The Theological Struggle for the Meaning of 'Woman' in the Early Christian Communities

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Doctor of Philosophy

University of Edinburgh

2005

STATEMENT

I, Sara Gross, declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself and that the work submitted has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Sara Gross 25th April 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Helen Bond, who has been patient yet persistent with me over the last few years. Thanks also to my secondary supervisor Larry Hurtado, who has kept me on track especially in the last few months. Mom, Dad, and Mary have put up with me throughout this journey and their encouragement has been invaluable. There are countless others who have offered support on so many levels without whom I would never have been able to achieve my goals: my sister Lisa, my adopted sisters Ruth and Caroline, James, Alister, Louise, and Darren Smith who has been my coach in sport and in life. Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

Feminist historical readings of New Testament texts often overlook the importance of theology in their assessments of early Christian women. This is because theologies make 'truth claims' and feminists prefer to view the restrictions placed on women as the result of socio-cultural factors. However, it is the argument of this dissertation that the early Christian communities were involved in a multi-faceted struggle for the meaning of 'woman' and that this issue was debated theologically in many locations. Rather than avoid questions of theology, it is important for feminist readers to engage in the theological struggle, a struggle that can be viewed as having a loosely defined continuity with the struggle for female identity within the feminist movement itself.

Three case studies are presented and in each case it can be shown that female identity was indeed debated on theological grounds in the early church. In the communities behind 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy it is clear that theological discussions were taking place over the issue of the place and role of women in the church/es. In the church at Corinth, debates arose over the meaning of gender in relation to the theological issues of wisdom, Christ's death and return, the presence of angels during worship, the meaning of baptism and the interpretation of Genesis 1.27. It will be shown that the author of 1 Timothy likely had a specific community or communities in mind when writing. By analysing the rhetoric of this text, it becomes clear that theological discussions over the meaning of 'woman' took place amongst the readers over the interpretation of Genesis 1-3 and the relationship between childbearing and salvation.

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians we find an interesting passage that shows the reader just how entwined theologies of community and gender relations were becoming in the early church. We can conclude that the theological questions behind the debates about female identity were quite different in different locations. It is important to be aware that the New Testament contains evidence of a struggle that offers a paradigm for debates among feminist Christians today.

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PART TWO: Towards an Answer

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BS	Bibliotheca Sacra
BT	Bible Translator
BTB	Biblical Theological Bulletin
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
ET	Expository Times
HR	History of Religions
IBD	Interpreters Bible Dictionary
ICC	International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JR	Journal of Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LTJ	Lutheran Theological Journal
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary for the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	New Testament Studies
RE	Review and Expositor
RJ	Reformed Journal
SE	Semeia

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TQ	Theological Quarterly
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review
ZNW	Zeitascgrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

INTRODUCTION

Two observations provide the main impetus for this project. The first is that women do not possess their own complete history. There are still far too many people who believe that women only began to make an impact on history in the 20th century.[46] I hope my work can contribute to the ongoing project of writing women into history so that women might one day enjoy the satisfaction that comes with knowing how one's foremothers lived.

Secondly, it is my observation that feminists often shy away from questions of theology and prefer sociological models to describe and understand the early Christian communities. One of the aims of this dissertation is to launch a conversation about how the meaning of Christian womanhood was being discussed theologically by the earliest Christians. My main questions are these: Is there evidence that female identity was being discussed in theological terms in the early church? And, what were the terms of the theological debates in various communities?

This dissertation unfolds as follows: Taken together, the first two chapters are called, 'Forming the Question.' By the end of this section the reader will be aware of how I came to perceive the need for the current study, and what exactly my method entails. Through an analysis of the major works on early Christian women, some of the holes in current scholarship are brought to light and suggestions for filling these holes are offered. The second chapter asks the questions, 'what is 'woman'?' 'Can this word really be defined?' and 'what is the most appropriate way to study women's history?' At the end of these two chapters, the reader will be familiar with the territory through which I travelled as I formed the major questions underlying this project.

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[46] For example, during the week prior to my arrival in Edinburgh in 1999, I found myself at a conference in Dubai about the future of education in the United Arab Emirates. The director of the largest of the men's colleges in the country took an interest in the topic of the present study and began asking questions. When I told him about this project, this middle-aged, American, PhD-recipient, director of an important educational institution's response was, 'Early Christian women? I didn't know there were any.'

In chapters three, four and five, I set about answering my own questions. Though a full answer is not possible in a study of this length, I have chosen three early church communities as case studies. In each of these chapters, I present the evidence that theological debates about the meaning of 'woman' were taking place in the communities addressed. From there, I attempt to outline the theological contours of each of the debates. Through the use of rhetorical analysis, it is possible partially to reconstruct the theologies held by some community members, in particular in those locations to which 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy were addressed. For example, in 1 Corinthians, evidence from the text suggests that the discussion about female identity involved theological issues such as God's wisdom, Christ's death and return, the presence of angels during the worship service, the meaning of baptism and the interpretation of Genesis 1.27.

The author of 1 Timothy also recalls the story of Adam and Eve when the question of gender arises. As we shall see, it is to this story that the first-century Christians most often turned when discussions about women arose. Also, the communities to which 1 Timothy is addressed appear to have been asking questions that cut straight to the heart of female identity and Christian faith; questions relating to childbearing and salvation.

The third case study, the community behind Ephesians, remains slightly more allusive. Yet this text offers its own insights, as shall be seen. Ephesians is a letter addressed not to one, but many churches, and as such offers its own unique conclusions about the struggle for the meaning of Christian womanhood. The passage found in 5.22-33 serves to underline the centrality of gender in discussions of Christian self-understanding. This will be discussed in full in chapter 5.

Rhetorical analysis leaves us with the impression that the early Christians were actively engaged in highly imaginative activities.[47] One can extrapolate from this that Christian

[47] B. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 95.

gatherings were lively occasions, and that part of the attraction of the movement may have been the intellectual stimulation occasioned by social experimentation, including the question of gender roles.

On arrival at the concluding chapter, it should be clear that the terms of the debate about the meaning of 'woman' in early Christianity were more diverse than is often acknowledged. Even when similar traditions and scriptures are used to construct various theological arguments, they are used in very different ways, to draw very different, even contradictory, conclusions. Thus, my contribution to scholarship on early Christianity is: the identification of a methodological hole in studies on women's history, and an offering of a partial answer to one of the questions that emerges from its depths. That question is; In what ways was female identity being created theologically in the early church?

PART ONE
Forming the Question

CHAPTER ONE
Early Christian Women's History: A Review of the Literature

In a 1985 publication, Bernadette Brooten laments the fact that, although sources are scarce, lack of ancient evidence is *not* the reason for our knowing so little about early Christian women's history.[48] Although much has been accomplished over the last twenty years, when it comes to women's presence in the history of the early Christian movement, we still have a long way to go. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the methods that have been employed by biblical scholars, historians and feminists to 'excavate' women from the depths of the first century CE.[49] I aim to assess conclusions and draw out themes that have emerged in this field. As such, this chapter will give the reader an insight into how the questions of this study have been shaped, enabling them to place the study within the context of scholarly debate.

Through a careful analysis of the major publications on early Christian women's history and related topics, I hope to show that the way forward for feminist scholars of early

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[48] B. Brooten, 'Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction,' in A. Y. Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1985) 91.

[49] There are a number of reference books available on feminist theology and women in religion. See for example, Letty Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson (eds.), *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (London: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1996); Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan (eds.), *An A to Z of Feminist Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Serinity Young, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, Vols 1 & 2. (London: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1996).

Christianity is as follows: first, the scholar must regularly reassess her methodology. She must take care to balance the tension between an ongoing critique of patriarchy and an appropriate way to speak about women whose worldviews were androcentric. Secondly, the historian must be as specific as possible about the experiences of *particular* women, or groups of women, in *particular* contexts. It is only through very specialized inquiries that the lives of real women will be restored to their rightful positions on the pages of history. Third, the feminist historian must take care when using sociological models to understand history. She must be sure not to underestimate the role that 'soft'[50] factors play in history, such as faith and the theologies that shape personal commitments.

The substance of this chapter is a literature review of the major works published on women's early Christian, ancient Jewish and pagan history. This type of concise review necessitates a rather crude simplification of books that deserve more credit for their contributions than a chapter of this length can offer. I hope the reader will bear with me on this point as I attempt to gather points of harmony and disparity among the authors presented, finally presenting a vision for the future of early Christian women's history.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's massive contribution to feminist theology, biblical studies, and women's history can be attributed to her successful application of a major hermeneutical paradigm shift in feminist scholarship. Previously, most of the studies done on women in the New Testament were literary in nature, focusing on particular 'women's' texts and all but ignoring the larger historical context of women in early Christian communities. Fiorenza moves away from the 'pervasive apologetic that characterizes most treatments of women in the bible, to a historical-critical construction of women's history and women's contribution to early Christian beginnings.'[51] She points to a fact that is at times overlooked by feminists in their desire to move on to a 'brighter future,' that we cannot afford an ahistorical or antihistorical stance since it is

[50] 'Soft' is a term used to describe influential factors in history such as culture and faith that are less concrete than laws or dates.
[51] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins.* (New York: Crossroads, 1983), xvi.

the power of oppression that deprives people of their history.[52] To restore women to history, to restore history to women, and to reconceptualize early Christianity, is the three-fold task of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (1983). Fiorenza shifts the previous focus of feminist scholarship from strictly literary questions to a historical analysis of women's activities.

Central to Fiorenza's method is her desire to expose historical reconstructions that place women on the periphery and to replace them with ones that place women in the center of Christian life and theology. This applies both to early Christian life and theology and to contemporary Christian life and theology.[53] Underlying Fiorenza's first three chapters on methodology is the question; to what extent was early Christianity liberating for women and to what extent was it oppressive? She claims that 'insofar as the Christian movement rejected both sexual dimorphism and patriarchal domination as well as broke down the rigid separation between the public and private spheres, it supported and advanced women's cultural and political emancipation.'[54]

This claim has proven to be problematic for some feminist historians. On one hand, as a historian, one might prefer, as suggested by Anne Jensen, to ask what roles women have played in church history,[55] or in the ancient world etc. This shift takes the focus off *Christianity* and places it on *women* themselves. It asks not how *Christianity* was liberating or oppressive, but how *women* lived in their specific historical contexts. At first this may appear to be the only way to proceed. However, simply to describe what women did and did not do leaves little room for a critique of patriarchy that should be an integral part of any feminist method.[56] The tension being described cannot be overlooked, nor has it, in my opinion, been adequately resolved in the field of early Christian history.

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[52] Fiorenza, *Memory*, xix.
[53] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 35.
[54] Fiorenza , *Memory*, 91-2.
[55] Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), xi.
[56] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 43.

A feminist historian must cautiously reconstruct women's stories in a way that acknowledges that women were active participants in a patriarchal history. It is a historical fact that women have been victims of a gendered hegemony where power and privilege have been the possession of men. A patriarchal system keeps women 'in their place' by restricting their freedom and relegating them to the roles of wife and mother, at the same time making sure that these roles are not valued as highly as the traditional roles of men. This is exemplified in material terms by the simple fact that in most societies women have received no, or very little, monetary reward for their hard labors, but rather remain dependent on men their entire lives. The feminist problem is twofold. First, women have generally had little choice regarding their destiny and have been banned from public and political realms. Secondly, the challenging and demanding tasks of bearing and raising children and keeping a home have been undervalued and underpaid. In their goals, feminists must strike a balance between these two realities. Feminist historians must at once set their sights on the historical possibility that women have had influence in the public realm, and that this influence has been 'erased' by the biases of the male authors of primary sources and western scholarship. At the same time they must discover a method that recognizes the value of the traditional roles of motherhood and child rearing despite the fact that these activities probably did not receive appropriate recognition in the historical period under investigation. Feminist historians seek a theoretical framework that, in Fiorenza's words can 'maintain the dialectical tension of women's historical existence as active participants in history as well as objects of patriarchal oppression.'[57] To what degree feminist historians of early Christian women's history have been successful in achieving this task is yet to be seen.

Integral to Fiorenza's argument is her use of the sociological model of 'the sect' to describe early Christianity,[58] though she recognizes that it represents a 'patriarchal sociological model.'[59] This model has its benefits and its limitations. A sect can be characterized, among other things, by its egalitarian ethos; it is not a hierarchically

[57] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 85-6.
[58] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 72.
[59] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 83.

ordered community.[60] This is a useful model for interpreting early Christianity from a feminist perspective since it does not justify the later patriarchalization of Christianity in theological terms, but in terms of sociological and political factors. Thus, it becomes theologically and historically plausible to articulate a vision of an egalitarian Christian community in the past, present and future. The downside to Fiorenza's use of this sociological model is that this vision of an egalitarian community is tied so closely to the sect typology that it may be inseparable from it. Since Christianity, in most cases, no longer exists in the form of 'sects,' difficulties arise since one has then to divorce the vision of an egalitarian community from the sociological model that helped us gain access to that vision in the first place. This represents a flaw in Fiorenza's model.

Two further points illuminate Fiorenza's historical reconstruction of early Christianity. Following the lead of scholars such as Leander E. Keck and James Gaffney, she divides early Christianity into two distinct movements: *The Jesus Movement* and the *Early Missionary Movement*.[61] The former refers to the group that followed Jesus, the renewal movement within Judaism lead by a man from Nazareth. This renewal movement held the Kingdom of God as its central symbol. Its gospel was that of the poor and the marginal, which was experienced by the healing of Jesus, and in which tax collectors, prostitutes and 'sinners' constituted not the morally corrupt, but a class of people so destitute they had to engage in dishonorable professions to survive.[62] On the other hand, the *Early Christian Missionary Movement* was the movement that spread to Europe and Asia Minor after the death of Jesus. It is characterized by the practice of sending out missionary partners and by the founding of churches that met in private homes. Women in this movement were teachers, preachers, and deacons. They founded house churches and were not restricted to roles considered culturally 'feminine.'[63] The theology of the movement was experientially based, the life of Jesus was understood in terms of σοφία,

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[60] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 72.
[61] Unlike Keck and Gaffney, Fiorenza does not divide these groups by emphasizing the differences between Jesus and Paul. See Keck, 'Ethos and Ethic in the New Testament' in. J. Gaffney (ed.), *Essays in Morality and Ethics*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) 29-49.
[62] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 123.
[63] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 183.

the wisdom of God, and members held what Fiorenza calls, a 'prophetic-critical attitude to the temple as the locus of God's presence.'[64] In summary:

> As the prophetic movement of the "sons and daughters of God," it gathers in house churches and spreads the gospel in missionary partnership. As the new temple, its members are "full" of Sophia and Spirit; they are the new creation and the new creatures of God. As a "new people" they gather together in house churches for the breaking of the bread and table sharing.[65]

Some critics have rightly questioned whether we truly have the evidence to substantiate the claim that the early church held a normative theology of Sophia-Jesus.[66] Further, we do not possess the evidence that Sophia's feminine nature was taken so seriously. In subsequent publications, Fiorenza herself answers her critics, in particular in her second book, *Bread Not Stone*, as shall be seen below.

