

EVE AS SAVIOR OF HUMANITY? FROM THE GENESIS NARRATIVE TO PAUL'S COMMENTS ON CHILDBEARING IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:15

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Abstract: *As the concluding text to one of the more controversial Pauline teachings about women in the church community, 1 Timothy 2:15 carries a host of grammatical, semantic, and cultural questions that tax the most motivated and careful exegete. It is rendered distinctly troublesome by the change in number in the verbs and debates about their referent(s), the meaning of “salvation,” and Paul’s choice of desired attributes. I examine Paul’s use of the figure of Eve by looking first at the Genesis passage, where I consider her role as Adam’s helper, her fall, her curse, and her recovery as keys to interpret her mention in 1 Timothy 2. I offer a surprising solution: Adam, not Eve, is saved through childbirth; that is, humanity is saved from extinction through the woman’s role of mother with the condition that the couple, that is, men and women in the church, maintain the godly attributes listed.*

Key words: *Eve, Adam, women’s roles, childbearing, the fall, curse, procreation, redemption, virtues*

While the figure of Eve as the primal woman has made an indelible impression in Western thought, the biblical record is surprisingly limited in its mention of her influence.¹ Certainly, the first woman holds prominence in relationship to creation and humanity’s fall from innocence in the Garden of Eden, but after the first few chapters of Genesis she is not mentioned again in the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul will later mention her as the first woman, but only twice. His first mention is found in 2 Corinthians 11:1–4, where he draws a comparison between the Corinthian church and Eve: as the serpent deceived Eve, so the Corinthian church might be led astray from pure devotion to Christ.² My attention here will be on his second mention of Eve in 1 Timothy 2:9–15, where Paul uses Eve as an illustration explaining why women must not teach or exert authority over a man, with the ac-

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¹ My argument for Eve’s role in the creation and fall, and being saved by procreation in the Genesis account and 1 Timothy, appears in *Paul and His Mortality: Imitating Christ in the Face of Death*, BBRSup 12 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 73–76. All text citations are from the NET translation of the Bible. Many thanks to Abrahm Duarte and the anonymous JETS reviewers who offered resources and made several helpful comments and suggestions.

² See Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 47–48, for their linking Eve in 2 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 through the legend of the seduction of Eve where the serpent seduces Eve and impregnates her, producing Cain. For discussion of rabbinic sources for this legend, see A. J. Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” *ZAW* 89.3 (1977): 358–60.

companying explanation that Adam was formed first and Eve, not he, was deceived, leading to sin.³ My focus will rest on the confounding phrase in verse 15 frequently translated, “she will be saved through childbearing.”

In both Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, when Paul develops his theology of sin and death, Adam, not Eve, is blamed for introducing sin at the foundation of the human race (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–49). Eve is not mentioned, apparently because Paul’s theological focus diverts from the Genesis account due to his desire to compare Jesus not with her, but with Adam.⁴ Adam was the first human; Jesus represents the Second Adam, the first of a new spiritual race, a new creation that points to the culmination of the age with resurrected humanity. In 1 Corinthians 15, Adam and Jesus are contrasted in reference to death and resurrection: “For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). Eve, however, is an intriguing figure in the Genesis account and not overlooked by Paul when he refers to the story in 1 Timothy 2. She is the last of God’s creative work, but she is the feminine counterpart to Adam and so distinctively reflects God’s image (Gen 1:27; 2:18, 21–23).⁵ Humans made in the image of God are male and female (a detail curiously omitted from the account of creation of animals in Genesis). The woman represents qualities of Elohim that the man by himself cannot reflect and as such God is represented by both the masculine and the feminine.

The Genesis story highlights Eve’s role in the fall of humanity. She is the one who listens to and succumbs to Satan’s temptation and then induces Adam to join her. Her role, however, does not end with her sin. She receives a specific curse and a distinct place in the couple’s recovery. Understanding her salvific role is the focus of this essay. What follows examines Eve’s story in the Genesis account with a focus on the fall, her curse, and most importantly, how she takes part in the recovery.

³ Whether the author is Paul or a Pauline school has some relevance for our question if we want to use other accepted Pauline texts like the Corinthian letters or Galatians to corroborate a Pauline theology or a given interpretation. The challenges to Pauline authorship on internal and external grounds, while significant, do not ultimately persuade me. Paul is sensitive to authorship issues in other established writings. Clear internal Pauline attestations overcome arguments of vocabulary or theology in the Pastorals, which have a markedly different occasion, audience, and tone from his other writings. An argument for pseudepigraphy, however, does not seriously affect our thesis that the author is drawing from the Genesis tradition.

⁴ For discussion of how Eve being blamed in 1 Timothy 2:14 derives from LXX Genesis 3:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:3, see Chris W. Lee, *Death Warning in the Garden of Eden: The Early Reception History of Genesis 2:17*, FAT 2/115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 173–77. Adam is given moral culpability as the representative of mankind. He had been given the original prohibition (Gen 2:17) and was present (“with her,” עִתָּהּ, Gen 3:6) when Eve was tempted and when she succumbed without his intervention. For discussion of Eve as feminine and passive protagonist for sin by Paul in Romans see Austin Busch, “The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5–25,” *BibInt* 12.1 (2004): 1–36. See also Nicholas Elder, who argues from Jewish Second Temple literature that Eve’s role in the fall is present in Romans. Nicholas Elder, “Wretch I Am! Eve’s Tragic Speech-in-Character in Romans 7:7–25,” *JBL* 137.3 (2018): 743–63.

⁵ See George W. Knight III, “The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female with Special Reference to the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church,” *JETS* 18.2 (1975): 81–91, where he affirms that the equality underscored by Paul in Galatians 3:28 finds its roots in the image of God found in both male and female (Gen 1:27) and restored and recreated in Christ’s image (cf. Col 3:10–11).

ery of the couple and, as a derivative, of all humanity from the effects of the curse.⁶ Through this study, I describe how Eve in Genesis offers salvific hope to all humanity after the disaster of the fall and curse in which she also participated. After considering the account in Genesis, I turn to Paul's use of her figure and her story and analyze how he adapts the primal narrative for his theological purpose.

I. EVE AS SINNER AND SAVIOR IN GENESIS

Eve occupies a critical role in the Genesis story that Paul will take as paradigmatic for all women. I consider four aspects of Eve's story in Genesis that have a bearing on the 1 Timothy 2 text: (1) she is made after Adam and for Adam; (2) she takes a lead role in listening to the serpent and eating the forbidden fruit; (3) her role in the curse is coupled with a promise of overcoming the serpent through the fruit of her womb; and ultimately, (4) she is seen as saving humanity through her procreative ability.

1. *Eve as God's choice to bless Adam: she is made after Adam and for Adam.* The first notable quality of Eve is her role in relationship to Adam. Her stated role as Adam's "helper" may be controversial, but however one interprets that theme, one thing is clear: Eve was God's choice to bless Adam.⁷ After underscoring the tension of Adam's aloneness, the author describes the creation of Eve.

In the narrative, God observes that it is "not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18, *לֹא-טוֹב הָיְתָה הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ*) and he decides to make a helper for him, an *'ezer* (*עֹזֵר*), who matches or corresponds to him. Before he does this, God has Adam go through an exercise so that he will appreciate and understand the value of his coregent—he names all the land and air animals. The naming of the animals is not personal, but is an identifier. That is, Adam did not give personal names to the animals as we sometimes do ("Fido," "Spot," "Felix," etc.), but he is distinguishing the animals as creation distinct from him ("dog," "cat," "snake," etc.). The context shows that the exercise is not only to assign names or establish the identity of the animals or Adam's authority over God's creation, but it is meant to emphasize to the reader if not to Adam that he was truly alone. No created thing, no animal, was his equal or corresponded to him.⁸ He had a blatant need that God recognized, and that Adam came to recognize. Only divine intervention could help Adam.

While the creation account in Genesis 1 speaks of how water creatures should multiply according to their kinds and fill the seas, and how birds should likewise

⁶ For a similar attempt that pairs the Genesis story with the order of 1 Timothy 2, see Andrew B. Surgeon, "1 Timothy 2:13–15: Paul's Retelling of Genesis 2:2–4:1," *JETS* 56.3 (2013): 543–56.

⁷ In her creation in Genesis 2, Eve is presented as Adam's counterpart and helper who is created in relation to Adam and for Adam. Adam takes primacy in the creation story and Eve in some way complements him. Whether or not the author intended it, the theological import of Eve as God's final creative act and thus "the crown of creation" that is more developed than Adam might be debated. She is, however, the last thing God creates, and she is the capstone, the final touch of God as he exerts his creative energy.

⁸ Adam had free rein in the garden or orchard. No plant or animal corresponded to him. Adam was alone because no other creation fit him.

multiply on the earth, the text makes no mention of their gender or comment on the process of reproduction (vv. 21–22). The creation of humans, however, distinctively underscores the gender difference in a context that indicates that this pairing somehow reflects God’s image. The story of the creation of Eve is emphatic in one thing: Eve was taken from Adam. She was the same stuff as Adam and corresponded to him perfectly. While plants, animals, and Adam himself originated from dirt, the soil (1:11–12, 24; 2:7), the construction of woman is sourced in man’s rib. “At last,” Adam exclaims, “this is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” Unlike the animals, she derives from, corresponds to, and complements him.⁹

Hebrew offers many words to distinguish male from female. Both in Genesis 1:27 and in the reprisal of the same concept in 5:1–2, when God creates mankind in his likeness with the specification that he creates his likeness as male and female, he uses the simple gender terms for male and female, *zakhar* (זָכָר; LXX, ἄρσεν) and *nekevah* (נִקְבָּה; LXX, θήλυς). In 2:23, when identifying the woman, Adam refers to himself with *’ish* (אִישׁ), the male human in relational counterpart to woman, which could also be rendered “husband” (LXX, ἀνὴρ) to underscore his gender role. Likewise, he says the woman will be called *’ishâ* (אִשָּׁה), which could be rendered “female,” “woman,” or “wife” (LXX, γυνή), and in Hebrew has an obvious vocalic equivalence. This first identifier of the first man and woman then is like Adam’s naming of the animals, less a personal reference than an identifier, and the first significance is the idea of correspondence.¹⁰ After Adam named the animals, he became aware that they did not correspond to him; when God brought the woman to him, he immediately recognizes her likeness, her appropriate correspondence in substance to him, and his naming shows that he recognizes this.¹¹ The important point in this text from a narrative and semantic standpoint is that the man and woman correspond to each other—they are of the same essence. God met his need, and he would no longer be alone: *’ish* meets *’ishâ*; man meets woman. God has made a companion for Adam that, while distinct from him, fits him.

