

CHAPTER 5

An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15

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1 Timothy 2:11-15 is considered to be the key passage in considering what women may or may not do in church leadership. This is for three reasons. First, the passage as translated, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man," seems to contradict the message of other significant portions of the Bible. Significant women such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah did teach and exercise authority over men. Women preached at Pentecost, and Junia is called an apostle.

Second, while attempts have been made to buttress the supposed limitations of 1 Timothy 2:12 from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, it is obvious that this is not a general prohibition, for Paul allows praying and prophesying by women in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Thus, because of these first two points it may be seen that if there is a prohibition against women teaching and exercising authority in the church, that prohibition exists in 1 Timothy 2:12 and nowhere else.

Third, the passage contains a reference to Adam and Eve, and this reference may mean that a prohibition is based on the foundational order of creation. If this is so, it might override the problems presented by the first two points.

In this paper I will seek to present evidence from the life situation and from studies of the words that will demonstrate that in fact 1 Timothy 2:11-15 has been mistranslated and consequently misunderstood.

The Cultural and Religious Setting of Asia Minor

Women in public life. Women did not lead lives of seclusion in Asia Minor, as did their counterparts in Athens and Corinth. Witherington notes that Asia Minor women were allowed to hold public and cultic offices, positions reserved in other places for men.¹ He quotes Donaldson who says:

Especially in Asia Minor did women display public activity. Their generosity took the most various forms even to bestowing considerable sums on each citizen in their own cities. They erected baths and gymnasium; presided at the public games or over great religious ceremonies; and they paid the expenses incurred in these displays.

They also held priesthoods and several of them obtained the highest priesthood of

¹ Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13.

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Asia--perhaps the greatest honor that could be paid to anyone.²

Women in family life. Not much is known of the family life of Asia Minor. A woman continued to possess her dowry, although her husband had some rights to it, and after his death she did what she pleased with what she owned.³ All of this is within the general patriarchal family structure.

Women in religious life. The religious life of the city was dominated by a worship of mother goddesses. These goddesses, bearing names such as Cybele, Demeter, Artemis, and others, were seen as the source of life. Artemis is the most famous of these goddesses. Her great shrine in Ephesus attracted thousands of worshippers, and when Paul's preaching seemed to threaten her worship, a major riot occurred (Acts 19:23-40). Kroeger says of Artemis: "(S)he was the mother of gods and men, the mistress of wild animals. From her came all life, and the dead were gathered again to her womb. She stood guard over the tombs of her devotees."⁴

Ephesus was a city where the mystery and perhaps proto-gnostic cults soon tried both to draw from and add to Christianity. This is evident from Paul's concern when he said farewell to the Ephesian elders: "And from among you yourselves there shall arise men saying distorted things in order to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore watch out (Acts 20:30, 31a)."

Identifying the Life Situation Surrounding the Pastoral Epistles

The epistles are written in the face of certain issues that have come to the attention of the apostle. A proper interpretation requires that this problem be identified to the best extent possible. The concern of the Pastoral Epistles is distorted teaching [*diestrammena*--Acts 20:30], false doctrines, myths and elements of Judaism [*heterodidaskalein, muthois, genealogiais*--1 Tim. 1:4]. Paul has previously warned the Ephesians not to be blown about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14), and warned them against those who would lead them astray (Eph. 4:17-24, 5:6-14). That these warnings were successful, delivered in person and in four epistles (Ephesians, and the three pastorals) is evident in the commendation the church receives in Revelation for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. I. Howard Marshall has said:

The older view was that the Pastoral Epistles are in effect a manual of church order, a description which in effect makes them into a complete set of instructions applicable to the church in any time and place. It is much more plausible that they are to be seen as a response to a specific situation. They confront a situation of heretical teaching which was plainly a major threat.⁵

² James Donaldson, *Woman: Her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and Among Early Christians* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 124, quoted by Witherington, 14.

³ Witherington, 14.

⁴ Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not A Woman* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 51.

⁵ I. Howard Marshall, "Sometime Only Orthodox. . . Is There More to the Pastoral Epistles?," *Epworth Rev*, 20:3 (1993), 16.

Marshall goes on to list the following factors which were at work in the doctrinal life of the Ephesian church: a stress on the Jewish law with "an odd exposition of the significance of the myths and genealogies; a limited view of salvation; a belief that the resurrection had already taken place; ascetic practices; and a lack of moral concern in spite of the stress on the law."⁶ Gordon Fee agrees with this analysis, saying: "The whole of 1 Timothy. . . is dominated by this singular concern."⁷

In opposition to this analysis that the epistle is written in the face of a severe doctrinal threat, Vern Sheridan Poythress proposes that 1 Timothy 3:14-15 "summarizes the thrust of the whole letter."⁸ Thus he defends what Marshall calls the traditional view, that the epistle is in effect a church manual. Poythress draws two points from this thesis. First, that the instructions in 1 Timothy 2 on how men should pray and how women should make themselves attractive are written concerning conduct in the church assembled for worship.

Several important arguments, however, have been raised by B. W. Powers against this commonly held notion.⁹ Powers points out that the prayer gesture of uplifted hands is used in other contexts than congregational worship (cf. Ex. 9:29; 1 Kings 8:22; Neh. 8:67; Ps. 28:2 as examples). A reference to uplifted hands, therefore, does not necessarily indicate a context of congregational worship.

Further, the phrase "in every place" does not in itself lead us to think of a worship service. In fact, no where else in the New Testament is such a meaning required of this phrase. It would be more likely that "in every place" means the opposite, that is, that Paul does not want a strong distinction between how people pray in their homes and how they pray when with other Christians.