Fiorenza's reconstruction of early Christian women's history has enormous implications for contemporary communities, and here she draws largely on liberation theology. Her commitment to what she calls the *Ekklēsia of Women* is evident throughout her book. She metaphorically aligns women in modern churches with 'the poor' of the original Jesus movement claiming that,

> The "church of the poor" and the "church of women" must be recovered at the same time, if "solidarity from below" is to become a reality for the whole community of Jesus again. As a feminist vision the *Ekklēsia* vision of Jesus calls all women without exception to wholeness and selfhood, as well as to solidarity with those women who are the impoverished, the maimed, and outcasts of our society and church.[67]

While her vision for the future is admirable, one must ask, from the perspective of historical study, what is gained and lost in Fiorenza's method. Some have questioned her

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[64] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 184.
[65] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 198.
[66] Ross S. Kraemer, review of E. S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, *JBL* 104 (1985) 725.
[67] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 127.

conclusions, which seem to construct the first two centuries of Christian practice as a kind of 'golden age' for women in the history of this massive world religion. For example, Ross S. Kraemer challenges Fiorenza's contention that Jesus preached against patriarchy, in the passage in which he tells his followers to call no one father (Matt 3.2). For Fiorenza, this means that human beings cannot assert the patriarchal role of father, only God can, and she points to the absence of father figures in early Christianity. Instead she notes the plethora of mothers, sisters and brothers. However, this leads Kraemer to conclude that Fiorenza's principle criterion of authenticity is any interpretation in accord with the theology she herself considers acceptable.[68] Questions of historical plausibility are often asked by Fiorenza's critics. In her hermeneutics, historical possibility is aligned with that which is liberating for women- a stance that many find problematic.

To summarize, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza changed the way in which historians, theologians and New Testament scholars approach the topic of women in early Christianity by successfully answering a number of methodological and historical questions specific to women in their contexts. She highlighted the egalitarian ethos of most early communities and reflected on how her reconstruction has implications for the church today. Since the publication of her book in 1983, many feminist scholars have taken her lead in emphasizing women's leadership in the early tradition.[69] One reviewer says of *In Memory of Her*, 'Fiorenza possesses an exquisite sensitivity to androcentric readings and translations, grounded in careful grammatical and linguistical study.'[70]

The recognition of women who held leadership roles in early communities is essential for our understanding of Christianity. However, to place historical emphasis on the women who filled these particular roles at the expense of others who chose more traditional roles is to reassert one of the central affirmations of a patriarchal system, that is, the only occupations of any value are those that belong to the public realm. In order to fill out the picture of early Christian women that Fiorenza first sketched in 1983, we

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[68] Kraemer, review of Fiorenza, *Memory,* 724.
[69] See Antoinette Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1990) or Anne Jensen, *Daughters.*
[70] Kraemer, review of Fiorenza, *Memory*, 723.

need to begin to uncover the lives of those women who are less obvious in the sources, but of no less historical importance. Among them will be slave girls, children, prostitutes, housewives, and lifelong mothers.

Bread Not Stone

In *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Fiorenza extrapolates on her method for reconstructing Christian women's history. She argues that the women's liberation movement should be the 'hermeneutical centre' of such a reconstruction.[71] Thus, the primary hermeneutical criterion for any feminist history of Christianity should be women's experience struggling for liberation.[72] In her own words, '*the* litmus test for invoking Scripture as the Word of God must be whether or not biblical texts and traditions seek to end relations of domination and exploitation.'[73] Her questions are not just historical, but indeed *theological* in the strictest sense of the word, requiring not only a new naming of God, but also a total reevaluation of the meaning of church and its use of Scripture.[74] In Fiorenza's view, the Bible should function as a formative root-model of the new woman-church, as 'an open-ended paradigm that sets experience in motion and structures transformation,'[75] rather than being used for abstract principles or impulses.

It is in *Bread Not Stone* that Fiorenza outlines the four 'hermeneutics' that she feels should be addressed in feminist practice. These are: 1) a hermeneutics of suspicion: since texts and interpretations are essentially androcentric; 2) a hermeneutics of proclamation: sexist texts should not be retained in lectionaries or used for Christian worship; 3) a hermeneutics of remembrance: that recovers all biblical traditions through historical-critical reconstruction and reclaims women's suffering; 4) a hermeneutics of creative actualization: that reclaims imaginative freedom, popular creativity and ritual

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[71] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 7.
[72] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 8.
[73] Fiorenza, *Bread*, xiii.
[74] Fiorenza, *Bread*, xiii.
[75] Fiorenza, *Bread*, xvii.

power to retell women's stories and reformulate prayers.[76] It is the first, third and fourth of these that are relevant to the task of doing women's history, and that Fiorenza has undertaken herself in *In Memory of Her*.

In her fifth chapter, Fiorenza draws out her method of historical scholarship, her 'hermeneutics of remembrance.' Striking is her continued use of the methods of historical-critical scholarship, though she applies a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' to the field. In line with feminist and postmodern theory, Fiorenza recognises that objectivity is impossible, i.e. discovering 'what really happened.'[77] She concludes that history has to include women and feminist questions,[78] and that historical critical scholarship is a useful tool in this project, but at the same time must be scrutinized and critiqued.[79] Further, biblical scholarship is different from pure history, insofar as it calls itself biblical, and expresses not only a historical-literary claim, but also a theological self-understanding.'[80] Thus, for Fiorenza, 'studying the biblical past to recover its unfulfilled historical possibilities and mandates becomes a primary task for biblical scholarship.'[81] This has the effect of keeping the future 'open' for new interpretations.

It is difficult to fault Fiorenza's model since she does not put her theory into effect here as she did in her previous work. In arguing that woman-church should be the hermeneutical centre of historical reconstruction, one would expect her to show that there are links between this modern idea and the early church. However, as one critic notices, Fiorenza obscures the discontinuity between androcentrically-defined communities of faith behind biblical text and the woman-church of today since she does not prove that the ancient discipleship of equals was 'woman-defined.'[82] In *Bread Not Stone* Fiorenza takes one step beyond the usual acknowledgement that objectivity is not possible, and seems to claim that objectivity should not even be attempted, since the

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[76] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 15-21.
[77] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 94-8.
[78] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 105.
[79] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 106.
[80] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 118.
[81] Fiorenza, *Bread*, 149.
[82] Rosemary Radford Ruether, review of E.S. Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*. *JAAR* 54 (1986) 142.

interpreter's assumptions may be coloured by patriarchal norms, even on the unconscious level. In her methodology 'what really happened' is not only impossible to discover, but should not even be attempted.

But She Said

The title of Fiorenza's third major publication, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*, refers to the gospel story of a foreign woman who interrupts Jesus and enters into a theological argument for the sake of her daughter (Matt 15. 22-28).[83] The goal of this volume, which is, once again, largely methodological is 'to theorize feminist bibilical interpretation in the space created by feminist theory.'[84] This differs from the main goal of *Bread Not Stone* which is 'to position feminist biblical interpretation in the centre of biblical studies.'[85] There are three parts to the book as follows: the first explores the various interpretive strategies developed in feminist biblical studies, arguing that biblical interpretation must be reconceptualised in rhetorical terms. The second explores the hermeneutical process of a feminist biblical rhetoric of interpretation. Fiorenza says, '[i]f texts are communicative practices which are contextually determined, then a feminist political hermeneutics must develop a complex analysis that can assess the meaning of biblical texts in relation to existing power structures.'[86] As such, it is impossible to construct a universal feminist position. For example, the ongoing debate within feminist circles on essentialism and constructionism[87] indicates that the discursive construction of woman, gender dualism or the feminine cannot constitute the site from which to read as a feminist liberation theologian. Instead, feminist identity must be conceived not in terms of Western logic of identity, but in terms of the logic of democracy.[88] And finally, the third section of the book discusses two more tangible practices of feminist biblical interpretation, one in

[83] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 11.
[84] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 7.
[85] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 7.
[86] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 10.
[87] This debate will be discussed in full in chapter 2.
[88] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 11.

theological education and the other in the interpretation of a Lukan text within the rhetorical space of the *ekklēsia*.

I am struck by the real variety of essays in this volume. It reads almost like a collection, yet holds together to make a consistent argument. Fiorenza answers her critics intelligently and allows their comments to shape her project, in the democratic fashion that she preaches. In fact, one is left with the impression that her work has been produced in the democratic *ekklēsia* in every sense.

In the introduction to *But She Said*, Fiorenza addresses those who argue that she naively constructs a continuity between the first-century discipleship of equals and today's woman-church. She agues that such critics misunderstand the 'already' and 'not yet' of the *ekklēsia* of women,[89] underlining the distinction between the democratic notion of *ekklēsia* as counterspace to patriarchy (as exists in all patriarchal societies), and the feminist movement and struggle against patriarchy (in the modern era).[90] Thus, she posits a conflict between an egalitarian, democratic understanding of community and the dominant reality of patriarchy as an interlocking system of discriminations and subordinations. This tension and contradiction provides for Fiorenza's fragile continuity of struggle.[91] The process of criticism and response helps to clarify and draw out her position.

In a more recent article,[92] Fiorenza responds again to the criticism that she has reproduced a 'myth of pristine origins' for Christianity in *In Memory of Her*. She argues that on the contrary, her book should be understood as an attempt to write Christian beginnings with a difference and with a feminist liberationist perspective.[93] She says

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[89] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 6.
[90] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 6.
[91] Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 6.
[92] See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning Christian Origins: In Memory of Her Revisited,' in Kieran J. O'Mahony (ed.), *Christian Origins: Worship Belief and Society.* JSNT Supplement Series 241. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).
[93] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 235.

that, 'since history shapes identity and our view of the world it matters in my view whether wo/men and other subjugated peoples have a history not just of violence and exploitation but also a history of liberation, agency and equality that is not just utopian but already has been partially realized in history.'[94] She says further that, 'egalitarian social movements striving to change unjust relations of domination- this reconstructive model assumes- are not just a product of modernity but are found throughout history. Ancient social movements and emancipatory struggles against kyriarchal relations of exploitation do not begin with the Jesus movements. Rather they have a long history in Greek, Asian and Jewish cultures.'[95] In her methodological frame, Fiorenza aims to delegitimate the *kyriarchal* 'myth of Christian origins.'[96]

Fiorenza argues adamantly that her methodology constitutes sound scholarship, and that studies in which social scientific narratives appear to be more 'realistic' or 'objective' than feminist ones are so because kyriocentric discourses function as ideologies that 'naturalize' the structures of domination as 'what is' (both then and now).[97] Thus, she gives due recognition to the internalised norms that function to limit historical possiblilty. She critiques the standard scholarly criterion of 'historical plausibility' saying that it 'overlooks the fact that what is regarded as 'common sense' or plausible in a culture depends on the hegemonic ideological understanding of 'how the world is.'[98]

Ben Witherington

Ben Witherington is the author of a trilogy on women in the New Testament, all produced in less than a decade. The first of these three books is called *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (1984) but this title is deceptive, since, on closer inspection, the book outlines Jesus' view of women, not women themselves in his ministry. In his attempt to delineate Jesus' view, Witherington divides his study into four parts; women and their roles in Palestine; women in the teaching of Jesus, women and the deeds of Jesus, and

[94] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 238.
[95] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 243.
[96] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 239.
[97] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 243.
[98] Fiorenza, 'Re-Visioning,' 244.

women in the ministry of Jesus. From the outset, Witherington wishes to avoid either a patriarchal or a feminist bias, though as the book progresses, his main claim is that Jesus' view was one of *equality*. He argues that according to his Jewish contempories, Jesus' rejection of the normative and gendered 'double standard' was taking equality too far.[99] In reality, the book's Jesus comes across as more of a feminist than Witherington is willing to admit.[100]

The second volume in the series, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (1988), is about women in the earliest communities, and its purpose is to complete the above study in order to give a full picture of Christian beginnings. Again, Witherington's title is deceptive since the first part of the book is really about Paul's view of women, and the second regards the gospel writers' views. But, none the less, Witherington fills out the picture of his first book, in this discussion of post-resurrection communties.

Not surprisingly, Witherington notices a tension amongst various Pauline texts about the role of women in the churches. He quotes Richard Longenecker, who argues that the root of the tension is between creation and redemption theologies in Paul's own thought.[101] When the former is emphasised, so are subordination, submission and silence and when the latter is emphasised so are freedom, mutuality and equality.[102] However, against Longenecker, Witherington claims that Paul's theology is one of Christ as fulfilment, or redemption, not the replacement of creation.[103] The problem for Witherington, lies in the communities, where some were not able to follow Paul in preserving the tension between old and new.[104] This is interesting in that it acknowledges that the Pauline letters were written in order to persuade an audience who

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[99] Ben Witherington, W*omen in the Ministry of Jesus*: *a study of Jesus' attitudes to women and their roles as reflected in his earthly life,* SNTSMS 51, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 125.
[100] Michaels, J. Ramsey, review of Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity. BA* 56 (1993) 46.
[101] See Richard Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 92. Quoted by Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 217.
[102] Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 217.
[103] Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 218.
[104] Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 219.

may have had different ideas from Paul, yet follows Paul's own lead in characterising these communities as unable to understand the tension in which they lived.

Finally Witherington argues that Paul's ideas about women's roles are a 'reformed patriarchy;' 'Paul's views are at one and the same time egalitarian, and, in a limited sense, patriarchal.'[105] He says that Paul is neither chauvinist nor feminist, yet does not discuss exactly what those categories mean.[106] Further, it is debatable whether it is even possible to hold both egalitarian and patriarchal views at the same time.

Witherington's third book, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (1990),[107] is a combination of the two previous books, written in more simplistic language for a general audience and without some of the rigours of scholarship. I applaud Witherington's attempt to make this information available to the general reader, yet here I fear that it is a case of too-little-too-late. This book appeared in 1990, and by this time Fiorenza's, highly methodological, *In Memory of Her*, had been available for a number of years, as well as a number of other studies on women.[108] Further, by this stage it was widely acknowledged that a topical discussion of women's 'roles' or 'place' is not the best way to discuss women in the first century, nor is it a suitable way to find answers to modern theological questions. Also, Witherington's studies carry with them all the baggage of a study that claims to be unaffected by modern questions of feminism, yet throughout reveals itself to be thoroughly affected by such questions. Alan Padgett also notices this, asking why Witherington characterises the church as uninterested in social reform, but does not discuss whether this is meant to carry direction for modern churches.[109] While

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[105] Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 73.
[106] Alan G. Padgett, review of Witerington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, *EQ* 62 (1990) 275.
[107] Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[108] Besides Fiorenza's three volumes discussed above, also available by 1990, were Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Seen by First-century Philippian Women* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988); Margaret MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches : A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Bonnie Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1989).
[109] Padgett, review of Witherington, *Earliest Churches,* 275.

the author aims to avoid a patriarchal or feminist slant, he also does not acknowledge his own conservative, middle voice. Throughout Witherington's works are open or implied theological and ethical discussions.[110] Further, Frances Young makes the same criticism of Witherington's attempt to avoid an agenda; 'the assumption of this study that the 'facts' or the 'true meaning' can be definitively established is too simplistic.'[111] We cannot escape the dynamic interaction between text and reader. In summary, Witherington's studies use a methodology that was outdated, even in the 1980's.