The final naming of the couple that has endured through time also reveals something about them as individuals, their substance, and their function. The man’s name, “Adam,” is derived from his essential substance, his origin, and, after the curse, his destiny. “Adam” (אָדָם) shares its derivation with the word for “ground” or “earth” (אֲדָמָה), and throughout these first chapters “Adam” is used

⁹ Genesis 2:24 offers a theological summary inserted at this point in the story. Neither Adam nor Eve left father or mother, but their union typifies all marriage unions. This example becomes the theological core for marriage as the most important, permanent, and intimate of all human relationships and is cited by Jesus and Paul as the basis for the binding quality of the marriage covenant.

¹⁰ Again, *’ish* and *’ishâ* are the words used to describe the partners of the marriage union described in verse 24.

¹¹ U. Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah*, vol. 1 of *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Abraham Israel (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 136. אִישׁ is difficult to define more literally than “male” or perhaps “husband.” Though similar in sound and form, the two names אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה do not share the same root, but in context, without doubt, are set up to evidence a corresponding relationship. The context is clear that the woman is like him: “I have given names to all living beings, but I have not succeeded in finding one among them fit to be called by a name resembling mine, thus indicating kinship with me. She, at last, deserves to be given a name corresponding to my own.”

with this association and with intentional ambiguity for “mankind” or as the proper name of the first man. God formed Adam (אָדָם, the first man or mankind) from the dust of the ground (אֶדְמָה) and breathed life into him (2:7). When Adam is cursed (3:17–19), the ground also is cursed to produce thorns and thistles. Adam is cursed with death returning him to the ground from which he came. Man emerges from dust and will return to dust. Later in 5:2, God blesses the male and female and names *them*, that is, collectively, Adam (אָדָם), which is translated “mankind” or “humankind.” The reference is not to gender, but to their substance deriving from the ground or earth. In the next verse, the name Adam clearly shifts to refer solely to the man, not the woman. Adam fathers a son, Seth, in his own likeness and image, paralleling the creative act of God where he likewise had made humankind in his likeness and image (בְּדִמְיוֹת, 5:1; cf. 1:26–27). Before we consider the corresponding names for the woman and Adam giving the woman the personal name “Eve,” we must pause to consider the timing of the revelation of her name within the setting of the narrative.

2. *Eve as first sinner: she takes a lead role in listening to the serpent and eating the forbidden fruit.* The story of Adam and Eve as traditionally understood claims that Eve took the initiative in the fall of mankind. She was deceived by Satan, who was incarnated as a serpent, then led Adam to eat the forbidden fruit with consequences for the whole human race. God had warned Adam not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the ominous threat of certain, immediate death (Gen 2:17). Immediate consequences ensued, and those consequences and curses explain the origin of troubles that universally plague humanity up to today.

A notorious problem occurs from the inception of this story that requires a careful interpretive strategy to solve: neither Adam nor Eve died, at least biologically, on the day they ate the fruit. Adam lived to 930 years of age before he physically died (5:5).¹² Elsewhere I respond to the question of whether the author of Genesis intended to view death as a *moment*, a *state*, or a *trajectory*.¹³ While equivocating positions suggest that mitigating circumstances qualified the consequence of death or that the original warning was merely a threat that God mercifully revoked and not a promise, the more satisfying direction is to look for how the couple experienced death.¹⁴ Is death understood by what happened in the narrative (i.e., nakedness,

¹² Shaul Bar explains a rabbinic solution that Adam’s 930 years fall within a divine day of one thousand years (from Psalm 90:4). Shaul Bar, *I Deal Death and Give Life: Biblical Perspectives on Death*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010), 15; so also Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah*, 278.

¹³ See R. Gregory Jenks, “A Tale of Two Trees: Delinking Death from Sin by Viewing Genesis 2–3 Independently from Paul,” *BBR* 28.4 (2018): 533–53. There, to understand the relationship between the curse and death, I juxtapose the two trees—one that promised life, the other that promised certain and immediate death. I consider the debate between Moberly and Barr in which Barr argues against the fall of man and Moberly sees death as metaphorical. Barr diminishes the catastrophic nature of the story and minimizes the immediate consequences: Adam lives on and his relationship with God endures. Moberly, citing the presence and opposing voice of the serpent, claims that Barr’s interpretation makes God out to be a liar, which Barr later refutes. For this, see also my *Paul and His Mortality*, 63–73.

¹⁴ For the equivocating position, see Claus Westermann, who appeals that “God’s dealing with his creatures cannot be pinned down, not even by what God has said previously.” Claus Westermann, *Gene-*

shame, blame, curses, or banishment), or do we apply later theological abstractions for death (e.g., “spiritual death,” moral death, mortality, etc.) retroactively? Also, is death simply a natural consequence of eating the fruit (i.e., was the fruit somehow poisonous) or is the consequence of death a divine judicial sentence for disobedience? In a previous article, I have argued that the popular idea of “spiritual death” is anachronistic and concluded that death is best understood in terms of judicial banishment from the redemptive tree of life. The warning in Genesis 2:17 of death on the very day they eat from the forbidden tree is fulfilled when the couple realized their mortality.¹⁵ They would actually die on another day far in their future respective to their eating the fruit.¹⁶

Both the curse to Adam, that he would return to the *’adāmāh* (אֲדָמָה), the ground from which he came (3:19), and the banishment from the orchard, where the antidote to death, the tree of life, stood, are the carrying out of a judicial sentence based on the couple’s disobedience.¹⁷ While they did not succumb to immediate physical death on that day, by being forced from the garden, where stood the tree of life, they realized their mortality. Thus, the death sentence is immediate, but its execution is delayed through a span of life. It must be added that the idea of postmortem existence or judgment is foreign to the Genesis narrative and to the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole. Apart from rare and obscure mentions of Sheol; the story of Samuel, which stands as the one solitary infamous reference to someone coming back from the world of the dead; and images of collective salvation of the nation of Israel as a whole, the Hebrew Scriptures do not speak of a postmortem existence, and certainly no postmortem judgment. Rather, death itself, not hell, is presented as judgment. This depiction of their mortality, a departure from continuance, which is an attribute of being in God’s image that they once shared, is disturbingly grievous. The perennial problem that is addressed throughout the literature leads to the climactic story of the Christian gospel that accepts the concept of postmortem existence and introduces resurrection as a final solution. But in the

sis 1–11: A Continental Commentary, trans. John J. Scullion, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 225. Cf. Abraham van de Beek, “Evolution, Original Sin, and Death,” *JRefT* 5 (2011): 214.

¹⁵ The Hebrew mindset does not give place for “spiritual death,” separating the body from the soul in the death process. Adam and Eve and at least some of their progeny are said to walk with God, implying that the author of Genesis is not promoting a sense of relational death this early in the biblical narrative. Van de Beek offers “moral death” as an explanation—when Eve ate the fruit, she received the divine capability of moral knowledge, but simultaneously became aware of her own moral failure and this awareness could be defined as death. Van de Beek, “Evolution, Original Sin, and Death,” 214.

¹⁶ For a more thorough explanation of the alternatives and my conclusion, see Jenks, “A Tale of Two Trees,” 533–53. See also Lee, who argues that death for the couple is not necessarily linked to becoming mortal, the immediate consequences they experienced after eating the fruit, or the divine curse of Genesis 3:14–19 (where death is only explicitly given to Adam), but that the couple received a judicial death sentence as a penalty (irrespective of the question of their pre-fall immortality). Lee, *Death Warning*, 47.

¹⁷ The image of a tree of life is suggested at least metaphorically in Psalm 1 depicting the wise man. In Proverbs, wisdom is depicted as a life-producing tree (3:18), the fruit of the righteous is like a tree producing life (11:30a), longing fulfilled is a tree of life (13:12), and healing speech is a life-giving tree (15:4). For more on the figure of the tree of life through pre-historic times to modernity, see Douglas Estes, ed., *The Tree of Life*, TBN 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

Genesis narrative, the problem of mortality and the continuance of humanity on this earth is addressed in terms of procreation, thrusting Eve into prominence.

3. *Eve's curse explored: her role in the fall and curse is coupled with a promise of overcoming the serpent through the fruit of her womb.* Eve was created as a special companion for Adam, but she also took the lead in humanity's downfall. By succumbing to the temptation of the serpent, she acted against the divine warning and gained moral knowledge, but by that same process became aware of her moral failure.¹⁸ She then led Adam to eat of the fruit. The text offers little explanation of this invitation—"She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it (וַיֹּאכַל גַּם-לְאִשָּׁה עִמָּה Gen 3:6)—but later God's reproof accuses Adam of "listening to" or euphemistically "obeying" (v. 17, שָׁמַע) his wife in defiance of God's clear and direct command. When God confronts Adam, whom he has explicitly warned, Adam blames the woman. When God confronts the woman, she mimics her husband in sloughing off responsibility and blaming the serpent. Each character in the story receives a twofold curse, which I will explore briefly, but how the curses of all three affect Eve require special attention, as they have a direct and distinct consequence on her function and her relationships.

All three actors in the original Genesis story, the serpent, Eve, and Adam, were cursed, each with two curses. The serpent (1) will crawl on the ground and eat dust, the substance from which man derives and to which he returns at death; and (2) will have to reckon with his eventual mortal wounding by Eve's progeny. Eve (1) will have pain in childbearing; and (2) will have to submit to her husband's rule. Adam (1) will toil with the thorny ground, and (2) will one day return to it. The curses are not experienced in isolation, but imply a curse to the relationships, especially for the woman: the woman and her offspring are set in enmity with the serpent; the husband now has an implied hierarchy over the woman.¹⁹

Adam's curse bears particular focus. Adam, whose name is a derivative of the ground, will toil to bring food from the ground, which is also cursed because of Adam's sin, and one day he will die and return to the ground. He was created from dust, and he will return to dust. The man's curse will affect his function as provider; he will gather food from the ground with difficulty. The image is material and corporeal. It is noteworthy that Adam's curse is the only one that directly corresponds to the warning of Genesis 2:17. Adam is explicitly told that he will die, that is, return to the ground from which he came. God's curse to Adam is what the reader should expect given the Genesis 2:17 warning. Adam will return to the dust of the ground from which he was formed: he will die. If a surprise accompanies this curse, it is that this is not immediate—on the day he ate from the tree. Why did Adam receive this specific curse, but not Eve? If this is the natural consequence for *all* who eat the fruit, then in addition to her two curses, Eve will also share Adam's curse of returning to the ground.

¹⁸ Van de Beek, "Evolution, Original Sin, and Death," 214–16.

¹⁹ Spurgeon, "1 Timothy 2:13–15," 546–52, views pain in childbearing and in Genesis 3:16 not just as a curse and punitive, but also as a means for finding restoration to her husband.

