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## WHO IS THE “WOMAN” IN 1 TIMOTHY 2?

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### *Introduction*

No passage of Scripture has engendered more debate regarding women in ministry than 1 Timothy 2. Although it does not speak directly to the question of female ordination, it has often been used in that regard. But it seems that some basic questions may not have received the attention they deserve.

### *Framework for This Discussion*

Thomas Schreiner, in a book edited with Andreas Köstenberger, explores two of the options regarding 1 Timothy 2 and the implications of some of these options:

What is meant by the word *γυναικας* in verse 9 and throughout the rest of this passage? Does it refer to women in general, or more specifically to wives? If it refers to wives both here and in subsequent verses, then women are not forbidden from teaching publicly in church. They are merely prohibited from teaching and exercising authority over their husbands.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere, various other questions have been asked about this text. The nature of “exercising authority” has been argued at length and, in our opinion, convincingly, in the volume edited by

1. Schreiner, “Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” 92–93. Note that *γυνή*, *γυναῖκες*, *γυναῖκα*, and *γυναικας* used in this article are all case forms of the same Greek word.

Porter and Carson.<sup>2</sup> Another of the major disagreements relates to the question of the normative nature of 1 Timothy 2.<sup>3</sup> Some, such as Stendahl, would argue that Gal 3:28 needs to be understood as the determinative text, with 1 Timothy 2 and others reflecting the incorrect biases of the apostle Paul.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, it is also useful to note the categories into which Hoch divides his selected bibliography on the subject: non-evangelical egalitarian, evangelical egalitarian, and hierarchicalist.<sup>5</sup> Much of the literature seems to take this either/or stance.<sup>6</sup> Picking up on this general trend, Allison has pointed out the influence of one's presuppositional framework in dealing with the total biblical teaching on this subject. He writes,

Among biblical scholars themselves, these issues above all others have pitted conservative against liberal, contributing to the downfall of the myth of value-free hermeneutics. The flood of obviously apologetic articles ("advocacy exegesis") claiming Paul for liberal or conservative views, either defending him against chauvinism or justifying his subordination of women, has sharpened our awareness of the problem of the Pauline "canon within the canon," but is also politicizing the exegetical enterprise in general when it involves these issues.<sup>7</sup>

For the record, our conclusion on this matter is that 1 Timothy 2 ought to be considered normative. We reject (and hope to avoid) the pitfall of creating a canon within the canon. We are also persuaded that the teaching of 1 Timothy 2 is not merely a parochial matter related to the particularities of the Ephesian church in particular, nor was it normative simply for

2. Köstenberger, "Syntactical Background Studies to 1 Tim 2.12," 156–79.

3. For one of many examples of this, see the point and counterpoint articles of Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics, Part III," and Waltke, "1 Timothy 2:8–15: Unique or Normative? A Response to Gordon Fee."

4. Stendahl, *Bible and the Role of Women*.

5. Hoch, "The Role of Women in the Church," 250–51.

6. Cf. Wall, "Wifely Submission," 272, and Allison, "Let Women Be Silent," 27.

7. Allison, "Let Women Be Silent," 27.

the ancient church. We are persuaded that the teaching of this text, such as it is, should be considered as both applicable and authoritative for all churches.

But it is to Schreiner’s original question that we turn. Who are the “women” about whom Paul writes?

### *The English Translation Options*

Underlying much of the discussion regarding the male/female relationship appears to be a semantic confusion based on the lack of one-for-one correspondence between the English words for wife/woman/female and husband/man/male with the Greek and Hebrew terms used to express these ideas. Such differences may serve to obscure our understanding of the meaning of the original text. English translations use three sets of words “male/female,” “man/woman,” and “husband/wife.” Greek and Hebrew, on the other hand, basically use only two sets of terms to cover these same English concepts: one for “male/female,” marking clear sexual differentiation, and another that can be translated either “man/woman” or “husband/wife.”

