

FIRST TIMOTHY 2:8–15

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Introduction

First Timothy 2:8–15 is one of the most controversial passages with regard to the New Testament’s treatment of women. This essay will examine 1 Tim 2:8–15 by noting the occasion that prompted the letter: heretical elders had gained a foothold in the church of Ephesus. Following this, three verbal clues will be discussed so as to establish a link between the false teachers and the younger widows of 1 Timothy 5. The discussion of the young widows concludes that they were spreading the false teaching. Having made this connection, I will argue that Paul wrote 1 Tim 2:8–15 as he thought of these women. The paper concludes with the understanding that the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 is preventing women from teaching heresy in a domineering manner.

Occasional Context: Erring Elders and Problem Women

False teachers had infiltrated the leadership of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:29–30).¹ Paul wrote 1 Timothy some time in the 60s so as to instruct Timothy to silence them (1 Tim 1:3).² The gravity of the situation in Ephesus is evident from the outset.

1. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 8. Commenting on 1 Tim 3:1–7, Marshall notes that “The list of qualities required . . . is to some extent a contrast with the vices of the heretics” (Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 473. See the section, 473–84).

2. For a defense of Pauline authorship and a date within the 60s, see Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 360–71.

The traditional opening prayer of blessing is absent.³ Upon opening his letter Paul immediately identifies some of the false doctrines: they are fixated on “fables and endless genealogies” and the “law” (1 Tim 1:4, 7). This description is significant from several angles. First, its position in the letter tells of its importance: it occurs very early, coming immediately after the introduction. Second, it sheds light on the content of the heresy, for it is the first false doctrine that Paul identifies. Beyond its position in the letter, a fixation on genealogies would also seem to be indicated by the adjective “endless.” This doctrine was prominent in Paul’s mind as he thought of the false teaching. Later on, Paul also notes that they forbade marriage, and quite likely sexual union within marriage. Some foods were also prohibited (1 Tim 4:1–3). It seems that the heresy was a deviant form of Judaism.

The heresy did more than just create abstract problems. It led to wrong behavior in the church. Paul portrays the false teachers as being argumentative (1 Tim 6:4), greedy (1 Tim 6:5), self-asserting and aggressive (1 Tim 6:3–5), as well as proud (1 Tim 6:5). Since they were ranked among the leaders, their example had created a context of conflict, leading others to engage in un-Christian behavior (1 Tim 2:8, 9–10, 6:17–19). Hence the whole letter was written to counter the false teachers, so that the church in Ephesus would know how to “conduct” (*anastrephesthai*) itself (1 Tim 3:15).⁴

3. The only other letters missing this greeting are Galatians and Titus, both of which treat situations of urgency. Elsewhere in Paul’s correspondence to churches (Rom 1:8–10; 1 Cor 1:4–6; 2 Cor 1:3–7; Eph 1:1–10; Phil 1:4–6; Col 1:3–4; 1 Thess 1:2–3; 2 Thess 1:3–4; 2 Tim 1:3–4) and to individuals (Phlm 4–7), he follows the traditional format of letter writing.

4. There is a tendency to use 1 Tim 3:15 in a way that bypasses the occasional context of false teachers, and draws the inference that 1 Timothy may be used primarily as a manual for establishing an “order” for the church. See for example, Polythress, “The Church as Family,” 235–36. However, the verb ἀναστρέφω refers to “conduct” or “demeanor” and does not have the sense of “order,” “arrange,” “establish,” “set up,” or “organize.” The same applies to its cognate noun, ἀναστροφή (Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 72–73). Moreover, Polythress uses the ethos of family (1 Tim 5:1–2) to translate the household organization into the structural shape of the church. It is

False Teachers and the Younger Widows

The church in Ephesus was made up of a cross-section of Roman society. From an economic standpoint, there were wealthy (1 Tim 6:19) and poor, such as slaves (1 Tim 6:1–2). There were married couples (1 Tim 3:2) as well as widows (1 Tim 5:9–11). There were members over sixty years of age (1 Tim 5:9) and younger members such as children. In short, the church reflected the diversity of the society around it. Presumably, within the church at Ephesus, people of different backgrounds embraced the false teachings. However, three verbal links suggest that the false teachers had their greatest success with the younger widows in the congregation. These links are the use of the verb “turn aside” (*ektrepō*), the concept of “idle talk,” and the following of “demonic” or “Satanic” teachings.

