

# Eve Christology: Embodiment, Gender, and Salvation<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Scholarly interaction with the position of Eve in relation to Christology has tended towards relegating her to an absent, subordinate, or implicit position, from the standpoint of the typological significance of Adam. The result is the assumption of an exclusively male representation of salvation, which inadvertently leads to questioning the particularity of the female body in relation to salvation. Does the Adam-Christ paradigm entail the inability for a male Christ to save women, since humanity in all its diversity is not represented in Christ? Does the idea that a woman is merely a deformed man who must “become male” to enter into salvation best capture the figures of Adam and Christ presented by the Pauline writings? In order to counteract these ideas, this essay will explore how Eve figures in Christological significance. The essay argues that Eve in the Pauline writings is a type of Christ, whose existence may serve to undermine the prevailing notion of male domination in the representation of embodied humanity.

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Scholarly discussions of Pauline Christology have tended to relegate Eve to an absent, subordinate, or implicit position in contrast to the typological significance of Adam.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the standard view of Paul’s typology tethers together two men, Adam to Christ.<sup>3</sup> The result is the assumption of the presence of *only* a particularly

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2 See the discussion in Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Dunning, *Christ Without Adam: Subjectivity and Sexual Difference in the Philosopher’s Paul* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

3 See Dunning’s summary in “Christ Without Adam: Subjectivity and Sexual Difference in the Philosopher’s Paul,” Harvard Divinity School video lecture, October 16, 2014 (<https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2014/10/16/video-christ-without-adam>); around the ten-minute mark.

male representation of salvation, with an inadvertent question mark when it comes to where a female body might fit into this scheme.<sup>4</sup> That is, the discussion is typically approached from the standpoint of the assumed presence of Adam and the “problem” of Eve’s placement as a representation of humanity (both male and female).<sup>5</sup> It is my contention that the difficulty of whether a male Christ can represent humanity is an artificial one, conceived with a lens that from the start erases “Eve” (that is, women), and then either mourns or celebrates her absence.<sup>6</sup>

It is time to begin approaching Christology and gender from a fresh perspective, without ignoring the historical exclusion of women on the basis of biblical, primarily Pauline, texts.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, I will launch the beginning of a discussion of how Eve figures Christologically, with the hope that there may be a transfiguration of our notions of the embodiment of salvation. My aim is that we will be able to see faith and calling in multifaceted, inclusive ways and be emboldened to seek out the representation and leadership of women. The question of where “Eve” figures in the theological world not only affects the inner world of faith and worship but has the power to transform how one relates to the outer world of social relations.<sup>8</sup>

This essay will argue that far from being absent—or merely present as an absence—Eve is a type of Christ whose existence serves to undermine the prevailing notion of male domination in the Christological representation of embodied humanity.

I will begin by offering a change in lenses from an emphasis on both historical reconstruction and patriarchy as the frame for understanding Eve’s place in salvation, to the utilization of varied gendered language in the Pauline text to exemplify

4 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Cross Roads, 1983).

5 According to Mary Daly: “Exclusively masculine symbolism for God, for the notion of divine ‘incarnation’ in human nature, and for the human relationship to God reinforce sexual hierarchy.” Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 4.

6 From henceforth I will be using Eve as shorthand for women in general in the spirit of her typological significance. Gradually, I will expand this type to encompass humanity in general.

7 Although biblical scholars often distinguish between undisputed and disputed Pauline letters (with the Pastoral epistles in the latter category), this is not relevant to my analysis in this essay. While I tend to think that Pauline authorship is plausible for 1 Timothy, this is not required for my thesis, since there is a significant degree of continuity throughout the “Pauline” corpus on the status and role of women. So the reader may take my use of “Paul” and “Pauline” in what follows as they will.

8 To the extent which women are barred from representation, leadership and agency; there often follows a stunting of a community or society. The participation of both men and women is necessary for mutual human thriving.” Gender inequality hurts economic growth,” and as a result, education, micro financing, easing repression, and enabling access to jobs are some of the strategies employed to develop formal economies. Should theology be an exception when most of humanity is deeply religious? Perhaps “The double X solution” or “the girl effect” is the missing component across the board. See Nicholas D. Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, (New York: Knopf, 2009), xiv–xx.

embodied faith, while exploring how this undermines various perceived gender hierarchies. I will also be considering how early Christian writers used gender language to describe the struggle of faith, embodied existence, and future hope. The point here is to provide a plausibility lens from which to be able to conceive of an Eve Christology, thus opening the doors to re-imagine the place of Eve in our theological world, while remaining rooted in Scripture and tradition.

