warrant rejecting the normal use of the word *διάκονος* “servant” especially when the normal use fits the context well.²⁸

²⁶Schreiner, 16:1.

²⁷Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Anchor Bible: The First And Second Letters To Timothy*, (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 229.

²⁸See APPENDIX 2 for a fuller refutation of the idea that this “of the church” designation in Rom 16:1 somehow should yield a translation of “deacon” rather than “servant.”

Schreiner's third point is probably his weakest. He says that "the use of the masculine noun *διάκονος* also suggests that the office is intended."²⁹ Even if this were true, it still would not prove his point. A noun is either masculine, feminine, or neuter and *normally* it never varies.³⁰ The gender of the noun itself is not what matters; the endings are what determine the use of the noun. William Mounce's Greek grammar summarizes this point well.

In Greek, pronouns follow natural gender but nouns for the most part do not. *ἁμαρτία* is a feminine noun meaning "sin," although "sin" is not a female concept; *ἁμαρτωλός* can be a masculine noun meaning "sinner," although "sinner" is not a masculine concept.³¹

The feminine noun in Greek is used all the time with masculine subjects or objects; it by no means changes the translation of the subject or object because a feminine noun is being used with a masculine subject or object. Having said that, *διάκονος* is not a normal noun. It is a noun that is both masculine and feminine.³² The fact that *διάκονος* has the masculine article *ὁ* at times and the feminine article *ἡ* at others renders Schreiner's third argument completely null and void. Ultimately, there is no good reason to see Phoebe as a deacon rather than a servant in this passage. Furthermore, Paul customarily describes others by their work or faithfulness, not by official titles. If Paul is purposing to call Phoebe here a "deacon of the church," it is a unique example from his usual practice.³³

Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:11

Having studied Romans 16:1, we will turn our attention to 1 Tim 3:11, which is the other major verse which proponents of female deacons reference for support. After finishing the qualifications for elders in the 1 Tim 3:1-7, Paul now discusses the qualifications for deacons in 3:8-13. Paul lists five character traits for those who would be *διακόνους* "deacons." These qualifications for deacons are similar to those listed for elders, hence the use of the adverb

²⁹Ibid., 16:1.

³⁰This is not always true as will be demonstrated shortly.

³¹William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar: 2nd ed.*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 24.

³²BAGD, 230-31. and Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament: 4th Ed. With Dictionary*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 42.

³³Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy*, (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 177.

ὡσαύτως “likewise.” They must 1) be men of dignity, 2) not be double-tongued, 3) not be addicted to much wine, 4) not be greedy for dishonest gain, 5) hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:8-9). After laying out these qualities, Paul also requires that the deacon candidates be tested for a time to see whether they prove themselves blameless (1 Tim 3:10). Then the next verse introduces a new group of people by means of the noun γυναῖκας “wives/women” and the adverb ὡσαύτως “likewise” (1 Tim 3:11). Utilizing the adverb ὡσαύτως “likewise” as he did in verse eight, Paul lists four character qualities similar to the five that were listed in verses 8-9 for the deacon candidates. These γυναῖκας “women/wives” are to be 1) dignified, 2) not slanderers, 3) sober minded, 4) faithful in all things (1 Tim 3:11). After listing the qualifications for γυναῖκας “wives/women,” Paul goes back to listing character qualities for διάκονοι “deacons” (1 Tim 3:12).³⁴ These last two qualities are also similar to the qualifications of the elders in the previous section. Deacons are to be 1) the husband of one wife, and 2) capable managers of their children and home (1 Tim 3:12). Paul then concludes this section of deacons by noting that those who serve well as deacons gain good standing and great confidence in the faith.

The exegetical question that we must answer to understand this passage correctly is who are the γυναῖκας “wives/women” in verse eleven. The three main options are: 1) women who are deacons, 2) women who assist deacons, and 3) wives of the deacons.³⁵ It is most unlikely that Paul is referring to Christian women in general as he was in 2:12 because this would have arbitrarily interrupted an otherwise ordered passage (not to mention the fact that his readers would have had an even harder time discerning the identity of the γυναῖκας). Let us look at the first option and see how it fits the context.

There are some conservative scholars who defend the idea of a second office for deacon by appealing to the structure and the use of the adverb ὡσαύτως “likewise.” For

³⁴We know Paul is once again talking about men because he says they are to be ἕστωσαν μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρες “husbands of one wife.”

³⁵Strauch, 114.

example, Andreas Köstenberger says that, “Structurally, the presence of *hōsautōs* in 1 Timothy 3:8 and 11 (“likewise” / “in the same way”) suggests that qualifications are given for two other types of officeholders besides that of overseer (3:1-7).”³⁶ First of all, contrary to Köstenberger, eminent Greek scholars like Peter Gentry and John Polhill agree that using the adverb *ὡσαύτως* “likewise” to demarcate another office here is pushing the use of the adverb too far.³⁷

Additionally, if *γυναῖκας* is a second office, why is there an omission of any reference to their marital status and fidelity. George Knight III aptly points out that, “This omission is significant because this qualification is always mentioned in the PE [Pastoral Epistles] where positions of ministry or service are in view and because it stands out as such a striking difference between the otherwise nearly parallel qualifications of the *διάκονοι* and the *γυναῖκας*. The omission can, however, be explained if the requirement is inherent in their position as wives of the *διάκονοι*.”³⁸

Secondly, if *γυναῖκας* means women who are deacons, we must ask ourselves, “Why did Paul use *γυναῖκας* “wives/women” and not *τάς διάκονους* “women who are deacons?” In other words, if Paul is singling out “women who are deacons,” why does he choose to use the ambiguous word *γυναῖκας* when he could have just placed a feminine article on the word for deacons making himself perfectly clear? Remember *διάκονος* is one of those rare nouns that can take either a masculine or a feminine article because the noun is both masculine and feminine. If *γυναῖκας* does mean “women who are deacons” this also messes up the structure of the passage because the new list of qualifications for *γυναῖκας* in verse 11 are almost identical to the qualifications for the *διακόνους* in verses 8 and 9. Alexander Strauch remarks that:

That would be like saying that all nurses must attend four years of college and then singling out male nurses and repeating that male nurses must attend four years of college with a

³⁶Andreas Köstenberger, *Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles*, (The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology 7.3, Fall 2003), 11.

³⁷Personal interviews with Dr. Peter Gentry and Dr. John Polhill, (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), February 2005.

³⁸George Knight III, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 1 Tim. 3:11.

slightly different terminology. The required four years of college applies to all nurses, male or female.³⁹

If Paul would have been singling out female deacons and listing qualifications for them, there would be something distinct about the qualifications, but that is not the case here—they are almost exactly the same.

