

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ASCERTAINING WOMEN'S GOD-ORDAINED ROLES: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15*

“But women will be saved through childbearing” (1 Tim 2:15; NIV)—this pronouncement of the writer of 1 Timothy¹ has puzzled commentators of

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¹The question of the authorship of the Pastorals has no direct bearing on this paper, even though the date of writing may alter the possible contemporary backdrop for 1 Tim 2:15 in terms of the respective stage of gnosticism at the time of writing. While the problems attached to Pauline authorship are several, the problems related to non-Pauline authorship are also very significant (cf. Stanley E. Porter, “Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon,” *BBR* 5 [1995]: 105–23; for a helpful general summary of the issues involved, see Thomas D. Lea, “Pseudonymity and the New Testament,” in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* [ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 533–59, esp. 553–56). Bruce M. Metzger, “A Reconsideration of Certain Arguments Against the Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles,” *ExpTim* 70 (1958): 91–94, has persuasively argued that the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals cannot merely be proven by statistical analysis (see also Donald Guthrie, “Appendix,” in *The Pastoral Epistles* [TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957; repr. 1984], 211–28; and Eta Linnemann, “Pauline Authorship and Vocabulary Statistics,” a paper presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Philadelphia, November 17, 1995). Likewise, the presence of pseudonymous epistles in New Testament times is as uncertain as the question whether the church would have chosen to include pseudonymous epistles in the New Testament canon. Cf. E. Earle Ellis, “Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents,” in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 212–24; and idem, “Pastoral Letters,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 658–66, esp. 659. Thus the book’s inclusion into the New Testament canon appears to imply early recognition of apostolic (Pauline) authorship, which, in turn, when coupled with the explicit reference to Paul in 1 Tim 1:1, seems to make a strong case for the fact that the implied author (Paul) is to be identified with the apostle Paul. Interestingly, the dual rationale of 1 Tim

all ages to no end, and consensus can be found in one thing only: that this passage has consistently defied attempts to interpret it, and that consensus on the passage's meaning is therefore as elusive today as it ever has been. Could the writer of 2 Peter have had this passage in mind when he wrote, "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:15b–16)? Others may agree with a recent writer who laments, "Just as the first half of this chapter showed us the author at his best, so the second half seems to show him at his worst. Christians are under no obligation to accept his teaching on women."² The same writer paraphrases the content of the present passage as follows: "woman, a weak, gullible creature, should find her natural vocation in a life of domesticity in subordination of her husband."³ Another commentator finds the reference "almost unbearable."⁴

A mere cursory glance at the available English translations reveals a confusing array (or disarray?) of alternatives, ranging from the provocative "women will find their salvation in motherhood" (TCNT) over the daring "women will get safely through childbirth" (Moffat) to "she shall be preserved through the bearing of children" (NASB). The interpretation of this passage even cuts across partisan lines on the "women's issue," so that commentators otherwise on opposite sides of the spectrum may find themselves in agreement on the verse's meaning. In the light of this

2:13 and 14 is already found in the unquestionably Pauline Corinthian correspondence (cf. 1 Cor 11:8–9; 2 Cor 11:3; see Leopold Zscharneck, *Der Dienst der Frau in den ersten Jahrhunderten der christlichen Kirche* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902], 14) which may suggest, to the mind of some, the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, and to others the effort by a later follower of Paul to replicate his theology. In the following argument, Pauline authorship will be considered probable, but the thesis of this paper is not materially affected by it.

²Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge Bible Commentary; London: CUP, 1966), 38.

³Idem, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 74.

⁴Otto Michel, "Grundfragen der Pastoralbriefe," in *Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten: Festgabe für Landesbischof D. Theophil Wurm zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. Emil Brunner et al.; Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag der Evangelischen Gesellschaft, 1948), 94, quoted in Gottfried Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (THKNT; 3d ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980 [1966]), 70–73.

unsettled situation, are we seeking to do the impossible by writing yet another piece on this inscrutable verse? Perhaps, but one might be forgiven a little foolishness when the topic is as significant as that addressed by the present passage, i.e., women's God-ordained roles. It should also be acknowledged that this issue, like few others, has enormous implications on the social, and political domain.

In light of the formidable challenge presented by the phrase "saved by childbearing," we will narrow our focus to the three component parts of this expression and discuss (1) the meaning of **σωθήσεται** ("be saved" or "be preserved") in 1 Tim 2:15; (2) the preposition **διὰ** ("by" or "through") in the present context; and (3) the meaning of **τεκνογονία** ("childbearing," literally or as synecdoche for a woman's "domestic calling").⁵ We will first present a survey of the history of the interpretation of the present passage, focusing on patristic, Reformation, and modern writers, and categorize the major interpretations proposed for 1 Tim 2:15. Based on this survey, we will discuss the phrase "saved by childbearing" word for word, considering also possible references to gnostic teaching and to Gen 3:15 or 16. The essay will conclude with a brief effort to integrate the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 presented here into a coherent reading of 1 Tim 2:9–15.

*The History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15*⁶

*The Fathers*⁷

We begin our survey with two instances of Messianic typology in Justin and Tertullian.⁸ In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (CE 114–165),

⁵We thus will not attempt to include a discussion of the conditional clause in the latter half of the verse. While this is certainly a limitation, it seems to be a necessary and reasonable one that does not negatively affect our ability to arrive at a valid interpretation of the passage, as we hope to demonstrate below.

⁶For a survey of the history of the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–14, see Daniel Doriani's Appendix in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

⁷For surveys of the history of interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15, see Ceslaus Spicq, *Saint Paul. Les Épîtres Pastorales I* (ÉBib; 4th ed.; Paris, 1969), 382–83; Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (EKKNT; Zürich/Neukirchener-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1988), 142–46.

⁸Cf. Robert Falconer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), 132: "The Greek fathers in general gave no place to this interpretation, but in the Latins this mystical sense was general."

we find the following passage:

. . . and that He became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, "Be it unto me according to thy word." And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him.⁹

Some claim this passage as evidence that the Fathers, and here Justin, interpreted 1 Tim 2:15 in terms of a Messianic typology. While the above passage clearly reveals Justin's use of Messianic typology, however, it is less clear that the author depends on 1 Tim 2:15.

Tertullian (CE 145–220), arguing for the full incarnation of Christ, writes this regarding Christ's birth of Mary:

. . . it was by just the contrary operation that God recovered His own image and likeness, of which He had been robbed by the devil. For it was while Eve was yet a virgin, that the ensnaring word had crept into her ear which was to build the edifice of death. Into a virgin's soul, in like manner, must be introduced that Word of God which was to raise the fabric of life; so that what had been reduced to ruin by this sex, might by the selfsame sex be recovered to salvation. As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel. The delinquency which the one occasioned by believing, the other by believing effaced. But (it will be said) Eve did not at the devil's word conceive in her womb. Well, she at all events conceived; for the devil's word afterwards became as seed to her that she should conceive as an outcast, and bring forth in sorrow. Indeed she gave birth to a fratricidal devil; whilst Mary, on the contrary, bare one who was one day to secure salvation to Israel, His own brother after the flesh, and the murderer of Himself. God therefore sent down into the virgin's womb His Word, as the good Brother, who should blot out the memory of the evil brother. Hence it was necessary that Christ should come forth for the salvation of man, in that condition of flesh into which man had entered ever since his condemnation.¹⁰

⁹Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 100, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1:249. Some also refer to Ignatius, *Eph.* 19, but it is unclear whether this refers to a Messianic typology or not, and even more doubtful that this represents an effort at interpreting 1 Tim 2:15. The same must be maintained regarding Iren., *Haer.* 3.22 and 5.19.

¹⁰Tertullian, *De Carne* 17, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:536.

What has been said about Justin's theology also applies to Tertullian. It is unclear whether either writer had 1 Tim 2:15 in mind as he penned the respective passages. Moreover, even if Tertullian and Justin thought of 1 Tim 2:15 as they wrote, it can hardly be argued that this provides a confirmation of 1 Tim 2:15's teaching of a Messianic typology along the lines they suggest. This must be demonstrated on other grounds.

Clement of Alexandria (CE 153–217), an eclectic Christian theologian, wrote a work directed against gnosticism entitled *Stromateis* between CE 192–202, presenting Christianity as the true gnosis. In his previous book, he had argued that marriage is a holy estate and consistent with the perfect person in Christ. In the current work, he refutes the gnostics' licentious tenets that despised the ordinances of the Creator, resulting in grossest immorality in practice. Clement first cites 1 Tim 5:14–15, leading up to a reference to 1 Tim 2:15:

He is applying the idea of defilement to a partnership involving an alien body rather than the body given away in marriage for the purpose of producing children. This is why the Apostle says, "So it is my wish that younger women should marry, have children, and be mistresses of their homes, without giving any opponent an opportunity to criticize. There are some already who have taken the wrong course and followed Satan." In fact, he expresses approval of the man who is husband of a single wife, whether elder, deacon, or layman, if he gives no ground for criticism in his conduct of his marriage. He "will be preserved by the generation of children."¹¹

We note the following: (1) Clement links 1 Tim 2:15 with 1 Tim 5:14–15, alluding also to 1 Tim 3:2; (2) he applies the passage not (merely) to women, but (also) to men; (3) he uses the passage for the purpose of refuting gnosticism.

Gregory of Nyssa (CE 335/6–395), in a work entitled *De Virginitate* written in Basil's monastery before CE 365, interprets the reference to "children" in 1 Tim 2:15 metaphorically as relating to good works, defending the spiritual superiority of virginity:

Everyone knows that the propagation of mortal frames is the work which the intercourse of the sexes has to do; whereas for those who are joined to the Spirit, life and immortality instead of children are produced by this latter intercourse; and the words of the Apostle beautifully suit their case, for the joyful

¹¹Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.12.89–90. Cf. *Clement of Alexandria* (trans. John Ferguson; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 312.

mother of such children as these "shall be saved in child-bearing"; as the Psalmist in his divine songs thankfully cries, "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children (Ps 113:9)." Truly a joyful mother is the virgin mother who by the operation of the Spirit conceives the deathless children, and who is called by the Prophet barren because of her modesty only.¹²

Chrysostom (CE 347–407), preaching on the present passage, comments as follows:

Shall not women then be saved? Yes, by means of children. For it is not of Eve that he says, "If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." . . . It is as if he had said, "Ye women, be not cast down, because your sex has incurred blame. God has granted you another opportunity of salvation, by the bringing up of children, so that you are saved, not by yourselves, but by others. See how many questions are involved in this matter." "The woman," he says, "being deceived was in transgression." What woman? Eve. Shall she then be saved by child-bearing? He does not say that, but, the race of women shall be saved. Was not it then involved in transgression? Yes, it was, still Eve transgressed, but the whole sex shall be saved, notwithstanding, "by childbearing." And why not by their own personal virtue? For has she excluded others from this salvation? And what will be the case with virgins, with the barren, with widows who have lost their husbands, before they had children? will they perish? is there no hope for them? yet virgins are held in the highest estimation. What then does he mean to say?

Some interpret his meaning thus. As what happened to the first woman occasioned the subjection of the whole sex, (for since Eve was formed second and made subject, he says, let the rest of the sex be in subjection,) so because she transgressed, the rest of the sex are also in transgression. But this is not fair reasoning; for at the creation all was the gift of God, but in this case, it is the consequence of the woman's sin. As all men died through one, because that one sinned, so the whole female race transgressed, because the woman was in the transgression. Let her not however grieve. God hath given her no small consolation, that of childbearing. And if it be said that this is of nature, so is that also of nature: for not only that which is of nature has been granted, but also the bringing up of children. "If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety"; that is, if after childbearing, they keep them in charity and purity. By these means they will have no small reward on their account, because they have trained up wrestlers for the service of Christ. By holiness he means good life, modesty, and sobriety.¹³

Chrysostom thus appears to take 1 Tim 2:15 to refer to women's reward from rearing Christian offspring. This interpretation appears to be echoed by Jerome (CE 345–420), who writes in a letter, "We read of Eli the priest

¹²Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* Chap. 4 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Second Series 5:350.

