

## ΑΥΘΕΝΤΗΣ AND ITS COGNATES IN BIBLICAL GREEK

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In an earlier essay entitled “A Semantic Study of ἀθένης and Its Derivatives,” I surveyed the semantic history of this word family in ancient Greek from its earliest attestation in the fifth century BC until the fourth century AD.<sup>1</sup> The conclusions of that study can be summarized in four broad propositions: (1) A crucial semantic distinction must be made between ἀθένης in the meaning “kin-murderer,” which is well attested in the classical Greek literature of the fifth century BC, and ἀθένης in the meaning “master” or “doer,” which is only sporadically attested in earlier Greek literature, but which becomes the dominant sense after the turn of the era. The two senses may go back to separate etymological roots. (2) This basic semantic divide corresponds, since at least the turn of the era, with a distinction in linguistic register, the archaic meaning “kin-murderer” being reserved for elevated prose seeking to emulate Attic literary models, and the meaning “master” or “doer” occurring in works reflecting more closely the living vernacular of Hellenistic speech. (3) All derivatives of ἀθένης (beginning with ἀθεντικός in the second century BC), are semantically indebted to the second basic meaning, especially “master,” yielding such senses as “authoritative” for the derived adjective, and “predominate” for the derived verb. (4) The handful of exceptions to this overall pattern can all be explained as the result of the failure of later writers, especially the so-called Atticists, to understand the proper classical meaning of the word.

In the nature of the case, my earlier study, covering as it does the semantics of this word family over a period of eight centuries, and involving some 167 places where it is attested over that time period, could not deal in detail with all these individual passages. In the present paper, taking advantage of the general semantic picture which emerged from that earlier investigation, I will focus my attention on the three places where members of the ἀθένης family occur in biblical Greek, supplemented by one additional passage in early Christian literature outside of the New Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> See *JGRChJ* 1 (2000) 145–75. A reprint of this article is available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/Vol-11-No-1>.

## I. ΑΥΘΕΝΤΗΣ IN WISDOM OF SOLOMON 12:6

A notoriously difficult passage of the Wisdom of Solomon (generally dated to the first century BC or the first century AD)<sup>2</sup> is 12:3–7, which describes the detestable practices of the Canaanites before the Israelite conquest. It reads as follows in the NRSV (with italics added to highlight its chiasmic structure):

3	<i>Those who lived long ago</i>	A
	<i>in your holy land</i>	B
4	<i>you hated for their detestable practices,</i>	C
	<i>their works of sorcery and unholy rites,</i>	
5	<i>their merciless slaughter of children,</i>	D
	(τέκνων τε φονέας <sup>3</sup> ἀνελεήμονας)	
	<i>and their sacrificial feasting on human flesh and blood</i>	E
	<i>These initiates from the midst of a heathen cult,</i>	E'
6	<i>these parents who murder helpless lives</i>	D'
	(καὶ αὐθέντας γονεῖς ψυχῶν ἀβοηθήτων)	
	<i>you willed to destroy by the hands of our ancestors,</i>	C'
7	<i>so that the land most precious of all to you</i>	B'
	<i>might receive a worthy colony of the servants of God.</i>	A'

It is clear from the context that αὐθέντας here refers to “kin-murderers,” those guilty of the particularly heinous crime of killing one’s own flesh and blood, in this case parents killing their own children. This conclusion is reinforced when we take into account the chiasmic structure of this passage, which does not seem to have been noticed before. Clearly αὐθέντας in verse 6 (D\*) corresponds to the φονέας, “murderers,” of verse 5 (D), in both cases referring to child-slayers.

As we noted above, “kin-murderer” (the equivalent of the Latin *parricida* and the Irish *finjal*) is in fact the regular meaning of αὐθέντης in the classical works of fifth-century Attic literature, although it later disappeared from the living language, being preserved mainly as a literary archaism in Atticizing writers.<sup>4</sup> It is just such an archaism which we find in the present passage in the Wisdom of Solomon. As David Gill has shown, a striking feature of this passage is “the great number of words and phrases reminis-

<sup>2</sup> On the date of Wisdom, see M. Gilbert, “Sagesse de Salomon (ou Livre de la Sagesse),” *DBSup* 11 (1991) 91–93.