Ektrepō is used in the pastorals only with reference to false teachings, and primarily with regard to the young widows.⁵ On a general level, those influenced by the heresy are said to have “turned aside.”⁶ Again, those not listening to the truth have “turned aside” to fables (2 Tim 4:4). Timothy is warned not to “turn aside to profane and idle babblings” (1 Tim 6:20). However, the younger widows are said to have actually taken this step. They have “turned aside after Satan” (1 Tim 5:13). While this description would theoretically apply to anyone who

telling that in so doing he passes over the structure of household slavery (1 Tim 6:1–2). Neither does he comment on Paul’s instructions that younger widows (those under 60) be married (1 Tim 5:14). The selection of some aspects of a first-century household, such as male leadership, and the passing over of others, such as slavery and the requirement that widows under sixty be married, suggests that a prior concept of the “household” is in fact operative in his argument.

5. Fee has rightly noted that the concept of wandering away from the faith is an integral idea in 1 Timothy, which is expressed using different verbs (Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 43–44). However, of the verbs that are used to convey this concept (ἀπωθέω, ἀφίστημι, ἐκτρέπω) only ἐκτρέπω is applied to a specific group of the congregation. This is not done with the other verbs that communicate the idea of “turning away.”

6. 1 Tim 1:6; Gk. ἐξετράπησαν.

followed the false teachers apart from the young widows, this label is applied to no other segment of the congregation.

The false teaching is characterized by “idle talk” (1 Tim 1:6).⁷ *Mataiologia* is a compound noun made up of *mataios* meaning “idle” or “empty” and the word *logos* meaning “communication” that is “chiefly oral” in nature.⁸ The fruit of the false teaching is manifested in the young widows. They are “idle,” and not only idle but also “gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (1 Tim 5:13). This is especially significant because within the Pastorals the terms *argos* (idle) and *matalogia* are used exclusively to describe the false teaching.⁹ And once again, while this description of “idle” might describe any person that listened to the false teachers, in 1 Timothy, it is only applied to the young widows.

Another link between the false teaching and the young widows is in the description of their beliefs. The false teaching is described as the “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). The younger widows are said to have turned aside after “Satan” (1 Tim 5:15). The semantic overlap between “Satan” and “demons” is such as to indicate another link between the false teachers and the younger widows. And again, Paul says this of no other segment of the congregation; only the younger widows are described as such.

It is important to note that when Paul says that they are “busybodies”¹⁰ (*periergoi*) in 1 Tim 5:13, he is *not* referring to the women who are chatting about their neighbors’ affairs. This term is used in one other place in the New Testament, in Acts 19:19. There it is translated “those who practice sorcery” (NIV). In 1 Timothy, *periergoi* is used in a paragraph where Paul concludes that the young widows have turned aside after Satan. The term “busybodies” conveys much more than gossip. It refers to their advocacy of the false teachings as they go house to house (1 Tim 5:13). As we shall see later on, it is significant that Paul has

7. Gk. ματαιολογία.

8. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 621, 599.

9. See also Titus 1:12 where ἄργός is used.

10. Gk. περίεργοι.

portrayed these women as being among those who were advancing the false teachings. When coupled with Paul's use of the expression "turn aside," as well as the concept of "idle talk" this suggests that in Paul's mind, there was a unique link between the false teachers and the young widows.

By forbidding marriage, the false teachers opened up new roles for women in the congregation, apart from their traditional roles as wives or mothers.¹¹ Perhaps this explains the teaching's success with the women in the congregation.¹² One particularly sought-after role was that of teacher. In his opening comments Paul states that the false teachers want "to be teachers of the law" (1 Tim 1:7). Inasmuch as a student will be like their teacher, this seems also to describe the aspirations of the younger widows. Paul warned that the widows had been going from "house to house . . . saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim 5:13). Here a number of observations are in order. First, going "house to house" is Paul's own description of his ministry in Ephesus (Acts 20:20). The false teachers had adopted it in order to draw—"make captive"—the women after themselves (2 Tim 3:6). Now the young widows were using the same method that had been used to lead them astray (1 Tim. 5:13). Second, inasmuch as these young widows had already been sitting at the feet of the false teachers (1 Tim 5:12 "*learn to be idle*," also 1 Tim 1:6), "saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim 5:13) refers to the content of the false teachings.¹³ Given the success that the false teachers enjoyed with the young widows, these women ought to be included among those who desire "to be teachers of the law" (1 Tim 1:7). Thus, Paul is aware that young widows figured prominently among those who were listening to the false teachers and pursuing positions of leadership,

11. Moo, "What Does It Mean," 181.

12. Ibid.

13. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 122. The errant content of their speech is further suggested by the terms φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, the latter of which is used in Acts 19:19 to describe "spells" and "magical arts" (Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 125).

particularly teaching.¹⁴ This situation is the backdrop for 1 Tim 2:8–15.