Though most mainstream translations render the word *γυνή* (*gunē*) as “woman” in 1 Timothy 2,<sup>8</sup> it is by no means certain that *γυνή* should be translated in this way. The King James Version, which has exercised a massive (and justly deserved) influence over subsequent English translations, renders *γυνή* as “wife” 84 times and “woman” 102 times. The KJV consistently renders the term “woman” 16 times in 1 Corinthians 11 and twice in 1 Timothy 2. However, more recently, some translations—such as the ESV, which renders *γυνή* “woman” in 1 Timothy 2—render the same term differently in 1 Cor 11:3 where headship and submission are equally in view. There are probably several reasons for this, but it is not an inconsequential choice, given the options in English. Here, for instance, are the five definitions of “woman” given by the *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, eleventh edition:

8. NASB, NKJV, ESV, NET, TNIV, HCSB, and NIV.

- 1 a : an adult female person  
 b : a woman belonging to a particular category (as by birth, residence, membership, or occupation)—usu. used in combination e.g. councilwoman  
 2 : womankind  
 3 : distinctively feminine nature: womanliness  
 4 : a woman who is a servant or personal attendant  
 5 a chiefly dial : wife  
 b : mistress  
 c : girlfriend

Note that at least the first four of these definitions could essentially be used interchangeably with the English word “female.” In fact, the primary definition of “woman” in English is “an adult female person.” This presents a problem when deciding how to translate various biblical passages, because, in both the Old and New Testaments, the linguistic options are decidedly different.

### *The Burden of Proof*

The difficulty is that the term “woman,” as it is used in English, is a term denoting gender primarily. On the other hand, the term “wife,” while also being gender-specific, denotes a particular role and a particular stage of life. The question is, when we come to 1 Timothy 2, which should be our default translation? Should we assume that Paul is making a point about gender roles, or should we assume that he is talking about roles within the family?

Although we must be cautious in making sweeping claims, no doubt some of the confusion results from the cultural differences between our society and that of the New Testament. It does seem as if the category of adult, never-married women was far less widespread than it is today. Hommes writes, “The Graeco-Roman world of Paul’s day hardly knew the concept of an

unmarried woman. A girl married early (age 14-17).”<sup>9</sup> The terms translated “man” and “woman” did not simply, or even mostly, mean “male” and “female” in terms of simple gender distinction—certainly not in Paul’s writings. House correctly writes, “emphatic sexual differentiation is mostly expressed in biblical Greek by ἄρσεν and θήλυ.”<sup>10</sup>

However, the word γυνή is a relatively popular one. It is used in the LXX in 1139 verses, for a total of 1289 times and in the New Testament 215 times in 194 verses.<sup>11</sup> We have briefly examined each of these, and find that they fit our hypothesis as far as we can see (obviously we looked more closely at the New Testament uses); but in an article of this size, we must consolidate our research parameters. Therefore, we begin by examining the LXX of Genesis (to which Paul alludes in 1 Timothy 2), Philo, the Pastoral Epistles, and one other important passage parallel to 1 Timothy 2. By examining each of these, we can see which of the two English translations—“wife” or “woman”—would be the expected one, all other things being equal, and, in turn, which translation needs to meet the higher burden of contextual proof.

#### *The LXX of Genesis and Philo*

Since Paul cites Genesis as part of the explanation for his injunction in 1 Timothy 2, we must begin by examining the usage of γυνή in Genesis. In addition, we will briefly look at some particularly relevant examples in Philo for comparison.

*Use in Genesis.* Both the Old and New Testaments use particular words that refer to sexual differentiation, and more general words that are translated either “woman” or “wife,” (or “man” or “husband”). The earliest usage of these distinctive words is in Gen 1:27 (“male and female created he them,” using זכר (*zākār*), LXX ἄρσεν (*arsen*) and נקבה [*nēqebah*], LXX θήλυ [*thēlu*]). Next, in Gen 2:22, אִשָּׁה [*ishshah*] (LXX γυναικα) is

9. Hommes, “Let Women Be Silent in Church,” 14, n. 11.

10. House, “Speaking of Women,” 310.

11. This is according to a search on *BibleWorks* software.

first used, speaking of the woman/wife. Genesis 1 implies nothing other than the sexual distinction. In Genesis 2, however, the marriage relationship is in view, and different words are used (cf. esp. Gen 2:24,  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  [*ish*], LXX  $\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$  [*anthrōpos*] and  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$ , LXX  $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\alpha$ ). Note that in Genesis, the term  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  is always translated by  $\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$  in the LXX and has the idea of “wife.” In every use of  $\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$  in Genesis (151 times), it is always used in a marriage context referring to a “wife,” (though it is possible to read Gen 14:16 as an exception).<sup>12</sup>