<sup>3</sup> This is the manuscript reading, retained in *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum. Vol. XII: Sapientia Salomonis* (ed. Joseph Ziegler; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 133. The NRSV rendering “slaughter” seems to reflect the reading φονάς, found in Rahlfs’s edition of the LXX, which goes back to a conjectural emendation by Otto Fridolin Fritzsche, *Libri Apocryphi Veteris Testamenti* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1871).

<sup>4</sup> See Wolters, “Semantic Study” 147, especially n. 19.

cent of the language of Greek tragedy," notably the works of Aeschylus and Euripides.<sup>5</sup> Gill notes that one of these words is αὐθέντης.<sup>6</sup>

That αὐθέντης is used here in an archaic literary sense which was largely unknown to Greek-speakers after the turn of the era is also shown by the fact that none of the ancient versions understood it. The Old Latin version (originally done in the second century AD, and later incorporated into the Vulgate) renders it as *auctores*, probably conveying the meaning "progenitors" in this context.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a widespread scholarly consensus that this is one of the many translation errors found in the Old Latin of Wisdom.<sup>8</sup> The translator was perhaps thinking of αὐθέντης in the sense of "doer" (of an action), which might in other contexts be appropriately rendered *auctor* in Latin.<sup>9</sup> In any case, he completely missed its archaic Attic meaning.

Other ancient versions misunderstand the word as well. The Armenian version translates αὐθέντας here as "masters," thus taking it to have the ordinary meaning of the word in later Greek.<sup>10</sup> The same is true of the Syro-Hexapla, which uses the Syriac noun *šalītā*, "ruler, leader."<sup>11</sup> The Arabic version has yet another rendering, namely "suicides."<sup>12</sup> In this case, the translator correctly guessed that αὐθέντας was here being used in an archaic Attic sense, but was misled by an Atticistic lexicographical tradition in antiquity, which mistakenly took the classical sense of the word to be "suicide."<sup>13</sup>

The Peshitta is a special case, because it does not appear to read αὐθέντας at all. Verse 6a is rendered *w' hw' wdrn lnpšt' dbny 'mhwun*, "and there was no help for the souls of the children of their people," which is clearly based on a different Greek *Vorlage*. However, this *Vorlage* appears to have retained traces of the original text. As Weitzman has shown, there is good evidence

<sup>5</sup> David Gill, "The Greek Sources of Wisdom XII 3-7" VT 15 (1965) 383-86, here 384.

<sup>6</sup> Gill, "Greek Sources" 385.

<sup>7</sup> So the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, which lists Wis 12:6 under *auctor* IV,2 ("generis conditor").

<sup>8</sup> See P. Thielmann, "Die lateinische Übersetzung des Buches der Weisheit," *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie* 8 (1893) 253-77, here 263, R. Cornely, *Commentarius in Librum Sapientiae* (Cursus Scripturae Sacrae; Paris: Lethielleux, 1910) 437-38, A. T. S. Goodrick, *The Book of Wisdom* (Oxford Church Bible Commentary; New York: Macmillan, 1913) 260, and W. Thiele, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der allateinischen Bibel 11/1: Sapientia Salomonis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979) 214-15.

<sup>9</sup> See Wolters, "Semantic Study" 145-46. In the manuscript tradition of the Old Latin of Wisdom there is some evidence that later scribes realized that *auctores* was a mistranslation. Some manuscripts add the word *sceleris*, so that the meaning becomes "authors of the heinous deed," while others substitute the word *interfectores*, "killers." See Thiele, *Sapientia Salomonis* 462. Similarly, the modern Vulgate revision known as the Nova Vulgata has the rendering *auctores caedis*, "authors of the slaughter;" see *Libri Sapientiales* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977) 169. Another variant recorded by Thiele is *actores*, which may reflect the meaning "doers."

<sup>10</sup> The Armenian word is *chokh*, a noun meaning "master, lord, grand seigneur." See M. Bedrossian, *A New Dictionary Armenian-English* (1875-1879; repr., Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1973) 444.

<sup>11</sup> See A. M. Ceriani, *Translatio Syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI* (2 vols.; Milan: Pogliani, 1876-1883) *ad loc.* See also R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1879-1901) col. 4180, where this verse is referred to under the entry for *šalītā*, 2 ("praefectus").