The Literary Context: 1 Timothy 2:8–15

The first problem Paul corrects deals with the men.¹⁵ They are instructed as to how they should pray.¹⁶ The focus on their demeanor connects this passage to the larger theme of 1 Timothy: the conduct of the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:14–15). They are to pray “without wrath and disputing,” in all likelihood because the false teachings were causing dissension.¹⁷ Prayer is good, but the manner in which it was being done was not.

The term “likewise” signals that Paul is going to instruct the women.¹⁸ His concern for the church’s conduct (1 Tim 3:15) is piqued by the women’s attire. They were to dress (Gk. *en katastolē*) with propriety (*sōphrosunē*). *Katastolē*, denotes not only clothing, but “deportment” or the manner in which one

14. Among other arguments, Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 124, has objected that 1 Timothy does not *explicitly* indicate that women were teaching because it does not use the word “teach.” Therefore, he concludes, the prohibition from teaching in 1 Tim 2:12 cannot be a correction to women who were teaching in the church, and who were being prohibited because they were deceived. This objection is problematic. Teaching is broadly understood as conveying information—whether it be true or false—through the medium of speech. And this is precisely what Paul indicates these women are doing with the heresy: going house to house and *saying* things that they ought not. Furthermore, Mounce’s objection falls short because the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 could still be directed against women who were deceived *even if they were not already teaching, for Paul knew that they were vying for this position* (1 Tim 1:7). In this case, Paul’s prohibition would be a pre-emptive measure.

15. Gk. ἄνδρας. 1 Tim 2:8 begins with “thus” (Gk. οὕν). This connects the pericope to the preceding references to the false teaching (1 Tim 1:3; 1:19b—2:1).

16. ἄνδρας is best understood as “men” and not “husbands,” contra Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office.” For a rebuttal see Schreiner, “An Interpretation,” 93–94.

17. *Ibid.*, 91.

18. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 447, says, “The common factor is ‘instruction’ not the content of the instruction.”

conducts oneself.¹⁹ The women's expensive clothes flaunted their status and were a form of self-advancement that was inconsistent with Christian character. The latter term, *sōphrosunē* introduces and concludes the whole passage (1 Tim 2:15). It refers to "propriety." Dressing is appropriate, but the manner in which these women were dressing clearly was not.

While all women could afford to clothe themselves in good works (1 Tim 2:10), only a few could afford to dress "with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes (1 Tim 2:9).²⁰ Prior to discussing the more contested verses of this passage, it should be noted that Paul is giving absolute instructions to women, *even when it is clear that he only has a select group of wealthy women in mind* (1 Tim 6:17). This ought to alert the reader that in 1 Tim 2:12, Paul may only be addressing a particular group of women, such as the younger widows, even as he uses absolute language. Elsewhere the wealthy were instructed not to be "arrogant" (1 Tim 6:17).²¹ Again, being wealthy is not wrong in itself, but it is wrong to be arrogant by dressing ostentatiously.

The women's dress was an indication of their spiritual inclination. Paul offers corrective instructions in vv. 11 and 12.²² He begins speaking of "woman" generically and in the singular, rather than the plural as v. 9. He gives the imperative "Let a

19. Schreiner, "An Interpretation," 94.

20. Padgett, "Wealthy Women," 23, comments, "This concern for modesty in dress was also a standard Greco-Roman virtue for women. Yet the selection of what not to wear indicates that these women were wealthy."

21. Schreiner has offered a typical objection to the view that the Ephesian women were prevented from teaching because they were deceived. Commenting on v. 12, he writes: "A prohibition against women alone seems to be reasonable only if all the women in Ephesus were duped by the false teaching. This latter state of affairs is quite unlikely" (Schreiner, "An Interpretation," 92). As we have seen, even though only a few women could afford to dress with gold and pearls, Paul offers an absolute prohibition against any woman's doing so. Paul's method of problem-solving, just prior to the most contested verses in the passage (vv. 11–12), suggests that it is indeed possible that in vv. 11–12 Paul may well have a specific group of women in mind even though he addresses women generally, just as he does here in vv. 9–10.

22. Padgett, "Wealthy Women," 23.

woman learn.”²³ Apart from 1 Tim 2:11, the verb for “learn” is used only in connection with the widows in Ephesus. The first instance is corrective with reference to older widows’ families (1 Tim 5:4). A widow’s children and grandchildren must “learn” to care for their own widows. This sort of learning refers to the general “learning” that comes with life, rather than learning through formal instruction. More telling, however, is 1 Tim 5:13. The younger widows “learn to be idle.” That the widows have learned the content of the heresy indicates that they have been sitting at the feet of the false teachers. In 1 Tim 2:11 the context refers to formal instruction by the church. Given the prevalence of false teaching in Ephesus and the use of “learn” in 1 Tim 5:13, the implied contrast in 1 Tim 2:11 is between false and orthodox teachers.²⁴ The submission enjoined thus refers to orthodox teachers, and not to husbands.