¹³St. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Timothy* 9 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 13:436.

that he became displeasing to God on account of the sins of his children (1 Sam 2:27–36); and we are told that a man may not be made a bishop if his sons are loose and disorderly (1 Tim 3:4). On the other hand it is written of the woman that ‘she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with chastity.’¹⁴

Finally, Augustine, writing between CE 400–428, provides a figurative interpretation of the present passage similar to that of Gregory of Nyssa, taking “children” to refer symbolically to good works:

For that the Apostle Paul, when speaking outwardly of the sex of male and female, figured the mystery of some more hidden truth, may be understood from this, that when he says in another place that she is a widow indeed who is desolate, without children and nephews, and yet that she ought to trust in God, and to continue in prayers night and day (1 Tim 5:5), he here indicates, that the woman having been brought into the transgression by being deceived, is brought to salvation by child-bearing; and then he has added, “If they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety (1 Tim 2:15).” As if it could possibly hurt a good widow, if either she had not sons, or if those whom she had did not choose to continue in good works. But because those things which are called good works are, as it were, the sons of our life, according to that sense of life in which it answers to the question, What is a man’s life? that is, How does he act in these temporal things? . . . what the apostle meant to signify is plain, and in so far figuratively and mystically . . .¹⁵

It may be concluded that, while Justin and Tertullian teach a Messianic typology that links Eve and the fall with Mary and the birth of Christ, this is not clearly presented as an interpretation based on 1 Tim 2:15. Even if that were their point of reference, it would not be the only, or even predominant, interpretation in the patristic period. Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine use a symbolic or allegorical approach, taking “childbearing” as a reference to women’s bearing of spiritual children, i.e., good works. This, of course, opens the door to find in 1 Tim 2:15 the teaching of salvation by works, an interpretation that has been combated ever since, both during the time of the Reformation and in the modern era. Yet other ancient interpreters took 1 Tim 2:15b to refer, not to women themselves, but to their children and to women’s contribution to their children’s godly conduct (Chrysostom, Jerome). Finally, 1 Tim 2:15 was understood as affirming the propriety of marriage, even for overseers

¹⁴Jerome, Letter 107 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 6:192.

¹⁵Augustine, *De Trinitate* Book 12 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 3:159.

(with reference to 3:2), with the present passage referring to the woman's preservation within the marital and familial bond (Clement of Alexandria).

The Reformers

Almost a millennium later, Martin Luther wrestled with the question whether or not the bearing of children constituted a good work, concluding that it is to be an outgrowth of a woman's faith:

It is a very great comfort that a woman can be saved by bearing children, etc. That is, she has an honorable and salutary status in life if she keeps busy having children. We ought to recommend this passage to them, etc. She is described as "saved" not for freedom, for license, but for bearing and rearing children. Is she not saved by faith? He goes on and explains himself: bearing children is a wholesome responsibility, but for believers. To bear children is acceptable to God. He does not merely say that bearing children saves; he adds: if the bearing takes place in faith and love, it is a Christian work . . . This is the comfort for married people in trouble: hardship and all things are salutary, for through them they are moved forward toward salvation and against adultery.¹⁶

Luther's discussion is clearly informed by systematic concerns, particularly the great Reformation issue of salvation by faith vs. works. Without detailed study of the passage, he interprets it in the light of these concerns in the larger framework of Genesis 3.

John Calvin provides a sensitive and seasoned discussion that has set the standard for treatments of this passage ever since:

To censorious men it might appear absurd, for an Apostle of Christ not only to exhort women to give attention to the birth of offspring, but to press this work as religious and holy to such an extent as to represent it in the light of the means of procuring salvation. Nay, we even see with what reproaches the conjugal bed has been slandered by hypocrites, who wished to be thought more holy than all other men. But there is no difficulty in replying to these sneers of the ungodly. First, here the Apostle does not speak merely about having children, but about enduring all the distresses, which are manifold and severe, both in the birth and in the rearing of children. Secondly, whatever hypocrites or wise men of the world may think of it, when a woman, considering to what she has been called, submits to the condition which God has assigned to her, and does not refuse to endure the pains, or rather the fearful anguish, of parturition, or anxiety about her offspring, or anything else that belongs to her duty, God values this obedience more highly than if, in some other manner, she made a

¹⁶In *Luther's Works*, Vol. 28: *Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (ed. Hilton C. Oswald; St. Louis: Concordia, 1973 [Jan. 13, 1528]), 279.

great display of heroic virtues, while she refused to obey the calling of God. To this must be added, that no consolation could be more appropriate or more efficacious than to shew that the very means (so to speak) of procuring salvation are found in the punishment itself.¹⁷

Overall, Calvin shows remarkable balance in his interpretation. Most notably, he refers “childbearing” also to the raising of children and to anything else that belongs to a woman’s duty (synecdoche). In one of his sermons, Calvin summarizes the message of 1 Tim 2:15 as follows: “Let us who know to what end we are made learn to bear the yoke God has laid upon us, i.e. let everyone of us follow his vocation.”¹⁸ Calvin found ample parallels in his own day to the original background of the present passage:

As amongst the Papists, to have a household seems to be a polluted state of the world . . . And this is a shameful thing that a Pope, that Antichrist, spews out this blasphemy, “That those who are in the flesh cannot please God,” i.e. they that are married . . . If nuns and friars boast of their chastity and lie in idleness and call this a spiritual state, God shows that it is a detestable and cursed kind of life. Let us learn therefore that if a woman be among her household and be busied about her children . . . if she bears it patiently, knowing that it is God’s good appointment, . . . this is a sweet smelling sacrifice to him. Let the nuns therefore tarry still in their convents and cloisters and in their brothel houses of Satan . . .¹⁹

In sum, Luther and Calvin move away from an allegorical to a more literal rendering of the passage. However, this does not of itself solve the problem, since the appearance of teaching salvation by works, i.e., the bearing of children, remains. Even an appeal to the teaching of the Pastorals in general or to the Pauline epistles by Calvin and many modern interpreters does not really solve the problem.²⁰ While it is thus ruled out that the passage means what it appears to mean since it cannot mean that

¹⁷John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 71.

¹⁸In *Sermons of John Calvin on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timotheie and Titus* (trans. L. T.; London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983 [1579]), 233.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 231.

²⁰Cf., e.g., I. Howard Marshall, “Salvation in the Pastoral Epistles” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 1994), 4: “The reference can hardly be to conversion but to the attaining of final salvation, and it can hardly be to doing good works in order to be saved, since the Pastoral Epistles teach quite clearly that we are not saved by works.”

on grounds of systematic theology, this hardly is a constructive interpretation or explanation of the passage on its own terms. After an analysis of 1 Tim 2:15, we may, of course, conclude that this passage speaks of the woman's eschatological salvation with reference to her God-ordained function centering on her role in the domestic sphere. But whatever theological presuppositions we may hold based on Pauline theology elsewhere should not preclude an open-minded study of the present passage, which should entail the acknowledgment of the possibility that Paul (or whoever wrote 1 Timothy) in 1 Tim 2:15 presents a teaching different from the central thrust of his theology regarding salvation in his earlier writings.

The Modern Era

As mentioned, there is considerable diversity in the interpretation of the present passage in recent times. Some interpreters merely list the different options without taking a position themselves²¹ or refrain from comment altogether,²² others present a variety of interpretive insights without ever presenting a coherent interpretation of the passage,²³ yet others primarily display a concern to rehabilitate women in the light of contemporary concerns. Hermeneutically, it may be observed that emphases often vary according to the predominant underlying paradigm of a given interpreter: if religion-historical, the gnostic background may be weighted heavily; if salvation-historical, the role of Genesis 3 and of a possible Messianic typology is considered important; if systematic-canonical, reconciliation with Pauline teaching on salvation elsewhere will be a particularly serious concern; if contemporary issues are a driving motivation, one's views on

²¹Cf. John Temple Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 75–77; Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1980), 205–208; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), 133–34; Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983), 179–80; Philip H. Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 79–80.

²²The works by Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse, eds., *Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989); Michael Harper, *Equal and Different* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994); Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); and Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) do not contain any discussion of the present verse.

²³Cf. Richard Clark and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 26, 144, 171, 176, 181.

women's roles in the church and in society will tend to affect one's approach. For convenience's sake, the different kinds of interpretation proposed in the modern era may be summarized and briefly critiqued below.²⁴

First, women's salvation may be taken to refer to the bearing of "spiritual children," i.e., good works. While this interpretation was held by Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, it is hardly ever held today. While the importance of women's good works is stressed in New Testament and Pauline teaching, this approach resorts to a symbolic interpretation that appears inconsistent with the epistolary genre and the passage's context.

Second, women's salvation may be contingent on their physical children's perseverance in holy lives of faith. Chrysostom and Jerome held this view. While a detailed discussion of 1 Tim 2:15b is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that the shift from a singular to a plural subject from the first to the second half of the verse is a sign of incongruence characteristic of paraenetic style, and that there is therefore no reason to interpret this shift as connoting a change of subject.²⁵ The change from singular to plural subject in verse fifteen may simply reverse the movement from plural to singular from verse nine (*γυναῖκας*) to the

²⁴For summaries, see George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 144–46; Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus. A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 140–44; Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990), 78–81; and David R. Kimberley, "1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text," *JETS* 35 (1992): 481–86. The survey focuses on the major types of interpretation proposed over the history of interpretation and does not intend to be comprehensive. Thus some argue that 1 Tim 2:15 teaches that a woman's salvation depends on rearing her children to become good Christians (cf., e.g., J. H. Ulrichsen, "Noen bemerkninger til 1. Tim 2,15," *Norsk TeolTids* 84 [1983]: 19–25). There are also minor variants of the interpretations given below. For example, James Hurley and Mary Kassian hold to variations of the sixth interpretation: women will be kept safe from seizing men's roles (James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 321–23), or women will be saved from loss of leadership (Kassian, *Women, Creation, and the Fall*, 78–80).

²⁵Cf. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, 142, referring to Peter Trummer, "Corpus Paulinum—Corpus Pastorale. Zur Örtung der Paulustradition in den Pastoralbriefen," in *Paulus in den neutestamentlichen Spätschriften. Zur Paulusrezeption im Neuen Testament* (ed. Karl Kertelge; QD 89; Freiburg: Herder, 1981), 149, n. 184.

following verses.²⁶ In any case, few today hold to this interpretation.

Third, some detect in the present passage a reference to Messianic typology. 1 Tim 2:15 is taken to mean that women will be saved by *the* childbirth, i.e., Mary's giving birth to Jesus the Messiah, thus reversing the consequences of Eve's fall into deception. Clark (?), Ellicott, Fairbairn, Falconer, Huizenga, Kassing, Knight, Payne, Roberts, and Spencer, amongst others, favor this interpretation.²⁷ At the outset, it should be noted that some, though certainly not all, interpreters holding to this view, tend to overstate, if not misrepresent, their case, by giving the impression, when appealing to early patristic support for their interpretation, that the Messianic typology they find taught in 1 Tim 2:15 is the one alluded to in certain Fathers.²⁸ This, however, is debatable and should certainly not be assumed without argument.²⁹ Moreover, while the preceding verses (i.e., 1 Tim 2:13–14) refer to Genesis 2 and 3, they do so to illustrate Paul's prohibition of women's teaching in verse twelve by pointing to the order of creation and to the scenario of the fall rather than by establishing a Messianic typology. While verse fifteen may allude to Gen 3:16, there is absolutely no hint in the text that the author of the Pastorals intends to refer to a Messianic rendering of Gen 3:15, the so-called "proto-

²⁶Cf. Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 1:384, who cites other possible reasons for the shift such as the Semitic practice of oscillating between the collective and the individual.