Not only do proponents of this first view have structure problems as well as word choice problems, they also must reconcile Paul’s prohibition against women taking authority over men in the context of the church. As we have already seen from the exegesis of Acts 6:1-7 earlier in this paper, deacons are servant leaders who, at times, do have to exercise authority over others to perform their ministries properly. Deacons, just like the elders, must be qualified as good managers (3:4-5, 12). Deacons hold an official position of authority in close association with elders. Albeit, the authority of elders is different from that of deacons, deacons do exercise authority.⁴⁰

The second view, “women who assist deacons,” is a more acceptable understanding than the first because it does not abuse Greek grammar insisting that a third office is being introduced. Furthermore, this view does not have to wrestle with male and female role relationships as they pertain to exercising authority over men in the church. Since this interpretation recognizes the female assistants as helpers alongside the deacons (for the deacons are there and are in charge of whatever ministry is being accomplished). This view is also able to provide an answer for why the early post-apostolic church only had female deacons who assisted other females (in the Eastern Church). While it is a possible interpretation, the “women who assist deacons” view still does not adequately answer why the ambiguous *γυναῖκας* “wives/women” is used without any identifying words like “women assistants” or “women who help” when “deacons” and “elders” are unmistakably identified.⁴¹

³⁹Strauch, 117.

⁴⁰An elder’s main job is to teach and provide direction and correction for the church and he claims the ultimate responsibility for the church under Christ. The deacon’s authority is limited to his service leadership which provides unity for the church and allows the elders to dedicate their time to studying God’s word.

⁴¹Strauch, 121.

The third view is the most acceptable and probable position for interpreting 1 Tim 3:11 properly. This view holds that the word γυναικας in verse 11 is referring to “wives of the deacons.” This interpretation fits the context perfectly because one sees all three groups of people plainly identified by the word that Paul uses for each (i.e., there needs to be no exegetical tap dancing—each word means exactly what it says). In verse 2, ἐπίσκοπον means “elder”; in verse 8 διακόνους means “deacons”; in verse 11 γυναικας mean “wives.” As nicely as this interpretation fits the text, there are at least two criticisms that must be answered. The first criticism is, “Why does not γυναικας have a possessive pronoun to absolutely prove that it means “*their* wives” like the ESV, KJV, NKJV, and NIV translations have in English. The simple answer is that it does not have to have a possessive pronoun to make it clear that γυναικας is speaking of the wives of the διακόνους because the context makes it clear. Reading the word γυναικας in the middle of a section on male deacons would naturally cause one to think that it is speaking of the wives of the deacons. If the church at Ephesus, did not have female deacons or female assistants to deacons, they would automatically assume this text is speaking of the wives of the deacons. This would fit with the biblical description of deacons as one’s having a leadership and an authority role in the church. It would also explain why we do not hear about female deacons in church history until late in the third century. As Strauch succinctly illustrates, “the pronoun *their* would certainly be helpful to us, but *it is not necessary to the sentence grammatically, nor was it necessary to Paul’s original readers* [emphasis in the original].”⁴² Furthermore, the absence of the personal pronoun can be explained stylistically especially when seen or read out loud in the Greek. Verse 8 says διακόνους ὡσαύτως σεμνοῦ “deacons likewise must be dignified,” and verse 11 says γυναικας ὡσαύτως σεμνά “wives likewise must be dignified.”⁴³

⁴²Ibid., 122.

⁴³See APPENDIX 3 for an in-depth analysis of the Greek syntax which proves a possessive pronoun is unnecessary for us to conclude that “*their* wives” is the proper understanding that should be taken from the text in 1 Tim 3:11.

The last question the “deacon’s wives” view has to answer is, if γυναῖκας in verse 11 is “their wives,” then why are there qualifications for the wives of deacons and not elders? If the deacon candidate’s wife is in view in verse 11, then the verse fits nicely with the context and presents itself as yet another qualification for the deacon nominee himself (i.e., the character of the deacon’s wife is a part of his own qualifications). This fits masterfully with the context. Moreover, the reason qualifications are not listed for the elder’s wife lies in the fact that an elder’s wife cannot help him in the nature of his office, namely teaching and governing the *whole* church. It would be a violation of 1 Tim 2:12 for a woman to teach or to have authority over a man in the context of the church. An elder’s wife could help him in some aspects, but she could not get involved in all aspects. For example, she could help her elder husband by teaching children’s Sunday school or leading a woman’s Bible study or by making disciples of other women. She should not, however, lead the adult mixed Sunday school class or lead a men’s Bible study or disciple a man by herself. Wives of deacons, on the other hand, “can assist their deacon husbands in his service without violating their God-ordained role in the local church.”⁴⁴ At times their assistance may be necessary in cases such as help with single mothers, children, and sick or elderly women. It is safe to assume that deacon’s wives will assist in *some* manner of their husband’s diaconal role because Paul lists similar qualifications for them as well. The fact that they do and will assist their husbands is exactly why Paul requires them to meet certain qualifications too. It is also helpful to remind ourselves that the character of a man’s wife says much about the character of that man as well.

Exercising Authority

As mentioned in a few different places in this paper, advocates for women deacons have a problem with reconciling Paul’s prohibition against women exercising authority over men in the context of the church. Authority and male-female roles in the church are crucial to understand because so much of what has been discussed in this paper depends on it, and it is the

⁴⁴Strauch, 127.

opinion of this author that there is a lot of inconsistency, chauvinism, and flat out compromising of the truth by even some of the most conservative evangelicals. Most complementarian scholars will agree that women are not to be in a primary teaching position over men. Texts like Acts 13:1, 1 Cor 12:28, and Eph 4:11 help us to see that teaching is an official position in the church. While women are certainly able and encouraged to teach doctrine in appropriate ways (Acts 18:26, Titus 2:3-4), texts like 1 Tim 2:12 and 1 Cor 14:34 make it clear that women are not to be placed in teaching positions over men.⁴⁵ The subject of teaching seems to be where most complimentarians are in agreement. The problem arises when we start talking about authority and what it means to exercise authority over someone.