Paul’s concern is to correct the manner in which the women are to learn from the orthodox teachers. The term for “quietness” (*hēsuchia*) forms an *inclusio* around vv. 11 and 12. *Hēsuchia* can refer to the absence of speech. But it can also refer to a peaceful disposition. In this case, it is the disposition required of a student. Indeed, earlier in the same chapter, Paul used the adjectival form of *hēsuchia* with the meaning “tranquil” or “peaceful” (1 Tim 2:2). The women are also to learn in “all submission.” Inasmuch as they had previously been learning from false teachers, when they sit at the feet of the orthodox, they are not to dispute. That they are to learn in “all” submission indicates that they are to assent to every aspect of right teaching, and not just parts.²⁵

If there is an *inclusio* around vv. 11 and 12, there is also a contrast between the two verses. Whereas v. 11 enjoins women to learn, v. 12 prohibits the activity of teaching. There is an implied object attached to the verb “to teach.” Did Paul forbid a

23. Gk. μαθησάτω.

24. “Paul’s imperative should be seen as a concern that women learn from orthodox teachers, and not primarily as a liberating force for women.” (Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 452).

25. *Ibid.*, 454.

woman to teach *orthodoxy* or *heresy*?²⁶ One perspective holds that the object of “to teach” refers to the authoritative teaching of church.²⁷ Another is that it refers to the teaching of error.²⁸ The Greek verb *didaskō* usually refers to the teaching of correct doctrine in the New Testament. However, this is a function of the scope of the New Testament and not of the verb. That is to say, given that the New Testament records the teachings of Jesus and his apostles, it is to be expected that *didaskō* is most often used of orthodox teaching.²⁹ The verb’s ability to refer to both truth and error is evidenced in the Pastoral epistles. In Titus 1:11 it refers to false teachings.³⁰ But in “itself the [verb] says nothing as to the acceptability or otherwise of the teaching as such.”³¹

One often-overlooked point suggests that in 1 Tim 2:12 *didaskēin* refers to the teaching of error. The object of the verb *didaskō* is governed by its subject, and not by the form of the

26. The infinitives “to teach” (Gk. διδάσκειν) and “to have authority” (Gk. αὐθεντεῖν) are introduced by a first-person present tense use of the verb ἐπιτρέπω. While the terseness of the English translation “I do not permit” seems imperatival, it should be recalled that this is not a command, but a regular use of the indicative mood, present tense. The duration of this prohibition will have to be determined by the context of the verb (Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 454).

27. Moo, “What Does It Mean,” 185.

28. Belleville, “Teaching,” 223; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 73.

29. Contra Shreiner, “An Interpretation,” 77, who argues that the verb had positive connotations because διδάσκειν is “almost always used in a positive sense in the Pastorals.”

30. Titus 1:10–11 reads: “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not” (NKJV). That the content of verb διδάσκω is made explicit with the phrase “things which they ought not” is helpful, but it is not required to understand that the teaching is heresy. That the teaching is false could be concluded simply on the basis of Paul’s description of the teachers as “idle talkers and deceivers.” Thus, contra Kostenberger, in 1 Tim 2:12 Paul would not have had to offer “some other contextual qualifier specifying the (inappropriate or heretical) content of the teaching (as in Titus 1:11)” —especially given Paul’s description of the false teachers as “idle.” See Kostenberger, “Complex Sentence,” 74.

31. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 455.

verb itself. For example, when Jesus is teaching, the content of the teaching, whether it is explicit or implicit, may be understood as orthodox (Mark 4:1, 6:34, Luke 6:6, John 7:35, Acts 1:1). The same rule applies when the apostles teach. Conversely, when the person who teaches is a hypocrite, the teaching is rightly understood as falsehood (Matt 15:8–9). This analysis does not vary when the focus is narrowed to the infinitive *didaskein*. It is the character of the subject who is teaching that will determine whether a teaching is true or false. This has implications for *didaskein* in 1 Tim 2:12. Whether *didaskein* refers to false or true teaching hinges on Paul's estimation of the character of the women doing the teaching, and not on the form of the verb.³²

Paul's description of the young widows suggests that Paul knew that the false teachers had had their greatest success with at least one segment of the female portion of the church in Ephesus. Furthermore, v. 12 implies that it is directed against women who are deceived. It is Eve (Genesis 3), who was deceived, who is used as a parallel to the women in the prohibition. Coupled with Paul's awareness of the false teachers' success with women, this "strongly suggests the conclusion that behind the present prohibition lies some particular false teaching by the women."³³

