

## What Does Cain Have to Do with Eve?: Philo's *Quod deterius potiori insidiari* 1.78 and 1 Timothy 2:12—Exploring an Overlooked Parallel

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### Abstract

Paul's use of the *hapax legomena* ἀθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12 has occasioned no small amount of debate. However, Philo's use of the ἀθεντέω word group, while noted, has gone unexplored. A careful examination of the literary and theological dimensions of Philo's use of ἀθέντης (Det. 1:78) supports the notion that 1 Timothy 2:12 is concerned with correcting abusive behavior, not permanently banning women from leadership in the Christian church.

*"I don't allow a wife to teach or to control her husband.  
Instead, she should be a quiet listener"* (1 Tim 2:12 CEB).

In the American evangelical gender debate,<sup>1</sup> no single verse has played a more important role in limiting the ministerial leadership of women than 1 Tim 2:12. While other verses are often cited by those who would prohibit the full inclusion of women within the evangelical realm (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–35), no other verse is claimed with such staunch authority as “clear.” Those within evangelicalism who affirm the ordination of women—the present author included—readily concede the complexity of 1 Tim 2:12. In reality, however, the truth is that 1 Tim 2:12 is anything but “clear.”<sup>2</sup> Debates rage over the nature of the “teaching,” the question of the man–women/husband–wife relationship,<sup>3</sup> and especially Paul's

1 Where I mention “evangelicalism” here, I have in mind the particular American variety.

2 For an important contribution concerning the supposed “clarity” of 1 Tim 2:12, see Jamin Hübner, “Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59.1 (2016): 99–117. Hübner rightly cites five aspects of the passage—although more could be mentioned—that render such an assertion (re: “clarity”) as problematic. For a larger treatment of this issue, see J.M. Holmes, *Text in a Whirlwind: A Critique of Four Exegetical Devices at 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, Library of New Testament Studies 196 (New York; T&T Clark, 2000).

3 See Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 286ff., for a compelling discussion on the plausible household structure of 1 Tim 2:9–15.

use<sup>4</sup> of the *hapax legomena* αὐθεντεῖν, “to control.” If one opens any modern English translation of 1 Tim 2, one can immediately see the complexity of translating this infinitive. Numerous English translations of αὐθεντεῖν render it as, “to exercise authority,”<sup>5</sup> “usurp authority,”<sup>6</sup> “to have authority,”<sup>7</sup> or “to assume authority over.”<sup>8</sup> The Common English Bible translation cited above glosses the verb as “to control.”

How one understands the nuances of the αὐθεντεῖν in 1 Tim 2:12 generally determines the outcome of the exegetical debate over women’s ordination.<sup>9</sup> To give an example, The Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) 2000, which is the theological statement for the Southern Baptist Convention, concludes in Article VI that “[w]hile both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” First Timothy 2:9–14 (they curiously do not include v. 15) is one of the primary texts the BF&M utilizes for this conclusion.

And since the debate over women’s ordination—as least within evangelicalism—has been largely focused on the meaning of αὐθεντεῖν, the general approach in arriving at a position on the matter has been through appeals to lexicons.<sup>10</sup> But especially given that the most influential New Testament lexicon, BDAG, is rather deficient in its bibliography on this lexeme,<sup>11</sup> it should be clear that merely appealing to lexicons is inadequate and will not settle this debate.

4 While the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is disputed, I suspect Paul is the authorial overseer of all three epistles and thus will refer to the author as “Paul” throughout this epistle. All translations of the texts in question are mine unless otherwise noted.

5 ESV

6 KJV

7 NRSV

8 NIV

9 This is not meant to imply that one text governs the totality of the evidence. Rather, I am simply noting that the weight placed on 1 Tim 2:12 by the complementarian (or patriarchal) interpretation should not be used as a heuristic device to interpret all the Pauline data—including Paul’s references to women in Rom 16:1–16 and elsewhere. On the contours of the debate over women’s ordination within evangelicalism, see Mark Chavez, *Ordaining Women: Culture & Conflict in Religious Organizations* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (New York: New York University, 2003).

10 Appeals to various English lexicons have long been a staple of evangelical argumentation especially as it relates to the debate over women’s ordination in 1 Tim 2:12 (1 Cor 11:3 is also often included in this debate via the “head” [κεφαλή] lexeme).