Some of the same texts that prohibit women from teaching men in the context of the church are the same texts that also speak to women not having authority over men in the context of the church (1 Cor 11:1-15, 1 Cor 14:34, 1 Tim 2:12,).⁴⁶ 1 Tim 2:12 is the most didactic text on this subject so that is the one we will look at here. 1 Tim 2:12 comes in the context of Paul's directives for church order. 1 Tim 2:1-3:13 deals with church order. In fact Paul records why he is writing these things in 1 Tim 3:14-15, "I hope to come to you soon, but *I am writing these things to you so that, [15] if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth*" (ESV, emphasis mine). He urges prayer for everyone (1 Tim 2:1-7). He tells them the manner in which they should pray and learn in the context of male and female relationships in the church (1 Tim 2:8-15). Then he explains how the church should choose leadership in elders and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13).

It is in this context of church order that 1 Tim 2:12 says, "I do not permit a woman *to teach or to exercise authority* over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet" (ESV, emphasis mine). Some may claim that this verse is only a temporary cultural exception, but that is inaccurate because Paul bases this ongoing command on the creation of Adam and Eve and the relationship

⁴⁵See John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1992), 27-30, for good answers to how women can and cannot teach in the context of the church.

⁴⁶See also texts that talk about wives submitting to their husbands as members of the church of God (Titus 2:5, Col 3:18, Eph 5:22-24, 1 Pet 3:1-7).

they had even before the fall (2:13-15). Paul says διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρός “I do not permit a woman *to teach* or *to exercise authority over* a man” (2:12). διδάσκειν “to teach” and αὐθεντεῖν “to exercise authority over” are both present active infinitives which are joined by the coordinating disjunctive οὐδὲ “neither, nor.” Tom Schreiner rightly appeals to Köstenberger’s conclusion, which shows that, “the two infinitives, *didaskain* (“to teach”) and *authentein* (“to exercise authority”), which are connected by *oude* (“nor”), refer to two distinct activities.”⁴⁷ Köstenberger’s study also provides the insight that when οὐδε “links two verbs, it either links two concepts that are bad in themselves or two that are good in themselves, but not one that is positive and one that is negative.”⁴⁸ Since διδάσκειν “to teach” is positive, then αὐθεντεῖν “to have authority over” must also be positive. If Paul had written ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν “to teach heresy” instead of διδάσκειν “to teach,” then αὐθεντεῖν would have meant “to domineer.” Therefore, since Paul used two positive concepts separated by οὐδε in verse 12, he is prohibiting women from teaching men in any kind of official capacity in the church. It also means that Paul is prohibiting women from having authority over men in the context of the church. “Teaching” and “having authority” are not tied up in the same thing. They are two distinct activities based on the Greek grammar.

So what does it mean for a woman “to have authority over” someone? John Piper and Wayne Grudem define authority in general as “the *right*, power, and responsibility to direct others” (emphasis added).⁴⁹ The third edition of BAGD defines the verb αὐθεντέω as “to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders, or dictate to.”⁵⁰ In fact, when BAGD specifically cites 1 Tim 2:12, it says, “practically = ‘tell a man what to do.’”⁵¹ What does all this information mean? Well, we know for certain that 1 Tim 2:12 means exactly what we thought it meant when we first read it. In the context of the church, women are neither to teach men in any

⁴⁷James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg ets., *Two views on Women in Ministry*, (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 2001), 220.

⁴⁸Doriani, 178.

⁴⁹Piper and Grudem, 40.

⁵⁰BAGD, 150.

⁵¹Ibid.

kind of official capacity nor are they to be put in positions of authority over men where they have *the right*, responsibility, or power to direct men or tell them what to do *because of that position*. However, this does not mean that a woman can never tell man what to do in the context of the church. People, for the sake of expediency, often tell other people to do things all the time—whether they are in a position of authority or not. This is simply an accepted practice in human communication. It is much easier to tell someone “catch that tottering lamp” when it is about to fall to the ground than it is to go through the laborious discourse of saying something like, “I realize that *I am not your authority*, and that *I do not have the right via my position to tell you what to do*, but I assume that you, just as I, do not want to see that nice lamp crash to the floor, so I think that all of us would be happier if you caught it before it hits the ground.” We do not need to go through that process; we would just say “catch that lamp.” A Christian would have no problem receiving that kind of "command" and responding out of love.

Love is not the only reason we are compliant with the commands of others however. We are compliant and obedient to anyone who is placed in a position of authority over us.⁵² We are obedient to authorities not just because of love, but because of *their position*. For example, a Christian has an obligation to obey his boss at work—he can always quit his job, but *as long as he is an employee*, he has a biblical mandate to submit to his employer. The same principle of submission follows in the church. A part of volunteering to work in a certain ministry at a church is to submit to the person who is in charge or directing that ministry. We have an obligation to submit to the one in charge or corrective church discipline needs to begin. Church ministry is voluntary, and it is usually not required to be a member of a church (although there might be questions about one’s regeneration if one is not active or interested in church ministry in some way). One has the right to drop out of a church ministry just like one has the right to quit one’s secular job. But, just as one is obligated to submit to one’s employer *while employed*,

⁵²E.g., Wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22); children are to submit to their parents (Eph 6:1-3); believers are to submit to governmental laws and authorities (Rom 13:1 and 1 Pet 2:13); young men are to be subject to older men (1 Pet 5:5). Of Course, obedience is always contingent on an authority not ordering one to sin against God (Acts 5:29).

one must also, *while active in a ministry*, submit to the person in charge or directing that ministry.

Look at this syllogism that T. Rocco Hepp put together to help explain this more clearly.

According to male-deacon-only advocates and some inconsistent deaconess advocates, 1 Tim 2:12 is a *general* principle for the relationship between men and women in the local church. The office of elder is one application of the *general* rule in 1 Tim 2:12. Women therefore, regardless of what title may be given to them (e.g., elder, deacon, vicar, pope), cannot teach, preach, or exercise any type of authority over men according to this *general* principle. If, however, 1 Tim 2:12 pertains to the *office* of elder only and is not to be understood as a *general* rule for men and women in the church of God, then women who are not elders may teach and exercise authority over men. I think it is clear that Paul intended 1 Tim 2:12 to be taken as a general principle. This being the case, women are precluded from the office of deacon if it can be shown to possess any type of authority.⁵³

Adopting the belief that 1 Timothy 2:12 is a role-specific verse, rather than a general principle as stated in the last syllogism, opens the door to women teaching men. The logic is unavoidable once the exegetical error is made. Therefore, 1 Timothy 2:12 forbids a woman to be in charge of a church ministry with men active in it. This principle is also demonstrated in 1 Cor 11:1-15 and 1 Cor 14:34.