Likewise, there is no reason in the text to restrict the concern over the adornment of women to the church as it gathers. The concern for "good deeds" for women and the absence of anger and disputing for men would indicate a concern for the whole of life. As well, the phrase "who profess godliness, or reverence to God" (*epaggellomenais theosebeia*) being present tense is also a reference to continuing life attitude.

Therefore, the contention that chapter two is concerned exclusively with conduct within the church worship service is an assumption without adequate support within the text.

⁶ Marshall, 16-17.

⁷ Gordon Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflections on the Hermeneutics of Ad Hoc Documents," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985), 142-148. See also Timothy J. Harris, "Paul comes straight to the point of his purpose in writing: the need to fight against false teaching and unnecessary myths and genealogies (1:3-7). The position of this section clearly identifies it as Paul's central concern." "Why Did Paul Mention Eve's Deception?" *Evangelical Quarterly*, 62 (1990), 339.

⁸ Vern Sheridan Poythress, "The Church as Family; Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL Crossway Books, 1991), 235.

⁹ B. W. Powers, "Women in the Church; The Application of 1 Tim 2:8-15," *Interchange*, 17 (1975) 55-59, discussed by Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics of Exegesis?"

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This means that our understanding of chapter two must be integrated into Paul's overall concern that the church be defended against false teaching.

Poythress's second thesis is that the extensive use of family metaphors for the church and for relationships within the church in 1 Timothy means that all relationships within the church are to be modeled after the family, including the subordination of women to male leadership.

Poythress's contribution is to highlight that there is a family concern in the Pastorals. Later I will show how this family concern ties into the doctrinal concern. That the analogy of the church as a "family" is widespread in the pastorals and in other Pauline literature is not to be denied. We should note, however, that it is not the only metaphor for the church used in 1 Timothy. Other metaphors include "military" (1 Tim. 1:18), "building" (1 Tim. 3:15), "agricultural" (1 Tim. 5:18), and "athletic" (1 Tim. 6:12). When one goes on to 2 Timothy and Titus even more metaphors appear in each category.

Poythress's other weakness is that he violates the hermeneutical use of metaphors. He takes a metaphor and from its extension draws conclusions. For example, he says:

The central use of the household analogy naturally points toward inferences regarding authoritative leadership in the church. The leadership within a family is vested in the husband and father (Eph. 5:22-6:4). The church as God's household also needs wise and competent leadership. That leadership is to be sought among men who have already shown their abilities in the context of their immediate families (1 Tim. 3:1-7).¹⁰

The order that elders are to be men who have ruled their homes well is, however, not an instruction to have males as elders because males must exercise authority in the church as they exercise it in the home. Rather, it is an instruction given to test the authenticity of the candidate's faith and practice. It is linked to "he must also have a good reputation with outsiders" (v. 7). There must be consistency in the life of a church leader, therefore, every aspect of the candidate's life should be reviewed. It is an over-extension to conclude from these instructions that there must be only male leadership in the church, just as it is an over-extension to conclude from "the husband of one wife" that an elder must be a married male.

There is a concern for church order in the pastorals. That concern, however, grows from the concern for purity of doctrine. The elders are to be apt to teach, for a church that is threatened by heresy must have leadership that is doctrinally literate. They must also have their own households in order, for much of the false teaching was being transmitted first in homes (see discussion below).

¹⁰ Poythress, 238.

In conclusion, church order and the use of the household metaphor do not form the primary grid for the interpretation of the pastorals. The key which unlocks our understanding is the apostle's burden that false teaching not enter and destroy the flock. It is essential that difficult passages such as 1 Timothy 2 be understood in light of the concern for the doctrinal purity of the church. For a true interpretation everything in the passage at hand must be shown somehow to relate to this concern to guard the church against heresy and keep it doctrinally pure.

An Examination of Key Words in 1 Timothy 2:11-15

(v. 11) *manthaneto*, imperative, 3rd. singular, to learn. "Women are to learn."

Some commentators, such as Payne and Keener, note the distinct contrast between Paul's command that women learn and the general attitude toward women in the prevailing culture that they were to be left in ignorance. Thus the women who are addressed in the epistle are ignorant and thus are prey to false teachers and liable to spread false teaching. They are the ones Paul is forbidding to teach. Keener says:

A more important reason Paul may not have wanted these women to teach is that much of the false teaching in Ephesus was being spread through women in the congregation. This is not to say that women are more prone to lead others astray than men--the false teachers themselves seem to have been men. But in that culture the uneducated women seem to have provided the network the false teachers could use to spread their falsehoods through the congregations (1 Tim. 5:13; 2 Tim. 3:6-7).¹¹

Moo seeks to counter this argument by saying that "there is no evidence in the pastoral epistles that the women were teaching these false doctrines."¹²

That the false teachers were working their way into homes and gaining control over weak-willed women (2 Tim. 3:6), however, would seem to indicate that some of the false teachers were female. We have seen above that the women of Asia Minor were not cloistered as were the women of Greece. So women, as well as men teachers, would have the freedom to move from house to house. Note, however, that these false teachers "were gaining control." It is doubtful that male teachers would be allowed in a home to instruct the wife in the strong and lengthy manner implied by the phrase "gaining control." We might also note the non-gender specific instruction of 1 Timothy 6:3: *ei tis heterodidaskalei*--"if anyone teaches false doctrines." Therefore, there is some probability that some of the false teachers were women.

¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 112.

¹² Douglas Moo, "What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?: 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 190.

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Keener continues to argue that "(P)resumably, Paul wants them to learn so that they could teach."¹³ This proposal, however, that the instruction for women to learn is de facto an instruction for them to teach is quite weak. I agree with Moo when he interacts with Spenser over Spenser's claim that the instruction that women would learn implies that they will eventually teach, for there are a number of "ancient texts" that say that being prepared to teach is the purpose of learning.¹⁴ Moo counters this with two points: women were being prepared to teach, but were restricted from teaching men; and, it is not necessarily the case that everyone who is taught will teach, for not every Jewish man who was taught became a rabbi.