32. Schreiner holds that "[T]he fact that διδάσκειν has no object strongly suggests that the verse is a positive command" (Schreiner, "An Interpretation," 77). Contrary to Schreiner's objection, that the verb has no object is probably irrelevant. It is the subject that determines the content of the teaching, not the form of the verb. The question thus becomes, "What did Paul think of the women who were teaching in 2:8–15?" Furthermore, in the New Testament there are several instances where the verb διδάσκω has no object that makes explicit the nature of the teaching (Matt 11:1; 26:22; Mark 2:13; 6:6; Luke 5:3; 5:17; Acts 11:26; Rom 2:21). The examples listed here are not given so as to imply that we cannot know whether teaching is orthodox or not. Rather, they raise the question, which is not asked by Schreiner, as to *how we may know that a teaching is orthodox or heresy*. When there is no object to define the nature of the teaching, the content of the teaching must be inferred from the surrounding verses and chapters, which is all that this reading is doing for 1 Tim 2:12. More specifically, this must include a consideration of the subject who is doing the teaching.

33. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 458. In today's polemical context, anyone who argues that women were teaching in Ephesus is viewed as having an

Hence, *didaskō* does not refer to orthodox doctrinal instruction, but rather to the teaching of falsehood.³⁴ This is what these women who have “turned after Satan” are prevented from teaching.

The second infinitive, *authentēin*, is typically understood to represent the authority of an office-holder in the church. But *authentēin* contains a forceful element that is lost by the translation “to have authority” (NIV). In 1 Tim 2:12, the verb is better rendered “domineer.” This is suggested through a combination of three lines of reasoning: (1) the external evidence of word studies, (2) Paul’s over-riding concern for the church’s demeanor in 1 Tim 2:8–15, and (3) the manner in which *authentēin* is joined with the previous infinitive *didaskein*. To the first of these we now turn.

One important word study is Al Wolters’s, “A Semantic Study of αὐθεντίας and Its Derivatives.” Wolters separates the use of the noun from the verb. As for the noun, *authentēs*, Wolters delineates how the sense of “murderer” was not present in koine Greek.³⁵ He concludes that the verb should be understood as deriving from the sense that it had “in the living Greek of the day,” namely, “master.” The authority that underlies the meaning “master” is thus taken to be the basis of the authority of the office of elder within the church. In light of his analysis, Wolters concludes that there seems to be no basis for the claim that *authentēin* in 1 Tim. 2:12 has a pejorative connotation, as in “usurp authority” (KJV) or “domineer.”³⁶

It is of interest to note that in his conclusion, Wolters differs from Henry Baldwin, even if ultimately they would both prefer

agenda that is driving their exegesis. However, in a different context, John Chrysostom commented on 1 Tim 2:14 that Eve taught Adam when she gave him the forbidden fruit. “The woman taught once, and ruined all” (Homily IX: 1 Timothy ii.11–15, 435–36).

34. Schreiner, “An Interpretation,” 104, has overstated the case when he says: “there is no evidence that the infinitive διδάσκειν should be rendered “to teach falsely.” His analysis does not consider how the object of this verb is governed by its subject.

35. Wolters, “Semantic Study,” 152.

36. *Ibid.*, 170.

the translation “have authority over” for 1 Tim 2:12. On the basis of a word study *alone*, Baldwin leaves open the possibility of rendering the term “to control, to dominate” or “to compel.”³⁷ Nevertheless, without reviewing the entirety of Wolters’s article, two matters deserve comment. The first is his treatment of BGU 1208.38. The second is his discussion of the noun’s translation. From this, it shall be concluded that although Wolters’s article is a helpful study, his application to 1 Tim 2:12 does not do justice to the forcefulness of *authentēin*.

BGU 1208.38 is an extra-biblical use of *authentēin* that is dated 27 BC. Its proximity to 1 Timothy makes this witness especially important. Wolters relies on Liddell-Scott-Jones and other “standard lexica” to derive the meaning “to have full power over or authority over.” To understand BGU 1208 as having “full power *over*” is grammatically untenable. The preposition *pros* with the accusative does not carry the sense of “over” in the Greek. Being attentive to the range of meanings permitted by the use of *pros* with the accusative, Linda Belleville suggests that BGU 1208 be understood as “I had my way *with* him” or perhaps “I took a firm stand *with* him.”³⁸ Despite this criticism, what is particularly helpful about LSJ’s treatment of BGU 1208 is its inclusion of the forceful element in *authentēin*. Indeed, what does it mean to exercise *full* power over someone, as opposed to simply exerting power? Unfortunately, this aspect of LSJ’s definition is not discussed by Wolters. However, Wolters does discuss the transfer of the derivative noun *authentēs* into other languages. And this will shed light on LSJ’s definition of *authentēin* as “having full power.”