Next to the biblical texts exegeted in this paper, this issue of authority is the strongest reason why women should not be deacons. A part of what it means to be a deacon is to be in authority over men and women regarding whatever ministry the deacon has under his charge. One should not assume that this position is a chauvinistic one—unless God is chauvinistic regarding gender roles. The doctrine of the deacon has been presented to the reader of this paper in a way that is faithful to biblical exegesis. This study has provided a consistent complementarian position. It is not chauvinistic. It has to do with role relationships, not matters of equality. *It would be chauvinistic for a man to say that a woman cannot have a teaching position over men because of 1 Tim 2:12 and then support her placement into positions of authority over men.* That would be a tragedy because it would prove that it was not the text of Scripture that truly drove the man to stop the woman from teaching men in the context of the church. For that same passage says that she is not to have authority over men in the context of

⁵³Personal interview with T. Rocco Hepp, Master of Divinity graduate, (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), February 2008.

the church as well. If it were truly God's word that motivated his reacting against her teaching men, then that same motivation would cause him to be consistent, and he would react against her having authority over men as well. However, if our motivation is lacking that kind of consistency and fidelity to God's word, then we should take a long introspective look at ourselves and question whether God's Word is really the basis for our decision.

Conclusion

Issues of male and female relationships and authority are difficult. This is the main reason there is disagreement over who deacons should be and what they should be. The bottom line is that the office is not a leadership role in the same fashion that the elder is, but it is a *servant-leadership* role nonetheless. In that role the deacon will sometimes have to exercise authority over others in the congregation. Short of issuing the command "thou shalt not have female deacons," Scripture firmly stands against the idea of female deacons. It is not because men are smarter or better than women in any way (quite the contrary many times); it is because our Lord has ordained that we order ourselves to magnify God through relationships that display a picture of Christ and his bride the church.

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APPENDIX 1⁵⁴

THE NOVEL INTERPRETATION FALLACY

The following assertion has been made by some Christians who believe females may fulfill the official role of deacon in the church of God. “Using 1 Tim 2:12 to prohibit female deacons is a novel interpretation.” “Novel” according to modern English dictionaries means “strikingly new, unusual, or different.”⁵⁵ Have Christian scholars cited 1 Tim 2:12 to exclude females from the diaconal office? Yes, it is by no means a novel interpretation. Ample evidence proves it.

1. Orthodox Presbyterian Church

C. The Office of Deacon⁵⁶

1. Biblical

Is the office of deacon open to women? Admittedly this is a difficult question to settle exegetically but not, we think, impossible. Therefore we offer the following considerations in support of the position that Scripture does not authorize the ordination of women deacons.

a. Acts 6:1-6 records the first official appointment, not of deacons in the sense of that office mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:8ff., but of those who were to oversee the distribution of what was given to meet the needs of the church’s poor in Jerusalem. The difference between the Seven and the later deacons appears from the fact that at least two of the former (Stephen, 6:7ff., and Philip, 8:5ff., 26ff., 21:8) continued to carry on substantial word-ministries, the kind of ministry apparently excluded from the activity assigned to the latter. The apostolic

⁵⁴Compiled by T. Rocco Hepp, M.Div.

⁵⁵*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997)

⁵⁶The following extract is from the *Minutes of the Fifty-fifth General Assembly* (1988) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The full section on women in the church may be accessed at <http://opc.org/GA/The%20Office%20of%20Deacon> (as of February 2005). The underlined portions are mine for emphasis.

appointment of the Seven seems to have been a temporary, *ad hoc* arrangement, which nonetheless quite properly guided the church "analogically" in the later development of the diaconate.

In the light of the preceding paragraph it would be precarious to draw a conclusion from the exclusively male character of the Seven to the exclusion of women from the diaconate. At the same time, however, we should not overlook or minimize the authority vested in the Seven (and hence, eventually, in the diaconate). Specifically, they were entrusted with authoritative oversight of distributing to the poor; in that sense they were overseers (v. 3 "appoint over" A.V.).

b. Philippians 1:1 ("the overseers and deacons")—the only New Testament passage where the two offices are paired in a single phrase—says nothing directly about the issue of women deacons. It is worth noting, though, that no conclusions ought to be drawn from either this pairing or the respective designations concerning the *authority* of each office, either absolutely or relative to the other. There is to be sure, no New Testament instance of elders being called "minister" or "servant" (*diakonos*), but Christ himself is so designated (Rom. 15:8; cf. Matt. 20:28) as is Paul, as an apostle, repeatedly (e.g., 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23, 25). Conversely, as we noted, in the light of Acts 6 deacons can be viewed as overseers. Certainly the eldership, in view of its assigned responsibility for the ministry of the word, has a certain priority or leading function in relation to the deed/mercy ministry of the diaconate. But, we submit, it would have been entirely in keeping with New Testament teaching for the elder also to have been called a *diakonos* (after all, "minister of the word" has become a customary description of some who occupy this office, cf. Acts 6:4); nor would there have been anything inappropriate in the occupant of the office of mercy being designated by *episkopos*. An element of authority resides in the office of deacon; authority, oversight, in that sense, "rule" is at issue for the office of deacon as well as the office of elder.

c. Romans 16:1, 2 and 1 Timothy 3:11 are the two passages usually appealed to as referring specifically to (official or ordained) women deacons. Careful exegesis of the two passages in context, however, shows that such a reference is by no means certain nor, in the case of 1 Timothy 3:11, more likely; the result in each case is an exegetical standoff.

In the case of the Romans 16:1, 2, taken by itself, *diakonon*, applied to Phoebe, is naturally, perhaps even more likely read as a fixed or official designation. (To observe that such a reading would hardly be questioned if the person referred to were a male is gratuitous—male deacons are clearly mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, while this would be the only reference, without any other New Testament support, to a woman deacon.)

But there is nothing in the passage that demands an official sense. Nor is there anything—in either the syntax or the reference to Phoebe as *prostasis* - that makes it unnatural to take *diakonos* here in the less specific, nonofficial sense it has elsewhere in the New Testament. The view of Cranfield, for instance, that a general reference here is "perhaps just conceivable" is too grudging as well as exegetically unwarranted; such a reference is quite natural. It should be noted that in only three out of thirty New Testament uses of *diakonos* is the official sense clearly warranted (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12).

In 1 Timothy 3:11 the perennial debate, going back at least to the Greek Fathers, is whether "women" (*gunaikas*) refers to (a) women deacons (deaconesses) or (b) deacons' wives. That all the women in the congregation are in view, as sometimes proposed, can be dismissed, since the immediate context is concerned with special or particular groups within the church.