Along the same lines, the term  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  is always used in Genesis with an emphasis on sexual differentiation. It is used in Gen 1:27 and in 5:2 (which is a reference back to Gen 1:27). The three other uses of the term (Gen 6:19; 7:3, 9) refer to the animals taken into the ark. “Marriage” is not part of the context of the word usage in Genesis. And in each case the LXX translates with the term  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$ . The LXX also uses  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$  another time in Gen 7:16 where it is employed to differentiate the sexes of the animals entering the ark. Neither the Hebrew  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  nor Greek  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$  appear ever to be used in a specific marriage context in Genesis.<sup>13</sup>

The term  $\text{זָכָר}$ , translated “male” in Gen 1:27, is found 14 times in Genesis. It is not only used in the texts mentioned above regarding  $\alpha\rho\sigma\epsilon\nu$  and  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$ , but is found in Genesis 17 four times where it is used in the context of “male” circumcision. It appears an additional four times for the “male” circumcision of the Shechemites in Genesis 34. Throughout the Old Testament  $\text{זָכָר}$  is used to specifically identify gender without reference to marital status and is used to refer even to animals for sacrifice. In the LXX of Genesis it is always translated  $\alpha\rho\sigma\epsilon\nu$ .<sup>14</sup>

12. NASB (emphasis added): “He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot, with his possessions, and also the *women*, and the people.”

13. The term only appears eight times in Genesis.

14. In Lev 20:13 the term is also used to indicate that illicit sexual behavior is in view. The term  $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  is used along with  $\text{זָכָר}$ . This suggests what is forbidden may specifically, in this verse, be a married man having sexual relationships with a “male.”

In the whole LXX, the term ἄρσεν (translated “male”) is used consistently to refer to the male gender, predominantly as a translation of the Hebrew root זכר.<sup>15</sup>

*Use in Philo.* This same pattern holds true in Philo. θῆλυ occurs 74 times. We have examined each use, paying special attention to those times when θῆλυ is used in close proximity with γυνή. Our intent was to see how the gender-specific terms were used, compared with those that can also denote marital status. The following quotation is illustrative.

But such great anxiety and energy is displayed by the law in attaining the object of training and exercising the soul so as to fill it with courage, that it has even descended to particulars in the matter of raiment, enjoining what men ought to wear, and prohibiting with all its might a *man* [ἀνὴρ] from wearing the garments of a *woman* [γυνή], in order that no trace of shadow of the *female* [θῆλυς] may be attached to the *male* [ἄρσεν] part of mankind, to its discredit; for the law, being at all times in perfect consistency according with nature, desires to establish laws which shall be akin to and in perfect harmony with one another from beginning to end, even in those minute points which, by reason of their insignificance, appear to be beneath the notice of ordinary legislators.<sup>16</sup>

Again note Philo’s use of these terms.

But we must begin our explanation of these mysteries in this way. A *husband* [ἀνὴρ] unites with his *wife* [γυνή], and the *male human being* [ἄρσεν] with the *female human being* [θῆλυς] in a union which tends to the generation of children, in strict accordance with and obedience to nature. But it is not lawful for virtues, which are the parents of many perfect things, to associate with a mortal husband. But they, without having received the power of generation from any other being, will never be able by themselves alone to conceive anything.<sup>17</sup>

15. McComiskey, “zākār,” indicates that this Hebrew word “denotes the male of humans or animals.” 243. Cf. Clements, “זָכָר zākhār,” 82, 84–85.

16. Yonge, *Works of Philo*, 641 (emphasis mine).

17. Yonge, *Works of Philo*, 84 (emphasis mine).

This last text, in particular, shows Philo's usage of these critical terms. ἀνὴρ (*anēr*) and γυνή are not the terms used to specify simple sexual distinction.

*The New Testament Passages*

In order to understand better which translation makes the best sense in the context of 1 Timothy 2, we must briefly examine the New Testament passages that use γυνή. This will provide us with some guidelines about which translation deserves to be the default setting when we come to 1 Timothy 2, and which one justifies the higher burden of contextual proof.

It should be noted at the outset that, in our examination of the New Testament texts, we were unable to find a use of γυνή that could not be understood as "wife." However, two sections deserve particular emphasis: the Pastoral Epistles, and 1 Corinthians 14, which is often assumed to be parallel in its teaching to 1 Timothy 2.