<sup>12</sup> On the Arabic rendering, see Goodrick, *Book of Wisdom* 260.

<sup>13</sup> See Wolters, "Semantic Study" 150.

that the Peshitta translator of Wisdom was working from a single Greek manuscript which in some places was so damaged that it was illegible, forcing the translator to simply guess at the Greek he was translating.<sup>14</sup> I would suggest that this was also the case in Wisdom 12:6. The translator could apparently make out the words καὶ . . . ψυχῶν ἀβοηθήτων, since these are reflected in the translation "and there was no help for the souls." For the rest of the line, where there appears to be no semantic correspondence between the Greek and the Syriac, I suspect that the translator had before him, not ἀθέντας γονεῖς, but only the fragmentary remnants . . . θέντας γ.ν.ς, and that he reconstructed this as representing [γεννη]θέντας γ[έ]ν[ου]ς, "ones born of the race." This, in turn, could be reasonably rendered as "the children of (their) people."<sup>15</sup> Whether or not this hypothetical reconstruction is correct, it is clear that the Peshitta is not translating ἀθέντας at all, and *a fortiori* is not grasping its archaic Attic meaning.

The confusion of the ancient versions is to some extent perpetuated in modern times. There are also modern scholars who have interpreted ἀθέντας in Wisdom 12:6 to mean "masters," following the Armenian version and the Syro-Hexapla. Examples are Schmid and Jadrijeviæ.<sup>16</sup> A more common error, once again based on an uncritical reliance on the Atticistic lexical works of antiquity, is the notion that ἀθέντης is a murderer who kills *with his own hands*.<sup>17</sup> So reads the KJV of our verse, and many other versions and commentators.<sup>18</sup> One contemporary example is the New American Bible (1970), which renders our verse as follows: "and parents who took *with their own hands* defenseless lives" (my emphasis).

We conclude, therefore, against all the ancient versions and many modern scholars, that ἀθέντας here means "murderers" in its specific Attic sense of "kin-murderers."

## II. AYΘENTIA IN 3 MACCABEES 2:29

The abstract noun derived from ἀθέντης is ἀθεντία (sometimes spelled ἀθεντεία). There is widespread lexicographical agreement that it means something like "sovereignty" or "authority." In fact, in a Roman bilingual inscrip-

<sup>14</sup> Michael Weitzman, "Two Curious Passages in the Peshitta of Wisdom," in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Cambridge, 1995* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 137–51.

<sup>15</sup> Note that in the LXX γένος frequently renders Hebrew 'am. See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) 239.

<sup>16</sup> J. A. Schmid, *Das Buch der Weisheit* (Vienna, 1858), as cited in Franz Feldmann, *Textkritische Materialien zum Buch der Weisheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1902) 28, and Antonius Jadrijeviæ, "Notae ad textum Sap 12, 3–7," *VD 22* (1942) 117–21, specifically 120 and 121 ("dominos").

<sup>17</sup> See Wolters, "Semantic Study" 150, 154.

<sup>18</sup> The KJV reads: "and the parents that killed with their owne hands, soules destitute of helpe." So also Cornely, *Commentarius* 437, Goodrick, *Book of Wisdom* 260, Abraham Kahana, *The Apocryphal Books* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1978) 1.496 [Hebrew], the German *Einheitsübersetzung* (1980), and Armin Schmitt, *Das Buch der Weisheit. Ein Kommentar* (Würzburg: Echter, 1986) 102.

tion of the second century AD, it is the equivalent of the Latin *auctoritas*, and Church Fathers use it freely to refer to the sovereignty of God or Christ.<sup>19</sup> Its meaning, therefore (like that of all the other derivatives of αὐθεντης), is based on αὐθεντης “master.” There is little dispute about the lexical content of the word.