Following this change of lenses, I will attempt to launch a uniquely Eve Christology. Far from being absent or implicit, I will argue that 1 Tim 2:13–3:1a (along with 2 Cor 11:3) offers Eve as a type to Christ and representation of humanity.<sup>9</sup> Not only will I explore *how* the text understands Eve and Christ as representatives of humanity, but I will begin to wrestle with whether Christ as male reinforces gendered power structures or serves to diffuse them. This latter concern is what incentivized me to write this essay in the first place. I had initially become convinced of my position from my exegetical studies, following the internal logical of 1 Timothy; but I noticed that many positions, some overtly feminist, assumed a thoroughly sexist portrayal of Paul and would then read this portrayal back into various passages.

But does the idea that a woman is merely a deformed man, who must become male to enter into salvation, best capture the existence of the figures of Adam and Christ presented by these Pauline writings? What happens to this paradigm if it is forced to confront the “other” present in the same Scripture?

Finally, why take a multifaceted theological approach rather than merely an exegetical one that focuses on textual details in 1 Tim 2:15–3:1a? The answer is that this is the beginning of a much larger project and functions to launch a larger discussion. I do not wish to pretend that I have single-handedly resolved all exegetical or theological contentions, but perhaps my reflections here can move the discussion slightly or encourage further dialogue. Also, a multidisciplinary approach can contribute in ways that a narrow focus cannot, and *visa versa*. Theology need not be opposed to exegesis as though one dilutes or replaces the other. Rather, the Bible itself is already theological and we as human beings interpret our world and the text theologically; therefore, why not bring our theology intentionally to the text? By the same token, we must allow our theological notions to be challenged exegetically—indeed, by the text’s own internal logic—since this will help guide and shape our conclusions and constructions.

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9 Although the final section of this essay will focus on 1 Tim 2:13–3:1a, I will also touch on Paul’s reference to Eve in 2 Cor 11:3. The perceptive reader will note that I have included 1 Tim 3:1a (“It is a trustworthy statement”) as the end of the unit beginning with 2:13, although it is typically taken with what follows. The reason for seeing 3:1a as referring to what came before will be addressed at the appropriate time.

## Switching Lenses

How one approaches and/or experiences the larger question of gender in the Christian world will shape what is noticed or goes unnoticed in the Pauline corpus. It is not my desire to contend there is never the assumption of male priority in the background of the Pauline texts or to argue that everything fits neatly or perfectly into a modern feminist scheme. However, I would like to offer the following interpretive possibility: There exists a unity-in-diversity in Christ that relativizes power structures, which results in men, in a metaphorical sense, being allowed to become women in the context of these structures and in women becoming men, also metaphorically, in relation to gendered power structures.

This lens, which will be used as a starting point for approaching the position of Eve in relation to Christ, is rooted in two main considerations. The first is a sampling of Paul's use of feminine and masculine language in regard to himself and the spiritual growth of believers toward their *telos* in Christ. The second is how some early Christians used gendered language to describe themselves in relation to Christ.

## Paul: Power, Embodiment, and Destiny

Paul readily applies feminine imagery to himself and to male believers, as well as masculine imagery to all believers, including women, in order to encourage an overall transformation in how they live out Christ in the world. In a world where, as Cynthia Westfall puts it, "virtue was manly, and males were stringently cautioned against displaying any kind of effeminate behavior, dress, role-playing or emotion,"<sup>10</sup> Paul captures the imagination in such a way as to take something societally devalued and threatening to masculinity, and gives it a pride of place in Christ.

This use of metaphor is not merely decorative, but profoundly formative. The power of a metaphor is in its ability to subvert our sensibilities by conveying something unexpected or unknown. The way Paul applies feminine imagery to himself and to men is subversive. By inviting listeners to accept feminine imagery for Paul himself, the door is open for this imagery to be applied to male readers of Paul, that they might understand what he is conveying.<sup>11</sup>

Paul uses three mother metaphors to describe himself and his role as an apostle who gives birth and nurses children. I will focus on two of these, which are found in 1 Cor 3:1–2 (similarly 1 Thess 2:7) and Gal 4:19.<sup>12</sup> The first mother metaphor

10 Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 51.

11 See Wayne C. Booth, "Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation," in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 6, 63.

12 These mother metaphors are discussed in detail by Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

is set in the context of infighting for superiority of place and boasting in connection to various religious leaders, whether Apollos, Paul, or Cephas. Paul accomplishes what Beverly Roberts Gaventa identifies as “a metaphor squared,” involving a double switch in order to counter the effort in the Corinthian congregation to gain the highest place over others.<sup>13</sup> He states: “Brothers, I could not talk to you as spiritual people, but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ. *I fed you milk*, not solid food, because you were unable to take it. Indeed, you are still not able, even now, for you are still of the flesh” (1 Cor 3:1–3a; NAB).<sup>14</sup>

Key to this scenario is not only the identification of the Corinthians as infants “in Christ” who need milk, rather than as adults, but also Paul’s self-identification with a mother role, feeding them this milk. As Gaventa puts it: “First he metaphorizes (with apologies for the barbarism) the gospel as milk, then he ‘squares’ that image by metaphorizing himself as the mother whose body supplies the milk.”<sup>15</sup> Initially, it is tempting to take the milk metaphor as merely a critique of the Corinthians, a sign of their immaturity. But in light of all is said to belong to the Corinthians in terms of their status in Christ, Paul is urging them to regard themselves as positively in need of the life-sustaining milk of the gospel.