11 BDAG (1034) glosses the verb: “αὐθεντέω [αὐθέντης gener. = ‘one who takes matters into one’s own hands’] ‘function in a directive manner’, w. gen. exercise authority over, w. διδάσκω in effect = tell a man what to do 1 Ti 2:12.” See Stanley E. Porter’s forceful criticisms of BDAG in *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 69. Louw-Nida, one of the more linguistically informed lexicons, similarly suggests that the verb denotes control in a domineering manner: “to control, to domineer.” γυναῖκες οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω . . . αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρας ‘I do not allow women . . . to dominate men’ 1 Tim 2.12. ‘To control in a domineering manner’ is often expressed idiomatically, for example, ‘to shout orders at,’ ‘to act like a chief toward,’ or ‘to bark at’” (37.21).

The scholarly debate over ἀθηντεῖν has resulted in dozens of word studies across a quarter decade.<sup>12</sup> Among the most in-depth recent studies across the literature concerning this verb include the work of Philip B. Payne,<sup>13</sup> Cynthia Long Westfall,<sup>14</sup> Al Wolters,<sup>15</sup> and Jamin Hübner.<sup>16</sup> A consensus seems to be emerging where interpreters see the verb (within Paul's context) as denoting a sort of dysfunctional or even aggressive relationship between men and women in 1 Tim 2:12.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, these word studies have centered largely on Greco-Roman sources and their utilization of the verb ἀθηντέω, with varying degrees of linguistic precision and nuance. However, there is a seemingly overlooked parallel that has gone overlooked within the scholarly discussion. This parallel is found in Philo of Alexandria's *Quod deterius potiori insidiari* (*The Worse Attacks the Better*) 1.78. The term similarly appears as a *hapax legomena* and Philo uses the noun ἀθέντης rather than the verb, which might explain why some have opted to exclude it from study.<sup>18</sup> However, as Westfall has pointed out, "Modern lexicographers do not support a methodology that excludes the cognates [verbs, nouns, and other word forms] in determining the meaning of a word."<sup>19</sup> That is to say, Philo's use of the noun ἀθέντης and Paul's use of the verb ἀθηντέω should be viewed alongside each other, not separately.

This study will attempt to explore Philo of Alexandria's use of the noun and how Philo's usage might inform how one understands Paul's language in 1 Tim 2:12.<sup>20</sup> I will translate and explain the relevant portion of Philo's text, and then attempt to locate the literary and linguistic correspondence between Philo and Paul. The goal is to see how we might consider (or reconsider) Paul's language as it relates to his theological view of Eve, deception, and ethics.

12 See the references in Jamin Hübner, "Revisiting ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12: What Do the Extant Data Really Show?," *Journal of the Study of Paul and His Letters* 5.1 (2015): 41 n. 1.

13 Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 361–90.

14 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 290–94; Cynthia Long Westfall, "The Meaning of ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 10 (2014): 138–73.

15 Al Wolters, "The Meaning of ἀθηντέω," in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: An Interpretation & Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 65–115.

16 Hübner, "Revisiting ἀθηντέω."

17 That Paul is prohibiting a specific type of activity in 1 Tim 2:12 suggests that he does not view what is taking place positively.

18 The studies by Westfall, Payne, and Hübner do not discuss the parallel.

19 Westfall, "The Meaning of ἀθηντέω," 146.

20 Given the rarity of the word group under dispute, it is interesting to see a lack of engagement with Philo's sole use of the word in the relevant scholarship. My goal here is to thus explore this gap.

## Introducing Philo's *The Worse Attacks the Better* 1.78

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20–15 BCE to 40–50 CE)<sup>21</sup> is perhaps the most significant Jewish philosopher of the first century. His surviving corpus extends far beyond the length of the New Testament and is filled with perplexing philosophical insights and allegorical exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. He lived during the time of Jesus and Paul, dying around 49 CE,<sup>22</sup> at the approximate time of the composition of 1 Thessalonians.<sup>23</sup> Philo's prodigious thought and work were even mentioned in early Christian literature by authors like Clement of Alexandria.<sup>24</sup> Philo, a first-century Jewish philosopher, is in many ways a linguistic and historical necessity for the study of Paul due to him being Paul's contemporary as well as his use of similar lexemes and even literary traditions.