There is, however, some disagreement about the meaning of αὐθεντία in 3 Macc 2:29, which happens to be the earliest attestation of the word in surviving Greek literature. It there occurs in the context of a decree against the Jews issued by king Ptolemy IV Philopator (222–204 BC). However, since there is considerable scholarly scepticism about the authenticity of the quoted decree, and scholarly guesses about the date of 3 Maccabees itself vary widely (most settling on some time in the first century BC), we cannot date this first occurrence of the word with any confidence.<sup>20</sup>

The relevant portion of the decree reads as follows in the NRSV:

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 (οὓς καὶ καταχωρίσαι εἰς τὴν προσυνεσταλμένην αὐθεντίαν).<sup>21</sup>

In this translation αὐθεντία is understood to mean “status.” This is an unusual rendering, because αὐθεντία nowhere else seems to have this meaning. The lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones also gives a special sense to the word in this verse, namely “restriction,” but this seems to confuse the meaning of the noun with that of the participle which modifies it (προσυνεσταλμένην = “restricted beforehand”). Others, too, speak of an “unusual meaning” of the word here,<sup>22</sup> and continue to interpret it as “status” or “restriction.”<sup>23</sup> To add to the confusion, Belleville has translated the word here as “origin.”<sup>24</sup>

In my opinion, however, it is not necessary to assign an unusual meaning to αὐθεντία in 3 Macc 2:29. The word here refers to the limited *authority* which

<sup>19</sup> See Wolters, “Semantic Study” 161.

<sup>20</sup> See H. Anderson, “3 Maccabees,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) 2.512.

<sup>21</sup> This is the text as printed in *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum. Vol. IX: Maccabaeorum libri I–IV, fasc. III: Maccabaeorum liber III* (ed. Robert Hanhart; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 48. For the purposes of the present argument we will not consider the possibly preferable variant readings in this clause, such as καταχωρήσαι and προσυνεσταλμένην.

<sup>22</sup> Leland E. Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to Αὐθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12” *NTS* 34 (1988) 124.

<sup>23</sup> For the meaning “status” see also the translations by Cyril W. Emmett in *APOT* 1.166, Moses Hadas in *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953) 46, Kahana, *Apocryphal Books* 2.244 (Hebrew *ma’āmād*), Anderson, *OTP* 2.520, and I. Rodríguez Alfageme, *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento* (2 vols.; Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1983) 491 (“condición”); for “restriction” see also F. Rehkopf, *Septuaginta-Vokabular* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) s.v. (“Beschränkung”). Both meanings are given in J. Lust et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint. Part I: A–I* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992) s.v.

<sup>24</sup> Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority. Timothy 2:11–15,” in *Discovering Biblical Authority. Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 211.

the Jews in Egypt were given to follow their own customs and laws under the broader political sovereignty of the Ptolemaic rulers. See the discussion of this passage in Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. The Struggle for Equal Rights*.<sup>25</sup> Although Kasher, no doubt relying on the standard English translations of 3 Maccabees, still uses the term “status” to render αὐθεντία in this verse, he describes the political reality to which it refers in much more specific language. He speaks of the “autonomy” of the Jews, and of their “right to ‘live according to ancestral laws.’”<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere he speaks of their “juridical independence,” their “legal autonomy,” and their “independent jurisdiction.”<sup>27</sup> At the same time, he acknowledges that “their autonomy was extremely limited” or “restricted.”<sup>28</sup> In short, he is describing what 3 Macc 2:29 calls the Jews’ “restricted authority” ([προ]συνεσταλμένην αὐθεντίαν) to regulate their own affairs within Egyptian society.<sup>29</sup>

This interpretation is confirmed by the Syro-Hexapla of our verse.<sup>30</sup> The Syriac word which it uses to render αὐθεντία is *šūlṭānā*, meaning “power, authority, right.”<sup>31</sup> It is also confirmed by the way the verbal cognate of αὐθεντία is explained in a number of lexical works in antiquity.<sup>32</sup> As the proper Attic equivalent of αὐθεντεῖν (which was considered too colloquial by the Atticists) these lexica gave the verb αὐτοδικεῖν, “to have independent jurisdiction,” that is, to be master in one’s own sphere.<sup>33</sup> This exactly describes the legal position of the Jews under the Ptolemies (although the relevant “sphere” or “jurisdiction” could be quite limited)

We conclude that αὐθεντία in this passage, rather than being used in an otherwise unattested sense, here as elsewhere carries its ordinary meaning of “authority.”

### III. ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:12

This controversial text reads as follows in the NRSV:

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority (αὐθεντεῖν) over a man; she is to keep silent.

There have been a number of recent attempts to soften or alter the force of Paul’s bald statement that he does not permit a woman to “have authority”

<sup>25</sup> Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. The Struggle for Equal Rights* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985) 214–32. See also idem, “The Civic Status of the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt,” in *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (ed. Per Bilde et al.; Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 3; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992) 100–121.