In favor of (a), apparently the view inclined to, more or less decisively, by the majority of modern scholars, and against (b) are the following arguments:

- (1) the adverb "likewise," "similarly" (*hosautos*) repeated from verse 8, points to a new category or class of officials, as does the list of qualities parallel to those in verses 8-10;
- (2) if deacons' wives were in view, we should expect an article (*tas*) before "women," or at least the pronoun "their" (*auton*);
- (3) to single out deacons' wives while making no mention of overseers wives would be very strange;
- (4) although the New Testament does not know the technical term "deaconess" (*diakonissa*), this verse, together with Romans 16:1, hints at that office, alluded to already in Pliny's letter to Trajan (A.D. 112) and firmly in place in the church's life by the third to fourth centuries.

In favor of (b) and against (a) are the following considerations:

- (1) to interrupt a description of the qualifications for (male) deacons (verses 10, 12) by injecting qualification for women deacons would be awkward and unlikely; much more plausible, despite (2) above, is that the "women" of verse 11 have some auxiliary or dependent identity in reference to deacons, most likely, that of being their wives;
- (2) if Paul had wished to introduce a separate class of women deacons it would have been easy for him to make that clear by

introducing *tas diakonous* either directly after or instead of "women;"

(3) that Paul would mention the wives of deacons but not of overseers may be explained by the likely suppositions (1) that, like deacons themselves, their wives would be younger and therefore relatively unknown and their lives subject to more intensive scrutiny, and (2) that by virtue of the differences between the two offices deacons' wives could be more directly and extensively involved in the official activities of their husbands than would be the case with overseers' wives;

(4) later in the letter a lengthy section is devoted to ordered women workers or ministrants in the church (the "enrolled widows" in 5:9-16); note the similarity between the requisite qualities in 3:11 and those for older women in Titus 2:3, where there is no question of women deacons;

(5) the most likely antecedent to the eventually emergent office of deaconess is the order of widows;

(6) "if some women were deacons, further qualifications would be unnecessary" (Gordon H. Clark, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The Trinity Foundation, 1983, p. 61).

A perusal of these two sets of arguments reinforces the aptness of Kelly's remark that 1 Timothy 3:11 "contains a puzzle which will probably never be solved to everyone's satisfaction"; neither set is decisive.

d. For both passages, then, the issue of women deacons will have to be settled by other relevant considerations, if present, from their immediate and wider contexts. The context of Romans 16:1, 2 appears to provide nothing pertinent; the description of Phoebe as a *diakonos* remains ambiguous. But the immediate and larger context of 1 Timothy 3:11 definitely weighs against a reference to women deacons.

Our reasoning is as follows. As shown above (III B), Paul's exclusion of women from the eldership in 1 Timothy 2:12 rests, not on a presumed constitutional inability of women to teach or exercise authority but on the unique, covenant-based analogy between the family and the church ("God's household" 3:15). The structure of authority in the home and in the church mirror each other; the headship of elders in the church answers to the headship of father (and husband) in the family.

The question, then, is this: is the diaconate, too, an office from which women are excluded by the church-family analogy? Is the point of that analogy special office

as such or only the office of elder? Put another way, does the exercise of authority over men prohibited to women in 2:12 only have in view the offices of elder or the office of deacon as well?

At least three contextual considerations favor the more comprehensive exclusion.

(1) The requirements for overseer (verses 1-7) and deacon (verses 8-10, 12, 13) are linked in a parallel fashion. "Likewise" (*hosautos*, verse 8) functions to reinforce that parallel, but the parallel itself, as the large degree in overlap of specific requirements for each office shows, does not depend on it. Philippians 1:1 (the "overseers and deacons," distinguished within the congregation as a whole) underscores this parallel. By virtue of the parallel, then, if women are excluded from the one office—unless there be some offsetting consideration(s)—they are excluded from the other.

(2) More pointedly, the parallel is made explicit on the issue of *authority*. In verses 4, 5 and 12—note in virtually identical language; the parenthetical comment of verse 5 applies equally, following verse 12, to deacons—a requirement for both the deacon as well as the elder is that each must manage/lead/rule (*proistemi*, cf. 1 Thess. 5:12) his own family if he is to take care of God's church. Certainly the sphere of ministry assigned to each is different, nonetheless there is a parallel between the authority of the eldership and that of the diaconate.

Further, the rationale for that parallel authority is also made explicit. It lies in the analogy between family and church. In both instances, for the deacon as well as the elder, at issue, by analogy, is the authority of headship in the home, the authority of the father/husband. In that light, the parallel requirement that the overseer/deacon, if married, be "the husband of but one wife" (vss. 2, 12) is a further argument against women deacons.

(3) What in effect is the topic sentence for the entire section (2:1-3:16) is found in 3:15: "how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household." The location of this paragraph sentence, occurring immediately after the qualifications for deacons, confirms that the family-church analogy, as that analogy involves the exclusion of women from special office, still controls the argument to that point. The exercise of authority over men prohibited to women in 2:11, apparently, includes the office of deacon as well as that of overseer.

Nothing in this section of the text offsets these three observations, unless we insist, without adequate warrant as we have seen, that 3:11 by itself demands a reference to women deacons.

To resist this conclusion and seek to maintain a place for women in the diaconate, we wish to observe, seems to have some unanticipated consequences, least of all acceptable to the advocates of this view. If we hold that women may be deacons but not elders, the question is inevitable: why does the family-church analogy function to exclude women from the office of elder but not from special office in general? The answer to this question cannot now be found in the *idea* of office as such but will have to be sought instead in the difference, in *content*, between the two offices. That, in turn, (1) will involve recourse in some form to the sexist view that constitutionally women do have the capacity for deeds of mercy but not for the presumably more demanding task of expounding and teaching the word of God, and so (2) will also result in a devaluation of the diaconate as lower or less important.

Within the broader controlling context, then, 1 Timothy 3:11 does not refer to women deacons. There is some merit to the suggestion (cf. Fairbairn) that Paul is deliberately vague or general in his reference to "women;" in view are both the wives of deacons who were sometimes associated with their husbands in diaconal activities as well as other women who, without being set apart officially, were entrusted with various kinds of diaconal service (perhaps best expressed in the translation "deaconing women"), especially, in view of the greater separation between the sexes in the culture of that day, among women.

If this treatment of 1 Timothy 3:11 in its broader context is sound, then the passing, ambiguous reference to Phoebe as *diakonos* in Romans 16:1 must give way to that more substantial New Testament teaching that women are not to serve in the office of deacon.

Conclusion. The issue of women deacons is a difficult one to resolve exegetically. But the relevant New Testament data do fix the coordinates of a trajectory pointing to the conclusion that women are not to be ordained as deacons. Nor does the New Testament make provision for a separate office of deaconess in parallel with the elders and deacons.