Margaret MacDonald

The aim of Margaret MacDonald's 1988 book, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, is to trace the process of institutionalization in Pauline communities. She explains how the church changed from its loosely-organized, charismatic beginnings to its tightly-structured nature in the second century, by analyzing its ethos, ministerial structures, rituals and beliefs, all of which were in flux. During Paul's lifetime, his goal was to legitimate a sect and a belief system.[112] After his death, the goal of his associates was to stabilize community life, as is evidenced in Colossians and Ephesians.[113] Later, the author of the Pastorals finished the job others had started by protecting the community and solidifying boundaries.[114] One of MacDonald's examples of how the process of institutionalization played itself out in tangible terms in the church is the transformation of the use of 'the household' as a symbol of identity. In Paul's own time, the ability to provide a house was an important criterion for determining eligibility for leadership, and after his death, effective household leadership became the criterion for church leadership.

MacDonald's study has repercussions for our understanding of women in these early communities. The book goes a long way toward explaining how women were gradually marginalized, and finally excluded from leadership positions by the middle of the second century. On the other hand, I find her version of the early Christian story slightly too

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[110] See for example Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 35, 40, 58-59, 69, 73-75.
[111] Frances Young, review of Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*. *JTS* 41 (1990) 631.
[112] MacDonald, *Churches,* 31ff.
[113] MacDonald, *Churches*, 85ff.
[114] MacDonald, *Churches*, 159ff.

linear in its chronology. It is difficult to imagine that the church went through a transformation so logical in historical progression. In the broadest sense, perhaps we can paint a picture of the early church with such a wide sweeping brush, but it is the detail, the lines, and smaller dabs of colour that are missing. Finally, MacDonald's interpretation of early Christian history is dependent on assumptions about the authorship of various letters in the Pauline tradition, and as we shall see in the chapters on Ephesians and 1 Timothy, the question of authorship is very much debatable.[115]

MacDonald's second major publication, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (1996), makes use of valuable sources from the second century that allow insight into early Christianity from the perspective of the outsider. The outsider's perspective was important in early Christian communities, and MacDonald dedicates parts two and three of her book to discussing these, finding that outsider opinions of the group as a whole, and the perception of the women in the group were closely related. She maintains that the history of early Christian women must include the public reaction to their lives. By making use of sources both inside and outside the New Testament, MacDonald claims that,

> We get a comprehensive picture: we see the importance of women in opinions about church formed both in elite circles as well as sectors of society that made up the remaining ninety-nine per cent of the population, the sectors of society from which virtually all early Christians came.[116]

Part One discusses outsiders' opinion of Christianity. MacDonald discusses the writings of Pliny, Marcus Cornelius Fronto, Lucius Apuleius, Lucian of Samosata, Galen of Pergamum, and Celsus. Some of her findings fly in the face of the assumption of scholars of Christian women's history. For example, it is often assumed that widows in the early church were free from the traditional role of wife and mother, however, Lucian of Samosata writes about widows being accompanied by children,[117] which is not what

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[115] MacDonald's chapters include discussions of all three books presented in the case studies of this dissertation. Her interpretation of these will be discussed in the individual chapters.
[116] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6.
[117] MacDonald, *Women*, 75.

we would expect from women freed from traditional roles. Further, Pliny tells us that he had some female ministers tortured, and interestingly, these women were also slaves.[118] It has often been suggested that female leaders were from the upper classes, and had some social and financial freedoms before their conversion.

Part Two discusses the celibate women of the early Christian movement and their relationship to outsiders. MacDonald concludes that how celibate women conducted their lives was of prime importance since remaining unmarried was interpreted as a challenge to the Greco-Roman household order.[119] These women became 'an important means of setting the church apart from the world.'[120] So, through MacDonald's study we see that the responsibility for the perceived identity of the church rested, in part, on women. While unmarried women were used to gauge the 'otherness' of the church by outsiders, married women were used to gauge the 'likeness' of the Christian church to the Greco-Roman world.

The third and final section of her study is the reason why her study is so compelling and unique. MacDonald notes in her introduction that there is a consensus emerging in feminist anthropological studies that 'patterns of male dominance and sexual asymmetry are subject to considerable cultural variation, that quick assumptions should not be made about correlations between ideology and the actual shape of female power.'[121] She takes this observation seriously in her study, observing that:

> ...the recent theoretical reflection of anthropologists working on women and culture has reminded me that we should not assume that highly conventional behaviour is inconsequential behaviour; it may even carry the possibility of surprising avenues for power. We should not think of the married Christian woman... as a static entity. She was a conveyor of the boundaries between the church and the world, and a mediator between realms. She not only represented

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[118] MacDonald, *Women*, 51.
[119] MacDonald, *Women*, 179.
[120] MacDonald, *Women*, 178.
[121] MacDonald, *Women*, 26. MacDonald footnotes three studies here, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 13; Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understandings' *Signs* 5 (1980), 417 and J. Dubisch, ed. *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1986), 207-8.

> the church in the passive sense, but continually reconstructed the harmony of the church through her presence. Women's household management may in fact have been as important to the sustained growth of early Christianity as the proclamations of well-known apostles and teachers.[122]

I have quoted MacDonald at length here, because her observations on the importance of the role of married women will be important for my own theoretical discussion in the next chapter.

And finally, what I consider to be the most insightful conclusions to MacDonald's study are her observations about women who remained married to non-Christian husbands. Because a pagan woman was expected to follow the religious beliefs of her husband, these women transgressed social boundaries as strongly as those who remained unmarried, since they had trespassed on the prerogatives of the *paterfamilias*.[123] In 1 Peter 3.1-6, women are instructed to obey their non-believing husbands, and, in effect, act as what MacDonald calls, 'quiet evangelists.' At first, these instructions seem to reinforce societal norms, but on closer inspection, these instructions encourage 'treacherous behaviour.'[124] As MacDonald says,

> Except for their illicit allegiance to early Christianity, women who remained married to non-believers probably led largely traditional lives. But it was through their existence as traditional wives that they found their routes to power: they played a key role in the expansion of a new religious movement.[125]

Thus, by looking at the reactions of pagans to the behaviour of early Christian women and comparing that to the biblical authors' own concerns about women's behaviour and outside opinion, Margaret MacDonald has produced some stunning conclusions. A few holes in her method, however, do not go unnoticed. For example, Macdonald uses Celsus' book, *The True Doctrine*, extensively in her study. However, this book was written around 170 CE, much later that most of the Christian texts to which the book is being compared. Further, the book itself does not even exist in modern times, but is

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[122] MacDonald, *Women*, 257.
[123] MacDonald, *Women*, 252.
[124] MacDonald, *Women*, 255.
[125] MacDonald, *Women*, 255.

used through its extensively being quoted by Origen in *Contra Celsum*. As with most studies of first and second century women, evidence remains sparse, and conclusions therefore rest on shaky ground. Further, MacDonald has been criticized for repeating the apologetic stance that seeks to excuse Christian patriarchalism as an unfortunate but necessary accommodation or 'response' to an externalized cultural context, namely, 'pagan opinion.'[126] Importantly however, MacDonald has rightly questioned both the dominant feminist methodology, and some widely held historical conclusions about early Christian women. Published reviews of the book reflect its extremely high quality, as all were exceptionally flattering.[127]

Luise Schottroff

Two other books that attempt to reconstruct the experiences of early Christian women in their various contexts are by German scholars Luise Schottroff and Anne Jensen. In *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (1994), Schottroff sets out to show how women helped to shape the first Christian communities. The book's *forte* is Schottroff's sensitivity in describing the everyday lives of women, and their daily work.[128] Few previous authors have challenged the reader to think in such detail about the daily routine of a woman in the ancient world in quite the same way; a simple task like bread making is described in living colour.[129] Schottroff shows that the women in the audiences of the gospels held many assumptions about daily life that have often been overlooked by exegetes. These assumptions arise mostly out of their roles as wives and mothers.

Schottroff's third chapter attempts to show how Christianity was a liberating force for women, children and slaves. She does this by using New Testament texts to illustrate how early Christian communities were, at least to some degree, egalitarian. Considering

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[126] Virginia Burrus, review of M. Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. JBL* 118 (1999) 167.

[127] See Burrus, review of MacDonald, *Women* 167-68; Rollin Ramasaran, review of M. Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. JAAR* 67 (1999) 223-226; Carolyn Osiek, review of M. Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. CBQ* 60 (1998) 579-80.

[128] Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1995) 62-120.

[129] Schottroff, *Impatient Sisters,* 76-7.

the fact that Schottroff sets out to write a 'feminist social history of early Christianity,' her use of texts in this way may be inappropriate. Her method falls into the same trap that many Christian-feminist reconstructions have fallen into: an attempt to 'rescue' the bible from patriarchy. This method has been criticized for its failure to acknowledge that the texts of the New Testament were written in real historical circumstances under patriarchy.[130] In her final chapter, Schottroff enters into the same discussion that motivated Fiorenza, the ongoing conversation between the biblical tradition and the women and men today who hunger for justice.[131]

Anne Jensen

In *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women*, (1992), Anne Jensen takes an entirely different approach from Schottroff. She agrees with Fiorenza that traces of women's emancipation can be found in early Christianity. Aware of some of the problems involved in the use of the category 'women' for historical investigation, Jensen takes a unique approach in her study.

Jensen recognizes some of the methodological problems inherent in doing early Christian women's history. One of these problems is that, in using the term 'women' as a category of analysis, the historian is left with the task of defining that category. The idea that there is some sort of essential or definable 'woman,' is problematic from a feminist perspective since it has been this very process of defining womanhood that has reinforced the hegemony of 'male' over 'female.' Jensen resolves this problem in her book by avoiding it. Instead of focusing on texts discussing normative or idealized forms of femininity, Jensen instead centers her attention on *real* Christian women. In this way, the focal point of her research becomes 'Prisca,' for example, instead of 'women.' Among others, she investigates the lives of Perpetua and Felicity, Blandina, and Maximilla. The downside to Jensen's method is that we have very little information about *particular* Christian women in the first two centuries. Most of her study centers on women living in the third century and beyond, about whom much more is known for certain.

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[130] For a discussion of this point see Fiorenza, *Memory*, 43-47.
[131] Schottroff, *Impatient Sisters,* 177-223.

Ross Shepard Kraemer

Ross Shepard Kraemer's book, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (1992), sets out to investigate 'women's religions' among Jews, pagans and Christians in the Greco-Roman world from the 4th century BCE to the 4th century CE. She defines 'women's religions' as whatever women themselves do and think in religious contexts.[132] Her method seeks to describe as much as is possible women's participation in ancient religion, and her outlook is decidedly feminist, reflecting in her final chapter on some of the discouraging outcomes of her study for modern feminists. She sets for herself a list of questions about women's religions and then uses her sources to discern to what degree these questions can be answered.

Kraemer's history of women's religion is a multicultural one. Unlike the other studies we have seen thus far, it does not outline specific ramifications for contemporary communities. That is not to say that it has none, for all good historical study should have at least some minor repercussions for how we understand our lives and our history. However, Kraemer's perspective is not theological in nature. She laments the fact that many studies of Judaism and Christianity in antiquity have been 'directed and distorted by a disproportionate concern for theological questions.'[133] Not only have studies of ancient Judaism and Christianity been written almost exclusively with this bias, but the discussion of women's leadership in these communities has also been oriented toward modern Christian practice.[134] In fact, one could even go as far as to claim that until recently, the driving impulse behind feminist interest in women in the early church has been the question of the ordination of women in contemporary Christian churches.

One of the outcomes of Kraemer's particular bias, or lack of theological bias, is that she recognizes the full impact of the limitations of her sources. While many scholars will admit that what can be said about women in early Christianity is limited by a lack of

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[132] Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.
[133] Kraemer, *Her Share,* 5.
[134] Kraemer, *Her Share,* 191.

primary sources, most are willing to stretch these sources, sometimes beyond their capacity. Others have agreed on this point, for example, Mary Anne Tolbert says this of the New Testament, 'what scanty sociological information can be teased out of these recalcitrant texts is much too tentative to test any theory or model.'[135]

Instead of focusing on literary documents, Kraemer favors non-literary evidence such as inscriptions. These sources are less vulnerable to the biases of gender that affect the transmission of literature since they are less dependent on copying,[136] though they also come with their own limitations. For example: who was in a position to have an inscription made? Also, inscriptions about Christian women only appear in any quantity in the third century.

Another point that divides Kraemer from other scholars is her lack of insistence that women constituted a large percentage of worshipers in early Christian communities. She is aware of the lack of resources for an accurate demographic survey of any early Christian communities, which makes it impossible to know if more women than men became Christians.[137] Many sources used to demonstrate the claim that more women than men were Christians cannot be trusted since many of them were written as polemics against Christianity, and none are meant simply to describe the number of men and women in the movement. This point is discussed in further detail below. Undoubtedly women had significant presence in the early Jesus movement. The exact nature of this involvement is debatable.

Another point emphasized by Kraemer is that, in most parts of the ancient world, women are associated with the 'wrong' sorts of religion. Those sects that were said to have a high proportion of female leaders were also characterized as foolish superstition by some authors. Even in the case of religious groups that had well-known male leaders, these leaders were often said to have been lead astray by the influence of a powerful female.[138]

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[135] Mary Anne Tolbert, 'Social, Sociological and Anthropological Methods,' In *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction* (ed. E. S. Fiorenza; New York: Crossroads, 1993), 266.
[136] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 10.
[137] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 131.
[138] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 128.

In the case of Christianity it is also true that many groups that were considered heretical were also said to be led, at least in part, by women. Kraemer articulates this problem in the following way, 'women may not have been prominent in the majority of so-called heresies, but most movements we know to have been characterized by the prominence of women were ultimately judged heretical.'[139] The historian is left with a 'chicken and egg' problem. Were communities considered heretical because they were under the leadership of women, or were they said to be led by women because particular authors wanted to discredit a movement?

An integral part of Kraemer's outline of women's religions in antiquity is her application of Mary Douglas' group/grid theory.[140] Kraemer claims that Christian women in most early communities were characterized by strong group and low grid, a complexion that is frequently associated with an increase of authority for women.[141] A low grid refers to the relaxation of social classifications and hierarchies. This grid values achievement over ascribed social status, and supports equality and the breakdown of social discrimination. Strong group simply refers to the fact that group boundaries are tightly held and are essentially non-negotiable. The strong group/weak grid combination is a locus where gender distinctions may be obliterated or minimized, and where sexual asceticism flourishes. [142] When marriage, childbearing and transmission of property are negated, this location offers increased options for women. In the case of early Christianity, belief in the imminent end of the world had the result of making traditional female roles irrelevant in some communities.[143]

How successful is Kramer's use of the grid/group theory? What does it teach us about early Christian women? As a sociological model, the grid/group theory certainly fits with what we might expect some early Christian women to have experienced in their social locations. Kramer argues in her tenth chapter that the second-century *Acts of Thecla* may represent one side of a debate regarding women's leadership in the early

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[139] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 157.
[140] See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970, reprinted 2002 by same publishers).
[141] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 199.
[142] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 15.
[143] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 199.

church. In the communities in which this text was circulated, asceticism and the rejection of social conventions were valued (weak grid/strong group), and women could baptize and teach. The pastoral epistles, in particular 1 and 2 Timothy, represent the other side of the debate. Each side represents an interpretation of the Pauline tradition.[144] Whether or not these two sides of the debate represent different communities or different visions of Christian life existing in the same communities is unclear. It is likely that some communities took a particular stand on these matters, while others stood more on 'middle ground.' In any case, Kraemer's theory applies to any communities where celibacy and asceticism were valued over married life.