*Pastoral Epistles.* The term γυνή is used ten times in the Pastoral Epistles. Strikingly, the ESV, to use just one representative translation, always translates γυνή as "wife" in the pastorals, *except* in 1 Timothy 2.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, such as 1 Tim 3:2, 3:12, 5:9, and Tit 1:6, the term contextually must refer to a wife and not the more general idea conveyed by the term "woman." In fact, every occurrence of this term in the pastorals *could* be translated either "wife" or "wives."<sup>19</sup> That is to say, most of the instances of γυνή in the pastorals actually require the translation "wife"; and those that do not absolutely demand it from the immediate context contain nothing to prevent such a translation and much to commend it.

18. The texts are 1 Tim 2:9, 10, 11, 12, 14; 3:2, 11, 12; 5:9; Tit 1:6.

19. Interestingly, Tucker and Liefeld recognize these two translational possibilities in discussing deaconesses but do not discuss the same issue in Appendix B which specifically relates to exegetical issues (Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 86).

If we expand the parameters to include the entire Pauline corpus, we find a similar phenomenon.<sup>20</sup> The ESV, for example, translates approximately two-thirds of these as “wife” and not “woman.” If we eliminate 1 Timothy 2, the percentage rises even higher. Also, in the ESV translation of 1 Corinthians 11, the translation moves back and forth between “wife” and “woman”; so even the translation “woman” in 1 Corinthians 11 is often used as a stylistic replacement for the “wives” in question.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine every Pauline passage, having looked at all of them, we can see none that demand being translated in strictly gender-oriented terms. In any case, it is inarguable—and on this the English translations are in agreement—that, at the very least, the entire Pauline use of *γυνή* is weighted far more toward the translation “wife” than “woman.”

*First Corinthians 14.* First Corinthians 14 is the passage often viewed as the closest parallel to 1 Timothy 2 in terms of its teaching on women. This is the passage in which some argue that Paul is saying more or less the same thing to the Corinthian believers as he says to the Ephesians in 1 Timothy 2. In fact, these are the only passages that specifically prohibit “women” from teaching.<sup>21</sup> House writes:

The teaching of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 seems to have more in common with 1 Corinthians 14:33b–35 than with 1 Corinthians 11:2–16. Whereas 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 recognizes the prophetic function of the woman under the control of the Spirit, 1 Timothy 2:8–15, along with 1 Corinthians 14:33b–35, prohibits vocal expression or position of leadership over men in the congregation. These two passages have similar emphases.<sup>22</sup>

But two questions immediately present themselves when examining these parallels. First, what is the *λαλεῖν* (*lalein*, to

20. Rom 7:2; 1 Cor 5:1; 7:1–6, 10–16, 16, 27, 29, 33–34, 39; 9:5; 11:3, 5–15, 15; 14:34–35; Gal 4:4; Eph 5:22–25, 28, 31, 33; Col 3:18–19; 1 Tim 2:9–15, 14; 3:2, 11–12; 5:9; Tit 1:6.

21. Powers, *Ministry of Women*, 69.

22. Oepke, “*ἀνὴρ*” 362.

speak) from which they were forbidden in 1 Corinthians 14? And second, more to the point, is there any indication in the text as to whether the translation should be rendered “women” or “wives”?

If λαλεῖν absolutely forbids all speaking, then this is hard to reconcile with Paul’s assumption, in this very letter, that women will indeed speak within the public assembly (1 Cor 11:5).<sup>23</sup> In 1 Corinthians 11, it is assumed that they will pray and prophesy, and Paul’s admonition is that they not do so with an uncovered head. In addition, if Paul had intended merely to prohibit women from preaching, might he not have used one of the more commonly-used words for teaching, preaching, or proclamation?<sup>24</sup> Further, it should be noted that Paul’s overall concern in this passage is for orderliness. The discussion of “women” lies between v. 33 and v. 40, both of which emphasize orderliness and avoiding confusion. Of course, it is possible that Paul used λαλεῖν to denote preaching or formal teaching (but not prophesying or praying), and it is possible that this would be a natural and necessary application of the admonition to avoid confusion in the service, but all this seems unlikely.

More significantly, it is widely acknowledged (virtually all modern translations reflect this), that the women in question were indeed married, since the following verse enjoins them to save their questions for their husbands at home (v. 35).