2. Daniel Wallace (Bible church)

See article at http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=1164 (as of February, 2008).

3. Greg Bahnsen (OPC)

See article at <http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pt198.htm> (as of February, 2008).

4. J. Ligon Duncan III (PCA)

See articles at

<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/apologetics/Church%20Officers/women1.htm>

<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/apologetics/Church%20Officers/women2.htm>

(as of February, 2008).

5. George Knight III (PCA)

See article at http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_print.php?699 (as of February, 2008).

6. Alexander Strauch (nondenominational)

“According to the New Testament, deacons hold an official position of authority, in close association with the overseers. . . . Since both offices, eldership and deaconship, demand the exercise of authority that extends over the entire local church, an argument can be made that both offices are restricted to males. The idea of women deacons, then, conflicts with the entire context, particularly 1 Timothy 2:12, which states ‘But I do not allow a woman to...exercise authority over a man....’ Paul’s restriction on women having authority over men in the local church (1 Timothy 2:12) raises serious doubts about 1 Timothy 3:11 referring to women being deacons.”⁵⁷

7. Peter T. O’Brien (Anglican)

“That Paul should refer to two definite groups in the prescript of his letter suggests that they have special, self-evident authority.”⁵⁸ (This statement is found at the conclusion of his discussion of “ἐπίσκοποι και διακονοί” in Philippians 1:1.)

As seen above, there are many modern scholars from different denominations who believe the office of deacon possesses authority. This is not only the interpretation of many modern scholars. Many early-church Christians believed the office of deacon is vested with authority similar to that of elders.

1. Polycarp

“Therefore one must keep away from all these things and be obedient to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷Strauch, Alexander. *The New Testament Deacon: The Church’s Minister of Mercy* (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 118.

⁵⁸*The New International Greek Testament Commentary: Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 48.

2. Origen

“Thus ought every servant of God to feel and act, even one in an inferior place, that he may come to have a more important one, if he has made some upward step by his endurance of persecution. But when persons *in authority themselves* [emphasis mine]--I mean the very deacons, and presbyters, and bishops--take to flight, how will a layman be able to see with what view it was said, Flee from city to city? Thus, too, with the leaders turning their backs, who of the common rank will hope to persuade men to stand firm in the battle?”⁶⁰

3. Ignatius of Antioch

“I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, *along with your deacons* [emphasis mine], who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”⁶¹

“Let the laity *be subject* [emphasis mine] to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father.”⁶²

“Fare ye well in the Lord Jesus Christ, while ye *continue subject* [emphasis mine] to the bishop, and in like manner to the presbyters and to the deacons.”⁶³

“My soul be for theirs that *are submissive* [emphasis mine] to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God!”⁶⁴

“And be ye subject also to the presbytery, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, in whom, if we live, we shall be found in Him. It behoves [sic] you also, in every way, to please the deacons, who are (ministers) of the mysteries of Christ Jesus; for they are not ministers of meat and drink [only], but servants of the Church of God. . . . And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counsellors and assessors of the bishop? And what are the deacons but imitators of the angelic powers, fulfilling a pure and blameless ministry unto him, as the holy Stephen did to the blessed James, Timothy and Linus to Paul, Anencletus and Clement to Peter? He, therefore, that will not yield obedience to such, must needs be one utterly without God, an impious man who despises Christ, and depreciates His appointments. . . . Fare ye well in the Lord Jesus Christ, while ye *continue subject* [emphasis mine] to the bishop, and in like manner to the presbyters and to the deacons.”⁶⁵

⁵⁹Polycarp *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians* 5.3. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer. In *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2nd ed. Edited and revised by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 126.

⁶⁰*De Fuga In Persecutione*. Translated by Rev. S. Thelwall. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

⁶¹*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, revised and chronologically arranged with brief notes by A. Cleveland Coxe (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, [1886] 1994), 1:61.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 1:90.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 1:72.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 1:95.

⁶⁵*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*

“Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! . . .”⁶⁶

“May I have joy of you in the Lord! Be ye sober. Lay aside, every one of you, all malice and beast-like fury, evil-speaking, calumny, filthy speaking, ribaldry, whispering, arrogance, drunkenness, lust, avarice, vainglory, envy, and everything akin to these. ‘But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ Ye presbyters, *be subject* [emphasis mine] to the bishop; ye deacons, to the presbyters; *and ye, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons* [emphasis mine]. Let my soul be for theirs who preserve this good order; and may the Lord be with them continually!”⁶⁷

4. Cyprian

“For I am grieved when I hear that some of them run about wickedly and proudly, and give themselves up to follies or to discords; that members of Christ, and even members that have confessed Christ, are defiled by unlawful concubinage, and *cannot be ruled either by deacons or by presbyters* [emphasis mine]. . . .”⁶⁸

⁶⁶*The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp in Ante-Nicene Fathers*

⁶⁷*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Tarsians in Ante-Nicene Fathers*

⁶⁸*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:282

APPENDIX 2

THE SUPPOSED "_____ OF THE CHURCH" CONSTRUCTION

Some have suggested that the most likely translation of *διάκονον* in Rom 16:1 is “deacon.”⁶⁹ This does not fit the use of the noun *διάκονος*. The noun *διάκονος* occurs twenty-nine times in the New Testament and six times in the Septuagint. Out of those twenty-nine occurrences in the New Testament, there are only three instances where the word is translated “deacon”: Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12. Two of those three instances occur in the same paragraph and all three are mentioned in the context of *ἐπισκόποις* “elders.”

In every other occurrence in the New Testament, the noun *διάκονος* is translated “servant” or “minister” (the words “servant” and “minister” are synonymous and are used interchangeably for variation in the English translations). Jerome’s Latin Vulgate also uses the Latin word *minister* (servant or minister) to translate the Greek noun *διάκονος*. However, it is crucial to note that Jerome used a different Latin word to translate *διάκονος* in Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12.⁷⁰ Instead of using the typical word *minister* (servant) to translate *διάκονος*, he used the Latin word *diacon* (deacon or cleric of minor orders). All these observations help us to see that *διάκονος* is being used differently in Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12 than it is in all the other occurrences in the Bible. The reason for the difference is due to the fact that Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12 are talking about the second office (elder being the first office) of church government, namely, the office of deacon.

⁶⁹This appendix has been adapted from a debate among some Southern Baptist theology students in 2005. It is the result of a study which this author did in response to the female-deacon-advocate assertion that the “of the church” language in Rom 16:1 suggests that Paul is saying Phoebe holds the office of deacon.