The society of Paul’s day generally held mothers to be of lesser status than fathers and viewed childhood as a precursor to adulthood, in which one moves away from the mother. In contrast, Paul has simultaneously lowered both himself and the Corinthians and, by the same token, elevated motherhood into apostleship, seeing it as corresponding to a deeper (or higher) reality in Christ. “When Paul presents himself as a mother,” explains Gaventa, “he voluntarily hands over the authority of a patriarch in favor of a role that will bring him shame, the shame of a female-identified male.” Yet, the imagery is effective because it “plays on hierarchical expectations: Paul presents himself as the authority who does not conform to standard norms of authority.”<sup>16</sup> Paul has transfigured himself, allowing the “foolishness of the cross” from chapter 1 to permeate his being.

In Gal 4:19 Paul portrays himself as a woman in labor who remains so until Christ is birthed in the Galatian churches. This labor is a metaphor for Paul’s apostolic anguish due to the Galatian tendency to return to slavery at the prompting of the missionaries Paul opposes. “My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you! I would like to be with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed because of you.” (Gal 4:19–20) Here Paul freely feminizes himself in an effort to plead for the Galatian addressees to embrace the

13 Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 83.

14 Emphasis added. Translations from the Bible in this essay will be from the New American Standard Bible (NASB), unless otherwise indicated. Note that this translation should be distinguished from the New American Bible (NAB), which will sometimes be used.

15 Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 83.

16 Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 219.

fullness of his gospel of freedom. In order to accept Paul's message about himself, they must see him as a sort of mother in anguish, but nonetheless the one bringing them the message of freedom and sonship because of the Son.

Paul, the metaphorical mother, has already declared in Gal 3:26–29 that through faith all are *sons* (υἱοὶ) and *heirs* of God in Christ. This serves as the basis for another flip in expectations on several counts, including gender, since the first-born son represents, inherits, and leads his family. Gal 3:26–29 comes in the context of Paul's controversy with Peter, who had refused to eat with the gentiles in the presence of the Jesus-following Jews sent from Jerusalem. Paul deems this hypocritical with respect to the "truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:13–14) and thus worthy of opposing him "to his face" (2:11). The well-known affirmation of Gal 3:28 ("there is no male and female"; author's translation) is situated within this larger context; this expresses Paul's understanding of the direct bearing that the reality of Christ has on how those who are "in Christ" ought to see themselves and others.

"There is no male and female" is a slight departure from how the other categories (Jew/Greek, slave/free) in Gal 3:28 are configured. Where the other pairs are contrasted with οὐδὲ, male and female are joined by καὶ. The basic meaning appears to be the same, except that the construction for male and female alludes to Gen 1:27 ("male and female he created them"). Paul is linking, and contrasting, the new creation theme of Galatians with the original creation of male and female in Genesis.

As with the other pairs in the context of the controversy with Peter, Paul is not denying that any differences exist, or trying to erase differences entirely (he still identifies as a Jew, for instance). What he is consistently countering is the *status* divisions that those in the church are retaining on the basis of these distinctions, so that a gentile is not fully and functionally an heir in Christ because he or she does not observe certain Jewish practices; in the case of men, this would include the former identity marker of circumcision. In Paul's view, women in this world of Christ have the *status* of first-born sons, something not merely to be realized in the future; rather, this should change the very fabric of the household economy of Christ in the church.

The context of this passage in Galatians is thus highly practical, dealing with the level of participation of gentiles in the life of the church, rooted firmly in the gospel message. In order to avoid hypocrisy, one's salvific inheritance must be recognized by a fundamental change in praxis. Gender difference in this context has no bearing on one's status and participation level in the life of the church. In Christ, represented through the world of metaphor, Paul can be a mother and women can be first-born sons. The result is not an erasure of difference, but an embracing of difference with a functional abolition of the status difference

accompanying it. “Sonship” is no longer gender or hierarchally based but shared in relation to Christ.

### Gendered Metaphor Used by Early Christians

Of interest to this discussion are instances where masculine imagery is ascribed to early Christian women, who have “put on” Christ. At other times their female bodies are identified with the body of Christ, who is worshiped. What I hope to show in the examples below is how adopting masculine imagery functions to metaphorically switch the dynamics of power for women whose bodies were exploited and destroyed in ways intended to highlight their gender.<sup>17</sup> That is, they can be female, yet embody the character and status thought to be only reserved for men; they are thus able to represent both men and women in faith.