Eve, of course, will one day die, but this is not explicitly spelled out in her curse.²⁰ The woman's curse is unrelated to the Genesis 2:17 warning and is perhaps mitigated by the fact that God gave the original prohibition to Adam, not her. Her curse focuses on her relationship as wife to the man and on her role in bearing and raising seed with the ultimate end of producing a warrior who will defeat the serpent.²¹ Eve's curses relate to her procreative role as mother and to her role as helper to her husband. This procreative role includes two aspects: first, the painful process of childbearing will produce a seed that will overcome the serpent; then second, in Genesis 4:1, her childbearing role will serve as the hope for mankind's mortality. Thus, her seed will defeat the tempter, the evil adversary of the narrative, and then her procreative ability will ensure the continuance of the human race beyond her death and Adam's death.

4. *Eve as procreating savior: she is seen as saving humanity through her procreative ability.*

After Adam and Eve eat the fruit that produces death and after they receive God's curse that Adam in particular would return to the ground whence he came and before the banishment of the couple, Adam ironically names his wife a second time. I have mentioned that in Genesis 2:23, before the fall, he called her אִשָּׁה (LXX, γυνή), which sounds like the feminine counterpart to his own name, אָדָם (LXX, ἀνήρ). That first naming is more an identifier than a name and views her as the dramatic finish to the God-given assignment of naming the animals, and it reflects her correspondence in essence to Adam. She is "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." However, in 3:20, after the fall and the curse of death directed particularly to him, Adam gives her a personal name, Eve (חַוְוָה, *hawwāh*), "living one" or "life giver" (LXX, Ζωή), and she is called "the mother of all the living."²²

Adam's second naming of his wife after the curse creates a thorny problem on many levels. Source theorists struggle with why this naming passage typical of

²⁰ Death is not mentioned in the woman's curse at all. The curse to the serpent, however, warns of inevitable hostility between the serpent and the woman with her offspring that will, as with Adam, end in the serpent's death, his head crushed by the offspring of the woman (v. 15).

²¹ Paul uses "seed" (σπέρμα) singular to identify the recipient of the covenant blessing through Abraham. Abraham's seed is his descendant Jesus, who inherits the Abrahamic covenant and in whom believers are identified, thus experiencing the benefits of that covenant (Gal 3:15–29; cf. Acts 13:23). 1 John 3:9 reprises the image of God's seed indwelling believers rendering them unable to sin. The image of the serpent, now dragon, fighting the seed of the woman is also reflected in Revelation 12:17.

²² Adam is never formally named in the narrative, and translations vary as to when "the man" should be called by the transliterated proper name "Adam." The first use of אָדָם without the article is in Genesis 2:20. Cassuto observes that there is a parallel expression in Genesis 2:23 and 3:19: man was taken from the ground; woman was taken from the man (*From Adam to Noah*, 136). James Barr underscores: "His death is not the punishment, but is only the mode in which the final stage of the punishment works out. He was going to die anyway, but *this* formulation of his death emphasized his failure to overcome the soil and his own belonging to it. The death to which Adam will finally fall victim, then, his 'returning to the dust' (for the term 'death' is significantly not used at this point), is not in itself a punishment, as many scholars have long seen." Barr holds that Adam and Eve were never immortal and that the curse is not a punishment. James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 9.

genealogical genre is inserted in a narrative.²³ Feminist or gender theologians reckon with the mere idea of Adam naming his wife, sometimes viewing it as an authoritative act that certainly defines her role as subordinate to him.²⁴ While recognizing the volatile possibilities, I discuss this act of Adam from a literary perspective. His first act of naming her is generic and follows his naming the animals at God's command, followed by God's unique creation of a companion for him from his own body. She is his equivalent counterpart in contrast to all the other animals. The second act of naming her is sandwiched between God's cursing the serpent, woman, and man, and his expelling of the couple from the garden and from access to the tree of life. This naming is distinct, personal, and emphatically affirms that she is, in opposition to the death curse, alive and the mother of all living.²⁵ Though she was deceived and ate the fruit that promised certain immediate death, Adam emphatically names her the mother of living beings. Adam's act of naming her offers hope against the death curse that immediately precedes and offers an affirmation of life in view of their banishment that immediately follows.

If we see the drama of the curse of death being played out, this second naming fits well into this context. Adam and Eve, **אִשָּׁה** and **אָדָם**, **חַוָּה** and **אָדָם**, are waiting for the death promised in Genesis 2:17. Adam receives the curse that he will return to where he came from, the ground, and the couple is expelled from the garden where there was a tree providing eternal life. Adam, however, recognizes Eve as the mother of all living, a life-giver, as the couple faces certain death.²⁶ This naming is a counter to the curse and despondency that they are facing. But what is the substance of that hope?

5. *Eve as godlike childbearer.* We find the answer or at least the beginning of the answer in the text that immediately follows the banishment of the couple from the garden of Eden. Set against the tragic backdrop of their exile from the garden and from the tree that provided the antidote to their mortality is Eve's surprise in Genesis 4:1 (**וַתֹּאמֶר קִנִּיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה**), when she discovers her procreative capacity. Translations range from the traditional, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (RSV, ESV), to the more interpretive, "I have created a man just as the

²³ See Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 268–69. This verse is widely regarded as an insertion because of its abrupt placement with no genealogy. Westermann links "mother of all living" with Mother Earth.

²⁴ Cassuto considers the placement of Adam naming Eve in light of the curse and asserts that it is a statement of lordship. "Since the Lord God decreed that *he* (the husband) *should rule over her* he assigns a name to her as a token of his rulership" (*From Adam to Noah*, 170, emphasis his).

²⁵ For discussion of how Adam names Eve, the "Mother of all living," before she is a mother at all, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 204–7.

²⁶ Adam is specifically cursed and told that he will return to the ground. Later we see in Genesis 5 that he dies, but no mention in the text is made of Eve's death. Perhaps this omission is insignificant, but in light of the protection from death that murderers Cain and Lamech receive (Gen 4:15, 24) and the specific mention of physical death in Adam's curse (Gen 3:19), but not Eve's, it may have a more important bearing.

LORD did!" (NET).²⁷ Childbearing is a divine response to the curse of death. Though Adam and Eve recognize that they will die, they see through their progeny that humanity will continue.²⁸ Not only so, but as we will soon see, Eve is accepting that giving birth reflects something of God's creative nature. In some way she is like God and the channel for God's gracious response to save humanity.

The idea that immortality is achieved through procreation is not so radical a thought, as elaborated in a recent article by Jacob Wright. In "Making a Name for Oneself," he considers competing cultural values for leaving a legacy through martial valor or heroic death and concludes that, for the Hebrew mindset, having progeny that carry on your name was the value that trumped all for establishing continuance.²⁹ A male child that carried on your heritage was far more valuable than a stone statue that marked some heroic or noble deed.³⁰ This value is marked in many places but no more than in Jephthah's daughter who, when she recognized she was to be immolated as a result of her father's rash vow asked for two months to be with her friends to lament not her death, but the fact that she remained and would die a virgin (Judg 11:37–40). She would have no progeny to succeed her.³¹ Infertility, of course, plays a lead antagonistic role in many of the Hebrew narratives of leading ladies, and childbearing was universally recognized as a means of divine blessing.³² Eve recognized her unique ability to procreate and saw this as the antidote to the curse of death for her and Adam.³³ She was the door that mankind would ever walk through to extend life into the future.

²⁷ Notable is the use of "Yahweh" here instead of "Elohim," found in Genesis 1:26–27 and 4:25. Also distinct is the birth of a "man" (אִישׁ), in contrast to children (בְּנִים) or seed/offspring (זָרַע), as found in both Genesis 3:15–16 and 4:25.

²⁸ So Williams, "The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent," 357–74.

²⁹ Jacob L. Wright, "Making a Name for Oneself: Martial Valor, Heroic Death, and Procreation in the Hebrew Bible," *JOT* 36.2 (2011): 131–62. See also Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 191.

³⁰ But see Isaiah 56:4–5 where God comforts faithful eunuchs with a promise that he will set up for them a permanent monument in his temple that will be better than sons and daughters.

³¹ Of course, virginity could also be associated with several other implications—sexuality, marital relations, and so forth. Does virginity signify mere youth, that is, *young woman*, or does it also imply other ideas like sexual chastity, unattached to a man, or without children? Berry Webb concludes that childlessness is the main thought here: "This was the bitterest thing of all for Jephthah's daughter: not to die, but to die young, unfulfilled, childless. For she, too, not just her father, was rendered childless by the vow. Cut off, with no child to succeed her, she may well have been numbered among the unremembered, among those who 'have perished as though they had not lived' (Sir. 44:9 RSV)." Barry Webb, *The Book of Judges*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 334.

³² Examples are numerous and include Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and direct statements like Psalms 127:3–5; 128:3. See Genesis 20:17–18.

³³ See Williams, "The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent," 357–74. Williams entertains the idea that the original plan for the first couple was for them to live forever alone in immortality. After the fall, part of her (their) curse was to have to bear children. "We have already noted that the humans could have remained in Eden had they not transgressed and since humanity was to be represented by them alone there was no real need for children. Now as a result of the transgression all this has changed.... So the woman is 'cursed' by bearing children. It is to cause great discomfort for her but it is to be the only way for the human race to survive outside Eden" (373–74). This interpretation seems to counter God's intent for reproducing in his original command in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!"

The story of the conception and birth of Cain and Eve's reaction is told in one verse. Eve's exclamation is that she had "created a man *just as the LORD did*" (אֵת־יְהוָה אִישׁ קָנָה, Gen 4:1, NET, lit., "with Yahweh").³⁴ The translation of this expression is disputed both for the verb קָנָה and for the particle אֵת. Bokovoy raises the issue that the root of the verb *qnh/qny*, which is associated phonetically with the name of her firstborn, Cain, was used in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures not just with the meaning, "acquire," but as "create" or even "procreate."³⁵ He views אֵת in a concomitant sense, "with Yahweh" (see below), and argues convincingly that Eve follows a theological view that YHWH is a "direct participant in the process of procreation" and "an active creative agent in the mysterious process of human conception."³⁶ That is not to say that God engaged in sexual relations with her, but that he played a role in procreation.³⁷

The particle אֵת is notoriously difficult to translate and "one of the most difficult grammatical morphemes in Biblical Hebrew."³⁸ (1) If אֵת is translated as a preposition "with" it can refer to the Lord in a concomitant sense, as an associating agent as Bokovoy does, that is, that the Lord helped Eve bear a child. (2) It could also be instrumental and thus view YHWH as a tool in the procreative process.³⁹ (3) It can also be an accusative/object sign, thus, "I have created a man, the Lord," which could refer to the *protoevangelium* in Genesis 3:15, the seed that would conquer the serpent. God had promised that the serpent would attack the heel of Eve's offspring, but Eve's offspring would attack the serpent's head. Thus, embedded

³⁴ Byron comments on the ambiguity of the Hebrew expression: "If the אֵת is understood as a direct object marker rather than as a preposition, it is then possible to understand Cain as the fulfillment of the promise made to Eve in Genesis 3:15 where God says the woman will have a child who crushes the head of the serpent" (*Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition*, 12). He analyzes historical interpretive traditions that consider whether God is the *cause*, the *instrument* or *tool* of Eve's pregnancy and other traditions that interpret Satan to be the father of Cain (13–20; cf. 1 John 3:12).

