

# Why Mike Winger is wrong about *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 – and why it matters

Is Mike Winger’s analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12 a sturdy structure or a house of cards? Here we gently blow on his discussion of *authentēō* and see what happens.

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- Part 11 (“Women be silent,” 1 Cor 14) — [www.bit.ly/3naLVUL](http://www.bit.ly/3naLVUL)

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## Introduction

We have watched the part of Mike Winger’s video on 1 Timothy 2:12 in which he discusses the meaning of Paul’s important Greek word *authenteō* in that verse. (The video is Part 12 in his Women in Ministry series).

We see first-class presentation skills, with a clear structure, a calm and earnest manner, and a friendly dose of infectious enthusiasm.

We have no doubt of Mike’s good intentions.

And Mike rightly acknowledges that the egalitarian scholars whose work he discusses are his brothers and sisters in Christ. He says:

***I’m dealing with people who actually believe the Scriptures are the word of God. I think we need to try to hold hands as much as we can on these issues, to not vilify each other, but we gotta just genuinely expose the errors in thinking and the errors in research that we see.*** (6hr28mins)

We hold hands with him on that.

With fairness, Mike also says:

***Every one of us can make mistakes. I can make mistakes. Someone will be going through this with a fine-tooth comb and they may find mistakes I’ve made and – good – those should be exposed, any mistakes that I’ve made ...*** (5hr49mins)

So, we are following Mike’s own suggestion that his mistakes should be identified.

Regrettably, there are many major “***errors in thinking***” and major “***errors in research***”.

That may come as a surprise to most of his audience. Most of the comments below his YouTube video are very positive. If someone watching or listening has not thoroughly researched the topic of debate for themselves, they would think he has done an impressive job of demonstrating that his view is faithful to Scripture.

But the uncomfortable reality is that his presentation skills have outstripped his skills of reading, researching, reasoning and rightly handling the Bible.

His errors include mistakes of fact, unsound reasoning, inadequate research, and misunderstandings and misrepresentations of what scholars have written. His conclusion on the meaning of *authenteō* is over-confident. It is not soundly supported. In our view, it is definitely incorrect.

We have responded to Mike's previous invitations to provide pushback against his earlier videos in the Women in Ministry series. See <https://terranwilliams.com/articles/>. Disappointingly, even though he invited it, he has chosen not to engage with any of our pushback.

We invite you to consider these questions as you read on:

- Has Mike done his research thoroughly?
  - In particular, has Mike accurately read, checked and engaged with what scholars have written?
- Has Mike thought clearly about the topics which he addresses?
  - In particular, is his reasoning sound?

If you find that we have made some errors of our own, please write and tell us, so that we can make any needed corrections. You can email us at [terranwill-at-gmail.com](mailto:terranwill-at-gmail.com).<sup>1</sup>

Here is a road map of where we are headed:

First, we show how the issue over the meaning of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 fits into the wider debate about women's ministry.

Second, we summarize the principal steps in Mike's reasoning.

Third, we go through those steps in the same order.

Fourth, we state our conclusion and why it matters.

Please understand the limited scope of this article. We are not presenting a full exposition of 1 Timothy 2. Nor are we reviewing the whole of Mike's Part 12 video. Specifically, we are engaging with the 4½ hours of it in which he discusses the meaning of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12, and assessing his reasoning.

Before we proceed, three explanations:

1] We occasionally use the Greek word *authentēō* in a sentence as if it were an English word. For simplicity, we have not changed its Greek grammatical form to fit our English usage.

2] When the original of a quotation uses the Greek alphabet, we have changed the Greek words into English letters for ease of reading. (Our spellings may not correspond to those in Mike's notes, where he uses a system of transliteration that we have not seen elsewhere.)

3] Anyone listening to the video or reading Mike's notes will keep coming across the word 'ingressive'. In academic jargon it indicates that a word is being used to refer to the beginning of an action. (Another word for that is 'inceptive'.)

## The big picture

Mike believes that in 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul is referring to the function of a church elder – to teach and have authority (*authentēō*).

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<sup>1</sup> You'll need to replace “-at-” with “@”. Please put these words in the subject-line: Winger Part 12.

He summarizes (on page 3 of his notes):

***Woman can't teach/have authority over men in the church***

- ***This seems to be the elder role and the elder function.***
  - ***That is, ... the specific activity of teaching and having authority in the way that an elder does according to the New Testament.***

Concluding his study (page 120 of his notes), he indicates again his view that verse 12 refers to-

***Just church leadership, in particular, eldership functions.***

As Mike sees it, Paul's point is that eldership authority should not be held or exercised by a woman over men.

Mike starts his discussion of the meaning of *authenteō* with an intriguing claim.

Regarding the debate over women's ministry, Mike says:

***The center of this whole debate boils down to this one question: In 1 Timothy 2:12, is the phrase "have authority" a wrong translation?*** (3hr36mins)

The reason this claim is intriguing is that it is true in one sense and false in another.

We'll explain first in what sense we believe it to be false.

The 'egalitarian' or 'mutualist' position is that God places no restrictions on the ministry of women as compared with men. Women may be called to serve as church elders or pastors. *That position does not boil down as Mike says.* It does not depend on whether *authenteō* is or is not translated as "have authority".

Many scholars consider that "have authority" is a mistaken translation. But *even if it is a correct translation*, that does not defeat the non-restrictive position.

There are two reasons.

Reason 1: Even if *authenteō* means 'have authority', it does not follow that it refers to authority in a sense that is appropriate to the functions of an elder. If Mike proves that the word is suitable to describe the coercive authority held, for example, by an ancient king or emperor, or the absolute authority of God himself, that would not make it suitable to describe the authority of an elder.

We can illustrate this reason by considering the word 'Lord'. That word suitably reflects the authority of an ancient king, or of God. But it does not follow that it is an appropriate word to use for church leaders, whether in the first century or today. Indeed church leaders, and specifically elders, are expressly forbidden to lord it over the flock (Mark 10:42; 1 Peter 5:3).

Reason 2: Even if Mike proves that *authenteō* is suitable to describe the authority of a church elder, it still does not follow that women should be excluded from eldership. In our view, Paul's instructions in 2:12 are dealing with a local problem in Ephesus; so, Paul's solution of not permitting a woman to teach and have authority over a man should be understood as situation-specific.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Note that Reason 2 shifts the focus of the discussion from verse 12 to verses 13-14. Mike believes that Paul is there appealing to a creation principle about men's and women's "roles", so Paul's solution is not situation-specific but universal and timeless. But in our view, it makes better sense to understand verses 13-14 as an illustration. Paul uses the Genesis story of Adam and Eve as an illustration of things going wrong when a

Because the translation ‘have authority’ does not defeat women’s eldership, the response to Mike’s video by *In Philosopher’s Garb* only addressed the other parts of Mike’s video, which are not concerned with the meaning of *authentēō* – see his [YouTube video](#), commencing from 7m:10s.<sup>3</sup>

So then, if the translation ‘have authority’ does not defeat women’s eldership, in what sense is Mike’s claim true?

It is true in the sense that *excluding* women from eldership depends on translating *authentēō* in 2:12 as meaning ‘have authority’ – and provided that it is *also* interpreted in a sense suitable for the kind of authority which is exercised by a church elder.

If Paul is not referring to the function of a church elder in 2:12, the debate is over. Mike’s position is defeated.

You may wonder: but what about the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3? As Mike’s notes say, don’t Paul’s qualifications for elders “*point toward men exclusively*”?

The short answer is no, they do not. For more information, see our footnote.<sup>4</sup>

Excluding women from eldership depends on there being a clear statement in Scripture that women must not exercise authoritative ministry towards men. Only a clear statement can be sufficient, because there are so many indications to the contrary in the New Testament. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 Paul urges both men and women to eagerly desire the greater gifts of being apostles, prophets and teachers. On the face of it, that suggests that Paul envisages women exercising spiritual authority in Christian congregations.

To see the big picture even more clearly, it is worth considering Priscilla, whom Mike mentions at the end of his discussion of *authentēō*. Priscilla probably exercised the two functions that Mike believes Paul is prohibiting to women. We’ve included a brief discussion of Priscilla at the end of this article, in Appendix 4, to show how Priscilla fits with 1 Timothy 2.

We come back to the main point.

Mike needs to show that *authentēō* is used in 1 Timothy 2:12 *in a sense that refers to the ordinary authority of a church elder*. We shall show that he comprehensively fails to do so. In addition, he doesn’t even consider some key questions that he would need to answer in order to establish his view.

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woman teaches a man falsely, which is what Paul feared was about to happen in Ephesus. That illustration provides a justification for Paul’s situation-specific solution. The relevance of the particular circumstances in Ephesus is underlined by the strangeness of Paul’s comment in 2:15 (ESV: “*Yet she will be saved through childbearing*”). That is an allusion to the false teaching in Ephesus that Artemis was the midwife-goddess, to whom women could appeal for safety in childbearing. We will say more about verses 13-15 when we address the other parts of Mike’s long video. For now, we note merely that Mike’s own understanding of verse 15 as set out in his notes is consistent with this verse being an allusion to women’s reliance on Artemis.

<sup>3</sup> We think the author goes a bit over the top in his criticisms of Mike, but his analysis is of good quality and easy to listen to.

<sup>4</sup> Prominent complementarian scholars, who understand New Testament Greek, acknowledge that the qualifications do not prove that all elders must be men. For our critique of Mike’s analysis of 1 Timothy 3, see our article ‘What Winger Presently Gets Wrong: Women Leaders in the New Testament (PART A)’ at <https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-presently-gets-wrong-women-leaders-in-the-new-testament-part-a/>. For a fuller discussion of the qualifications for elders, see Andrew’s article ‘Do the Elder Qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 Insist on Men, not Women?’ <https://terranwilliams.com/do-the-elder-qualifications-in-1-timothy-31-7-and-titus-15-9-exclude-women/>.

The result is: his complementarian position on this much-discussed verse falls down.

## Mike's argument on *authenteō*

Mike presents a closely reasoned argument in support of his view.

In introducing his study of *authenteō*, Mike says that two questions “**dominate**” it (3hr44mins):

Question (1):

***Does this word ... carry a meaning related to 'authority' or is it related to something else?***

Question (2):

***Does this term have a pejorative connotation – is it somehow negative automatically?***

After about four hours of discussion, his answers are (1) *authenteō* is related to authority, and (2) *authenteō* is not automatically negative.

Finally, after brief consideration of some context, Mike decides that Paul uses the verb *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 to mean ‘have authority’ in a positive sense. He concludes that women should not teach in a context of church authority and should not be elders in the church.

The principal steps in his argument go like this:

**Step 1** Before Paul's time, the related noun *authentēs* meant ‘murderer’. However, that is not relevant to 1 Timothy 2 because the meaning ‘murderer’ faded from the tongue of the common people. By the first century AD the noun *authentēs* meant ‘master’, in a positive or neutral sense. (3hr45m onwards)

**Step 2** The meaning ‘master’ at that time is confirmed by study of other related words: *authentikos*, *authentia*, *authentēsis*, *authentria*. (4hr25m onwards)

**Step 3** There are some examples of the use of the verb *authenteō* in the time period relevant to Paul. From the earliest known use in the first century BC until the conversion of Constantine in 312 AD, there are eight possible examples. None of these establishes a negative meaning for the verb *authenteō*. Some of them are related to authority. (4hr37mins onwards)

**Step 3A** Egalitarian scholar Linda Belleville claims that in the first century *authenteō* meant ‘dominate’ and not ‘authority’. But there are several major mistakes in her work. (5hr 49mins onwards)

(We have called this “Step 3A”, because it is a side issue, rather than a fresh step in Mike's argument. We will not need to discuss it separately.)

**Step 4** After Paul's time, the Church Fathers, who were Greek speakers, understood the verb *authenteō* to refer to authority. Mike considers Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Chrysostom, and briefly mentions a dozen other sources. (5hr58mins onwards)

**Step 5** Contrary to some egalitarian claims, early translations of 1 Timothy from Greek into other languages were mostly positive, and later translations show a mixture of views. Eight contemporary translations that are non-sectarian and well-respected take *authenteō* as positive, rather than supporting the negative egalitarian view. Generally, there have been non-pejorative translations

throughout time, with reasonable explanations for the exceptions. The translation “dominate” is a recent trend, but it is not present in the most respected English versions. (6hr22mins onwards)

**Step 6** Some egalitarians have relied on the etymology of *authentēō* to support their view. But etymology – the origin of a word – is an unreliable guide to meaning. And anyway, scholars cannot agree on the etymology of *authentēō*. Context is a better guide. (7hr09mins onwards)

**Step 7** Considering context within verse 12, Köstenberger has shown that the phrasing of verse 12 forces the two infinitive verbs *didaskein* (‘to teach’) and *authentēin* (‘to have authority’, a form of *authentēō*) to be either both positive or both negative. (7hr13mins onwards)

**Step 8** Since in the context of verse 12 *didaskein* (‘to teach’) does not have a negative qualifier and is positive, *authentēin* (‘to have authority’) is also positive. (7hr39mins onwards)

**Step 9** There are also other contextual clues that *authentēō* in 2:12 is positive: ‘learn’ in verse 11 corresponds to ‘teach’ in verse 12; ‘submission’ in verse 11 corresponds to ‘authority’ in verse 12. (7hr48mins onwards)

**Step 10** Some egalitarians, such as Belleville and Payne, abuse the term ‘or’ in verse 12 to change the meaning – to something like ‘to teach in a way that wrongly takes authority’. Köstenberger’s study rules this out. (7hr50mins onwards)

**Step 11** Conclusion: “‘**have authority**’ is the right translation” (7hr53mins)

**Step 12** Application: in context, 1 Timothy 2:12 relates to the functions of eldership, which entail teaching and authority. Teaching and authority are connected. There is a single idea behind them. The restriction relates to church authority. If a woman teaches in a way that does not relate to church authority, that is a different issue. Priscilla taught theology in a home environment, without church authority. Deborah was a judge over men. Complementarians differ from patriarchalists, who impose more expansive restrictions. (7hr54mins onwards)

If a ship sets out on the ocean heading in the wrong direction, and then makes adjustments in its course that go further and further away from where it should have been heading, it will certainly not arrive at the correct destination. That is the shape of Mike’s argument. Every step is a mis-step.

Before we examine the mis-steps, we must identify an underlying problem of method.

## Some clarity on method

Faced with a disputed word of uncertain meaning, two steps are of fundamental importance.

Number 1. Most important is to consider fully the actual context in which the word is used. It is not enough to look at just the one phrase or the one sentence or even the whole paragraph. The whole context must be examined.

In a New Testament letter, it requires tracing the writer’s train of thought through the letter. And has the writer expressed views on the same matter elsewhere?

There is also the canonical context: what have other New Testament authors said about the matter, and how does it fit into the storyline of the whole Bible?

And what can we find out about the historical and cultural context of the letter, which may help us to understand the author’s concern and the situation being addressed?



In the case of the use of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12, full attention to context is of heightened importance because it is a rare word, for which the relevant historical examples are few.

Number 2. The second most important step is to find out how the word was used by other authors around the relevant time period. This will indicate the semantic domain of the word – the general range of possible meanings. We can review whether the meaning we are getting from the context makes sense in light of the semantic domain.

Of lesser importance than Number 1 (whole context) and Number 2 (general range of meanings of the particular word at the relevant time), there is a possibility of getting some help from broader kinds of word studies:

- One can look at how the word was used at other times (which may be hundreds of years away from the actual time).
- One can look at other words that are related to the particular word we are interested in.
- One can look at the derivation of the word (etymology).

From their nature, such broader word studies are peripheral. If the issue is important, they should be carried out. But the assistance they can provide is inherently limited:

- The meanings of words change over time, so usage in more distant centuries may be quite misleading.
- While related words are sometimes very close in meaning, sometimes they are very different, so they can be misleading unless handled judiciously.
- Etymology is a last resort. Experience shows that, even if the derivation can be confidently identified, it can be misleading, because of the erratic way that meanings develop.

What about the relationship between Number 1 and Number 2?

A word study can only ever tell us the general range of possible meanings. Sometimes a usage is new – which is how languages change over time. So, a word study cannot tell us the actual meaning in context. It is the context that is decisive.

At the level of theory, Mike knows this. He says in the video:

***Context is King. Context is, like, über-King!*** (7hr13mins)

But those vivid words are said after more than three hours of discussing the meaning of *authentēō* without reference to the context. They are a belated acknowledgment that context is decisive. And even after that acknowledgment, Mike's examination of context is inadequate.

## Mis-steps #1 and #2 – The noun *authentēs* as 'murderer' or 'master', and related words

[Step 1: video 3hr45mins onwards; p37-45 of Mike's notes]

[Step 2: video 4hr25mins onwards; p45-47 of Mike's notes]

In Step 1 of his argument Mike focuses not on Paul's word *authentēō*, which is a verb, but on *authentēs*, which is a related noun. (For anyone whose grammar is a bit rusty, in our footnote we give a simplified reminder of the difference between a noun and a verb.)<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in Step 2 Mike focuses on words other than *authentēō* itself.

You may think: what a strange way to begin! Why begin with peripheral word studies, instead of starting with the whole context, or even with the semantic domain of *authentēō* in and around Paul's time?

There is a reason. The reason is Mike's reliance on the work of Al Wolters, in three scholarly articles and a book chapter.<sup>6</sup>

A few basic facts will make the mystery clear.

Fact 1: In Classical Greek, commencing more than 500 years before Paul wrote 1 Timothy, the noun *authentēs* appears about two dozen times in surviving texts, meaning 'murderer', or more specifically 'murderer of one's own kin'. In contrast, the first known use of the verb *authentēō* is not until the first century BC.

Fact 2: Since the noun *authentēs* appears in surviving sources some centuries earlier than the verb *authentēō*, it is likely that the verb may be derived in one way or another from the noun.

Fact 3: Wolters examines the eight actual or possible uses of the verb *authentēō* within the time period relevant to Paul, and proposes translations of them. In his detailed discussion, Wolters does not arrive at 'have authority' or 'exercise authority' for any of them.<sup>7</sup>

Fact 4: Wolters defends 'have authority' for Paul's use of *authentēō*, and he concludes that dictionaries of New Testament Greek ought to remove any suggestion of a negative sense ("*pejorative*") or of an inceptive sense ("*ingressive*").<sup>8</sup>

At first sight, Fact 4 does not appear to follow from Facts 1-3. To get from Facts 1-3 to Wolters' position in Fact 4 is a daunting challenge.

Since no direct route is available, Wolters takes a roundabout route. It involves postulating clear blue water between two meanings of *authentēs* – the original meaning of 'murderer' and a later meaning of 'master', which Wolters takes as informing Paul's use of *authentēō*. Wolters argues that the original meaning of 'murderer' was forgotten, except among a narrow class of people with literary pretensions, and that the new meaning 'master' was established before Paul wrote.

That roundabout route involves conquering some steep mountains, not least that

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<sup>5</sup> A verb refers to an action, while a noun refers to a real or abstract thing. If I say, 'I kicked the football', 'kicked' is a verb and 'football' is a noun.

<sup>6</sup> Wolters, 'A Semantic Study of [*authentēs*] and its Derivatives' *JGRChJ* 1 (2000) 145-175; reprinted 2006 in *JBMW* 11/1 44-65; Wolters, '[*Authentēs*] and its Cognates in Biblical Greek' *JETS* 52/4 (2009) 719-729; Wolters, 'An Early Parallel of [*authentēin*] in 1 Tim 2:12' *JETS* 54.4 (2011) 673-684; Wolters, 'The Meaning of [*Authenteō*]', in *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (eds Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn), 65-115. NOTE: when in the present article we refer to the book *Women in the Church*, our references are to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edn unless otherwise stated.

<sup>7</sup> A curious feature of Wolters' book chapter is that, without explanation, his summary of meanings on p83 differs in several ways from the actual translations arrived at in the detailed discussion earlier in the chapter. On p83, one of the translations is "have authority" – a possibility that he floated on p74, then, with fuller discussion, changed to "since I was ... a senior revenue official ... with respect to him" (p75).

<sup>8</sup> *Women in the Church*, 65-66, 113-114.

- *authentēs* as murderer continued to be used
  - shortly before Paul's time (in Wisdom of Solomon, which Paul drew upon in his letters), and
  - around Paul's time (by Philo), and
  - shortly afterwards (by Josephus),
- and
- in a process that began no later than the second century BC, *authentēs* appears to have extended beyond 'murderer' into 'perpetrator, 'doer', 'author',
- and
- the first definite, known use of *authentēs* to mean 'master' is after Paul (in *Shepherd of Hermas*).

