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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'SAVED BY CHILDBIRTH' (1 TIMOTHY 2.15)?

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1 Timothy 2.15, like few other passages in the New Testament, is almost embarrassing in the attention it draws to itself. It is one of those passages that makes discussion of 'Pauline theology', in particular the debate over 'Paul' and women, so difficult. Although the passage raises a number of interesting exegetical issues (examined in more detail below), the nature and kind of reaction it prompts is out of all proportion to its exegetical significance. Nevertheless, the passage refuses to go away as an item of debate, consistently garnering an entry or two each year in the standard bibliographies. What is disappointing in many of these discussions, however, is that they assume far too many 'self-evident' interpretations of many of the text's lexical and grammatical phenomena. But many of the interpretations are anything but self-evident, despite many self-assured comments. What the text seems to be saying to many of its interpreters is apparently formulated more on the basis of ideology than critical exegesis. This ideological criticism has been of two kinds. The first simply dismisses or marginalizes the verse, and the second tends to...
over-theologize various elements of its interpretation. Such reductionism has made the text more problematic than it need be. This has resulted in a facile handling of the text, and in a failure to give due weight and consideration to its linguistic context. In the light of this, the linguistic issues must be systematically considered once more. The major lexical and grammatical questions raised in this single verse include determining the subject of the verb σωθησαται with respect to 'the woman' of v. 14, the sense of the verb σώζω, the denotation of the term τεκνογονία, the function of the preposition διά with the genitive case, the shift in number of the verbs from singular to plural, and the use of the third-class conditional construction. In themselves, each of these issues may not be particularly complex, but their composite understanding is necessary to avoid irresponsible interpretation.

Before offering a re-examination of these primary lexical and grammatical issues, several examples of ideologically based criticism that dismiss the force of the passage warrant mention. An obvious solution to interpretative difficulties is simply to dismiss them, a solution made possible for this passage because it appears in one of the so-called deutero-Pauline epistles, and in an unpopular section at that (1 Tim. 2.8-15). The author or authors of 1 Timothy may in some loose way have been connected to the original, authentic Paul (for example the progressive and enlightened Paul of the Hauptbriefe, best exemplified in such a strongly egalitarian passage as Gal. 3.28-29). But this passage, so this theory goes, links the woman with the fall of humankind and equates her redemption with giving birth to children; this reflects a later, reactionary attempt to control the enthusiasm of the early Christian movement. This solution is both instructive and questionable. On the one hand, it recognizes a clear sense to the meaning of the passage. But the meaning is seen to be offensive. It is offensive morally, for it relies upon traditional oppressive sexual stereotypes, including a distorted interpretation of the fall, or it reflects a primitive mythology that links woman as tempter with evil. On the other hand, this view manages to skirt around the all too clear

1. For examples of how Gal. 3.28-29 has been interpreted, see S.E. Porter, ‘Wittgenstein’s Classes of Utterances and Pauline Ethical Texts’, JETS 32 (1989), pp. 85-97.
implications of this passage, relegating not only the passage itself but
the book in which it is found into a marginalized position, beyond the
consideration given to other 'authentic' material. This attempt is
ultimately less than satisfactory. I am not fully convinced that
1 Timothy can be so easily or clearly distanced from authentic Pauline
material, either because the rise of early Catholicism is not so well
proven, or because it is difficult to conceive of an early Pauline
church that would so easily enshrine undifferentiatedly both the
progressive and the reactionary Paul in its established canon.

A second dismissive solution is one that posits that the author of the
epistle is quoting 1 Cor. 14.34-35 at 1 Tim. 2.11-14. The Corinthian
passage says,

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to
speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the law also says. And if
they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home;
for it is improper for a woman to speak in the church.

The author of 1 Timothy, so this theory says, quotes this passage but
without Paul's further negative assessment of this statement attributed
to his Corinthian antagonists. By doing a little exegetical legerdemain,
an interpreter who holds to this solution has not really explained any­
thing. First, there is the matter of the significant changes in wording
between the two passages. Someone who took over the wording so
clumsily as to miss the important Pauline commentary (and dismissal)
might have had some difficulty in re-writing the passage so
thoroughly to begin with. Secondly, this explanation does not treat v.
15 at all. Verse 15 would have to be a further comment by the author,
but recognizing that fact does not explain its meaning. If anything, it
adds to the difficulty.