Philo begins his commentary on the story of Cain and Abel in *The Worse Attacks the Better* (abbreviated "Det.") with a reference to Gen 4:8 LXX: "And Cain said to his brother Abel, 'let us travel into the countryside.' And while they were in the countryside, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (Det. 1:1). In a display of "power" or "force" (κράτος), Cain murders Abel (Det. 1:1). Reflecting on Cain's brutality, Philo spends the totality of this work exploring the significance of this event. With this contextual key in mind, let us look at Philo's use of our *hapax legomena* that occurs in *The Worse Attacks the Better* 1:78. The text reads as follows:

Therefore, anyone who loves one's self (φίλαντος),<sup>25</sup> via<sup>26</sup> the surname Cain, must learn (διδασκῆται)<sup>27</sup> that he has slaughtered the namesake of Abel, his image,<sup>28</sup> his individuality, the iconic image according to the type (τύπον),<sup>29</sup> not the archetype, not the family, not the outer form, which he expects to destroy (συνεφθαρκέναι) although they are living

21 Torrey Seland, ed., *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 4. For an exploration of the chronology of Philo's life as well as a superb exploration of his writings, see Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), ch. 1.

22 Cf. Niehoff, *Philo*.

23 While settling on any construction of a Pauline chronology is difficult, I find the case made by Douglas Campbell in *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) to be reasonable and compelling. As such, 1 Thessalonians is perhaps Paul's first letter.

24 Jennifer Otto, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–2.

25 2 Tim 3:2. So also Josephus, *Antiquities* 3:190; 5:215.

26 The lack of a preposition here suggests that the person who is a "lover of self" participates in the surname of Cain, perhaps in a similar way as a person participates "in Christ" in Pauline thought (cf. Gal 3:27–29). The accusative most probably refers to the "manner" or "respect," insofar as the result of the actions of the "lover of self" result in a person being identified within the "surname of Cain."

27 Cf. 1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 11:14, 12:28–29; 1 Tim 2:7; 4:1.

28 Cf. Col 1:15.

29 Cf. Rom 5:14; Rom 6:17, which additionally includes the term διδάσκεις ("teaching").

immortal creatures. Let anyone say to him, railing violently at him (κατακερτομῶν).<sup>30</sup> “Oh, what have you done, oh evil genius! Do you not think to slay the one who loves God’s glory, that you do not also dwell before God? You have become a murderer<sup>31</sup> of yourself (σαντοῦ δὲ γέγονας αὐθέντης), having slain (ἀνελών) by ambush the only abillity you have to live a blameless life.”

### Contextualizing Philo’s *The Worse Attacks the Better* 1:78

The first aspect of Philo’s discourse here is an interpretation of the Cain and Abel narrative in Gen 4 LXX. Beneath his use of these twin historical figures lies a philosophical (φιλοσοφίαν) or even typological foundation (cf. Philo, Sacr. 1:1). Elsewhere, Cain is previously called a “lover of self” (φιλαύτω Κάιν), “filled with undiluted evil” (ἀκράτου κακίας ἐνεφορήθη<sup>32</sup>) toward his brother (Det. 1:68). Cain as the titular “lover of self” (φιλαυτον) is also contrasted with his brother Abel, who is a “lover of God” (φιλόθεον) (Philo, Sacr. 1:3).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, from Philo’s philosophical mindset, Cain is perhaps the quintessential representative of the φιλαυτον—a *type* of individual who is more interested in aggrandizement and the pursuit of passion. Cain functions as a category of person who is brazenly unethical and has exercised a severe and fatal dominion over a cherished family member. At the beginning of Philo’s discourse (Det. 1:69), one sees the immediate connection to the rest of the section: Cain’s murder of Abel serves as a pedagogical stepping-stone to speculate about various virtues and vices.

Philo rivals Paul’s own philosophical complexity and shares with him many similar concerns.<sup>34</sup> Both authors are concerned with ethical conduct: Paul with women and men or perhaps husband and wife relationships, and Philo with those sophists who purport to be wise and are instead operating like Cain (Det. 1:72). In Philo’s rather devastating critique, he sees in such persons a deep and abiding sense of emotional and personal instability:

But when they [the sophists] sing praises of their intelligence

30 Philo’s use of *κατακερτομῶ* reflects the attitude of a man “railing against” passion, yet ultimately succumbing to it (*De specialibus legibus* 4:81) and also to a man’s children “jeering” him on (*De virtutibus* 1:202).

31 Or “destroyer,” “abuser.” Note, though, the context suggests physical violence.

32 Philo’s use of the aorist verb ἐνεφορήθη suggests that the long process of Cain’s contempt toward Abel has reached a boiling point of no return.