Wolters claims to scale those mountains successfully. But his theory involves drawing strong inferences from comparatively slight evidence about the history of the word *authentēs*, and discounting contrary evidence. To supplement the rather thin evidence for his theory, he relies also on the history of some related words.

As we understand it, that is why Mike starts with Step 1, concerning the significance of *authentēs* as 'murderer' or 'master', and then goes on to Step 2, concerning some related words, but not *authentēō* itself.

Since those word studies are about derivations and related words, rather than how *authentēō* was used in and around Paul's time, in our view they are peripheral at best. We have included in Appendix 1 an examination of the topics covered in Mike's Step 1 and Step 2, where we show numerous errors in Mike's reasoning.

### Summary of Mis-steps #1 and #2

In summary, Mike's Step 1 and Step 2 are mis-steps because:

- Mike's approach gives undue priority to peripheral areas of inquiry, rather than focusing on the whole context of what Paul wrote and on the evidence of the meaning of *authentēō* in and around Paul's time;
- Wolters' theory about the derivation of *authentēō* draws strong conclusions from weak evidence, and requires that some of the evidence be downplayed. On the present state of the historical evidence, we can only guess at how small or how great is the distance between Wolters' theory and the actual derivation of *authentēō*.

In Appendix 1, we give further information about mistakes in Mike's Steps 1 and 2.

### Mis-step #3 – Uses of *authentēō* in and around Paul's time

[video 4hr37mins onwards; p47-61 of Mike's notes]

We have mentioned that the most important area in this discussion should be the whole context.

The second most important is the evidence of usage and meaning of *authentēō* in and around Paul's time.

Although Mike comes to this area rather late in his discussion, he rightly devotes significant attention to it (more than one hour of his video).

From the earliest known use in the first century BC until the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 AD, there are only eight possible examples, in addition to Paul's own use of it.

We will see that, contrary to Mike's view, these examples provide zero support for his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. None of them shows a meaning suitable for the authority of a church elder. Under this Mis-step #3 we will explain why.

Before we embark on looking at the eight possible examples, we need to say more about Mike's two dominating questions, which he uses in his assessment of the examples. Let's recall those questions, as explained by Mike:

Question (1):

***Does this word ... carry a meaning related to 'authority' or is it related to something else?***

Question (2):

***Does this term have a pejorative connotation – is it somehow negative automatically?***

In Mike's view:

***The first question helps us out. The second question is where the rubber meets the road.***  
(3hr44mins)

But those questions are not fit for Mike's purpose of interpreting 1 Timothy 2:12.

Mike's first question is misdirected.

It distorts the analysis because it skews the inquiry. The first question skews the inquiry because it is focused on 'authority'. The first question should have been the open question: What is the range of possible meanings of this word at the relevant time?

But at the same time, the phrase "***related to 'authority'***" is too broad for Mike's purpose. It lumps together all possible kinds of authority, without distinguishing between authority that is suitable for a church elder and other kinds of authority. There needed to be a question focused on the relevant kind of authority.

For example, the authority that God gives to elders to lead the flock as shepherds and care for them and be examples to them (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Peter 5:1-3) is not like the coercive authority that God gives to rulers to use physical force to punish evildoing (Romans 13:1-6). Jesus expressly forbids church leaders to act like secular rulers (Matthew 20:25-28), as Peter well remembers (1 Peter 5:3). We acknowledge that Paul sometimes envisages the possibility of having to exercise his authority as an apostle of Christ with considerable firmness (as in 2 Corinthians 13:10). But that would be an extreme circumstance, quite unlike the day-to-day function of elders leading a congregation, which is what Mike claims that 1 Timothy 2:12 is about.

So, Mike's Question (1) is too broad. It's like trying to do brain surgery with a chainsaw instead of a scalpel.

And Mike's Question (2) – is it automatically pejorative – is like asking whether criminals automatically break the law. The obvious answer is 'no, sometimes they behave well'. And words can be like criminals. Except for technical terms (like 'parietal lobe'), words do not do anything "automatically"; they often behave inconsistently. They are flexible. Their connotations can vary, depending on how they are used in context. A negative connotation that persists independently of

context is a rare thing. If we do a word study of the English word ‘murder’, we will undoubtedly conclude that its primary meaning is negative. We might not locate any example of a positive usage. But if your hungry friend says, “I could murder a Big Mac with fries!”, he is evoking a positive connotation, not a negative one.

The meaning of a word is not a fixed thing, set in stone; it depends on how the word is used in context. The English word ‘authority’ has a wide range of meanings, as any reliable dictionary will show. In the abstract, the English word ‘authority’ cannot be said to have automatically positive, negative or even neutral connotations. Authority may relate to persons or to things. It may be official, unofficial, or wrongful; even if official, it may be used well or badly. The authority of a king may be God’s provision (positive), but if a church elder exercises authority like a king, that is scandalous (negative).<sup>9</sup>

So, in summary, here is the problem: Mike is fixated on (1) whether usages of *authentēō* are related to ‘authority’, which distorts the inquiry and, anyway, is too vague a question to be useful, and on (2) whether the usages show the word to be inherently negative, which is not an illuminating question.

We can understand how he got into that fix; it is the impact of reading too many scholarly discussions (on both sides of the conversation) which have been imprecisely or simplistically targeted.

The result is that he keeps missing the most pertinent question, which is whether *authentēō* is an appropriate word for the regular function of an elder. In Mike’s argument, the rubber never meets the road.

Cynthia Westfall offers a much more sophisticated analysis of uses of *authentēō*.<sup>10</sup> She concludes that, where *authentēō* is what one human being is doing to another-

**... the people who are the targets of these actions are harmed, forced against their will (compelled), or at least their self-interest is overridden, because the actions involve the imposition of the subject’s will over against the recipient’s will ...**<sup>11</sup>

Mike claims that her view is not biblical, for using authority to compel others to do things isn’t necessarily a bad thing (4hr40mins).

But Mike is missing her point. He does not hear what she is saying. Church leadership, as envisaged by Jesus and by Paul, is not characterized by the exercise of coercive power to override the will of another person.<sup>12</sup>

Now we turn to the eight examples. We will follow Mike’s numbering of them.

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<sup>9</sup> It is not clear to us whether Mike has fully in mind the difference between connotation (an idea or feeling that a word may provoke) and denotation (the primary or literal meaning of a word). Perhaps Mike’s second question is intended to mean: Does *authentēō* have an automatically negative primary meaning? If that is what he intends, it is still the wrong question, because of the flexibility of words and the impact of context. It is artificial to try to divide all primary meanings into automatically positive or negative, or even into positive, negative or neutral. Life is not so tidy, nor are words.

<sup>10</sup> Westfall, ‘The Meaning of [*authentēō*] in 1 Timothy 2.12’ *JGRChJ* 10 (2014) 138-173. She examines transitivity, field, tenor, mode, register, alternate models of experience, appraisal and collocation (all of which are explained in her article). She subsequently refers to this work in *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, (2016).

<sup>11</sup> Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 292. Her remarks refer to uses not only around Paul’s time but also later.

<sup>12</sup> Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 292-294.

Philodemus, *De Rhetorica* 2.133 (Mike's #1)

The fragment is damaged, so that it is unclear whether the word *authentēō* is even used at all. Mike says this one is of no real help. We agree.

Papyrus *BGU* 1208.38 (Mike's #2)

Mike vividly communicates his excitement about this text:

***OK, now we're at something that I'm really excited about. It's going to be a lot of detail ... but man, I'm stoked!*** (4hr43mins)

He is excited because he believes that this example provides strong support for his view of 1 Timothy 2:12.

But here we will see in acute form the unsuitability of Mike's dominating questions.

Papyrus *BGU* 1208.38 is undoubtedly relevant to help us understand 1 Timothy 2:12. Mike is right to be excited about it. But his two questions divert him away from what matters. As a result, he does not see that, when correctly analyzed, this papyrus weighs heavily against his view of 1 Timothy 2:12.

We need to say first that this text is not easy to understand. Scholars have long struggled to make sense of what is going on in it.

For the phrase containing *authentēō*, Al Wolters offers the translation:

***since I was ... a senior revenue official ... with respect to him.***<sup>13</sup>

Philip Payne's literal translation is:

***I assumed authority against him.***<sup>14</sup>

Mike says he agrees with Andrew, quoting from Andrew's book:

***Payne's interpretation and Wolters' interpretation are so different one would hardly know that the same text was under consideration.***<sup>15</sup>

So, Mike employed New Testament scholar Gary Manning to translate it for him. Mike has helpfully provided Manning's article for download.<sup>16</sup> So far as we can tell, Manning has achieved some good progress in getting a better understanding of it, although uncertainties remain.<sup>17</sup>

It is a letter written about 27-26 BC. It uses a number of business and legal terms. Because it has suffered damage, there are a lot of gaps in it, which add to the difficulties.

The writer is Tryphon. He is a close associate of Asclepiades, who owns a family business. The letter describes various issues connected with the cost of passage for livestock on or across the Nile. One of them involves Peteesis, who is asking payment from Tryphon. There is mention of a *strategos*

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<sup>13</sup> *Women in the Church*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 370.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, 373, in Appendix 3.

<sup>16</sup> 'BGU 1208, A Letter from Tryphon to Asclepiades: Translation and Explanation', at <https://biblethinker.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-BGU-1208-Translation-and-Notes.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> The abbreviated reference '*BGU*' means 'Berliner Griechische Urkunden' (Berlin Greek Documents). The relevant volume is vol 4 of *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Koeniglichen Museen zu Berlin*, Weidmann, 1912. Line 38 reads: *authentēkotos pros auton*.

(possibly a police captain or magistrate). Another character is Antilochos, who is connected with contracting pilots, setting fares and renting dock space. And Calatytis is a boatman.

The issue that matters for our purposes concerns the rate for hiring Calatytis. Here is Manning's description of the basic flow of the letter, so far as concerns that issue:

***Tryphon is trying to resolve a problem that his boss, Asclepiades, has informed him about. There has been an error or fraud involving the boatman Calatytis, although other agents seem to be more at fault. The problem has been reported to the local strategos, and part of the letter recounts the legal moves so far. Tryphon and Asclepiades are concerned, because of the severity of the Nile flood this year, that they have to avoid being cheated or spending unnecessarily. ... ..***

***Tryphon is sending Calatytis' wage-contract to Asclepiades, so there was some resolution, although the terms may not be exactly what they want. Other complexities in the transport of the livestock have arisen: The cost of passage (separate from hiring the boatman) has been increased by Antilochos. Rent for the upper landing docks is supposed to be included in the ferry contract, but has been contested. However, there has been some success: the stopping of payment (to Peteesis and perhaps also to Antilochos) has resulted in the other parties agreeing to the terms of passage and renting the landing. Tryphon forced the issue of hiring Calatytis the boatman at the same rate, using the legal actions mentioned earlier.***

...

The part of the story where *authentēō* is used is where "**Tryphon forced the issue**". Manning explains further:

***Tryphon did not inherently have authority over Antilochos, but in the recent past he brought to bear two means of authority: he made a complaint to the strategos, and he and Asclepiades withheld payment on this contract. These two actions result in him now having some ability to push Antilochos to agree to terms that Tryphon thinks are fair.***

Manning translates the critical part of the letter as:

***And since I had exercised/asserted authority toward him, he agreed within the hour to secure (for?) Calatytis the boatman at the same fare.***

In light of Manning's explanations, the phrase 'exercised authority' or 'asserted authority' seems a little eccentric as a translation of *authentēō*, for Manning says plainly that Tryphon did not inherently have authority over Antilochos. Rather, Tryphon takes two steps that set up an imbalance of power, which enables him to force Antilochos to accept the terms that Tryphon and Asclepiades want.

Mike claims:

***Tryphon used some sort of authority he had over Antilochos to get him to agree to the lower payment.*** (5hr04mins)

But Mike's description does not match Manning's explanation.

This is not an exercise of an authority held by Tryphon over Antilochos but a deft use of forceful negotiating tactics. Tryphon uses a threat of some kind of legal action (involving the *strategos*), coupled with economic duress (withholding payment to pressurize Antilochos into backing down). That is what, according to Manning's explanation, the term *authentēō* is referring to.

Let's illustrate this with a parallel modern scenario. Let's say Mr Big has commissioned contractors to renovate his mansion. A price has been agreed in a binding contract. But halfway through, the contractors announce that the price is increasing. Mr Big and his chief of staff, Mr Strong, rightly feel this is unfair. So, Mr Strong reports the matter to some kind of judicial official or complains to the police. Then they stop all payments, including those that are legitimately owed. Finally, Mr Strong meets with a representative of the contractors. He threatens legal steps and announces that they will not pay even owed monies until the price is reduced to what was originally agreed. He uses these two levers to push the contractors into a corner. It works. The contractors remove the price hike.

Question: who of us would recount this story and use either the words, "Mr Strong exercised authority towards the contractors" or "Mr Strong asserted authority towards the contractors"? None of us, because he had no authority of his own over the contractors. We would more likely explain, in Manning's words, that Mr Strong had **ability to push** and he **forced the issue**.

At one point, Mike recognizes the element of coercive power in the stopping of payments:

***He's using this as some leverage – just like you might stop payment on a bill that's over the agreed-on amount.*** (5hr02mins)

Likewise, there is a coercive element in the involvement of the *strategos*. In regard to that involvement, Manning explains:

***Tryphon's legal actions have given him grounds to compel the negotiations in his favor.***

As Mike puts it:

***He brought in leverage and control into the situation.*** (5hr13mins)

If Manning's understanding of what is going on is correct, then this letter is describing effective business tactics. Manning's word "**compel**" and Mike's phrase "**leverage and control**" are well-chosen. This is a successful application of pressure, a coercive exercise of power by Tryphon (with and on behalf of Asclepiades) over Antiochos and Peteesis.

Manning's explanation confirms that the meaning of *authenteō* in this letter is notably similar to what several egalitarian scholars have said. According to Westfall,

***Antiochos was forced against his will ... forced to do what he had refused to do.***<sup>18</sup>

According to Linda Belleville, Tryphon "**took a firm stand with him**".<sup>19</sup>

When Mike assesses the significance of this text, he is blown off course by his two dominating questions.

In answer to his first question, he concludes that in *BGU* 1208 *authenteō* is related to authority.

In answer to his second question, Mike concludes that *authenteō* is not pejorative here. He ties that to Manning's explanation:

***Tryphon's overall tone suggests that he believes his actions were correct, and he believes the other side is guilty of fraud.***

Mike comments:

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<sup>18</sup> Westfall, 'The Meaning of [*authenteō*] in 1 Timothy 2.12', *JGRChJ* 10 (2014) 138-73, 161 n53.

<sup>19</sup> *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 217.



***That's huge, OK! This is huge – authenteō is being used here in a positive, not even neutral, but a positive sense. That's big!*** (5hr10mins)

But in truth these answers to Mike's dominating questions provide zero support for Mike's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12.

We fully recognize Tryphon regarded himself as positively justified in acting the way that he did. However, even if one stretches the meaning of the English word 'authority' to employ it in the translation of this letter, Tryphon's business tactics are foreign to anything that would be acceptable conduct by a church elder towards their flock. If *authenteō* is apt to describe setting up an imbalance of power and forcefully taking advantage of it, then it appears to be a quite unsuitable word for the exercise of authority by church leaders. Coercion, manipulation, using an imbalance of power to compel compliance – these have been much in the news recently, in stories of appalling misbehavior by pastors, which has been grossly damaging to Christ's church.

Because Mike is asking the wrong questions, his analysis misses the point.

### Methodus mystica (Mike's #3)

*Methodus mystica* is an astrological treatise.

Its original date is unknown. Different scholars have suggested possible dates from the third century BC to the third century AD. Wolters advances a strong argument for the range 100 BC to 50 AD.<sup>20</sup>

The passage refers to different occupations, from a ruler at the top, down through artisans, to a thief (or receiver of stolen goods) or one who takes care of 'seaside business' (or 'waterside trades') – presumably meaning a smuggler. Then the final expression, where *authenteō* occurs, appears to refer to one who is highly skilled (or predominant in cunning) and earns nothing, in contrast to occupations previously mentioned – presumably referring to a slave.

Different scholars propose different interpretations. It seems the verb *authenteō* is used to say that the slave is predominant or superior in skill or cunning, as compared with the previous occupations (perhaps the comparison is only with thieves and smugglers, perhaps also with artisans). Of course, that is quite different from saying that he is superior in authority over other persons.

The point that Mike takes from this is that it is not a negative usage.

That is correct, but there is something important that Mike does not spell out:

- This usage provides no support for the meaning of *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 for which Mike argues.

And there is something else that is important, which Mike also does not say.

The chief interest of this astrological text is the rare grammatical construction in which the verb *authenteō* is used. The verb *authenteō* has a direct object in the genitive case, and the object is one or more persons.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wolters, 'An Early Parallel of [*authentein*] in 1 Tim 2:12' *JETS* 54.4 (2011), 673-84. But compare Belleville in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 217, who briefly argues for the third century AD at the earliest.

<sup>21</sup> Wolters, 'An Early Parallel', 677. Transliterated, the original text as given by Wolters is *ton toutōn authentounta*. The word *authentounta* is a grammatical form of *authenteō* (a participle). The object of the verb is *toutōn* ('to these', or 'over these'). The text is often given as *ton pantōn authentounta*. That represents an emendation, which Wolters argues is unnecessary. The grammatical construction is the same either way. The final expression, which is under discussion, is *ton toutōn authentounta en tē technē kai mēden ktōmenon*.

There are only three known examples of the use of *authenteō* with this grammatical construction in the time period relevant to Paul. Two are in astrological texts. The other is Paul's own usage in 1 Timothy 2:12. (In later writings, this usage remains rare.)<sup>22</sup>

We will return to this rare grammatical feature later. We will need to consider where Paul may have picked it up and why he used it.

#### [Aristonicus Alexandrinus, \*On the Signs of the Iliad\* 1.694 \(Mike's #4\)](#)

This text is from around the turn of the era (BC to AD). The verb *authenteō* occurs in a passage concerning the use of an editing sign in a manuscript. In a phrase about the originator of a speech, the meaning of *authenteō* is 'be the originator of'.<sup>23</sup>

This meaning occurs also in later Greek. Presumably it is connected in some way with the adjective *authentikos* as meaning 'original' and with the noun *authentēs* as meaning 'author'. This is not an instance of *authenteō* being done by a person to another person.

Mike says frankly that this meaning has no connection with 1 Timothy 2 (5hr26mins).

He makes two points.

His first is that this meaning is not negative. We agree.

His second is:

***... it is possible that 'author' is related to 'authority', because the person speaking is the one who is primarily responsible for those words that were spoken. The person who's the author of the writing is the authority of ... the writings in themselves, so this word might relate to authority itself. Several scholars actually say, yes.*** (5hr26mins)

He then refers to Wolters' discussion of *authentikos*.

We have addressed that in Appendix 1, where we note that the idea of a report or document being authentic does not evoke an image of a person exercising authority over another person.

Think of it this way:

- We are quoting Mike throughout this article. He is the originator of the words. He has authority over what he says. But that does not mean that he is in authority over us.

On any view, the meaning of *authenteō* in *The Signs of the Iliad* has nothing to do with Paul's sense in 1 Timothy 2, as Mike concedes. So, it provides no support for the idea that Paul is there speaking of the proper authority and function of a church elder.

#### [Ptolemy, \*Tetrabiblos\* \(also called \*Apotelesmatika\*\) 3.13.10 \(Mike's #5\)](#)

This is a Hellenistic astrological text, from around the middle of the second century AD.

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<sup>22</sup> The few examples are all from Christian writings, and are explicable either as direct allusions to Paul's words or as dependent on the writer's familiarity with Paul's grammatical construction. For details, see Wolters in *Women in the Church*, 93-96.

<sup>23</sup> Wolters' translation of the passage is: "For it is usually added in recitation when the originator of the speech ... has said something shocking. But as it is, how could it be said with reference to Odysseus, who is reporting the words spoken by Achilles?"

Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* provides insight into some of the false beliefs that Paul probably encountered. That is because Ptolemy was an anthologist, who collated astrological lore from a wide range of earlier sources known in the Hellenic world.<sup>24</sup>

Mike uses a standard translation by F. E. Robbins, published in 1940.<sup>25</sup> It is worth noticing that, owing to its date and provenance, the translation was certainly not influenced by the current debate between complementarians and egalitarians.