Strikingly, these accounts do not attempt to actually remake these women into men, as though they had to put off the feminine to make way for the masculine Christ. Rather, in metaphorical space women as women were able to take on attributes that were thought to be available only to men, such as bravery and steadfastness.<sup>18</sup> Thus, while remaining women, they defied gendered expectations in Christ.

The first example comes from Perpetua, a twenty-year-old breast-feeding woman who found herself threatened with death for her faith. The narrator of her story opens with an appeal to a “single manifestation of the one Holy Spirit,” who gives gifts to all people as sons and daughters. Brothers are told to associate themselves with the martyrs, in this instance with Perpetua.<sup>19</sup> Perpetua herself describes her fear for her child’s life since she is unable to nurse him, along with her father’s rejection of her as his daughter. However, she believes “power comes not from ourselves but from God.”<sup>20</sup> Before she dies she dreams of her impending martyrdom: “I was stripped of my clothing, and suddenly I was a man. My assistants began to rub me with oil as was the custom before a contest.”<sup>21</sup>

17 This exploitation and destruction included being set on poles naked, to be ripped apart by beasts, or put naked in nets to be gored by a mad cow (to match their gender). Curiously, those watching Perpetua and her companion be killed were horrified not by women being put naked in nets to be killed, but by their appearance: one is a young girl and the other’s breasts are still dripping with milk. The “solution” was to cover their bodies.

18 This change should not be too surprising since gender was closely associated with status or position. In both Paul and in ancient thinking one does not usually get a discussion of gender per se, but more concretely of wives, virgins, or other categories. In other words, one is dealing with where one is situated in an economy, whether societal or in a household; by contrast, in more recent times it has been easier to separate gender from positions closely tied to it. See Tommy Givens, “The Politics of Marriage in the Household Code: 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in Context” (unpublished essay).

19 Amy Oden, ed., *In Her Words: Women’s Writings in the History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 27.

20 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 29.

21 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 31.



Her fight is thought not be against the beasts or opponents, but, cosmically, she battles the devil. In this context she is described as retaining her modesty, while immodesty is forced upon her in the process of her destruction. In the final scene, Perpetua guides the gladiator's trembling hand to her throat, interpreted by the narrator in this way: "so great a woman . . . could not have been slain had she not herself willed it." We get the strong sense that the power of God in the Spirit transfigures earthly power dynamics so that where one may see a young woman and mother, embedded within her is *also* powerful agency—an athlete and warrior. Positionally, she is "a man" who controls her destiny and battles evil because she is the "true spouse of Christ."<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, a martyr named Blandina is called "a noble athlete," who has "renewed strength with her confession of faith."<sup>23</sup> She was hung on a post "in the form of a cross" waiting for wild beasts to rip her apart. But she became a source of hope, strength, and courage for others who saw "in the person of their sister [in her female body] him who was crucified for them."<sup>24</sup> Although her body is described as tiny and weak, she is seen as an "inspiration to her brothers, for she had put on Christ, that mighty and invincible athlete" who had overcome the adversary and won the crown of immortality.<sup>25</sup> Accompanying these masculine metaphors are powerful feminine ones as well. She is a "noble mother encouraging her children . . . duplicating in her own body all her children's sufferings," transcending outward expectations of her gender to onlookers.<sup>26</sup>

At the very least, these narratives reveal that early Christians thought a woman could represent them and could embody Christ. There does not appear to be anxiety in these accounts of mixing male and female metaphors nor reservations about a female body hung on a pole representing the male Jesus hanging on a cross on behalf of humanity.

The early church was also not dissuaded from freely mixing graphic gender metaphors for God; hence God the Father can be called Mother and Jesus can have breasts and give birth, as seen in the following quotations from Clement of Alexandria and Synesius of Cyrene. According to Clement: "By his loving the Father became of woman's nature, a great proof of which is he whom he begat from himself; and the fruit that is born of love is love." Clement also affirms: "O Christ Jesus, / heavenly milk of the sweet breasts / of the graces of the Bride / pressed out of your wisdom." Synesius of Cyrene can say of the Holy Spirit: "She is mother / she is sister / she is daughter / who has delivered / the secret root." Synesius again: "You are Father, you are Mother, / you are male, you are female,

22 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 34.

23 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 39.

24 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 40.

25 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 40.

26 Oden, ed., *In Her Words*, 41.



/ you are voice, you are silence, / nature giving birth to nature, / you are master, age of the ages.”<sup>27</sup>

There is more than enough space within Christ and the church for the persons of the Trinity to be conceived in feminine metaphors and for males and females to represent one another—and notably Christ.

### **Eve as a Type of Christ, with Christological Implications**

Now that space has been created for a shared understanding of the possibility of a female representation of Christ, it is time to build a case that Eve is a type of Christ, who serves as a representative of humanity, generally, and of the church, specifically, in 1 Tim 2–3:1a. I will try and show that, like Adam, she serves as a negative representation of humanity, yet with a hopeful twist; and I will identify some relevant, unique Christological features in our passage.