A third solution is simply to posit that this passage is a later interpo­
lation within 1 Timothy. Alonso Diaz recognizes difficulties with this view, related first to when the interpolation may have occurred (he

3. See D.W. Odell-Scott, 'In Defense of an Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor.
He is responding to J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Interpolation in 1 Corinthians', CBQ 48

4. J. Alonso Diaz, 'Restricción en algunos textos paulinos de las
reivindicaciones de la mujer en la Iglesia', Estudios Eclesiásticos 50 (1975), pp. 77-93; cf. O. Michol, 'Grundfragen der Pastoralbriefe', in Auf dem Grunde der Apostel
und Propheten (Festschrift T. Wurm; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948), p. 93.
suggests during the Montanist controversy), and secondly to how the verses are to be understood (the verses oppose Montanism and attempt to bring practice into conformity with other Pauline teaching). This view is not exegetically or historically sound, and should not be perpetuated as a satisfactory explanation of any of the passage’s difficulties. According to the most thorough analysis of the textual tradition, there are no major texts that delete this verse, and such a solution has to be viewed with great suspicion as pure conjecture meant to deal dismissively with admittedly difficult verses.

Other scholars reflect their ideological bias by the tendency to over-theologize various elements of interpretation of 1 Tim. 2.15. These proposals, in common with the ideologically based dismissals of it, fail to give due weight to the linguistic considerations. These proposals will be evaluated within the larger context of considering anew the individual lexical and grammatical elements that compose this verse.

The first issue considers the subject of the future passive verb, σωθήσεται, in v. 15. Since no explicit subject of the verb is designated, it makes best exegetical sense in a grammatical context to begin from the assumption that the subject of the verb corresponds in some way with the last mentioned possible antecedent, ‘the woman’ (ἡ γυνὴ) of v. 14. But who exactly is this woman? The solutions here have been at least five. In the light of the mention of Adam and Eve in v. 13 and Adam again in v. 14, it has been proposed that η γυνὴ in v. 14b is still Eve, ‘the woman’. A second solution is that this is the consummate or ideal woman, Mary, the mother of Jesus. Several

8. This is perhaps the most popular view in the light of church history. It appears to be the view of Ignatius in Eph. 19; Irenaeus in Hær. 3.22; 5.19; and Praedic. in Apostolica 33; Justin in Dial. 100; and Tertullian in de Carne 17. Among modern commentators it has been widely supported as well: e.g. W. Lock, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), pp. 32-33; P.B. Payne, ‘Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article, “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance’”, Trinity Journal 2 (1981), pp. 177-78 (giving the above evidence);
interpreters have combined the first two proposals in a grand theological synthesis, concluding that the passage is stating that Eve will find her ultimate redemption or salvation in the birth of Christ. Thus 'the childbirth' (see below) refers to the *protoevangelium* of Gen. 3.15 and the overcoming of the consequences of the fall. A third solution is that ἤ γυνὴ is any woman, or woman in general. A fourth proposal is that 'the woman' is the representative woman of Ephesus, the city to which the letter is purportedly addressed. And a fifth solution is that she is the representative Christian woman. These proposals run a gamut from the general to the specific, and from the exalted to the mundane along the way raising issues warranting closer evaluation before being able to suggest an answer to the question of the subject of the verb.

Reference to Adam and Eve must be put within the larger context of the general comments made by the author about men and women. Beginning with 1 Tim. 2.8, the author says that he desires for men to pray in a particular way and for women to dress in a particular fashion. The woman’s dress is said to reflect in some way her spiritual


inclination, to be maintained through a discipline of quietness. Then
the author turns to Adam and Eve, with respect to the order
(πρῶτος...έλθα) of creation and the order of deception. Although it
must be conceded that ‘the woman’ of v. 14 could be Eve, the infer-
ring of Eve as the subject of the future verb in v. 15 does not carry
great conviction. The attitudinal force of the future form of the verb
in v. 15 is one of expectation, that is, it grammaticalizes or conveys
not a temporal conception (past, present or future) but a marked and
emphatic expectation toward a course of events. Since Eve’s fortunes
have already been determined, they are beyond any further expecta-
tion, so this solution is unlikely.