(v. 11) *hypotage*, subjection, subordination, obedience.

The question is, to whom, or to what, are the women to be in subjection? It is not at all clear that women are to be in subjection to the male leadership of the church, as Moo would contend.¹⁵ Rather, the submission being enjoined is more likely to be submission to the Word of God itself, not to any male teacher.

(v. 11) *hesychia*, silence, quiet.

Moo's contention that this means silence in the sense of not speaking at all, even to ask a question, is, in my opinion, outweighed by Payne's counter that a student must learn in a quiet manner, for how can a person learn in a significant way without ever speaking?¹⁶ In the immediate context, 2:2, Paul uses the same word in expressing his desire that "we may lead peaceful and quiet lives." Thus it is the learning attitude of the female student that is in view.

Kroeger says that the phrase "silence and submission" is used in the Near East to indicate a readiness to do God's will.¹⁷ Some propose that this, as well as the related

¹³ Keener, 112.

¹⁴ Moo, 185.

¹⁵ Moo, 183. See also Moo p. 18 where he attempts to reconstruct the religious context of 1 Timothy. Moo reads into the background of the text his own perception of the evangelical church in the 1980s. He claims that Paul is teaching traditional roles for women, and, therefore, it must be that part of the false teaching is a forbidding of traditional roles. For example, the "encouragement to abstain from marriage. . . is likely to include a more general denigration of traditional female roles." Moo is arguing in a circle. Moo has decided what his exegetical conclusions are, and then proposed them as the context for the passage.

¹⁶ Douglas J. Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* (Spring 1980), 162-83; and Philip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus: Response to D. J. Moo's Article, '1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,'" *Trinity Journal*, 2 (Fall 1981), 169-197. See also Walter L. Liefeld's discussion of 1 Cor. 14:34 where he points out that *sigao* (be silent) occurs three times in the same tense and mood in that chapter (vs. 28, 30, 34). Liefeld says: "Its use in verses 28 and 30 with regard to prophets and tongues-speakers suggests that the silence imposed on women in verse 34 is not a universal silence but one dictated by circumstances, in this case the time for judging the prophecies." Walter L. Liefeld, "Women, Submission & Ministry in 1 Corinthians," in *Women, Authority & The Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 150.

¹⁷ Catherine Clark Kroeger "1 Timothy 2:12, A Classicist's View," in *Women, Authority & the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 237, and referring to James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 379.

passage in I Corinthians 14:34, is speaking of the problem of a noisy, women's section.

Brooten, however, clearly demonstrates that there is virtually no archaeological evidence whatsoever that the Jewish synagogues had a women's upper gallery, and that there is little evidence in any ancient documents that men and women sat separately in the synagogue service.¹⁸ It is an observed fact, however, that the Christian church in many cultures does practice such a separation. Hence, there is probability of it being a first century practice in the church, but it is difficult to determine the extent of the probability.

Thus, it is clear that women should learn and since this is a new situation for women, Paul is saying something about the proper attitude of a learner. Where they are learning is not a concern. They may be learning while at church, or at home. Wherever, they are to learn. Further, Paul is not issuing a prohibition against a woman's verbal participation in the learning situation.

(v. 12) *didaskein*: to teach.

Why does Paul prohibit teaching? In answer it has been projected that women, sensing their liberation in Christ, were overstepping the acceptable limits of their gender by teaching in church. This hypothetical life-situation scenario has two major problems.

First, it may be that teaching by women was not a cultural norm. James Sigountos says that teaching in the Hellenistic world was done by males and that when women taught it was considered to be a scandal.¹⁹

But, we have seen that in Asia Minor women were more prominent in religious activities than in Greece proper. So, their teaching may not have been as culturally offensive as it would have been in Greece. For purposes of argument, however, let us assume that it was as culturally offensive in Asia Minor for women to teach as it was in Greece. Even so we still have a problem. Why is Paul forbidding women to do what their culture has already forbidden them to do? Are we to suppose that the Ephesian church was dramatically out of step with the then current gender role definitions? This does not seem very probable.

Secondly, if women are teaching men in church, we would assume that they have learned before they taught in order to be accepted as teachers. But, as demonstrated above, the women Paul is addressing have not learned. They are commanded to learn and to maintain the proper attitude while learning. Therefore, it is not plausible to assume that they are teaching.

In summary, because the probability is small that it would have been culturally

¹⁸ Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, CA: Scholar Press, 1982), 138.

¹⁹ James Sigountos, "Women in the First Century Church," unpublished lecture (Nyack, NY: Alliance Theological Seminary, March 1994), 20.

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acceptable for women to teach in the church, and, because the women Paul is concerned with were not qualified to teach, needing instead to learn, I conclude that the prohibition not to teach was not specifically directed toward their participation in the church service.

(v. 12) *epitrepo*--Not now permitting, or setting. Present indicative.

It is argued that the present indicative, when contrasted with the stronger imperative that follows, "let her learn," implies that the situation under discussion is local and, therefore, the prohibition is restricted in scope.²⁰

Keener further argues that it is significant that Timothy does not seem to be aware of a standing prohibition, for Paul does not use the phrase "you know" or connect it to previous teaching.²¹

Keener speaks of J. I. Packer's contention that there is doubt as to how Paul would apply this in our culture and that, therefore, we should give Paul the benefit of the doubt and maintain the restriction. Keener responds forcefully, however, that "if the matter is really in doubt, we should not be using it to pass judgment on other people's calls" (i.e., spiritual calling).²² Furthermore, if there is doubt, there are no grounds for supposing that the most restrictive interpretation is in fact giving the benefit of the doubt to Paul since evidence abounds in the New Testament of the activity of women in ministry.²³

(v. 12) *authenthein*. Infinitive. Definition discussed below.