### **The Christological Context of 1 Timothy 2:13–15**

The Christological concern of 1 Timothy can be summarized as follows: The salvation and hope of all people (even false teachers) depends on Jesus Christ, characterized as the “Human One” who saves everyone.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, false teaching undermines the τέλος of Paul’s instruction, which is “love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1:5) and stands in opposition to the “household of God, which is by faith” (1:4).<sup>29</sup> Earlier we noticed, in other limited considerations of Paul, that household language accompanies Paul’s rhetoric and at times serves to reorient the reader’s perspective away from normal household expectations and roles. Hence, Paul as an apostle can be a mother, and women (as well as men) have the household status of first-born sons.<sup>30</sup>

The Christological themes and even the wording of 1 Timothy bear uncanny resemblance to the themes and wording of Romans 5 regarding Adam and Christ. Some noteworthy themes include access and hope in Christ (Rom 5:1–2, 4); the love of Christ in the heart (Rom 5:5); and the ungodly (false teachers in 1 Timothy) having the hope of salvation in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:6–11, 14–21). The similar wording used to describe the Adam-Christ typological connection in Rom 5 and 1 Tim 2 has to do with the use of ἀνθρώπος, an inclusive term for “humanity” to describe Christ, rather than a gendered term to denote his maleness (Rom

27 Quotations taken from Martien Parmentier, “Greek Patristic Foundations for a Theological Anthropology of Women in their Distinctiveness as Human Beings,” *Anglican Theological Review* 84.3 (2002): 555–83, here 581–83.

28 For references to false teaching, see 1 Tim 1:18–20; and 4:1–8; although not exactly false teaching, various ways in which people can go off track are addressed in 5:11–15; and 6:9–10.

29 This is my translation. Typically translated as the “administration of God,” the Greek is οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ.

30 Men in God’s household can be expected to do cleaning and washing, if they model their actions on that of Christ (Eph 5:25–28).

5:12–19). Adam (at times used to convey humanity, without masculinity specifically in mind) is similarly described as ἄνθρωπος. Just as all humanity dies in Adam, all humanity lives in Christ. Similarly, in 1 Tim 2 we are told that God desires for all people [ἁνθρώπων] to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (2:4) because there is “one mediator between God and humanity [ἁνθρώπων], the Human One [ἄνθρωπος], Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5–6a; author’s translation). For this reason, Paul was appointed a teacher and apostle.

More fundamental than the explicit appeal to an example from Gen 2–3, the universal applicability of Paul’s message has been based in the universal scope of God’s salvific work in Christ, the representative of all humans. However, what follows in 1 Timothy are the well known behavioral corrections that mention men and women specifically—though women perhaps more infamously.

What grammatically links the gender-specific sections in 1 Tim 2:11–3:1a to the previous universal Christological discussion? The link is Paul’s “Therefore” (οὖν) in 2:8. Paul desires men (ἄνδρας) to lift their hands without wrath and “like-wise” (ὡσαύτως) the women (γυναῖκας) to be characterized by modesty, self-control, and good works (1 Tim 2:9–10). Gender-specific claims such as these are not to be confused with gender-exclusive ones, as though women were free to raise their hands with wrath or men were free to act brazenly in the Christian community. Rather, a life of quietness and tranquility is tied to Paul’s τέλος because it is empowered by God the Savior and Christ Jesus the mediator of humanity; this is the reason that Paul is an apostle (who tells the truth; 2:7) and it is on this basis that he gives commands to both men and women. Modesty, self-control, and good works without wrath or dissension all characterize the gospel, as opposed to the false teachers who did not live a quiet life in “all godliness and dignity” (2:2).

Without getting too sidetracked in the gender debate over women’s leadership in the church, it is important to note that quietly receiving instruction with all submissiveness is the essence of what Paul wants of *both* men and women, rather than bragging about what they do not know (two men are even mentioned by name as negative examples in 1 Tim 1:20). The word ἡσυχία used twice in 2:11–12 to characterize the “quietness” of the women is the same word used for the demeanor of the whole church in 2:2. Submissiveness is in line with the entire spirit of the letter.

Additionally, Paul’s statement in 2:12, “I am not permitting [present active indicative] a woman to teach nor usurp authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (author’s translation), is perfectly in line with the prevalence of false teaching accompanying ignorant and domineering behavior over content that is not truly understood. The present active indicative naturally points to the behavior Paul is presently banning. The imperative “woman, learn” (author’s translation) perhaps

signals the urgency of what he has wanted all along, namely that those who are entrenched in false teaching (or who are teaching what they do not understand) need instead to be emboldened to first learn and follow the gospel of Christ.