<sup>26</sup> Kasher, *Jews in Egypt* 209.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 30–32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>29</sup> See Wolters, “Semantic Study” 161, n. 86. See now also T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009) s.v. αὐθεντία, which gives the related meaning “autonomous district” to the word in 3 Macc 2:29.

<sup>30</sup> See Ceriani, *Translatio Syra* 2.639.

<sup>31</sup> See J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903) s.v. (p. 565b).

<sup>32</sup> See Wolters, “Semantic Study” 159, 161.

<sup>33</sup> See ibid. 159. LSJ defines αὐτοδικεῖω as “to be αὐτόδικος.” The latter, in turn, is defined as “with independent jurisdiction, with one’s own courts.”

(αὐθεντεῖν) over a man. I will not rehearse these attempts here.<sup>34</sup> My present concern is rather to survey the ancient versions of this verse, and to show that, with one possible exception, they all support the view that αὐθεντέω is a denominative verb based on αὐθέντης “master.”

The verb αὐθεντέω is a derivative of the noun αὐθέντης, just as δεσποτέω is derived from the noun δεσπότης, and ἐπιστατέω is derived from the noun ἐπιστάτης. In each case, the original noun means “master,” and the derived verb essentially means “be master (over),” and is construed with a genitive, as is regular with verbs of ruling.<sup>35</sup> The same pattern holds for τυραννέω (from τύραννος) and ἡγεμονέω (from ἡγεμών), among others. Clearly the verb αὐθεντέω, like all the other derivatives of αὐθέντης, derives its semantic content from αὐθέντης in the meaning “master,” the ordinary colloquial sense of the word in Hellenistic Greek after the turn of the era.

A survey of the ancient versions of this verse shows that they were generally quite sensitive to the denominative force of the word. The Old Latin versions (the *Vetus Latina*), dating from the third century on, have four different translations of αὐθεντέω, all of them related to a Latin noun designating someone in authority. They are the following:

- (1) VL 1: *praepositam esse* (related to *praepositus*, “commander”).
- (2) VL 2: *dominare* (related to *dominus*, “lord”).
- (3) VL 3: *dominari* (related to *dominus*, “lord”).
- (4) VL 4: *principari* (related to *princeps*, “ruler”).<sup>36</sup>

The same pattern holds for subsequent versions:

- (5) Vulgate: *dominari* (related to *dominus*, “lord”).<sup>37</sup>
- (6) Harklean Syriac: *mšlłw* (*mešlłāw*).<sup>38</sup> This is the infinitive of the Ethpaal conjugation of the root *šlł*, which in this conjugation means “to rule, have dominion, authority, power,”<sup>39</sup> and which is related to the common noun *šalīṭā*, meaning “ruler, leader.”<sup>40</sup> As we saw above, the root *šlł* was also used in the Syro-Hexaplaric rendering of αὐθέντης in Wisdom 12:6, and of αὐθεντία in 3 Macc 2:29.

<sup>34</sup> For a few examples, see Wolters, “Semantic Study,” nn. 45, 82, 85, 125, and 134.

<sup>35</sup> On the genitive with verbs of ruling, see Goodwin and Gulick, *Greek Grammar*, §1109, and BDF §177.

<sup>36</sup> See Hermann J. Frede, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel 25: Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos. Pars I* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975–1982) 474.

<sup>37</sup> Note that Latin *dominari*, “rule,” “reign,” “govern,” regularly has a neutral or positive sense. Elsewhere in the Vulgate it is used of the reign of the righteous king (Ps 71 [72]:8) and of Christ (Rom 14:9).

<sup>38</sup> See Barbara Aland and Andreas Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung. II. Die paulinischen Briefe, Teil 3: 1./2. Thessalonicherbrief, 1./2. Timotheusbrief, Titusbrief, Philemonbrief und Hebräerbrief* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 140.

<sup>39</sup> J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) s.v. *šlł* (p. 579b).

<sup>40</sup> J. Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary* s.v. (p. 580b).