Robbins translates *authentēō* as 'dominates'.

Ptolemy starts a long sentence with these words-

***If Saturn alone is ruler of the soul and dominates Mercury and the moon, if he has a dignified position with reference to the universe and the angles, he makes his subjects lovers of the body, ... ..***

Egalitarian scholar Linda Belleville here translates *authentēō* as "domineers over".<sup>26</sup> And complementarian scholar Al Wolters here translates it as "has gained mastery of".<sup>27</sup> The three expressions, "dominates", "domineers over", "has gained mastery of", all indicate power exercised so as to control – to influence in a way that has decisive effect. We suggest the English verbs 'overmaster' or 'overpower' would also catch the right nuance in the context.

This usage of *authentēō* does not fit Mike's theory about the positive connotations of the word. He downplays it. Trying to keep his ship afloat, Mike characterizes this usage as 'factual'. He says:

***This one is not pejorative or negative, it's just factual. You might suggest it's positive – I don't think it's positive, I think it's just factual. It's just moon influenced this, Saturn influenced that. That's, that's all it is. ... ..*** (5hr37mins)

He also mentions 'authority', though he hesitates to insist on it here:

***That's, that's all it is. And it is relating to [pause] authority or control – at least, control you might say.*** (5hr37mins)

This text is certainly about control, and Mike gives no reasons for rejecting Robbins' translation "dominates" as unsuitable.

Because of the shape of the scholarly discussion, we need to emphasize here a basic linguistic point. The real issue is not which English word we select as an equivalent for *authentēō*. Nor is it whether the selected word is in itself positive or pejorative. Just like Greek words, English words can have different connotations in different contexts. If an older sibling 'dominates' their younger sibling, that's pejorative, but if the best football team 'dominates' the league this season, that's a compliment. The real issue is always the meaning in the actual context.

In *Tetrabiblos*, the powerful control exercised by Saturn over Mercury and the moon is not a good match for the function of an elder in relation to the flock. Whichever translation one selects, an elder

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<sup>24</sup> See Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, 257-258, in chapter 12, under the heading 'Using the second key to aid understanding of 2:11-12'.

<sup>25</sup> The translation is in the Loeb Classical Library series. The date of 1940 is confirmed on the LCL website <https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL435/1940/volume.xml>. The translator, F.E Robbins (1884-1963), was Professor of Greek at the University of Michigan.

<sup>26</sup> Belleville in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn), 217 (mistakenly footnoted as Robbins' translation).

<sup>27</sup> Wolters in *Women in the Church*, 78.

should not “dominate”, “domineer over”, “gain mastery of”, “overmaster” or “overpower” the flock. This example therefore counts against Mike’s interpretation of *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12.

Mike brings in here five uses of the adjective *authentikos* in Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*. But they do not support his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. And some of them fit very well with Ptolemy’s use of the verb *authenteō* to refer to domination, domineering or mastering. We give the details in Appendix 2.

So, we return to Ptolemy’s use of the verb *authenteō* in his statement about Saturn dominating Mercury and the moon. Wolters makes an important point here:

***... in this case [authenteō] describes a relationship not between Saturn and people but between Saturn and other planets.***

***As is customary in astrological parlance, planets are spoken of in anthropomorphic terms. Just as they are elsewhere said to “rejoice,” to “regard,” and to “witness,” so they are here said to “rule.” Not only do the planets have the names of personal gods (Saturn, Mercury, and the like), but they themselves are spoken of as persons. ... This means that [authenteō] in this passage illustrates its use with the genitive of the person (as in 1 Tim. 2:12) ...***<sup>28</sup>

We have already mentioned that there are only three known examples of the use of *authenteō* with this grammatical construction in the time period relevant to Paul: two of them are in astrological texts, and the third is Paul’s own usage.

That striking fact brings us to a gaping hole in Mike’s work on the meaning of *authenteō*. He has omitted to consider why Paul uses this rare word.

In Appendix 1, we identify how Mike ignores Belleville’s important point about this: why did Paul pick none of the usual words for the ordinary exercise of authority? As she says, a logical reason is that *authenteō*:

***... carried a needed nuance that was particularly suited to the Ephesian situation.***<sup>29</sup>

There are two parts to this question about Paul’s reason for picking this word.

The first part has to do with the regular words that Paul steps over and does not use.

If Paul is talking about who should exercise authority in the church, why doesn’t he use one of the regular Greek words for authority or leadership, like he does *everywhere else* that he mentions authority or leadership? The Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon for the New Testament* identifies 13 words in the semantic domain “**exercise authority**” and 48 words in the semantic domain “**rule, govern**”, but *authenteō* is not among them. It places that word only in the different semantic domain of “**control, restrain**”.<sup>30</sup>

If, as Mike says, Paul is referring in verse 12 to church leadership, in particular, eldership functions, then why does Paul not employ one of his own words for an elder’s function which he uses later in the same letter (*proistēmi* = ‘to preside, lead’ in 5:17; or *epimeleomai* = ‘to care for’ in 3:5), or the word for the elders’ responsibility to ‘shepherd’ a church (*poimainō*), which we find in his speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28; see also John 21:16; 1 Peter 5:2), or even the word which the writer

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<sup>28</sup> Wolters in *Women in the Church*, 78-79.

<sup>29</sup> Belleville in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Just to be clear, we are not suggesting that Louw-Nida is better than other lexicons; our purpose is to illustrate the oddity of using *authenteō*.

of Hebrews uses for the function of church leadership (*hēgeomai*) (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24; see also Acts 15:22)?

Paul's avoidance of all of the regular words for church leadership cries out for an explanation. And it strongly implies that he is not talking about regular church leadership.

The second part of this question has to do with Paul's desire to communicate with his original audience. He is writing a letter with instructions to Timothy. Timothy will be able to read it out to anyone who is being difficult or resisting Timothy's implementation of Paul's instructions. Paul wants to be understood. Why use a rare word?

We need to understand the real nature of the issue here.

It is often mentioned that *authentēō* is a so-called *hapax legomenon*, that is, a word that is used only once in the whole of the New Testament. If we compare it with the usual word for authority (*exousia*), *exousia* occurs over 100 times in the New Testament. But the issue goes much further. There are hundreds of words that are used only once in the New Testament, and we usually know what they mean partly from their context and partly because the words are used plenty of times in writings outside the New Testament. The point is: *authentēō* is not like that. This word is so rare that we have only a little to go on.

If we compare uses not just in the New Testament but in all surviving ancient Greek literature, *exousia* occurs between 1,000 and 2,000 times.<sup>31</sup> But *authentēō* is so rare that we have just eight actual or possible examples of the word being used at any time before Paul, or in Paul's own time, or up to 312 AD, other than Paul's own use of it or citations of what Paul wrote. And after 312, there is not even one known use of the word in a non-Christian author.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, historical evidence is always patchy, and words can be spoken without necessarily being written down, but still the evidence of usage is remarkably small. The verb which Paul chose is rare.

Now consider this: Paul was a skilled communicator.

*If as a skilled communicator you want to communicate effectively, and be understood, you don't choose a rare word, without explaining it, unless there is some special circumstance which means that you are confident it will ring a bell with your audience.*

What could the nuance possibly be, which will ring a bell with Paul's audience?

Several clues are staring us in the face.

The first clue is the possible source of the particular grammatical construction that Paul uses.

Paul is writing in about 63/64 AD.<sup>33</sup> This construction is used in *Methodus mystica*, which is probably to be dated between 100 BC and 50 AD. And it is used in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, which was written after Paul's time but records Hellenic astrology from earlier times.

Where did Paul pick up this expression? We cannot know for sure, but the only evidence that we have points to his getting it from astrological lore.

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<sup>31</sup> Gupta, *Tell Her Story*, 173, says 1,500 times.

<sup>32</sup> Wolters, in *Women in the Church*, 109: "another striking feature of the post-312 use of [*authentēō*] is that it occurs only in the writings of Christians."

<sup>33</sup> For more information on dating 1 Timothy and the related events, see Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, 239, in chapter 12, under the heading 'The historical context'.

How so? Because he spends three years ministering in Ephesus (52-55 AD), where the worship of Artemis of the Ephesians is very big. Since the goddess is associated with astrology, he ministers to people who are involved with Hellenic astrological lore. (An online search will readily find photographs of statues of Artemis, which were standing in Ephesus during Paul's time there, in which the signs of the Zodiac can be seen draped around her neck.) Paul could scarcely have avoided encountering Hellenistic astrology in Ephesus.

In other parts of the video, Mike plays down the relevance of Artemis. He rebuts some mistaken egalitarian claims about the Artemis cult, but he misses multiple allusions to it in Paul's letter.

As we might expect, given the high importance of Artemis in Ephesus, Paul's first letter to Timothy contains a number of allusions to astrology, which appears to have been one element in the false teachings that were circulating.<sup>34</sup>

Why might Paul use a word from astrology when he writes to Timothy in Ephesus? Could it be that one of its meanings in astrology suits his purpose, and it will ring a bell with the people that Timothy needs to persuade?

In addition to Paul's choice of *authentēō*, there are more intriguing resemblances between astrological lore and Paul's letter. Here is some more of the relevant passage in *Tetrabiblos*:

***If Saturn alone is ruler of the soul and dominates [authentēō] Mercury and the moon, ... he makes his subjects lovers of the body, ... dictatorial, ... lovers of property, avaricious, violent, amassing treasure ...***

There are elite women in Ephesus who are lovers of the body, lovers of property, avaricious, amassing treasure (consider 1 Timothy 2:9; 5:6, 8, 11, 16; 6:9-10, 17).

In 5:13 Paul describes the young widows with the word *phluaros*, which means 'talkers of nonsense' (see NIV 2011, correcting the older translation 'gossips'). Astrology is nonsense.

In the same verse, Paul complains that they say things they ought not to say. Like all false teachings, astrology should not be promoted.

Still in 5:13, Paul says the young widows go from house to house, and that they are idle (Greek, *argos*).

Progress from house to house was a key idea in ancient astrology. There were understood to be twelve 'places' or 'houses', each representing a different stage or aspect of a person's life. The word *argos* was the name of the eighth of the twelve astrological houses, known as the idle house, or house of death. Why does Paul emphasize *argos*, saying it twice in the same sentence? We might get the hint that those who involve themselves with progress through the astrological houses are on a path to death, rather than life. Paul says some of them have already turned away to follow Satan (5:15).

In 5:14, Paul instructs such women to re-marry, bear children (compare 2:15), and 'rule the house', using the verb *oikodespoteō*, which is used nowhere else in the New Testament. Why has he used that particular word just here?

Let's return to Robbins' translation:

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<sup>34</sup> See Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, 255-258, in chapter 12, under the heading 'Using the second key to aid understanding of 2:11-12'.

***If Saturn alone is ruler [oikodespoteia] of the soul and dominates [authenteō] Mercury ...***

Or Wolters' translation:

***Saturn, therefore, once he has taken sole 'house'-control [oikodespoteia] of the soul and has gained mastery [authenteō] of Mercury ...***

Paul's unusual word choice looks like another allusion to astrology, for Ptolemy uses the closely related noun *oikodespoteia* in close proximity to *authenteō*.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, one of Paul's concerns about the false teachers is that they want to be teachers of the law (1:7). Might 1 Timothy 2:12 imply a risk that the elite women in Ephesus may be, as in Robbins' translation, "***dictatorial***", telling a man what to do, but telling him wrongly?

Is every single one of these resemblances between astrology and Paul's letter to Timothy a mere random coincidence? We doubt it.

What is Mike's explanation for them?

He does not say, for he never considers why Paul chose the unusual astrological word *authenteō* or why he used it with the same rare grammatical construction as we see in astrological lore.

Near the start of his discussion of *authenteō*, Mike almost acknowledges that he needs to think seriously about why Paul uses the word. He says:

***When Paul uses it, does he pick this word instead of another word for authority – exousia or something – does he pick this word because this word has a negative connotation and he's only saying: I don't allow a woman to have this kind of negative authority over a man, as opposed to having authority over a man?*** (3hr45mins)

But Mike's two dominating questions send him off track, so that he never offers a reason either for Paul's negative choice of not using any of the ordinary words for church leadership or for Paul's positive choice to use the unusual term *authenteō*.

If Paul is not choosing this word to make his remarks more pointed, because it is used in astrology, then there must still be some other particular reason, which relates to the situation that he is addressing, for his choice of such an unusual word.

[Moeris Atticista, \*Lexicon Atticum\* entry for \*autodikēn\* \(Mike's #6\)](#)

This is an entry in a dictionary written in the second or third century AD. The authenticity of the available text is disputed. Al Wolters offers a reasonable emendation of the text to improve the author's spelling. As amended by him, the entry should be read to say that *autodikein* in Attic Greek is *authentein* in Hellenic Greek.

Wolters explains that the Attic Greek verb *autodikein* means 'to plead one's own cause'.

But this meaning does not support Mike's case.

That does not stop Mike from trying. He says that acting on their own in court means

***"being sort of under their own authority, you might, you might say"***. (5hr38mins)

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<sup>35</sup> Note also that, if the women follow Paul's advice to remarry and bear children, they can take to heart his encouragement to rely on the salvation that comes through the Childbearing (the coming of Christ), rather than relying on Artemis for safety in childbearing (2:15).

Perhaps conscious of the weakness of his point, Mike comments:

***“Maybe you think I’m stretching it a bit.”***

That is a realistic comment.

This is not an example of *authentēō* being done by one person to another person. The meaning stated in this ancient dictionary certainly has nothing to do with having or exercising authority over another person. Paul’s use of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2 certainly has nothing to do with pleading one’s own cause in court.

So, Moeris Atticista provides no support for Mike’s interpretation.

[Papyrus P. Tebtunis 276.28 \(Mike’s #7\)](#)

This is an astrological text dated to the late second or early third century AD.

It is damaged at the point of interest. The nature of the damage is such that it is not possible to be confident which particular word is used, but it is reasonably clear that it is either *authentēō* or a related word. According to Wolters, the appropriate reconstruction would be something either about rule or about governorship.<sup>36</sup>

Mike skips this one, because of the damage.<sup>37</sup>

But on reflection, this text is significant. It is yet another astrological text where either *authentēō* or a related word is used.

We are intrigued by Al Wolters’ assessment of this text and some others. In his 2011 article, he gathers 12 examples of either *authentēō* or a related word being used in astrological lore, relevant to the time of Paul. Referring to the time period before 200 AD, he says:

***Given the relative paucity of [authentēs] “master” and its cognates in this time period, it is their use in these astrological texts which is particularly relevant for understanding [authentēō] in 1 Tim 2:12.***<sup>38</sup>

We have already noted the significance of astrology in Paul’s spiritual struggle in Ephesus.

[Scholion on Aeschylus, Eumenides 42 \(Mike’s #8\)](#)

A scholion is a comment on an earlier text.

It is agreed on all sides that in this scholion the meaning of *authentēō* is ‘murder’.

But there are disputes over both the date of the scholion and its significance.

As to dating, it could be first century BC. But it could be later than Constantine.

The reason that Mike thinks the scholion is “**important**” and discusses it in his video is to rebut the idea that it may provide support for a negative meaning of *authentēō*.

On any view, this example cannot provide positive support for Mike’s position. ‘Murder’ is nothing like ‘have authority’.

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<sup>36</sup> *Women in the Church*, 80-81.

<sup>37</sup> In *Men and Women in Christ*, 373, in Appendix 3, Andrew commented that it was unclear.

<sup>38</sup> Wolters, ‘An Early Parallel’, 683-4. After this comment, he sets off on what is in our view the tangential issue of whether it “has a pejorative or an ingressive nuance”.



Review: what does *authentēō* mean in Paul's time, and why does he use that word?

Mike's analysis is defective, chiefly because his dominating questions are misdirected.

He keeps missing the vital question: is *authentēō* an appropriate word for the proper function of a church elder?

In Papyrus *BGU* 1208.38 (Mike's #2), *authentēō* refers to a forceful use of negotiating tactics – economic duress, and a threat of legal action – to compel the other party to back down from a wrongful demand. That is not how Paul expects an elder to relate to their flock.

*Methodus Mystica* (Mike's #3) provides no support for Mike's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. But it does show *authentēō* used in an astrological text, and with the same rare grammatical construction which Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:12.

Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (Mike's #5) provides some fascinating information for our study. (For Ptolemy's uses of the related adjective *authentikos*, see Appendix 2.)

In *Tetrabiblos*, translations of *authentēō* by respectively Robbins, Belleville and Wolters render it as “*dominates*”, “*domineers over*”, and “*has gained mastery of*”. These all indicate power exercised so as to control.

Mike characterizes this use of *authentēō* as “*just factual*”. But the dominating control exercised by Saturn over Mercury and the moon is not a model for the function of an elder in relation to the flock. This example therefore counts against Mike's interpretation of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12.

The English verbs “overmaster” and “overpower” would also catch the right nuance in *Tetrabiblos*. Given the radical difference in the contexts, that is remarkably similar to the usage in *BGU* 1208, where Tryphon overmastered or overpowered Antiochos, not by planetary influence but by coercive and effective persuasion.

There is nothing in the examples of *authentēō* from the relevant time period that supports Mike's translation ‘have authority’, in the sense in which Mike means it in 1 Timothy. *BGU* and *Tetrabiblos* suggest a relevant meaning of ‘exert power over’ or ‘dominate’, with a connotation of decisive influence.

That conclusion should not be a surprise. Listen carefully to Wolters, who writes:

**... the meaning that is usually assigned to the verb in 1 Tim 2:12 (“have authority over”) is based primarily on the verb's later usage, on the meaning of its cognates, and on the ancient versions of this biblical verse.<sup>39</sup>**

That is a realistic assessment.

In our view, it points to the lack of a solid foundation for the translations of this verse which are favored by complementarians.

Here is Payne, to the same effect:

**Not even one instance of the later ecclesiastical use of [authentēō] with the meaning “to have authority over” or “to exercise authority” has been established before or near the time of Paul.<sup>40</sup>**

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<sup>39</sup> Wolters, “An Early Parallel of [authentēō] in 1 Tim 2:12,” *JETS* 54 (2011): 673-684. (673)

<sup>40</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 373.

Zooming out again to the bigger picture, we notice that Mike somehow never quite articulates what his complementarian thesis entails. The basic idea behind it is this:

- When Paul was writing 1 Timothy 2:12, he wanted to select a fitting word for the kind of leadership authority appropriate to male elders, so he selected *authentēō*.

After our survey of uses of *authentēō* in the relevant time period, that idea looks implausible. Of course, it would be helpful if we had a greater quantity of historical evidence showing how *authentēō* was used in and around Paul's time. But that is no reason to disregard the evidence that we have or to draw a conclusion that is in conflict with it.

Besides, there is a gaping hole in Mike's work. He has omitted to consider why Paul uses this rare word, and does so with the rare grammatical construction found in astrological texts.

Why does Paul expect his audience to know what he means by this rare word? And if Paul is really thinking of church eldership, as Mike believes, why has Paul stepped over all the ordinary words for authority or leadership?

We have noted Al Wolters' assessment that the usage of *authentēō* and related words in astrological texts "**is particularly relevant for understanding [authentēō] in 1 Tim 2:12.**" In addition, we have noted numerous resemblances between astrological lore and Paul's letter. We invite consideration of this question:

- Is every one of those resemblances a mere random coincidence? Or – if we bring together other data in 1 Timothy about some women in Ephesus<sup>41</sup> – is Paul concerned to forestall an elite, wealthy woman, who uses and promotes astrology, forcefully and effectively influencing a man, to damaging effect?

## Mis-step #4 – How the Church Fathers understood *authentēō*

[video 5hr58mins onwards; p63-67 of Mike's notes]

After Paul's time, says Mike, the Church Fathers understood the verb *authentēō* to refer to authority. And the Church Fathers were native Greek speakers.

Mike refers in some detail to Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Chrysostom, and he briefly mentions a dozen other sources. (5hr58mins onwards)

But Mike's analysis is marred by many mistakes. And irrespective of those mistakes, it is fundamentally flawed, as we shall explain.

### Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria – Mike's mistakes

Summarizing what Mike says about these two Church Fathers:

- He refers to a work of Irenaeus written about 180 AD. He claims that Irenaeus uses *authentēō* three times to refer to authority (6hr00mins).
- Clement of Alexandria flourished around 200 AD. Mike seems to claim that Clement uses *authentēō* twice to mean 'authority'. He suggests this is "**huge**", because of the absence of

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<sup>41</sup> Consider 1 Timothy 1:3, 7 with 2:9, 15; 5:6, 8, 11, 13-14, 16; 6:9-10, 17.

any pejorative connotation, even though Clement is aware of the meaning ‘murder’ in Attic Greek (6hr01-02mins).

But as far as we can discover, those claims are mistaken. Neither Irenaeus nor Clement ever uses the word *authentēō* in their writings. We’ve put the details in Appendix 3.

### Origen – and the fundamental flaw in Mike’s analysis

Origen flourished in the first half of the third century AD. According to Mike, Origen uses the word *authentēō* for ‘authority’ twice. (6hr03mins; pages 63-64 of his notes, where “Origen” should read “Origen”).

In fact, there is only one example in Origen’s writings, not two.<sup>42</sup>

Moving quickly on from that mistake, it is here that we come to the fundamental flaw in Mike’s analysis of the evidence from the Church Fathers.

Mike refers to a passage in Origen, which he regards as “*super cool*” because it shows Origen’s interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 (6hr03mins). He displays on screen Al Wolters’ (controversial) translation of the passage in the third edition of the book *Women in the Church*.<sup>43</sup>

But in the first edition of that book, complementarian scholar Henry Baldwin made an important observation:

***Among the church fathers, we find direct quotation of 1 Tim. 2:12 appearing more than twenty times. Obviously, such quotation offers little lexical help in understanding the meaning of [authentēō] ...*** (197, n23)

Why would such quotations “*obviously*” offer little help for understanding *authentēō*? Baldwin does not spell it out, but there is an obvious reason:

- The Church Fathers largely held an unbiblical view of women as inferior to men both in rank and in nature. They read 1 Timothy 2 to fit in with that view. For example, Paul’s reasoning was explained as meaning that women must not lead because of the inherent weakness of women’s moral and intellectual nature, as compared with men’s.<sup>44</sup>

That meant in practice that the Church Fathers in their writings sometimes derided women and disrespected them, treating them like lesser humans.<sup>45</sup> Few commentators today would write, as did Clement of Alexandria, that a man’s beard is the token of his superior nature.<sup>46</sup>

The traditional view of women among the Church Fathers has been rejected by both sides in the debate over women’s ministry, because it is unbiblical. Women are not morally and intellectually inferior in their created nature. Mike himself has insisted in his video on Genesis (Part 2 of his Women in Ministry series) that women are created in the image of God, no less than men.

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<sup>42</sup> In ‘A Semantic Study’, Wolters lists a second reference in Origen, but it is not *authentēō*. It is in Wolters’ examples of the noun *authentia* or *authentēia*.

<sup>43</sup> Page 87. Wolters’ translation is controversial because he makes a conjectural emendation to the Greek text and makes several translation decisions which are out of step with others, but it is not necessary to enter into those points here.

<sup>44</sup> We will see a vivid example when we consider Chrysostom, below.

<sup>45</sup> Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, chapter 1. See also chapter 2 of Williams, *How God Sees Women*.

<sup>46</sup> *The Instructor* 3.3.

So, can we rely on the Church Fathers' understanding of what Paul meant by *authentēō*? The answer is no, because they interpreted 1 Timothy 2 in line with their mistaken, culturally-derived beliefs about women's inferiority.

Like other Church Fathers, Origen had firm views on the importance of restricting women's activities in the church.

The passage on which Mike relies is a fragment from Origen's commentary on 1 Corinthians, where he discusses 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, concerning women's silence in the worship assembly.

In Fragment 74, Origen cites the words "***The women should keep silence in the churches***". He says that, even if a woman has the gift of prophecy, she must not speak in the assembly. He also cites Paul's words from 1 Timothy 2:12. Then he says that in that text (or, in some translations, in another place) Paul has spoken more securely about the woman not being a leader of the man by means of the word. He follows that with a citation of Titus 2:3-4, with the explanation that women should indeed be teachers of what is good, but not with men sitting and listening to them.

Further on, Origen emphasizes:

***"For it is improper for a woman to speak in an assembly," no matter what she says, even if she says admirable things, or even saintly things, that is of little consequence, since they come from the mouth of a woman.***<sup>47</sup>

This fragment plainly conveys Origen's view that women should not in any circumstances speak in a worship assembly. Origen understands this rule of total silence to be additionally supported by 1 Timothy 2:12.

Mike has overlooked that he firmly rejected Origen's view of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in his Part 11 video ('Five Views on Women Keep Silent').

In his notes for Part 11, Mike rightly protested:

***Total silence doesn't fit the context at all and creates massive contradictions.***

But total silence is Origen's view, which Origen bases on both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12.

And in this Part 12 video, Mike has said, in regard to 1 Timothy 2:12:

***... it doesn't mean total silence.*** (2hr05mins)

According to Mike's view, therefore, (and ours) Origen was definitely wrong in what he said in Fragment 74:

- Origen's exposition of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 cannot be relied on, because Origen's view does not fit the context at all and creates massive contradictions.

And

- Origen is wrong specifically about 1 Timothy 2:12, because that verse is not referring to total silence.

Yet Mike is relying on what Origen said in that Fragment, in support of Mike's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2!

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<sup>47</sup> Translation by Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, 29.

So, the position of Mike the BibleThinker is that we should rely on what Origen says, which is “*super cool*”, and at the same time reject it because it’s definitely wrong.

Are you baffled? We are.

Near the end of his discussion of *authentēō* in his Part 12 video, Mike alludes to the sorry history of women’s mistreatment in the church, owing to unbiblical beliefs. He says:

**... we should fight ... against deriding women and disrespecting them and treating them like they’re ... lesser humans. Absolutely, we should be fighting, because that is ... a problem throughout time and we should fight against those things.** (7hr08mins)

So, Mike is there telling us to fight against the Church Fathers’ unbiblical view of women. Yet one hour earlier, Mike was urging us to be persuaded by Origen’s view of what 1 Timothy 2 means for women, because Origen was a Church Father and a native speaker of Greek. More self-contradiction.

Mike’s analysis of the evidence from the Church Fathers is fundamentally flawed, because he fails to take into account their unbiblical view of women’s nature, which Mike himself rejects.

Church Fathers who interpreted *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 to prohibit women from having authority over men did so because of their prior prejudice that women were inferior to men. From their point of view, everybody knew that women were inferior. It was a fact of life. It sometimes needed to be *said*, but it seldom needed to be *argued from Scripture*. Rather, the Fathers drew inferences from their general convictions about women’s defective nature. In our footnote, we cite a complementarian scholar who makes that point.<sup>48</sup>

That historical fact is of importance for our study of *authentēō*. It needs to be set alongside some further facts concerning the historical use of that verb, which are crisply brought out by Wolters:

**Not surprisingly, apart from the use of the verb in 1 Timothy 2:12 (and one place in Origen where that text is quoted), its rare occurrences before Constantine are all found in pagan authors. What is surprising, however, is that its use after 312 occurs exclusively in Christian writers.**<sup>49</sup>

What should we reasonably infer from those facts? We should infer that Christian usage of *authentēō* after the New Testament period was influenced by Paul’s use of the verb in 1 Timothy 2:12, seen through the prism of the Church Fathers’ defective view of women. (The historical record shows *authentēō* being used in reference to rule or authority from some time in the fourth century.)<sup>50</sup>

The Church Fathers’ defective view of women demands that we use great caution in drawing conclusions from what they say, concerning what Paul originally meant by *authentēō*. We do not see

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<sup>48</sup> Doriani says in a historical survey: “By modern standards, ancient discussions of 1 Timothy 2 and women’s issues were rare and unsophisticated. Yet there was debate, even if *it rose from general convictions about God, men, and women, rather than exegesis*”: *Women in the Church* (1<sup>st</sup> edn), 220 (emphasis supplied). And that attitude persisted through the centuries. For example, the exposition in Calvin’s Commentary on 1 Timothy 2:12, and his reconciliation of that text with the rule of Deborah, were based not on exegesis of the texts but on what he called “the ordinary rules of government”, in particular the claim that government by women “has always been regarded by all wise persons as a monstrous thing”.

<sup>49</sup> *Women in the Church*, 67.

<sup>50</sup> Around 325 AD, Eusebius refers to God the Father as *authentountos* (‘ruling’) in *On Ecclesiastical Theology*, 3.5.21.1. Around 370 AD, Basil uses it to mean ‘exercise authority’ in *The Letters* 69, line 45. These references are identified in Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 361, 374.

such caution in Mike’s analysis. Instead of caution, we see self-contradiction. That is a fundamental flaw.

### Chrysostom – confirming the fundamental flaw, and more mistakes

John Chrysostom lived from 350 to 407 AD.

Mike says Chrysostom uses *authenteō* to refer to authority 124 times in his authentic works. He gets this from Wilshire’s article (6hr06mins). Mike does not say that he has checked it. If Wilshire’s article is as accurate in regard to Chrysostom as it is in regard to Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria (see Appendix 3), then we may take this statistic with a pinch of salt.

Nonetheless, it is surely right that Chrysostom sometimes uses *authenteō* to refer to authority. That is exactly what we should expect, knowing of Chrysostom’s view of women’s inherent inferiority and his consequent interpretation of 1 Timothy 2.

So, what does Chrysostom say about 1 Timothy 2 in his *Homilies* on that letter?

In Homily 9, Chrysostom ignores the word *authenteō*, offering no explanation of it. Instead, he emphasizes women’s silence and that they must not teach. He explains Paul’s view of women like this:

***For the sex is naturally somewhat talkative: and for this reason he restrains them on all sides.***

Referring to 1 Timothy 2:14, Chrysostom adds this interpretation of Paul’s thinking:

***The woman taught once, and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach. But what is it to other women, that she suffered this? It certainly concerns them; for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively.***

So, women cannot teach in the church and must be silent, because by nature they are talkative, weak and fickle. That was in line with the conventional cultural view concerning women, which was a serious infection in the body of the church.

When Chrysostom says “***weak and fickle***”, he is not referring merely to women’s supposed inconsistencies but to their moral deficiencies, as compared with men.

His view that women are morally defective, being more susceptible to sin than men, is seen again in his discussion of the priesthood. He emphasizes that a bishop (overseer) must care not only for “***the male portion***” of the flock but also for-

***the female, which needs more particular forethought, because of its propensity to sins.***<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, when discussing 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, he explains the requirement that women be completely silent in the assembly by referring to their defective nature, as compared with men:

***... the woman is in some sort a weaker being and easily carried away and light minded.***<sup>52</sup>

A fuller survey of Chrysostom’s writings would show some ambivalence. Though at times he denigrated women, at other times he honored them. But here is one of his more memorable comments on the unfitness of women to lead in any public sphere:

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<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom, *On Priesthood*, 6.8 (NPNF 1/9:78-79).

<sup>52</sup> Homily 37 on 1 Corinthians.

**... if the more important, most beneficial concerns were turned over to the woman, she would go quite mad. ...**

**Nor did God assign both to be equal in every way, lest from equality a kind of struggle and rivalry should again arise, for women in their contentiousness would deem themselves deserving of the front-row seats rather than the man!<sup>53</sup>**

Chrysostom tells us more about his views on women in the church in Homily 4 on Titus. Expounding Titus 2:3-4, where Paul encourages old women to teach young women, Chrysostom cites Paul's *authenteō* phrase from 1 Timothy 2:12. He interprets it as preventing women presiding or extending their speech to great length.

Mike contrasts that Homily with a different one where Chrysostom uses *authenteō* in a pejorative sense (6hr07-11mins).

The different one is Homily 10 on Colossians.

Despite Chrysostom's firm view that all leadership authority resided in men, in Homily 10 on Colossians he warns husbands not to *authenteō* their wives. There is no possibility that Chrysostom here intends the sense 'have authority over' or 'exercise authority over'. He is expounding Paul's warning to husbands in Colossians 3:19 not to act harshly towards their wives. The context therefore indicates that he intends a negative meaning, akin to 'overpower' or 'dominate'.<sup>54</sup>

In this connection, Mike makes a false point about Andrew's book. He says in his notes:

**Some egals don't mention that Chysostom [sic] also comments on 1 Tim 2 (Payne, Bartlett)**

In the video, he amplifies what he has in mind. He says:

**... what they'll do is, they'll say: hey, we're trying to understand what it means in First Timothy 2:12. Now we'll quote Chrysostom. He used it to be pejorative, so therefore it's pejorative in First Timothy 2:12. (6hr10mins)**

But Mike's claim bears no discernible relation to the actual reasoning which Andrew presents in his book. Andrew nowhere states, suggests or implies that, *because* Chrysostom used the term pejoratively in Homily 10 on Colossians, *therefore* it is pejorative in 1 Timothy 2:12.

Andrew's reasoning has a quite different shape. He examines the whole context of 1 Timothy 2, draws a probable conclusion about the meaning of *authenteō* from doing so ('overpower'), and then checks that the conclusion is consistent with a historically attested meaning of *authenteō* at the relevant time. Andrew's reference to Homily 10 on Colossians is as an additional point of interest, showing that Chrysostom was aware that the word could have the meaning 'overpower'. Mike signally fails to engage anywhere with Andrew's actual reasoning.<sup>55</sup>

The crucial point is that Chrysostom saw a range of meaning in the word *authenteō* and himself used it negatively in his Homily 10 on Colossians. How he interpreted it in 1 Timothy 2:12 says more about

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<sup>53</sup> Chrysostom, *The Kind of Women Who Ought to be Taken as Wives*, translated by Elizabeth A. Clark, in *Women in the Early Church*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> See the discussion in Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ*, 374, in Appendix 3.

<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Mike's caricature bears no relation to Philip Payne's reasoning in *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 380-385, concerning the meaning of *authenteō* and Chrysostom's use of it.

his presuppositions concerning women's defective nature than it does about what Paul originally meant by the word.<sup>56</sup>

Discussing Chrysostom in his video, Mike continues to rely uncritically on what he reads in complementarian works. Here is an extract from his notes, which he reads out (6hr14mins):

***Daniel Doriani points out that, in his Homilies on Timothy, [Chrysostom] says this about ... the fall in Gen 3,***

***“Chrysostom says that Eve “exercised authority once wrongly” (authentysen hapax kakws). The implication obviously is that Chrysostom could not make the negative force felt without the addition of kakws, and therefore, he did not regard the verb authentew as negative in itself.” Daniel Doriani, Women in the Church, 1st edition, 227.***

The adverb *kakōs* means 'wrongly'. It may also be translated as 'badly' or 'wickedly'.

In fact, this quotation originates from Baldwin, elsewhere in the book (p46). And Baldwin is not citing Chrysostom's *Homilies on Timothy*; he is citing Chrysostom's *Sermons in Genesis*.<sup>57</sup>

Mike comments:

***This is actually a really good point. ... If the verb was ... inherently bad, he wouldn't have to say 'wrongly'.*** (6hr14mins)

But it is not ***“a really good point”***, for it is not based on how language actually works. The fact that a person adds the negative qualifier *kakōs* cannot tell us whether the verb is inherently negative. They may add it for emphasis or for some other reason.

According to Matthew 15:22 the Canaanite woman, who came to Jesus for help, said that her daughter was *kakōs daimonizetai* (badly demon-possessed). By Mike's and Baldwin's reasoning, the ***“implication obviously is”*** that the meaning of the Greek verb 'to be demon-possessed' is not negative! Their point is not ***“really good”***, but really bad.

Mike's video also reveals a lack of knowledge about John Chrysostom and the Church Fathers.

Mike confidently states that, among the Church Fathers, only Clement of Alexandria had classical training (6hr00mins). But anyone with even a slight acquaintance with the Church Fathers would immediately think that statement did not sound right. It is another misunderstanding by Mike: it appears he has misread a sentence in Wilshire's article.<sup>58</sup>

On the basis of his misreading, Mike believes that Chrysostom was ignorant of classical Greek.

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<sup>56</sup> Mike also misses something important when he tries to suggest that egalitarian scholarship misuses Chrysostom. This is one of those unusual circumstances where 'heads I win, tails you lose' is reasonable and legitimate. When Church Fathers write about maintaining restrictions on women, it is reasonable to treat their pronouncements with great caution, because of their unbiblical view of women. But when they write things which support an egalitarian or non-restrictive viewpoint, they have considerable weight, because those things are stated *despite* their unbiblical view of women.

<sup>57</sup> The reference given to the Greek text is MPG 54:581-630.

<sup>58</sup> There is a sentence on page 126 of Wilshire's article, 'The TLG Computer and Further Reference to [*authentēō*]' which could be misunderstood if read carelessly by a reader who knew little or nothing about the Church Fathers.



But that is as far wrong as it is possible to be. As is well known, Chrysostom was trained in the Greek classics by the foremost classical scholar of the time, who rated Chrysostom as his best ever pupil.<sup>59</sup>

(For more on Chrysostom and *authentēō*, see our Appendix 4 on Priscilla.)

### Twelve more examples – the fundamental flaw again, and more mistakes

Mike puts on screen an extract from his notes containing a list of twelve more Church Fathers from the fourth century AD onwards. He says all of them always understood *authentēō* “***in its various forms***” as authority. (6hr05mins)

We are unsure what Mike means by “***in its various forms***”. But it doesn’t matter, since the Church Fathers’ views on this particular topic cannot be uncritically relied on, for the reason we have explained.

And Mike continues his errors of failing to distinguish between different meanings of ‘authority’ and of assuming that words can be rigidly classified as inherently pejorative or not.

He shows particular excitement about an entry in a fifth century dictionary (the Cyrilli Lexicon). It equates *authentēō* with the verb *exousiazō*, which is a word for having or exercising authority. He considers this to be “***super important***” (6hr16mins).

But Mike’s assessment is fallacious.

This dictionary is written centuries after Paul’s time; and we already know that in Christian circles the word *authentēō* began to be used to refer to authority during the fourth century.

And there is more. If we look at how the verb *exousiazō* is used in the New Testament, it is used only four times. Twice in 1 Corinthians 7:4 it is used in a straightforward sense. But Luke 22:25 uses it to refer to those who are in authority over the Gentiles, in Jesus’s warning to his disciples that church leaders must not be like the leaders of the Gentiles. So, Jesus’s warning invests it with a negative connotation in the context of church leadership. And Paul also uses it in 1 Corinthians 6:12 in a negative sense, to mean ‘dominate’. Paul says:

**“All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.** (ESV)

Mike invites us to rely on the Cyrilli Lexicon. On that basis, we could infer that *authentēō* may readily be used to mean “dominate”, in a negative sense, which is contrary to Mike’s own conclusion.<sup>60</sup>

When Mike turns to Westfall’s argument about the meaning of *authentēō* at p292 of her book *Paul and Gender*, he misuses the unreliable views of the Church Fathers to criticize it (6hr17-18mins).

And he compounds his error by never actually engaging with her central point.

On the same page, she states her challenge to complementarian thinking in this way:

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<sup>59</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Life and Work of St. John Chrysostom*, 7-9 (in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1, Volume 9): “John ... is the greatest pulpit orator and commentator of the Greek Church ... Chrysostom received his literary training chiefly from Libanius, ... the first classical scholar and rhetorician of his age, ... He was introduced by him into a knowledge of the Greek classics and the arts of rhetoric, which served him a good purpose for his future labors in the church. He was his best scholar ...”

<sup>60</sup> Mike has been misled by Wolters’ discussion in *Women in the Church*, 88, where Wolters says, without qualification, that *exousiazō* is not pejorative in its meaning. But meaning depends on context. To be more accurate, Wolters should have said that in the New Testament *exousiazō* is used in a positive or negative way, depending on context.

**Among the eighty-two occurrences of the verb that Scott Baldwin used to support the position that the word means “to have authority,” there is no example of a male doing this to another person or group of people in a ministry or church leadership context where the referent action had a positive evaluation in the context.**

**When the verb is transitive with a personal object or recipient of the action, there is a discernible pattern in the kind of action that happens to the recipients ...**

**... the people who are the targets of these actions are harmed, forced against their will (compelled), or at least their self-interest is overridden, because the actions involve the imposition of the subject’s will over against the recipient’s will ...**

Recalling uses of *authentēō* where one person does it to another, we have seen what Tryphon did to Antiochos; we have seen what Saturn supposedly does to Mercury and the moon; and we have seen Chrysostom’s use of the word as between husband and wife, warning the husband not to do it. We cannot help wondering how differently the Greek-speaking Church Fathers might have read 1 Timothy 2:12 if they had adhered to a biblical view of women.