33 Abel often represents, in much the same manner, the “lover of God” (Det. 1:32, 48, 103).

34 Cf. the more popular introduction by Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones, eds., *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy: Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019) and the more in-depth work by Max J. Lee, *Moral Transformation in Greco-Roman Philosophy of Mind: Mapping the Moral Milieu of the Apostle Paul and his Diaspora Jewish Contemporaries*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

(φρόνησιν), self-control (σωφροσύνην), righteousness (δικαιοσύνην), and godliness (εὐσέβειαν), they are then demonstrating that they are most of all senseless (ἄφραϊνοντες), licentious (ἀκολασταίνοντες), unjust (ἀδικοῦντες), and godless (ἄσεβοῦντες) in every way. (Det. 1:73)

Despite their alleged wisdom and philosophical prowess, Philo is not content to simply leave the sophists to their own understanding of his language—he goes deeper: these sophists practice things that are “shameful” or “degrading” (δ’ αἰσχιστα) (1:74). Such parallels mirror Paul’s own language toward the women mentioned in 1 Tim 2:9–10.<sup>35</sup> In essence, the uneducated sophists in Philo’s critique are falling into the typological narrative reality of Cain. That is, they are “in Cain” in the same way as others are “in Adam” in Paul’s typological thought world (Rom 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:22). As such, Cain’s slaying of Abel is his intense renunciation of the ethical life, leaving Cain (and those who are acting like him) in ethical contempt and forsakenness. Because the sophists lack “instruction” (παιδείας), they are deeply confused (Det. 1:77), deprived of discernment and propriety.<sup>36</sup> The sophist is, therefore, a “lover of self” (1:78)—like Cain.

New Testament writers other than Paul similarly utilized the Cain narrative and tradition to describe evil deeds. While lacking exact parallelism to Philo, the author of 1 John does utilize Cain as a negative example of ethical conduct. Specifically, the author notes that Cain came “from the evil one” (ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν), whose “works were evil” (ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν) (1 John 3:12). Jude 1:11 makes a similar point about false teachers “going in the way of Cain” (τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Κάϊν), indicating their inevitable destruction. In the New Testament, then, Cain remains a negative historical-typological example of someone who has acted with unethical aplomb.

To summarize this point, within Jewish literature, including the New Testament, and in our example in Philo, Cain serves as a pedagogical tool to instruct readers about the negative impact of sin and self-centeredness that lies at the heart of selfishness. Adam and Eve and other biblical figures are utilized in this way as well. As we shall see, this observation has some serious implications for how we might reconsider Paul’s seemingly caustic (and contradictory, if we consider his other words concerning the equality of women) prohibition of women’s conduct in 1 Tim 2:12.

35 For instance, Paul desires that the women act with “mental soundness” (σωφροσύνης) (1 Tim 2:10), and Philo castigates his interlocutors who believe they are “mentally sound” (σωφροσύνην) (Det. 1:73). They are clearly operating with the same concept.

36 Cf. 1 Tim 1:18–20 and the curious case of the expulsion of Hymenaeus and Alexander, along with the hopeful note that they will “*learn* not to blaspheme” (παιδευθῶσι μὴ βλασφημεῖ).

## Bridging the Linguistic and Theological Parallels Between Cain and Eve

For Philo's purpose, the story of Cain and Abel serves as a moral or ethical case study. It is perhaps possible Paul feels the same about Adam and Eve. Let us now examine closely four linguistic, literary, and theological parallels between *The Worse Attacks the Better* and 1 Tim 2:12.

In the first instance, Paul and Philo both use the verb διδάσκω (διδάχθῃτω in Det. 1:78; διδάσκειν in 1 Tim 2:12) within a pedagogical context. Philo desires that the reader be taught (διδάχθῃτω) so as not to be "senseless, licentious, unjust, and godless" (Det 1:73). For Paul, the women are also told to "learn" (μανθανέτω) in order that they might avoid the trapping of authoritarianism (taking αὐθεντεῖν as a negative activity that is worth prohibiting) (1 Tim 2:11),<sup>37</sup> which mirrors the imperative found in Det. 1:78 (διδάχθῃτω in the passive).<sup>38</sup> Without discernment and education,<sup>39</sup> both the women in Ephesus and Philo's own readers will collapse into unethical behavior—that is, if they haven't already fallen into such things (1 Tim 5:13–16).<sup>40</sup>

As with Philo and Paul, Sirach likewise affirmed the necessity of learning, among other Jewish thinkers. For instance, in Sir 18:19 we read, "Before you speak (λαλῆσαι), you must learn (μάνθανε) and before you become ill, take care of yourself."<sup>41</sup> The necessity of personal learning is repeated by Philo as well in the same book where he talks about the instability of the unlearned person as the recipient of knowledge: "for the opinions of those who have only lately begun to learn (τῶν ἄρτι μανθάνειν) are unstable and without any firm foundation" (Det. 1:12). The readers of Philo and Paul are to learn so that they will not fall into the patterns of Cain or of Eve, where the self takes control and wields authority over the other.