- (7) Sahidic Coptic: *erjoeis*, “to be lord” (related to *joeis*, “lord”).<sup>41</sup>  
 (8) Bohairic Coptic: *ethreserjōj*, “to be head” (related to *jōj*, “head”).<sup>42</sup>  
 (9) Gothic: *fraujinom*, “to be lord” (related to *frauja*, “lord”).<sup>43</sup>

The only exception to this pattern appears to be the Peshitta, but its rendering of αὐθεντεῖν is rather puzzling. The Syriac text reads literally “I do not permit a woman to teach or to *dare* over (*lmamrāḥû ‘al*) a man.”<sup>44</sup> The verbal form in question is the Aphel infinitive of the verb *mrah*, which in this conjugation means “to venture, dare, be rash, hasty, headstrong, presumptuous.”<sup>45</sup> This is a puzzling rendering, because it has no discernible connection with known meanings of αὐθεντέω. As a result, translators of the Peshitta are at a loss as to how to interpret the Syriac at this point. Some attempted renderings are: “be assuming over” (Murdock),<sup>46</sup> “to lord it over” (Jennings),<sup>47</sup> “be presumptuous over” (*Aramaic-English Interlinear NT*).<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the best rendering of the Peshitta text as it stands is: “I do not permit a woman to teach or *despise* a man,” since this same Syriac idiom (Aphel of *mrah* plus ‘*al*) is used in the Peshitta of Rom 2:4 to translate the Greek καταφρονέω.

The anomaly of the Peshitta rendering can be explained, however, if we postulate a small inner-Syriac corruption in the puzzling verbal form which translates αὐθεντεῖν. If instead of the *lmmrḥw* of the printed editions we read *lmmrnw* (changing the third radical from a *ḥet* to a *nun*), then the meaning becomes “to be lord (over),” using the denominative Syriac verb *maran*, which is derived from the noun *mārā*, the regular Syriac noun for “lord.”<sup>49</sup> In the Syriac script the letters *nun* and *ḥet* are easily confused, making this hypothetical scribal error quite plausible.<sup>50</sup> If we adopt this slight emendation to the traditional text, we discover that the apparent anomaly disappears: the Syriac now not only matches the Greek, but also agrees with all nine of the previously discussed ancient renderings in using a verb re-

<sup>41</sup> G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect otherwise called Sahidic and Thebaic* (7 vols.; 1911–1924; repr., Osnabrück: Zeller, 1969) 5.450.

<sup>42</sup> See the apparatus in *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> W. Streitberg, *Die Gotische Bibel* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1971) 417.

<sup>44</sup> See G. H. Gwilliam, J. Pinkerton, and R. Kilgour, *The New Testament in Syriac* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1920), and Aland and Juckel, *NT in syrischer Überlieferung* 140.

<sup>45</sup> J. Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary* s.v. (p. 300b).

<sup>46</sup> James Murdock, *The Syriac Peshito Version of the New Testament* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1852), available in the BibleWorks<sup>7</sup> software.

<sup>47</sup> William Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament (Peshitta)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926) 131.

<sup>48</sup> *Aramaic-English Interlinear New Testament. Vol. II: Acts-Philemon* (New Knoxville) OH: American Christian Press, 1988) 636–37.

<sup>49</sup> J. Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary* s.v. *maran* (p. 302a): “denom. verb from *mārā*.” Cf. R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* s.v. (cols. 2208–09). The postulated consonants *lmmrnw* should probably be vocalized as the Pael form *lammarrānû*, since the Pael is the primary conjugation used for denominatives for which no Peal exists; see W. M. Thackston, *Introduction to Syriac* (Bethesda) MD: IBEX Publishers, 1999) 94. For the Pael of *maran*, see *Thesaurus Syriacus*, col. 2208 (last line).

<sup>50</sup> This hypothetical corruption must have occurred quite early, since no variants for the reading *lmmrḥw* in the Peshitta are recorded in Aland and Juckel, *NT in syrischer Überlieferung* 140.



lated to a noun meaning “master” or “lord.” If this is correct, then Jennings’s translation “lord it over,” though based on *mraħ* rather than *maran*, paradoxically turns out to be something of an inspired guess, which accurately captures the nature of ἀθεντέω as a denominative verb of ruling.