³⁵ For comments on the play of Cain's name with the *qnh* root, see Prudentius, *The Origin of Sin: An English Translation of the "Hamartigenia,"* trans. Martha A. Malamud, CSCP (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 4n6.

³⁶ David E. Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of קָנָה in Genesis 4:1," *VT* 63.1 (2013): 35. Tracing through the women of the Old Testament who bear children we see a repeated refrain of God's presence in childbearing in conception, in birth, and in caring for the survival of children: Sarah (Gen 21:1–2), Rebekah (25:21), Rachel (30:2, 6, 22–23), Leah (29:31–35), Samson's mother (Judg 13), Ruth (Ruth 4:13), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:10–11, 19–20).

³⁷ Bokovoy, "Eve," 33. See Robert W. Wall, "1 Timothy Reconsidered (Again)," *BBR* 14.1 (2004), 97–9. Wall notices that in the redemptive act of childbirth in Genesis 4:1, Eve does not mention the participation of Adam. The narrator clearly does say that Adam was intimate with Eve leading to her pregnancy, but Wall emphasizes that Eve's childbearing was a unique act of partnering with God, something that only a woman can appreciate: "Women may view the experience of 'childbearing' as an epiphany of partnering 'with God' as *only a woman can*. In this sense, 'childbearing' becomes a metaphor of being female" (emphasis his). Wall sees the salvation of Eve in 4:1 when she recognizes God's mercy in allowing her to bear a child in cooperation with YHWH with no mention of the promised pain of the curse mentioned in 3:16. Childbearing is God's redemptive act particularly for women, but as we will argue, by extension childbearing is God's means to save all humanity.

³⁸ *IBHS*, 177.

³⁹ The text clearly elucidates that Cain is the product of sexual relations with Adam and thus is not a product of a virginal conception with YHWH.

within the curse is the first mention of a hope that will persist despite death's presence. The woman's seed, an extension of humanity, will eventually crush the serpent.⁴⁰ In light of that promise, the reader might be led to expect that this seed, Cain, her firstborn, would be a source of life and hope, and fight or even defeat the serpent as per the serpent's curse (Gen 3:15).⁴¹ Instead, the forces of evil overcome him, and the falling away of Eve's first child who succumbs to sin and murders his brother becomes especially significant. The narrative arc that seeks a final challenge to this threat will continue to play on this grand conflict with a righteous line in Genesis 5 and much further into the gospel story.

Another possibility for תַּאֲ is (4) to see it as a comparative conjunction, "like," that could be objective, that is, the man she created was like Yahweh, or subjective, that is, she was like or acted like Yahweh when she created a man. The first idea, that what she creates, a man, is a continuation and reflection of a theme rooted in Genesis 1:26–28, that humankind is uniquely in the image and likeness of God.⁴² What she creates is likewise distinct from all creation, as humanity is among the species, in that it likewise distinctly reflects God's image and likeness and thus is capable of continuing the original purpose to represent him in the unique role of regency over the earth.⁴³ Genesis 4:1 might be seen as a connecting point between the original command in 1:26–28 and 5:1, which restates that God creates Adam in the image and likeness of God, but in 5:3 the text clearly deviates from this expectation: Adam "fathered a son *in his own likeness, according to his image*, and he named him Seth" (וַיֹּלֶד בְּדִמּוּתוֹ כְּצִלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת). Seth clearly now bears the image and likeness of his father, Adam, and a question might be raised whether God's image and likeness passes through Adam to his offspring. That Adam's descendants maintain God's image is clarified elsewhere.⁴⁴

The latter subjective idea that Eve shared God's power of creative ability, reflected in the New English Translation ("I have created a man just as the LORD did!"), is compelling considering the themes throughout where humans are understood to be made in the image of God. Though humans recognize their mortality and eventual biological passing, through Eve, whose creative power reflects God's creative power, the human race will continue.⁴⁵ Eve with Yahweh's help will bear

⁴⁰ The reference is to the serpent himself, not to his offspring.

⁴¹ For support for the idea that "seed" "refers to an immediate offspring rather than a distant descendant," see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 198–99.

⁴² Note, however, the use of "Yahweh" here instead of "Elohim" in Genesis 1:26–27, 4:25, and 5:1.

⁴³ In Genesis, the birds and fish, sea and air animals are commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the water and the seas (1:22). The command to fill the land is reiterated only to humans, not to the other land animals (1:28).

⁴⁴ That future generations bear the image of God is affirmed in Genesis 9:6, where capital punishment for murder is justified because murder is killing someone made in God's image. ("For in God's image God has made humankind.") The passing of the image, whether of God or of Adam, is explicitly reflected in Seth, not Cain or Abel. (Cain forfeits mention due to his murder and exile, which disqualifies him from being a representative image-bearer; Abel, because he dies without bearing children).

⁴⁵ See Wright, "Making a Name for Oneself," 131–62, where he emphasizes procreation over heroic death as the means to attain an immortal legacy. Through progeny one's life continues.

children, so procreation will reverse the effects of the curse of death. The remedy to the curse in Genesis is not described in spiritual terms of covenant or redemption, but in physical terms of creation or, literally, biological procreation.⁴⁶

We cannot overlook Eve's understanding that she is connected in still another way to God.⁴⁷ The text already stated three ways that she shares divine attributes. First, at creation the couple was created *in the image of God* (Gen 1:26–27). Second, according to the serpent and later confirmed by the Lord, eating from the forbidden tree made them like God *knowing good and evil* (3:5, 22). Third, in the tension of the two trees and their fall and banishment, they forfeit a recognized divine attribute, *living forever*. If **וְכִי** is translated as a subjective comparative conjunction in Genesis 4:1, she discovers a fourth divine attribute that she shares with Yahweh: the promise of human death, extinction, is thwarted when Eve recognizes her *creative ability*, an ability that is like the Lord's. In the act of procreation, she identifies with the creator God and by doing so finds the fulfillment of a promise that responds effectively to the curse.⁴⁸

Whether she procreates a man with YHWH's help, or creates a divine man, or a man like YHWH did, through procreation Eve serves as the savior of humanity as she overcomes the curse of death brought on by her and her husband's disobedient act. Bokovoy concurs that the text explicitly states that she created "a man" (**אִישׁ**), not a "child" or a "son," which might be expected, and adds that this "may suggest that she sees herself as a link from divine creation to successive human births."⁴⁹ While Adam and Eve will die, the human race through their progeny will continue. Humanity no longer faces extinction. Humanity is saved.

So, in the Genesis account, (1) Eve is created as man's counterpart companion and helper; (2) she is deceived by the serpent in Adam's presence and incites Adam, also, to eat the forbidden fruit; (3) she is cursed along with Adam; but, (4) Adam recognizes her redemptive role in that she has the ability to procreate when he renames her Eve, an ability she herself recognizes when she bears her first child. Paul will refer to these images when he counsels Timothy about the role of women in the early church, and he will pick up especially on the theme of the woman's role

⁴⁶ Jenks, "Tale of Two Trees," 553. So Williams, "The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent," 357–74. See also Wall for his linking Eve's birthing a child in Genesis 4:1 with her salvation, a theme I will consider further below. Wall, "1 Timothy Reconsidered (Again)," 95–99.

⁴⁷ James Barr argues that Adam and Eve had no desire to become like God. Rebutting Moberly, he says: "Adam and Eve are not portrayed as humans seeking to assume the place of God. Eve's motivations were dietetic, aesthetic, and educational. There is nothing here of a rebellion against God, nothing of a titanic will to take over the status of the divine." James Barr, "Is God a Liar? (Genesis 2–3)—and Related Matters," *JTS* 57.1 NS (2006): 4; see also Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, 13–14. I contend that Eve was tempted to acquire an attribute shared by divinity, wisdom, and the four notations of divinity stated here indicate that humanity in the image of God is a theme of the narrator.

⁴⁸ So Wall, "1 Timothy 2:9–15 Reconsidered (Again)," 95: "Eve suggests that God's role in the woman's procreative process of childbearing bears a family resemblance to God's role in creating woman in the first place—a point Paul seems to make in 1 Cor 11:11–12. In this sense, God's motive for creating woman is not only to provide man with a partner but a partnership whose principal expression is childbearing" (95).

⁴⁹ Bokovoy, "Eve," 33.

in childbearing. Provisionally, he appears to say that women will be *saved through childbearing* (1 Tim 2:15), and in light of what we have seen in Genesis, it is to this disputed allusion that we turn.

II. PAUL'S USE OF EVE IN 1 TIMOTHY TO INSTRUCT ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN

We are now ready to take a close look at the second of the two mentions of Eve in the Bible after the Genesis account. This passage is notable for its exegetical challenges and controversy about men and women within the context of Timothy's church in Ephesus and how this might be applied today with "modern" Western values, which for some might be considered more reasonable and morally advanced than those that precede them. The conversations range from grammatical and theological studies to work in historical backgrounds. Recently a new wave of writing has drifted from the Genesis moorings in interpretive strategies to explore the Greco-Roman context in Ephesus, including attempts to see Paul responding to false teaching emanating from some form of proto-Gnosticism or the Artemis cult and how Paul's writing might be tacitly addressing the figure of Artemis and her worship.⁵⁰ My discussion focuses exclusively on 1 Timothy 2:15 and seeks to reprise the Genesis text as integral to the discussion, but I would be remiss not to acknowledge the controversies that surround it in context.

One contextual question asks whether the primary application for this passage is all men and women in the church in general or whether it should be limited to married men and women and, in particular, women in relationship to their husbands.⁵¹ From Paul's perspective and the first-century worldview, the reference to childbearing in the first century would apply most naturally to married women and so does not have immediate relevance for the unmarried.⁵² The reference to Adam and Eve as the first couple and the model for marriage might also serve as evidence

⁵⁰ For the proto-Gnostic thesis, see David R. Kimberley, "1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text," *JETS* 35.4 (1992): 481–86; Richard Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:12 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 171–77. For arguments regarding Artemis, see the two-part article by Sandra L. Glahn: "The Identity of Artemis in First-Century Ephesus," *BSac* 172.687 (2015): 316–34; "The First-Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity," *BSac* 172.688 (2015): 450–68.

⁵¹ Glahn rightly points out that distinguishing whether *γυνή* is translated "women" or "wives" has a huge bearing on how we interpret and apply the text ("The First-Century Ephesian Artemis," 459–60). She argues from the reference to submission and childbearing and then from 1 Peter 3:1–7, which closely parallels the theme and language of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and which clearly addresses wives, that "wives," not "women," is the author's intent. She promotes the idea that there was apostolic teaching regarding the relationship between husbands and wives taken from the Genesis story and shared by Paul and Peter; see also George and Dora Winston, *Recovering Biblical Ministry by Women: An Exegetical Response to Traditionalism and Feminism* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2003), 113.