To extrapolate further that the consummate act of the woman,
Mary—that is, giving birth to Christ—is spoken of here requires an
even larger leap of exegetical faith, one not warranted on the basis of
the context. It first requires that there be a clear and logical progres-
sion in the argument from Eve to Mary, one not indicated in the text.
Furthermore, it requires association of ‘childbirth’ with one particular
childbirth, with stress upon the article to specify a particular instance.
The word translated here ‘childbirth’ is not used elsewhere in the New
Testament, much less to speak of Jesus’ birth (an obscure reference at
best). The protoevangelium of Gen. 3.15 does not use this language,
and neither is Jesus’ birth referred to in this way until much later (in
the second century by Irenaeus). This highly theological view puts too
much emphasis upon the particularizing function of the article, as
well. Although the article may be used to specify a particular item,
and in fact does so on occasion in the pastoral epistles, this is only
one of its several uses; it could be generic as well, as it probably is in
v. 8 with reference to ‘the’ men in every place.

14. See S.E. Porter, Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with
Reference to Tense and Mood (Studies in Biblical Greek, I; New York: Peter Lang,
1989), ch. 9, esp. p. 414, on the force of the future form as grammaticalizing
expectation.
15. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, p. 75.
16. Lock, Pastoral Epistles, p. 33, who cites: τὸ μυστήριον, ἡ πίστις, ἡ
διδασκαλία; see also pp. xvi-xvii for more examples. He is followed apparently by
17. Guthrie, Pastoral Epistles (2nd edn), p. 88. On the use of the article, see now
S.E. Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament (Biblical Languages: Greek, 2;
Most plausible, it seems to me, is to take 1 Tim. 2.15 as a concluding statement of the entire section (1 Tim. 2.8-15). Within the section, Adam and Eve are used for illustrative purposes, with the idea that even though Adam was first created, it was Eve or ‘the woman’ (here an anaphoric use of the article, ‘the woman referred to above, that is, Eve’) who was first deceived. The argument implies that all women as a result are ‘deceived’. But the one who is ‘saved’ (see below) is the woman who remains in faith and love and holiness. Before we can be any more specific about who this woman is, as well as determining the sense of the entire verse, several of the other items in v. 15 must be examined.

Secondly, to say something more specific about the concept of salvation an examination of the use of σώζω must be made. Determination of the meaning of σώζω as it is used in 1 Tim. 2.15 is complicated by several factors, however, including the question of which corpus of writing to examine for suitable parallel usage. The pastoral epistles constitute the immediate context. But should the entire Pauline corpus be included? In other words, should continuity between the agreed-upon authentically Pauline material and the questionably Pauline material be assumed on the basis of verbal parallels? If continuity is assumed, the difficulty in determining the meaning of σώζω is reduced to a large extent, since in virtually all authentically Pauline contexts σώζω denotes a salvific spiritual act, perhaps eschatological in consequence (e.g. Rom. 5.10; 1 Cor. 7.16). In the deutero-Pauline material the same may well hold true also, especially in the pastoral epistles, which provide an essential minimum corpus for examination, and the one considered here. Besides 1 Tim. 2.15, which will be examined below, the examples of the use of σώζω in 1 Timothy include the following: 1.15: one of the ‘faithful sayings’ is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save (σώζω) sinners; 2.4: reference is to our saviour (σωτήρ) God, who wants


all men to be saved (σωθήναι) and to enter into knowledge of truth; 4.16: Timothy is told that by upholding and maintaining the teaching he will save (σώσεις) himself and those who hear him, a context in which perseverance is taken by several commentators to imply final salvation. 20 Examples in 2 Timothy include 1.9: it is God who saves (σώσαντος) us and calls with a holy calling; and 4.18: the Lord will rescue me from every evil work and save (σώσει) me into his heavenly kingdom. Although some interpreters debate about the sense of 2 Tim. 4.18, this seems to be unnecessary fretting since the goal of salvation is said to be the heavenly kingdom. The only example in Titus is 3.5: according to the mercy of our saviour God (σωτήρος) he saved (ἐσωθοῦσα) us through (διὰ) a washing of rebirth and renewing of the Holy Spirit, a context in which final salvation is united with past events.