The second linguistic and theological parallel is the dual use of "self-control" lexemes (σωφροσύνην in Det. 1:73; σωφροσύνης in 1 Tim 2:9, 15) where both authors are adamant that persons exercise self-control over their impulses, unlike (1) Cain who did not exercise self-restraint in his murder of Abel, and (2) the women in Ephesus who wielded control over the men, resulting in the usurpation

37 In terms of logical coherence, there is no reason for an author to prohibit a positive or ethical activity.

38 While the Greek words are not *semantically* related, their rhetorical *function* is the same.

39 C.f. Craig S. Keener, "Women's Education and Public Speech in Antiquity," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50.4 (2007): 747–59.

40 See I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 601ff.

41 Another use of "speaking" language as applied to women in the Pauline corpus is found in 1 Cor 14:34–35, but this passage is textually dubious and is unlikely to have been penned by Paul. See Philip B. Payne, "A Summary of Vaticanus Distigma-obelos Symbols Marking Added Text, Including 1 Corinthians 14.34–5." *New Testament Studies* 63 (2017) 604–25.



of their individuality and autonomy, and even jeopardizing their life and standing before God.<sup>42</sup> The exercise of self-restraint and learning represents a palpable link between Philo and Paul.

The third parallel is the utilization and context of the verb γίνομαι (γέγονας in Det. 1:78; γέγονεν in 1 Tim 2:14) to suggest a change of behavior or status, moving from a positive or meaningful relationship to a corrosive or negative one. To be more precise, the utilization of the verb *itself* does not denote this point (although it certainly is coordinate with it).<sup>43</sup> However, it is employed for each author in contexts where the concept of ethical transformation (or degradation) is overtly present *within* the respective narratives that they engage.

For Paul, Eve functions as someone who “fell into transgression” (1 Tim 2:14), indicating a change in ethical conduct and posture. That is, she “became” a transgressor and collapsed into sin. For Philo, Cain “became” a murderer. Both Eve and Cain are thus transformed via their deeds from one state of ethical placement (righteousness in Eve’s case and innocence in that of Cain) into another (transgression and murder, respectively). In both instances, the author is showcasing a negative occurrence where a person falls and becomes something they were previously not, shifting their status into the realm of sin. The individual, functioning typologically, is set as a negative example of what the ancient reader should avoid.<sup>44</sup> Hence, the use of the common verb between Paul and Philo is illustrative of this same point within their shared contextual focus.

The fourth and final parallel between the two passages is also the most important and obvious: the use of the αὐθεντέω/αὐθεντης word group itself. In both instances, this word group is used in context to refer to the exercising of control of one person or group over another. This understanding is confirmed by Cynthia Westfall’s thorough analysis of the verb and its cognates as carrying the basic sense of “unrestrictive force.”<sup>45</sup> The women in Ephesus were centered on themselves, seeking to wield control over the men in the congregation in the same way that Cain wielded complete sovereignty over Abel through the act of *killing* him.

The parallel cannot, of course, be pressed further for complete linguistic symmetry, as there is no hard evidence that the women in Ephesus were involved in

42 Cf. Westfall, “The Meaning of αὐθεντέω.” She explains: “My analysis suggests the basic semantic concept of the word αὐθεντέω can be described as the autonomous use or possession of unrestricted force” (166–67).

43 Such a lexeme is quite common in the New Testament.

44 Similarly, Paul and Philo do not place any specificity upon the gender of the person in their statements. For Paul, he has already dealt with the heretical false teachers (1 Tim 1:20) and the pedagogical function of Eve serves to incorporate the women (or wives) back into the realm of sound teaching.

45 Westfall, “The Meaning of αὐθεντέω.”



violence toward the men.<sup>46</sup> However, in his survey of the verb, Al Wolters has offered the following glosses of the noun form: “doer,” “murderer,” “master.”<sup>47</sup>

Wolters continues that

[t]he verb αὐθεντέω should not be interpreted in the light of αὐθέντης ‘murderer’, or the muddled definitions of it given in the Atticistic lexica. Instead, it should be understood, like all the other Hellenistic derivatives of αὐθέντης in the light of the meaning which that word had in the living Greek of the day, namely ‘master.’<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, one could be critical of the three glosses and their immediate relevance to the usages we find in the first century.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, I suggest that all three glosses are relevant here due to the following contextual factors: (1) the use of the active tense form of γέγονας to denote Cain’s agency and activity toward Abel; (2) Cain’s use of “power” (κράτος) over Abel (Det. 1:1); and especially (3) the fact that Cain “killed” (ἀνελών) Abel.