An important point in Wolters’s article concerns the use of the noun.³⁹ He concludes, “To the best of my knowledge all examples of loanwords drawn from the *authentēs* family depend for their meaning on *authentēs* ‘master,’ and none has a pejorative sense.”⁴⁰ The translation “have authority over” for 1 Tim

37. Baldwin, “An Important Word,” 51.

38. Belleville, “Teaching,” 209–18, 214.

39. Wolters, “Semantic Study,” 164–66.

40. *Ibid.*, 166.

2:12 thus receives further support from this reasoning. Wolters is certainly correct that the meaning “master”—and its implied authority—is present in the various borrowings of the noun into other languages. But the use of *authentēs* with the sense “master” also creates other problems for understanding 1 Tim 2:12 simply in terms of “having authority over.”

Authentēs translates easily into contexts that speak not only of authority, but also of the possession of an extraordinary amount of authority. For example, Wolters shows that the term was taken over into Turkish as *effendi* meaning “master.”⁴¹ He links this pattern of transfer (i.e., *authentēs* to *effendi*) to 1 Tim 2:12 by extracting *only* the notion of authority from the translation. Excluded from consideration is the quantity of authority that is present in *effendi* and *authentēs*. It is those excluded aspects that make understanding 1 Tim 2:12 as “authority over” problematic.

There is much more to the term *effendi* than simply the notion of authority. Middle Eastern specialist Kenneth Bailey has commented on this loan word by noting that the Sultan to whom this referred had “life and death powers over the people of his empire.”⁴² This level of authority is consistent with LSJ’s rendering of BGU 1208.38 as having “full power or authority over.” But it is hard to imagine Paul granting “full power” in this sense to the elders of Christ’s church. In short, Wolters seems to have proven his case too well. The extra-biblical use of *authentēin* testifies to an excess of power when compared to that of an elder. Otherwise put, the extra-biblical evidence relates to 1 Tim 2:12 in the same way a guest sleeps on a “Procrustean bed.” The excess is cut off in order to make it fit. On the other hand, the notion of *authentēin* as having “full power over” and the use of its derivative noun *authentēs* to create *effendi* (who were masters possessing the power to take a life) renders *authentēin* susceptible to the translation “to lord it over,” or more colloquially, “to dominate.” However, negative connotations do not seem to be

41. The pronunciation of *authentēs* at the time this word was borrowed into Turkish would have been very similar to *effendi*, since *au* was pronounced *av*, and the letter *eta* was pronounced “*ee*” as in *see*.

42. Bailey, “Women”, 8.

necessarily associated with the verb. Here the quantity of authority is what is at issue. Thus, before any negative connotation can be associated with the verb, the literary context and syntax of 1 Tim 2:12 must also be considered.

The verb *authentēin* appears only once in the New Testament and has a range of meanings in extra-biblical writings. The range of meanings may be narrowed by considering the dominant theme of the pericope in which it appears. It is located at the center of a double *inclusio* that is concerned with the church's demeanor. *Authentēin* is first enclosed by a concern for "propriety" (*sōphrosunē*; 1 Tim 2:9, 15). Then it is enclosed by a concern for "quietness" (*hēsuchia*; 1 Tim 2:11–12). Both terms refer to the way a person handles themselves, or their demeanor. In this connection, it is useful to recall that *katastolē* in 1 Tim 2:10 refers not only to the women's dress, but also her "deportment" or the manner in which she conducts oneself.⁴³ Paul mentions *authentēin* in a context where the manner in which people act is uppermost in his thoughts, both immediately before and after v. 12. It seems reasonable that his use of *authentēin* in this context would be directed towards the women's demeanor. Indeed, we should be surprised were it not. Combined with the earlier attestation for a forceful meaning for the verb (BGU 1208.38), this literary context suggests that something about their demeanor seemed forceful or heavy-handed. However, before the meaning of *authentēin* can be determined with even greater precision, the syntax of v. 12 also requires that *authentēin* be related to the infinitive "to teach."

The infinitive *authentēin* is joined to the first infinitive *didaskein* by the conjunction *oude*. This requires that the author have the same perspective on both infinitives. Thus, if *didaskein* or *authentēin* can be shown to have a positive or negative connotation, then the other infinitive will have the same connotation.⁴⁴ As we have already seen, in this context, *didaskein* has a negative sense. It is used to prevent deceived women

43. Schreiner, "An Interpretation," 94.

44. Kostenberger, "Complex Sentence," 74.

from teaching. Joining *authenthein* to *didaskein* re-enforces the notion that *authenthein* will have a negative connotation.