First we must note that this word is a hapax legomenon (only occurs once) in the New Testament. Let us first survey possible translations and connotations.

C. C. Kroeger proposes that the word relates to a Gnostic teaching. She brings forward the work of French etymologist Pierre Chantraine who said that *authentēs*, the agent noun, as well as the derivative verb (*authentēo*) had essentially the significance of "beginning or being held responsible (*aitios*) for an action, situation or state." This meaning is the reason for its possible use as "to be in charge or rule over something, and to be ultimately responsible for a terrible crime." As well, Kroeger says, it meant to claim authorship. She refers to the dictionary by Cornelis Schrevel and Stephano's *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. If such a translation were a viable alternative it would lead to the following translation of 1 Timothy 2:12: "I do not allow a woman to teach or to assert that she is the originator of man." Thus, Kroeger concludes, it would be a

²⁰ Payne 172. See also Spencer, *Curse*, 84-85, and Keener 112.

²¹ Keener 112.

²² Keener, 113

²³ Keener says: "Scandal would have arisen had Paul included women among his traveling companions, but once this fact is taken into consideration, the percentage of women colleagues Paul acknowledges is amazing by any ancient standards" (113).

"prohibition against a woman teaching a Gnostic type of mythology in which Eve predated Adam and was his creator."²⁴ The instances she quotes, however, are much later than New Testament times.

It would seem then that Kroeger's proposed translation "the originator of man" is possible. Its weakness, as stated before, is that she has not shown instances of this meaning in literature near to, or contemporary with, the New Testament. Therefore, it can only be said that "originator" is a possible translation.

Some others hold that the word simply means authority and brings with it no connotation as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the source of the authority, or how it is exercised in practice.

The first defense of this position is tradition. It is claimed that the church has always understood *authentēin* as it appears in 1 Timothy 2:12 to mean authority, plain and simple. Such is not the case, however. L. E. Wilshire did a detailed analysis of the Vulgate reading of 2:12b. He observes that Medieval glosses and commentaries relied on the Pauline commentary written by fourth century 'Pseudo-Ambrose' which set forth a theory of 'power' dominance of men over women. "This theory came to color Medieval biblical analysis."²⁵ Erasmus and Beza based their Latin translations on these glosses, and then, based on their translation, Roman Catholic exegetes argued that "authority" was the correct translation because of Erasmus's Latin translation.²⁶ Thus it is not correct to say that the church has always understood *authentēin* to mean "authority."

George Knight maintains that in all the instances where the verb is used in classical Greek it has the meaning of "undifferentiated authority."²⁷ This view has been challenged by the deeper study of all instances of *authentēo* by L. E. Wilshire who studied every instance of the verb from the TLG computer at the University of California, and as a result maintains that *authentēin* does not mean authority in first century usage.²⁸

Considerable scholarly opinion exists that the word *authentēin* has connotations of authority by reason of force and power, that is, an authority that creates an unwilling submission. Thus, some translate it as "overpower" or "domineer." Osburn suggests that *authentēo* "originated in popular Greek vocabulary as a synonym of *kratein tinos* 'to dominate someone'"²⁹ And Witherington points to the forcing of action by means of

²⁴ Catherine Kroeger, "1 Timothy 2:12: A Classicist's View," in *Women, Authority & the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 231, 232.

²⁵ Leland E. Wilshire, "1 Timothy 2:12 Revisited: A Reply to Paul W. Barnett and Timothy J. Harris," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 65:1 (1993), 45.

²⁶ Wilshire, "Revisited," 45.

²⁷ George Knight, "AYTHENTEIN in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2:12," *New Testament Studies*, 30:2 (April 84), 143-157.

²⁸ L. E. Wilshire, "The TLG Computer and further reference to AYTHENTEIO in 1 Timothy 2:12", *New Testament Studies*, 34 (1988), 120-134.

²⁹ C. O. Osburn, "AUTHENTO (1 Timothy 2:12)," *ResQ*, 25 (1982), 1-12; N. J. Hommes, "Let Women Be Silent in Church," *CTJ*, 4 (1969), 5-22; Dibelius/Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 47, n. 19; Witherington, *Women in the*

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greater power.³⁰

A related possible meaning is that it connotes authority that has been grasped. Thus, the King James translates it "usurp authority." This is related in the sense that authority which has been usurped is usually equated with a form of despotism. But again, Wilshire concludes that "to dominate" should not be considered a first century usage.³¹

In classical Greek *authentein* occurs as a word for murder (eight times, two of which are post-NT) or the taking of action with violence. Wilshire concludes that ". . . the preponderant number of citations from this compilation have to do with self willed violence, criminal action, or murder or with the person who does these actions."³²

This interpretation would parallel, as Wilshire points out, the prohibition against "anger" (*orges*) and "quarrelling" (*diaslogismon*) (2:8), "terms with strong violent connotations."³³ Thus the term is in contrast to "leading a quiet and peaceable life" (2:2), and learning in calmness (2:12). Interpreters have objected that it could not possibly have such a violent meaning in the context of 1 Timothy 2. Wilshire proposes, however, that the interpretation problem has stemmed from trying to translate the word literally. Instead, he says, it may have the force of hyperbole and thus be similar to James 4:1: "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you?"³⁴

Kroeger is in line with this when she suggests that it might mean "being ultimately responsible for a terrible crime." This understanding has been further developed by Andrew C. Perriman.³⁵ Perriman suggests that the crime in this case is Eve's presenting Adam with the fruit. He says: "Eve did not have authority, but in her action became responsible for--became the cause of--Adam's transgression."³⁶

I conclude that the word *authentein* speaks of an action resulting in someone being harmed. The use of the word in association with "to teach" and with the example of Eve and Adam shows that the harm referred to is spiritual and related to the false doctrines. Because of its strong connotations of murder and violence we may further conclude that it is used in a hyperbolic sense in order to drive home Paul's sense of the destructive

Earliest Churches, 121.