Mike needs to respond to Westfall’s challenge by showing us examples where *authentēō* is done by a man to another person in a ministry or church leadership context, and where this is seen as a positive thing. He does not produce any such example.

Instead, he goes off on a tangent, arguing that *authentēō* must be a positive word, because in the Church Fathers it is sometimes used of God’s exercise of authority (6hr18mins).

In response to that last point, we need only say this: some of us may know pastors or elders who have a lofty opinion of their position, exercising authority over their flock as if they were God himself. Jesus does not recommend it.<sup>61</sup>

#### Summary of Mis-step #4

Mike’s reliance on how the Church Fathers understood *authentēō* is misplaced: it is fundamentally flawed, and it is marred by mistakes so numerous that it would be tedious to include all of them in this brief summary.

Christian usage of *authentēō* after the New Testament period was influenced by Paul’s use of the verb in 1 Timothy 2:12, seen through the prism of the Church Fathers’ defective view of women.

The fundamental flaw is that Mike himself agrees that the Church Fathers held an unbiblical view of women, yet he is asking us to rely on their interpretation of a verse on the specific topic of women relating to men (1 Timothy 2:12).

He urges us to rely on what Origen says, describing it as “**super cool**”. Yet, in self-contradiction, Mike himself argues that the view expressed by Origen in that very passage is definitely wrong – as indeed it is.

Mike makes false points about what Chrysostom said, about what other writers have said about it, and about Chrysostom’s supposed ignorance of Classical Greek. In interpreting Chrysostom, Mike relies uncritically on some really bad reasoning.

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<sup>61</sup> Note also that Westfall’s challenge would not be met by referring to later uses of *authentēō* to describe authoritative actions of popes and monarchical bishops in ecclesiastical and political affairs, exercising institutional power in a way not envisaged as a pastoral function in the New Testament.

Mike thinks it “**super important**” that a fifth century dictionary equates *authenteō* with *exousiazō*. But the latter is one of the words used in Jesus’ condemnation of the wrong kind of leadership by Christian leaders, which weighs against Mike’s position.

Mike does not respond to Westfall’s challenge. He does not show us even one example where *authenteō* is done by a man to another person in a ministry or church leadership context, and where this is seen as a positive thing.

## Mis-step #5 – Assessing translations

[video 6hr22mins onwards; p67-76 of Mike’s notes]

The fundamental flaw in Mike’s assessment of the Church Fathers carries over into his assessment of historic translations.

Given the views of the Church Fathers, it would be reasonable to expect *all* historic translations to reflect a reading of 1 Timothy 2:12 that is driven by the traditional view of women.

What is remarkable, in our view, is to find historic versions that do not.

Mike mentions one such example – the Peshitta, which is an early translation into Syriac (6hr 31mins). (In his notes, Mike assigns it to the second century AD, which is a reasonable guess.)

He tips his hat to this remarkable fact, but does not explain it to his audience. He does not mention Wolters’ explanation of what the Syriac text says:

**... Imamrāhū ‘al, literally “dare over” or “dare against,” which has been variously rendered as “be assuming over,” “lord it over,” and “be presumptuous over.”<sup>62</sup>**

There is a notable similarity between those phrases and the astrological meaning of ‘overpower’, ‘dominate’ or ‘gain mastery’.<sup>63</sup>

Mike refers also to early Latin translations of 1 Timothy 2:12, which varied. One of the Latin words chosen to translate *authenteō* was *dominari*. That was the translation choice that was carried over into the Vulgate (the version attributed largely to Jerome, which became authoritative in the Roman church).

Mike says that Belleville reads *dominari* as pejorative, and offers this explanation of her view:

**You’ll understand why. In English it sounds that way because it uses the Latin term ‘dominari’. ‘Dominari’ sounds like ‘dominate’, sounds like ‘domineering’. ... But abogado sounds like avocado but it means lawyer. (6hr36mins)**

Then he laughs [6:36:27].

It would have been better if Mike had not mocked Linda Belleville’s view. He overlooks four facts.

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<sup>62</sup> *Women in the Church*, 85.

<sup>63</sup> To bring this evidence into line with his thesis that there is no negative connotation in 1 Timothy 2:12, Wolters proposes a speculative emendation of the Syriac text. But one can as easily surmise, instead, a reasonable explanation for what the Syriac text actually says: being dated so early, it may have been written before the patriarchal culture of wider society had largely gained mastery over the mind of the church in the post-apostolic period.

1] and 2] The words *abogado* and *avocado* are not an apt analogy, since they are entirely unrelated. In contrast, Belleville is not relying on a random similarity of sound, for the English words ‘dominate’ and ‘domineer’ are both derived from the Latin verb *dominari*.<sup>64</sup>

- Believing the best of Mike, perhaps he was unaware of those two facts, so did not appreciate the foolishness of his mockery.

3] That derivation is unsurprising, since one of the ordinary meanings of *dominari* is ‘lord it’, ‘domineer’.

- However, Mike mistakenly reads dictionaries as indicating some rarity of negative meaning.<sup>65</sup>

4] In 1 Peter 5:3 Peter exhorts overseers not to lord it over those who are entrusted to them. Which word do the Vulgate translators choose for that text? The same word which they use in 1 Timothy 2:12 (*dominari*).<sup>66</sup> *In the Vulgate, a woman must not do it to a man (1 Timothy 2:12), and elders must not do it to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).*

- However, Mike seems unaware of this directly relevant example, citing instead a string of irrelevant examples taken from Wolters’ discussion.<sup>67</sup>

Mike relies on Wolters’ refrain that various translation choices are “**related to ... lord**”, and for that reason should be regarded as positive (6hr38mins). But that refrain should be tested against how words with meanings related to ‘lord’ are used in relevant contexts referring to the behavior of church leaders: Matthew 20:25-26 (negative); Mark 10:42-43 (negative); Luke 22:25-26 (negative); 2 Corinthians 1:24 (negative); 1 Peter 5:3 (negative).

Belleville points out that a Coptic translation in the third century gives a rendering that means “**nor to be lord of him**”.<sup>68</sup> Mike again says that this is positive, not negative (6hr39mins). But Mike is ignoring the conflict between “**nor to be lord of him**” and his own claim about what Paul means in context. As we have noted, elders are specifically forbidden to be lord over the flock. To lord it over someone else is something that neither a man nor a woman should do, if they are following the way of Jesus.

Mike goes on to say some remarkable things about modern Bible versions.

The most widely used current English translation is the NIV. The 2011 version translates *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:11 as “**assume authority**”. This expression could be either positive (start using legitimate

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<sup>64</sup> This etymology is not controversial. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dominate> or any reliable dictionary.

<sup>65</sup> In Latin dictionaries on Andrew’s shelf, Collins includes ‘lord it’ and Cassell includes ‘domineer’. A quick online search of Latin dictionaries yields ‘to be master’, ‘to be despot’, ‘to be in control’, ‘to rule over’, ‘to exercise sovereignty’, ‘to dominate’. The degree of positivity or negativity when this word is used depends on the context.

<sup>66</sup> The Vulgate of 1 Timothy 2:12 is “*docere autem mulieri non permitto neque dominari in virum sed esse in silentio*”. The Vulgate of 1 Peter 5:3 is “*neque ut dominantes in cleris sed formae facti gregi et ex animo*” (‘*dominantes*’ is a participle, a grammatical form of *dominari*). Note that Dan Wallace misreads the Vulgate in the article referred to by Mike, <https://bible.org/question/light-1-tim-212-when-paul-states-women-should-not-teach-or-exercise-authority-over-men-do-y>. Wallace says that the Latin verb is *dominare* (a transitive verb found in ecclesiastical Latin). But it is *dominari*, which is the normal Latin verb and is intransitive – hence the preposition *in* before the word *virum* in 1 Timothy 2:12 and before the word *cleris* in 1 Peter 5:3.

<sup>67</sup> *Women in the Church*, 86.

<sup>68</sup> *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 210.

authority) or negative (seize authority illegitimately). Mike gives the impression that the NIV translators intended that it should *not* be understood negatively. (7hr04mins)

But in fact, the NIV translators considered that it could be taken either way. The head of the committee (Douglas Moo) is on record to that effect.<sup>69</sup>

Mike then makes a selection of eight translations that he describes as “*well-respected*” and “*not sectarian*”. He explains what he means by “*sectarian*” in this context:

***A sectarian translation is one that evidences bias towards a particular camp within Christianity.*** (7hr06mins)

His list is NRSV, ESV, NASB, NKJV, NIV, CSB, NLT, and NET.

He then claims that none of them supports an egalitarian view.

It is easy to test whether a translation contains bias towards a particular camp. We can see if a translation reflects a complementarian viewpoint by looking at whether it downplays what women did in the New Testament.

In Mike’s Part 4 video on New Testament women, he looks into how Romans 16:1 should be translated: was Phoebe a *deacon* of the church at Cenchreae, or was she a *servant*? Despite his commitment to complementarianism, Mike gives sound reasons for concluding from the context that Phoebe was probably a deacon. That is in line with some well-known complementarian scholars such as Douglas Moo, Tom Schreiner and Craig Blomberg (Part 4 video, 1hr39mins). But some other complementarians disagree, and many complementarian churches refuse to allow women to be deacons.

Despite the fact that even prominent complementarian scholars concede that Phoebe was probably a deacon, as does Mike himself, five of Mike’s so-called non-sectarian translations present Phoebe in Romans 16:1 as a servant – those are ESV, NASB, NKJV, CSB and NET. That is a window on their view of a woman’s place. (She is a deacon only in NIV, NLT and NRSV.)

What about the apostle Junia in Romans 16:7? Even John Chrysostom noted, as something remarkable, that she was an outstanding apostle. Respected, non-sectarian versions such as NIV and NRSV translate accordingly. But in ESV, NASB, CSB and NET Junia is no longer an apostle.<sup>70</sup>

We do not know why Mike regards the versions which downplay women as meeting his definition of non-sectarian.

There are so many errors of fact and of analysis in Mike’s discussion of translations that it would be tedious to go over them all.<sup>71</sup> Nor would it be particularly useful, given the basic problem that many of the translations are influenced by the Church Fathers’ unbiblical view of women.

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<sup>69</sup> Collin Hansen, ‘Debating the NIV and Impermissible Authority for Women’, November 24, 2010, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/debating-the-niv-and-impermissible-authority-for-women/>.

<sup>70</sup> The other two versions, NKJV and NLT, are ambiguous on whether Junia is an apostle. For an exposé of the weakness of the reasons against Junia’s apostleship, see our article ‘What Winger Presently Gets Wrong: Women Apostles’ at <https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-presently-gets-wrong-woman-apostles/>.

<sup>71</sup> They include misreadings and misrepresentations of Belleville in *Two Views*, 86; failing to assess Coptic, Gothic and Harklean Syriac versions in a relevant manner; misunderstanding the range of meaning of German ‘herrschen’; mistranslating Greek *kat epitagēn* as ‘in authority’; missing that Belleville discussed Luther, Tyndale, and DV in *Two Views*; and mis-assessing the significance of TNIV and some other modern versions.

Before summarizing, we must mention one further matter.

Mike says that the word 'dominate' represents a recent trend in translating *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12. In this context, he adds a remarkable statement which reveals his failure to keep in mind the relevant history. He says:

***Some egalitarians are ... .. misleading people about the nature of men and women and about what God has revealed to us in his word, and about how churches should function ... .. The church has been fairly unified on this topic throughout history. This is a recent blip, to be honest. ... .. it's a recent issue.*** (7hr08mins)

That statement misrepresents the relevant history.

From the second or third century until recently, the church's majority view of the nature of men and women was that women were inferior to men, both in rank and in nature.

The traditional argument against women's leadership was, in summary:

***... they are less intelligent, emotionally unstable, more susceptible to temptation, and therefore they are necessarily subordinate to and may not exercise authority over men. Moreover, the restriction is not simply a restriction from church office, but a restriction of women exercising authority over men in any public sphere whatsoever.***<sup>72</sup>

That view received some pushback from time to time, particularly in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. But it was only in the 1980s that the church as a whole finally shook off the unbiblical view that women were inherently defective, compared with men. The Danvers Statement, put out by believers who began calling themselves 'complementarians', rejected it. Other Protestant Christian groups also rejected it. Roman Catholics likewise rejected it.

The question then arose: since the traditional reasons for denying women's leadership were agreed to be unbiblical, and should be discarded, should leadership by women now be allowed?

That is what the complementarian/egalitarian debate has been about.

Driven by the new consensus that women are as fully human and as fully in the image of God as men, biblical egalitarians have offered new interpretations, under which women's leadership is permitted. Part of this has been a fresh look at how 1 Timothy 2:12 should be translated.

Likewise, complementarians have offered new interpretations of 1 Timothy 2 and other passages. Because they acknowledge that women are not presented in the Bible as defective humans, in comparison to men, they have needed *new* reasoning to justify retaining restrictions on women. So, they have introduced the language of roles from 20<sup>th</sup> century secular sociology. They say that, though men and women are fully equal, God has given them different roles. They speak of men as leaders and women as followers. And, transforming the usual meaning of the term 'role', they say those 'roles' are unalterable.

That reasoning is a novelty in biblical interpretation.

Mike's statement ignores the novelty of complementarianism.

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<sup>72</sup> William G. Witt, *Icons of Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Theology for Women's Ordination* (2020), 23. This summary is supported by citations from the Church Fathers and others.

By describing the translation trend towards ‘dominates’ as a “*blip*”, he implies that we should go back to the church’s “*fairly unified*” view of the nature of men and women throughout history. But Mike himself rejects the traditional view. His remarks are self-contradictory.

### Summary of Mis-step #5

Mike’s assessment of the evidence from ancient and modern translations is replete with errors of perception, of fact and of analysis. It does not provide sound support for his view of the meaning of *authenteō*.

## Mis-step #6- Etymology

[video 7hr09mins onwards; pp76-77 of Mike’s notes]

Step 6 in Mike’s reasoning is that the derivation of a word is an unreliable guide to its meaning. He says:

***Etymology is often an unreliable guide. ... you want to know what the word means, not what the root means, as a general rule.*** (7hr10mins)

He quotes from a book called *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*:<sup>73</sup>

***Appeal to etymology, and to word formation is therefore always dangerous.*** (7hr11mins)

But we note the striking inconsistency in Mike’s reasoning. In his Step 6, he now warns against relying on the derivation of a word as a secure guide to its meaning. But in his Steps 1 and 2, he relies heavily on Wolters’ theory of how *authenteō* may be derived from *authentēs* in order to argue for a particular interpretation of *authenteō*.

We agree that etymology must be used only with great caution. But Mike misses a useful point here.

While scholars do not agree on the derivation of the complete word *authenteō*, everyone concurs that the root of the first part of the word is *auto*-.<sup>74</sup>

That root means ‘self-’. It has come through directly into English in words such as ‘autonomous’ and ‘autocratic’. Compare the English words ‘self-serving’, ‘self-seeking’, ‘self-regarding’, and the like, which chime with the attitude condemned by Jesus in his instructions about leadership in Mark 10:42-45 and similar passages. The Greek root is seen in words such as *authadēs* (Titus 1:7 – self-willed – which Paul says an elder must not be).

Paul was a person of considerable linguistic intelligence, as his letters show.

After the teaching of Jesus about how leaders in his church should put others first and be slaves of all – teaching that was taken to heart by Peter and by Paul – it is a struggle to believe that Paul, supposedly having in mind the regular function of a church elder, stepped over *every* conventional word used for church leadership and deliberately chose instead a rare word that started with ‘self’.

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<sup>73</sup> Page 132.

<sup>74</sup> Wolters in *Women in the Church*, 111.

## Mis-step #7 – Köstenberger’s theory

[video 7hr13mins onwards; p77-82 of Mike’s notes]

The gist of Mike’s Step 7 is:

- Considering context within verse 12, Köstenberger has shown that the phrasing of verse 12 forces the two infinitive verbs *didaskein* (‘to teach’) and *authentein* (‘to have authority’) to be either both positive or both negative. (7hr14mins)

Mike believes this is “**a pinnacle moment of great clarity**” (7hr39mins). But what we will see with great clarity is that it is a mis-step and a muddle.

Andreas Köstenberger’s theory, and its application to 1 Timothy 2:12, is a classic case of scholars not seeing the forest for the trees – missing the big picture through focusing on small details.<sup>75</sup>

The theory is an artificial construct, which forgets the flexibility of language in the real world. Andrew explained this in Appendix 4 of his book, to which Mike has offered no answer.<sup>76</sup>

As briefly as we can, we will describe the trees, and then show you the forest.

Köstenberger’s theory concerns uses of the Greek words *ouk* and *oude*. They are negatives. The word *ouk* can be translated as ‘neither’ or ‘not’, then *oude* as ‘nor’ (or ‘and not’ or ‘or’). These words occur in 1 Timothy 2:12.

In that verse, the next conjunction is *alla*, which means ‘but’.

So, using the ASV translation for simplicity, Paul is saying: “I permit not (*ouk*) a woman to teach nor (*oude*) to have dominion over a man, but (*alla*) to be in quietness.”

Notice the basic format: “I do not permit A nor B, but C”. Inserting the Greek words, we get: “I do not (*ouk*) permit A nor (*oude*) B, but (*alla*) C”.

Köstenberger notes the presence of “**a negated finite verb**” (‘I do not permit’) and proposes that all relevant uses of *ouk* and *oude* fit into one of two patterns.<sup>77</sup>

Pattern 1 is:

***Two activities or concepts are viewed positively in and of themselves, but their exercise is prohibited or their existence is denied due to circumstances or conditions adduced in the context.***

Pattern 2 is:

***Two activities or concepts are viewed negatively, and consequently their exercise is prohibited or their existence is denied or they are to be avoided.***

His theory is absolute, admitting of no exceptions. He says that the syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12

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<sup>75</sup> We use the plural here – ‘scholars’ – advisedly, since many scholars have uncritically accepted the theory.

<sup>76</sup> In *Men and Women in Christ*, Appendix 4, Andrew explains two fundamental defects in Köstenberger’s theory. He adds: “These fundamental points make it unnecessary to lay out in detail the numerous errors of reasoning in WITC, 122–135, which include the artificial and arbitrary nature of the inquiry (122, 124), the instability of the thesis even within the argument (122–123, 125), the drawing of conclusions which do not follow from their premises (130, 133, 134, 135) and the insufficient attention to context (131–135).”

<sup>77</sup> *Women in the Church*, 122, 126-127.



***... mandates that the two activities indicated by [didaskein] and [authentein andros] must be, in Paul's consideration, either both positive or both negative ...***<sup>78</sup>

But his statement of patterns is problematic.

Pattern 1 is not meaningful. By its supposed contrast with pattern 2, it presupposes that all activities can be neatly classified into positive or negative in and of themselves, in the writer's estimation. But that is artificial. The writer may or may not have a view on that question. Or the writer may view some activities as neutral. (Köstenberger candidly admits to categorizing neutral activities as positive!)<sup>79</sup> Or it may all depend on the circumstances. Or the writer may be more interested in different kinds of questions than positive or negative – for example, whether the activities are expected or unexpected. Like ice cream, verbs may come in many flavors.

Pattern 2, in the form stated by Köstenberger, overlaps with pattern 1, because it does not specify whether the particular context is taken into account or not taken into account. However, he seems to mean that the particular context is insignificant and that the activities are viewed generally by the writer as negative, irrespective of the circumstances.<sup>80</sup>

But that is then just as problematic as pattern 1, for much the same reasons. To kick a person is usually wrong; to kick a ball into a goal is good or bad, depending on which team the speaker is playing for or supporting; to kick a stone off a track may be a matter of indifference, or it may be good (someone might trip on it) or bad (it was a piece of the path).

For pattern 1, the closest syntactical parallel to 1 Timothy 2:12 which Köstenberger offers is Acts 16:21. There, opponents of Paul and Silas accuse them of proclaiming customs “which it is not (*ouk*) permitted for us to accept or (*oude*) to do, being Romans” (our translation). Köstenberger claims that those opponents view the activities ‘to accept’ and ‘to do’ as inherently positive. But accepting something may be regarded as positive, negative or a matter of indifference, depending on what the Romans are being invited to accept. And doing may be regarded by the Romans as positive, negative or neutral, depending on the particular kind of doing that is in view, and especially who is doing it to whom. Köstenberger's allocation of this to pattern 1 is arbitrary and not meaningful.