While Douglas' group/grid model fits what might be expected if certain Christian communities read the *Acts of Thecla* as an authoritative text, it remains unclear whether any actually did. However, a careful reading of the sources does lead the historian to the conclusion that in certain sectors of early Christianity celibacy and asceticism were valued over married life and child rearing. In this situation women would have more physical freedom, not being tied to the expectations that surround marriage and childbearing. Autonomy, at least in modern feminist terms, was possible for women in the ancient world only at the expense of the full bodily experience of being a woman. Kraemer laments this fact in her epilogue, noting how uncomfortable a conclusion this is for feminists; 'the notion that self-determination for women is only available at the cost of psychic self-destruction, at the cost of the repudiation of the feminine, is hardly comforting.'[145]

The question that needs to be asked then is this; did women in antiquity experience celibate life in its variety of forms as liberating? This question has been asked often, but never answered adequately. Given the limitations of our sources, it may remain unanswered, mainly due to the shortage of literature authored by women in antiquity. I would also pose a related question that is asked by Margaret MacDonald. My question is this: did women in antiquity experience married life, child bearing and rearing as

[144] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 150-154. This claim has also been made by D. R. MacDonald, whose work is discussed in Chapter 4.
[145] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 208.

liberating? Two problems arise at this junction: First, how do we access the mindsets of ancient women? Secondly, how do we define liberation? There is not enough space here for a full discussion of this complex issue. However, in relation to my second question, I would like to note the comments of New Testament scholar Monika Fander who proposes an alternate starting point for feminist scholarship, one that focuses on the freedom a woman possesses, rather than focusing on her oppression. She credits her approach to a group of Italian feminists, an approach that they call *Libreria delle donne.* Fander shows how these Italian women 'presuppose that every woman possesses an area of freedom, no matter how minimal. In consequence, they speak not of liberation but rather of the way in which female freedom comes about.'[146]

In conclusion, Kraemer's study of women's religion in the ancient world highlights several important points for Christian women's history. It embodies the recognition that women's religious history is multicultural. She acknowledges the limitations of her sources and favors non-literary evidence. She notices that so-called heresy and women's involvement are often related in the literature. Finally, Kraemer's use of Mary Douglas' group/grid theory brings her to the conclusion that for women, autonomy is often gained through the denigration and perceived destruction of the bodily experience of womanhood, something that Kraemer admits leaves modern feminists uneasy. This theme that autonomy equals the negation of full female identity runs through many studies of women in ancient religion.

Deborah Sawyer

Another short, but thorough examination of women's religion in the ancient world is Deborah Sawyer's *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (1996). Sawyer divides her study into three sections; 1) 'The Setting,' in ancient Rome, Judaism and Christianity; 2) 'Women in Narrative and Religious Practice,' discusses the experiences of women in Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Religions; and 3) 'Religion and gender,' explores how the nature of womanhood was understood in relation to men, the deities and each other.

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[146] Monica Fander, 'Historical-Critical Methods,' in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction* (ed. E. S. Fiorenza. New York: Crossroads, 1993), 205.

Interestingly, and uniquely, Sawyer includes a section in her introduction called, 'What is 'Woman'?'[147] As we shall see in the next chapter, this is a question that underlies my own project as well. Further, Sawyer asks, 'What is Religion?' The outcome of this basic level of questioning is that, 'in our day, and looking back through history, convincing definitions of what constitutes the female gender, or what constitutes religion have been elusive, and our contention in this study is that is the way they should remain.'[148]

Sawyer defines gender theories on a sliding scale, with essentialist views on one side,[149] and constructionist[150] views on the other. She says 'the concept of a spectrum signifying the diversity and complexities of our experience of gender and with its inclusion of two polarities, allows for the existence of difference without prescriptions for behaviour.'[151] Aristotle and Plato provide ancient examples of this theory of gender, with Aristotle being the essentialist and Plato the constructionist.[152] This line of argument drifts through Sawyer's book, in particular in the last three chapters where gender is discussed specifically. Chapter seven on 'Magna Mater and the Vestal Virgins' provides 'tantalizing' material for any discussion of the question of gender, the former being characterised by self-castrating eunuchs called *galli,* and the latter as virgins who were perceived as men.[153] These two groups lie at opposite ends of the spectrum, since castration meant that society could not see the *galli* as men (constructionist) and the virgins were holy due to the harnessing of their female nature (essentialist).[154]

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[147] Deborah F. Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 3-8.
[148] Sawyer, *Women*, 1.
[149] Essentialist refers to the view that men and women are 'designed' to behave in certain ways and play certain roles based on biology, or some other non-social influences.
[150] Constructionist refers to the view that women and men behave in certain ways due to social and cultural factors.
[151] Sawyer, *Women*, p. 7.
[152] Though she admits that Plato's view does not fit neatly into this category. Sawyer, *Women*, 5.
[153] Sawyer, *Women*, 119.
[154] Sawyer, *Women*, 129.

Chapter eight, 'Wisdom, Lilith and Mothers,' discusses the Jewish tradition, noting in particular that many Jewish sources are misogynist, and for some writers women even represent evil in the world.[155] Further, the Jewish matriarchs were esteemed in the literature because of their action and initiatives as wives and mothers.[156] These views are essentialist in Sawyer's methodology. In chapter nine, the early Jesus movement is depicted with more 'fluidity' of gender roles, representing a constructionist mindset.[157] Yet in the Pauline communities, a sexual hierarchy is made visible both in domestic and public spheres, and a theological underpinning is also added by Paul and his followers, through reflection on the implications of Eve's sin. For Sawyer this represents a type of essentialist view.[158]

Sawyer's discussion of the importance of early Christian texts and their interpretations for the construction of gender identity in the Western world is of particular interest to Christian women's history. Most historians of early Christian women's history have focused on the implications of their research for contemporary churches. Few have noted the importance of this time period in the widespread shaping of female identity.

Despite its strengths, I find Sawyers categories of essentialist and constructionist quite contrived. Though she claims that these are extremes on a spectrum, she is quick to place ancient authors in these modern categories.[159] However, she is the first author who has attempted to include feminist theories of dualistic gender construction alongside her historical reconstruction. In the future New Testament scholars and historians would do well to explore further questions about how early Christian practice has shaped the construction of gender in the Western world.

Also, one critic questions Sawyer's 'eclectic approach to chronology.'[160] He notes aptly that the 'first Christian centuries' are not 200 BCE- 200 CE,[161] Sawyers' stated dates for

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[155] Sawyer, *Women*, 130.
[156] Sawyer, *Women*, 144.
[157] Sawyer, *Women*, 146.
[158] Sawyer, *Women*, 157.
[159] Stuart L. Love also criticizes Sawyer on this basis. See his review of *Women* in *CBQ* 60 (1998) 588.
[160] David Noy, review of Sawyer's *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries, JJS* 49 (1998) 159.

the study, and questions the validity of her discussions of Sappho,[162] or gender in Plato.[163] Further, the book begins with quotes from two fourth century works.[164]

In her conclusion, Sawyer observes that, 'the inclusion of women in the earliest phases of Christianity is a feature that is not universal and to present it as a 'golden age' for women's participation does not represent fully the divergent nature of Christian practice.'[165] From its inception, the Christian movement had to deal with persecution under Rome. Sawyer insists that in such an environment, parallel to the more charismatic communities, there were some communities that began to mirror the norms of Roman society in organization and gender roles at a very early stage.[166] In these communities, women would have fulfilled more traditional roles than in charismatic, missionary movements. Though this conclusion represents no more than a hypothesis, there is no reason to reject it as historically implausible. Further, Sawyer's study concludes that more diversity exists in early Christian women's experience that has been previously recognized.

Antoinette Clark Wire

In the introduction to her 1990 book, *Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*, Antoinette Clark Wire aptly observes that studies of women in certain contexts are usually more suggestive than conclusive.[167] Such is the case, to some degree, with all the studies that have been described thus far. If we want to understand the lives of women in the ancient world, we need to pay closer attention to the variety of contexts in which women expressed themselves. Diversity is the key, since for every woman in every context there exists a lifetime full of thoughts and experiences, 99% of which will never be uncovered from the depths of history. However, the more specific we can be about particular women, in particular places,

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[161] Noy, review of Sawyer, *Women*, 159. Also see Sawyer, *Women*, 9.
[162] Sawyer, *Women*, 56-58.
[163] Sawyer, *Women*, 5-7.
[164] Noy, review of Sawyer, *Women*, 159.
[165] Sawyer, *Women*, 148.
[166] Sawyer, *Women*, 148.
[167] Wire, *Women Prophets,* 1.

belonging to particular religious groups, the closer we will come to representing the lives of real historical figures.

Wire also knows the importance of reading old texts in new ways if we are to reconstruct women's pasts.[168] In this case, she chooses Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth as the object of a new reading. She reconstructs the reality of the women prophets by deconstructing Paul's rhetoric.

Wire insists that the female prophets were not a minority in the church at Corinth based on the role they play in Paul's rhetoric. The Corinthian women prophets, many of whom ceased, or did not begin, to have children, found themselves free from the authority of a husband.[169] Under such circumstances, these prophets were free to focus on the new Christian community. They glorified God by prophesying in the Spirit. Paul feared that this spirit would be 'co-opted for human gain'[170] if it was not controlled more tightly. Wire argues that it is unlikely that the women in Corinth saw their prophesying as competing for God's glory as Paul did, nor did they see it as representing man's glory.[171] These prophets believed that God's spirit had been poured out on the foolish and they were among the receptors of this grace. The increased social status that the women achieved conflicted with Paul's desire for the community.

The real strength of Wire's study is that it allows us to take one step closer to the women in the Corinthian community. Wire argues that these women and Paul are on totally different trajectories, both theologically and socially.[172] Her new reading of Paul's first letter to their church is insightful and her conclusions are plausible. The fruitful outcome of spending time with a text and carefully reconstructing the community behind it is apparent on each page of this clever analysis. Her careful attentiveness to the text is admirable and biblical scholars of all brands would do well to learn from her example.

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[168] Wire, *Women Prophets,* 6.
[169] Wire, *Women Prophets,* 72-97.
[170] Wire, *Women Prophets*, 182.
[171] Wire, *Women Prophets*, 116-134.
[172] Neil Elliot, review of A. C. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, *ATR* 74 (1992) 233-36.

The downfall of Wire's approach however, is in its assumption that most of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians were directed to the women who prophesized. It cannot be shown conclusively that female prophets are being addressed anywhere other than the passages that discuss women and prophesy. Wire falls into the danger of giving women prophets a prominence that Paul gives them only occasionally.[173] This book will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on 1 Corinthians.

Lilian Portefaix

Another example of a study that attempts to reconstruct a community behind a Pauline letter is that by Lilian Portefaix. In *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Received by First-Century Philippian Women*, (1988), Portefaix attempts to reconstruct the social setting of the women of Philippi and then makes some speculation about how the letter to their community and Luke-Acts would have been received by these women. Portefaix demonstrates how the pagan background of the Philippians made it possible for them to understand Christian teachings[174] and argues that the women of this community were more religious than some women in neighboring towns, making them more receptive to Paul's letter.[175] In particular, the admonition to bear Christ's suffering was new and well received by this audience. Portefaix claims that the connection between suffering and resurrection gave human tribulation a new meaning for the Philippian women.[176]

Unfortunately, the connections that Portefaix makes connections between the cultural context of Philippi and how the community received Paul's letter and Luke-Acts are tenuous at best. Her study is based more on conjecture than on textual evidence for the links she establishes. Portefaix herself acknowledges that, 'such a reconstruction is highly dependent on speculative judgement- hence the frequency of such expressions as 'presumably,' 'possibly,' and 'there are reasons to assume' etc...'[177] The question

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[173] Robert H. Gundry, review of A. C. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, *JAAR* 61 (1993) 392-394. Barbara Reid also comments on this in her review of Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, *CBQ* 54 (1992) 594-596; and also Neil Elliot, review of Wire, *Women Prophets*, 233-36.
[174] Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice,* 135-153.
[175] Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice,* 58.
[176] Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice,* 152.
[177] Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice,* 201.

remaining is, are there enough 'reasons to assume' that her conclusions are *probable*? Most of the connections she makes are *possible*, but that is all.

Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo

Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo have edited a more recent volume entitled, *Women and Christian Origins* (1999),[178] including essays that have been divided under four titles: 1) *Creating the Context(s)*, a discussion of the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts from which Christianity emerged; 2) *Women, Jesus and Gospels*, including articles on historical women as well as representations of women in the gospels; 3) *Mining the Pauline Tradition*, with articles on Paul's view of women as well as 'real' women behind the text; and 4) *Gender, Authority and Redemption in Early Christian Churches*, including articles about the construction of female identity in Gnostic texts, church order and theology. All contributing authors share a commitment to integrating women into the study of Christian origins, and recognise the centrality of ideas about gender in understanding culture and religion.[179] All agree also on the utility of feminist approaches,[180] and aim to take a neutral stance on texts, by avoiding the labelling of any sources as 'heretical.'[181] Also, much to the credit of the editors, this is the first volume that I have come across in which the article on the Greco-Roman context was actually written by a *classicist*, a move that should be repeated wherever possible.

In her article, 'Paul on Women and Gender,' Elizabeth Castelli notes that 'as with so much of women's history, the resounding silence that answers back to the questions we pose is itself part of the story of women's past, and it is a silence that insists on being continually acknowledged.'[182] It is this silence that scholars like Fiorenza, Wire and Portefaix have attempted to fill using new and different critical tools and imagination.

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[178] Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, eds. *Women and Christian Origins*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[179] Kraemer and D'Angelo, *Women*, 3.
[180] Kraemer and D'Angelo, *Women*, 4.
[181] Kraemer and D'Angelo, *Women*, 6.
[182] Elisabeth Castelli, 'Paul on Women and Gender,' in Kraemer and D'Angelo, *Women,* 226.

Richard Bauckham

At the outset, Richard Bauckham agrees with Fiorenza that the criteria of historical plausibility are too vulnerable to prejudice and that history in the biblical tradition should remain in the sphere of the 'possible.'[183] In *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*, Bauckham presents a volume which is not an overview of women in the gospels, but about *particular* persons,[184] 'about which I have genuinely fresh things to say.'[185] Most of the studies found in the book are of women who have either not been studied previously, or at least not at length. Bauckham hopes that his reader will be surprised by how much can actually be known about these women historically. His methodology is quite eclectic, changing from chapter to chapter as required.

Bauckham introduces the idea that the gospels share both androcentric and gynocentric perspectives since 'readers are invited to share the perspective of the female characters.'[186] His 'gynocentric reading of Scripture' turns towards eight women who are; Mary and Elizabeth, Anna of the Tribe of Asher, Joanna the Apostle, Mary of Clopas, the two Salomes and the Secret Gospel of Mark, Women and the Resurrection. He calls his method a 'feminist canonical hermeneutic,' and addresses the need to explore the distinctive canonical functions of texts in which women's perspective is dominant (ie Song of Songs).[187] Women's perspectives occur also in books whose dominant perspective is androcentric, for example, parts of the Torah where the perspective of the matriarchs interrupt the more dominant perspectives of the patriarchs. Thus, the New Testament gospels are good examples of gynocentric perspectives

[183] Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Names Women in the Gospels* (London: T &T Clark, 2002), xiv.
[184] Interestingly, two very old books on New Testament Women take this approach as well, by naming chapters after named (and even unnamed) women. These are Walter F. Adeney, *Women of the New Testament* (London: Service and Paton, 1899); and Thomas E. Miller, *Portraits of Women of the New Testament* (London: HR Allenson Ltd, 1916). The former study is methodologically very similar to Bauckham's.
[185] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xvii.
[186] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xix.
[187] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 13.

interrupting androcentric ones since readers are invited to adopt the perspective of those who encounter Jesus.