In the light of the above cumulative evidence and in particular in the context of 1 Tim. 2.15, σωθήσεται is virtually guaranteed a salvific sense (the passive voice is probably a divine or theological passive, that is, God is the agent of salvation). This is confirmed both by the verb being introduced by contrastive δε, 21 which puts v. 15 in juxtaposition to the sinful state of ‘the woman’ in v. 14, and by the use of the following ἐκαί clause (see below). The sense of ‘be kept safe’ (NIV early edition, later changed; NASB; Moffatt; TEV footnote) 22 must be rejected as an accommodation to the apparently harsh theology of v. 15, a proposal which introduces a sense not clearly established for this word in the pastoral epistles. As Houlden says, ‘the salvation referred to must not mean physical safe-keeping in childbirth but that assured on the Last Day’. 23

22. So, e.g., J.B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 222: ‘Eve and women in general will be saved or kept safe from wrongly seizing men’s roles by embracing a woman’s role’.
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Thirdly, with respect to the word τεκνογόνος (often translated 'childbirth'), as mentioned above, it appears only once in the entire New Testament, although the cognate verb form appears in 1 Tim. 5.14. In the light of the apparently rather narrow and even sexually-discriminatory meaning of this word as it is used in this context, it is not surprising that there have been several attempts to try to show that it cannot be confined simply to the idea of childbearing. For example, some interpreters, trying to expand its meaning, have proposed that it might well refer to a woman's normal responsibilities and duties, including but not specifically restricted to the act of bearing children. Moo says that 'τεκνογόνος, which may indicate child-rearing as well as child-bearing, may represent, by synecdoche, the general scope of activities in which Christian women should be involved'. He looks to 1 Tim. 5.14 for support of this proposal. Other interpreters have gone even further and construed the term in a less tangible and more theological sense as the idea of a woman's performing her proper role of maintaining moral and spiritual virtues, and being kept from falling into error, in particular the error of Eve, which was lording authority over her man. This view is made exceptionally difficult by the distance of v. 15 from v. 12, rendering an apparent connection between the two less than self-evident. And the most expansive view is that τεκνογόνος is simply a figure for good works. This sense is much too broad to be established in any meaningful way from the linguistic context of 1 Timothy.

That these solutions cannot be correct is further borne out in two


ways. The first way is by examining the use of the cognate verb form in 1 Tim. 5.14. In that context the author specifies that he desires for younger women to carry out certain duties and responsibilities: γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, and so on. It is to be noticed that the three words form a logical and conceptual continuum, in which marriage is differentiated from the bearing of children, which is differentiated from the managing of one's household. It is difficult to see how ‘childbearing’ forms an inclusive term with household management or any other duties. It is equally illegitimate to include ‘childrearing’ within a larger semantic range for τεκνογονία, since the author apparently uses τεκνοτροφεῖν (1 Tim. 5.10) to denote this function. Secondly, there is no moral, spiritual or theological quality directly (or even tangentially) attributed to any of these actions in this context. They are all listed within the confines of performance of specific and definable duties. This is confirmed by examination of the use of τεκνογονία in extra-biblical Greek literature, although it must be admitted that the word is not widely used in other than Christian writers. Apart from later Christian writers, in all four contexts in which this word is used, where the meaning can be determined with any degree of certainty it denotes the specific act of bearing children.