⁵² For a proponent and an example of this view, see John E. Toews, "I Permit No Woman to Teach," in *Your Daughters Shall Prophecy: Women in Ministry in the Church*, ed. John E. Toews, Valerie Rempel, and Katie Funk Wiebe (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1992), 137–56.

that this counsel is prescriptive for married couples, not men and women at large.⁵³ First-century Jewish culture did not view unmarried women as independent entities, but in relationship. If women were unmarried, they were linked to their parents; if married, to their husbands and children. This familial perspective will be reflected later in 1 Timothy when Paul teaches about elder and deacon qualifications (3:1–15), when he addresses the comportment of older and younger men and women (5:1–2), and when he discusses the problem of widows who need financial support and community engagement (5:3–16). In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul’s counsel to the unmarried is to remain unmarried. While the Corinthian text allows widows to remarry as a concession, Paul encourages them to remain unmarried (vv. 39–40), but that counsel is changed in 1 Timothy 5:14 where the clear counsel for younger widows is to marry.⁵⁴ The primary application of 1 Timothy 2:8–15 is to husbands and wives, but this aspect will have little bearing on our conclusions in verse 15.

So, before we go much further, let me tip my hand to preview my proposal for the translation and interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15. I propose that the *δε* in this verse links not to “the woman” (*ἡ γυνή*) in verse 14b, but to “Adam” (*Ἀδὰμ*) in verse 14a.⁵⁵ The referents for the unstated subjects of the passive verbs of this verse have already created controversy for their change in number. I take the first to refer to Adam, and the second, to the man and woman, thus, “and *he* [Adam] will be saved through childbearing, if *they* [the couple] continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.” Three reasons drive my argument: (1) This translation is grammatically and syntactically satisfying (a) because it resolves the change in number of the verbs; (b) because it parallels the referents in the preceding verses; and (c) because it ties the passage back into verses 4 and 8. (2) The bridge to the Genesis source text is more clearly made. Finally, (3) it resolves the theological problem of how and why Paul would introduce the idea of childbirth at this juncture in his argument. While this is a novel suggestion, it harmonizes with Paul’s theological perspective and emphasizes the value Paul puts on the distinctive contribution of women in society and the church to accomplish God’s greater purpose.

1. *Saved through childbearing: an alternative view.* The final verse of this section perhaps is less controversial in the modern context because at first glance it does not appear to speak directly to gender or the chain of authority within the church context like the verses immediately preceding. It has often been translated and un-

⁵³ As mentioned previously, the Genesis narrator added the editorial comment in Genesis 2:24 that draws from the Adam and Eve event to explain and define the practice of marriage as leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. The comment serves to apply the Adam and Eve story as marriage’s theological basis throughout the biblical record (it is cited as such by Jesus in Matthew 19:5 and Paul in Ephesians 5:31). All marriage is rooted in this first marriage.

⁵⁴ For interaction over this apparent conflict, see Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 355–57. See also Royce Gordon Gruenler, “The Mission-Lifestyle Setting of 1 Tim 2:8–15,” *JETS* 41.2 (1998): 228–29, for an explanation of Paul’s reversal of counsel from the Corinthian to the Ephesian context.

⁵⁵ See Stanley E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?,” *JSN* 49 (1993): 87–102, for five possible subjects for *σωθήσεται*: Eve, Mary, any woman or women in general, the representative woman of Ephesus, and the representative Christian woman (90–91).

derstood to offer women a reprieve in life in their childbearing function as a consequence or reward for the attitude of piety that Paul has been describing for women. As we will see, the passage does yield several different interpretations, and my ultimate purpose is to offer an alternative interpretation, admittedly novel, that requires an amended translation from all major English translations of this verse.

Table 1 shows a list of many modern published English translations to serve as a reference for the discussion. A comparison of these translations shows different polarities and emphases regarding who is saved, what salvation implies, what is meant by bearing children, and later, what are the moral conditions for this salvation and by whom. In each case the woman is seen as the subject of the passive verb and this passage is directly connected to what immediately precedes, where Paul talks about Eve being formed after Adam and being deceived. The singular subject in the apodosis is translated as plural by several translations (NIV, NLT, CEV, AMP, Phillips, NASB) to harmonize with the protasis. Likewise, the plural noun subject for the protasis is most frequently not specified but translated by the general pronoun “they,” but four translations ignore the number of the verb and link it to a singular noun of the apodosis, “she” (HCSB, NCV, NET, WYC), and one translation identifies the noun as “women” (NABRE).

Table 1: First Timothy 2:15 among the Translations

Apodosis	Protasis	Translation
σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας,	ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης·	GNT
“But women will be saved through childbearing—	if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”	NIV
“But women will be saved through childbearing,	assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.”	NLT
“Yet she will be saved through childbearing,	provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”	NRSV
“Yet she will be saved through childbearing—	if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”	ESV
“but she shall be saved through her child-bearing,	if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.”	ASV
“but she will be saved through her childbearing,	if they continue in faith, love, and sanctification with sobriety.”	WEB
“But she will be saved through childbearing,	if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.”	CSB
“But she will be saved through childbearing,	if she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with good judgment.”	HCSB
“But she shall be saved by generation of children,	if she dwell perfectly in faith, and love, and holiness, with soberness.”	WYC

“But she will be saved through having children	if she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”	NCV
“But she will be saved through motherhood,	provided women persevere in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”	NABRE
“Notwithstanding, through bearing of children she shall be saved,	if they continue in faith, and love, and holiness with modesty.”	GNV
“But women will be saved by having children,	if they stay faithful, loving, holy, and modest.”	CEV
“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing,	if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”	KJV
“Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing	if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”	NKJV
“But she shall be preserved in childbearing,	if they continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion.”	Darby
“But <i>women</i> will be preserved (saved) through [the pain and dangers of] the bearing of children	if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control <i>and</i> discretion.”	AMP
“Nevertheless I believe that women will come safely through childbirth	if they maintain a life of faith, love, holiness and gravity.”	Phillips
“But <i>women</i> will be preserved through the bearing of children	if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”	NASB
“But she will be delivered through childbearing,	if she continues in faith and love and holiness with self-control.”	NET
“On the other hand, her childbearing brought about salvation, reversing Eve.	But this salvation only comes to those who continue in faith, love, and holiness, gathering it all into maturity. You can depend on this.”	MSG
“Yet a woman shall live in restored dignity by means of her children,	receiving the blessing that comes from raising them as consecrated children nurtured in faith and love, walking in wisdom.”	TPT
“even though she will be saved through the birth of the Child,	if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, along with good judgment.”	ISV

Several discrepancies that highlight interpretive problems are combined in different ways to form different conclusions and are worth noting in these translations: (1) whether salvation is spiritual or physical; (2) the connection between salvation and childbearing; (3) a distinction in how to translate *μετὰ σωφροσύνης* in the protasis; (4) how to resolve the discrepancy between a plural referent in the protasis and a singular subject in the apodosis; and (5) how this verse relates to the greater context, especially the preceding verses regarding Adam and Eve and male-

female relations.⁵⁶ Many have taken great care to consider the various innuendos of the text, to shed light through analyzing historic settings, and to integrate potential meanings into modern values. The exegetical and theological divide is vast and divisive and the implications weighty.⁵⁷

On the one hand, many see salvation as physical and emphasize health concerns. A primitive understanding of medicine in the first century connected maternal deaths with moral behavior. The text promises the self-controlled, quiet, holy woman salvation, that is, *survival*, or perhaps safe childbirths in the act of childbearing, apparently as a divine reward for good behavior.⁵⁸ Certainly, the death of women during childbirth presented a formidable gender-specific life threat. Naturally arising here is a recalling of Genesis 3:16, where Eve is cursed with pain in childbirth: “I will greatly increase your labor pains; with pain you will give birth to children.” Pierce’s conclusion is that the Ephesian women needed to accept suffering and recognize that they needed “to wait on God’s timing to accomplish his redemptive purposes” in the new covenant relationship. “Paul is assuring them that they can find deliverance ‘through’ this ordeal (though not ‘from’ it) by trusting God and living a life of piety. Though this does not guarantee that a godly woman will never suffer or at times even die in childbirth, it does mean that a partial healing from the judgment on the first woman can take place along the way as a foretaste of kingdom blessings.”⁵⁹ The new covenant offers hope against Eve’s curse.

Ames and Miller suggest that Paul’s reference to women’s prayer, dress, and salvation in childbirth refers to his desire that the churches avoid syncretistic activity with the Artemis cult where women prayed, adorned themselves lavishly, and were concerned both with infant death or disfiguration and with risk to their own lives.⁶⁰ Glahn adds that the Artemis cult in Ephesus worshiped Artemis as a noted

⁵⁶ Others will also discuss the significance of the preposition *διὰ* or attempt to reconcile the use of the article with *τεκνογονίας*, which influences many to believe this is talking about salvation through Christ’s birth in his first advent (see below).

⁵⁷ Douglas Moo remains exemplary in his exegetical treatment of grammar and context. He lists six interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:15 and concludes: “It is not through active teaching and ruling activities that Christian women will be saved, but through faithfulness to their proper role, exemplified in motherhood.” Douglas J. Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11–15: Meaning and Significance,” *TrinJ* 1.1 (1980): 62–83, 71. Moo views salvation specifically as “eschatological salvation” (73).

⁵⁸ See especially David Mark Ball for his thorough study of *σώζω*, where he concludes that Paul is arguing for divine protection for godly Christian women from the curse of physical pain in childbirth given to Eve in Genesis 3:16. David Mark Ball, “Making ‘Sense’ of Salvation in 1 Timothy 2:15: A Case Study of the Pros and Cons of Word Studies in New Testament Exegesis,” in *Biblical Theology and Missiological Education in Asia: Essays in Honor of the Rev. Dr. Brian C. Wintle*, ed. Siga Arles, Ashish Chrispal, and Paul Mohan Raj, SGIIC 15 (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 2011), 144–77. See also Moyer Hubbard, “Kept Safe through Childbearing: Maternal Mortality, Justification by Faith, and the Social Setting of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *JETS* 55.4 (2012): 743–62.

⁵⁹ Ronald W. Pierce, “Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Tim 2:8–15: A Test Case,” *JETS* 36.3 (1993): 351.