²⁷Cf. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 205–208; Charles J. Ellicott, *The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1869), 38–39; Patrick Fairbairn, *Pastoral Epistles* (Minneapolis: James & Klock, 1976 [1874]), 130–34; Falconer, *Pastoral Epistles*, 132; Hilde Huizenga, "Women, Salvation, and the Birth of Christ: A Reexamination of 1 Timothy 2:15," *SBT* 12 (1982): 17–26; P. Alfrid Kassing, "Das Heil der Mutterschaft," *Liturgie und Mönchtum* (1958): 39–63; George W. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 144–48; Philip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo's Article, '1 Timothy 2:11–15: Meaning and Significance,'" *TrinJ* 2 n.s. 2 (1981), 177–81; Mark D. Roberts, "Women Shall Be Saved: A Closer Look at 1 Timothy 2:15," *TSF Bulletin* (1991): 4–7; Aída D. B. Spencer, "Eve at Ephesus (Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors according to the First Letter to Timothy 2:11–15?)," *JETS* 17 (1974): 215–22.

²⁸Cf., e.g., Payne, "Libertarian Women," 177–78; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 146. It appears that many commentators merely quote earlier writers without direct recourse to the patristic references themselves (cf., e.g., Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* [SNTSMS 59; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 265, n. 228, who refers to Payne, "Libertarian Women," and Lock's commentary).

²⁹See already the discussion under the history of interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 above.

evangelion.” It must also be noted that the presupposed understanding of Gen 3:16 as the “proto-evangelion” is only found in the second century and nowhere occurs in the New Testament.³⁰ The same is true for the Messianic typology linking Eve and the fall with Mary and the birth of the Messiah (cf. also 2 Cor 11:2–3 where such is manifestly absent). The presence of the definite article in the original Greek (τῆς τεκνογονίας) merely indicates the generic nature of childbirth rather than pointing to a specific birth of a child. An elaborate salvation-historical typology would be unexpected in the present context, especially in the light of the sparse use of the Old Testament in the Pastorals in general. Moreover, it is not merely women who are saved through the birth of the Messiah. One is reminded of the classic statement by Guthrie who commented, “[I]f that were the writer’s intention he could hardly have chosen a more obscure or ambiguous way of saying it.”³¹

Fourth, the term “saved” is sometimes taken in its literal meaning and applied to women’s physical preservation through (during) childbirth. Barrett, Bernard, Guthrie, Hanson, Jeremias, Keener, and Moffat’s translation are representatives of this view.³² The effort to render σώζω literally probably stems from a desire to avoid the teaching of a woman’s spiritual salvation by the bearing of children. However, it may be objected by some that the meaning “to be preserved physically” for σώζω would be unusual (cf. the use of ῥύομαι in 2 Tim 3:11; 4:18).³³ Besides, many Christian women have died during childbirth and thus were not physically preserved during it. Finally, the rendering of διά with “during” is unusual as well.

Fifth, it has recently been argued that 1 Tim 2:15 means exactly what it says (or at least seems to say on the surface): women will be saved by the bearing of children (so Gritz, Kimberley, Motyer, Porter).³⁴ It is sug-

³⁰Cf. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, 140–41.

³¹Cf. Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 78.

³²Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 56–57; J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [1899]), 49–50; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 77–79; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 72–74; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (NTD 9; 8th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 22; Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 118–20.

³³Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 31.

³⁴Cf. Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess*, 140–44; Kimberley, “1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text,” 481–86; Steve Motyer, “Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8–15,” *Vox Evangelica* 24 (1994): 91–102; Stanley E. Porter, “What Does it Mean to be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1

gested that the author may here, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians, pick up on a slogan used by his opponents, in this case gnostics who forbid marriage (cf. 1 Tim 4:3, 7–8; 6:20–21). This interpretation has the virtues of a literal rendering and of an attention to a possible gnostic backdrop to this epistle. On the other hand, this view, similar to the closely related sixth type of interpretation discussed below, appears to conflict with Pauline teaching on salvation elsewhere. In the light of the considerable semantic range of **σώζω** in the New Testament and in Pauline literature (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 6:17; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 4:18), alternatives to a literal rendition of the term should be explored.

Sixth, the view that has found considerable support among commentators in recent years is the one that interprets the reference to “child-bearing” in 1 Tim 2:15 as a synecdoche. Women, it is held, will be spiritually saved by adhering to their God-ordained role in the domestic sphere. The future tense of **σωθήσεται** is usually taken to refer to women’s eschatological salvation at Christ’s second coming. As has been seen above, this was essentially the view of John Calvin, and many conservative interpreters such as Alford, Barclay, Bowman, Foh, Hendriksen, Kelly, Moo, Schreiner, Scott, White, and Witherington follow this approach (see also the variations by Hurley and Kassian).³⁵ Of all the interpretations surveyed thus far, this reading perhaps does most justice to the text in context. Moreover, this view is attractive particularly for conservative (and here especially Reformed) interpreters since it appears to harmonize well with Pauline theology elsewhere. This strength, however, may also be the greatest weakness, since it may betray presuppositions that unduly prejudge certain elements of the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15.

Timothy 2.15)?” *JSNT* 49 (1993): 87–102.

³⁵Cf. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1965 [1960]), 79; Ann J. Bowman, “Women in Ministry: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” *BibSac* 149 (1992): 207–209; Susan J. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 128; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 111–12; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 69–70; Douglas J. Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 179–93; Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Recent Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church*; E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 23–29; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 123–24. On Hurley and Kassian, see already note 24.

At the same time, the interpretation of “childbearing” in terms of a synecdoche appears well-founded in the light of the close parallel passage in 1 Tim 5:14 where “the bearing of children” (τεκνογονεῖν) is part of a series of verbs including “to marry” (γαμεῖν) and “managing their household” (οἰκοδεσποτεῖν). The eschatological interpretation of σώζω with reference to the second coming of Christ, however, is not corroborated, to say the least, by any further eschatological references in the context. In fact, the future tense, if time-referring, may refer to any point in time future to the writer of 1 Timothy, not just the end of time, including the immediate future.³⁶ Moreover, the future tense of σωθήσεται need not be taken to refer to a real event at a future time (such as the woman’s future salvation at Christ’s return) at all but may more properly be understood as a gnomic future, i.e., of the projected result of an event on the basis of the meeting of a certain condition (in the present case, the woman’s continuing in faith, love, and holiness with all sobriety; cf. 1 Tim 2:15b).³⁷ Nevertheless, while certain tensions remain in this interpretation, if no other more satisfying approach emerges, this is a reading of the text that is certainly possible and perhaps correct. In the light of the above survey, our search for an alternative, entirely satisfying interpretation of the present passage may focus on determining the possible renderings and the most plausible meaning of the term σωθήσεται in the present context.

Seventh, it is held that the present passage indicates that women shall be preserved (or shall escape from) Satan (or the consequences of the curse) by adhering to their God-ordained role in the domestic sphere. The perceptive discussion by Brox and brief but suggestive articles by R. Falconer and S. Jebb and, more recently, an article by A. Padgett point in this direction (cf. also the NASB: “But she shall be preserved through the

³⁶Cf. K. A. Van der Jagt, “Women are Saved through Bearing Children (1 Timothy 2.11–15),” *BibTrans* 39 (1988): 207: “The salvation is not purely eschatological, that is, it is not only in the future but also a reality of the present.”

³⁷For the gnomic use of the future tense in Greek, cf., e.g., Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of New Testament Greek* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 44; James Brooks and Carlton Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Wilmington: University Press of America, 1979), 98; Wesley J. Perschbacher, *New Testament Greek Syntax* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 293. These authors list the following instances of a gnomic use of the future in the New Testament: Matt 7:16; 12:37; 15:14; Mark 2:22; Luke 12:34; Rom 5:7; 7:3; Gal 6:5; Eph 5:31 (cf. Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16). But see also the remarks on the four references involving a future passive of σώζω contemporaneous to 1 Timothy discussed below. As will be seen, none of these instances involve a reference to a distant future point in time.

bearing of children").³⁸ The advantage of this interpretation is that it links v. 15 particularly well with the preceding verse (v. 14) where the fall and the serpent's temptation of the woman are explicitly mentioned. A possible reference to the woman's preservation from Satan is also given added probability by the explicit mention of Satan in the close parallel passage in 1 Tim 5:14. Moreover, as will be seen below, the concern for believers' preservation from Satan pervades the Pastorals. On the other hand, some may object that "to be preserved" is an unusual, or at least infrequent, rendering of *σώζω* in the New Testament and in Paul, and that Satan (or the curse) is not explicitly referred to in v. 15 but needs to be implied from the context.

An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15a

The Meaning of σωθήσεται διά in 1 Timothy 2:15a

The preceding survey of interpretations of 1 Tim 2:15 has indicated that determining the intended meaning of *σωθήσεται* may well be the key to a correct interpretation of the passage.³⁹ Should the term be taken to con-

³⁸Cf. Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Regensburger NT; 8th ed.; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 136: "Der vorausgehende Vers hatte ihre Position recht aussichtslos gezeichnet, hier wird ein 'Ausweg,' eine Möglichkeit, ein Heilsweg gezeigt . . . Der apodiktische Satz mag an Merkwürdigkeit verlieren, wenn man annimmt, daß das 'Kindergebären' (nach Tit 2,4) die Erziehung der Kinder und die Führung des häuslichen Lebens einbegreift, also für die Ehe und das Verheiratetsein als ganzes steht"; Robert Falconer, "1 Timothy 2:14, 15: Interpretative Notes," *JBL* 60 (1941): 376: "**Σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας;** here 'she shall be saved' must mean escape from the effects of the transgression"; S. Jebb, "A Suggested Interpretation of 1 Ti 2.15," *ExpTim* 81 (1970): 221–22. Alan Padgett, "Wealthy Women at Ephesus. 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in Social Context," *Int* 41 (1987): 19–31: "I believe that Paul means to say that Eve was saved from the snake, that is, from Satan" (28). Padgett argues that Paul was in the present passage dealing with a particular problem with certain women in Ephesus who supported false teachers. Paul's response, according to Padgett, was to limit these women's authority, so that there is nothing in the text that limits the role of women in the church today. Our agreement with certain aspects of Padgett's exegesis does not imply that we are following all of Padgett's sociological conclusions regarding the background of 1 Tim 2:15. Likewise, his typological approach to the present passage appears too ingenious to be a plausible interpretation of the text as it stands.

³⁹We presuppose a hermeneutic that will not make extratextual information functionally determinative of the text's meaning to the extent that it actually sets aside the plain reading of the text and other hermeneutical fallacies that have particularly beset the study of the New Testament gender passages. On this, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical

note physical preservation (fourth view), spiritual salvation (fifth view), eschatological salvation (sixth view), or spiritual preservation from Satan (or the curse) (seventh view)? Moreover, there are further issues that pertain to the interpretation of the term: (1) What is the implied subject? (2) What is the range of meaning of **σώζω** in the New Testament, in Paul's writings, and in the Pastorals, and what light is shed on the meaning of **σωθήσεται** by the immediate and larger context? (3) What is the force of **διὰ** in the present passage? (4) Does the writer allude here to Gen 3:15 or 16 and is there a reference to the author's gnostic opponents? (5) How does **σωθήσεται** relate to the phrase **διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας**? These questions will provide the framework for the discussion below. While they cannot be dealt with independently so that there will be a certain amount of overlap in our treatment of these issues, these questions are the ones that will need to be answered in the course of the present study.