Fourthly, the next grammatical issue warranting examination revolves around the preposition διά. With its object in the genitive case, the preposition may have a number of different sense relations. One of the least likely suggestions is by Scott. On the basis of what he sees as the totally ‘preposterous’ sense of the passage—that a woman is saved through childbirth—he takes διά as denoting a condition: ‘She will be saved even though she must bear children’. As a result the woman will be saved, so he posits, despite the continuing mark of

27. See Dibelius and Conzelmann, Pastoral Epistles, p. 75.
28. Hippocrates (fifth–fourth centuries BC), Epitulae 17: ἢ τούμπαλιν γάμους ἢ πανηγύριας ἢ τεκνογονίαν ἢ μυστήρια ἢ ἄρχας καὶ τυμάς ἢ ἄλλο τι ἄλλος ἀγαθόν; Galen (second century AD), De instrumento odorantur 49: υπέρ ὧν ἐπὶ πλέον ἐν γε τῷ περὶ τεκνογονίας λόγῳ διεχόμεθα; Joannes Philoponus (sixth century AD), De opifici mundi 301: ἐὰν δὲ κακὸν κάσα μίζης, οὐκόν καὶ ἡ τεκνογονία κακὸν καὶ τὰ ἀποτελέσματα ταύτης, οἱ ἄνθρωποι; Simplicius (sixth century AD), Commentarius in Epistulae enochiadien 96: καὶ τῶν ζῶν οὐνόδος εἰς τεκνογονίαν ὅρα. This list was secured using the TLG database and Ibycus computer system. It confirms Fee’s claim (1 and 2 Timothy, p. 75).
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divine judgment, if she lives the 'true Christian life'. But Scott has perhaps gone too far here. He has constricted himself into arguing for an understanding that not only has failed to garner support from any other commentator I am aware of, but fails to find any significant support in the major grammarians as well. Taking the preposition with the sense of 'in the experience of' is an attempt by Falconer to mitigate what he sees as the uncompromizable Pauline idea of salvation by faith alone, while at the same time maintaining a sense of attendant circumstances. His grammatical conclusions are therefore dictated by this theology, and he does little to defend this position apart from appealing to supposed Jewish thought regarding the necessity of having children.

In contrast to these theological explanations are the recognized grammatical categories of either some temporal or some instrumental sense of the preposition διά with the genitive case. The temporal sense would be one of duration: 'during the time of childbearing'. Although this is a grammatical possibility, the major difficulty with this view is that the most convincing examples that grammarians cite of the temporal use of διά have clear temporal words, for example, day, year, night (Acts 1.3; 5.19; 24.17; Gal. 2.1). Furthermore, if the salvific sense of σωτήρ is accepted, as there is good reason to do (see above), the temporal view of the use of the preposition is virtually eliminated. Hence, the temporal view tends to be found only in translations where the sense of 'preservation' for σωτήρ is maintained (e.g. NIV early edition; Moffatt; TEV footnote). The instrumental sense of the preposition must finally be recognized as the most likely in this grammatical context, whether it be more specifically (a) 'by means of' or (b) 'through the channel of' childbearing. The only other

31. A possible though highly debatable exception is 1 Pet. 3.20: διεσώθησαν διά υἱοθετοῦς.
32. The best discussion of the grammatical issues is found in C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1959), pp. 55-58, esp. 56-58. His thought that 1 Tim. 2.15 might be temporal is answered above.
33. (a) Dibelius and Conzelmann, Pastoral Epistles, p. 48; Spicq, *Epîtres pastorales* (4th edn), p. 383; (b) Lock, Pastoral Epistles, p. 33; Moo, '1 Timothy 2.11-15', p. 72; idem, 'Interpretation', p. 206, following M. Harris, 'Appendix',
place in the pastoral epistles where σωτηρία is collocated with διά (Tit. 3.5) has the instrumental sense (see above). It might on occasion be required to differentiate these two senses more exactly, but it is sufficient here to note only that they share the common feature that 'childbearing' is the instrument (the means or the channel) by which salvation is accomplished.

Fifthly, the next important grammatical issue in 1 Tim. 2.15 revolves around the shift in number from the singular use of σωτηρία to the plural use of μεταφορά. The shift has resulted in several proposed explanations. Unwarranted because of its unjustified speculation is Bartsch's proposal that the author's use of the plural reflects quotation of a source document on church order. Unlikely also is the idea that husbands and wives are the subject of the plural verb, on the basis of the conceptual sphere purportedly being one of marriage. There is little in the context to suggest or support this development in thought. More likely is a third proposal that the plural refers by way of an awkward grammatical shift to the products of the act of childbirth, the children themselves. A fourth proposal is that the plural expands to include all of the individual examples of the women referred to in 2.11-15a by representative or generic classification. If these women remain in faith, love and holiness, then they will be saved.