⁶⁰ See Frank Ritchel Ames and J. David Miller, “Prayer and Syncretism in 1 Timothy,” *RegQ* 52.2 (2010): 78–79. They also assess verses 12–14, where they seek to show how Paul’s use of Adam and Eve contrasted with the Ephesian cult of Artemis, who is paired with but dominated her twin brother, Apollo. Paul warns against syncretistic tendencies that would lead women to dominate men in teaching.

mediator for birthing women. She was called on to save them in childbirth, and Glahn believes Paul is quoting a slogan (hence the conflicting number in the verbs) to make the point that God will save Christian women in childbirth.⁶¹ Hutson carries forward the same view that Paul has in mind saving women in the dangerous process of childbirth, but Hutson supports this view from Jewish, not Gentile culture and context. He argues that Paul was replacing three deadly sins of women found in rabbinic tradition—separation during menstruation, neglecting the dough offering, and lighting the lamp on the Sabbath—with the four virtues of faith, love, holiness, and temperance.⁶² Weissenrieder takes an opposing tack when she suggests that ancient medicine found childbirth health-giving and celibacy an affliction. “For their own wellbeing women were expected to have children.”⁶³

Here, the discrepancy in pronoun numbers is a factor in interpretation: Is Paul using a synecdoche saying that the individual mother will survive the perils of childbirth if all the women of the community as a class maintain these godly dispositions? Her survival would then somehow be dependent on the general piety of the group. This association seems farfetched. Would not each individual woman find personal safety based on her own godly behavior or disposition? The pronoun discrepancy and the connection between moral behavior and successful childbearing seems to be a stretch and no evidence exists that Christian women have had a better survival rate in childbirth than unbelieving women. The apodosis and protasis given the above understanding appear unrelated and forced.

On the other hand, a plethora of views interpret this as spiritual salvation.⁶⁴ The woman will be saved in the present from false teaching, sin, or its consequences, or she will be saved in the future from an eschatological, coming judgment.⁶⁵ Glahn mentions a view held in Eastern Europe where spiritual salvation is gained by women through bearing *many* children.⁶⁶ She further offers a foil that some hold salvation as equivalent to sanctification, and that motherhood is the sanctifying antidote for a woman’s desire to minister to the church through teaching. A derivative of that view attempts to connect female submission to male authority and suggests that “saved” should be nuanced as “delivered” from her curse of submission;

⁶¹ Glahn, “The Identity of Artemis in First-Century Ephesus,” 316–34; Glahn, “The First-Century Ephesian Artemis,” 450, 465–68. Consistent with her proposal that this is a slogan, Glahn raises the possibility that the phrase, “This is a faithful saying,” in 3:1 is best applied to this saying or slogan in 2:15, not to what follows in chapter 3.

⁶² Christopher R. Hutson, “‘Saved through Childbearing’ The Jewish Context of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *NovT* 56.4 (2014): 392–410.

⁶³ Annette Weissenrieder, “What Does *σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας* ‘To Be Saved by Childbearing’ Mean (1 Timothy 2:15)? Insights from Ancient Medical and Philosophical Texts,” *EChr* 5 (2014): 314.

⁶⁴ For salvation from present sin, see Douglas Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder [to Philip Payne],” *TrinJ* 2 NS (1981): 205. See also Marjorie J. Cooper, “Analysis and Conclusions regarding 1 Timothy 2:9–3:1A,” *Presb* 45.1 (2019): 104–5, for salvation as spiritual.

⁶⁵ Contra the idea that childbearing *itself* offers spiritual salvation, following a Roman Catholic theological model where works give evidence of salvific faith. See Vito De Grisantis, *La donna nella Chiesa: Il problema e la storia della interpretazione di 1 Timoteo 2,11–15* (Milano: Mursia, 2000), 45.

⁶⁶ Glahn, “The First-Century Ephesian Artemis,” 464, emphasis mine.

thus, by childbearing she is able to assume a position of authority, presumably over children.⁶⁷ Another view seeks to counter a Gnostic misogynist influence that looked at childbearing with disdain. Paul affirms that childbearing will not bring condemnation on her but saves her dignity in this womanly vocation.⁶⁸ Kartzow applies this to woman slaves who bore children to their masters. Slaveholding women are saved from barrenness through their slaves' "reproductive capital" when they bear them children, children who are often prominent in the narrative, which then gives the slave women themselves a sort of dignity or salvation through childbearing.⁶⁹ Baum offers a distinctively antimaterialistic interpretation: childbirth saves wealthy women from the deception of an opulent and selfish lifestyle.⁷⁰ Another view presents "childbearing" as allegorical, that is, the salvation that the woman produces is spiritual salvation obtained strictly by faith that results in the children of faith, love, holiness, and temperance.⁷¹

Several of these views obscure the connection of virtue from salvation in childbearing, or they link the virtues in the apodosis with the issues of submission and silence from the preceding verses, conceding that women are by nature subordinate to men and innately gullible. Cooper argues that salvation must be spiritual and that when women experience pain in childbearing they are reminded of the consequence of Eve's unbelief and hence are motivated to believe God as revealed in Jesus Christ leading to a sanctification process.⁷² Spurgeon sees salvation as the restoration of the husband-wife relationship and the couple with God. The salvation Eve was longing for was the salvation of being reunited in prayer (tying into the general theme initiated in 1 Tim 2:1) and love with her husband, Adam, and therefore her salvation was found in bearing children with him as an expression of their restored unity.⁷³

⁶⁷ For a discussion of different expressions of motherhood (τεκνογονία, τεκνοποιία, τεκνοσπορία, τεκνοτροφία) and their implications in a Roman context, see Bruce W. Winter, "The 'New' Roman Wife and 1 Timothy 2:9–15: The Search for a *Sitz im Leben*," *TynBul* 51.2 (2000): 293–94. For an argument that through childbearing, a woman counters the argument of male priority in creation found in 1 Corinthians 11:8–9 when women give birth to and raise men, see M. D. Roberts, "Women Shall Be Saved: A Closer Look at 1 Timothy 2:15," *Reff* 33.4 (1983): 18–22. "Woman will be saved through childbearing, not from death, but from the theological condition which outlaws her teaching. She shall be saved into ecclesiastical wholeness" (20).

⁶⁸ Kimberley, "1 Tim 2:15," 481–86.

⁶⁹ Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Reproductive Salvation and Slavery: Reading 1 Timothy 2:15 with Hagar and Mary," *Neot* 50.1 (2016): 93–96.

⁷⁰ Armin D. Baum, "Saving Wealthy Ephesian Women from a Self-Centered Way of Life (1 Tim 2:15): Salvation by Childbearing in the Context of Ancient Arguments against Sexual Intercourse, Pregnancy, and Child-Rearing," in *Troubling Texts in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of Rob van Houwelingen*, ed. Myriam Klinker-De Klerck, Arco den Heijer, and Jermo van Nes, CBET 113 (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 257–83.

⁷¹ Kenneth L. Waters Sr., *Women, Salvation, and Childbearing: The Mystery of 1 Timothy 2:11–15* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022).

⁷² Cooper, "Analysis and Conclusions," 97, 104–106. Along those lines, David Thomas reminds us that "facing possible death does have a way of making people face up to spiritual realities." David Thomas, "Saved by Childbearing!," *Notes* 10.2 (1996): 52.

⁷³ Spurgeon, "1 Timothy 2:13–15," 543–56. See also Jouette M. Bassler, "Adam, Eve, and the Pastor: The Use of Genesis 2–3 in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the*

Some tie the passage to Genesis 3:15, where it is promised that Eve's seed will crush the serpent's head, and they see this as referring to Eve's descendant Mary saving humanity from Satan. In this understanding, the definite article before "childbearing" (τῆς τεκνογονίας) points to a particular childbirth. By linking Eve to Mary, Jesus's mother, they conclude that Eve brought salvation to the world through birthing a child, whose progeny, ultimately the Messiah Jesus, would defeat Satan and bring universal salvation, thus the *protoevangelium*.⁷⁴ This final view is compelling and compatible with the context of the original Genesis passage and carries through the biblical tradition. Eve herself never produced the seed that crushes Satan's head. Her first child in fact succumbs to sin and murder and begins a wayward line of descendants. Only many generations later will another woman, Mary, not Eve, bear a Messiah that the Scriptures and church tradition recognize as the one who metaphorically crushes Satan's head.⁷⁵ It is a stretch to imagine that this tradition was so prevalent in Paul's and Timothy's mind as to be the focus here without further explanatory comment.⁷⁶

Finally, we also cannot overlook a prevalent view that recognizes the contextual association of the future σώζω verb root throughout 1 Timothy tying salvation to its spiritual or eschatological sense (1:15; 2:4; 4:16), or to the reference to God as σωτήρ or savior (1:1; 2:3; 4:10). This meaning is conveyed as recently as verses 1–7, where Paul clearly is concerned about the salvation of all humanity ("God our *Savior* ... wants all people *to be saved* and to come to a knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim 2:3b, 4).⁷⁷ Gruenler understands the salvation language missionally depicting a gen-

Garden, ed. Gregory A. Robbins, SWR 27 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1988), 43–65, who discusses the legend of the serpent's seduction of Eve: "Since Eve sinned by succumbing to the sexual overtones of the serpent, her descendants can only be saved by a related act, that is, by bearing children" (55). Bassler argues that the women will be saved from the allure of the heretical message by bearing children.

⁷⁴ So Richard A. Shenk, *The Virgin Birth of Christ: The Rich Meaning of a Biblical Truth* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016), 60–65; Jared M. August, "What Must She Do to Be Saved?: A Theological Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:15," *Them* 45.1 (2020): 84–97. In this view, salvation is not spiritual or eschatological, that is, the personal form of salvation Paul has already been using elsewhere in the letter (1:15; 2:4), but is represented by the defeat of Satan by the seed of the woman and thus a cosmic and general image of salvation. My proposal of Adam as a synecdoche for humanity and the focus of the passive verb could also work here.

⁷⁵ Deborah Sawyer represents treatments that compare Eve and Mary in feminist theologies and across church history as archetypal of women who are the heads of different salvific lines, much the same as Paul does with Adam and Jesus as the heads of two races of humans. Eve conceives with Adam a human and recognizes that her creative ability parallels God's creative activity. Mary, on the other hand, conceives Jesus with God himself. Both are life-givers in association with God. Deborah F. Sawyer, "Hidden Subjects: Rereading Eve and Mary," *ThSex* 14.3 (2008): 305–20.

⁷⁶ Paul, however, does demonstrate an assumption that his Roman audience would be aware of this verse and its metaphoric consequence in Romans 16:20 when he promises, "The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet."