On one hand, I find Baukham's methodology refreshing since it moves beyond the perspective of some feminists that all biblical narratives are agonisingly androcentric. In much the same way that historians have often unknowingly brought androcentric assumptions to a text, feminists are often in danger of bringing 'a hermeneutic of condemnation' to a text. As such, the feminist interpreter might assume an androcentric perspective where none appears. On this level, Bauckham has genuinely stepped out of the box.

However, I would argue that a more thorough 'hermeneutics of suspicion' should be applied before making Bauckham's move to a 'gynocentric perspective.' For example, in his first chapter, Bauckham says that in the narrative of Luke 1, we have 'an authentically gynocentric perspective.'[188] In what way, and using what criteria of 'authenticity' is this text gynocentric? For me, an authentically gynocentric text would have to be written by a woman, not by an unknown, probably male author. The main subjects of the narrative are female, and the author does draw the audience into sharing their perspectives, but from his own location in a patriarchal society. The text may represent an attempt to view events through women's eyes; this seems quite likely. But to call the story 'authentically gynocentric' is an exaggeration.

Bauckham says, 'it would be misleading to see either Elizabeth's or Mary's motherhood as serving the patriarchal and patrilineal interests of their husbands which would be the expected androcentric perspective on their roles as mother.'[189] This is true. The text may not represent the patrilineal interests of husbands, but the interests of a male God! Also, the stories serve the interests of Mary's son and his community. So, I would put a large caution stamp on Bauckham's work. While it is refreshing to acknowledge that some

[188] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 64.
[189] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 65.

biblical authors have attempted to step into a woman's mind, a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' should be applied to the ways in which those authors write about these women.

Further, Bauckham does not seem to be as intuitive or aware of the need to address the androcentric language of biblical authors as he should be from a feminist perspective. For example, he talks about Mary the wife of, mother of, etc. in his introduction,[190] following gospel writers' own androcentric ways of naming women. Interestingly, he has been careful not to name women in this way in his table of contents, which leaves me wondering whether he has reflected on this issue or not.

Jewish Women's History

Bernadette Brooten

A landmark study of women in early Judaism is Bernadette Brooten's published doctoral thesis, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (1982). Brooten identifies a number of cases where women's names appear in inscriptions placing them in a variety of leadership roles in the synagogue including elders, 'mothers of the synagogue,' 'heads of the synagogue,' and even priests. Brooten finds no reason to assume that these titles were honorific, as has been assumed in the past. Finding no ancient evidence that women were restricted to 'women's galleries' in the synagogue, Brooten asserts that women may have had as much freedom to move about the synagogue as the men did. This allows at least for the possibility that women also served in leadership positions.[191] Her findings also have implications for the way in which we reconstruct early Christian women's history. In her conclusion, Brooten notes that 'the inscriptional evidence for Jewish women leaders means that one cannot declare it to be a departure from Judaism that early Christian women held leadership positions.'[192] This flies in the face of the previous assumption made by some scholars that converting from Judaism to

[190] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xx.
[191] Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*, Brown Judaic Studies 36 (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 103-138.
[192] Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 150.

Christianity meant an increase in autonomy and authority for Jewish women.[193] Reviews are almost unanimous in their approval of Brooten's suggestions. Many agree that Brooten has rightly questioned the assumption that ancient synagogues were led by men, without exception and that there was literally no place for women within them.[194] One says, 'this collection of inscriptions from the Graeco-Roman world (27BC to AD 600) is fairly interpreted so as to make it difficult to ignore the probable contributions of Jewish women or to mistake male Jewish attitudes toward women for history.'[195]

Another way to access women's experiences in early Christianity is to ask specific questions about their lives and then to investigate to what degree those questions can be answered by the available sources. Few scholars have successfully asked and answered questions of this variety. In her book, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*, (1996), Bernadette Brooten has been bold enough to ask the following question; to what degree were the early Christians aware of the existence of female homoeroticism? At first, it may seem that Brooten is taking a modern issue and projecting it backward into early Christianity. However, she skillfully proves that this is not the case, since homosexual behavior is dealt with at length in both ancient Greek and Roman sources, in medical treaties, magic spells, and dream analysis.

Brooten believes that Paul's aversion to 'unnatural intercourse' in Romans 1:26 is actually an aversion to homosexual behavior between women.[196] She demonstrates that this aversion is intertwined with Paul's overarching claim that married women ought to remain in subordinate potions in relation to their husbands. Many ancient sources

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[193] In her introduction, Brooten cites Samuel Krauss as an older example of this mindset. See his *book The Jewish-Christian Controversy from the Earliest Times to 1789 (*translated into english by William Horbury; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1996). As a more modern example, she cites Emil Schürer, *The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* New English version (revised and edited by Geza Vermes & Fergus Millar; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1973-1986).

[194] See Paul Elbert, review of B. Brooten *Woman Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, JTS* 35 (1984) 503-504; A. T. Kraabel, review of B. Brooten *Woman Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, CBQ* 46 (1984) 341-342; Barbara Geller, review of B. Brooten *Woman Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, JBL* 104 (1985) 369-371; Judith Wegner, review of B. Brooten *Woman Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, JR* 68 (1988) 327-329; Johann Maier, review of B. Brooten *Woman Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, BZ* 32 (1988) 118-119.

[195] Paul Elbert, review of Wire, *Woman Leaders*, 504.

[196] Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 265.

disapprove of lesbian love on the grounds that it is 'unnatural.' Natural love, between a man and a woman, is conceived of in terms of an active/passive dualism, where the woman is the passive partner, and the man, the active one. If two women are involved in a sexual relationship, one must be taking on an active role, which is considered 'unnatural'. Therefore, Brooten classifies Paul's condemnation of sexual relations between women 'as based upon the assumption widely shared within the Roman world that nature calls for men to be superordinate and active and women to be subordinate and passive.'[197] Finally, Brooten locates Paul's condemnation of homoeroticism as part of an unfolding legal discussion about the meaning of Levitical concepts in the Roman world.[198]

Despite the specialized nature of Brooten's study, her conclusions have far-reaching consequences for feminist scholarship in early Christianity. In particular, the interconnectedness of Paul's statements about sexuality and the widespread misogyny of the ancient world can be seen afresh. Also, Brooten's study proves that if we really want to understand the New Testament in its historical context, a large amount of research needs to be done, even on topics that seem, at least at first, to barely appear in the text.

Tal Ilan

The talented scholar of Jewish history, Tal Ilan, has published a trilogy on women in ancient Judaism. The first volume of this trilogy is a revised version of her doctoral dissertation entitled *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (1996). The book embodies a simple approach to research on women in the ancient world, namely, it divides women's experience into the traditional categories associated with women's roles.[199] Her chapters discuss women's place as daughters and wives and she discusses how a woman's biology was perceived and the importance of preserving her chastity. The sources she uses are mostly literary, and her conclusions delineate the common

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[197] Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 192.
[198] Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 301.
[199] Another important study of Jewish women in ancient Palestine is Leonie Archer, *Her Price is Beyond Rubies: The Jewish Women in Graeco-Roman Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990). Archer outlines Jewish women's history in much the same way as Ilan, through the categories of childhood, marriage, motherhood, and finally death. Despite its methodological simplicity, it represents a decent starting point for historians of women's history in ancient Palestine.

perception of the 'ideal Jewish women.' Ilan admits that mostly men with high moral standards who saw women as a force of temptation wrote the halakhic literature that she uses as her main source. The idealized image of 'woman' that appears on the pages of this literature is one that shows that 'good' women were expected to 'behave,' produce heirs, do housework, remain faithful, avoid contact with other men, and use their beauty only to their husband's advantage.[200] The result of Ilan's survey is that more is learned about how pious Jewish men thought Jewish women should behave than about *actual Jewish women*. In her own words, Ilan's first volume represents a 'naïve attempt to encompass the entire historical perspective of Jewish women in Palestine under the assumption that knowledge of all the sources will inevitably produce a complete history.'[201] Despite its simplicity, Ilan's study introduces a number of key issues regarding the place of women in Second Temple Israel.

Underlying the second book of her trilogy is a radical new methodological approach to the history of women in Judaism. Ilan maintains that much can be learned from rabbinic literature about women in the Second Temple and Talmudic periods. Based on her belief that women have been suppressed and written out of *halakhic* literature, Ilan sets out to search for traces of the lost women's traditions.[202] Her methodological approach is radical for two reasons. First, she uses rabbinic literature as a tool to uncover *history*, though many scholars of rabbinic literature would rebuke such a practice. Secondly, she aims to do *women's* history, even though the texts she is exploring are likely listed among 'the most misogynous' from the perspective of many Western feminists. Despite these two potential criticisms, Ilan successfully manages to read an old text in a new way, producing a profitable contribution to the study of women's history. *Mine and Yours are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (1997), outlines a much more useful approach to the literary sources for Jewish women's history than her first volume.

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[200] Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Cambridge MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 226.
[201] Tal Ilan, *Mine and Yours Are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (New York NY: Brill, 1997), 30.
[202] Ilan, *Mine and Yours,* 36.

The third book of Ilan's trilogy is, in my opinion, superior to the others. *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (1999),[203] takes the reader on a journey through the diverse terrain of the historical uncertainty and contradicting images of women in Second Temple Palestine and beyond. This book is more like a collection of essays, related only by the simple themes 'women' and 'early Judaism.'[204] From women in Pharisaism, to the images of women in Ben Sira, to skeletal remains, Ilan highlights the diverse and contradictory evidence regarding women in early Judaism. The issue that emerges is diversity. Acknowledging this diversity is the only way to proceed with any history of women in the ancient world.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

After perusing the important literature on early Christian women, three distinct points of consensus emerge among scholars. A discussion of each of these themes will help to forge a way forward for this study and for the pursuit of early Christian women's history in general.

1) The first theme emerging from our survey is diversity. Kraemer notes insightfully that what happened to women who joined Christian communities largely depended on which community they joined![205] A house-church leader in Rome would differ in experience, theology and lifestyle from a prophet in Corinth. A converted slave-girl would live a very different lifestyle from an upper class Roman woman. A missionary would see things differently than a housewife. It is due to this necessary emphasis on diversity that studies such as Antoinette Wire's, Bernadette Brooten's (*Love Between Women*) and Tal Ilan's third volume have such great value. By focusing in on specific questions about the experiences of specific women, these authors avoid generalizations that reproduce

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[203] Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women Into Second Temple History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).
[204] One further publication on women in ancient Judaism that deserves mention is a collection of essays edited by Amy-Jill Levine. This book marks an important contribution to Jewish women's history in the first centuries CE. There is not enough space here to outline each essay, but topics include; images of women in Ben Sira, Philo, and Pseuo-Philo, women in Jewish narratives and Greek novels and women's authorship among others. The book is titled, *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).
[205] Kraemer, *Her Share*, 140.

stereotypes, both ancient and modern. My hope is that more studies of as high a quality as Wire's and Brooten's will appear on early Christian women in their specific historical locations.

2) A second theme emerging is that scholars of early Christian women's history have often used sociological models to help describe early Christianity. Schüssler Fiorenza demonstrates how, as a sect, early Christianity held an egalitarian ethos, accepting everyone equally into the community and emphasizing the need to embrace the poor, the sick and the marginal. Kraemer shows that women in many ancient religious environments experienced strong group and weak grid social locations according to Mary Douglas' group/grid theory. Under a 'weak grid', social hierarchies are relaxed and status is earned and not socially ascribed. 'Strong group' refers to strong group identity. Women in strong group/weak grid loci often found that autonomy was gained through asceticism and celibacy.

I believe that the feminist preference for sociological models is due to the fact that there is a certain hesitancy among feminists to speak in world-creating theological terms. Since theologies make truth-claims, they are partially responsible for the categorisation of women as subordinates throughout Christian history. For example, E. McLaughlin's article in the ground breaking volume from 1979, *Womanspirit Rising*, laments the 'depressing litany of theological justifications'[206] for ecclesiastical misogyny throughout the centuries. As a result, Fiorenza, Portefaix and Wire have preferred to see women's increasing restrictions in early church circles as a result of social factors.[207] This is exemplified by Fiorenza's method and conclusions in, *In Memory of Her*. She blames the shift in the early movement from house church, with its egalitarian ethos, to church as the household of God, with its patriarchal structure, on the shift from the church as a sect, to a larger institution.[208] In this way, the fact that the stress on submission and patriarchal subordination wins over the stress on altruistic love and ministerial service

[206] McLaughlin, 'The Christian Past: Does it hold a future for Women?' In *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (ed. C. P. Christ and J. Plaskow; New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 94.
[207] Though admittedly, Fiorenza's is a *theological* reconstruction of Christian origins. What precisely she means by this will be discussed below.
[208] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 312.

cannot be justified theologically, since it cannot claim the authority of Jesus for its own Christian praxis.[209]

As a word of caution; in *Feminist Theology/ Christian Theology*, Pamela Dickey Young criticizes feminist theologians, including Fiorenza, for arguing that the term 'Christian' can be used for whatever liberates women. On the contrary, Young argues that 'if there is nothing that can be derived from the tradition itself that can be used normatively to argue that this is what Christianity is all about then others can use the tradition in less liberating ways.'[210] Therefore, a normative factor derived from Christian tradition must be at heart of any discussion on Christian theology.

Dickey Young goes on to argue that Jesus himself cannot be that norm because we have no direct access to Jesus since he left none of his own writings. What we do have is the response of Jesus' earliest followers to the person of Jesus. Both the event of Jesus and the response of his early followers are necessary for Christianity's very being.[211] In the first layer of tradition we do not come to understand who the historical Jesus was, but rather, who he was for his earliest followers. Likewise, if we are truly to understand how women fit into the earliest communities, we need to understand those communities' theologies, and how their understandings of Jesus, his teaching, life and death, shaped their understanding of appropriate gender relations. In this way, the current study will be sure to acknowledge the fact that the communities we speak of were 'Christian' because they were formed as a response to the event of Christ and to the original responses of Jesus' followers. The communities under investigation have formed theological ideas about the life and death of Jesus, based on the theological ideas expressed by Jesus' original followers. Their theology is not only a response, but also a response to a response. They are a self-identified community precisely because of their shared beliefs and theology. So when such a community appears to be struggling with the issue of gender relations, the whole discussion would be based around the very thing that brings

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[209] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 334.
[210] Pamela Dickey Young, *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 74.
[211] Young, *Feminist Theology,* 84.

them together as a community in the first place, that is, a response to the gospel message, a theology.

I am not arguing here that Fiorenza's books are a-theological or anti-theological, rather that her criteria for historical analysis would be better served if the theologies of early church members were given a more prominent role. For example, while she uses the tools of historical-critical scholarship to construct a model for an evolving religious movement, her theological criteria are very much caught up in the modern context, to the degree that some aspects of ancient faith may be lost. After all, a woman would not opt to hold a house-church meeting in her home because it was typical small-sect behaviour, but because she *believed* that it was a good thing for a Christian woman to do. Thus, I hope that my study will serve as a sort of supplement to Fiorenza's and others'. This supplement will address the following question: How was female gender constructed theologically in the early church?