One would think that with the strong ties to living peaceful and quiet lives for the church, to God desiring all human beings to be saved, and to Christ being the Human One who is the mediator for humanity by offering himself as a ransom for all, interpreters would understand the gender-specific passages in light of the dominant Christology of 1 Timothy. Instead, more attention has been paid to 2:11–12 in isolation, generating an almost infinite number of interpretations—and these verses are “hailed as the very ‘guide for understanding the role of women.’”<sup>31</sup>

### Eve as a Type of Christ

In what follows I will more closely make my case for Eve as a type (or antitype) that prefigures Christ in 1 Tim 2:13–3:1a.<sup>32</sup> Eve may be identified as a type of Christ on the basis of three interlocking themes. First, she is a type of Christ because of her resemblance as a representative, and even by way of contrast. Second, she is a type of Christ because of her linkage to Christ on a thematic and textual level. And third, she is a type of Christ because she looks ahead toward the work of Christ, who is the hope of humanity in the entire epistle. Each individual line of evidence should be taken together as a complex whole and not isolated as if it were the entirety of my case.

I would also note that my case for Eve being identified as a type intersects with some of the discussion concerning what is known as a messianic interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15. It would, however, go beyond the purpose of this article to focus entirely on making an exegetical case for a messianic reading.<sup>33</sup>

In Rom 5 both Adam and Christ serve contrasting representative functions, whereby Adam leads to sin and death but Christ leads to grace and life. Similarly, in 1 Timothy, Eve typologically represents deception and transgression, while Christ represents the content of true instruction and the grace of salvation. Christ and Eve are not mentioned as separate and unrelated figures but are inextricably linked. Christ has already been established as the mediator of humanity in terms of salvation. Eve is used to represent not only the deceived women mentioned in the epistle, but, by implication, all who are deceived.

This universal figuration of Eve is explicit in 2 Cor 11:3: “But I am afraid that,

31 Quoted by Jamin Hübner, “Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59.1 (2016): 99–117, here 111.

32 I will use the terminology of Eve as a “type” of Christ, although technically she is an “antitype” in the sense of a prototype, a type in advance, of which the “type” is a fulfillment.

33 Much of my understanding is in line with select points that Stanley Porter makes in “What Does it Mean to be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 87–102, but with some notable departures, which I will touch on.

as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of *devotion* to Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Note that no special representative function of Eve for *only* women is spelled out either here or in 1 Timothy. Although it is grammatically possible to link Eve to the women in 1 Timothy, she may be more convincingly linked also to men, in keeping with the “likewise” (1 Tim 2:9). Thematically what is repeated to a specific gender—women—is contextually a gender-inclusive concern.

This is not to deny that women are being singled out in 1 Tim 2, but a gender-specific reference does not amount to a gender-exclusive one. Such an exegetical move is often taken in regard to women, but not men. However, just as church members (both male and female) were at risk of accepting a different Jesus than was preached in 2 Corinthians and were thus compared to Eve, in 1 Timothy we also have the similar theme of truth versus lies, as well as issues with trying to give oneself pride of place versus humility. Canonically, then, we can take Eve as representative of those of both genders who have fallen into deception; and in 1 Tim 2, this is the likely best exegetical option. Perhaps both men and women may represent each other, and particular missteps should not invite ontological assumptions that are absent from the text.

Eve’s representative function is evident in some additional ways in 1 Tim 2. The first is the introduction of her narrative with an explanatory γὰρ (2:13), intended to give the basis for the commands in 2:11–12.<sup>35</sup> This basis takes the form of a narrative summarized in 2:13–14, which highlights the deception and resulting transgressions that have been dominant among humanity, while 2:15 points to the future hope that will bolster Paul’s desire for changed behavior.

Further, within 1 Tim 2:15 there is the switch from the singular (“she will be saved”) to the plural (“if they continue”), which links Eve, the nearest singular feminine referent, to the referent of the plural. Although translators often try to smooth this out for grammatical consistency, it risks muting some of the author’s intended connections between 2:15 and what came before.<sup>36</sup>

The plural subject in the verb μένουσιν has several grammatical options, discussed by Stanley Porter. I agree with him that it is best to take it as representative of the women in 1 Tim 2, since Eve is the nearest single reference and the women are the nearest plural. However, we must also account for the epistle’s universal focus, its address specifically to men and then women linked with “likewise,” and the fact that the entire epistle attempts to bolster Paul’s case for good behavior.

34 The NASB here uses italics to designate words that are implied, but not actually present.

35 The explanatory γὰρ is far from rare; it is well documented by Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Exploration of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 399–402.

36 NASB, NIV, NLT, CEV are among the translations that render the singular as plural (“women”), so the numbers match.

The epistle even singles out two men in 1:20 as examples of those who were deceived (as Eve was), not to mention Paul himself before he was in Christ.