⁷⁷ I. Howard Marshall interacts with the work of Grudem, Köstenberger, and Schreiner about the meaning of spiritual salvation and how it relates to childbearing. He challenges their understanding of salvation through childbearing by offering the exceptions of the unmarried, the infertile, or older women who no longer care for children. I. Howard Marshall, "Women in Ministry: A Further Look at 1 Timothy 2," in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel*, ed. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 70–71. Marshall addresses works that include Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*

eral mission genre of the letter in light of false teaching: Ephesian women “who are flaunting their autonomy and refusing to marry” will imitate Eve’s example and “exhibit in public view the reality of their salvation” through bearing children to continue the covenant line.⁷⁸ The woman demonstrates that she is regenerated by fulfilling her roles of childbearing and raising children.⁷⁹ Yarbrough adds this word of eschatological comfort to the woman who sees childbearing as a mortal risk: “After death, she will be in heaven. In a setting where life expectancy may have been thirty or under, and where death from childbirth was common, assurance of life after death would have been welcome news to any woman.”⁸⁰

We come to my view: as I have argued in the first half of this essay, in the Genesis story Eve did bear a child in which she found salvation. The act of childbearing itself made her a creator and confirmed that she was the mother of all living in partnership with God.⁸¹ She bore a man (שׂם) with God and so worked to reverse the curse in cooperation with him.⁸² She brought salvation to humanity through birth, creating children that would save humanity from extinction.⁸³ Would it not be far more compelling to Timothy and Paul’s secondary audience, his churches, to appeal not to the secondary specific referent of Mary, but to view Eve typologically for all women and transfer meaning from the original story of bearing

and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than One Hundred Disputed Questions (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004); Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 107–44; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 218–26.

⁷⁸ Gruenler, “Mission-Lifestyle Setting,” 217. See also E. Nyegaard, who argues that Paul is seeking here to affirm the salvific benefit of marriage and childbirth countering the Gnostics and his occasional counsel offered to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 7. E. Nyegaard, “Essai exégétique sur 1 Timoth., II, 15,” *RTb* 4 (1877–1878): 377–83.

⁷⁹ So John Piper (citing Henry Alford), “How Are Women Saved through Childbearing: A Careful Study of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *Desiring God*, 10 June 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-are-women-saved-through-childbearing>. See also Denny Burk, “What Does It Mean that Women Will Be Saved through Childbearing? (1 Timothy 2),” *Crossway*, 7 October 2018, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-that-women-will-be-saved-through-childbearing-1-timothy-2/>. For alternative views see the commentaries, particularly Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 37–38.

⁸⁰ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 235.

⁸¹ Jerram Barrs, *Through His Eyes: God’s Perspective on Women in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 52–54. See Wall, “1 Timothy 2:9–15 Reconsidered (Again),” 97–98, for his description of Eve experiencing salvation as a female through childbearing. By partnering with God, she is redeemed. “The reader of Eve’s Genesis story interprets that what she recognizes when giving birth to her first child is a God who has not abandoned her, even though her hubris had led her to sin. *Her exclamation that she had created a child in partnership with God (cf. Gen 1:27–28) comes precisely at the climactic moment she discovers the truth about God’s mercy*” (97, emphasis his). Our view accepts that she recognizes God’s mercy in partnering with her to have a baby, but sees the object of salvation, humanity, that counters the couple’s inevitable pending death. Humanity survives through her progeny.

⁸² Wall points out that woman who comes from man in Genesis 2:23 now has man come from her in 4:1. “1 Timothy 2:9–15 Reconsidered (Again),” 95–97.

⁸³ So the salvation of humanity through childbearing is primarily physical with an anticipation of spiritual salvation through the seed of woman promised in the *protoevangelium*. Contra Wall, who asserts that salvation here can only refer to salvation from the woman’s transgression and by means of Christ Jesus. Wall, “1 Timothy 2:9–15 Reconsidered (Again),” 96.

a child to apply to all women who bear children?⁸⁴ Paul evokes Eve as the honorable one who, through her unique ability and gifting of childbirth and motherhood, saved Adam, a synecdoche for humanity, cursed to face extermination because of the fall.⁸⁵ Women in the church likewise evoke the ancient and enduring salvific theme when they bear and raise children.⁸⁶

The final list of positive attitudes and behaviors are critical for identifying the unstated plural subject of the verb in the protasis, *μείνωσιν*, with its obvious change in number from the verb in the apodosis, *σωθήσεται*.⁸⁷ The short list of faith (*πίστις*), love (*ἀγάπη*), and holiness (*ἀγιασμός*) all seem like innocuous and general descriptors of Christian character that Paul would recommend to any believer. Most translations do not dispute these first three descriptions. The last phrase, *μετὰ σωφροσύνης*, is curious both for its narrower semantic import and for the connecting preposition *μετά*, which can apply either to the final characteristic of holiness or to all three attributes. The variation of modern translations of *σωφροσύνης*, from “modesty,” “sobriety,” or “prudence” to the more precise, “self-restraint” or “self-control” (see table above), reveals different approaches to the subject.⁸⁸ “Modesty” or “propriety” borrows meaning from Paul’s previous injunction to women in verse 9 about women’s dress—they are to dress with modesty (*αἰδώς*) and self-control (*σωφροσύνη*)—rather than the more general understanding of this word, “self-control” or “prudence.” Self-control, however, need not be relegated only to women or a woman as a condition to salvation in childbearing, but

⁸⁴ Thus all women who bear children follow Eve’s footsteps. Some because of the apodosis see the application to Christian women or Ephesian women. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 48.

⁸⁵ Wall shares my conclusion that Paul intends to end his description of Eve as a type for women on a positive note: “That is, the retelling of her biblical story does not conclude with 2:14’s negative echo but climaxes with 2:15a and Eve’s salvation.” In a sense, integrating this with my view, Eve “saves” her reputation by being the savior of humanity through childbearing. “Significantly, a fallen Eve apprehends that her relationship with God remains intact when giving birth to her first child (*sullabousa eteken*, LXX Gen 4:1).” Wall, “1 Timothy 2:9–15 Reconsidered (Again),” 94–95.

⁸⁶ In support of this view, see Sariah Yau-wan Chan, “1 Timothy 2:13–15 in the Light of Views Concerning Eve and Childbirth in Early Judaism” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2006). Chan demonstrates that procreation is of supreme value in early Judaism because it “develops God’s creation of this world,” “it exerts a great influence on the survival, both the direction and destiny, of the Jewish nation,” and it is related to the advent of the Messiah who will come when a predetermined number of souls to be born is reached (260–61). She concludes that women will receive eschatological salvation if they fulfill their role as childbearers with godliness.

⁸⁷ It has been proposed that the children of the woman are the subject, and so her salvation derives not merely from bearing, but also raising children, an idea that some find also in the word *τεκνογονίας*. See, e.g., J. L. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles*, PengNTC (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 72–73; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus*, 12th ed., NTD 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 22.

⁸⁸ On *σωφροσύνη*, see Abraham J. Malherbe, “The *Virtus Feminarum* in 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in *Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson*, ed. Mark W. Hamilton, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Jeffrey Peterson, PTMS 65 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007), 45–65; Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature*, CSCP 35 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 316–19. North specifies that “Paul recognizes three aspects of *sophrosyne*, which may be defined in terms of its antitheses: it is opposed to madness (*mania*), to pride (*hyperphronein*), and to the tyranny of the appetites (*epithymia*)” (317).

can apply equally to a man and thus to the couple as a precondition to God's blessing of fertility.⁸⁹ Just two verses later, in 1 Timothy 3:2, the root word, *σώφρων*, is used to describe male elders.

A final comment that further supports seeing Adam as the beneficiary of childbearing is grammatical parallelism. Others have commented that verse 15a is linked through the *δὲ* to the preceding comment about the woman "coming to be in transgression" (*ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν*). Adam, however, is the subject of the previous passive verbs in verses 13–14: "For Adam was formed first (*Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη*) ... and Adam was not deceived (*καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἡπατήθη*)." It would make sense that the unstated subject of the following passive verb in sequence also would be understood as Adam. The translation I thus offer is: "And Adam [and, also viewed collectively, the line of first man Adam, *humankind*] will be saved [from extinction] through childbirth [bearing children that will extend humanity beyond mortality], if they [the couple] continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control." Paul's point after his prohibitions in verses 11–14 is to emphasize the widely understood value given by God to the woman, the necessity and value of her procreative role to further God's purposes in the church and the world as a counter to any suggestion of gender inequality.

In summary of my position and in response to our five interpretive demands for this passage, I answer as follows. (1) Salvation here speaks of the salvation of humanity of which Adam is the representative head. Salvation is not speaking about physical perseverance of the mother or child in the act of childbirth or about spiritual regeneration or about a broad plan of eschatological salvation through the introduction of the Messiah through the seed of the woman, but of reproduction leading to the salvation of humanity from physical extinction due to the curse of death rooted in the fall. Thus, (2) humanity is saved through procreation because children are born to replace those who die, ensuring the continuation of the human race. For (3) and (4) that seek to understand the plural subject in the protasis as a condition and in distinction from the singular subject in the apodosis, I offer the surprising recommendation that Adam as a synecdoche for all humanity is the implicit referent of the apodosis, and that the couple, Adam and Eve or man and woman (thus, both genders), are the plural referent in the protasis. The focus of the section going back to verse 8 and even verse 2, is on virtuous living by both men and women in the Ephesian church that reflects godliness to the world as a condition to humanity's salvation through childbirth. This leads to the question (5) of how this relates to the verses immediately preceding that cite Adam and Eve as examples of male-female relations in the church. I would say that Paul affirms the positive role of women in society as childbearers, a desirable role in the first centu-

⁸⁹ For this see North, *Sophrosyne*, 317. She observes of Paul, "Although, like most moralists in the Greek world, he construes *sophrosyne* as the essential virtue of women (Titus 2.6; 1 Tim 2.9), he also enjoins it upon men of every age (Titus 2.2, 6) and specifically lists it among the qualifications of a bishop (Titus 1.8; 1 Tim 3.2)." Spurgeon links this with God's injunction for the original couple to "adhere to God's restoration plan for them" marked by faithfulness, "then they would survive both marital dissension and ultimate separation from God" ("1 Timothy 2:13–15," 554–55).

ry though at times disdained in our current culture. This affirmation need not reflect negatively on women or even inform an interpretation of the previous verses.

2. *1 Timothy 2:15 in light of the Genesis story.* Holding to the view that women of the church, like Eve, are saved by fulfilling their function as childbearers and mothers has problems if one evaluates this role and function as somehow inferior to the role of the male gender. This is not just a class problem or one of discrimination or culture; it is a textual and theological issue. Paul elsewhere has clearly argued and promoted that his gospel eliminates distinctions that would promote discrimination (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14–18).

Paul, however, does promote the distinction of roles within Christ's body and that all members of the body, small or great, must exercise their unique functions for the body to operate well together. We all have different gifts, passions, shapes, and roles, that together make up the body of Christ. Many have noted in Genesis 1:26–27 that mankind made in God's image was made both male and female.⁹⁰ God's image is found not just in a polarity of gender, but in ideal pairing in relationship of man and woman that includes both unique identity and function that reflect the image of the triune God. Adam recognized Eve's sameness when God brought her to him (Gen 2:22–23). Men and women are independently divine image bearers, but together as a married couple, they form a third entity that, when both play out their unique gender roles, functions to bear God's image. Marriage and family reflect the mystery of the Trinity.