⁷⁰Jerome used the word *puerum* to translate *διάκονος* in Mk. 9:35, but like the Latin noun *minister*, *puerum* simply means “servant.”

Even though they have the witness of the New Testament and the witness of the vast majority of Greek scholars (whose translations are our modern English Bibles) who translate δίακονος as servant, some Christians have decided to translate δίακονος in Romans 16:1 as "deacon." They contend that Paul calls Phoebe "a deacon of the church." They suggest this is important because when used in the New Testament, "to say that someone is 'a _____ of the church' implies something significant about that person's role in the church's life." Even if "a _____ of the church" does imply something significant about the person's role in the church's life, that does not prove that we should go against the normal meaning of the word δίακονος—"servant." Someone could be a servant or a courier (which is within the semantic range of the word and would fit perfectly for Phoebe who was carrying the letter to the Romans) and still be very significant in the church of which one is a member. We do not have to be called deacon to be significant. Having said that, the conclusion to translate Rom 16:1 as deacon is not justified because of the "a _____ of the church" construction.

We need to step back for a second and see if we can read between the lines here. The construction "a _____ of the church" is supposed change the way one should translate the word in the blank to have its more significant meaning because "a _____ of the church" supposedly implies a more significant role about the person in church life. Acts 11:22 says, "The news about them reached **the ears of the church at Jerusalem**, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch." If the " _____ of the church" construction is supposed to imply some kind of official or recognized role, perhaps we should take the "ears" here not to be the physical appendage on the church members through which they attain sound data, but rather, we should take the "ears" to be "the gossips" or "the busy bodies" of the church at Jerusalem. Are we to conclude that there is an office of *ear* in the church? Of course that is silly, but it is only silly because we recognize that "of the church" does not change the way that we should understand "the ears."

In Acts 20:17, Luke records that Paul sent word to Ephesus and "called **the elders of the church** to come to him." The construction " _____ of the church" has nothing to do with the way we translate the πρεσβυτέρους "elders." They just happened to be the group of people

with which Paul wanted to converse. If Paul had wanted to talk to the widows of the church at Ephesus, he would have worded it exactly the same way. The fact that the words “of the church” follow mean nothing other than someone specific or somewhere specific. Similar comments could be made about James 5:14; he is simply saying these are the people you should call to pray over you when you become ill.

In 2 Corinthians 8:23, Paul says “as for our brothers (they are) **messengers of the churches.**” The word messengers here comes from the Greek word ἀπόστολοι which is the same word for apostles. Have the scholars who translated our modern English versions of the Bible gotten it wrong? They don’t seem to think that “_____ of the church” signifies an official role, and that it would have been better to see the ἀπόστολοι as apostles in 2 Cor 8:23. Once again, it is worthy of pointing out that messengers, servants, and couriers can be significant without having to change the way the word is translated.

In Ephesians 5:23, Christ is shown to be **the head of the church.** The construction “of the church” once again does not change the way that we translate the word “κεφαλή.” Since Christ is God, it would certainly be appropriate to say he is “the leader of the church” and even “most high one of the church,” but most translators go with the plain, boring “head.” The reason why is because “of the church” has no syntactical force to the translation of the word κεφαλή “head.” The same point could be made for Colossians 1:18, “He is the head of the body, the church.”

In 1 Thessalonians 2:14, Paul is commending the Thessalonians for being “**imitators of the churches of God.**” Does “of the churches” here signify that the “imitators” are officials or ones recognized in some kind of formal role? No, we do not need to purchase any LifeWay teaching material telling us how to start an imitator ministry. Rather, we should recognize Paul’s commendation of the Thessalonians and follow their example growing more and more in love and service.

We cannot leave this study without at least mentioning John’s address to the “angels of the churches” in Revelation 1:20; 2:1, 12, 18; 3:1,7, and 14. Of course, here we have entered

a genre of literature which is a little more difficult to interpret and is filled with symbolic language. But these verses also help to illustrate the same conclusion pointed out in the previous verses. First of all, we must keep in mind that John's letter had an intended audience, namely the servants of God in churches (1:1, 4). The word ἄγγελοῦ can mean "angel" in the sense of a "spirit being from heaven" or in the sense of a "messenger." Due to the use of symbolic language in the book of Revelation, it is probably more appropriate to translate ἄγγελοι as "angels," but that does not mean that heavenly spirit beings are what is being addressed. Why would John be addressing "spirit beings" when the content of his address is often rebuke for sin? He would not because the audience is born again church members in the seven churches. The lampstands point to actual churches, so it is more likely that "angels of the churches" point to actual physical beings who received a letter from John. I bring this up because, at first blush, it might appear that if ἄγγελοι "of the churches" is to be translated "angels of the churches" instead of "messengers of the churches," then those who translate δίακονος as "deacon" in Romans 16:1 might seem to be vindicated in their conclusion that "of the churches" has some kind of syntactical force that changes the way Greek words should be translated. This, however, is not the case. Yes, it should be translated "angels of the churches," but the reason it should be "angels" here is because of symbolic language being used in the book of Revelation, not due to the "_____ of the churches" construction. No commentary that I consulted says ἄγγελοι should be translated "angels" due to the "_____ of the churches" construction.

In conclusion, there is not good evidence that a genitive relationship like "of the churches" should cause us to change the way that we translate Greek words. The fact that "of the church" is a genitive has nothing to do with whether δίακονον should be "servant" or "deacon." It is a simple genitive of possession. In other words, Paul is saying that Phoebe is "a servant belonging to the church at Cenchreae." No other text in Scripture uses that construction where the author is talking about the office of deacon. Therefore, there is no warrant to follow the suggestion of those who would translate δίακονον as "deacon" in Rom 16:1. Rather we should follow the lead of the many Greek scholars who have given us our modern English Bibles.

Phoebe is not a deaconess. The contextual clue for interpreting δίακονος as “deacon” is its coincidence with ἐπισκόποις “elders.” This is the same way the Latin Vulgate translates deacons, and it is the same way our modern translations translate it; it is only liberal translations like the TNIV and NRSV that translate Romans 16:1 as “Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae.” Furthermore, Paul customarily describes others by their work or faithfulness, not by official titles. If Paul is purposing to call Phoebe a “deacon of the church” in Romans 16:1, it a strange departure from his usual practice.⁷¹

⁷¹Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy*, (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 177.