These contextual factors taken with Westfall’s analysis of the word group noted above, suggest that the relevance of all three of Wolters glosses is certainly plausible and indeed entirely coordinate with both passages. By inflicted “unrestricted force” over another agent, Philo concludes that Cain (and the person “in Cain”) has forsaken his ability to participate in the ethical life. Cain exerted dominion, becoming the ultimate authoritarian over Abel by murdering him. Cain supplanted God’s own divine prerogatives granted in Gen 1:26ff. and wielded authority over his helpless younger brother—ultimately removing and destroying his image and individuality. The Ephesian women, according to Paul, were guilty of falling into a similar trap based on abusive activity towards men.

In short, αὐθέντης in Philo is polysemous, carrying the multiple layers of

46 Paul’s instructions for them to learn “to avoid violence” seems like a gratuitously underwhelming response to a potential egregious interpersonal situation.

47 Al Wolters, “A Semantic Study of αὐθέντης and Its Derivatives,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000): 145–75, 153. He concludes that “by the first century AD, αὐθέντης in the living language meant ‘master’, and the meaning ‘murderer’ was largely forgotten,” (153). Both sentences are at odds with each other. One cannot claim that a word means something and then suggest that another meaning was largely forgotten. Such a statement lacks coherence. Westfall is rightly critical of this bifurcation (“The Meaning of αὐθεντέω,” 170 n. 87). Wolters also does not consider Philo’s own utilization of αὐθέντης in relation to the violence wrought by Cain over Abel. Wolters writes, “αὐθέντης ‘murderer’ was at home *only* (emphasis mine) in the literary language of the classical period. Philo’s use of αὐθέντης in this article is not within the classical period.” Additionally, Wolters’s response to Westfall’s analysis in his postscript to his essay in *Women in the Church* says 12 uses of αὐθεντέω (out of 43) do not correspond to Westfall’s linguistic point. Put another way, roughly *three-quarters* of the occurrences of αὐθεντέω *do* in fact correspond to Westfall’s analysis, which is a substantial admission.

48 Albert Wolters, “A Semantic Study of αὐθέντης and Its Derivatives,” *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 11.1 (2006): 47–65, 54.

49 For additional criticism of Wolter’s methodology, see Hübner, “Revisiting αὐθεντέω,” 62–65.

meaning pointed out above. In the use of this term, then, Philo indicates that Cain acted like a brutal authoritarian by killing Abel.

### **Cain, Eve, and 1 Timothy 2:12: Some Theological Considerations**

So, what does Cain have to do with Eve? One can easily surmise that the women in the Ephesian churches were among those most impacted and deceived by the heretical teachings of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:18–20). For example, Timothy is enjoined to “command” a group of “certain persons” (τισιν)<sup>50</sup> “to not teach contrary doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3). These false teachers are concerned with “myths and endless genealogies” (1:4) and have “deviated and wandered into meaningless disputations” (1:6).<sup>51</sup> This theme of self-centered and deceptive activity culminates in Paul’s discussion of women in 1 Tim 2:8–15, who are clearly addressed here in light of particular circumstances relevant to the occasion of the letter.<sup>52</sup>

Rather than being concerned with wealth and opulence, Paul offers a better way. They are to be concerned with “self-control” (2:9) in the same way as Philo suggests for his readers (Det. 1:73). Paul’s ethical discourse here is centered on virtue and godly character, which is far more important than the status that comes with wealth.<sup>53</sup> This includes their activity as women in the church and their “good deeds” (ἐργων ἀγαθῶν) in 2:10. The emphasis on “quietness” (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ) is meant to counter the perpetuation of “false doctrine” (1:3), especially in relation to the women “learning” in 2:11.

In keeping with the notion of ethical transformation in Philo, the imperative to learn (μανθάνετω) (1) suggests a transforming of the heart and mind through a humbled posture (cf. esp. 1 Tim 5:4),<sup>54</sup> and (2) represents a significant defense against the dissemination of false doctrine. In Rom 16:17, Paul likewise calls the Roman churches to similar ethical commitment predicated upon “the teaching” (τὴν διδασχὴν) that they have “learned” (ἐμάθετε) in light of individuals or groups disseminating problematic ideas (“making divisions and scandals”) contrary to such teaching.