Paul promotes the idea that God has given women the unique role of childbearer and that by exercising this function they are countering the curse of death that came through the fall.⁹¹ The ultimate consequence of the fall is death, but by their unique role of childbearing, women counter the curse and enable mankind to endure. This procreative ability succeeds not just biologically or creatively in furthering the human race for another generation, but through the extension of the grace of motherhood, a woman is able to create children raised in holiness, which serves a redemptive role as well.⁹² Later Paul will speak positively of the widows in Timothy's church and list "as one who has raised children" (1 Tim 5:10) among the good works that they exhibit. His counsel to the younger widows highlights child-

⁹⁰ Contra diverse studies like Phyllis Trible, "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2–3 Reread," *ANQ* 13.4 (1973): 251, that identify the first Adam as genderless. Eve's formation after Adam and Jesus's teaching that there is no marriage in heaven (implying no gender roles) serve as examples of a genderless human as ideal.

⁹¹ Marshall ("Women in Ministry," 72–73) speaks against the "role theory" of complementarians like Köstenberger, arguing that the list is one-sided—"the list of congregational activities forbidden to women because they are the prerogative of men is not balanced by any list of activities forbidden to men because they are the prerogative of women" (72). He infers that the complementarian position favors men because they can do anything women can do except that older women can teach younger women. The glaring exception to Marshall's analysis is childbearing that is the exclusive domain of women. See also Harold W. Hoehner, "Can a Woman Be a Pastor-Teacher?," *JETS* 50.4 (2007): 761–71, who argues that women have all the spiritual gifts, but are excluded from the office of elder or bishop.

⁹² See Gruenler, "Mission-Lifestyle Setting," 217. He argues from a Reformed perspective that woman's injunction to childbearing is missional in that she furthers a line of the elect children that will lead to the Messiah.

rearing: “So I want younger women to marry, raise children, and manage a household, in order to give the adversary no opportunity to vilify us” (1 Tim 5:14). The role of woman as mother is both uniquely creative and redemptive.⁹³

God made women uniquely able to bear and nurture children. This quality is, with rare exception, seen as a positive gift. We live in an age unrecognizable to the biblical authors where technological advances allow women to choose to remain childless. For a variety of reasons, modern society permits, approves, encourages, and sometimes legislates that women choose to have few or no children.⁹⁴ This worldview is foreign to cultures throughout biblical times where in various texts barren women lament their state and cry out to God for a child, and where fecundity is God’s blessing and something to be embraced.⁹⁵ A caution is in order: that fertility is a sign of God’s blessing does not necessitate the inverse that infertility somehow implies disgrace. Paul’s point is to highlight, though, the reproductive role of women as a positive attribute that should be embraced with joy. On this basis, Paul encourages women to revel in the capacity given by their gender to bear and nurture children. He moves beyond the question of whether a woman can assume a prominent role of authority in the church and instead shifts to affirm positively the woman’s procreative role. Eve’s humiliation by deception and her fall that leads to death is redeemed through childbearing into a distinct and unique function that produces life, promotes the community, and thus builds the body of Christ. Humans experience immortality through procreation. Eve by her procreative ability provides salvation not only in an ultimate sense through her seed that will destroy Satan, but also in birth itself, which assures the perpetuity of the human race.

A final comment is in order related to Eve in both Genesis and 1 Timothy 2:15. While today’s church has spent decades debating whether women should have freedom to exercise authority or teach in church contexts, a much more fundamental and important cultural battle is now being waged—that of gender and sexual identity. Our discussion informs that controversy by underscoring the necessity and biblical priority of biological reproduction. In our current cultural battle over questions of gender and sex, a debate about truth looms large. That debate is over whether truth is based on correspondence or on a social construct. Is a proposition

⁹³ This is not to say that unmarried virgins or infertile married women are in any way inferior. In light of his view that we are living in the eschaton, Paul recommends younger women not to marry, but to remain single like him (1 Cor 7:25–40). Infertility would require more reflection, but clearly some of the great women of the biblical narrative were infertile.

⁹⁴ Discussions of overpopulation are often promoted as the motive behind this worldview, but the data and conclusions are debated. Notably, due to the social problems that were created a generation later, China has recently reversed the previous mandate to limit childbearing to one per family.

⁹⁵ As an exception, one might think of Jesus’s woe pronounced on pregnant women in the coming tribulation in Matthew 24:19//Mark 13:17//Luke 21:23. For texts that speak negatively of barrenness, one need only look at the stories of famously barren women like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, or Elizabeth to understand how infertility was viewed. By comparison, when these women have children, sometimes miraculously, they recognize God’s favor in their ability to conceive and mother children. To this add passages like Psalm 127:3–5: “Yes, sons are a gift from the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Sons born during one’s youth are like arrows in a warrior’s hand. How blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them. They will not be put to shame when they confront enemies at the city gate.”

objectively true or false based on something outside of one's beliefs, or is it true based on personal or societal affirmation or consensus? Today, some doctors are reluctant to declare the gender of newborns, and some parents are warned not to impose personal values on the gender identity of their young children, based on the prevalent idea that gender is socially constructed rather than verifiable by physical characteristics like sexual organs or chromosomal identification. To conceive and bear children we need to recover a minimal idea of gender awareness that recognizes male and female on a chromosomal level. Human reproduction depends on coupling of males with females. Christians should oppose social values that argue against the traditional family and should reject biological experimentation that avoids male siring and female birthing and nurturing of babies. Paul's understanding that Eve saves humanity through childbirth is intended to give women dignity and value in the church, but it also serves as a guideline to validate gender distinctions and to support traditional roles of men and women within the family, where children can be conceived, birthed, and raised to preserve humanity.

3. *1 Timothy 2:15 in context: childbearing and women as leaders.* How does Paul's recognition of Eve's distinct salvific role of childbearing affect the passages that precede and follow this affirmation? Those who claim that Paul bars women from having authority or teaching in the church might conclude that in verse 15 Paul consigns them solely to a role in the home as mothers and that he sees the value of the feminine gender *only* in her role as mother and procreator. The capacity to bear children does not resolve the question of the status and function of women in society, the church, and the home. Recognizing God's promise that she would procreate as part of the response to the fall, the curse, and banishment from the garden of Eden and the tree of life as seen in the first story of Eve is meant by Paul as a commendation and a positive reflection, rather than a confining limitation. Whether bearing and mothering children to save humanity from extinction *disqualifies* her from teaching or exercising authority is not Paul's primary point in verse 15, and motherhood carries a distinct necessity for exercising authority and teaching. In the passage immediately following, where Paul gives Timothy the qualifications for church leaders, the wives of elders have an obvious role in leadership at least as models of character and spiritual maturity.

Frequently noted are the many women that Paul recognizes for their roles in ministry. Certainly, Paul commends women like Timothy's mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, for their exemplary role of motherhood in raising godly Timothy (2 Tim 1:5; cf. Acts 16:1). Other examples of women church leaders include Phoebe, who had a communicating role in the Roman church (Rom 16:1–2); Euodia and Syntyche, who served as Paul's co-laborers in the Philippian church (Phil 4:2–3); and Priscilla, who helped Apollos understand the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26). The book of Acts is careful to note the women who courageously received Paul's gospel in its inception in a culture that frequently opposed him (5:14; 8:12; 16:13–14; 17:4, 12, 34). The current debate on how to interpret 1 Timothy 2:12–14 need not encroach upon Paul's underscoring the critical function of childbearing for the good of all humanity.

As I have noted previously, the final half of verse 15, especially the repetition of the injunction to self-control (σωφροσύνη) that in verse 9 is applied to women for their dress offers a good summation of what is required also of men in verse 8 who need to lift holy hands without dispute or anger (χωρίς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ). This message is also applicable in Paul's subsequent argument that church leaders must likewise exhibit self-control (σώφρων, 3:2). Both genders are required to maintain general Christian character and virtue.

III. CONCLUSION

The focus of my examination has been on the final verse of a notoriously difficult section on the comportment of women in the church. In particular, I seek the meaning in context of Paul's reference to being saved through childbearing in 1 Timothy 2:15. My objective has been to analyze this text with a focus on the Adam and Eve story in Genesis as an important precursor to better understand Paul's allusion to Eve as representative woman. His citation of Adam and Eve demands that we grasp the original story and the author's original intent before we trace Paul's teaching to Timothy and the first-century hermeneutic that he and Timothy would share. What ties 1 Timothy 2:15 to Genesis is not just Eve's status as "helper" created for Adam, that is, the woman is made for and subordinate to the man or her gullibility, that she, not the man, was the one who listened to the serpent leading to her disobedience, but something that Adam, Paul, and Timothy all recognize as honoring to women and redeeming: Eve through childbearing brings salvation. This is the plain meaning of the Genesis account given the sequence of creation of woman, fall, curse, renaming Eve, banishment, then first birth.

For Adam, for the author of Genesis, and for Paul, Eve is the bright hope within the story of the fall of humanity. Yes, she listened to the serpent and disobeyed the command initially given to Adam resulting in the death curse. But she also provides the antidote to the curse. Though Adam (and derivatively, all mankind) will die because he disobeyed, Eve is the counter to the curse. She is the mother of all living. When she bears her first child, she recognizes the wonder of her creative act. Death does not have the final word. Humankind will be saved from extermination through her unique physical ability to procreate. The woman is chastised as responsible for error, sin, and death, but as childbearer she is seen also as the source of human salvation through two avenues: first, redemptively, by bearing seed who will destroy the serpent (3:15); and second, creatively, through procreation (4:1).⁹⁶ Paul underscores the value of the woman within salvific history.

In conclusion, my proposal is that Adam is the subject of the apodosis who receives salvation, and the couple, Adam and Eve, or men and women in Timothy's church, are those who are required to demonstrate Christian virtues. In verses 13 and 14, the main subject of the passive verbs is Adam, not Eve, and that is naturally carried forward as the subject of the passive verb in verse 15. No doubt because of the childbearing reference and mistaken understanding of the verb "will be

⁹⁶ Thus, salvation is both physical and spiritual.

saved,” translators have been wrongly pressed into seeing Eve as the one receiving the benefits of childbirth rather than giving them. According to our rendering with a careful eye to the Genesis passage that Paul is referencing, we can now understand that Adam serving as the representative of mankind receives these benefits and so will be saved through the childbearing role of Eve (not directly referenced in verse 15). Humankind is saved from extinction due to the curse through the woman’s capacity to procreate a man (שׂוֹמֵר) either “with” or “like” YHWH (Gen 4:1b). The plural verb in the protasis does not refer to all women, then, but to the couple. Thus 1 Timothy 2:15 is rendered: “But he (Adam, representing mankind) will be saved through childbearing, if they (the couple) continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.” The referencing back to Adam and Eve as types of husband and wife serves to remind Timothy and the reader that the woman’s role of childbearing is critical as part of God’s will to save humanity. The members of the church need to recognize the need of both men and women to maintain faith, love, and purity with self-control with the result that mankind will be saved through the woman’s distinctive role of childbearing.