Now let's consider a hypothetical example corresponding to the syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12. (“I do not (*ouk*) permit A nor (*oude*) B, but (*alla*) C”.)

Suppose an army has just won a battle. Enemy soldiers are still lying severely wounded on the battlefield. The victorious commander is concerned that there will be another battle tomorrow, against a fresh force. It is vitally important for his soldiers to get as much rest as possible. He issues an order to his soldiers: “I do not permit soldiers to maltreat the wounded, nor to care for them, but to remain in camp and rest.”

According to Köstenberger's theory, if the commander says this in Greek, there are only two options here. Either this is pattern 1 (the commander views both maltreatment and care as inherently positive, but he is forbidding them due to particular circumstances in the context) or this is pattern 2 (the commander regards both maltreatment and care negatively, both here and in all other circumstances).

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<sup>78</sup> *Women in the Church*, 121.

<sup>79</sup> In *Women in the Church*, 124.

<sup>80</sup> We deduce that meaning from the additional explanation at 124-125: “What the present essay seeks to discover, however, is whether the writer/speaker views particular activities or concepts as positive or negative *apart from the circumstances involved in the prohibition.*” (emphasis original)

But that is unrealistic.

In the particular context, we understand that he is forbidding these two activities because on this day his soldiers need to rest.

But that leaves entirely open what his view might be of those two activities in other contexts. For example:

[1] If the commander is a stickler for the efficiency of his army, he may indeed think generally (not just in the circumstances of this particular day) that *both* maltreating and caring for people are bad from his viewpoint, because those activities waste energy that could be conserved for more important purposes. [bad + bad = pattern 2]

But-

[2] If he is a compassionate person, he may believe that maltreatment, even of an enemy, is generally *bad* and that caring is generally *good*. [bad + good]

[3] If he is a tyrant, he may believe the opposite: enemies, or anyone else who is inconvenient or disliked, *should* generally be maltreated and *should not* be cared for. [good + bad]

[4] If he is a narcissist, he may in general be quite indifferent to how people are treated – whether wounded enemies or anyone else – supremely unconcerned whether they are maltreated or cared for. [neutral + neutral]

Or,

[5] If he is something of a narcissist but also concerned about his reputation among high-minded people, he may generally disapprove of maltreating people if there is even the slightest risk that it may reflect badly on him, while being generally indifferent to whether people are cared for. [bad + neutral]

Köstenberger's theory does not allow for numbers [4] and [5], because neutrals are not distinguished from other cases. And numbers [2] and [3] are supposedly impossible, because Greek syntax does not permit them!

The theory is misconceived. It mistakenly constructs a fixed rule based merely on observing what often happens (like the three-year-old who insists that the past tense of 'hit' must be 'hitted').

That is enough about the trees.

Now for the forest.

The pertinent point is that the commander is prohibiting A and B, but permitting C. What his order *does* tell us is that *in this particular context* the commander regards both maltreatment and caring as negative, in contrast to resting in the camp, which is positive. That is obvious, because he is not permitting them. (In the context, A and B are regarded negatively, because they would prevent his soldiers getting the rest that they need.)

It is the same in 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul is the commander.

The 'forest' is: Paul is prohibiting A and B but urging C, so he views A and B negatively and C positively.

Köstenberger pretty well admits this, when he writes:

**... when a writer/speaker prohibits an activity, he is, of course, viewing that activity, in a sense, negatively.<sup>81</sup>**

We are now ready to move to Step 8 in Mike's reasoning.

## Mis-step #8 – A false positive

[video 7hr39mins onwards; p82-84 of Mike's notes]

Let's stay with the format of what Paul wrote. "I do not (*ouk*) permit A nor (*oude*) B, but (*alla*) C." In 1 Timothy 2:12, A and B are verbs. They are infinitives. Verb A is *didaskein* ('to teach', a form of *didaskō*), verb B is *authentein* (a form of *authenteō*), followed by *andros* (from *anēr* 'a man').

Many scholars, on both sides of the debate, have uncritically accepted Köstenberger's artificial theory. Mike follows them. His Step 8 relies on it.

Mike says: Since in the context of verse 12 *didaskein* ('to teach') does not have a negative qualifier and is positive, therefore *authentein* ('to have authority') is also positive. (7hr39mins; 7hr48mins)

But this makes no sense. From Paul's point of view, neither *didaskein* nor *authentein* can be positive in this particular context, because Paul is prohibiting them, and in the same breath contrasts them with a positive action. And the fact that he prohibits them here, using *ouk* and *oude*, does not tell us anything definitive about his views of those activities in other circumstances.

To try to support his fallacious reasoning, Mike follows Köstenberger in trying to show that *didaskein* must be viewed positively in 1 Timothy 2:12 because of how it is used in other places.

But we already know that Paul views it negatively in 1 Timothy 2:12, because he is forbidding it, and contrasting it with something positive in the same verse.

Sure, in some other places, Paul regards teaching positively. That is what we would expect. But so what?

To answer that question, Mike advances further fallacious reasoning. He refers to a survey of all 97 examples of the verb *didaskō* in the New Testament. He has checked the full survey himself. He claims:

**... every time it occurs without some specific qualifier, without some clarity to show us it's positive, it is positive.** (7hr41mins)

He says that is the case in 40 occurrences out of the 97.

But how does Mike know that it is positive in those 40 occurrences? He has looked at the context, in order to find out!

Mike adds that there is not one example in the New Testament of a negative use without a qualifier. (7hr42mins)

We inquire again, so what? If the word is negative from the context, then it is negative. If the word is positive from the context, then it is positive. If the word is neutral in the context, then it is neutral. If no such connotation is shown by the context, then it is unspecified.

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<sup>81</sup> *Women in the Church*, 124.

Köstenberger makes the same error of reasoning in his book. He offers the incoherent statement:

***In cases where the context is not specified, the context assumes a positive connotation.***<sup>82</sup>

But the New Testament is not a list of unconnected words – there is *always* a context for the use of *didaskō*. And we can only know whether the connotation is positive or negative or any other flavor in that particular context by examining that particular context.

If in 1 Timothy 2 we examine the context, we see immediately that *didaskō in verse 12* is negative in Paul's estimation, because he is prohibiting it, and because he at once goes on to contrast it with behavior that he regards positively.

There is some value in reviewing how *didaskō* is used across the New Testament. But, if we are going to do that, we need to pay attention to the most relevant examples. We find a series of similar scenarios, where someone reprimands or seeks to silence the teaching (*didaskō*) of others, because they perceive the teachers and/or their teaching as defective:

- Jesus warns against those who teach others to set aside God's commands (Matthew 5:19).
- Jesus warns about hypocrites whose teachings are merely human rules (Mark 7:7).
- The Pharisees reprimand the blind man who has just been healed, for daring to teach them (John 9:34).
- The Sanhedrin orders Peter and John not to teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18) and later refers back to this order (Acts 5:28).
- Paul tells Titus to silence rebellious people, full of meaningless talk, who teach things they ought not to teach (Titus 1:11).
- Jesus reprimands those in Pergamum who teach like Balaam, enticing people to sin (Revelation 2:14).
- Jesus judges a self-appointed prophetess who teaches his followers, seducing them into sexual immorality (Revelation 2:20).

Whether Paul approves of teaching or disapproves of it depends on the circumstances. In the above list of examples, Titus 1:11 is an example of Paul's disapproval. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul forbids teaching, together with *authenteō*. That is another negative example. It makes no sense to say that *didaskō* is positive in 1 Timothy 2:12.

Mike makes a further point. In 1 Timothy 1:3 and 6:3, Paul uses a different verb to refer to false teaching. It is *heterodidaskaleō*. It means to teach falsely or differently, that is, to teach something that is other than true Christian teaching. Mike says:

***If Paul didn't want women to teach other than Christian doctrine, then 1 Timothy 2:12 would not have said didaskein. It would have said heterodidask.... It would have been a different word.*** (7hr46-47mins)

Mike does not finish one of the words, but his point is clear:

- One of the issues concerning 1 Timothy 2:12 is whether (A) Paul is prohibiting certain women from teaching a man falsely, or (B) he is prohibiting all women from authoritatively teaching true Christian doctrine to men. In Mike's view, Paul must mean (B), for that is the

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<sup>82</sup> *Women in the Church*, 131. The incoherence of this statement is not saved by his citing in a footnote from an Exegetical Dictionary which makes the same self-contradictory point. It says first that *didaskō* is used relatively frequently with no indication of the context. Then it says: "The content is determined by the context."

reason why Paul uses the ordinary verb for teach, *didaskō*. If he had meant (A), he would have used the verb for teaching falsely, *heterodidaskaleō*.

But again, this is fallacious.

Terran is pastor of a church. If he were concerned that some elite young widows in his church were going from house to house with astrology and other false teachings, with men in their sights, he would not forbid them 'to teach a man falsely'. He would forbid them to teach a man, period. To allow them to teach, while saying merely that they should not teach falsely, would be too risky. They don't even know the difference between what is true and what is false; if they did, they wouldn't be into astrology. They must be forbidden to teach.

Likewise here, Paul does not want the women to teach. His use of *didaskō* rather than *heterodidaskaleō* does not show that he was only forbidding them to teach true doctrine to a man.

Mike has another line of reasoning by which he hopes to show that *didaskō* is inherently positive in the specific context of 1 Timothy 2:12. Because Paul only forbids women from teaching a man, it is (supposedly) implied that they can teach women and children, and also that men can do it. Those impliedly permitted actions would all be positive. (7hr47mins)

But let's try applying that faulty logic to other parts of the same passage:

- In 2:8 Paul wants men to pray without anger or quarreling. Since he only forbids anger and quarreling to men, it is implied in 2:8 that women are permitted to pray with anger and with quarreling.
- Alternatively, in 2:8 Paul wants men to pray. Since he only instructs men to pray, he does not want women to pray.
- In 2:9 Paul wants women to dress decently, and not with braided hair and gold or pearls. Since he only forbids women to dress in that way, it is implied in 2:9 that men are permitted to dress indecently, and with braided hair and gold or pearls.

That reasoning is plainly wrong.

The fact that Paul addresses a perceived problem by prohibiting inappropriate conduct, tells us nothing about other situations which Paul does not mention.

In so far as there is anything in Mike's point, it would be more against his view than in favor of it, when we see how it would apply to the word *authenteō* in 2:12.

According to Mike, what Paul has in mind in 2:12 is that a woman should not exercise eldership authority. But if a woman should not be an elder, then she should not exercise eldership authority over anyone, whether men, women or children. Yet that is not what Paul writes. He writes only that she should not *authenteō* a man.

In every case, Paul's prohibition relates to the actual danger that he perceives. As Wolters appropriately explains:

**... we can reasonably assume that he is addressing a situation at that time in Ephesus where women were doing (or proposing to do) what he is here prohibiting.<sup>83</sup>**

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<sup>83</sup> *Women in the Church* (3<sup>rd</sup> end), 112.

But if a woman were to be recognized in the church as an elder, Paul would certainly foresee that she would exercise authority over men, women and children. So, it would be odd for him to forbid only that she teach and *authenteō* a man.

Besides, we could usefully consider whether it is probable that Paul would want a man, even an elder, to *authenteō* another man. Knowing how *authenteō* was used in the first century (domination by planetary influence, overpowering an opponent in negotiations), that appears improbable.

### Summary of Mis-step #8

In Step 8, Mike relies on Köstenberger's theory about the pattern of syntax requiring that both of the prohibited activities are positive, in Paul's estimation, in other contexts which Paul does not have in view in the particular passage (pattern 1).

Given the artificial nature of the theory, it is perhaps not surprising that Mike gets in a tangle when he tries to apply it.

He offers incoherent reasoning. Supposedly, *didaskō* is only negative when accompanied in the context by a qualifier.

But we know it is negative in the context we are concerned with (1 Timothy 2:12), because Paul is prohibiting it. That is a pretty clear qualifier.

Context is always of key importance. In the parallel examples in the New Testament, where someone (including Paul) reprimands or seeks to silence the teaching (*didaskō*) of others, it is because they perceive the teachers and/or their teaching as defective.

Mike says that, if Paul were concerned in verse 12 to prevent false teaching by women, he would have used a word referring specifically to false teaching, not the ordinary word for teaching. But that is fallacious. If they hold to false doctrines, Paul does not want them to teach, period.

Then he argues that, because Paul only forbids the women from teaching a man, it is implied that they can teach women and children, and also that men can do it, so the teaching he has in mind must be inherently positive. But comparison with verses 8 and 9 shows the faultiness of that logic.

Besides, if Paul's real concern is that a woman should not exercise the teaching authority of an elder, he ought to be prohibiting her from doing that to anyone, not just to a man.

## Mis-step #9 – A glimpse of the forest

[video 7hr48mins onwards; p84 of Mike's notes]

In his discussion of *authenteō*, Mike's consideration of context has so far been restricted to some of the words in verse 12. In Mike's Step 9, he slightly expands his consideration of context to consider verse 11.

As a consideration of context, this remains severely inadequate, but verse 11 must certainly be considered, and Mike is right to do so.

Let's review where we are now in Mike's overall argument on *authenteō*.

Mike has put great efforts into trying to prove that *authenteō* has a positive meaning in verse 12, by studying how that word and some related words are used in other writings.

Here is how it works out:

- Mike spends about four hours trying to show that *authentēō* is a positive word related to authority.
- After that time, in this Step 9, he starts to consider the relationship between verse 12 and verse 11.
- He says there are contextual clues in verse 11 and verse 12 that add more to the case for taking *authentēō* as a positive thing (7hr48mins).
- In Step 9, he contrasts the learning in verse 11 with the teaching in verse 12, and the submission in verse 11 with *authentēō* in verse 12.
- As he does so, he summarizes Paul's train of thought, as he sees it:

***So, she's to learn, not teach; she's to be submissive, not have authority. That parallel between verses 11 and 12 helps to assure us that we're properly understanding authentēō as 'have authority', that that is the connection, because it's a flow of thought where, where there's sort of this counterpoint, you know: two examples of the positive, two examples of the negative. (7hr49mins)***

It is as if he finally lifts his eyes up from the trees and glimpses the forest.

He notices that in Paul's mind the learning and the submission in verse 11 are viewed positively, whilst Paul definitely views negatively the teaching and *authentēō* in verse 12.

So, *authentēō* must be negative in the context.

It seems that Mike momentarily realizes that Paul's flow of thought here does not actually support his complementarian analysis.

So he tries to recover. He changes 'positive' and 'negative' to 'permitted' and 'forbidden'. He adds:

***Two examples of the permitted, two examples of the forbidden – I should put it that way, since I'm using 'negative' in a different context here.***

But that rewording doesn't help him.

The examples of the permitted are permitted because Paul views them positively.

The examples of the forbidden are forbidden because Paul views them negatively.

Mike is not using 'negative' in a different context. Throughout his discussion of *authentēō*, he is using his 'positive or negative' distinction to elucidate the actual meaning of the word in Paul's mind as used in 1 Timothy 2:12. It is only Köstenberger's artificial theory that muddies the water by claiming a connection with Paul's positive view of teaching in some other contexts.

After Mike tries to recover by saying that he's using 'negative' in a different context, the listener hears his sharp intake of breath (7:49:34-35), almost as if he realizes for just an instant that his explanation is lame and wonders whether he has fired a torpedo at his own ship, before he quickly moves to a different point.

Let's be clear about this:

- What we want to know is whether Paul has in mind in verse 12-  
(A) that women should not do those two things (teaching and *authentēō*) because the particular form of those activities that Paul has in mind is bad,

or

(B) that women should not do those two things *simply because they are women*.

- Examination of how and where *authenteō* was used in and around Paul's time takes us part of the way to answering that question. *It shows (A) to be more likely than (B)*. That is because in and around Paul's time *authenteō* appears quite unsuitable for a characteristic eldership function.
- The only thing that can finally answer our question is to trace Paul's whole train of thought through the letter, and read it also in its historical and canonical context. So far as we can see, Mike does not take those steps anywhere in his consideration of *authenteō*.

Right from the start, Mike's consideration of *authenteō* was doomed to produce no reliable conclusion, because his methods are wrong.

Mike makes a further claim. He says, if an egalitarian reading of verse 12 were correct, we would not expect to see learning and submission in verse 11 as the alternatives to the two activities in verse 12 (7hr49mins).

But that is simply wrong.

An egalitarian reading is fully compatible with a comparison of the learning in verse 11 with the teaching in verse 12 and a comparison of the submission in verse 11 with *authenteō* in verse 12:

- The women should learn the truth rather than continuing their involvement with false teaching.
- The women should be in submission rather than dominating or overpowering a man with that teaching.

(In a different section of his video, from 8hr03mins onwards, Mike denies that women are involved in false teaching. We intend to address that in a separate article.)

In sum, in Step 9 Mike gets into even more of a tangle by trying to apply Köstenberger's theory. Of course, the teaching and *authenteō* in verse 12 are negative in Paul's estimation because he is forbidding them and because he contrasts them with a positive action. In Step 9, Mike has not given any valid reason for preferring a complementarian reading to an egalitarian reading.

## Mis-step #10 – The linkage of teaching and *authenteō*

[video 7hr50mins onwards; p84 of Mike's notes]

Mike claims that some egalitarians, such as Belleville and Payne, abuse the term 'or' in verse 12 to change the meaning. They change it to something like 'to teach in a way that wrongly takes authority'. He says that Köstenberger's study rules this out. (7hr50-53mins)

We need to state Payne's view more clearly here.

Payne has a chapter in his book with the title: "1 Timothy 2:12 ... Does [*oude*] Separate Two Prohibitions or Conjoin Them?" After many pages of detailed discussion, he states his conclusion that



the function of *oude*, as typically used by Paul, is to merge two expressions together to convey a single more specific idea.<sup>84</sup> He compares the English expression “*hit n’ run*”.<sup>85</sup>

Mike’s claim in his Step 10 is rather extraordinary, because of what he concedes only a few minutes later. In his discussion of how Paul’s words should be applied today, he says that teaching and authority in verse 12 are connected, such that there is a “*single idea*” behind them.

While that is not identical to what we see in Payne, it is close to it. Mike says:

***Even Köstenberger agrees, right, that there is a single idea behind these two ‘teach or have authority’ ... the single idea joins them and adds context to them. ... oude implies teaching and authority are connected here.*** (7hr54-55mins]

So, in Step 10, Mike makes a mountain out of a molehill. He substantially agrees with Payne that teaching and *authenteō* in verse 12 are connected together by a single idea, though without going so far as to combine them into a single idea. The small difference between Payne and Mike is of minor significance.<sup>86</sup>

## Mis-step #11 – Conclusion on *authenteō*

[video 7hr53-54mins and 8hr02mins; p84-85 of Mike’s notes]

Mike’s conclusion is:

***‘Have authority’ is the right translation.*** (7hr53mins)

Because of the many mis-steps in Mike’s reasoning, his conclusion is unsupported.

Worse than that, ‘have authority’ appears quite improbable as a translation. It is not supported by relevant historical evidence of the meaning of *authenteō*. The evidence suggests that it is quite inappropriate.

Mike’s preferred translation does not fit any of the relevant historical examples. The domination of Mercury and the moon by Saturn is not a model for the characteristic function of a church elder. And Manning’s translation of *BGU* 1208 certainly does not refer to an exercise of authority compatible with the ordinary function of a church elder.

In stating his conclusion, Mike offers a reason why many Christian brothers and sisters disagree with his complementarian view. Supposedly, it is because we do not want Scripture to say what it says. He pulls in from secular sociology the terminology of ‘roles’ and declares:

***The reason we don’t like this view is because something’s wrong with our understanding of gender relationships. Something’s wrong with the way that we value the connection between men and women and the roles that God has given us. We’re wrong, which is why we didn’t want Scripture to say what it said.*** (7hr54mins)

We firmly disagree.

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<sup>84</sup> *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 348, 359.

<sup>85</sup> *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 344.

<sup>86</sup> On this, see further the discussion in *Men and Women in Christ*, 380-381, in Appendix 4.

The true reason we reject Mike’s view is that we have found it to be unsupported: we believe it to be unfaithful to Scripture, and consequently damaging.