The Implied Subject of 1 Timothy 2:15a. We may begin by determining the implied subject of **σωθήσεται**. This subject appears to be the term "the woman" (**ἡ γυνή**) from the previous verse, as informed by the addition in the latter part of the verse (see below). While the author had referred to the man and the woman at creation by their names, i.e., Adam and Eve (v. 13), he refers in v. 14 to Adam and to "the woman" (rather than Eve), thus apparently pointing to Eve's representative role for womankind in general at the fall.⁴⁰

In the present verse, based on the transitional **ἡ γυνή** in v. 14, the writer completes his change of reference from Eve as a historical person to Eve "the woman" as representing womankind at the fall to the women addressed in the present correspondence and thereafter as indicated by the omission of any explicit subject in v. 15. It should be noted that the statement in verse 15b narrows the reference to *Christian* women, i.e., those who "continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."⁴¹ The

Fallacies Critiqued," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 259–83. In the case of the interpretation of the present passage, care should be taken lest issues such as the alleged gnostic background or a putative allusion to Gen 3:15 or 16 or both take effective control of the passage's entire interpretation. The challenge is to provide an interpretation that does not unnecessarily import extratextual information nor adds extensively to the explicit statement but is a plausible interpretation of the text as it stands.

⁴⁰See already Sir 25:24: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die."

⁴¹Cf. Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 1:382. On taking the plural reference in v. 15b as pertaining to the women addressed in v. 15a, see already the brief

generic reference to women also seems to favor taking the future tense of the verb as gnomic, i.e., used without reference to time.

Finally, the sequence of passive forms in vv. 13, 14, and 15 requires explanation. The reference in v. 13 to Adam's creation clearly implies God as the agent, an instance of the so-called *passivum divinum* ("divine passive"; ἐπλάσθη). Conversely, the terms of being deceived in verse 14 (ἠπατήθη, ἐξαπατηθεῖσα) point to Satan as the implied agent, an instance of what may be called a "diabolical passive."⁴² This may explain the fact that Satan is not explicitly referred to in v. 15 as the implied threat from which the woman is saved: as in v. 14, Satan is understood to be the potential danger from which the woman is to be "saved." The passive form in v. 15 (σωθήσεται) itself, then, may be another instance of a "divine passive," with God as the implied agent of the woman's salvation, or be taken as a quasi-deponent form where stress is laid on the woman's own participation in her salvation or preservation from the implied threat of v. 15 (e.g., "the woman will escape"). These possibilities must be kept in mind in the course of the remaining study.

The Range of Meaning of Σώζω and Σωθήσεται in 1 Timothy 2:15a. We may proceed as follows. We will first sketch out the range of meaning of σώζω in the New Testament at large. This is followed by an identification of the most compatible passages in the Pauline writings and particularly in the Pastorals. Extending our scope beyond the New Testament to extrabiblical literature preceding or contemporaneous to the Pastorals, we will survey instances, first of future passives of σώζω, and then of (future) passives of σώζω plus διά plus the genitive.

Introduction. Two major implications emerge from the study of σώζω, in the New Testament and in Paul: first, the term's range of meaning is broader than is often acknowledged, even in the Pauline literature, and even in the Pastorals; and second, the effort at illuminating the probable meaning of σώζω, in 1 Tim 2:15a needs to be narrowed to instances of σώζω, in the (future) passive plus διά plus the genitive.

Our comments regarding the range of meaning of σώζω in the New Testament, Paul, and the Pastorals in general, can therefore be brief.⁴³ In

discussion above. But this subject can and need not be fully dealt with here.

⁴²This category is, at least at present, not found in most Greek grammars!

⁴³Cf. I. Howard Marshall, "Salvation in the Pastoral Epistles." Marshall's discussion reflects that 1 Tim 2:15 is not a central passage in the epistle's teaching regarding salvation. He takes the passage to refer to eschatological salvation, "since the Pastoral Epistles teach quite clearly that we are not saved by

classical Greek, the term generally referred to the averting of life-threatening danger or, where no immediate danger was mentioned, to a person's keeping or preservation. This usage is comparatively rare in the New Testament; it is, however, found in Acts 27–28 (**σώζω**: 27:20, 31; **διασώζω**: 27:43, 44; 28:1, 4). In the LXX, **σώζω** translates as many as fifteen different Hebrew words. Regarding the range of meaning of **σώζω** relevant for 1 Tim 2:15a we survey the three most pertinent lexicons:

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich sketch the range of meaning of **σώζω** as follows:

1. preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions;
2. save or preserve from eternal death;
 - a. active: so. or sthg.;
 - b. passive: be saved, attain salvation;
3. combination of 1. and 2.⁴⁴

Category 2. b. appears to be the most likely meaning of the present term in 1 Tim 2:15a within this range.

Liddell and Scott provide the following outline (partial):

1. of persons: save from death, keep alive;
 - pass. to be saved, kept alive, preserved;
 - keep a whole skin, escape destruction;
 - to be healed, recover from sickness;
 - also, save oneself, escape⁴⁵

We note that the relevant renditions include those of “be preserved,” “escape destruction,” and “escape.”

Louw and Nida include **σώζω** with three different meanings in two different semantic domains:

- I. Physiological Processes and States
 1. heal;
- II. Danger, Risk, Save, Safe
 - A. to cause to be safe, free from danger
 2. rescue; and
 - B. to save in a religious sense

works.”

⁴⁴Cf. BAGD, 798–99.

⁴⁵Cf. LSJ, 1748.

3. save⁴⁶

The meaning “to heal” is frequently found in the Gospels; it is transparently not the meaning of **σώζω** in the present passage. This leaves the meanings of “to rescue” (i.e., keep safe, preserve from danger) and “to save” (in terms of religious salvation) as possible renderings.

What are we to learn from these categorizations? It appears that much confusion has resulted from the fact that interpreters sought to reconcile the connotation of religious salvation with Pauline teaching elsewhere (viz. the Reformation). However, the meaning “to rescue” in the sense of safekeeping or preservation is perfectly possible and, as will be seen, highly probable in 1 Tim 2:15. Perhaps even meanings such as “escape from destruction” (see Liddell and Scott) are conceivable in the present passage. Moreover, Louw and Nida comment that preservation implies “not only rescue from danger but a restoration to a former state of well-being and safety.”

In general, it should be noted that, while a term’s range of meaning sets the outer parameters for a given occurrence of this expression in context, it functions primarily as an excluding criterion of what a term *cannot* mean rather than indicating what it *does* mean. Specifically, the occurrence of **σώζω** in the future passive, i.e., **σωθήσεται**, in 1 Tim 2:15a should primarily be compared with similar uses of **σώζω** elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul, or the Pastorals, as well as with the occurrence of similar forms, i.e., (future) passives, in other writings contemporary to 1 Timothy. Moreover, in the present case, the usage of **σώζω**, even in the future passive, is demonstrably so different from its use in Paul and the Pastorals that we may safely exclude the Gospels as the source of possible close parallels to 1 Tim 2:15.

Similar Passages to 1 Timothy 2:15a in the Paulines and Pastorals. The term **σώζω** occurs in the Pastorals in 1 Tim 1:15; 2:4, 15; 4:16; 2 Tim 1:9; 4:18; Tit 3:5. In the remaining Paulines, there are these additional references: Rom 5:9, 10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:14, 26; 1 Cor 1:18, 21; 3:15; 5:5; 7:16; 9:22; 10:33; 15:2; 2 Cor 2:15; Eph 2:5, 8; 1 Thess 2:16; 2 Thess 2:10. Also, the term **σωτήρ** is found in the Pastorals in 1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 Tim 1:10; Tit 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6; and the term **σωτήριος** in Tit 2:11. Of those references, the following may be identified as possible parallels to the use of **σώζω** in 1 Tim 2:15:

⁴⁶Cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:241–42, 269.

- 1 Cor 3:15: “If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (NIV footnote: “Perhaps a Greek proverbial phrase, meaning ‘by a narrow escape’”; **εἴ τινος τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, ζημιωθήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός**);
- 1 Cor 7:16: “For how do you know, woman, if you will save your husband? Or how do you know, man, if you will save your wife?” (**τί γὰρ οἶδας, γύναι, εἰ τὸν ἄνδρα σώσεις; ἢ τί οἶδας, ἄνερ, εἰ τὴν γυναῖκα σώσεις**);
- 1 Tim 4:16: “Watch yourself and your teaching; persevere in them. For by so doing you will save both yourself and those who listen to you” (**ἔπεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, ἐπίμενε αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν καὶ σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντάς σου**);
- 2 Tim 4:18: “The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom” (**ρύσεται με ὁ κύριος ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔργου πονηροῦ καὶ σώσει εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπουράνιον**).

1 Cor 3:15 is the closest formal New Testament parallel to the present passage. Here the future passive of **σώζω** is used to denote an escape through danger. But differences between 1 Cor 3:15 and 1 Tim 2:15 must be noted as well: unlike 1 Tim 2:15, the context in 1 Cor 3:15 is clearly eschatological; and in 1 Cor 3:15, the phrase **οὕτως δὲ ὡς** is interjected between **σωθήσεται** and **διὰ πυρός**, while no adversative conjunction is found between **σωθήσεται** and **διὰ τεκνογονίας** in 1 Tim 2:15. In the next two passages, 1 Cor 7:16 and 1 Tim 4:16, it is evident that the addressees will not be the direct cause for a person’s salvation.⁴⁷ 1 Tim 4:16 should be seen as an instance of the “preservation” theme (from Satan) in the Pastorals which will be discussed further below.⁴⁸ Timothy’s teaching of sound doctrine will help preserve his hearers from falling into error. Finally, in 2 Tim 4:18, reference is made, not to first-time salvation,

⁴⁷Cf. Adolf Schlatter, *Die Kirche der Griechen im Urteil des Paulus* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1958 [1936]), 92, n. 1, who names 1 Tim 4:16 as a close conceptual parallel to 1 Tim 2:15. This author also refers to 1 Corinthians 7 as a similar instance where Paul refutes the improper disparagement of sexual relations, even within marriage, among his readers.

⁴⁸Thomas Schreiner, in a personal correspondence dated September 15, 1995, objects that in “1 Tim. 4:16 human actions are the instrumental cause for [eschatological] salvation.” This interpretation is possible, but hardly seems to do justice to the major concern here and elsewhere in the letter for people’s present preservation from false teaching.

but to preservation and safe passage. Interestingly, the similar term **ῥύομαι** is used in the first part of the clause, denoting deliverance, while **σώζω** focuses, not on a one-time act, but on a process of preservation and safekeeping. While this passage clearly has an ultimate eschatological reference point, the emphasis is at least in part on the author's confidence of his safekeeping *in this life* until that final day. But whether the above passages are parallel to the present one or not and whether or not they are to be interpreted eschatologically or with primary reference to the here and now, ultimately the context of 1 Tim 2:15 itself remains determinative for the term's meaning there. Moreover, in light of the paucity of New Testament parallels, it will be desirable to extend our scope of reference to contemporaneous extrabiblical literature.