I wish to recall that it was *theology* that brought the early Christians together as a group in the first place. It was a *theology* about the nature of the person of Jesus Christ and the significance of his life and death that formed the very boundaries of the community. Theology was the motivating factor behind all their thoughts and actions. Though it is true that certain theologies have served to restrict women's freedoms, it is also possible to view theologies as products of history. Thus, the theologies of the first century church can be analysed as part of the flux of the history of ideas. In this way, theology can be seen as a key factor in shaping gender identities, while at the same time not claiming to hold divine truth over these identities beyond their immediate contexts.

3) A third theme emerging from our review of the literature on early Christian women is that some women in the early communities supposedly gained a certain freedom compared to their ancient counterparts in other traditions.[212] This freedom is often portrayed as relative to the number of women in leadership positions and the degree of

[212] This conclusion has been questioned by Brooten, Fiorenza and others who are wary of any assertion that might promote anti-semitism.

choice available as to whether or not to pursue the traditional roles of wife- and motherhood. With the exception of Margaret MacDonald, each of Fiorenza, Schottroff, Jensen, Kraemer, Sawyer, Wire, Portefaix, Brooten, and Ilan ask to what degree women found liberation, power, or autonomy in their religious milieu.[213]

It has often been observed that this 'autonomy' was gained at the price of denying female bodily experience. This meant that living a celibate life, not bearing children, and focusing on refining the spiritual soul while negating the 'weak' female form generally coincided with increased social status for women both inside and outside Christian circles. Examples of this attitude can be found in Paul's letters, the *Acts of Thecla*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*, to mention a few. Entire books and articles have been written exploring this topic, including Virginia Burrus', *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts,*[214] and the volume edited by Elisabeth Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith.*[215] In my concluding chapter, I will argue for a more 'textured' reading of the early church, in which the question 'what is woman?' was discussed in various ways and contexts.

Autonomy gained at the expense of 'being a woman' naturally makes modern feminists uneasy. But does this historical fact merit such unease? Not unlike the way that some Muslim women take offense to some Western feminist evaluations of their circumstances, my guess is that, if given a voice, first-century Christian women might take offense in much the same way. By evaluating ancient women by modern standards, feminists are in danger of turning these historical figures into objects, the 'it' of historical analysis. Just as a patriarchal mindset creates male as subject and female as object, or 'other,' a feminist historian should be careful not to make herself the norm and her ancient counterparts the 'other.' To avoid the 'othering' of ancient women, the historian has to balance a modern feminist assessment of a woman's historical position, with an assessment that attempts to enter into the woman's mindset, as much as is

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[213] As we shall see in the next chapter, this approach is distinctly a feminist one, as opposed to an approach that favors gender identity and construction as its starting point.
[214] Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston NY: E. Mellen Press, 1987).
[215] Elisabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Wilmington DE: Michael Glazier, 1983). Though both these studies deal with material dated later than the first century.

possible, from her location in the twenty-first century. The second element of this methodological dialectic is underestimated in most feminist histories. As a feminist goal for the future, I would like to see less lamentation over how women have failed to gain freedom in modern feminist terms, and more rejoicing over how women actively expressed themselves in their contexts and circumstances. The next chapter of this dissertation discusses this methodological problem in more detail and suggests a different theoretical starting point for early Christian women's history.

So, where do we go from here? One of the goals of rewriting history from a feminist perspective is to write women into history and therefore restore history to women.[216] The feminist historian must set her eyes on a day when women's history will appear alongside men's history in grade-school, as well as university textbooks. This 'human' history will also include the history of other 'forgotten' groups, such as slaves, the poor and the marginalized. The category 'women's history' need only exist in the meantime. Once the history of women has been dug out of the depths of generations past and established as a monument for all to see, the very category of 'women' will dissolve, and 'human' history will enlighten the past of 'humanity.' Unfortunately, we are not there yet. Feminist historians must continue to uncover and write the histories of women in every place and time period.

As far as early Christianity is concerned, we have barely taken a chip out of the task of uncovering women's history. A scholar who undertakes such a task must be familiar with the scholarly 'tools' of a variety of disciplines. In order to understand the women who contributed to the formation of Christianity, one must have a good understanding of the social and political conditions of the Roman Empire. One must be thoroughly versed in Greek culture and Jewish history. One must be familiar with the philosophical thinking of the first centuries and the theologies of religious communities. Such a historian might ask, Where did women live? What did they wear? How did they make their clothes? What did they eat? Where did they shop? Did women travel? Did women have profitable trades? Were women educated? What did they learn? What did they

[216] See Fiorenza, *Memory*, Introduction, xiii- xxv.

believe? What kind of worldviews did they ascribe to? All these questions and more have only been partially answered in the literature reviewed in this chapter.[217]

A conclusion that has been reached by many of the scholars above is that the division of scholarly fields is simply too narrow to do women's history. We must combine insights from fields such as Classics, Women's studies, History, Sociology, Anthropology, Archaeology, as well as New Testament, Jewish Studies, and Hebrew Bible.

In conclusion, any history of women in the early Christian movements must be multicultural. This history will emphasize diversity and uniqueness of experience. It will involve creativity in its use of sources, and it will use these sources respectfully. Yet, this new history will be one that is aware of its own context and biases brought to it by the modern author. Though the task of early Christian women's history has largely been driven by modern theological concerns up until this point, this need not, and perhaps should not, be the case in the future. Through careful examination of all available sources, a plethora of new insights are waiting to be discovered. The feminist historian must also take caution not to take her own historical circumstances as normative, this puts her in danger of 'othering' the women of times past. The historian must constantly be aware of the need to reassess the assumptions she brings to her research, always looking for more appropriate ways to divulge women's lives. Most importantly for this dissertation, the feminist must not shy away from a discussion of the theologies that shaped the Christian construction of gender identities. Moreover, these theologies have not been assessed adequately, and it is this hole in feminist practice that this study aims to fill. After reviewing the major contributions to the field, it must be acknowledged that the task of writing early Christian women back into history has only just begun.

[217] For another list of questions for the historian of early Christian women see Brooten, 'Early Christian Women,' 81.

CHAPTER TWO
On Doing Women's History

At times I have found myself wondering what it means to do history from a feminist perspective. More specifically, what does it mean to do 'women's' history from a feminist perspective? What methods of analysis have feminist historians used to make sense of historical data? Is the category 'woman' helpful or harmful? How do I tell the stories of women living under patriarchal circumstances in a way that is respectful of their worldview, without compromising mine?

In this chapter the following points will be discussed. First, I will discuss the ways in which the category 'woman' is problematic due to its inherent instability. Feminism is one of many sites in which the struggle over the meaning of 'woman' has taken place. Secondly, over the past three decades feminism has challenged the traditional ways of conceptualizing historical events. The meaning of the term 'history' has recently gone through a paradigm shift from history as an objective telling of certain events, to history as interpretations of a variety of human activities. Third, I will outline a brief history of feminist history showing that there is no consensus regarding the best approach to history from a feminist perspective. Each scholar presents her methodology on the vast landscape of feminist approaches. Fourth, I will discuss some of the subtle differences between 'gender history' and 'feminist history.' These two fields overlap greatly in their approaches in so far as gender history recognizes that gender divisions have been one of the key factors in the organization of power in society. Lastly, I hope to show how all these points relate to my specific questions relating to the history of women in their ancient, early Christian contexts.

As mentioned above, feminism is one of many locations in which the discussion about the meaning of 'woman' has taken place. From its inception, the Christian movement was also a location for this debate. All of Paul's (and pseudo-Pauline) letters, the

Synoptics and Luke-Acts, as well as extra canonical texts such as the Gospel of Thomas show signs that the debate about women's place in the movement evolved steadily in this theological context. Early Christianity was indeed a site of struggle over the meaning of messiah, law, the eschaton, and *the place of women*. By the end of this chapter I hope to show how my own experience, contemporary feminist theory, and a desire to use a sound method of historical inquiry combine to create the methodological boundaries of my dissertation project. The reflections found below, in combination with my assessment of the state of scholarship on early Christian women found in the previous chapter, contribute to the formulation of the following question: 'How was female gender constructed theologically in the early church?'

What is woman?

The tension that underlies my dissertation project is one that has also plagued feminism from its inception, a tension that questions the very meaning of the word 'feminism.' This tension runs not only through my academic efforts, but also affects me on a personal level, leaving me feeling hopeful in one moment, and angry in the next.

Feminism has brought to light the fact that throughout history women have been made subject to men in a variety of ways, have been expected to fulfill a tightly-defined role in society and family life and have had their social, political and personal freedom all but destroyed. In such a context, historians too, have, for the most part, failed to treat women as historical agents. They have ignored the large variety of roles women have played on the stage of history and have instead treated women's work as if it fits into the mould of 'domestic life' which is often seen as 'a static, unchanging backcloth to the world of real historical activity.'[218] One solution to this problem has been an attempt to make 'women' the focus of historical investigation, and therefore, to do 'women's history'. That is, to try and write a history of women's actions and women's accomplishments, and to trace women's fingerprints through time.

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[218] Sally Alexander. *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History* (London: Virago, 1994), 275.

This solution is problematic however, not just for feminist historians, but for feminism in general, since it continues to use the category 'woman' as the *subject* of historical inquiry, as if this category has one, simple, easily-defined, all-consuming, everlasting meaning, when, of course, it does not.[219] Further, since the specificity or particularity of women has already made them unfit representatives of humankind, would not attention to women reinforce, rather than undercut, the notion that women are the second sex?[220] This question is not an easy one to answer. It is one that feminists have been asking from the earliest stages of the movement. Karen Offen informs us that the term 'feminism' has only really existed since the early part of the twentieth century, and from its inception, was controversial.[221] This problem is summarized most succinctly by Denise Riley in the introduction to her famous book, *Am I That Name?*:

> Feminism has intermittently been as vexed with the urgency of disengaging from the category 'women' as it has with laying claim to it; twentieth–century European feminism has been constitutionally torn between fighting against over-feminization and against under-feminization, especially where social policies have been at stake.[222]

I feel strongly about the need to write women back into history. However, the use of the category 'women' for historical analysis makes me feel deeply uneasy, knowing that few historical persons will actually fit into that category once it is defined. Further, investigating 'women' as a separate group seems to belittle women's historical activity by placing their activity under 'special' investigation. At once I feel excited about the

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[219] Feminist theory has been plagued with, and indeed is defined by the problem of the dualistic construction of gender identity, both inside and outside the confines of historical study. Many would attribute this, at least in modern times, to Simone de Beauvoir's, *Le deuxième sexe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), first published in France in 1949. Beauvoir questioned 'the oppression of women' in the Western world and was the first publication to question this since Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible: The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible* (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1985), from the late 1890's. Beauvoir popularized the idea of a gendered dualism of oppression, defined by what is man and not-man.
[220] Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: University Press, 1988), 18.
[221] Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism : A Comparative Historical Approach' *Signs* 14/1 (1988) 119-157.
[222] Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category 'Women' in History (Basingstroke: McMillan, 1991), 3.

possibility of a history written in an inclusive manner, and angry about the fact that the need exists to undertake such a project.

Denise Riley's above-quoted book is entirely dedicated to the tension that is now being discussed. She makes three claims that, from her point of view, 'need not worry us.' Her first claim is that 'woman' is indeed an unstable category. Secondly, this instability has historical foundation. And lastly, feminism is the site of the systematic fighting-out of this instability.[223] Thus, her conclusion is that '"women" is a simultaneous foundation of and an irritant to feminism and that this is constitutionally so.'[224]

The notion of what a woman is alters with time, as does the notion of what it means to be human. To further complicate the situation, the degree to which possession of a gender is held to invade the whole person is also in constant flux.[225] Theological discourse has always been one location in which these conversations about meaning have taken place. Riley dedicates an entire chapter to a discussion of the various ways that the 'soul' has been constructed in Christian theology. The degree to which the soul is 'gendered' has had a large impact on how women are perceived in religious contexts. This is a key point when research is in the area of women's history. Theological discussions on the meaning of the soul and its relationship to God are the foundations on which the conversation about women's place and role is laid.

The word 'woman' takes on specific meanings in specific contexts. For example in the English-speaking world, until recently, 'woman' meant biologically female persons in the lower classes, whereas today a 'woman' is a biologically female person of any class. Even within a given historical context, is any person really capable of 'being a woman' at

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[223] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 5.
[224] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 17. The methodology suggested in Riley's book has been hugely influential in the field of women's history, yet she has been critiqued for not utilizing her own method effectively. Instead, Riley's book consists of a straightforward traditional history of the category 'women' in selected moments in Western culture. See Diane Elam, 'Romancing the Postmodern,' in *The Postmodern History Reader* (ed. Keith Jenkins; London: Routeledge, 1997), 69.
[225] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 18.

all times? Riley asks, 'Can someone fully inhabit a gender without a degree of horror? How could someone 'be a woman' through and through, make a final home in the classification without suffering claustrophobia?'[226] She goes on to say that it is not possible to spend twenty four hours a day soaked in the immediate awareness of one's sex. Gendered self-consciousness therefore has a 'flickering' nature.[227]

Thus, the meaning of 'woman' or femaleness in general fluctuates over time and space. Further, even in a specific moment of history, no one is capable of fully inhabiting the meaning of the word 'woman,' which is to say that the definition of this word can never be fully accurate for any one person at any one time. Therefore, Riley concludes that instability is the lot of feminism. She emphasises the 'the inherent shakiness of the designation 'women' which exists prior to both [feminism's] revolutionary and conservative deployments, and which is reflected in the spasmodic and striking coincidences of leftist and rightist propositions about the family or female nature.'[228] Again, the question arises, How do I approach the topic of 'women' in the early Christian movement? How can I relate my study to the ever-changing meaning of 'womanhood,' both in our times and in the ancient world? Should this project be abandoned altogether?

In her article, 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism,' Linda Alcoff takes up a similar question articulated in a different way. She notices that there have been two main camps that have attempted to answer the question, 'Are there women?' *Cultural* feminists say 'yes!' and they can be defined by their activities and attributes in the present culture. These feminists try to revalidate undervalued female attributes.[229] Conversely, *Post-Structuralists* say 'no!' and attack the category and concept of woman by problemizing subjectivity, claiming that it is the very process of defining 'woman' that has led to her secondary role in society.[230] As such, postructuralists tend to focus on

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[226] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 6.
[227] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 96.
[228] Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* 98.
[229] Linda Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,' *Signs* 3/3 (1988) 408.
[230] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 407.