The conclusion of v. 12 also suggests that *authenthein* refers to a wrong demeanor, such as domineering. In v. 11 the women are to “be in silence.” As we have already seen, *hēsuchia* refers not to the absence of speech, but to a tranquil demeanor (1 Tim 2:2). This has implications for v. 12. Where the solution resides in enjoining a particular demeanor, it stands to reason that the problem also relates to the women’s demeanor. The demeanor that caused the problem would thus be one that manifested a lack of “peace” or “tranquility.” “Domineer” would certainly be close to the mark. Thus, words studies, the literary context and syntax combine so that *authenthein* is best rendered negatively with the sense “to dominate” and not in the neutral or positive sense of “to have authority.”⁴⁵

Although *didaskein* and *authenthein* are two separate verbs, it is most likely that they are describing a single activity.⁴⁶ Thus on

45. This article has largely accepted Wolters’s analysis as to the extra-biblical uses of *authenthein*. It only questions whether the correct conclusions have been drawn from his analysis. However, for an analysis that argues forcefully for the sense of “domineer” as being present in the extra-biblical references, see Belleville “Teaching,” 209–18.

46. First, as Blomberg, “Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian,” 363, points out, in 1 Timothy 2 Paul has a pattern of “using pairs of partly synonymous words or expressions to make his main points.” He lists the following: “Verse 1 speaks of ‘petitions,’ ‘prayers,’ ‘intercessions,’ and ‘thanksgivings’; verse 2a, of ‘kings and all those who are in authority’; verse 2b, ‘of peaceful and quiet’ lives and of ‘godliness and holiness’; verse 3, of ‘good and acceptable’ behavior; verse 4, of being ‘saved’ and coming ‘to a knowledge of the truth’; verse 5, of our ‘God and Savior’; verse 7a, of a ‘herald and apostle’; verse 7b, of Paul’s assertion, ‘I speak truth; I do not lie’; verse 8, of ‘wrath and wranglings’; verse 9a, of ‘decency and propriety’; and verse 9b, of ‘gold and silver.’” Each of the members of these pairs may be distinguished from each other; however it is clear that Paul has one main group in mind for each pair. It seems likely that this is also the case for *didaskein* and *authenthein*. Second, vv. 11 and 12 are in antithetical parallel format. The learning in verse 11 is contrasted to the teaching that the women are prohibited from doing in v. 12. The learning in v. 11 is *modified* by the phrases “in quietness” and “in all submission.” These modifiers correspond to “have authority over.” This

this basis, v. 12 may be understood as “I do not permit a woman to teach a man error in a domineering manner.” Obviously Paul’s point is not that teaching error is acceptable if done politely. Rather, a woman may not domineer in order to advance heresy, which was most likely what was happening. Were she not advancing heresy, the heavy-handed demeanor would not be necessary. Here in v. 12, the women’s conduct echoes the larger concern in 1 Timothy, that the household of God would know how to conduct itself. Teaching is not wrong, but domineering in order to teach error is.

Paul justifies this prohibition by refuting two of the false teachings. First Timothy 2:13 is a genealogical treatment of Adam and Eve. In 1 Tim 1:4 Paul informs Timothy that the heretics are fixated on “endless genealogies.” Inasmuch as genealogies deal with “who comes from who,” in 1 Tim 2:13 Paul seems to be explaining why these women may not teach, because⁴⁷ they have been wrongly espousing some understanding of Adam and Eve that gave chronological priority to the woman.

The second false teaching is addressed in 1 Tim 2:14. Here Adam retains his personal name, but Eve is now referred to as “the woman.” Neither is the verse balanced internally. A balanced verse would read, “Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived.” Had it been Paul’s intention simply to point out the woman’s deception in the fall and Adam’s lack thereof, this would have been adequate. However, Paul gives particular emphasis to the woman’s deception. This is done first with the perfective use of the preposition *ek* joined to the verb *apataō* (deceive), so that Paul says of Eve that she has been *exapatētheisa* (lit. “really deceived!”).⁴⁸ The second imbalance occurs when Paul states something of the woman that he does

suggests that *authentēin* relates to *didaskēin*, not as a separate activity, but as a way of describing a single activity.

47. Gk. γάρ.

48. ἐξαπατάω can be used on its own to describe deception. For example, 2 Cor 11:3 applies it to Eve. Interestingly enough, nowhere else in the New Testament are ἀπατάω and ἐξαπατάω brought together as they are 1 Tim 2:14. Juxtaposing ἀπατάω with ἐξαπατάω heightens Paul’s intention of making a comparative contrast between the man and the woman.

not say of Adam; “she became a transgressor.” Paul’s point is certainly not to introduce a contrast that suggests that the man did not become a transgressor. Rather, he seems to be countering a teaching that denied or downplayed Eve’s deception.