Σώζω in the Future Passive. There are twenty instances of the future passive of **σώζω** in the New Testament of which one in the longer ending of Mark (16:16) can be omitted: Matt 9:2=Mark 5:28; Matt 10:22=24:13=Mark 13:13; Luke 8:50; John 10:9; 11:12; Acts 2:21=Rom 10:13 (OT); 11:14=16:31; Rom 5:9, 10; 9:27 (OT); 10:9; 11:26; 1 Cor 3:15; and 1 Tim 2:15. In these nineteen references, the term **σώζω** refers either to healing (four times; only in the Gospels: Matt 9:21=Mark 5:28; Luke 8:50; John 11:12) or religious salvation, usually conceived of in eschatological terms (fourteen times; Matt 10:22=24:13=Mark 13:13; John 10:9; Acts 2:21; 11:14=16:31; Rom 5:9, 10; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:26; 1 Cor 3:15; in both Acts and Romans, Old Testament quotations may set the overall framework). It should be noted that these passages need to be looked at individually and that they are confined to a relatively small number. Arguably, the reference in 1 Tim 2:15 stands apart from either category (but cf. the discussion of 1 Cor 3:15 above). The occurrence of **διεσώθησαν** in 1 Pet 3:20 should also be noted.⁴⁹

Finally, the future passive indicative of **σώζω** occurs once in each of the following writers: Philo (*LA* 3.190); Diodorus Siculus (*Hist.* 1.80); Dionysius Halicarnassensis (*Thuc.* 26.107); and Josephus (*BJ* 2.201). The passage in Philo may best be rendered actively (as does the Loeb Classical Library Series) as “to preserve her” (**σωθήσεται**):

καὶ μὴν ἔμπαλιν ἢ ἡδονὴ τοῦ μὲν ἄφρονος διατηρεῖ τὴν ἐπίβασιν, τοῦ δὲ σοφοῦ λύειν καὶ ἀναρεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖ τὴν ἐνστέον, ἡγουμένη τὸν μὲν κατάλυσιν αὐτῆς μελετᾷ, τὸν δ' ὄν μάλ' οὐα σωθήσεται (“Pleasure on the other hand watches over and preserves the procedure of the foolish mind, but endeavours

⁴⁹See the discussion below.

to break up and destroy the way of life of the wise mind, holding that the latter is planning her ruin, while the former is devising the best means to preserve her”).

The usage in Diodorus Siculus is brought over into English by the phrase “would be recovered” (σωθήσεται): ἀδυνάτου γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ πάντας ἀποστήσαι τῆς κλοπῆς εὔρε πόρον ὁ νομοθέτης δι’ οὗ πᾶν τὸ ἀπολόμενον σωθήσεται μικρῶν διδομένων λύτρων (“For as it was impossible to keep all mankind from stealing, the lawgiver devised a scheme whereby every article lost would be recovered upon payment of a small ransom”).

The references in Dionysius Halicarnassensis and Josephus are best rendered as “save themselves” (σωθήσονται) and “saving myself” (σωθήσομαι), indicating the verb’s possible deponent force in the passive. The former reference reads as follows: ἄλλοι δὲ καὶ οἱ πλείστοι ἤδη περὶ σφᾶς αὐτοὺς καὶ ὅπη σωθήσονται διεσκόπουν (“... while the remaining and most numerous part already began to consider how they should save themselves”). Finally, the passage in Josephus has: ἢ γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ συνεργούντος πείσας Καίσαρα σωθήσομαι μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἢδέως, ἢ παραξυνθέντος ὑπὲρ τοσούτων ἐτοιμῶς ἐπιδώσω τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ ψυχὴν (“Either, God aiding me, I shall prevail with Caesar and have the satisfaction of saving myself as well as you, or, if his indignation is roused, I am ready on behalf of the lives of so many to surrender my own”).

Thus some fluidity regarding the rendering of this verb in the passive voice remains: the future passive once carries an active force, is once used passively, and twice as a middle. Moreover, the future tense does not appear to carry strong weight in any of these passages.

The Force of Διά in 1 Timothy 2:15a. We may take up this question in relation to one further element, i.e., the usage of σώζω in the (future) passive with the preposition διά plus the genitive. The general categories of usage of διά are listed by Harris as (1) means or instrument; (2) attendant circumstance; (3) cause or ground; and (4) purpose.⁵⁰ Regarding the meaning of διά in 1 Tim 2:15, reference may be made to Harris’ citation of the present passage as an instance of double entendre similar to 1 Peter 3:20.⁵¹ In the latter case, διεσώθησαν δι’ ὕδατος may mean both

⁵⁰Murray J. Harris, “Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament,” *NIDNTT* 3:1181–84. Cf. also BAG, 180, who list under the category entitled “means, instrument, agency”: 1. means or instrument; 2. manner; 3. attendant circumstance; 4. efficient cause; 5. occasion.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 3:1177.

“they were brought safely through water” (local **διά**) and “they were preserved by means of water” (instrumental **διά**). The translation “they were saved through water” preserves the deliberate ambiguity in English. Harris appears to imply that **διά** in 1 Tim 2:15, likewise, may be understood both in terms of physical preservation throughout the process of childbirth (temporal) and childbirth as the means by which salvation (preservation) occurs (instrumental). The double entendre may well be intended in 1 Peter 3:20; but is 1 Tim 2:15 a comparable example?

The study of passive instances of **σώζω** with the preposition **διά** in literature surrounding the time period of the writing of 1 Timothy reveals the following passages. Josephus provides this reference in his autobiography:

Ἐπει δὲ προελθὼν ὀλίγον ὑπαντιάζειν ἔμελλον τὸν Ἰωάννην ἰόντα μετὰ τῶν ὀπλιτῶν, δέισας ἐκείνον μὲν ἐξέκλινα, διὰ στενωποῦ δὲ τινος ἐπὶ τὴν λίμνην σωθεὶς καὶ πλοίου λαβόμενος, ἐμβὰς εἰς τὰς Ταριχαιᾶς διεπεραιώθην ἀπροσδοκῆτως τὸν κίνδυνον διαφυγών (“I had not proceeded far when I found myself nearly facing John, advancing with his troops. I turned from him in alarm, and, escaping by a narrow passage to the lake, seized a boat, embarked and crossed to Tarichaeae, having, beyond all expectation, come safe out of this perilous situation.”).⁵²

In this instance, the passive of **σώζω** plus **διά** is used to denote an escape by way of a narrow passage. Thus the passive form is to be rendered actively, i.e. “escape,” as if the verb were functioning as a deponent, and the preposition points to a place through which the escapee passed on his way out of danger.

The geographer Strabo supplies us with a similar usage. He writes,

τῶν δὲ Ῥωμαίων ἐπακολουθούντων ναυκλήρω τινί, ὅπως καὶ αὐτοὶ γνοίεν τὰ ἐμπόρια, φθόνῳ ὁ ναύκληρος ἐκὼν εἰς τέναγος ἐξέβαλε τὴν ναῦν, ἐπαγαγὼν δ' εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν ὄλεθρον καὶ τοὺς ἐπομένους, αὐτὸς ἐσώθη διὰ ναυαγίου καὶ ἀπέλαβε δημοσίᾳ τὴν τιμὴν ὧν ἀπέβαλε φορτίων (“And when once the Romans were closely following a certain ship-captain in order that they too might learn the markets in question, out of jealousy the ship-captain purposely drove his ship out of its course into shoal water; and after he had lured the followers into the same ruin, he himself escaped by a piece of wreckage and received from the State the value of the cargo he had lost.”).⁵³

⁵²Josephus, *Vita* 304.

⁵³Strabo, *Geog.* 3.5.11.

Once again, the passive of **σώζω** is to be rendered with the active term “escape,” and a piece of wreckage becomes the means of the escapees’ transition into safety.

Another instance from Strabo’s writings reads thus:

οἱ δὲ τοῦ Ἀδράστου συντριβῆναι τὸ ἄρμα φεύγοντός φασιν ἐνταῦθα, τὸν δὲ διὰ τοῦ Ἀρείονος σωθῆναι. Φιλόχορος δ’ ὑπὸ τῶν κωμητῶν σωθῆναι φησὶ αὐτόν . . . (“[O]thers say that the chariot of Adrastus, when he was in flight, was smashed to pieces there, but that Adrastus safely escaped on Areion. But Philochorus says that Adrastus was saved by the inhabitants of the village . . .”).⁵⁴

The passive form of **σώζω** is again to be rendered with the term “escape” and a horse becomes the means of the warrior’s flight into safety.⁵⁵

Finally, reference should be made to 1 Cor 3:15 and 1 Pet 3:20. It appears that the phrases **διεσώθησαν διὰ πυρός** and **διεσώθησαν δι’ ὕδατος** (“were preserved/escaped through water”) resemble closely the usage of **σώζω** in the present passage, similar to the references cited above.

What these examples illustrate, is that the passive of **σώζω** plus **διὰ** was in literature surrounding the writing of the Pastorals regularly used in the context of a person’s escape or preservation from danger by way of a given route (circumstantial use; cf. also Rom 2:27; 14:20; 1 Cor 3:15; 2 Cor 2:4; 3:11; 6:8; 1 Pet 3:20).⁵⁶ There seems to be therefore no need to

⁵⁴Strabo, *Geog.* 9.2.11.

⁵⁵This passage adds an interesting element, i.e., the occurrence of a passive form of **σώζω** with the preposition **ὑπό**. The latter phrase denotes a person’s being saved by one or several agents (in the present case, “the inhabitants of the village.”) Rather than constituting parallel uses, the two phrases thus rather seem to be of a contrasting nature.

⁵⁶Cf. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, 147; Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 383: “**διὰ** avec le génitif n’introduit jamais le complément du passif, il marque souvent l’état ou la condition dans laquelle s’insère une personne ou une action (au milieu, les circonstances, l’occasion)”; both of these writers also refer to C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 56 (c); and H. Bürki, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an Timotheus* (Wuppertaler Studienbibel; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 4th ed., 1980 [1974]), 92–93. But see, for example, Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 147: “**διὰ** with the genitive is used here to express means, instrument, or agency (cf. BAGD s.v. A. III. 1d [180]). There are seven occurrences in the New Testament of the verb **σώζω** with **διὰ** (Acts 15:11; Rom. 5:9; 1 Cor. 1:21; 3:15; 15:2; here; 1 Pet. 3:20), all except 1 Cor. 1:21 passive and all except 1 Cor. 3:15 and 1 Pet. 3:20 indicating with **διὰ** the means through which salvation is brought, accomplished, or appropriated.” But, inexplicably, Knight fails to mention that BAGD itself places **διὰ** in A. III. 1c attendant circumstances, not 1d as he himself does. No more need be said.

resort to double entendre on the part of the author of the Pastorals as is suggested by Harris.⁵⁷ 1 Tim 2:15, likewise, should therefore be understood as a reference to the woman's escape or preservation from a danger by means of childbearing. Moreover, as in the above examples, what a person is saved *from* is implied rather than explicitly stated; merely the way of escape is given. But the context always suggests a given danger, be it death by drowning or by the hand of the enemy. What is therefore the most likely danger or enemy from which the woman escapes or is preserved in the present context? Arguably, it is the serpent, or Satan, and perhaps the temptation provided by it. Three factors combine to render this reading probable:

- (1) the reference to the woman's being deceived at the fall in the preceding verse (1 Tim 2:14);
- (2) the explicit mention of Satan in the close parallel passage later in the same epistle, i.e., 1 Tim 5:14–15 which reads: "Therefore I want younger widows to get married, bear children (**τεκνογονεῖν**), keep house (**οἰκοδεσποτεῖν**), and give the enemy no occasion for reproach, for some have already turned aside to follow Satan (**Σατανᾶ**);" in this passage, the author appears to make explicit both elements that are merely implied in 1 Tim 2:15: the larger scope connoted by the term "bearing of children," i.e., "keeping house," and his desire to preserve women from Satan;
- (3) the consistent concern for believer's preservation from Satan or demonic forces in the Pastorals (or at least insinuations in this regard) and the presence of this motif elsewhere in Pauline writings (references will be to 1 Timothy unless noted otherwise):
 - the writer has delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan in order not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1:20);
 - Eve fell into deception at the fall, women will escape by childbirth (1 Tim 2:14–15);

⁵⁷Porter et al. suggest that **σωθήσεται** in 1 Tim 2:15 may be an instance of a so-called "divine passive," with God being the unexpressed but implied agent of the woman's "salvation" (cf. Porter, "What Does It Mean?" 94). In context and in light of the uses documented above, the quasi-deponent force of **σῶζω** in the passive ("escape," "be kept safe") may provide a better explanation. On this, see already the discussion under II. A. 1. on the implied subject of 1 Tim 2:15a above.