Eve is also linked to Christ thematically through the echo of Mark 10 in connection to Christ's role as the mediator of humanity. Jesus is the one who "gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony at the proper time" (1 Tim 2:6;). With the term "ransom" we are swept back into the narrative context of Mark 10:45, where James and John request positions of power alongside Jesus, whose destiny is to be killed before resurrection. They are reminded, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them" (Mark 10:42;). Their request was counter to Jesus's chosen life as a slave and what he desired for those who embraced the truth of his message. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45;).

This servant model of Christ is one of the key concerns of 1 Timothy. In contrast to the false teachers who sought to elevate themselves above others, Paul wants his readers to offer themselves to others in prayer and service; they are not to assume authority or pride of place, but rather to follow the example of Christ. The issue of pride of place may also be the sentiment behind the narrative summary in 1 Tim 2:13, which mentions Adam being formed first, then Eve, which is followed by the reminder of Eve's deception, and implicitly that of the readers too (male and female).<sup>37</sup>

The last linkage of Eve with Christ can be found in what is arguably a packed Christological passage, which will be important to translate as literally as possible: "But she will be saved (*σωθήσεται*) by the Childbirth (*τῆς τεκνογονίας*), if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. The saying is trustworthy." (1 Tim 2:15–3a; author's translation).<sup>38</sup> Our passage retains the singular, which points back to Eve, combined with a future "she will be saved" (divine passive?), which points ahead from Eve towards salvation. Σωτηρία is most often used to refer to the salvation that comes from Jesus Christ for sinners; but 1 Timothy is clear that one is not saved in a way that is detached from how one lives their life. To have the salvation that is from God in Christ is to live a holy life

37 In case there is a temptation to interpret this ontologically as women being more susceptible to deception as women, one should consider that even though it is mentioned here that Adam was not deceived, Paul has no issue regarding himself in Romans 7 as subject to deception, using the same term: "For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it put me to death" (7:11). This is another indicator that even when Paul is being gender-specific he is not being gender-exclusive when it comes to those represented in these types; and he is not gender-exclusive when it comes to which figure (Adam or Eve) led to the death that requires life in Christ and an antidote.

38 I leave it to the reader to decide if the reading of this passage is too "obscure" (as Donald Guthrie puts it) within its Christological context. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary 14 (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 78.

that is not characterized by the bad behaviors of the deceived false teachers, including their arrogance and the extensive vice lists at the beginning of the epistle (1:4a, 6–7, 9a–10, 13a). Given the standard Pauline usage of Σωτηρία and its immediate Christological context, Eve’s “salvation” should be interpreted in this light, without positing or importing some other meaning.

What many may find unpalatable is the reference to “the Childbirth,” which they then take to refer to the actual childbearing process of women generally. Besides reconstructions of Paul’s possible interactions with the Artemis cult, it is this reading of childbirth as an ongoing process that encourages the translation of σωθήσεται as “preserved,” rather than “saved.” Along with the awkward grammatical construction, since “the Childbirth” is deictic, pointing to something specific, one is also left with what appears to be an absurd, perhaps offensive, statement.

To say one can have salvation by having children certainly goes against everything Paul ever said concerning salvation being by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Additionally, it goes beyond the wording and expressed theology of our passage to interpret this to mean that women should pray to God instead of Artemis to help them through childbirth (even if this may be true, this is not what the text is intending).

Although many are tempted to go with a translational option that is smoother (and seemingly more orthodox), fighting this urge forces one into the broader context. The Christological context of 1 Timothy tells us that one is saved by God in Christ, through his laying down of his life on our behalf. This framework directly challenges the quest for authority and pride of place among Jesus’s disciples and among those receiving Paul’s epistle.

One might responsibly ask in this context: Was or is there a childbirth or childbearing that saves? The obvious answer is the birth of Christ.

Stanley Porter concedes that Eve could be the subject of the deception in 1 Tim 2:14 paired with the singular “And she will be saved” of 2:15; but he is not quite convinced because: “The attitudinal force of the future form of the verb in v.15 is one of expectation, that is, it . . . conveys not a temporal conception (past, present or future) but a marked and emphatic expectation toward a course of events.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, Eve’s deed was done, over with, hence beyond future expectation.

But was there no looking ahead towards a future salvation within the context of a current fallen state in the Genesis narrative? Contrary to his conclusion, Porter’s explanation actually makes a good case for seeing Eve in view here.

The article τῆς (“the”) preceding “Childbirth” indicates that a particular childbirth is in view. This is not only thematically in line with the Christology

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39 Porter, “What Does it Mean to be ‘Saved by Childbirth’,” 92.

articulated in 1 Timothy, but also consistent with the hope of Adam and Eve presented in Gen 3:15 with its reference to the (singular) seed of the woman.<sup>40</sup> It is uncontroversial that Gen 3:15 is taken by the church to be the promise of the future eschatological hope of Christ. However, that the childbirth in 1 Tim 2 refers to this promise does not have as much consensus. Yet, “the Childbirth” does not appear to be representing an ongoing present activity.