## Mis-step #12 – Application, and more self-contradiction

[video 7hr54mins onwards; p85 of Mike’s notes]

Mike’s Step 12 offers some remarks about application of 1 Timothy 2:12. This is not part of the reasoning that leads to his conclusion about the meaning of *authentēō*. But it reveals an interesting further flaw in his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2.

He talks about rejecting patriarchal over-applications which restrict women more widely, beyond church eldership. He draws attention to Priscilla, who taught Apollos. He mentions Paul instructing slaves to obey their masters, when some of those masters would have been women. He issues a challenge to “*patriarchalists*”. He says:

***Do you get what I’m saying? You’re expanding the meaning of Paul way beyond the context of First Timothy 2 into all realms of life, and this is a mistake. It’s inconsistent with Scripture ... (8hr00-01mins)***

But there is a self-contradiction in Mike’s challenge to patriarchists. It arises from his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:13-14, where Paul refers to the story of Adam and Eve.

From Mike’s notes of the parts of his video which we have not yet addressed, we see he claims Paul supports verse 12 by appealing in verse 13 to a creation principle – a transcultural principle about the created order of men and women.<sup>87</sup>

But a creation principle applies to creation. As patriarchists point out, it cannot be limited to church organization.

Yet in contradiction of the supposed creation principle on which Mike relies, Mike seeks to allow authority to women over men in spheres of society outside the church, because Scripture drives him to do so.

We will look forward to engaging with the remainder of Mike’s video, including his teaching on the meaning of verses 13-14, and preparing a further article.

## Our Conclusion – and why it matters

We have not presented in this article an exposition of 1 Timothy 2 (we have each discussed it in our books).<sup>88</sup> But we have engaged with the 4½ hours of Mike’s Part 12 video in which he discusses the meaning of *authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12, and we have assessed Mike’s reasoning.

While Mike’s presentation skills are masterful, his argument is a house of cards.

There are many errors and gaps in his research. He has not addressed major issues that he needed to address. He has misread what scholars have written. He has missed important points which they

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<sup>87</sup> Mike’s notes, pages 4, 99, 102.

<sup>88</sup> Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts* (IVP, 2019), chapters 11-14 and Appendices 3-6; Williams, *How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy* (Spiritual Bakery, 2022), chapter 7.

have made. He has gone off on tangents by asking himself the wrong questions. His reasoning is often unsound and illogical, even self-contradictory. His knowledge of church history is thin. He has got facts wrong. Mike's confident belief that Chrysostom had no classical training is so far off track that we have felt embarrassed at drawing attention to his mistake.

We are sad that a well-intentioned and gifted Christian brother teaches publicly with such seeming confidence on topics which he has not thoroughly mastered. The low level of reliability in Mike's output on Women in Ministry is disappointing, and is apt to mislead many of his listeners.

We are glad that Mike has invited us to expose his mistakes, because he needs to understand (as does his audience) that the influence of his videos on Women in Ministry far exceeds their reliability.

Mike has not shown even one historical example, prior to the Church Fathers, of *authenteō* being used or understood in a sense suitable to the function of a church elder. His earliest pertinent evidence to support restrictions on women is from the Church Father, Origen, in Fragment 74 on 1 Corinthians, which Mike enthusiastically describes as "*super cool*" and wants his audience to rely on. Yet, in self-contradiction, Mike himself argues that the view expressed by Origen in that Fragment is definitely wrong – as indeed it is.

And why did Paul make the strange choice of using this unusual word *authenteō*? That cries out for an explanation. Mike has not offered one. That omission is extraordinary:

- Linda Belleville raises that point, in a paragraph of her work that is cited by Mike in his video (see Mis-step #3 and Appendix 1).
- Andrew's book, which Mike has, draws attention to that pressing question.
- On 20 April 2023, Mike received from Terran an excerpt from Terran's book which drew attention to it.
- On 31 May 2023, Mike received from Andrew a full draft of a talk which gave prominence to that question.
- In his video, Mike refers three times to the chapter on 1 Timothy 2 in Nijay Gupta's book, where Gupta uses vivid language to emphasize the importance and relevance of the question.<sup>89</sup>

Mike says it took him a year to make his Part 12 video. He cannot have been unaware of this pressing question. We inquire, why then does he not answer it?

Does he leave it unaddressed because there is no answer to it, *except for one which links Paul's instructions in verse 12 to the particular situation in Ephesus*, which Mike is unwilling to concede, since that would undermine his complementarian interpretation?

The available historical evidence regarding the meaning of *authenteō* is limited. But what it shows is that in Paul's time, when *authenteō* is used to describe what one person does to another person, it is an appropriate word for describing the application of strong-arm negotiating tactics to overpower another party and force them to back down. And it is an appropriate word for describing the dominating astrological influence of one planet over another. That would ring a bell with Paul's original audience. It has connotations of pressure and of decisive influence. In contrast, there is zero

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<sup>89</sup> *Tell Her Story*, 173.

evidence showing that in Paul's time it was an appropriate word for describing the ordinary exercise of authority by a church elder.

Why does that matter?

Any church or denomination that excludes women from eldership or pastoral leadership on the basis of reading *authenteō* as 'have authority' or 'exercise authority' lacks a sound basis for doing so.

In our judgment, English translations that render it as 'have authority' or 'exercise authority' have the effect of misleading the readers who trust their translating competence.

It requires strong confidence in one's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 to forbid all godly, trained and gifted women from teaching as leaders in all local churches in all nations. The evidence concerning Paul's word *authenteō* does not provide a sound basis for such confidence.

## Appendix 1: More on Mis-steps #1 and #2

### Faulty methods in Mike's Steps 1 and 2

In the main text of our article, we have explained that Mike's *method* is faulty because he does not give due priority either to examining the whole context or to the actual usage of *authenteō* in and around Paul's time.

Disappointingly, Mike's attention to context, for the purpose of deciding upon the meaning of *authenteō*, is little more than an examination of a few other words in verse 12 and in verse 11 (Steps 7-9).

That approach to context is not unique to Mike. It is a common feature of much complementarian scholarship, which often focuses on 1 Timothy 2:12, or the handful of verses from 2:9 to 2:15, as a proof text.

Mike hails as "*the best resource*" the book *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn) (7hr15mins). But Andrew pointed out in Appendix 6 of his own book how the argument of *Women in the Church*-

***... proceeds with backwards logic. The meaning of *authenteō* as 'exercise authority' is determined first, without proper attention to the context of Paul's use of this word, and the expositions which follow are then largely fashioned on the basis of this meaning. ...***

***It is grieving to conclude that devout and able scholars have put such great efforts into advancing an interpretation which divorces verses 11-14 from their context.***

(You can access a free pdf of Appendix 6 at [www.bit.ly/3yuM5bM](http://www.bit.ly/3yuM5bM).)

In Mike's Step 2, as part of his consideration of cognates, Mike acknowledges that examining cognates is not always helpful. As he says, it can be abused.

We agree with Mike that cognates should be considered with due caution. Complementarian scholar Henry Scott Baldwin correctly pointed out in the first edition of *Women in the Church* (44-45):

***... there are numerous examples in Greek where the verbal form does not correspond to all the meanings of the noun. ... Our driving principle must be how people actually use language, not some theory about the origin of this or that word ...***

Disappointingly, despite Mike's acknowledgment of the need for due caution, we do not see it in his approach. We are perplexed by the priority that he gives to cognates of *authenteō*, whether *authentēs* (in Step 1) or four other words (in Step 2).

If Mike was determined to begin his consideration of *authenteō* with word studies, we suggest it would have made better sense for him to start with examining actual uses of the verb *authenteō* in or around Paul's time. That is the word that we are interested in and those are the usages that we most need to know about. That could then have been followed by a cautious examination of cognates to see whether they revealed any reliable additional information for understanding the meaning of *authenteō*.

Consider the noun *kurios*, meaning 'master' or 'Lord'. It is a very common word, occurring over 700 times in the New Testament. It is used of God and of Jesus. It generally has strongly positive connotations. Should we therefore infer that the cognate verb *kurieuō* has the same positive connotations when we see it used? That would be a mistake. While it can be used positively (for example, in 1 Timothy 6:15, referring to God), it can also be used with a negative connotation, as in Luke 22:26, where Jesus says that the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and adds: "**But you are not to be like that**" (v26, NIV). Paul took that to heart (see 2 Corinthians 1:24, where he uses the same word and emphasizes that he is not behaving in that way).

By starting his study with cognates, Mike confuses (and, we think, effectively misleads) his audience. By the time he comes to considering actual uses of *authenteō*, he has already used the words 'authority' and 'master' so many times, that this may influence his audience to think that this is what *authenteō* meant in Paul's time.

We now turn to the substance of Mike's Step 1, which is concerned with the noun *authentēs*. Mike seeks to show that in Paul's time the meaning 'murderer' was *passé* and that the meaning 'master' had been established by the turn of the era (BC to AD).

#### How Mike goes wrong in regard to the meaning 'murderer'

Mike is particularly concerned to counter a point made by Belleville. She refers to two examples of related words in the Greek Bible, in non-canonical books.<sup>90</sup> In Wisdom of Solomon 12:6 *authentēs* is used in the sense of 'murderer'. In 3 Maccabees 2:28-29 she interprets another word that is related to *authenteō* as 'origin' (her translation of *authentia*). She adds:

***These two uses in the Greek Bible should give us pause in opting for the translation "to exercise or to have authority over."***

Her point is, if Paul had wanted to speak of an ordinary exercise of authority, he could have picked from a large array of well-known words, but instead picked the rare word *authenteō*. Why? Her answer is that it:

***... carried a needed nuance that was particularly suited to the Ephesian situation.***

Instead of answering her real point, Mike tells us about Attic Greek, long before Paul's time. He correctly states that in Attic Greek, the meaning 'murderer' or 'kin-murderer' is abundantly attested. Wolters gives over two dozen examples in authors of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC or earlier.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Belleville, in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 2005, 82-83.

<sup>91</sup> In his article, 'A Semantic Study'.

But Wolters also gives 13 examples of the meaning ‘murder’ from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. One of the 13 is an example in Wisdom of Solomon, from the Greek Bible. More could be given. What are we to make of those?

Following Wolters, Mike argues that all of the examples of the meaning ‘murder’ in or after Paul’s time are explained by saying that the writers involved had literary pretensions. They were Atticists. In other words, they were trying to emulate Attic Greek, rather than using the common Greek of their own day (Koine or Hellenistic Greek). Mike says it’s like someone trying to copy King James English when writing a story; it’s not evidence of the current usage. Mike endorses Wolters, who says in his article:

***... it is a great mistake to take the definitions and usages of the Atticists as a reliable guide to the meaning of [authentēs] and its derivatives in Hellenistic Greek.***<sup>92</sup>

So, Mike says that the meaning ‘murderer’ had faded from the tongue of the common people by Paul’s time. And he claims that Belleville’s omission to explain the difference between Attic Greek and Hellenistic Greek is harmful. He says:

***... it’s harmful to people understanding the truth when you quote people and only quote them in part.*** [4hr01mins]

But that is exactly what Mike does to Linda Belleville.

He quotes her words ‘***should give us pause in opting for the translation “to exercise or to have authority over”***’, but he does not reveal that her real point is based on two usages of related words with two different meanings (3hr49mins). More than that, he does not tell his audience what her real point is. He gives the impression that she is arguing simply that the existence of the meaning ‘murder’ should give us pause in translating *authentēō* as ‘exercise authority’ or ‘have authority’. But her real point is something much more important. Her point is that *Paul has chosen a strange and unusual word that must have carried a needed nuance which was particularly suited to the Ephesian situation.*

Mike never answers her real point. We have said more about that under Mis-step #3.

In addition, Mike and Al Wolters are overdoing the practical significance of the difference between Attic Greek and Hellenic Greek as regards the noun *authentēs*.

Taking up Mike’s analogy of the King James Version of the Bible, would you expect a top English-speaking theologian, such as N.T. Wright, to be aware of meanings of words in the King James Version? The answer is yes.

Correspondingly, should we expect Paul to be aware of the meanings of words in the Greek Bible? Our firm answer is yes. And Timothy? Yes, he grew up in a Greek environment and was trained in the Scriptures from a young age (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15).

In fact, Paul was familiar with the Wisdom of Solomon. He draws on it in several of his letters. When he writes his earlier letter to the Ephesians, he draws on the book of Wisdom for his vivid description of the Christian’s spiritual armor (Ephesians 6). The very passage in the Wisdom of Solomon which uses the word *authentēs* to condemn people for being murderers also speaks of God’s hostility towards the same people because they engaged in sorcery: see Wisdom 12:3-7 (sorcery is in verse 4 and *authentēs* is in verse 6). That was highly relevant because of the sorcery which went on at

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<sup>92</sup> ‘A Semantic Study’.

Ephesus, and which Paul fought against with the spiritual weapons of the gospel (see Acts 19:13-20). So, in Paul's mind there would have been a link between that passage in Wisdom and the spiritual situation in Ephesus. We give more information in our footnote.<sup>93</sup>

We do not know why Mike is unaware of Paul's familiarity with the Wisdom of Solomon. It is explained in Andrew's book.<sup>94</sup>

Wolters himself says that the context in Wisdom makes it "**very clear**" that the word refers to "**parents who killed their own offspring in child sacrifice**".<sup>95</sup>

Then, if we look at other uses of the term *authentēs* to mean 'murderer', what do we find?

- A few decades before Paul wrote to Timothy, Philo used it to mean 'murderer'.<sup>96</sup> Like Paul, Philo was writing in order to be understood.
- Just over a decade after Paul wrote to Timothy, Josephus used it twice to mean 'murderer'.<sup>97</sup> Like Paul, Josephus was writing in order to be understood.

The meaning 'murderer' was not forgotten.<sup>98</sup>

We are not suggesting that Paul was employing this meaning in 1 Timothy 2:12, but the overlap between Wisdom 12:3-7 and the realities of Christian witness in Ephesus should not be overlooked. Nor should the possibility of a negative meaning for *authentēō* be ruled out.

### How Mike goes wrong in regard to the meaning 'master'

Scholars cannot agree on whether the two meanings 'murderer' and 'master' are historically related or unrelated. However, since murder is an ultimate form of mastery, it is not hard to see how they could be directly or indirectly related. Over time, meanings shift or extend.

We will examine the evidence on whether the meaning 'master' was established for *authentēs* by the first-century.

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<sup>93</sup> For the Christian's spiritual armor (Ephesians 6), Paul appears to draw the helmet of salvation from Isaiah 59:17; the breastplate of righteousness from Isaiah 59:17 and Wisdom 5:18; the 'whole armor' from Wisdom 5:17; and perhaps also the belt of truth from Isaiah 11:5 and the shield and the sword from Wisdom 5:19-20. Wisdom 12:3-7 says: "3 Those who lived long ago in your holy land 4 you hated for their detestable practices, their works of sorcery and unholy rites, 5 their merciless slaughter of children, and their sacrificial feasting on human flesh and blood. These initiates from the midst of a bloody revelry, 6 these parents who murder helpless lives, you willed to destroy by the hands of our ancestors, 7 so that the land most precious of all to you might receive a worthy colony of the children of God." (NRSVUE) Other well-known examples of Paul's use of this book are Romans 1:19-32 (Wisdom 13-14) and Romans 9:21 (Wisdom 15:7).

<sup>94</sup> *Men and Women in Christ*, 240, 269-270, respectively in chapter 12, under the heading '**The historical context**', and in chapter 13, under the heading '**Why does Paul use the rare word *authentēō*?**'.

<sup>95</sup> Wolters, 'A Semantic Study'. The strong negativity in the context is also clear from the fact that the text says that God hated those people for their detestable practices and judged them (12:4, 10).

<sup>96</sup> Philo, *The Worse Attacks the Better* (or *That the Worse is Wont to Attack the Better*), 1.78, commonly referenced as "*Det.* 1.78" (after the Latin title). See the discussion in Quient, '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', *Canadian-American Theological Review* 2020, 85-97.

<sup>97</sup> Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1.582 and 2.240.

<sup>98</sup> In his article 'A Semantic Study', Wolters argues that errors in ancient translations of Wisdom into other languages show that the meaning of *authentēs* as murderer was no longer understood. But that is like arguing that educated native English speakers are unlikely to know the meaning of a word in the KJV, because when the KJV was translated into, say, Mandarin or Bengali the translators bungled their translation of that word.

## Euripides – a corrupted text

Wolters' earliest example of *authentēs* as 'master' is in what he frankly acknowledges is “**a disputed passage**” of Euripides, around 420 BC.<sup>99</sup> Learned editors of Euripides consider the passage to be corrupt or inauthentic.<sup>100</sup> It is an unreliable outlier, since the next example of that meaning does not occur until a number of centuries later. Wolters gives no examples in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. Thus, Wolters' claim that 'by the first century AD' it meant 'master' is an inference that is not justified by any reliable, direct evidence.

## The Shepherd of Hermas – wrong century, wrong kind of authority

As a possible example from the first century AD itself, Wolters relies on a use of *authentēs* in a work called *The Shepherd* of Hermas.<sup>101</sup> But the Muratorian canon, written in the late second century, indicates that *The Shepherd* was written by Hermas when his brother, Pius, was Bishop of Rome, which was about 140-154.<sup>102</sup> So, in order to have literary evidence of the use of *authentēs* to mean 'master' during the first century, Mike needs to show that the part of *The Shepherd* where *authentēs* is used was written in the first century.

Mike does not do so. Nor does Wolters.

Besides, the use of the term in the *Shepherd* seems to refer to some kind of divine figure, who is in control of a tower, which is not the kind of authority that Mike's complementarian position requires that Paul is thinking about in 1 Timothy 2:12.

## First-century inscriptions of uncertain meaning

Wolters' only evidence of *authentēs* as master, dated in the first century, consists of some inscriptions which are transcribed in volumes 34 and 39 of *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.<sup>103</sup> Again, we will see that Wolters is not on firm ground.

The inscription in volume 34 is presented with an editing mark which shows that it is uncertain whether a form of *authentēs* is used in this inscription at all.<sup>104</sup>

The inscriptions in volume 39 are two inscriptions on the Ephesus monument. They are a literal (and therefore awkward) translation into Greek of the Latin original, which is not extant.

The context leaves the meaning uncertain in both cases. There is a hefty debate among scholars about it, with many different suggestions.

For line 109, the noun occurs in a sentence that means:

**[it is to be possible to change] the [authentēs] in the twenty days following.**<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> In his article, 'A Semantic Study'.

<sup>100</sup> For details, search for “Suppl. 442” within <https://www.textkit.com/greek-latin-forum/viewtopic.php?t=62287>.

<sup>101</sup> *The Shepherd* of Hermas, *Similitudes* 9.5.6.

<sup>102</sup> See J. Stevenson and W.H.C. Frend (eds), *A New Eusebius: Documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD 337* (SPCK, 1987), 52, 123-125; <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/shepherd.html>. For more on its dating and generally, see <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/scripture-and-the-shepherd-of-hermas/>.

<sup>103</sup> H.W. Pleket and R. S. Stroud (eds), Vol. 34 (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1987), Vol. 39 (Brill, 1992). The inscriptions are at *SEG* 34.1260.25; *SEG* 39.1180.109 and 123. The references are given in Appendix A2 to Wolters' article 'A Semantic Study'.

<sup>104</sup> To see for yourself, click [here](#). Go to the top right-hand corner of page 339 and see line 25.

<sup>105</sup> For translations and discussion, see under the heading “2.3 The Ephesus Monument” at <https://womeninthechurch.co.uk/%ce%b1%e1%bd%90%ce%b8%ce%b5%ce%bd%cf%84%ce%ad%cf%89-resources/>



For line 123, this is the sentence:

***The (same) consuls added, that it was to be possible to change the [authentēs] in the presence of whoever were to be praetors in each year.***

A book with translation of the text into English and line by line commentary was published in 2008.<sup>106</sup> The authors take the word to be most likely a translation of the original Latin word *cognitor*.<sup>107</sup> In the first century, a *cognitor* was a legal representative or advocate hired to assist in legal matters, or someone who guaranteed the identity of another person.

A *cognitor* does not have authority over other persons.

But too little is known, to arrive at a confident conclusion about what is meant by *authentēs* in these two inscriptions.

### Later examples

Wolters' further examples of *authentēs* in the sense 'master' are from the second century AD or later. They do not establish that in Paul's time *authentēs* meant 'master'.