In short, it seems unlikely that 1 Corinthians 14 is about preaching or teaching within the church service; but regardless, it is almost certainly not making a point related primarily to gender differentiation, but rather one in which γυνή is being employed in reference to married women.

23. Some have argued—though it seems difficult to defend—that this is a private, not corporate context, since v. 17 summarizes Paul’s instruction and regards it as part of their “[coming] together” as a body. For an alternative view, see Holmyard, “Does 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 Refer to Women Praying and Prophesying in Church?” 461–72.

24. On this, see the discussion in Powers, *Ministry of Women*, 61–62.

*Burden of Proof Concluded*

Based on the use of *γυνή* in the LXX of Genesis, the use in Philo's Koine, the Pastorals and broader Pauline usage, and the parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 14, translating *γυνή* in 1 Timothy 2 as "wife" instead of "woman" is quite possible. More than that, we would argue that to assume that the translation "wife" requires a higher burden of proof is to upend precisely where the real burden of proof lies. The other passages even suggest that "wife" is in fact the more likely translation.

*1 Timothy 2:8–15: Observations and Questions*

We are now at the point where we can look at 1 Timothy 2 directly. Several important questions need to be asked. First, why would the terms that explicitly point out sexual differentiation not be used? After all, Paul felt it worth the change to switch from using *ἀνθρώπων* (a masculine word that can mean a human being generally) in v. 5 to *ἄνδρας* (a man/husband) in v. 8. At first glance, this would appear to have some significance. At the very least, one might say that Paul was picking his specific words carefully. If he had wanted to use the term for "female," that was certainly an option available to him.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, many have pointed out that there are parallels between Paul's teaching about authority here in 1 Timothy 2 and his teaching in Ephesians 5.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that this is essentially the rationale offered by Hugenerger (though he connects 1 Timothy 2 with 1 Peter 3) and rejected by Schreiner. To quote Schreiner at length:

The idea that wives rather than women in general are the referent has been argued at some length by Gordon Hugenerger. He contends that a reference to women and men in general is not demanded in writing to the church, for Peter, in a text (1 Pet. 3:1–7) that is quite similar to 1 Timothy 2:9–15, only refers to husbands and wives . . . In

25. Regarding the expectations related to *γυνή*, "The Graeco-Roman world of Paul's day hardly knew the concept of an unmarried woman. A girl married early (age 14-17)" (Hommes, "Let Women Be Silent in Church," 14, n. 11).

26. Cf. Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 55; Prohl, *Women in the Church*, 32–33.

addition, elsewhere in Paul the terms *γυνή* and *άνήρ* usually refer to wives and husbands, not to women and men in general. Further, he asserts that the parallels between Titus 2:4–5 and 1 Peter 3:1–7 are crucial for establishing the referent in 1 Timothy 2. In fact, Hugenerberger thinks that the extensive verbal and conceptual parallels between 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 3 “must be determinative for our exegesis” of 1 Timothy 2. He believes it is unthinkable that no discussion of the family would occur in 1 Timothy.

The burden of Hugenerberger’s argument is that parallel texts show that Paul refers to husbands and wives in 1 Timothy 2:8–15. He especially leans on the parallels between 1 Timothy 2:8–15 and 1 Peter 3:1–7, seeing the latter as “determinative” for the meaning of the former. However, the texts hardly correspond in every respect, despite some impressive parallels. For instance, the 1 Peter text refers to *nonbelieving* husbands (3:1). And in 3:7 husbands are addressed in terms of their specific responsibilities to their wives (cf. Eph. 5:25–30, 33; Col. 3:19). No admonition for husbands regarding their relationship with their wives is present in 1 Timothy 2. Finally, it is obvious that Peter has husbands and wives in view in 1 Peter 3 since he says wives should be subject to their *own* (*ιδίους*) husbands (v. 1; cf. v. 5). It is precisely this kind of clarifying evidence that 1 Timothy 2:8–15 lacks, with the result that most scholars detect a reference to men and women in general.