Although most interpreters adopt the third proposal above, this does not seem satisfactory in the grammatical context, with proposal four being the most likely. Houlden claims, however, that the shift to the plural with reference to women from the singular reference in the verses above is awkward, but it is no more awkward than to suggest with proposal three that the children are the subject. The resolution of this ambiguity of reference is of surprisingly great consequence. If the plural verb refers to the children, the implication is that they in some

34. H.W. Bartsch, Die Anfänge urchristlicher Rechtsbilden (Hamburg, 1965), p. 73, cited in Hanson, Pastoral Epistles, p. 74.
35. White, 'First and Second Epistles', p. 110; Spicq, Epîtres pastorales (1st edn), p. 74; Brox, Pastoralbriefe, p. 137.
36. E.g. Houlden, Pastoral Epistles, pp. 72-73; Jeremias, Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, p. 22.
38. Houlden, Pastoral Epistles, pp. 72-73.
way through their abiding faithful and holy behaviour establish their mother’s salvation. Since the children never constitute a focus of attention—or even merit direct reference—in this section, such a shift is implausible without some explicit marker. The fourth alternative, on the other hand, has several contextual reasons in its favour. Within the context of 1 Tim. 2.8-15, plural reference to ‘women’ is explicitly made in vv. 9 and 10. Whereas in vv. 11-14 reference is made in the singular, using the singular with generic or representative force in relation to the actions of the first woman, in v. 15 the author expands reference from the representative case to the larger sphere of all ‘women’, stating that women’s abiding faithfulness and holy behaviour in some way establish ‘her’ or the representative woman’s salvation.

Sixthly, the last grammatical issue of significance considers the use of the conditional construction in v. 15. The plural verb μεταβασις is the main verb of the protasis of a third class (έπι) conditional structure, in which the apodosis precedes the protasis in clause order. Conditional constructions have proved notoriously difficult for grammarians on account of both conceptual and grammatical considerations. With respect to conceptual factors, questions arise regarding the implications of the structure with respect to reality, the kinds of implications attendant upon the protasis and the range of conclusions to be drawn from the apodosis, and the sorts of temporal relational implications to be seen. With respect to grammatical factors, questions arise regarding the use of indicative and non-indicative moods, and the various ways in which conditional constructions can be formulated. What is perhaps especially surprising about discussion of 1 Tim. 2.15 is that the conditional construction is rarely the focus of serious attention. Recent research indicates that the


41. Exceptions are Falconer, ‘1 Timothy 2:14, 15’, pp. 377-78, although he attributes it to an author who wishes to ‘give a Christian infusion to a sentiment which was current in Judaism’ (p. 378); Brox, Pastoralbriefe, p. 137; and Spicq, Epîtres pastorales (4th edn), p. 384, who states, ‘il accentue l’objectivité de la condition supposée’.
entire conditional construction must be considered, in which a logical relationship of consequence (not necessarily a temporal or sequential relationship) is established between the protasis and the apodosis. Furthermore, the construction functions in terms of positing a condition with various degrees of strength on the basis of the attitudinal force of the mood form used in the protasis, and drawing logical implications on the basis of the attitudinal force of the mood form used in the apodosis.

The instance in 1 Tim. 2.15 of a so-called third class conditional, with the subjunctive in the protasis, makes no implication whether in fact 'they remain', only that 'they might remain'. Regarding the action of the apodosis in relation to the protasis, interpreters often take one of two approaches. Some are tempted on the strength of the future verb form to see the apodosis as action future to the protasis. Others are tempted on the strength of the aorist subjunctive to see the protasis as action antecedent to the apodosis. The temporal analysis that results from these two formulations is roughly the same but they leave unanswered the larger question of the logical relation between the protasis and the apodosis, considered much more important in the light of recent research into conditional structures. A more plausible analysis here for the relation of the protasis and apodosis is either cause and effect or ground and inference. By the first, the understanding is that women abiding in faith and love and holiness constitute the necessary cause, with the effect that the woman in question will be saved by childbearing. By the second, the understanding is that the women abiding in faith and love and holiness form the ground, from which the legitimate inference can be drawn that the woman in question will be saved by childbearing. Neither category is fully satisfactory, however, especially in the light of the instrumental use of διά in the apodosis. This grammatical analysis indicates, however, that there is an intricate relationship between the protasis and the apodosis, a relationship that has been neglected. As Guthrie says, 'Indeed, it is not too much to claim that the former part of the verse must be inter-