³⁰ Witherington, 121. "G. W. Knight's survey of extra-biblical usage does show that the verb can be used in a positive or neutral sense 'to exercise authority. However, he is wrong that the verb cannot have the negative connotation 'to domineer or 'to abuse power and authority. Thus, for instance, the translation of *authenteikotos* in the letter from Tryphon (27-26 BX) that he urges is doubtful at best. Surely, what is implied there is not merely 'I exercised authority over him and he consented but 'I leaned on him and he consented" (i.e., a heavy handed or questionable use of one's authority).

³¹ Wilshire, *Revisited*, 47.

³² Wilshire, *Revisited*, 47.

³³ Wilshire, *Revisited*, 49.

³⁴ Wilshire, *Revisited*, 49.

³⁵ Andrew C. Perriman "What Eve Did, What Women Shouldn't Do: The Meaning of AUTHENTEIO in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 44.1 (1993), 127-142.

³⁶ Perriman, *What Eve Did*, 141.

nature of the false teaching. Thus it echoes Paul's strong hyperbolic warning to the Ephesian elders that "savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock" (Acts 20:29).

It is the presence of the word *authentēin* that tells us that Paul's concern is not that a hierarchy of husband-over-wife be preserved by wives not teaching them regardless of the content of their doctrine. Rather, it is precisely the content of the teaching that is at issue. Certainly wife-to-husband is not the only line by which the false teaching was being transmitted, but, the use of this word in the context of the Eve-to-Adam example, as I will show below, demonstrates that wife-to-husband was one of the ways false doctrine was being taught.

I further conclude that *authentēin* does not refer to ordinary authority and, therefore, does not prohibit women from holding an office in the church where she either shares or exercises authority.

(v. 12) *gyne*, feminine, singular, "woman" or "wife"; *andros*, masculine, singular, genitive, "man" or "husband."

It is possible that *andros* is generic, "men," but most likely it is singular, "a man." Hence, it is very possible that this means husband, that is, "her husband," and consequently that *gyne* means "wife." This view, which was held by Luther, has had a number of defenders through the centuries.³⁷ The following arguments support the view.

That *gyne* means a "wife" rather than a "woman" without any distinction as to her marital status is indicated by various modifiers and by context. The most frequent indicator is its appearance in connection with *aner* ("man," "husband") or some equivalent noun or pronoun indicating a man.³⁸ This is precisely what happens in this passage. The word *aner* follows immediately, and then a specific married couple is named in an illustration.

Some commentators have referred to the absence of the definite article before *gyne* as indicating its reference to woman rather than wife. Moo contends that: "(I)f Paul had wanted to confine his prohibition in verse 12 to wives in relationship to their husbands, we would have expected him to use a definite article or possessive pronoun with man. . ."³⁹ In 1 Corinthians 7:10, however, Paul uses *andros* without an article and it clearly means "husband." Hugenberger also cites Luke 16:18 "and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband (*apo andros*) commits adultery" and says: "(W)hat allows the reader to interpret *aner* as referring unambiguously to a "husband" rather than simply a

³⁷ It has been defended in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Guleilmus Estius and Abraham Calovius. Konrad Matthies and C. S. Garratt defended it in the nineteenth century, and in this century it has been propounded by C. R. Erdman, A. E. Burn and H. L. Goudge, and suggested by C. K. Barrett. See Gordon P. Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 35:3 (September 1992), 350.

³⁸ Rodney Remin, "1 Timothy 2:12: Woman or Wife?" *His Dominion*, 14:3, 5.

³⁹ Moo, in *RBMW*, 188.

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"man" is its proximity and semantic relation to *gyne*."⁴⁰

Hugenberger goes on to point out that:

(W)ithin Paul's writings, apart from 1 Timothy 2, *aner* occurs 50 times and *gyne* occurs 54 times in close proximity within eleven distinct contexts, and in each case these terms bear the meanings "husband" and "wife" rather than "man" and "woman."⁴¹

Remin points out, however, that in all the instances in the New Testament where a definite article is present there is "also present in conjunction with the definite article another indicator of the types presently under discussion which serve to show that the *gyne* under consideration is a wife."⁴² Therefore the presence or absence of the article is not determinative in deciding to translate man-- husband, or, woman--wife.

Finally, it is argued from context that the discussion revolves around conduct in public worship and not conduct in the home. If the context is strictly public worship, to translate "husband-wife" rather than "men-women" appears to be odd, for why would a wife be able to teach men at church except her husband? I have shown above, however, that it is unwarranted to assume that the passage has congregational worship solely in view. But, even so, as Remin points out, "(F)requently in Pauline epistles a discussion of public conduct ends with reference to husband and wife and familial relationships."⁴³ Thus, even if one thinks that 2:8 "I want men everywhere. . ." begins a discussion of public worship, it is still possible that v. 12 "I forbid. . ." constitutes a shift from public worship to the home.

I contend, however, that it is a stronger interpretation to see 2:8-10 as being general instructions that are applicable to many life situations, including worship, and that the shift to direct discourse in verse 11 is one indicator that the writer has now narrowed his attention. In support of such a possibility, we should note that the reference in verse 14 to Adam and *de gyne* is clearly a focus on the family concern. In verse 12 it is wives as a class that is spoken of, but in verse 14 it is Adam's particular wife. Also, we should observe again, that it is the association of *gyne* with Adam, not the presence of the article, that indicates that it is to be translated "wife," not "woman."