It is hardly impressive to say that elsewhere *γυνή* and *άνήρ* refer to husbands and wives since in those texts a reference to husbands and wives is indicated plainly in the context, and such passages are not even debated with respect to this issue. Some examples will illustrate how clear the evidence is: “the married woman” (*ή ύπανδρος γυνή*, Rom. 7:2); “each man should have his own wife” (*τήν έαυτου γυναίκα*, 1 Cor. 7:2); “to the married” (*τοις γεγαμηκόσιν*, 1 Cor. 7:10); “if any brother has a wife” (*άδελφος γυναίκα έχει*, 1 Cor. 7:12); “her husband” (*ό άνήρ αυτής*, 1 Cor. 7:39); “Let them ask their own husbands at home” (*τους ιδίους άνδρας* 1 Cor. 14:35); “I betrothed you to one husband” (2 Cor. 11:2); “More are the children of the desolate one than of the one having a husband” (Gal. 4:27); “wives being subject to their own husbands” (*άί γυναίκες τοις ιδίους άνδράσιν*, Eph. 5:22); “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2; cf. 1 Tim. 3:12; 5:9; Titus 1:6); “Instruct the young women to be lovers of their husbands (*φιλάνδρους*) . . . being subject to their own husbands” (*τοις ιδίους άνδράσιν*, Titus 2:5). By way of contrast,

the lack of such qualifications in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 shows that Paul is not referring to just husbands and wives, but to men and women in general. In Colossians 3:18–19, Paul could conceivably be referring to men and women in general, but the context (the next pericope deals with relations between parents and children, 3:20–21) and the call to “love your wives” (3:19) reveal that husbands and wives are in view. The very lack of such specificity in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 has rightly led most commentators to see a reference to men and women in general. Hugenberger demands that the Pauline usage elsewhere must obtain here, but he fails to notice the significant contextual differences between these other texts and 1 Timothy 2 and ends up imposing these other texts on the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the frequent appeals to “most commentators” at key points in his argument, Schreiner does make some significant points. He acknowledges that much of the Pauline usage supports Hugenberger’s conclusion. But essentially, he disagrees on two points. The first is the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11. Without re-arguing the merits of our particular view, it is hard to argue, as Schreiner does, that 1 Corinthians 11 is a clear model that must then determine how we understand 1 Timothy 2. Second, he disagrees about the similarities between 1 Timothy 2 and other passages that do refer to husbands and wives using the same terminology as 1 Timothy 2. Although Schreiner essentially acknowledges that the majority (we would argue all) of the Pauline usages of *γυνή* are in concert with Hugenberger’s understanding of *γυνή* in 1 Timothy 2, he nonetheless places the burden of proof on those who would argue that this use is like all the other Pauline usages. In fact, it would seem more reasonable to conclude, based on the biblical usage and the available Koine parallels, that the burden of proof lies in the other direction. Rather it seems that those who would translate and interpret this as referring to all females and all males have a higher burden of proof to meet in their interpretation.

27. Schreiner, “Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” 92–93.

### *Contextual Arguments*

We have argued, based on the LXX of Genesis, the text of Philo, and the major New Testament texts, that the burden of proof—at least initially—must be placed on those who would translate these as, effectively, “male” and “female.” But burden of proof arguments can be tricky, and they are nearly always debatable. In fact, regardless of who bears the greater burden of proof, there are two significant contextual arguments that suggest that it is “wives” rather than “women” who are Paul’s concern in this chapter.

First, it should be noted that Paul refers to the relationship of Adam and Eve (1 Tim 2:13) in order to support his conclusion. Many have argued, quite rightly, that this shows that Paul’s comments are not just parochial; nor are they based merely on the particular situation of the church in Ephesus (whatever that might have been). But, in addition to the transcultural application of Paul’s command demanded by his appeal to creation there is also another quite significant point to note. The particular allusion is to creation, but it is to the account in Genesis 2, not to Genesis 1.<sup>28</sup> Genesis 1 does not indicate that Adam was created before Eve but rather that God created them “male” and “female.” The order of creation is found in Genesis 2 where the context relates to the marriage relationship. As previously noted, the term *γυνή* is first used in the LXX in Gen 2:22. The “male” and “female” terms are used in Genesis 1 and not in Genesis 2.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the terminology used by the author of 1 Tim 2:14 does not point to the creation account of Genesis 1 where the

28. We want to be very clear that we are not advocating that either Genesis 1 or Genesis 2 deserves priority. Both are in harmony and do not disagree with one another, though they do have different emphases.

29. Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 163, note this: “In the Genesis 2 narrative he simply addresses her with the accolade *female*.” Where the term *אִשָּׁה* is not used in Genesis 2, the term *אִשָּׁה* is used, and, while translated “female” in some texts, it may be better understood as the “female in a paired relationship” (cf. Gen 7:2 and Exod 3:22).

term "female" is used but rather to Genesis 2, with its emphasis on the covenantal marriage relationship. First Timothy 2:14, following Genesis 2, does not use *θήλυ* either, since that would communicate exclusively sexual differentiation from the man. Rather the reference is to a wife who has entered into the covenant of marriage with her husband.

It goes without saying that the headship of the husband over the wife is not an unusual note for Paul to strike; and it is notably struck by Peter also in one of the significant passages employed by Hugenberger (cf. Eph 5; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:5–6).<sup>30</sup>

But there are other textual clues indicating that *γυνή* might better be translated "wife" and not "woman" in this passage. First, whatever the expression *σωθήσεται δὲ* (1 Tim 2:15a) means, it does result from the bearing of children (*διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας*). On its face, it seems unusual that Paul would intend to elevate the behavior of an unwed mother as the high and noble calling to which Christian women were called. Yet virtually all commentators and translators consider that this expression has reference to the *γυνή* spoken of in the preceding context. In other words, vv. 13–15 is given as support for what has just been said in vv. 11–12. In that case, it would be inappropriate to think of the *γυνή* in vv. 11–12 as simply a "woman," if, by that, one intended to convey merely a person of the female gender. Unless she were actually a wife, the passage would seem to elevate sexual impropriety.

Finally, in addition to these arguments, there is the parallel with 1 Peter 3. The similarities between the admonitions in these chapters are remarkable.<sup>31</sup> Yet, on this, Schreiner is essentially correct: some of the clarifying factors present in 1 Peter 3 are not explicit in 1 Timothy 2. However, taken together with the linguistic evidence and context of 1 Timothy 2, Hugenberger (along

30. Prohl, *Women in the Church*, 35, cf. 37, writes, "As we now go on to the next chapter and a consideration of the Old Testament passages referred to in the restrictions, we shall note how the evidence piles up in support of our contention that the Christian wife is the woman involved; that there is no law of creation which makes women in general subordinate to men in general, but that there is a law of creation which makes the husband the head of the wife."

31. Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office," 431–60.

with Powers and others) seems to have solid reasons for asserting the essential parallel with 1 Peter 3.

### *Conclusion*

In short, the use of the term *γυνή* in the LXX and Philo, the general use of the term *γυνή* in the Pastoral Epistles, the marriage context of 1 Corinthians 14 (the other Pauline passage that is claimed to prohibit females from teaching), the Old Testament context of the citation in 1 Tim 2:14, and the positive reference to childbearing, suggest the term *γυνή* in 1 Tim 2:11–15 is better translated “wife.”<sup>32</sup>

Had Paul wanted to say that no female could teach a male, he could have used the terms “male” and “female” that he used elsewhere (i.e., Rom 1:27; Gal 3:28). The terms that he did use are highly suggestive, and most appropriate for speaking of the husband and wife relationship, not simply the male/female sexual distinction. Headship and submission are significant Pauline themes when the subject is marriage, so this would not have been an unusual note for him to strike in this context. In short, 1 Timothy 2 does not prohibit females serving in authority over males provided that it is not a wife over her husband and provided there is not some other revelation—such as that concerning elders—that might prohibit it.<sup>33</sup> In this view, *γυνή* is understood in this text in precisely the same manner as it is understood in every other instance in the Pastoral Epistles.

Paul wrote 1 Timothy 2 to prevent Christian practice from undermining the structure of the Christian household. Paul gives binding commands for the proper boundaries of the *γυναῖκες* in the church. They were not to teach or exercise authority over

32. Barnett, “Wives and Women’s Ministry,” 225–38.

33. The conclusions of this paper do not cover the question of the role of the woman in the church, an issue that deserves further study. For a recent discussion of this, see Barnett, “Wives and Women’s Ministry,” 225–38. The church, with the equality of male and female, does not vitiate the headship/submission relationship established in the marriage covenant.

their husbands. To do so would violate the vital ordinance of marriage—rooted in creation—to which Paul gave so much attention elsewhere, and which stood as an enduring illustration of Christ and his church.

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