'gender' and the differences between women, rather than on their similarities.[231] Put aptly by historian Joan Scott:

> Unlike the social science approach which takes identity and experience of women for granted, the poststructuralist approach relativizes identity and deprives it of its basis in an essentialized 'experience' both crucial elements in most standard definitions of politics, for the mobilization of political movements. By problematizing the concepts of identity and experience, feminists using poststructuralist analysis have offered dynamic interpretations of gender that stress ideological contradiction and the complexities of changing power relations.[232]

Poststructuralist work insists on greater historical variability and contextual specificity,[233] yet this deconstructionist approach threatens to turn flesh and blood women into historical constructs.[234] As we have begun to see, both these positions have their problems. Since cultural feminism merely 'valourizes genuinely positive attributes developed under oppression,' it cannot map out a future long-term course for feminists. To the extent that it 'reinforces essentialist explanations of these attributes, it is in danger of solidifying an important bulwark for sexist oppression: the belief in an innate 'womanhood' to which we must all adhere lest we be deemed either inferior or not 'true' women.'[235] Later she states that 'if we define the subject in terms of gender, articulating female subjectivity in a space clearly distinct from male subjectivity, then we become caught in an oppositional dichotomy controlled by a misogynist discourse.'[236] On the other hand, the post-structuralists' view is that long-term results will emerge if we cling to the conclusion that feminist efforts must be directed toward dismantling the fiction that there is any such thing as 'woman'.[237] Through this lens, feminist practice can only be negative and thus threatens to wipe out feminism itself, since it might make the

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[231] Bridgette Hill, 'Women's History: A Study in Change, Continuity or Standing Still?' *Women's History Review* 2 (1993) 12.
[232] Scott, 'Women's History,' 58.
[233] Scott, 'Women's History,' 58.
[234] Hill, 'Women's History,' 13. The differences between 'gender' history and 'feminist' history will be discussed in detail below.
[235] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 414.
[236] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 423.
[237] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 417.

question of women's oppression obsolete.[238] Alcoff is clearly aware of the tension and instability that surrounds feminism in all its forms. She, like many other feminists after her, wants to move forward and use *experience* to begin to describe the features of human subjectivity.[239]

Yet making experience the centre of historical inquiry is not without its problems also. For example, Liz Stanley makes a common criticism of first wave feminists who were accused of narrowly defining 'women's' experience. She says, 'women went through much to have named themselves and recovered something of the history of their foremothers... in the meantime, realizing their mistake, white, middle-class feminists deconstructed 'woman,' implying that to name oneself and claim one's history was 'not only an intellectual error, but an ontological oversimplification to have done so.'[240] As we have seen feminist theory is wrought with questions and problems of definition and identity.

For the contemporary feminist, Alcoff's suggestion is to recognize one's identity as always a construction, yet also a necessary point of departure: 'people can choose to assert their Jewishness, so black men, women of all races, and other members of more immediately recognisable oppressed groups can practice identity politics by choosing their identity as a member of one or more groups as their political point of departure.'[241] Hence, the identity of a woman is the product of her own interpretation and reconstruction of her history, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access.[242] This 'reclaiming' of the oppressed part on one's identity has become common practice in liberation movements and is a suitable way forward for contemporary movements that are in search of political and social change. However, we cannot simply ask ancient women to define what being a woman means to them and the

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[238] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 419.
[239] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 430.
[240] Liz Stanley, 'Recovering Women in History from Feminist Deconstruction,' in her *The Woman Question*. 2nd edition (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1994), 76-77.
[241] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 432.
[242] Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism,' 434.

difficulties involved in trying to suggest how these woman might have understood themselves are profuse. For starters, there are the ever-pressing difficulties in being respectful of the fact that the group under investigation lived, some quite satisfactorily, under an ancient patriarchal system. How do we write about these women's lives appropriately from a feminist perspective? How does ancient women's experience become part of the fabric of historical research? How do we 'hear' these women's voices when they remain silent in the texts? Something inside me wants so desperately to let these women speak for themselves about what it meant for them to be a woman. Since I cannot contact the dead, or at least this is not considered a scholarly method of investigation, do I abandon the project of ancient women's history?

What is theology?

It is important now, before we continue, to define what exactly is meant by 'theology' in the pages that follow. Historical critical analysis has caused two polarities to form in New Testament studies. Stephen Fowl says that the project of historical critical analysis is aimed at separating reading the New Testament in a manner geared toward historical reconstruction from the practice of developing a theologically usable reading of the New Testament.[243] This is certainly true. As has been discovered in Chapter 1, feminist critics of the NT have preferred to use historical critical methods since theologies often make claims of universal truth. Historically, many of these truth-claims have stated that women are secondary to men according to God. It is easy to see why feminists want to avoid such claims. However, I would argue that theology can be viewed as an ever-changing project and thus, as part of the history of ideas. As such, we can talk about 'theology then' and 'theology now' without worrying about contradictions between the two. Thus, we can leave aside the questions of contemporary theology, and ask of any time-period, 'What did they believe then?' Once an adequate answer to this question is found, then comparisons can be made to modern belief systems if required.

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[243] Stephen E. Fowl, 'The New Testament, Theology and Ethics,' in Joel B. Green (ed.) *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Eerdmans, 1995) 396.

In this dissertation I will use James Dunn's definition of theology which is, 'Talk (*logos*) about God (*theos*) and all that is involved in and follows directly from such talk.'[244] Thus, my question is this, 'In what ways did the early Christians talk about God in relation to women?' I will assume throughout the dissertation that theology has a cosmological depth and, as such, creates world views and shapes opinion. It is this world-defining factor that makes theology such an important task for feminism. Few fields of study have the ability to shape lives, private and public as theology.

What is history?

The idea that women's history can be done from a feminist perspective not only leads us to question what is meant by the term 'woman', but also, what is meant by the term 'history' itself. The discipline of history has long been understood as the writing of accounts of the most important events of times past, by an objective, unbiased author. These accounts have, for the most part, either forgotten to include women, or considered women's accomplishments not worthy of report. In *Pas d'histoire, les femmes...* Hugette Bouchard notices that there is much evidence of women's activity in her field of modern history, including journals and other writings by women, women's pacifist groups, international organisations with female leaders, as well as women's invasion of various professions. But she adds, 'tout se passe comme si cela n'interessait pas la grande histoire.'[245] Bouchard goes on to question why historians have failed to see women's activity as an intricate part of modern history. She finds her answer with historian Carl Degler in *Is There a History of Women?* Degler claims that the problem lies within the definition of history itself: [246]

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[244] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Cambridge, Eerdmans, 1998) 6.
[245] Hugette Bouchard, *Pas d'histoire, les femmes...* (Paris: Syros, 1977), 15.
[246] This line of questioning has led to some radical and thought-provoking studies. For example, Joan Kelly-Gadol questions commonly-held notions of historical periodization by asking, 'Did women have a Renaissance?' Her answer to this question is yes, but not during the Renaissance. See Kelly-Gadol, 'The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History' in *The Signs Reader: Women, Gender and* Scholarship (ed. E. Abel and E. K. Abel; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 332. Linda Kerber lists Kelly-Gadol's work among a handful of near-classics in feminist history in, 'Gender' in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (ed. A. Molho and G. S. Wood; Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 46.

> Jusqu'a une date récente, l'histoire a eté definie d'une manière telle qu'elle à seulement inclus des aspects de l'experience humaine qui constituent l'activité des hommes: les guerres, la diplomatie, la politique, les affaires. C'est dans cette optique que les historiens de genre masculin ont choisi les critères de ce qu'ils ont fait entrer dans l'histoire.[247]

Therefore, if we redefine the meaning of the word 'history' and its boundaries, will women and other groups previously assumed to be 'secondary citizens' find their place on the pages of history?

I believe that changing the way history is defined has the power to change the way we perceive not only history itself, but also, our own pasts and present selves. Writing history is not so much the collection of objective facts as the construction of historical meaning and significance.[248] I agree with Karen Offen that the mission of the historian is 'to locate the patterns of change and continuity in the chaos of past human activity and to interpret their meaning for the present.'[249] Thus, the feminist historian must take into account the multiple forms of oppression that have shaped the lives of women and other groups, while at the same time recognizing the contributions that members of oppressed groups have offered to the web of historical change. As Sally Alexander has argued; 'it is through investigating the problems which feminism has raised that we can expect the most useful women's history to emerge.'[250] Thus, we must use the present-day tools of feminist theory to help us understand pre-feminist women and their lives.

From this angle, history has now become the telling and retelling of events from times past from various *perspectives*. In her article 'A Fantasy of Belonging?' Johanna Alberti notes that the notion of history as art has been placed against the dominant idea of history as science. This is more clearly defined as a critical self-awareness on the part of

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[247] Carl Degler, *Is There a History of Women*? (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 16.
[248] Rosemarie Buikema and Anneke Smelick. *Women's Studies and Culture: A Feminist Introduction* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993), 22.
[249] Offen, 'Defining Feminism,' 121.
[250] Alexander, *Becoming*, 276.

the scholar, or the lack there of.[251] The historian thus becomes accountable to her reader; she must clearly define her objectives and point of departure for her interpretation of events. To avoid coming across as omnipotent overseers of human past, historians must admit their fallibility and acknowledge that what they offer to the reader is an *interpretation*; their version of the story.

The first feminist engagement with the discipline of history as a profession was Mary Ritter Beard's, *Women as Force in History,* in 1946, though the vast amount of early publications did not appear until the late 1960's. Though it may seem obvious that history is always written from certain perspectives and that the same event can hold two totally different meanings depending on who you are, feminism and other liberation movements still encounter a significant amount of resistance from within the academy. Joan Scott says:

> More than in many other areas of historical inquiry, women's history is characterized by extraordinary tensions: between practical politics and academic scholarship; between received disciplinary standards and interdisciplinary influences; between history's atheoretical stance and feminism's need for theory.[252]

Thus, feminism's politics, theory and interdisciplinary approaches are all points of tension in the discipline of history. Feminist history has become a form of feminist critique of traditional historical knowledge.[253] Women's history is 'at once an innocuous supplement to and a radical replacement for established history.'[254] We have once again returned to the point where we must admit that doing women's history is not a methodologically simple task, new ground is still being trodden, new sites of struggle are always appearing on the horizon. From where shall I begin?

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[251] Johanna Alberti, 'A Fantasy of Belonging?' in *Knowing Feminisms* (ed. L. Stanley; London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 151.
[252] Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: University Press, 1988), 16-17.
[253] Buikema et al. *Women's Studies*, p. 24.
[254] Scott, 'Women's History,' p. 49.

The History of Feminist History

Women's history has surged onto the academic scene over the past three decades. This emergence is largely, if not entirely, thanks to the feminist movement. Questions raised by feminism may seem more alive to the scholar of modern history since the feminist movement itself grew up in this period. As shown in Joan Wallach Scott's, *Feminism and History*, 'woman' as a category of historical inquiry, along with its many problems, is discussed and debated widely amongst scholars of modern history.[255] The ability to do women's history with a critical awareness of the various social and political factors that have worked together to the disadvantage of those who are female, is only possible because of the feminist movement and its accomplishments to date. In fact, the very fact that I, as a woman, am able to participate in a post-graduate program is largely thanks to feminism in its multifarious forms. As such, feminism is my history, as well as the history of this project. In her book, *White, Male and Middle Class*, Catherine Hall presents a history of feminist history, which will be outlined briefly.

Feminist history was born in the 1970's as a recovery of 'Women's history.'[256] The first crucial text for British feminist history was by Sheila Rowbotham and was called *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It.*[257] In her preface, Rowbotham describes the question that inspired the undertaking of such a book. While writing she kept asking herself, 'In what conditions have women produced and reproduced their lives, both through their labor and through procreation; how has the free expression of this activity been distorted and blocked by the circumstances of society?'[258] Rowbotham's desire for historical inquiry is coupled with a desire to discover the limiting factors in women's lives.

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[255] Joan Scott, *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Scott's entire volume is dedicated to this question.
[256] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), 5.
[257] Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).
[258] As quoted in Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 6.

Those who followed Rowbotham were hopeful about the possibility of a 'new history.' According to Hall, the first stage of writing women's history was 'marked by an ambition- a conviction that it was possible to aim for a broad historical sweep, to rethink epochs, to construct new temporalities.' [259] In these early days it was appropriate to use generalizations, and to use secondary sources and long historical periods. 'Women' was not a contested category. Women were 'our sex,' were those who were oppressed by men, those who must demand power and agency for themselves and make history.[260] Thus, from its inception, feminist history sought to change the meaning and content of historical knowledge. Feminist history seeks not only to understand but to change our knowledge of the world.

Feminism came to hold two distinct camps within its boundaries in the 80's and early 90's. Here I will use Natalie Zemon Davis' definition of these two well-documented camps within feminism.[261] First, *liberal feminists* refused the idea that *biology* should structure women's public and private role. These feminists renounced the idea that there was any difference between men and women besides the obvious physical differences, which were better described on a spectrum than as two poles of humanity. *Radical feminists* claimed the creation and maintenance of *gender* difference as the means by which patriarchy controls women. These feminists wanted to reclaim womanhood and give it new meaning and a new, elevated status.[262] Davis notes that the main downfall of both these camps is that they completely ignored Freud, invoking an unproblematic self that could be rescued from patriarchy.[263] From its earliest stages feminism was aware of the difficulties in trying to define 'woman,' in the 80's the tension led to the emergence of these two distinct groups.

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[259] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 7.
[260] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, 8.
[261] Linda Kerber lists Zemon Davis' work among a handful of classics in feminist theory in 'Gender,' p. 46.
[262] Natatlie Zemon Davis, 'Women's History in Transition,' in *Feminism and History* (ed. J. W. Scott; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 515.
[263] Davis 'Women's History,' 515.

As feminism and feminist theory grew and divided, so did the approaches of feminist historians. At least five distinct approaches were taken to the task of writing women's history. First, some historians chose to give value to an experience (usually of mothering and traditional role) that had been ignored and devalued, and to insist on female agency in the making of history. On the contrary, others tried to demonstrate women's essential likeness to men as historical agents. Another group took evidence about women and used it to challenge received notions of progess and regress. Still others departed from the framework of conventional history and offered a new narrative, different periodization, and different causes for historical phenomena. These feminists made an attempt to discover the feminist or female consciousness that motivated women's actions. Lastly, some took up the method of social history seeing that human relationships of all kinds constitute society. These scholars studied a variety of groups and topics to assess the impact of processes of change. It is relatively easy for social historians to extend the list of subjects to include workers, peasants, slaves, elites and diverse occupational or social groups including women.[264] Certainly this is not an exhaustive list of the approaches that feminists have taken to the writing of history, but it does give some indication as to how diverse feminist approaches were in the 80's and 90's.

In agreement with Davis, Karen Offen found that in the 70's and 80's feminists chose to focus on forms of feminism that focused on the individual, all but ignoring relational, and social arguments. But Offen feels that historical scholarship has shed light on this situation teaching us that to look only to individualist feminism is to miss the rich historical complexity of protest concerning women's subordination, even in the English-speaking world.[265] She claims that 'focusing on [individualist feminism] alone blinds us to the range of effective arguments used to combat male privilege in the Western world during the past few centuries, and even to arguments put forth today by women and men in economically less privileged countries, where women's aspirations and self-sovereignty are often subordinated to pressing short-term political and socioeconomic

[264] For a full discussion of the variety in approaches see Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*.
[265] Offen, 'Defining Feminism,' 138.

necessities.'[266] Further, it is this tendency to prefer individualist arguments that has kept us from seeing the transformations and undulations in the role women have played and the things they have accomplished throughout history. Women's history should not look for female exceptions in the public sphere, but rather new ways should be developed to describe the history of women's worlds.[267]

Further, and more eye-opening criticisms of the methods of the early feminist movement (and its historians) were brought forward in the eighties. One such criticism came through the voices of African, Hispanic and Asian feminists. Until this point feminist interpretations had focused on 'women' without recognizing that gender is 'only one element in the operation of the multiplicative structural oppressions of wo/men.'[268] Many feminists have since come to realize the need to work together against oppression in all its forms.[269] Another common criticism of feminism is articulated by Elaine Showalter when she says that 'the feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing or even attacking male critical theory keeps us dependent upon it and retards our progress in solving our own theoretical problems.'[270] This is also a good point that is worthy of investigation. Feminist theory in general, and historical method in particular, should always stand on its own ground, on its own feet, making sure that its self-definition does not always stand in comparison to the standard, acceptable, or 'normative' approaches.