There is another sense, however, in which Jennings’s rendering is misleading. In contemporary English to “lord it over” has a pejorative connotation; it implies the *improper* use of authority or power. As the OED puts it, the expression means “to rule tyrannically, domineer.”<sup>51</sup> However, there is no evidence that ἀθεντέω had this negative connotation in NT times. In fact, one of the conclusions of my broader study of the ἀθέντης family was that there is no evidence of a pejorative use of ἀθεντέω—or of any of the other derivatives of ἀθέντης—before the fourth century AD, and even thereafter it was very rare.<sup>52</sup> Translations of ἀθεντέω like “domineer,” though still found in contemporary lexica,<sup>53</sup> have no basis in the actual usage of this verb. It is overwhelmingly used in a neutral or positive sense.

My conclusion is that all ten of the ancient translations of our verse that we have passed in review, with the possible exception of the Peshitta, all support the traditional non-pejorative rendering of ἀθεντέω in 1 Tim 2:12 as a denominative verb meaning “have authority over.”

#### IV. AYΘENTIΩΣ IN *KERYGMA PETRI*, FR. 9

We turn now to a passage which is not part of biblical Greek strictly speaking, but which belongs with the NT to early Christian literature, and as such is covered by the well-known lexicon of Walter Bauer, and its English editions by Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker.<sup>54</sup> The passage in question is found in the so-called *Kerygma Petri* or “Preaching of Peter,” which is dated to the first half of the second century AD, and which has come down to us only in fragments preserved by Clement of Alexandria and Origen.<sup>55</sup> One of the fragments found in Clement’s *Stromata* reads as follows in the translation of William Wilson:

Whence also Peter, in his Preaching, speaking of the apostles, says: “But we, unrolling the books of the prophets which we possess, who name Jesus Christ, partly in parables, partly in enigmas, partly expressly (ἀθεντικῶς) and in so many words, find his coming and death, and cross, and all the rest of the

<sup>51</sup> OED s.v., 1b.

<sup>52</sup> See Wolters, “Semantic Study” 170–71.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2d ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) 1.474 (§37.21): “to control, to domineer,” and BDAG s.v.: “give orders to, dictate to.” Note that the German original of DBAG and its predecessors has simply “herrschen,” without a pejorative sense. See Walter Bauer, *Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (5th ed.; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958) s.v.

<sup>54</sup> See the most recent English edition: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature. Third Edition (BDAG)* (revised and edited by Frederick William Danker; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> See *Apocrypha I: Reste des Petrus-evangeliums, der Petrusapokalypse und des Kerygma Petri* (Kleine Texte für Theologische und Philologische Vorlesungen und Übungen 3; ed. Erich Klostermann; Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1908) 15.

tortures which the Jews inflicted on Him, and His resurrection and assumption to heaven previous to the capture of Jerusalem."<sup>56</sup>

Peter is saying that the NT apostles read the OT prophets as describing in advance the life of Jesus Christ. This prophetic description happens in different ways, sometimes in parables and enigmas, sometimes ἀθηντικῶς and "in so many words."

What exactly is the meaning of ἀθηντικῶς in this context, and how does it relate to the known senses of its cognates? To judge by the renderings given by various dictionaries and translations, there is no consensus on the matter. BDAG has "with perfect clarity."<sup>57</sup> Lampe in his *Patristic Greek Lexicon* gives the meaning "directly, expressly."<sup>58</sup> George Ogg in his translation has "with certainty."<sup>59</sup> It seems that everyone is guessing, assigning to ἀθηντικῶς a meaning suggested by the context, but without connection to any of the meanings which the ἀθέντης word family normally conveys.

I believe a clue to the correct answer is given by E. A. Sophocles in his *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*.<sup>60</sup> He gives the following explanation of ἀθηντικῶς in our passage: "Literally, in the obvious sense, not in parables, = κυρίως." The clue lies in the reference to the synonym κυρίως. This adverb is clearly a cognate of the noun κυρίως, meaning "lord" or "master," and is well attested in a technical linguistic sense, namely "properly speaking" or "in the proper sense,"<sup>61</sup> used of a word's literal or "proper" sense as distinct from its metaphorical meaning. As early as Aristotle, the literal meaning of a word was conceived by the Greeks as the "master" sense, that to which all metaphorical meaning is subordinate. This conception of the relationship between literal and metaphorical meaning was widely adopted in classical antiquity, so that the literal, non-metaphorical meaning of a word is designated with cognates of terms for "lord" or "master" not only in Greek, but also in Latin,<sup>62</sup> Syriac,<sup>63</sup> and Coptic.<sup>64</sup> In the same

<sup>56</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.15.128.1, in the translation by William Wilson (*ANF* 2.510).