### Omission to consider 'perpetrator'/'doer'/'author'

In our primary discussion of Steps 1 and 2, we mentioned a process that began no later than the second century BC, by which *authentēs* appears to have extended from 'murderer' into 'perpetrator', 'doer', 'author'.

Wolters provides some information about this process in his article 'A Semantic Study'. His earliest example of *authentēs* as 'doer' is in Polybius' *Histories*. Polybius died in the second century BC, around 118 or 117.<sup>108</sup>

Wolters claims that the meaning 'doer'/'perpetrator'/'author' was dependent on the meaning 'master'.

That is a bold claim, given that the meaning 'doer' appears in the record long before the meaning 'master'. The ideas in 'doer'/'perpetrator'/'author' are also close to some meanings of cognates such as *authentikos* (as referring to an original document) and *authenteō* (in the sense 'be the originator of', as in Aristonicus Alexandrinus).

Mike's video does not discuss this aspect.

### Conclusion on *authentēs* as 'master' in Step 1

Neither Al Wolters nor Mike has convincingly demonstrated that *authentēs* meant 'master' already in Paul's time.

But if it did, that does not tell us what kinds of mastery the verb *authenteō* may have been actually used for.

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<sup>106</sup> M. Cottier and M. Corbier, *The Customs Law of Asia* (OUP, 2008)] See [SCAN of pp. 68-75, 144-53](#)

<sup>107</sup> The authors discuss other possibilities, including *manceps* as well as *magister* and *auctor societatis*.

<sup>108</sup> See further Paul Kretschmer, *Glotta*, 3. Bd., 4. H. (1912), 290, who refers to Polybius and identifies this meaning in Koine Greek as '*auctor*' [Latin for 'originator/doer/author'], '*Täter; Urheber*' [German for 'doer/perpetrator, author'] (Andrew's translations). In the main text of his article, Wolters misdescribes this 2<sup>nd</sup>-century-BC text as "first century BC", which cannot be what he meant to write.

## Faulty substance in Step 2

Step 2 of Mike’s argument is a claim that the meaning of the noun *authentēs* as ‘master’ by the first century AD is confirmed by study of other related words: *authentikos*, *authentia*, *authentēsis*, *authentria*.

The first cognate considered in Step 2 is the adjective *authentikos*. As elsewhere, Mike relies on Wolters’ work.<sup>109</sup>

Wolters says that *authentikos* has a basic meaning of ‘authoritative’ (that is, ‘masterful’) and then a secondary meaning of ‘original’.

But there is little to support that proposition in the evidence which Wolters relies on.

We have already noted the similarity between *authentikos* as meaning ‘original’ and the second century BC use of *authentēs* to mean ‘doer’.

Wolters relies on just two references in Cicero (first century BC), and on Ptolemy’s use of this adjective in *Tetrabiblos* (soon after 150 AD, but probably drawing on earlier texts). In contrast, he lists chronologically some 23 other uses of *authentikos* from its earliest occurrence in the second century BC up to the time of Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* and does not give the meaning ‘authoritative’ for any of those 23.

Besides, the two examples from Cicero have nothing to do with the idea of being ‘masterful’, or having authority over someone. They are both about someone receiving reliable information on the progress of a war. They are about originality in the sense of authenticity.

If you say that you have certain information ‘on good authority’ (*authentikos*), you mean that you regard the information as authentic and trustworthy. You do not mean that the person from whom the information came has authority over you, or over anyone else. (For Cicero’s words, see our footnote.)<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, when in English we speak of a master copy of a document, we mean that it is the original, or the same as the original. It is authoritative in the sense that it can be relied on as an accurate copy. In a legal context, the ‘original’ legal document is the real thing, which has legal effect. But that use of language, whether in English or in Greek, does not mean that a person using that expression is imagining a person who has mastery or authority over someone else.

As regards the examples in Ptolemy, we will examine those in a separate Appendix because they are supplementary to our main consideration of Ptolemy’s use of *authentēō* itself (Mis-step 3). In Appendix 2 we will see that in an astrological context there are examples of *authentikos* referring to mastery in a sense that does not fit Mike’s interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12.

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<sup>109</sup> See Wolters’ article ‘A Semantic Study’. Wolters also considers the closely related adverb *authentikōs*. But he gives no relevant examples of the adverb, so we need not consider it.

<sup>110</sup> According to the translation found [here](#), the first usage (*Cicero, Att. 9.14.2*) is: “a certain person told me on good authority [*authentikos*] that Caesar gives out that he is avenging Cn. Carbo, M. Brutu.” The second use (*Cicero, Att. 10.9.1*, translated [here](#)) is very similar. We give the lengthier context: “The arrival of Philotimus—why, what a fellow! how insipid! what lies he keeps telling for Pompey! – frightened all my party to death. For myself, I have become hardened. None of my party doubted that Caesar had curtailed his marches: according to him, he is absolutely flying. None doubted Petreius having effected a junction with Afranius: he brings no tidings of the kind. In short, they have also been convinced of this—that Pompey, at the head of a large force, had marched into Germany by way of Illyricum; for that was announced on good authority [*authentikos*]. Well, then, I must make for Malta, I think, until we get fresh news from Spain.” As one would expect, the English word “authentic” derives from *authentikos*. See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/authentic>.

The next cognate considered is *authentia*. Wolters identifies just one example in or before Paul's time. It is from 3 Maccabees 2:29, probably written in the first century BC, though the dating is uncertain. 3 Maccabees is a Hellenic Jewish writing which was not included in the Greek Bible. Wolters says more about it in his 2009 article.<sup>111</sup>

The usual translation of *authentia* here is 'status'.<sup>112</sup> But Wolters rejects this and proposes that it be translated as 'authority'. Mike accepts this without question and informs his listeners that this is the meaning of *authentia* in Paul's day.

However, while Wolters' article seems at first sight to make a reasonable case for his proposal, that impression dissolves upon reviewing the context (more context than is shown in Wolters' article).<sup>113</sup>

We give the words of this part of 3 Maccabees, as translated in NRSVUE, in our footnote.<sup>114</sup>

This book describes Ptolemy IV's heavy persecution of Jews in Egypt. He persecuted them by refusing them access to their sanctuaries, making them pay additional tax, reducing them to the status of slaves, threatening them with execution, tattooing them with the emblem of Dionysius, and degrading them back to their former diminished status. If, however, they would accept initiation into the pagan mystery cults, they would be deemed as equal with other citizens.

Wolters' proposal of 'authority', where other translations have 'status', is flawed, because it is in conflict with the context. What was the former experience that the author has in mind? The author tells us explicitly in the previous sentence: the status of slaves.

All translators will admit that the word '*authentia*' is puzzling. But Wolters' proposal is not well supported by the context.<sup>115</sup>

The third cognate considered in Step 2 is *authentēsis*.

Again, Mike advances Wolters' assessment, which is that this word means 'exercise of authority'. But in reality, this word is of minimal value for the discussion, as Wolters himself acknowledges, though Mike does not (4hr 36mins). There is only one known occurrence, which is in a second century AD astrologer called Vettius Valens. The meaning is uncertain. In a footnote, Wolters provides two scholars' interpretations, one in German and one in French. They are very different from each other, and from Wolters' own suggestion. In English, the French can be rendered as 'the absolute power', the German as 'the professional position of the independent contractor'.<sup>116</sup>

With due scholarly candor, Wolters explicitly places *authentēsis* into a category which comprises "**late, rare, or dubious**". Mike does not share that assessment with his audience.

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<sup>111</sup> '[*Authentēs*] and its Cognates in Biblical Greek', JETS 52/4 (December 2009), 719-29.

<sup>112</sup> In R.H. Charles (1913), RSV (1957), NRSV (1989), CEB (2011), NRSVUE (2021).

<sup>113</sup> The full context can be seen on Bible Gateway in the NRSVUE at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=3%20Maccabees%202&version=NRSVUE>.

<sup>114</sup> [28] "None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death; [29] those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status [*authentia*]." [30] In order that he might not appear to be an enemy of all, he inscribed below: "But if any of them prefer to join those who have been initiated into the mysteries, they shall have equal citizenship with the Alexandrians."

<sup>115</sup> Payne suggests the translation "domination", meant in the sense of 'being dominated': see *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 380.

<sup>116</sup> Andrew's translations of French 'le pouvoir absolu', and German 'die Berufsstellung des selbständigen Unternehmers'.

The final cognate considered by Mike is *authentria*. This is found once in the third century AD and again in the fifth century. Those occurrences are after Paul's time. Again, Wolters puts this word into his category of "*late, rare or dubious*". Again, Mike does not share that candid assessment with his audience (4hr30mins).

### Summary of Appendix 1

A] Mike misrepresents Belleville's reasoning and does not address her important point about Paul's word choice in 1 Timothy 2:12.

B] Mike makes misleading points about the meaning 'murderer' for *authentēs*, apparently unaware that Paul was familiar with the Wisdom of Solomon, and when writing to the Ephesians made use of that book. And he misses the significance of the usage both shortly before and shortly after Paul, in Philo and in Josephus.

C] Mike says that, by the first century, the meaning 'master' was established for *authentēs*. But that statement downplays some of the evidence (see previous point) and draws strong conclusions from thin evidence. The additional cognates provide little to support his analysis. It appears more likely that the meaning 'perpetrator'/'doer'/'author' preceded the meaning 'master'. It does not look as if Mike has tested Wolters' views against the actual evidence. And Mike's presentation is more positive about the evidence than even Wolters himself.

D] It is unsound to over-rely on related words. Even if some related words refer to some kind of mastery, that does not tell us how the verb *authentēō* was used. For that, we need to give due priority to considering the whole context of how *authentēō* is used in 1 Timothy and to examining the actual uses of the verb *authentēō* in and around Paul's time.

## Appendix 2: *authentikos* in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*

There are five examples to consider.

One is of significantly uncertain meaning, apparently referring to places: this is *authentikois* in *Tetrabiblos* 4.7.10, translated by Robbins as "principal". We agree with Mike that this passage of text is hard to understand, so it does not assist.

Two of them are in 4.4.11. They are translated by Robbins as referring to independence, which is of little relevance to our discussion (*authentikōteron*, "greater independence", and *authentikas*, "independent").

The remaining two are of greater interest.

In 4.7.5 *authentikōteron* is translated as "greater authority". This is in a section discussing the supposed effects of the planets and other heavenly bodies on people's friendships and hatreds. In context, the word translated as "greater authority" is referring to a stronger degree of powerful control exerted over people's friendships and hatreds.

Mike thinks that this reference is supportive for his view, but in truth it is the opposite, since that kind of control is not the proper function of church elders.

In 4.10.9 *authentikon* is translated as "direction". Mike makes the point that it is paired with *despotikon*, which Robbins translates as "mastery".

The relevant passage is in a discussion of the seven ages of man, which are known to many today through William Shakespeare's version in his play *As You Like It* ("**All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; ...**"). Unlike Shakespeare, Ptolemy writes, specifically of the age range 23 to 41 years inclusive:

***The lord of the middle sphere, the sun, takes over the fourth age, which is the middle one in order, young manhood, for the period of nineteen years, wherein he implants in the soul at length the mastery and direction of its actions, desire for substance, glory, and position, and a change from playful, ingenuous error to seriousness, decorum, and ambition.***

This refers to a mature adult being in full control of their own actions. It is in contrast to the younger age range 15 to 22, where in Robbins' translation the person is said to be subject to "**frenzy**" and "**burning passion**" and "**the blindness of the impetuous lover**".

Full mastery of one's own actions is certainly a desirable character quality in church elders. But the meaning 'full mastery' is not like the authority that characterizes the relationship of elders to the flock. So, this example counts against Mike's position.

In sum, Ptolemy's five uses of the adjective *authentikos* do not support Mike's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. The two examples which refer to power or mastery fit very well with Ptolemy's use of the verb *authenteō* to refer to domination, domineering or gaining mastery.

## Appendix 3 Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria

### Irenaeus – drawing a blank

Mike cites a 1988 article by Wilshire as indicating that Irenaeus uses *authenteō* three times in Book 1 of *Against Heresies*.<sup>117</sup> (6hr 00mins)

The references given in the article are to 1.18.1.4, 1.21.1.10, and 1.28.9.2. The references do not correspond to any version to which we have access. None of the phrases in Wilshire's suggested English translations, nor any similar phrase, appears in the English translation of those chapters that is available online, whether a 'voice of authority', 'redeemed by authority that came from above', or 'authoritative voice'. And we have been unable to locate the verb *authenteō* in the Greek text in Migne.<sup>118</sup>

Mike further claims:

***Irenaeus even uses authenteō of God.*** (6hr00mins)

We have not found any evidence to support that further claim.

We have compared Mike's claims with the research published by Baldwin and by Wolters. Neither Baldwin nor Wolters claims to have found any uses of *authenteō* by Irenaeus, so far as we are aware.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> 'The TLG Computer and Further Reference to [*authenteō*] in 1 Timothy 2.12' (1988), *New Testament Studies*, 34, pp120-134, 125.

<sup>118</sup> The Greek text can be seen at pages 641, 657 and 690-691 of <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=pL7UAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>119</sup> If anyone has information to help us on this, please email us. We did find a claim by Wolters in his article 'A

So far as we can tell, the verb *authenteō* is never used by Irenaeus.

### Clement of Alexandria – another blank

Mike appears to claim that there are two places in Clement where *authenteō* means ‘authority’. One of the two refers to “**the authority of the Lord**”. Mike suggests this is “**huge**”, because of the absence of a pejorative connotation, even though Clement is aware of the meaning ‘murder’. (6hr01-02mins)

In fact, as far as we can discover, Clement never uses *authenteō* to refer to authority.

The first reference Mike gives is to Book 2 of *Paedagogus*, also known as *The Instructor*. There, Clement uses a related noun, not the verb *authenteō*.<sup>120</sup>

The second reference given by Mike is to Book 4 of *Stromata*, also known as *Miscellanies*. Again, Clement uses a related noun, not the verb *authenteō*.<sup>121</sup>

Since Clement did not use the word *authenteō*, this evidence is of little value for our discussion.

## Appendix 4 How Priscilla fits with 1 Timothy 2

Everyone agrees that Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, taught a man, Apollos, so as to correct his understanding of the message of Christ. That is in Acts 18.

How does Acts 18 fit with what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2?

Mike’s answer depends on the idea of authority. He thinks that Paul is writing to Timothy about the function of elders, which he says is to teach with authority. Mike says it was fine for Priscilla to teach Apollos because, although she taught a man, she taught him *without authority*:

***Priscilla taught Apollos theology, but outside of the environment where it would include authority. It was in a home environment ... she had no sort of eldership role, no sort of authority that was going on at the time either.*** (7hr56mins)

But there are problems with that explanation. Most importantly, it conflicts with what is shown about Priscilla in Luke’s narrative in Acts 18. And interestingly, Chrysostom has no qualms about using *authenteō* and *authentia* to characterize Priscilla’s teaching.

We’ll look at Chrysostom first.

### Priscilla and *authenteō* / *authentia* in Chrysostom

Chrysostom speaks of Priscilla in a homily on Romans 16:3-5. He attempts to reconcile her ministry with Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12. His attempt is notably unsatisfactory, because it is anachronistic, reflecting the practices of his own time rather than of Paul’s.

He says that in verse 12 Paul “**was speaking about teaching in the church (en tō bēmati), about public discourse, and about speaking against the clergy.**”<sup>122</sup> The phrase *en tō bēmati* refers to public

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Semantic Study’ that the noun *authentia* or *authentia* is used by Irenaeus, not in the references given by Wilshire but in Book 1, chapters 24 and 26. However, Migne does not contain a Greek text for chapters 24 and 26. Perhaps the noun is preserved in Greek fragments cited by another writer, but since this is in the end an unimportant issue, we have not checked the footnotes in Migne for that.

<sup>120</sup> We viewed the Greek text at page 433 of

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=BwcRAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>121</sup> Again, we viewed the Greek text in Migne.

<sup>122</sup> First Homily on Priscilla and Aquila. We are using the translation by Dr David Ford published on 4/8/2021 at

teaching from the bema, which was the raised platform at one end of a basilica, where the clergy sat. A basilica was a roofed public building, usually rectangular in shape. For Chrysostom, the public/private distinction was a key point, since Priscilla did not teach Apollos in public, from the bema.

But in New Testament times churches gathered in people's apartments or in the semi-public areas of wealthy people's houses, not in public buildings; Christian basilicas with bemas did not yet exist. Nor were there any clergy in the sense meant by Chrysostom.

For our study of *authenteō*, another passage in his discussion is of greater interest. In translation, Chrysostom says this (and we substitute the words *authenteō* and *authentia* where they appear):

***So how does he say, in writing to Timothy, "I do not permit a woman to teach, neither to [authenteō] a man" (1 Tim. 2:12)? This is when the man is godly, and possesses the same Faith, and shares the same wisdom. But when the man is unbelieving, or going off into error, Paul does not deprive her of [authentia] to teach. Indeed, in writing to the Corinthians, he says, "And if the woman has an unbelieving husband, she must not leave him. For what do you know, O wife, whether or not you might save your husband?" (1 Cor. 7:13, 16). And how can a believing wife save her unbelieving husband? It's evident that this can happen through her instructing, and teaching, and leading him to the Faith, just as Priscilla herself did with Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).***

Notice those words "**just as Priscilla herself did with Apollos**". Paul did not deprive Priscilla of the *authentia* to teach; on the contrary, it was right for her to *authenteō* a man.

Chrysostom was not consistent in his understanding of *authenteō*.

### Priscilla in Luke's narrative

Now let's try to avoid anachronism and read Acts 18 on its own terms.

A church-planting team of three arrived in Ephesus (Paul, Priscilla, Aquila). Paul's message received a favorable reception but he promptly resumed his travels, leaving only Priscilla and Aquila to teach and care for the new converts.

The learned and mighty orator Apollos arrived, preaching an incomplete gospel. Priscilla and Aquila corrected him. Probably, they took him aside to their house to do so, because that was their base, where the new church began to meet (Acts 18:23-26; 1 Corinthians 16:19).

This is in the part of Acts where Luke is recounting Paul's ministry, from chapter 16 to the end of the book. By including this story, Luke shows that Paul's ministry was continued through his male and female co-workers, whom he had selected and trained well. This is underlined by Luke's choice of words. The relatively unusual verb which Luke uses in Acts 18:26 to describe Priscilla's and Aquila's teaching (*ektithēmi*) is the same word which he uses of the apostle Paul's own expository teaching in Acts 28:23, in the passage where he brings his whole narrative to an end.

Why should the learned and powerful Apollos take any notice of anything that Priscilla and Aquila said? Because they were the apostle Paul's delegates, whom he had left in charge of the church that the three of them were planting. As the first leaders of the new group of believers in Ephesus, they exercised their authority to correct Apollos. For our fuller critique of Mike's view on Priscilla, see our article 'What Winger Presently Gets Wrong: Women Leaders in the New Testament (PART B)' at

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<https://orthochristian.com/138476.html> and <https://orthochristian.com/138540.html>.

<https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-presently-gets-wrong-women-leaders-in-the-new-testament-part-b/>.

We are sad that Mike has ignored our critique of his discussion of Priscilla. We have shown that he hasn't looked closely at the biblical data. In his Part 12 video on 1 Timothy 2, he repeats his baseless claim that Priscilla was in Ephesus at the time when Paul wrote 1 Timothy. (Ephesus was the destination of the letter.) His notes say emphatically:

***There's obviously one woman educated in Christian theology there!***<sup>123</sup>

But there is no evidence to support that claim.

After Priscilla and Aquila had ministered in Ephesus for a number of years, by AD 57 they had returned to Rome (see Romans 16:3-5). About nine years later (AD 66), by the time of Paul's second letter to Timothy, we can see that they were in Ephesus again, because Paul greets them in the second letter (2 Timothy 4:19). But they are not mentioned in his first letter to Timothy; and there is no evidence that Priscilla and Aquila were already back in Ephesus when Paul wrote 1 Timothy.

We believe that in 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul is not talking about the function of teaching and authority as exercised by a church elder. But even if he is, the non-restrictive position still stands. There is no difficulty in fitting Acts 18 and 1 Timothy 2 together:

- In Acts 18 Paul gave Priscilla the functions of a teaching elder.
- If in 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul is talking about teaching and authority as exercised by a church elder, his restriction is dealing with a local problem in Ephesus, not laying down a universal rule that contradicts the authority which he gave to Priscilla.

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<sup>123</sup> Page 92 of Mike's notes.