- new converts should not be appointed as overseers, lest they become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil (3:6);
- an overseer must have a good reputation with those outside the church so that he might not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (3:7);
- the author finds evidence for the presence of deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons in the environment of the recipients of his letter, particularly the forbidding of marriage and abstinence from certain foods (4:1–5);
- younger widows should remarry, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach, for some have already turned to follow Satan (5:14–15);
- those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction (6:9–10; cf. 2 Tim 2:26);
- Timothy should guard what has been entrusted to him, avoiding the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith (6:20–21; cf. 6:9–10);
- in 2 Timothy, the author expresses the hope that kind, patient, and gentle correction of one’s opponents may lead to their repentance and a coming to the knowledge of the truth so that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (2 Tim 2:26);
- in 1 Cor 7:5, it is a married couple’s ill-advised prolonged abstinence from sexual intercourse that makes them vulnerable to Satan;
- in Eph 4:27, it is unresolved anger;
- and numerous references in 1 and 2 Timothy speak of a person’s need to guard (φυλάσσω) what has been entrusted to him (cf., e.g., 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 1:12, 14; 4:7, 15, 18)

The consistency with which the theme of preservation is sounded particularly in 1 and 2 Timothy is indeed remarkable. References to preservation from Satan (or the lack thereof) in the context of the present passage include 1 Tim 1:20 on the one hand and 1 Tim 3:6 and 7 on the other. It should also be noted that 2 Timothy is framed by significant “preservation” passages, i.e., 2 Tim 1:12 and 4:18. The Pastorals’ “preservation theme” may be considered to be a subcategory of perseverance versus apostasy, involving also numerous exhortations to Timothy to “es-

cape” and “pursue” (φεύγε, δίοικε; cf., e.g., 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22). The above list of references to people’s preservation from Satan (a positive concern) may be supplemented (with some overlap) by a list of the negative corollary in the Pastorals, i.e., references to people’s “wandering away from the faith,” their “straying” or “turning aside,” or their “being shipwrecked” and similar terms. This fills out the preservation (or lack thereof) theme in the Pastorals and further underscores its significance by providing us with the following references in 1 Timothy:

- some were straying (ἀστοχήσαντες), turning aside (ἐξαπατηθεῖσαν; 1:6)
- some have rejected (ἀπώσάμενοι) and suffered shipwreck (ἐναυάγησαν; 1:19)
- not Adam (ἡπατήθη), but woman deceived (ἐξαπατηθεῖσα; 2:14)
- be blinded (τυφωθεῖς) and fall into condemnation of devil (ἐμπέση; 2:14)
- fall into reproach and snare of devil (ἐμπέση; 3:7)
- some will fall away from the faith (ἀποστήσονται; 4:1)
- incurring judgment, setting aside previous pledge (ἔχουσαι κρίμα, ἠθέτησαν; 5:12)
- go around from house to house (περιερχόμενοι τὰς οἰκίας; 5:13)
- some have already turned aside to follow Satan (ἐξετράπησαν ὀπίσω; 5:15)
- reference to “elect angels” implies some are fallen (5:21)
- those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare (ἐμπίπτουσιν; 6:9)
- some have wandered away from the faith (ἀπεπλανήθησαν) and pierced themselves (περιέπειραν; 6:10)
- some have professed “knowledge” and thus gone astray from the faith (ἠστόχησαν; 6:21; inclusio with 1:6; cf. also 2 Tim 2:18 with reference to Hymenaeus and Philetus’ teaching that resurrection had already taken place)⁵⁸

⁵⁸One notes that the author of 1 and 2 Timothy frequently uses the vague expression “some” to refer to his opponents in the first epistle while naming some of his adversaries explicitly in his second letter (e.g., Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2:18 [but cf. already 1 Tim 1:20: Hymenaeus and Alexander], Demas in 4:10, and Alexander in 4:14; cf. Egbert Schlarb, *Die gesunde Lehre: Häresie und Wahrheit im Spiegel der Pastoralbriefe* [Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1990], 129). Also, verbs relating to “wandering away” or “straying” are less common in the second epistle, which may indicate a more confirmed situation at the time of writing 2 Timothy: in the author’s mind, teachers are either confirmed as true or false.

We may sum up the argument thus far. In the light of the reference to the fall in 1 Tim 2:14, the explicit reference to Satan in the close parallel of 1 Tim 5:14–15, and the impressive and substantial evidence for a “preservation from Satan” theme in the Pastorals, it appears more than justified to view Satan as the one from whom women will escape or be preserved by childbearing according to 1 Tim 2:15. Thus the phrase **σωθήσεται διά** in 1 Tim 2:15 may be rendered as “She (i.e., the woman) escapes (or is preserved; gnomic future) [from Satan] by way of **τεκνογονία**.”

Allusions to Gnostic Teaching or to Genesis

Gnosticism. If this is the likely rendering of this verse, may we here find an allusion to the teaching of the opponents of the writer of 1 Timothy? These opponents have often been uncritically identified as gnostics (see especially 1 Tim 6:20). However, as has increasingly been realized, utmost caution must be taken not to impose on the present text a later, more developed form of gnosticism.⁵⁹ The primary clues should, at any rate, be taken from the text of 1 Timothy itself. Generally, it is apparent that the antagonists of the writer of this epistle represent a blend of Jewish and pagan religious features.⁶⁰ Thus one finds an interest in genealogies and matters of the law (Jewish; 1:4, 7; 4:7; cf. Tit 1:10, 14; 3:9) and a contempt for marriage (pagan; 4:3: **κωλύοντων γαμεῖν**) existing side by side among the doctrines of the false teachers.⁶¹ Since it is therefore apparent

⁵⁹Cf. esp. E. M. Yamauchi, “Gnosis, Gnosticism,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 353.

⁶⁰Cf. Oskar Skarsaune, “Heresy and the Pastoral Epistles,” *Them* 20/1 (October 1994): 9: “Most commentators conclude that the adversaries were Judaizing Christians with a Gnostic leaning, or gnosticizing Christians with a Judaizing tendency.” Skarsaune himself argues on the basis of 2 Tim 2:18 that these gnosticizing opponents despised the material aspect of creation, had no use for a resurrection of the body, and thus ended up with a one-sided stress on realized eschatology (cf. also Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus*, 22–26). But it seems questionable to use a passage in 2 Timothy as the primary evidence to determine the background of the false teachers in 1 Timothy.

⁶¹For second-century gnosticism, cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.2–3, on the gnostics and Saturninus: “they consider marrying and childbearing to be from Satan” (*nubere autem et generare a Satana dicunt esse*). Cf. also the fragmentary apocryphal *Gospel of the Egyptians* cited in patristic literature which quotes Jesus as saying, “I have come to destroy the works of the woman” or answering the question of how long death will continue to reign by remarking, “As long as women bear children.” If similar attitudes were present among the false teachers in Ephesus at the time of writing of 1 Timothy, an over-realized eschatology

that the antagonists' concept of spirituality demeaned procreation, it is certainly possible, if not likely, that the writer of 1 Timothy seeks to counter this false dichotomy by linking the term **σώζω** with the term **τεκνογονία**, a juxtaposition that surely would have made the writer's opponents cringe. Indeed, the currency of the term **σώζω** in contemporary religious terminology may well explain the use of this expression by the writer of 1 Timothy with the less common meaning "to be preserved" rather than "to be saved." Similar to instances in 1 Corinthians and Colossians, the author may turn slogans by his opponents against them by redefining them within a Christian framework. A Christian woman, he maintains, is "saved" (**σωθήσεται**), not by knowledge and communion with the divine in neglect of her physical functions, but by adhering to her proper biological and societal role centering on her function in procreation and the domestic sphere. This coheres well with the emphasis on orderly family relations in the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim 3:4, 12; 5:4; Tit 1:6).

Another factor that is seldom given proper weight is the fact that the writer of the Pastorals' primary concern regarding women is not with them as perpetrators but as victims of false teaching (cf., e.g., 2 Tim 3:6; but see Rev 3:20–23).⁶² Thus a desire to protect women from harmful teaching seems to be the underlying motive for much of the instruction found in the Pastorals. This, of course, harmonizes perfectly with the

could have combined with asceticism owing to the gnostic negative evaluation of physical functions as the backdrop to the injunction in 1 Tim 2:15. A further poignant passage regarding women is found at the end of the *Gospel of Thomas* (before CE 200?): "Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven'" (logion 114).

⁶²Robert J. Karris ("The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles," *JBL* 92 [1973]: 554) cites as a parallel to this situation the example of Lucian's tirade against the wandering Cynic philosophers: "The thing would not be so dreadful if they offended against us only by being what they are. But although outwardly and in public they appear very reverent and stern, if they get a handsome boy or a pretty woman in their clutches or hope to, it is best to veil their conduct in silence. Some even carry off the wives of their hosts, to seduce them after the pattern of that young Trojan, pretending that the women are going to become philosophers . . ." (*De Fugitivi* 18–19). Contra Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 48: "2 Tim 3:6 shows that women played some kind of role among the opponents of the Pastoral Epistles."

scenario at the fall alluded to in 1 Tim 2:14, where Eve was not a perpetrator of false teaching but the victim of the serpent's deception.⁶³

The effect of subverting natural family structures appears to have been a major characteristic of the heresy behind 1 Timothy. The author of this epistle counteracts this aberration by maintaining that true Christianity undergirds and dignifies rather than subverting or obliterating the natural order. What is more, he explicitly establishes a connection between the church as God's "household" and people's own households (cf. 3:4-5, 12, 15; 5:10, 12-15).⁶⁴ Thus he strongly refutes a certain proto-gnostic libertinism which apparently denied the effects of the fall (cf. 1 Tim 2:14?; 1 John 15:2-2:2) and taught that Christians were no longer bound by the natural family order. Especially if it is true that an over-realized eschatology accounts for certain aspects of the heresy refuted in 1 and 2 Timothy (cf. esp. 2 Tim 2:17-18; cf. 1 Tim 1:19-20), the teaching of 1 Tim 2:15 should be understood as providing a corrective against such extremism.⁶⁵

This significant proto-gnostic backdrop to the present passage raises the question to what extent 1 Tim 2:15 should be tied to the original context that occasioned its teaching. On one level, of course, all epistles, even all biblical documents, are occasional in nature, since their composition was prompted by particular circumstances that led to their writing. To equate occasionality with historical relativity would thus lead to the radical conclusion that all biblical teaching, indeed all human communication, is contingent and relative to its historical and cultural context.⁶⁶ Few

⁶³Cf. also 2 Cor 11:3 where an analogy is established between Eve's deception by Satan and the possible deception of the Corinthian church (not merely women) by Satan, and 11:14-15 where Paul develops lines of analogy between the false teachers and Satan. Note, however, that there is no trace of a Messianic typology in 2 Cor 11:3 but that the relationship is merely between Eve and the church.

⁶⁴On this, see Schlarb, *Gesunde Lehre*, 321-56, especially the section entitled "Das Verhältnis von οἶκος ἀνθρώπων und οἶκος θεοῦ," on pp. 342-56.

⁶⁵Cf. Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 34; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 29-42; idem, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 23-24, 72-81.

⁶⁶But see, for example, J. I. Packer, "The Adequacy of Human Language," in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 197-226; Vern S. Poythress, "Adequacy of Language and Accommodation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 349-76.

evangelicals go to this extreme.⁶⁷ The question remains, however, what criteria should be used to distinguish clearly time-bound injunctions (such as Paul's request to Timothy to bring his coat and scrolls in 2 Tim 4:3) from passages that carry normative, authoritative weight beyond the original context that occasioned their teaching.