<sup>57</sup> BDAG s.v.

<sup>58</sup> *LPGL* s.v. This is also the meaning preferred by Michel Cambe in his discussion of the term; see *Kerygma Petri. Textus et Commentarius* (Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 15; ed. M. Cambe; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003) 351, n. 1.

<sup>59</sup> George Ogg in *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols.; ed. E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, R. M. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) 2.102.

<sup>60</sup> E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100) (Boston: Little, Brown, 1870) s.v.

<sup>61</sup> See *LSJ* s.v., IV: "esp. of words, in the proper sense, opp. μεταφορῶ or κατὰ μεταφοράν . . . properly speaking."

<sup>62</sup> *Dominans*, related to *dominus*, "lord." See Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896) s.v. *dominor*, II: "dominantia nomina=vulgaria, communia, the Greek κύρια proper, without metaphor."

<sup>63</sup> *Mārānā'it*, related to *mārā*, "lord." See J. Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary* s.v. (p. 302a): "authoritatively . . . properly . . . opp. . . . metaphorically, figuratively."

<sup>64</sup> *ČOEIS*, related to the noun *ČOEIS*, "lord." See Folkert Siegert, *Nag-Hammadi-Register. Wörterbuch zur Erfassung der Begriffe in den koptisch-gnostischen Schriften von Nag-Hammadi* (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1982) s.v. (p. 180): "eigentlich (übersetzt eine Nebenbedeutung von *kyrios* (Adj): der 'eigentliche' Wortsinn im Gegensatz zur Metapher)."

way, ἀθηντικῶς in the *Kerygma Petri* is related to ἀθέντης “master,” forming a colloquial counterpart to the more formal κυρίως of academic prose. We find ἀθηντικῶς used in the same way in another fragment quoted by Clement in his *Stromata*, in this case one ascribed to the Gnostic Valentinus.<sup>65</sup>

My conclusion therefore is that ἀθηντικῶς in this passage of the *Kerygma Petri* means “literally,” “in non-metaphorical language.” This fits well with the context, both the preceding contrast with “parables” and “enigmas,” and with the immediately following parallel expression ἀπολεξεί, which means “expressly, in the very words.” It also fits the general pattern which we have observed repeatedly above, that the derivatives of ἀθέντης are all semantically dependent on the meaning “master.”

As a final note, it should be pointed out that BDAG also lists ἀθέντης in the sense “master” (found in the *Shepherd of Hermas* 9.5.6), and ἀθηντικός in the sense “original” (found in 2 Clement 14.3), but these senses require little comment. The first is clearly established by the context, since the figure referred to there as the “ἀθέντης of the tower” is also called its κύριος (9.5.2 and 9.7.1) and its δεσπότης (9.5.7 and 9.7.6). This occurrence of ἀθέντης is significant because it may be the first undisputed example of the meaning “master” in a literary (as opposed to a documentary) source.<sup>66</sup> As for ἀθηντικός, it should be noted that the meaning “original” applies primarily to the “master copy” of a legal document (such as a contract or will) as distinguished from a secondary copy, which would not be legally binding. As elsewhere, the basic meaning of ἀθηντικός here is “authoritative,” and again derives its meaning from ἀθέντης, “master.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Clement, *Stromata* 4.13.90.1 I follow the 1592 edition of F. Sylburg in reading the following word as ἐρρέθη rather than εὔρέθη, yielding the text οὐ γὰρ ἀθηντικῶς ἐρρέθη μορφή, “for it was not properly called a form.”

<sup>66</sup> Wolters, “Semantic Study” 152. As an earlier example of this meaning of ἀθέντης DBAG lists Euripides, *Supplices* 442, but the word there is frequently emended or considered a later interpolation (see my “Semantic Study” 148). BDAG also refers to PCairZen 352, 15 (third century BC), but this is a mistake. The noun is there used in the sense “murderer.” See D. L. Page, *Select Papyri 3: Literary Papyri, Poetry* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) 463.

<sup>67</sup> Wolters, “Semantic Study” 154.



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