The closing reference to childbirth in verse 15 is the strongest indicator that family concerns are in view. To insist that the passage has public worship as its concern all the way through leaves this verse without any logical tie to the previous discussion. Thus the presence of verse 15, while posing in itself a number of thorny exegetical issues, creates a familial context for the overall passage which may begin with the discussion of

⁴⁰ Hugenberger, 354.

⁴¹ Hugenberger, 354.

⁴² Hugenberger, 354.

⁴³ Hugenberger, 9.

the prayer life of men and women and the sins that would hinder their prayers, that is, disputing and immodesty.

The instructions in previous verses against improper adornment and instructing proper comportment for the *gyne* might mitigate against the translation "husband." It has been argued that Paul would not be limiting the command to pray only to husbands or the command to properly make oneself attractive only to wives. Hugenberger, however, points out that this is precisely what Peter does in 1 Peter 3 when he instructs the husbands in prayer and the wives in proper adornment. The parallels between the passages are so strong that they seem to reflect an early Christian household table, that is, a set of instructions on how a household was to be conducted.⁴⁴

I conclude that verse 12 is giving instructions to wives and husbands. The forbidding is directed to the activity of the wife in relation to her husband. This harmonizes with other parts of Scripture where concern over the ability of the wife to falsely teach the husband is expressed. Men of Israel were forbidden to marry foreign wives because they would lead the husbands into idolatry (Ex. 34:16; 1 Kings 11:1-3; Ez. 9:2). And Peter (1 Pet. 3: 1, 2) tells wives that when the teaching that the wife has to offer is the truth of the gospel, submission and calm behavior are the ways to communicate truth, in this case, to an unsaved husband.⁴⁵

(v. 13) *Adam gar protos eplasthe heita Eva*, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

Here the word "for" indicates a reason for the prohibition. The reason has been interpreted as the order of creation. Adam was created first, which gives him preeminence. He should, therefore, be the teacher, not the one taught. However, the point of the Genesis story is that of Eve's purpose. She was created to be a fitting companion, and the two together completed the creation of humanity. But, Eve violated her purpose, her *raison d'être*, when she believed the false teaching of the serpent and then drew her husband into that sin. The alienation, death, and destruction that followed is surely appropriately captured by the Greek word *authenthein* in all its ugly and violent undertones. Thus, women are warned against doing this to their husbands, as Eve did to hers.

(v. 14) *he de gyne exapatetheisa en parabasei gegonen*, "the woman was greatly deceived (and) fell into sin and is in the state of sin."

Some commentators claim that this phrase means that woman's pre-fall (and therefore post-fall as well) nature is somehow open to deception more than that of the male.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hugenberger, 352.

⁴⁵ The strong parallels between 1 Peter 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 have long been noted. Both men and women are instructed on their behavior, specifically the attitude of husbands and the adornment of wives. The implications for the prayer life are brought out. And women are told not to take the position of being their husband's spiritual teacher.

⁴⁶ Harris, "Why Did Paul Mention. . .," 346, quotes Moo: "Paul cites Eve's failure as exemplary and perhaps causative of the nature of women in general and that this susceptibility to deception bars them from engaging in

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This interpretation, however, is no longer well-received for several important reasons, as follows.

If women by nature are more open to deception than men, then the reports of the women of the resurrection of Christ would be suspect. But they are cited as evidence.

We know that at least women are instructed to teach other women. And the child Timothy was taught the Scriptures by women. The teaching of children is recognized throughout the Bible as a very important task. Hence, those who fulfill this task must be able carefully and accurately to communicate both scriptural content and doctrinal truth. Such a critical undertaking would be forbidden to women if they were indeed more subject to deception than men. The fact that they do teach women and children proves that they are not more subject to deception than men.

Older women are instructed to give a full range of moral instruction to the younger women (Tit. 2:3-5), to be "teachers of that which is good" (v. 3). The word *sophronizousin* (v. 4) speaks of training in virtue. Paul plays on the same word when he says that the older women are to be good and teach what is good, to have a mind that is well-ordered and virtuous, and to teach the younger women to live such an ethical life.

Further, if women as a class are more open to deception than men, then this would mean that they cannot be wise, for wisdom is the contrary to being deceived (Proverbs 1:32, 33, as one example). But, this is not so, for wisdom is not infrequently associated with women in the Bible. Two women in the Old Testament are described as "wise" (2 Sam. 14:2 and 20:16). The book of Proverbs speaks of "a wise woman" (Prov. 14:1). Wisdom is personified as a woman giving a speech in Proverbs 1:21 and 9:3.

It may, therefore, be firmly concluded that women as a class are not more open to deception than men, and that they have the potential of teaching a full range of doctrinal and ethical issues.

What then is the relation between Eve's deception and the Pauline prohibition? Many of the women in the church are following Eve in being deceived. Possibly, as Kroeger supposes, the deception itself is entwined with a proto-gnostic Eve myth. They needed to realize that the myths are not harmless. Even as Eve was deceived, and then brought death to her husband, they also will inflict a similar spiritual harm on their husbands. The wives, therefore, must not model themselves after Eve.

(v. 15) *sothesetai de dia tes teknogonias*, "nevertheless, saved through childbearing."

public teaching." '1 Timothy 2;11-15: Meaning and Significance,' 1 NS (1980). However, Moo has since changed: '...the difficulties with viewing v.14 as a statement about the nature of women are real.' Rejoinder to Payne.'

There are four popular interpretations of this text. First, that the article before *teknonogias* indicates that a specific childbearing is in view, namely, Mary's bringing Jesus into the world. Eve sinned, but another woman, Mary, brought the Savior. This view was widely held by the church fathers.⁴⁷ It is not widely accepted today, however, because of the lack of any other reference or allusion to Mary or the birth of Christ in the context of the verse.