This is not the place to tackle this issue comprehensively.⁶⁸ Reference should, however, be made to T. David Gordon's helpful suggestion to distinguish between underlying absolute ethical norms and the specific formulation given to them in a particular context, with the implication that the former are timeless while the latter is subject to variation.⁶⁹ In our specific context the writer refers immediately prior to the present reference both to creation order, clearly of permanent validity, and to the fall, likewise of lasting consequences, both as narrated in the authoritative Hebrew Scriptures, in order to underscore his teaching regarding the woman's place in the Christian congregation (1 Tim 2:12–14).⁷⁰ Immediately following the present reference we find a general discussion of qualifications for overseers: "If *anyone* desires the office of overseer . . . it is necessary for an overseer to be . . ." (1 Tim 3:1–2).

⁶⁷For a survey of relativism as it relates to modern biblical interpretation, see William J. Larkin, Jr., *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), especially 18–21.

⁶⁸For helpful general introduction to some of the relevant issues, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 318–38, especially 326–32; and William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 401–26, especially 409–10 (but see the present writer's review in *TrinJ* 15 NS [1994]: 251–52). We dissent, however, from Osborne's treatment of the present passage, where he concludes, despite the presence of supracultural indicators in the context of 1 Tim 2:13–14, that while "[t]his points toward normative force," it does not solve the issue in itself (p. 329). However, as the following discussion will seek to demonstrate, a number of factors combine that appear to make a compelling case for the presence of norms underlying 1 Tim 2:11–15 that transcend the occasion of 1 Timothy. For an advanced treatment of some of the relevant hermeneutical issues pertinent to the present discussion, see further Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), whose index curiously does not include a single reference to the Pastorals.

⁶⁹T. David Gordon, "A Certain Kind of Letter: The Genre of 1 Timothy," chap. 2 in *Women in the Church*.

⁷⁰Cf. the comments on the use of the OT in the NT gender passages in Köstenberger, "Gender Roles in the NT," 267–71.

Also, the entire section in which the present passage is found, beginning in 2:1 (Παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων), concludes with the statement in 3:14-15 that the writer wrote these things (ταῦτα) for the recipient of this letter to know “how one should conduct oneself in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.” Finally, the nature of the entire epistle, i.e., that of an epistle concerned to regulate the organization of churches in the post-apostolic era, not just in Timothy’s end-of-first-century Ephesus, further enhances the likelihood that the present epistle is designed to provide injunctions and norms that transcend the letter’s particular historical-cultural horizon.⁷¹

These observations strongly caution against singling out v. 15 from the rest of the passage and from considering it as merely situation-bound. While it has become increasingly common in recent years for scholars to limit the applicability of New Testament epistolary passages by classifying them as ad hoc statements, care must be taken not to equate historical particularity with lack of general applicability. This would be reductionistic.⁷² To use Gordon’s hermeneutical framework,⁷³ while the injunc-

⁷¹This assessment of the structure of 1 Tim 2:1–3:15 differs significantly from that of Gordon D. Fee, “The Great Watershed: Intentionality and Particularity/Eternality: 1 Timothy 2:8–15 as a Test Case,” in *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 52–65. Fee’s claim that the occurrence of οὖν in 2:1 settles the case by subsuming the entire subsequent section (2:1–3:16) under the purpose of 1:3–4 is not borne out by the actual content of this portion of the letter. In particular, Fee fails to note the general thrust of the statement in 3:14–15. Also, Fee overstates his case, when he takes the entire epistle to be directed exclusively to correct false teaching. While this is arguably *one* of the purposes of the letter, some of the epistle’s general statements (such as 3:1) suggest that the author at least occasionally goes beyond the mere refutation of false teachers to provide positive instruction for the organization of the church as well that need not be mirror-read as indicating a corresponding abuse by false teachers.

⁷²Fee, “Great Watershed,” 60–62, constitutes a striking case of special pleading in this regard. Proposing to shift the focus from particularity to intentionality, he claims that “[i]t simply cannot be demonstrated that Paul *intended* 1 Timothy 2:11–12 as a rule in all churches at all times. In fact the occasion and purpose of 1 Timothy as a whole, and these verses in particular, suggest otherwise. Nor will it do to appeal to vv. 13–14 as though there were some eternal order in creation, since *neither* Genesis *nor* Paul makes this point.” Fee counsels “obedience to the ultimate concern of the text, even if at times the particulars are not carried over to the ‘letter.’ ” We may respond by asking why Paul *did* refer to creation and the fall in 1 Tim 2:13–14 in order to support his injunction in v. 12, if not to provide substantiation for the normativity of his point. Moreover, to set aside the informing norm underlying the present passage for the sake of “obedience to the ultimate concern of the text” appears to be a

tion in 1 Tim 2:15 is couched in language directed toward the author's proto-gnostic opponents (which may account for the unusual use of the term $\sigma\acute{\omega}\zeta\omega$ and other phraseology),⁷⁴ the underlying norm of this passage is of permanent validity: women's central domain, as established by creation and confirmed negatively by the fall, is to be found in her involvement in the domestic and procreative sphere, in the natural household. Moreover, if this analysis is correct, it would hold true even if the writer were not Paul but a Pauline follower from a later period, since the principles of normativity outlined above would within the framework of canonical Scripture equally apply to a later author of a biblical document.

While this is a difficult teaching in some respects, it appears to be what 1 Tim 2:15 is saying, and at least this writer does not feel at liberty to shrink from its apparent overt message merely because of the difficulties in implication and application of the passage in contemporary church and culture. It may be ironic that the interpretation that is directly counter-cultural in the present North-American context is one that supports what is generally considered to be a "traditional" or "conservative" stance on the issue of women's roles. But 1 Tim 2:15 is, of course, not the only biblical passage on women's roles, and it remains to discuss its teachings in relation to other pertinent passages such as Gal 3:28 in the concluding section.

Apart from the gnostic background to 1 Tim 2:15, there also appears to be a possible allusion to Genesis in this portion. But if this is the case, what part of Genesis is referred to: the so-called "proto-evangelion" in

precarious expedient indeed. But Fee here merely echoes Marshall, who likewise appeals to the "main thrust of Scripture" or a writer's "real intention" for the purpose of setting aside the overt teaching of certain passages (cf. I. H. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to Theological Criticism," in *The Best in Theology, Volume Three* [ed. J. I. Packer; Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1989], 45–60, and the more extensive interaction with Marshall in my article on "Gender Passages in the NT," 278). While these writers' categories have the appearance of being nuanced and discerning, they do, in fact, betray considerable subjectivity in judgment that would at least in principle enable them to set aside any passage that does not appear "reasonable" to them in the light of general culture for the sake of their own preferred interpretation. How much better to allow Scripture to be counter-cultural and to challenge one's own views than to domesticate it by not permitting it to say what is incompatible with contemporary culture or a given interpreter's views.

⁷³See n. 69 and the discussion above.

⁷⁴See the discussion of the possible proto-gnostic background to the present passage above.

Gen 3:15, the reference to the woman's curse in childbirth (Gen 3:16), God's mandate to the man and the woman to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth and to rule over it (Gen 1:28), or another passage? The answer to this question may provide an important corrective to viewing 1 Tim 2:15 too one-sidedly against its gnostic backdrop and supply us with important clues to the salvation-historical, biblical-theological, and inter-textual canonical framework of the writer of 1 Timothy.

Genesis. It has often been suggested that the writer of 1 Timothy here alludes to Gen 3:16⁷⁵ or even to the "protoevangelion" in Gen 3:15. This is seen to be indicated by the allusion to Genesis 3 in 1 Tim 2:14 and by the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 in terms of a Messianic typology ("women shall be saved by 'the' childbirth, i.e., Mary's giving birth to Jesus the Messiah"). It has already been argued above that there is no evidence from the context for an allusion to Gen 3:15 in the present passage. But what about Gen 3:16? If one requires verbal parallels between the original passage and a later allusion to it, 1 Tim 2:15 hardly qualifies as an allusion to Gen 3:16, since no direct verbal parallels can be found (LXX: τέξῃ τέκνα). Thus it may at best represent an echo of Gen 3:16, reflecting a perhaps unconscious reference to a passage with related content (i.e., childbearing).⁷⁶

It needs to be argued, however, that the mere fact that 1 Tim 2:14 alludes to Genesis 3 is not decisive for establishing a deliberate reference to Gen 3:16 in the following verse. The consideration of other factors will aid in determining this matter. It should be noted that Gen 3:16 speaks of the fall's negative consequences on the woman's childbearing while 1 Tim 2:15 accentuates its positive ramifications. Should the writer of 1 Timothy therefore be taken to imply that, in the present era of salvation, the effects of the curse will be reversed? On a literal level, of course, this is manifestly untrue, as every woman who has given birth and every husband of such a woman who attended the birth can testify. Even on any other level, raising children and managing a household still subsist in a fallen world, albeit supported by God's gracious enablement. While the reversal of the consequences of the fall is surely elaborated upon in many New

⁷⁵Cf. also G. Schneider in *EDNT* 3:340: "The background is probably the Jewish view that to endure the pains of childbirth suspends the curse in Gen 3:16."

⁷⁶On the distinction between allusions and echoes, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Jon Paulien, "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *BibRes* 33 (1988): 39–41.

Testament passages, it is doubtful that this is the writer's point in the present passage. In line with his general concern to protect women from being victimized by false teachers, he enjoins them to adhere to their God-given domestic roles—thus they will escape and be preserved from Satan.

One final possibility remains. If the present passage is found neither to allude to Gen 3:15 or 16, does 1 Tim 2:15 perhaps imply the author's interpretation of the fall narrative? This appears to be supported by the underlying logic connecting 1 Tim 2:14 and 15. Eve, it is said, was deceived and fell into transgression. Christian women, on the other hand, will escape or be kept safe from Satan, if they adhere to their God-given domestic role. Thus, by implication, Eve fell, because she failed to keep her proper domain and, by leaving it, became vulnerable to the serpent's false teaching (cf. 2 Cor 11:2–3). If this interpretation is correct, the writer of 1 Timothy is drawing from his reading of the fall narrative the lesson that Christian women will be kept safe from Satan if they avoid Eve's mistake, i.e., leaving her proper God-given realm (cf. Jude 6).⁷⁷ 1 Tim 2:15 thus represents, not an allusion to Gen 3:15 or 16, but an interpretation of the fall narrative. As will be seen below, this understanding also makes the best sense in context with 1 Tim 2:11–12.

Moreover, if there is any theological kinship with Genesis in the present passage, it may be with God's command to the man and the woman in Gen 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth and rule over it. The passage would thus hark back to the way in which the woman was initially given a share in humankind's rule over God's creation prior to the fall. In this case, it is inaccurate to view 1 Tim 2:15 merely from the perspective that it excludes the woman from all ruling functions in family, church, and society: the woman rather participates in this rule by adhering to her specific God-ordained role as indicated in the original creation account.

The Meaning of τῆς τεκνογονίας in 1 Timothy 2:15a

The term **τεκνογονία** was apparently extremely rare in Greek literature from classical times to the time of writing of 1 Timothy and beyond.⁷⁸ A

⁷⁷As 2 Cor 11:2–3, 14–15, Jude 6, and a number of passages in the Pastorals indicate, the leaving of one's proper God-given domain, the rejection of authority, and sexual immorality are properties of Satan and the fallen angels as well as of false teachers, and these, in turn, seek to draw women into their sphere of influence.