43. See Porter, Verbal Aspect, pp. 317-19, for analysis of these attempts to establish temporal relations between the protasis and the apodosis.
44. Porter, Verbal Aspect, pp. 319-20.
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interpreted in the light of the latter half. Nevertheless, most scholars have placed the majority of their emphasis upon the apodosis, with the result that they heighten the supposed theological difficulties by making it look as if the author is simply stating that salvation comes by childbearing. But the presupposed condition of remaining in faith and love and holiness must not be overlooked. The conditional structure, especially the protasis, does draw the comments of v. 15 toward conformity with established authentic Pauline teaching regarding salvation. But it still does not eliminate the ineluctable force of the apodosis regarding salvation by means of childbearing.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the author of 1 Timothy establishes two parts to his argument in 2.15. The two parts may well be in tension, except that both focus on the woman’s actions. The fundamental assumption for the women of this author’s audience is that they will lead lives of faith in Christ, love toward fellow Christians and holiness in their married life, with self-control. Although Scott does not believe that ‘self-control’ is a distinctly Christian virtue, as he concedes the others are, Scholer convincingly shows how the concept is applied here to the early Christian concern for reputation.49 This makes it likely that the author is addressing the Christian women of his audience, and by implication all Christian women. He goes further, however, and equates a woman’s earthly function of bearing children with her eschatological or salvific reward.

The plausibility of this analysis is reinforced by brief reference to the context of the entire book of 1 Timothy. The author of 1 Timothy seems to be fighting against a group distinguished by several characteristics. They were promoting doctrine (1 Tim. 1.3) that resulted in the telling of all sorts of silly myths and the emphasizing of genealogies (1.4), holding to stories about deceitful spirits and demons (4.1), and forbidding marriage and other practices (4.3). Consequently, they elicited his instructions concerning care of the home, the raising

45. Guthrie, Pastoral Epistles (1st edn), pp. 78-79.
46. See Kelly, Pastoral Epistles, p. 69, who appreciates the two prongs to the statement.
47. These glosses are based upon Kelly, Pastoral Epistles, p. 70.
of children, and the marriage of widows (5.9-10, 13-16). Instead of being engaged in right behaviour, the women were habitually spending time gossiping in each other’s houses (5.13), giving opportunity for those outside the church to slander those in it (5.14; cf. 6.1). It is easy to conclude that the encouraging of ascetic practices, combined with shunning of the women’s domestic roles, resulted in sexual abstinence or similar practices which were considered by the author to have missed the mark (cf. 1.3-7; 6.20-21).50 In the light of this ascetic tendency, the author endorses the resumption of normal practices between men and women, including sexual relations that result in giving birth to children. The inevitable result of such an exegetical conclusion is to make most modern readers highly uncomfortable. But regardless of what we may believe today about the roles and relations of men and women, and despite our best efforts to dismiss or obscure what the text says linguistically through ideologically or theologically dictated exegesis, the author of 1 Timothy apparently believed that for the woman who abides in faith, love and holiness, her salvation will come by the bearing of children.

ABSTRACT

After discussing several ideologically based interpretations of 1 Tim. 2.15, this article examines six primary lexical and grammatical phenomena in the text: the subject of the verb συνήχεσαν with respect to ‘the woman’ of v. 14, the sense of the verb ἐχθριστία, the denotation of the term τεκνοφυλακία, the function of the preposition ὑπὲρ with the genitive case, the shift in number of the verbs from singular to plural, and the use of the third-class conditional construction. The article concludes that the author of 1 Timothy apparently believed that for the woman who abides in faith, love and holiness, her salvation will come by the bearing of children.