The second view, promoted by Moo, is that "childbearing" is an indicator of "the circumstances in which Christian women will experience (work out; cf. Phil. 2:12) their salvation . . . being faithful, helpful wives, raising children to love and reverence God, managing the household. . . ."⁴⁸ The flaw with this view is that "faith, love, holiness and sound thinking" obviously refer to personal characteristics that the wife is to form, not a generic description of the happy home she is to create.

The third view stays closer to the text. Witherington also proposes that "be saved" is parallel to Philippians 2:12, "work out your salvation. . .," and that Paul is telling wives "how to work out their salvation, how they may remain in faith, love and holiness."⁴⁹ The main problem with this view is that it seems to gloss over "the childbearing," almost as if it were, erasing it from the verse.

Finally, there is the view that Paul is speaking of physical salvation during the event of childbearing. At first this may seem remote. The context, however, is speaking of Eve, and the curse not only brought subjection of the wife to the husband, but pain in childbearing. One scholar told me that every first century religion with any credibility included prayers for safety in childbirth. Keener gives an extensive list of such prayers and also demonstrates that it was a Jewish belief that women died in childbirth because of Eve.⁵⁰

I conclude that the fourth view, that of physical safety during childbirth, is the strongest. The second view maintains only a tenuous connection with the text itself, and the third view does not adequately explain the place of childbearing in working out one's salvation. The first view is a strong possibility, but does lack contextual references. The fourth view, which I support, brings the physical salvation of woman into conjunction with her spiritual salvation, and thus coordinates with the biblical message that Christ's salvation is not confined to the spirit, but is for the body as well.

⁴⁷ Keener, 118.

⁴⁸ Moo, *RBMW*, 192.

⁴⁹ Witherington, 124.

⁵⁰ Keener, 119.

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Exposition of the Passage in Relation to the Question of Women in Ministry

Wives are to learn as proper students when being taught the Word of God. That is, they are quietly or calmly to listen and be submissive to the teaching. This was, and in some societies still is, an elevation of women to the role of serious learners, following the example of Jesus who commended Mary for taking her place among the disciples at Jesus' feet.

Some women were teaching error in the Ephesian church. Perhaps women were involved in sneaking into households and teaching their errors to "weak-willed women."⁵¹ "Myths" were being taught by "older women" (1 Tim. 4:7), and younger women were going about saying what they ought not (1 Tim. 5:13), some having "already turned away to follow Satan" (1 Tim. 5:15).

Alliance missionaries are familiar with the fact that it is not uncommon in pagan societies for there to be a body of mythology and pagan lore that is transmitted through the women to other women. Kroeger demonstrates that women in the Greco-Roman culture were the people who taught the stories, fables, and myths.⁵²

Although the exact content of the myths condemned in the Pastorals cannot be determined, it is evident that pagan elements were being mixed with Jewish and Christian teaching, so that the result was unsound teaching that could destroy whole households.

Because these false teachings are not arising out of one identifiable source, but seemed to be seeping into the church from the Ephesian religious milieu, Paul takes action against them on several fronts.

First Paul seeks to strengthen Timothy, the pastor, in the Word of God. He is to keep himself doctrinally and morally pure and to resist falsehood by teaching truth. Timothy is to "hold on to the faith with a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:19), publicly reading, preaching, and teaching the Word (1 Tim. 4:13), which Word is able to make people wise unto salvation (2 Tim.2:15). Thus the teaching of the Word is in itself the strongest antidote to the myths.

Paul also wants the Christians to conduct themselves properly in relation to truth. It is not enough for men to pray; they are to pray from the standpoint of personal purity (lifting holy hands) which more specifically means without anger or disputing. We can assume that the emphasis on sound and false doctrine means that an acceptance of sound doctrine will enhance the unity of the believing community. The wives also are to

⁵¹ The NIV falsely creates the impression that only men are in view as the teachers by use of the word "men" in verse 8 as a translation for *anthropoi*. However, in verse 2 the same word in the same case is translated "people."

⁵² Kroeger, *Suffer*, 131.

be aligned in word and deed with the central tenets of the faith. They are to "make themselves attractive. . . with reverence and good mental judgment (*sophrosyne*, repeated in v.15).⁵³

Thus the emphasis on a proper alignment to truth is strongly present at the beginning of the discussion of women's responsibilities, and that emphasis closes the discussion. This will be accomplished by their adopting the attitude of true students of the Word, which means they are reverently to submit to its truth.

Paul then gives more specific instructions. The wife is not to introduce false teachings to her husband, for if she does, she will, like Eve, seriously harm him. Perhaps some wives were seeking to impose on their husbands the false teachings based on myths that they had learned, and some husbands were accepting the false teaching while others resisted. By forbidding this activity by the wives, Paul could block one of the pathways by which the heresies were being transmitted.

Even though we do not know the precise content of the myths, that they involved matters specific to the concerns of women seems probable, and this may help to explain the sudden appearance of Paul's words of comfort and assurance to women on the subject of childbirth, for there are numerous recorded prayers by women to pagan deities for safety during labor and birth.

The mention of Eve and her sin might immediately cause women to remember that the curse involved traumatic childbirth that frequently led to death. But the redemption of Christ is rolling back even that effect of the fall, and, as true and godly Christian women, they could with confidence look to the Lord as their protector during the dangerous time of childbirth. Women are encouraged to follow in the way of the gospel in holiness and sobriety. Thus, Paul's appeal to the Genesis account accomplishes his purpose of refutation of false teachers.

I would *translate* verses 11-15 this way.