APPENDIX 3

"THEIR WIVES" IN 1 TIM 3:11

The following is based on an analysis of every occurrence of the Greek word *γυναικὸς* in the New Testament.⁷² Some might think that it would be more compelling to translate *γυναικὸς* as "wife" rather than "woman" if there was a possessive pronoun or the Greek word *ἴδιος* "one's own" tied to the word *γυναικὸς*. There are not many examples where "wife" is used with a possessive pronoun, and *γυναικὸς* with the Greek word *ἴδιος* is used together only once in the New Testament and only twice in the Septuagint (Acts 24:24 and 1 Esd 4:20, 25). It is incorrect, then, to think that the New Testament writers almost always used them. A possessive pronoun or *ἴδιος* *can* be used to emphasize the translation "wife" over "woman," but neither of them is *necessary* to show that "wife" is the clear usage. For example, see Luke 3:19; 17:32, and Revelation 21:9. In these verses *γυναικὸς* is followed by a genitive making it possessive, but it does not have a possessive pronoun nor does it have the Greek word *ἴδιος* tied to *γυναικὸς*.

Sometimes Greek will use a definite article to act as a possessive pronoun (Black, 78). However, note the presence of the article is not what determines how we translate *γυναικὸς*; the context determines whether "woman" or "wife" is intended. The context has to be determinative here because there are many examples where the article is present yet "woman" is clearly intended (e.g., Matt 9:22; 22:27; 26:10). Once the context determines "wife" is intended, then it can be recognized (in some cases) that the article is acting as a possessive pronoun. The following verses are those which intend *γυναικὸς* to mean "wife" and have an article acting as a

⁷²This appendix has been adapted from a debate among some Southern Baptist theology students in 2005. It is the result of a study which this author did in response to the female-deacon-advocate assertion that "their wives" is an unwarranted translation in 1 Timothy 3:11.

possessive pronoun: Matt 18:25; 19:10; Acts 5:2; 1 Cor 7:3, 33, and Col 3:19. Conversely, the presence of the article does not necessarily mean that it is acting as a possessive pronoun. Here are the examples where *γυναικὸς* is translated “wife,” yet there is no *ἴδιος* with *γυναικὸς* and the article is *not* acting as a possessive pronoun: Mark 6:17-18; 1 Cor 7:4, 14; Eph 5:22-25; Col 3:18.

Here are many examples of *γυναικὸς* as “wife” or “wives” that have *no* article, *no* possessive pronoun, and *no* *ἴδιος*: Mark 10:2; 12:19, 20; Luke 14:20; 18:29; 20:28 (twice in this verse); 20:29; 20:33⁷³; Acts 21:5 (NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV, ESV = “wives,” NIV = “their wives”); 1 Cor 5:1; 7:10-12, 16, 27, 29, 39; 9:5; 11:3, 5, 6 (twice in this verse), 10, 13 (in 1 Cor 11:3, 5, 6, 10, and 13, the ESV has “wife”), 1 Tim 3:2, 12; 5:9, and Titus 1:6. 1 Peter 3:1 can probably be included in this group as well. The UBS editors have the article *αἱ* in brackets because it cannot be determined for certain if the article was in the original text or not; they gave it a C rating. Even if the article should be present, it is not acting as a possessive pronoun.

This same type of analysis can be done for the Greek word *ἀνδρός* “man” or “husband.” One will find similar results to the analysis of *γυναικὸς* in the New Testament. *Ἀνδρός* with *ἴδιος* only occurs together six times in the New Testament (1 Cor 7:2; 14:35, Eph 5:22; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1, 5). Just as *γυναικὸς* is translated “wife” based on the context, *ἀνδρός* is translated “husband” instead of “man” because of the context in Luke 2:36. There is *no* possessive pronoun (not even the article acting as a possessive pronoun), *no* *ἴδιος*, and it still clearly means “husband.” To conclude that Paul wants his readers to see “women” rather than “wives” in 1 Timothy 3:11 because he did not use a possessive pronoun or *ἴδιος* is unwarranted. It is a faulty conclusion that fails to recognize the regular usage of *γυναικὸς* as “wife” *without* a possessive pronoun or *ἴδιος*.

While ample biblical evidence has been provided that shows *γυναικὸς* is regularly translated wife without the possessive pronoun or *ἴδιος*, this author was unable to find any

⁷³Wife occurs twice in this verse: *γυναικὸς* with the article meaning “wife,” followed by *γυνή* with no article meaning “woman,” then again *γυνή* without the article, possessive pronoun, or *ἴδιος* meaning “wife.”)

biblical examples for a syntactical justification for γυναῖκός to be translated “women who are deacons.” Here is what is found in the New Testament when a writer wanted to categorize γυναῖκός as a set of something else (e.g., women “who are widows” or “women who are unmarried”). He either had γυναῖκός 1) with a participle or 2) followed immediately by an appositional noun or 3) followed by a relative pronoun or 4) followed by an adjectival pronoun or 5) followed by an adjective.

For category one: Matt 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43; 13:11; 23:49, 55; John 4:39; Acts 16:13, and Rev 12:4 have γυναῖκός with a participle. For category two: In Luke 4:26, γυναῖκα χήραν “woman who was a widow” we see an example where γυναῖκός is immediately followed by another noun in apposition. For category three: Luke 7:37, 39; 23:27, and Rev 12:13 are examples where γυναῖκός is followed by a relative pronoun. For category four: In Luke 8:2 and 1 Cor 7:13, γυναῖκός is followed by an adjectival pronoun. For category five: Acts 16:1 and 1 Cor 7:34 are the two examples where γυναῖκός is followed by an adjective itself. *1 Timothy 3:11 meets none of these five criteria.* Therefore, it seems unreasonable to insist that γυναῖκός be translated “women who are deacons” when there appear to be no other syntactical examples like this in the New Testament. It is much more reasonable to translate γυναῖκός as “their wives” since it fits the context, and there is a multiplicity of examples with this type of construction in the New Testament for this usage (as shown above).

It is important that we answer the question “what” before we answer the question “why” in interpreting a biblical text. We must first know what is in the text before we can answer why it is in the text. Based on the analysis above, it is proper to translate γυναῖκός in 1 Timothy 3:11 as “their wives” just like it is in most modern translations of the Bible. Deaconess advocates still have not done sufficient work to prove γυναῖκός should be translated “women” in 1 Timothy 3:11. The analysis above shows that the question of “what” is in the text has been answered. Γυναῖκας should be translated “their wives.” So now the question of why “their wives” is in the text can be entertained. Answering the question “why” is not as black and white

as answering the question "what" in hermeneutics. Sometimes it is unclear why the author has something in the text, and we often have to refer to other Scripture to answer these questions.