50 The plural use reflects the two individuals mentioned in 1:20, and perhaps the women as well mentioned later in 1 Timothy. See also *τινες* in 1 Tim 1:6, 19.

51 Some have rejected the faith provided by Christ and “have made shipwreck of their faith” (1:19). The grammar suggests that their names are the aforementioned Hymenaeus and Alexander, and they are guilty of “blasphemy” (1:20).

52 With the possible exception of 1 Cor 7:1–16; 11:2–16; and perhaps 14:34–35 if original, there does not appear any specific instances in the Pauline corpus where women are specifically singled out based on their being deceived by false teachers. However, there are no false teachers mentioned in 1 Corinthians.

53 The negative counterpart to his exhortation, *μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ*, (2:9b), confirms this point.

54 On a negative note, Paul points out that some women have conversely “learned” to be careless (1 Tim 5:13).

Second Timothy 3:6–8 perhaps best sums up the disposition of the false teachers along with the problem pertaining to women in the Ephesian churches:

Some will slither into households and control immature women who are burdened with sins and driven by all kinds of desires. These women are always learning (μανθάνοντα), but they can never arrive at an understanding of the truth. These people<sup>55</sup> oppose the truth in the same way that Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. Their minds are corrupt and their faith is counterfeit. (CEB)

The problems of false teaching affecting women in the Ephesian churches was a living reality for Paul, a reality that needed to be confronted and turned around.<sup>56</sup> Such correction could only happen through the ethical transformation of the women who were being deceived.

With all the above in mind, we may take a fresh look at 1 Tim 2:12 and its context in light of Philo's linguistic and philosophical understanding of Cain. Paul writes, διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. The women are the subject of Paul's address and he seemed to view the women's conduct as authoritarian and abusive. His use of the negated infinitive αὐθεντεῖν in context suggests that what is being perpetuated by the women in Ephesus is destructive. The solution given by Paul in 2:11 is that they learn "in full submission" and "in quietness."

Cain's activity in being an αὐθέντης toward Abel resulted in Abel's death. The women's conduct toward men is viewed as a form of mastery over the other, a controlling or domineering activity that must be restricted due to its ethical malpractice. As such, αὐθέντης and αὐθεντεῖν are coordinate in meaning and suggest that an abusive or authoritarian relationship is at the root of the conflict for both Philo and Paul. In each case, in view is the gratuitous display of force by an agent (or a group of agents) over and against another. The subsequent prepositional phrase in 1 Tim 2:12b, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ, helps clarify the previous clause. The women were deceived and uneducated, and the *solution* is a quiet attitude as opposed to their domineering or authoritarian approach.

Finally, there is nothing in the text of 1 Tim 2:12 that suggests a permanent ban on women's ecclesiastical position within the church. Paul's subsequent utilization of the Adam and Eve narrative matches that of the Cain and Abel narrative for Philo. Cain's relationship with Abel was centered on an abuse of power, and Eve's relationship with Adam is marked by deception and the assumption of authority.

55 The false teachers are explicitly called φιλαντροί in 2 Tim 3:2, echoing Philo's own condemnation of the "sophists" in Det. 1:69–78.

56 For a survey of Paul's opponents in the pastoral letters, see Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 41ff.

Given that Paul rules out inequitable power dynamics within marriage relationships in 1 Cor 7:3–5 and Eph 5:21–33,<sup>57</sup> it makes good sense that Paul would prohibit the use of aggressive or destructive force within churches or households—regardless of the gender of the person or group perpetuating said force.

Both Eve and Cain function as typological *and* pedagogical examples of what happens when someone acts with authoritarian tendencies over another. It can lead to the dissemination of heresy, or worse, direct harm (physical or otherwise), as in Abel's case. God's response to Cain was to curse him (Det. 1:96, 103) and Cain is therefore viewed by Philo as a type of the evil ones, dwelling in pain and fear (Det. 1:140), even though God promises to preserve Cain's life (Det. 1:165ff.) and marks him accordingly (Det. 1:177). The promise made to Eve (Gen 3:15ff. LXX) is found in a return to "self-control" (σωφροσύνης) (2:15) and through the salvific work of Christ (1 Tim 2:4–6).<sup>58</sup> Eve functions as a narrative type for the whole church (2 Cor 11:3) as well as an example for the women in Ephesus who were deceived and led astray by Satan. By their learning in a manner that reflects humbleness and reverence, they would eventually be included among those "faithful people [πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις] who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2).<sup>59</sup>

In sum, Paul's response to the deceived women is not their expulsion from the fledgling Ephesian churches or their permanent silence or subordination. Rather, he requires that they adopt a virtuous posture of learning and cultivate godliness in place of authoritarianism and selfishness.