A wife should learn in full submission and quietness. I do not permit a wife to harm her husband by teaching. She is to be in quietness. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the wife was deceived and became a sinner. But she will be saved through childbearing if she continues in faith, love, holiness, with wise thinking.

⁵³ Gloria Neufeld Redekop, "Let the Women Learn: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 Reconsidered," *Studies in Religion*, 19:2, 238. "*Sophrosyne* together with its derivatives appears 16 times in the New Testament. Ten of these occurrences are in the Pastorals. In all instances the reference is to "mental soundness," "reasonableness," or "good judgment," yet in 1 Timothy 2, when it refers to women, most translate it "discretely" or "with propriety." The King James Version and the Revised Standard Version do hint at "mental soundness" in their translations "with sobriety" and "sensibly." However, since in these versions the word modifies the verb "adorn," the association with clothing remains."

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I would *paraphrase* verses 11-15 this way:

Wives should not be noisy and distracted when being taught, but learn in quietness and in full submission to God. I forbid a wife to deliver a mortal, spiritual blow to her husband by teaching him false doctrine. She must be in a learning attitude. This command is based on the fact that Adam was formed first, and Eve next, as a companion, a helper, to him. She, not Adam, was deceived (which is why you wives must learn God's Word). So she sinned, and that sin had continuing effects for her and women from then on, effects even on childbirth. But, in spite of that sin and its curse of pain in childbirth, God will save the woman who remains godly in action and in mind, while she is giving birth.

Summary

The situation in the Ephesian church addressed by Paul in the pastoral epistles is one where false teachings threatened the church. This should not surprise us after reading the account of the riots in Ephesus which centered around the worship of the mother goddess Artemis. False teaching seldom enters a church in a straightforward way. Usually it creeps in with a wrong interpretation here, a misuse of Scripture there. This is especially so when it may come from a variety of sources, as would be the case in all of Asia Minor. Paul must, therefore, instruct Timothy to build up the defense of the church on a number of fronts. This is the reason why there is both instruction on church leadership, as well as instruction for personal and family life.

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul's instructions gradually grow more specific. He begins the chapter by speaking to people generally, and then becomes more specific as he exhorts, on the one hand, husbands, and, on the other hand, wives, to avoid sins that are particularly related to them and which negatively affect their prayers. The specificity continues with very pointed instructions to wives about learning the Word and having a proper attitude in learning, and not harming their husbands through false teaching. This concern that a wife not wrongly teach her husband is one found in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

The key consideration is the word *authentein*. Some have claimed that traditionally the church has understood this to mean "authority," plain and simple. However, a recent study has shown that this is not the case. The translation of "authority" is in fact late medieval. Others have said that the word in the first century meant "authority," plain and simple. However, this also is not the case. In the first century it was still carrying its connotation of violent, even murderous acts. This leads us to believe that Paul uses this word as a metaphorical hyperbole, much like other metaphorical hyperboles in Scripture such as "it (the tongue) is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (Js. 3:8). Paul is forbidding wives to pass on false teaching, "old wives tales" that will have the result of

spiritually destroying their husbands. "Remember Eve!," Paul says, "don't follow in her footsteps. Wives, purify your lives, and your minds, continuing in faith, love, holiness and wise thinking" (*sophrosunes*) (1 Tim. 2:15).

Conclusion

In order to view this passage as a blanket prohibition of women being part of the leadership of the church, and of their teaching men, some commentators have sought to reconstruct a contextual situation in which women were seeking to break out of their traditional roles in Ephesus and were in fact exercising authority and teaching men. From what we know of the culture and from the lack of evidence in the pastorals, this appears to be a highly unlikely scenario.

On the other hand, the exegetical conclusion that Paul is seeking to stop the infectious spread of heresy, both by addressing its false points directly, and, by severing the connection by which it was moving from the women to the men via the wives, seems to have high probability.

Further, it should be noted that the passage in question does not distinguish strongly between conduct in the gathered congregation, that is, how people should conduct themselves in church, and conduct in the home. The exhortations to men and women regarding prayer and personal holiness and learning would apply when the church gathered, but would not be limited to it. The shift of attention from men and women in general, to the husband and wife, and then to childbearing wives, reinforces the application of the teaching to everyday life as opposed to an "assembled congregation" specific context.

There are present in the passage elements that are cultural and time-bound, as well as abiding principles. Specifically, the exact nature of the heresies and myths is lost to us. But the call to prayer, unity, personal holiness, and teachableness; the respect for the husband as the one who is to provide spiritual teaching to his family; and the promise of the Lord's help, using the powerful word "saved" during childbirth, are all universal principles.

Throughout the New Testament women are seen to be active in ministry at every level, including the level of apostleship (Rom. 16:7). We must assume that in their cultural setting first century women such as Pricilla, Phoebe, and Junia were fully functional in ministry. They taught men, for we know that Pricilla taught Apollos; they were co-laborers with Paul; and from the fact that Junia was called an apostle⁵⁴ we can conclude that she planted churches and exercised authority over them. This authority would

⁵⁴ Keener says, "Although the name as it occurs here could be a contraction for the masculine Junianus, there is no evidence for this in extant Roman inscriptions, and the most natural way to read the name is 'Junia, a common enough woman's name' (242).

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include, not only teaching, but the full range of ministry activities, including baptizing and serving communion. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 does not alter or restrict that involvement.

Therefore, the passage does not forbid women being involved in the leadership of the church, nor does it forbid their teaching men the Word of God. Women should be allowed, on the basis of the New Testament, to be fully active in every part, and at every level of ministry, as were their first century counterparts. I conclude in concurrence with A. B. Simpson who wrote in reply to someone who complained about women preaching and teaching in the early Alliance that the issue was not that women taught, but what they taught. As long as they taught the truth, there is no reason to hinder them.