Additionally, this particular childbirth has the possibility to save those who have fallen into transgression, namely, Eve and those deceived like her; and so the definite article is best not taken as merely generic or collective of childbirth in general. Christ is the hope of 1 Timothy for false teachers and likely the hope referred to here. Porter gets this right: “Final salvation is united with past events.”<sup>41</sup> Paul is encouraging believers to look into their past with new eyes, enabling them to see a future hope even in the original sin or deception, leading to hope for themselves and for those deceived around them.

If the Christ child is the one referred to in 1 Tim 2:15, why is Mary absent from the text, since she quite literally bore the Christ? First, typology is not categorically “literal”; Adam is not literally Christ. More interpretive possibilities are open through allegory and metaphor than are possible from wooden one-to-one correspondences. In this case, it seems more than plausible that the childbirth of Christ has been conflated into Eve to further highlight the contrast between her and Christ, but with a twist.

Contained *within* Eve, who led to the transgression and resulting death, is also the future hope for salvation. The author closely associates Christ with Eve by placing him metaphorically in her womb. This is an intimate connection that goes beyond the closeness of the tight parallel structure linking Adam and Christ. It is another detail forcing us to look ahead from the fall of Eve, and also from the women and false teachers that Paul mentions, to the salvation in Christ Jesus. First Tim 2:15 is thus a passage pregnant with hope. Indeed, we saw earlier that Paul metaphorically looked on himself, though male, as one who would *deliver* the gospel, when he spoke of his anguish waiting for Christ to be born in the Galatians. The gospel of Christ is something that is thought of as born in a believer, which will lead to a transfiguration of the believer’s status so that those fallen into deception have the future possibility of salvation (and a change of status) already contained within them.

To cap off the case for the close connection between Eve and Christ, we come to the “trustworthy statement,” which is separated from our text by the designation “chapter 3” and typically linked with what follows by translators and

40 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”

41 Porter, “What Does it Mean to be ‘Saved by Childbirth’,” 94.



interpreters. And yet it might just as well be linked with the preceding verse (2:15). This would be a further signal that 1 Tim 2:15 is directly connected to everything that has been said already concerning Christ, since the almost liturgical formulation of “It is a trustworthy statement,” both in this epistle and in other Pauline material, accompanies Christological affirmations and promises of salvation.<sup>42</sup> Consider just two examples, both from 1 Timothy:

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος), that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

(1 Tim 1:15; italics original)

It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος). For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

(1 Tim 4:9–10; RSV)

Similarly, 1 Tim 2:15 in its connection to 3:1a constitutes a Christological affirmation connected to the τέλος of Paul’s instruction, which is based on the gospel of Christ Jesus. That is, “she will be saved by the Childbirth [of Christ], if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control,” a call universal in scope.

Based on the evidence provided, it makes sense to acknowledge Eve as a type of Christ in her representing our deception and transgression. However, unlike the metaphorical use of Adam with Christ, we discover in 1 Timothy that contained within those who are enmeshed in transgression and deception there is also the hope of Christ for salvation. The power of God is such that even in our evil and fallenness there is the possibility of future redemption. The martyrs understood this, readily seeing their persecution transfigured into glory in light of their baptism and connection to Christ. A woman’s body brutalized and exploited was transfigured into Christ who was their life. In Eve’s deception we are reminded of our own shortcomings, as we vie for a more powerful position at Jesus’s right hand. But we also see the hope of humanity in Christ Jesus, open to transforming all of us, both in our status and in our interactions.

Finally, why consider a uniquely Eve Christology? The short answer is: due to

42 1 Tim 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 1:9; 3:8. Also consider Titus, which like 1 Tim 3, also addresses who can be an overseer in a gender-inclusive way with “anyone” (τις), the need to teach sound doctrine accompanied by good works in connection with renouncing ungodly behavior in light of the hope in God our savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:1–15), and the entire church being reminded to be submissive towards those in authority (Titus 3:1–2; 1 Tim 2:1–2, 11) and all tied toward remembering (as Paul did of himself in 1 Timothy) that “we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another” (Titus 3:3) followed by the work of Christ. In Titus, the trustworthy sayings accompany behaviors tied to living out the gospel.

our own shortcomings and inability to imagine Christ apart from “Adam.” Historically, we have not only tended towards omitting female representation, but have resisted it. Metaphor can help undermine this resistance. In metaphorical space, James Cone’s Jesus can in a real sense be black, Paul can be a mother, and Bladina can be a type of Christ hanging from the cross. The crucified savior challenges the status quo by diffusing and reconceptualizing power. If a society fully embraces that women have the same status, privileges, value, and opportunities that first-born sons have, then eventually the gender-exclusive status slant we glean from the term “Son” will fade away. In the end, the questions of whether women may be saved by the crucified Christ and whether they may represent him on earth should be answered with a resounding *yes*.