⁷⁸We will limit our discussion to instances of the noun **τεκνογονία** and not deal with occurrences of the verb **τεκνογονεῖν**, since the former expression is used in the present passage.

search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* data base yields only two instances of the pre-Pauline usage of the term. The first extant reference containing **τεκνογονία** is found in one of Hippocrates' letters (fifth century BC):

Καὶ πῶς οὐκ ἐλεγχθεῖς, ἔφην, ὦ ἄριστε; ἢ οὐκ οἶη ἀτοκός γε εἶναι γελῶν ἀνθρώπου θάνατον ἢ νοῦσον ἢ παρακοπὴν ἢ μανίην ἢ μελαγχολίην ἢ σφαγὴν ἢ ἄλλο τι χεῖρον; ἢ τοῦμπαλιν γάμους ἢ πανηγύριος ἢ τεκνογονίην ἢ μυστήρια ἢ ἀρχάς καὶ τιμὰς ἢ ἄλλο τι ὅλως ἀγαθόν; ("But why, my good man, should you not be refuted? Should it not be inappropriate indeed to laugh at a person's death or disease or insanity or madness or melancholy or injury or something worse? Or, conversely, at weddings or festivals or childbearing or religious rites or authorities and offices or any other good thing?")⁷⁹

It is evident that this reference is quite general to childbirths as events in life similar to weddings or other important occasions.

The second reference is found in the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus' *Fragmenta Moralia* (third century BCE):

καὶ τὸ νομοθετεῖν δὲ καὶ τὸ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους, ἔτι δὲ συγγράφειν τὰ δυνάμενα ὠφελεῖν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας τοῖς γράμμασιν οἰκείον εἶναι τοῖς σπουδαίοις καὶ τὸ συγκαταβαίνειν καὶ εἰς γάμον καὶ εἰς τεκνογονίαν καὶ αὐτοῦ χάριν καὶ τῆς πατρίδος καὶ ὑπομένειν περὶ ταύτης, εἴαν ἦ μετρία, καὶ πόνους καὶ θάνατον ("Moreover [they say] that making laws and training persons, and also composing things which can be of value to those who read letters, belong to those who are zealous both to submit to marriage and to childbirth for its sake and [that of their] homeland, and to endure for her, if necessary, both pain and death").⁸⁰

As in the first reference, childbirth (here is the singular) is found in conjunction with marriage, here as a duty to be submitted to for their own sake and for that of the country.

⁷⁹Hippocrates, *Epistulae* 17.105, in *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate* (ed. Littré; Paris: Baillière, 1839 (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1973), 9:356–57: "Et comment, cher ami, ne serais-tu pas réfuté? Ou penses-tu n'être pas extravagant en riant de la mort, de la maladie, du délire, de la folie, de la mélancolie, du meurtre, et de quelque accident encore pire? Ou, inversement, des mariages, des panégyries (sorte de solennité), des naissances d'enfants, des mystères, des commandements, des honneurs, ou de tout autre bien?" I am grateful to Lawrence Lahey for his assistance with the English translation.

⁸⁰Chrysippus, *Fragmenta Moralia* 611, in *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (ed. Johannes von Arnim; Leipzig: Teubner, 1903; repr. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1968), 3:158. I am grateful to Lawrence Lahey for his assistance with the English translation.

Moreover, a reference in Aristotle's *History of Animals* needs to be considered where two manuscripts have **τεκνοποιίας** (*Cod. Marcianus*=A^a and *Cod. Laurentianus*=C^a; followed by the *TLG* data base) and two manuscripts have **τεκνογονίας** (*Cod. Vaticanus*=P; D^a; followed by the Loeb Classical Library series):

Μετὰ δὲ τὰ τρις ἑπτὰ ἔτη αἱ μὲν γυναῖκες πρὸς τὰς τεκνοποιίας (τεκνογονίας) ἤδη εὐκαίρως ἔχουσιν, οἱ δ' ἄνδρες ἔτι ἔχουσιν ἐπίδοσιν ("After twenty-one years, the females are in good condition to bear children while men still need time for development.")⁸¹

This reference is to the physical giving of birth to children, which appears to confirm the judgment of the *TLG* data base to follow the more solid manuscript evidence and to read here **τεκνοποιία**, a term that refers unambiguously to the physical giving of birth.

Thus there remain two undisputed pre-Pauline references to **τεκνογονία** in Greek literature. Both instances are rather general; the more recent passage in Chrysippus, however, appears to involve the use of a synecdoche. People are submitting, not merely to marriage and childbirth, but to married life and having children. Incidentally, the objection often raised against taking **τεκνογονία** as a synecdoche in 1 Tim 2:15, i.e., that in this case the author would have used the term **τεκνοτροφέω** which is found in 1 Tim 5:10, misses the mark, since the latter term merely specifies the raising of children, a sense required in the latter context, while **τεκνογονία**, apart from its literal use referring to physical childbirth, may also pertain to the having of a family in a general sense.⁸²

In the light of these observations, and particularly the reference by Chrysippus, it seems perfectly permissible to understand **τεκνογονία** in 1 Tim 2:15 as referring, not merely to the giving of birth to children, but to the having of a family, with all that this entails. The scarcity of the term accentuates the deliberateness of the usage in 1 Tim 2:15a (cf. the verb form **τεκνογονεῖν** in 1 Tim 5:14). The generic nature of the reference indicated by the definite article joins with the author's choice of the noun rather than the verb in the present passage in suggesting that a general

⁸¹Aristotle, *History of Animals* 528a.28, in *Aristote: Histoire des Animaux*, Vol. 2, Books V–VII (trans. Pierre Louis; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), 136; and in Loeb Classical Library series, *Aristotle: History of Animals*, Vol. IX (VII), 425.

⁸²Cf. Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1880), 316, who notes that Chrysostom and Theophylact use **τεκνογονία** with the sense of child-rearing in general.

concept is in view, “procreation,” i.e., the woman’s participation in the multiplication of the human race. Indeed, *procreatio* is the Latin translation of this term (cf., e.g., the Vulgate).

We may therefore conclude that 1 Tim 2:15 may best be rendered in the following way: “She (i.e., the woman) escapes (or is preserved; gnomic future) [from Satan] by way of procreation (i.e., having a family).”⁸³ Moreover, in line with 1 Tim 5:14, one should view procreation as merely the core of the woman’s responsibility that also entails, not merely the bearing, but also the raising of children, as well as managing the home (synecdoche; cf. also Titus 2:4–5). The sense of the injunction in the present passage is thus that women can expect to escape Satan under the condition of adhering to their God-ordained role centering around the natural household.

*Integration of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15a with
1 Timothy 2:9–15 and Contemporary Implications*

How may the preceding interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 be integrated with a reading of 1 Tim 2:11–15 as a whole, and how does it relate to other passages on the topic? While it is not the focus of the present essay to explore the implications of the suggested interpretation so that our comments need of necessity be brief, a few pertinent comments must be made. We commend the above interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 even to those who may not agree with our comments on the passage’s application below. As we have discussed elsewhere in greater detail, women are enjoined in vv. 11 and 12 to learn submissively rather than to teach or exercise authority in the church.⁸⁴ Vv. 13 and 14 supply reasons for this injunction from creation and the fall. V. 15 states women’s proper role in terms of lessons to be learned from Eve’s failure at the fall. Thus v. 15 moves beyond the fall to a restoration of the original creation design. The movement is from creation (v. 13) to the fall (v. 14) to a restored creation order (v. 15). All this occurs in a context of setting proper parameters for the legitimate ministry of women in v. 12 (cf. 3:1–2).

⁸³Dibelius and Conzelmann (*Pastoral Epistles*, 49) cite the following parallel regarding the father’s role in *Corp. Herm.* 2.17: “For the procreation of children is held by wise men to be the most important and the holiest function in life” (διὸ καὶ μεγίστη ἐν τῷ βίῳ σπουδὴ καὶ εὐσεβεστάτη τοῖς εὐ φρονούσιν ἐστὶν ἡ παιδοποιία).

⁸⁴For this rendering and interpretation, see Köstenberger, Schreiner, and Baldwin, *Women in the Church*.

If this reading is correct, v. 15 is in fact closely connected to v. 12, where, as stated, women are prohibited from permanent teaching or ruling functions in the church. Similar to the reasons given in vv. 13 and 14, the statement in v. 15 elaborates on the injunction of v. 12: all will be well with women who, unlike Eve, adhere to the domain assigned to them by God. Women, on the other hand, who depart from their God-ordained roles in their lives become vulnerable to Satan, particularly if they assume permanent teaching or ruling functions in the local assembly.⁸⁵ The Pastorals contrast this focus on procreation and the domestic sphere by the godly woman resulting in her preservation from Satan with the contempt of marriage and procreation found in the church's environment. Adherence to such teaching led to women's straying from the home, which, in turn, made them an easy prey for Satan, similar to Eve at the fall.

If these lines of thought are correct, the present passage would speak powerfully to a cultural context where many are seeking to "liberate" women from all encumbrances of family responsibilities in order to unleash them on a quest for self-fulfillment apart from such functions. Passages such as the present one appear to indicate that it is precisely by participating in her role pertaining to the family that women fulfill their central calling. Moreover, if the reference to "childbearing" should indeed be understood as synecdoche, even unmarried women are to retain a focus on the domestic sphere and all that it entails.

But what are we to make of Gal 3:28, seen by some as the paradigm passage on the present issue, a hermeneutical lodestar in the Pauline firmament, indeed Scripture's Magna Carta of egalitarian gender roles? If Paul wrote 1 Timothy, did he regress from his earlier "enlightened" stance in Galatians to a traditional patriarchal view in 1 Timothy? Or are we to focus on Gal 3:28, since the passage is formulated more generally, while considering 1 Tim 2:11–15 to be more specific in its application, if not entirely contingent on the original context, so that 1 Tim 2:15 should be read within the larger purview of the statement in Gal 3:28? This is an exceedingly important hermeneutical question. As I have argued elsewhere, the reading of Gal 3:28 just described does, in fact, not bear closer scrutiny in its own literary context, which focuses on the salvation-historical fact that men and women, like Jews and Gentiles, slave or free,

⁸⁵We cannot here explore in detail the complex implications for applying this teaching in a contemporary end-of-twentieth-century North-American context. For some helpful basic classifications, see Mary Kassian, *Women, Creation, and the Fall*, 81–83.

are equally heirs of salvation, just as they equally bear God's image (cf. Gal 3:26; cf. also Gen 1:28; 1 Pet 3:7; and 1 Cor 12:13 where Jews and Gentiles, slave or free are mentioned, but not male or female).⁸⁶ This passage does therefore not speak of gender roles in the government of the church but of salvation-historical entrance into Christ and the community of believers.

Moreover, Galatians, like 1 Timothy, is part of a specific original historical context, so that there is no warrant for taking Gal 3:28 to be normative while consigning 1 Tim 2:15 to the state of historical and cultural relativity. Contrary to such efforts, the teachings of Gal 3:28 and 1 Tim 2:15 should rather both be considered as normative teachings and be related to one another in the sense that Scripture teaches *both* that women and men have equal status as believers in Christ *and* that they have different roles assigned to them by their Creator. Thus 1 Tim 2:15 would not contradict Gal 3:28 but merely specify aspects of role differentiation within the larger perspective of male-female equality with respect to salvation as taught in Gal 3:28. If this is the case, it would be inadmissible to affirm Gal 3:28 while rejecting 1 Tim 2:11–15. Rather, the latter passage should be equally affirmed and applied as the former.

We part with the concluding observation that much harm has come in recent years from the increasingly antagonistic, even inflammatory, climate in which issues such as this have been discussed. Rather than viewing this question primarily in terms of “confining” women to the home, it may be more productive to focus on the issue of determining the essence of a gender's calling from God, with men and women helping each other to live out their respective roles. The need of the hour is for an increasing number of individuals who model integrated relationships and ministry in the local church as well as in other Christian settings.⁸⁷

⁸⁶For a more thorough treatment of this issue, see my “Gender Passages in the NT,” especially pp. 273–79.

⁸⁷I am grateful for the assistance of Keith Collins and Scott Shidemantle in the research for this essay and for the helpful responses to an earlier draft of this essay by Brent Kassian, Lawrence Lahey, Peter O'Brien, and Thomas Schreiner.