## Conclusion

The goal of this article was to explore two parallel *hapax legomena* found in Paul and Philo and see where the two shall meet. We have seen that there are considerable interpretive possibilities (both exegetically and theologically) between both Paul and Philo, especially as they relate to the notions of power and ethical conduct. Philo's use of αὐθεντής to describe the relationship between Cain and Abel has shown that the αὐθεν-*word group* (when used to describe human relationships) seems to consistently denote disparity and power imbalances, including abuses of power leading to violent retribution. This is coordinate with Paul's use of the infinitive in 1 Tim 2:12 where he is addressing the dynamics of power and

57 See Payne, *Man and Woman*, ch. 5; Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 92–102; Ronald W. Pierce, "1 Corinthians 7: Paul's Neglected Treatise on Gender," *Priscilla Papers* 23.3 (2009): 8–13.

58 See Allison M. Quient, "Eve Christology: Embodiment, Gender, and Salvation," *The Canadian-American Theological Review* 6.2 (2017): 65–84. We will leave aside the matter of "childbirth" in 1 Tim 2:15, as it will take us far beyond the scope of this article. See the competing interpretations offered in Payne, *Man and Woman*, ch. 22; Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, ch. 9.

59 Paul's gender-inclusive language here is often mistakenly given a masculine rendering in our English translations.

the activity of deceived women who are acting in an authoritarian manner over others. We have also seen that both Paul and Philo are keen to use historical figures for pedagogical purposes within a theological narrative and particularly that Paul has a constructive and positive response to the abuses at play: to learn in a godly manner that reflects a heart focused on Christ (1 Tim 2:11).

Such a conclusion does not place Paul at odds with himself, especially if one includes his clear affirmations of gifted and called women in ministerial authority (e.g., Phoebe in Rom 16:1–2; Junia in Rom 16:7;<sup>60</sup> Euodia and Syntyche in Phil 4:2–3; Apphia in Philm 1:2), his theology of sonship and baptism that disallows gender disparities (Gal 3:26–29), as well as his pneumatology whereby women are included in the charismatic gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 11:5; 12:12–28; Rom 12:6–8).<sup>61</sup>

In all, my conclusion regarding Paul’s admonition toward women in 1 Tim 2:12 is in line with those drawn by Payne, Hübner, and Westfall, and may serve to provide additional support to their arguments. As such, those who would wish to utilize 1 Tim 2:12 to bar women from serving in the highest forms of ecclesiastical leadership must additionally contend with Philo’s parallel usage of αὐθέντης in *Quod deterius potiori insidiari* 1.78.

### Summary of Linguistic and Theological Parallels Between Cain and Eve

	Cain in Det. 1:78 (and <i>passim</i> )	Women & Eve in 1 Tim 2:9–15
1.	The reader is encouraged to learn/ pedagogical use of “learning” lexemes (διδάχθῃτω).	The women need “to learn” (μανθανέτω) (2:11) in a submissive posture, echoing quietness instead of strife (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ) (2:11–12).
2.	Cain acted with sovereign authority/ violent power over another agent (Abel) (αὐθέντης).	The women acted in a controlling or domineering manner toward another agent/ (their husbands/men) (αὐθεντέω).
3.	“Self-control” (σωφροσύνην) is a vital virtue for the reader so as to avoid being a “sophist” (Det. 1:73).	“Self-control” (σωφροσύνης) is a vital virtue and urgent need for the women in Ephesus (2:9) and is viewed as a corrective ethical measure.
4.	Cain “becomes” (γέγονας) a murderer, destroying his life, and becoming a sinner. The “being” verb denotes (negative) transformation.	The women (like Eve) have “become” (γέγονεν) transgressors, acting over others via the flaunting of their status (2:9–10). The being verb denotes (negative) transformation.

60 On Junia’s apostleship, see Yii-Jan Lin, “Junia: An Apostle Before Paul,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139.1 (2020): 191–209.

61 For a coherent and comprehensive work on this particular aspect of Pauline theology, see Westfall, *Paul and Gender*.