Analogies that portrayed Eve as one who was enlightened rather than deceived were indeed present in diaspora Judaism when Paul wrote 1 Timothy. Philo of Alexandria’s *On the Cherubim* moves in this direction. Like Paul, Philo also refers to Adam by his name, but refers to Eve first as the “woman” and then later by her personal name. In an allegory that relates the mind to the body’s sense perception, Philo refers to Adam as mind, which, without perception, is “blind and helpless.” Whereupon, the woman, being perception, “directed masses of light toward the mind and dispersed the mist. She rendered the mind capable of seeing distinctly and with the utmost clarity the nature of the bodies, as now being a master.”⁴⁹ Far from being deceived, here the woman is portrayed as one who enlightens.

Philo himself did not understand Eve as an enlightened individual.⁵⁰ But traditions that allegorized Eve as a person who either taught or enlightened can be found in Jewish apocryphal wisdom writings (second century BC), and much later in gnostic writings.⁵¹ For example, the gnostic document, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, (written well after 1 Timothy) has Adam say of Eve, “She taught me a word of knowledge of the eternal God.”⁵² Other gnostic examples could be added.⁵³ Their relevance to Philo is simply to observe that his tendency to allegorize Adam and Eve was not an isolated phenomenon. Philo stands in an

49. Cited in Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 147–48, 215–16.

50. Perkins, “Gnostic Eve”, 45.

51. Perkins discusses Jewish (non-gnostic) allegorical readings of Eve in apocryphal wisdom literature. She notes, “There is nothing particularly ‘Gnostic’ in an exegetical tradition which understands Eve to be a principle of Wisdom and spiritual enlightenment for humanity.” *Ibid.*, 46.

52. *Ibid.*, 58.

53. *The Apocryphon of John* has Adam describe Eve saying, “And he (Adam) saw the woman beside him. And in that moment the luminous Epinoia appeared, and she lifted the veil which lay over his mind. And he became sober from the drunkenness of darkness” (www.gnosis.org/naghamm/apocjn.html).

allegorical exegetical tradition that both pre- and post-dates him. It would have been simple to develop a heretical rationale for women to teach based on Philo's portrayal of Eve as someone who directed "masses of light toward the mind."

That Paul was correcting false doctrines in vv. 13 and 14 is further suggested by his use of the verb *sōzō* in 1 Tim 2:15. Paul concludes his instructions to women by pointing to behavior that would be a demonstration of propriety (Gk. *sōphrosunē*; also 1 Tim 2:9).⁵⁴ Yet what exactly Paul meant with his solution in 1 Tim 2:15 has been much disputed.⁵⁵ Referring to the woman mentioned in 1 Tim 2:11–15a, Paul says "she will be saved" (Gk. *sōthēsetai*).⁵⁶ The verb *sōzō* is used in the fullest sense of eschatological salvation. The idea that women would be saved through childbearing goes against the core of Paul's theology that people are saved by faith. The awkwardness of this statement is alleviated by reading it in light of the false teachers whom Paul was opposing.

The false teachers had forbidden marriage and "probably sex generally" (1 Tim 4:3).⁵⁷ As such, any woman following their teachings would not have children. By listening to the false teachers, Paul said that they had "turned aside after Satan" (1 Tim 5:13). This would place their salvation in question, to say the least. Paul's advice to the young widows is thus for them to marry and bear children and manage the house (1 Tim 5:14). This is the same advice that Paul gives in 1 Tim 2:15, with a slightly different emphasis. By prescribing childbirth, Paul is

54. Susan Foh has described v. 15 as a *non sequitor* (cited in Scholer, "Place of Women," 195, from Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 1980, 128. However, the use of *σωφροσύνη* as an *inclusio* emphasizes the literary unity of the passage. Readings that treat v. 15 as peripheral to the main argument are rightly criticized as deficient. See, e.g., Scholer, "Place of Women," 195, n. 9.

55. See the various options in Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 469–70 or Coupland, "Salvation through Childbearing?" 302–3. A fine treatment of the grammatical issues of 1 Tim 2:15 is Porter, "What Does It Mean to Be Saved by Childbirth."

56. Porter, "What Does It Mean to Be Saved by Childbirth," 98.

57. Moo, "What Does It Mean," 181.

correcting another point of the false doctrine. Childbirth itself does not save, but by marrying and having children the young widows would demonstrate that they have repudiated the false doctrine which forbade marriage. This would explain Paul's use of the verb *sōzō* in a context dealing with childbirth. The closing qualification, "if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" reflects both Paul's hope for these women, as well as his reticence in regards to their standing in the faith. It is this reticence, born out of their connection with the false teachers, that leads Paul to forbid them to teach.

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