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[266] Offen, 'Defining Feminism,' 138.
[267] Buikema et al. *Women's Studies*, 18.
[268] Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word,* 64.
[269] In the 1970's and 80's women of colour and working class women began to articulate their own vision of feminism. In 'The Second Sex,' Simone de Beauvoir locates the cultural meaning of woman somewhere between 'male' (phallic) and 'not male' (castrated). See Imelda Wheleham, *Modern Feminist Thought: From Second Wave to 'Post-Feminism'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 9. This is related to the criticism lobbied at feminism by women of colour, lesbian and working class women that white middle-class women were assuming that the word 'woman' had a generic meaning for 'us,' the oppressed sex, yet these groups could not identify their own experience in this category (Wheleham, *Modern Feminist Thought*, 129).
[270] Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' in *The New Feminist Criticism* (ed. E. Showalter; London: Virago Press, 1986), 246.

Gender History and Feminist History

My discussion so far has been based around the methodological issues that surround the task of doing *feminist* history. Another, largely overlapping field that has developed over the last twenty years is that of *Gender History*, a field that espouses a slightly different (though as we will see, similar) method of investigation than feminist history.

The word 'gender' has gone through a transformation in recent years in the English language. The word used to describe grammatical distinction and the state of being one sex or the other.[271] Now, it has come to be equated with the social features that comprise the notion of 'man' and 'woman' in a given society at a given time. The term was first used by American scholars who 'wanted to insist on the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on sex.'[272] The word came to 'denote a rejection of biological determinism implicit in the use of such terms as "sex" or "sexual difference."'[273] 'Gender' took on this meaning at the same time as psychoanalysis began to offer 'an important theory about the reproduction of gender, a description of the transformation of the biological sexuality of individuals as they are enculturated.'[274] This concern with gender emerged only in the late twentieth century.[275] It is absent in all major bodies of social theory articulated from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.[276] Over the last two decades 'gender' has become an important concept in feminist communities and other academic circles.[277]

This interest in gender, which is often combined with an interest in race and class, signalled the fact that two major changes were occurring in academia. First, some scholars discovered a commitment to a history that included stories of the oppressed and

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[271] Kerber, 'Gender,' 41.
[272] Scott, *Politics*, 29.
[273] Scott, *Politics*, 29
[274] Scott, *Politics*, 44.
[275] For a full discussion of the changing definitions of the word gender in recent history see Scott, 'Gender,' 42-3.
[276] Scott, *Politics*, 41.
[277] Joan Scott's labelling of gender as a 'useful tool' for history has become a mantra among feminist historians. See Gerder's use of this quotation in, 'Gender,' 41.

an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression. Secondly, it denotes a scholarly understanding that inequalities of power are organized along at least three axis.'[278] Such a methodology opens a space, not only for a new history of women, but also for a new history.[279]

Supporters of gender studies and theory criticize feminist models for being too focused on 'oppression' and overcoming patriarchy. Elizabeth Roberts says; 'the patriarchal model tends to stress the negative aspects of women's lives, and thus, I believe distorts the true picture.'[280] Another historian claims, 'the belief in the supremacy of patriarchy over all other factors in women's history... promises to be an arid study... As a thesis that emphasizes the continued oppression of women by men as of central and supreme importance to women's history, it may well alienate the very allies- and there are many- we have won in the years since the 1960's...As women we will never achieve real equality and the enrichment that quality could bring to relationships without carrying men with us.'[281] Gender theorists thus suggest that a more authentic placing of men and women in history should be adopted, that goes beyond the inflexibility of the female oppression/liberation dualism.'[282]

By adding gender as a category of analysis, it is argued that we will begin to move beyond a history that extends what is already known of history, discovers women who were once invisible, and provide more information about 'feminine' sectors of society that were once considered marginal. Instead, movement will be towards a history made

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[278] Scott, *Politics*, 30.

[279] An example of how the use of the category 'gender' has changed the way history is perceived can be found in Bonnie G. Smith's, *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998). Smith's study analyses the academic discipline of history from 1800-1940 and how gender analysis allows for a recalibration of our understanding of history. See her Introduction, 1-13.

[280] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984),1-2.

[281] Hill, 'Women's History,' 19.

[282] Sue Morgan, 'Redressing the Balance, Transforming the Art: New Theoretical Approaches in Religion and Gender History' in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?* (ed. D. F. Sawyer and D. M. Collier; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 94.

of connections in which women, as much as men, are founding elements of historical processes.[283]

The term 'gender' along with the implicit notion that it is the relationship between men and women in society that is now under investigation found widespread acceptance in academic circles, much more so than feminist theory. Joan Scott notes that, '"gender" seems to fit within the scientific terminology of social science and thus dissociates itself from the (supposedly strident) politics of feminism.'[284] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza laments the fact that, 'it has again become a liability for scholars and theologians to be called feminists or to identify themselves as advocating feminism, because the term continues to be both contested and shunned as either too political or too ideological by those scholars who profess value neutrality and a positivist ethos of inquiry.'[285] Some historians who take up gender history do so in an effort to separate themselves from feminism and its politics.[286] In this way 'gender' studies is in danger of accommodating itself to the 'value neutral' scientistic theoretical paradigm,[287] which in turn puts it in danger of unknowingly reinforcing the system of hierarchal structures that are at work in the academy and were at work in the lives of historical figures.[288] It is important to keep 'women' on the centre stage. If not, women run the risk of being pushed back into obscurity, of being marginalized and distorted through a male lens.[289] Imagine doing a history of race relations in the history of the United States or South Africa with a value-neutral analysis of 'black' and 'white' and how these categories functioned in society without at least commenting on issues of justice and equality!

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[283] Silvia Mantini, 'Women's History in Italy: Cultural Itineraries and New Proposals in Current Historiographical Trends' Translated by J. Schwarten, *Journal of Women's History*, 12 (2000), 173.
[284] Scott, *Politics*, 31.
[285] Fiorenza, *Sharing*, 3.
[286] Scott, 'Women's History,' 43.
[287] Fiorenza, *Sharing*, 35.
[288] On a more personal note, I admire Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza for her unwavering belief that feminism, both inside and outside the academy can make a difference to those for whom change is needed most, in her theoretical frame, those at the bottom of the kyriarchal structure. Despite resistance from many sides, she continues to argue her point with clarity and academic genius, all the while her belief and faith in the need for global justice shine through.
[289] Hill, 'Women's History,' 15.

Joan Scott remains sceptical about an interpretation of the emergence of 'gender' as an analytical tool, as either a rescue of history from feminism, or the unfortunate death of feminism in the academy.[290] Not all historians who make use of 'gender' as a category for historical analysis are avoiding association with feminism. In fact, some use the analytical tools of gender studies as the theoretical backdrop to their feminist beliefs and politics.[291] Joan Scott and Catherine Hall are among those who feel that 'gender' can be a useful category for the analysis of the power relationships in society, community, and personal relationship. In a book written with Leonore Davidoff entitled *Family Fortunes*, Hall wanted not just to write women back into history, but rewrite that history so that proper recognition was given to 'gender' as a key to power in society.[292] For this undertaking Hall uses the tools of post-structuralism and assumes that language constructs rather than reflects meaning.[293] Masculinities and femininities are thus historically specific and we can trace the changes over time in the definitions which have been in play and power.[294] For Hall, the object of study is no longer individual women but instead the object is 'gender' which is one, but not the only, crucial axis of power.[295] Hall's methodology is explicitly feminist. No stone is left unturned in her analysis of how the construction of gender has historically relegated women to certain roles and spaces.

Scott recommends a similar methodology in her book, *Gender and Politics*. Scott feels hopeful about the use of gender as a category for historical analysis and she claims that, 'gender history develops a way of thinking historically about gender, for it draws attention to the ways in which changes happen in laws, policies, and symbolic representations. [I]t implies a social rather than a biological or characterological explanation for the different behaviours and unequal conditions of men and women.'[296] She goes on to say that, 'the term 'gender' suggests that relations between the sexes are

[290] Scott, 'Women's History,' 43.
[291] Scott, 'Women's History,' 43.
[292] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 12.
[293] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 23.
[294] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 13.
[295] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 33.
[296] Scott, *Politics*, 24.

a primary aspect of social organization (rather than following from economic or demographic pressures); that the terms of male and female identities are in large part culturally determined (not produced by individual or collective entirely on their own); and that differences between the sexes constitute and are constituted by hierarchical social structures.'[297] Her goals, therefore, align with the goals of feminism, in that she wishes to analyze the ways in which the construction of gendered stereotypes has oppressed women in the past. This kind of analysis holds the power to stop those gendered stereotypes from doing further damage to contemporary and future women. Scott says; 'The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in a writing of history that focus on women's experiences *and* analyzes the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics.[298] Thus, her methodology differs from Hall's in that she seeks to add an element of *experience* to her methodological formula.

It should be clear by now that the goals of feminist history and gender history share a large area of overlap in their methodologies. Gender history seeks to discover the ways in which women have been oppressed by the language used to define their identities. Feminism is the site of struggle where these old identities are recognized and where new language and meanings are produced to describe the experiences of women. We have now come full circle once again, recognizing that the meaning of the category 'woman' is unstable, and that no agreement has been met over how to approach the task of doing women's history, nor what methodological frame should be used. As Fiorenza reminds us, critical feminist interpretations must not deny these conflicts but must reconceptualize their location as a site of struggle. Religion, theology and biblical interpretation are best understood as feminist places of struggle over the production of either oppressive or liberative meaning and authority.[299] All this sounds logical theoretically, but how does one go about making 'struggle' one's methodological starting point? How do the questions raised above relate to the specific task of doing early Christian women's history?

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[297] Scott, *Politics*, 25.
[298] Scott, *Politics*, 27.
[299] Fiorenza, *Sharing*, 76.

Feminism, Biblical Studies and Ancient Women

Three distinct ways of 'doing history' have been discussed in this chapter, and indeed, my project makes use of each of them. In one sense, I aim to do *women's history*, in that my project is defined by its subject matter- women. This method is not without its problems however, in that the term 'women' eludes definition. This and other problems involved in taking 'women' as the subject of historical analysis are acknowledged by *feminist history* which is designated by its modes of analysis. Feminist historians politicize female invisibility and discern trends of female oppression and modes of accomplishment. As such, feminist history is committed to the study of 'patriarchy.' My project also uses the tools of *gender history*, in which both 'male' and 'female' experience are usually included in one's methodology.[300] Gender history tells a story, not about men and women and what happened to them, but about how the subjective and collective meanings of 'woman' and 'man' as categories of gender identity have been constructed.[301] This dissertation deals mostly with the category 'woman.' My method makes use of all these scholarly approaches.[302]

A number of conclusions emerge from the above discussion and many insights can be drawn from feminist theory and its attempts to attack a number of difficult questions about historical inquiry on the topic 'woman'. The methodology of any scholarly work has a number of social, theoretical and personal factors that combine to produce an 'approach' to a particular project. My feminist approach is, in part, influenced by my experience of feminism. In my own life I relate most strongly to the post-structuralist or liberal feminist view that the term 'woman' cannot be defined by any clear boundaries. Even biological factors are best understood on a spectrum instead of as polarities. The

[300] A full discussion of the difference between these methods can be found in Morgan, 'Redressing,' 91-98.
[301] Scott, *Gender,* 6.
[302] This gender/feminist debate may seem a bit 'dated' to those outside of biblical scholarship in that its popularity was strongest in the early 1980's. It seems to me, however, that feminist historiography is under-discussed in biblical studies, which is surprising since biblical studies is a field in which historical-critical theory is widely used.

idea that 'woman' has an unstable meaning that is constantly in flux fits well with my experience in the world.

I also think that to confuse my own experience of living in the world under the title 'woman' with a sound point of departure for feminist inquiry would be a grave mistake. It is also important to take heed to the arguments of what Alcoff calls 'Cultural' feminists. Some women in the ancient world, as in our times, will have taken pride in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, and their 'femininity,' and will have developed and lived out their creative potential within this framework. I respect and always wish to speak highly of such women, ancient or modern. To say that 'there are no women,' would be like snatching their identities from them, and destroying their creative activities. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the term 'woman' and its definition will be oppressive to some, while to others will hold the key to their self-understanding. I believe that this holds true for all time periods.

One theme that emerges from the above discussion is that feminism is one site of 'struggle' over the meaning of the word 'woman.' Is it possible then to make 'struggle' one's methodological starting point? And if so, what would such an approach involve? I would argue that it *is* possible to make 'struggle' one's methodological starting point by recognizing the various struggles that underlie one's project. First, there is the personal struggle mentioned above, my inability to see some parts of myself under the label 'woman.' Also, there is the fact that it makes me uncomfortable and angry that women have not been included in the writing of history. Secondly, there is the struggle over the meaning of 'woman' in feminist historiography.

But feminism is not the only location in which the debate over the meaning of 'woman' has taken place. Throughout Christian history the meaning, role, and 'soul' of woman has been discussed at length, mostly in theological discourses on God's intentions for creation and for end times. Early Christianity is no exception. The early texts, in particular Pauline, and deutero-Pauline writings display clear evidence that woman's

place was a 'hot' topic in early Christianity. In her book on early Christian widows, Bonnie B. Thurston states, 'for our purposes the noteworthy point is that the writings of the early church were shaped by a struggle involving a variety of groups over, among other issues, the equality of women.'[303] Early Christianity was, therefore, a site of struggle over the meaning of the word 'woman.' Sue Morgan says that 'gender' is studied not through material experience, but through language and discourse.[304] This is true of both modern and ancient times. My aim is to prove that female identity was being debated in Christian theological terms in the first century. I also aim to understand, as much as is possible, the ways in which female gender was created through the language and discourse of Christian theology at the nucleus of the Christian movement, in New Testament times.

As has been shown in chapter 1, it is important for feminist scholars not to shy away from questions of theology, but rather to acknowledge that theology was the foundation on which Christian gender identity was built. I will argue that in the New Testament one can find proof that the early Christians struggled to define themselves as gendered beings theologically. My chapters aim to show clearly that this is indeed the case. A lot of work has been done on 1 Corinthians in regard to the women in the community and their behaviors and beliefs. In the third chapter of this dissertation I will assess the work of these scholars and discuss what can be said about the theologies of the Corinthian women. 1 Timothy has been chosen because of its wealth of textual evidence pointing to the fact that there were indeed many women from various walks of life who were active in the communities.[305] Ephesians has been chosen because I am captured by the text of 5.22-33 and the way in which the identity of the church in Christ is theologically entwined with the relations of male and female in marriage. This text serves as an example of just how important gender was in early church theology. By casting some light on these examples, I hope to highlight the diversity of opinion in the early church over how 'the female' could and should be understood as part of this exciting new religion.

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[303] Thurston, *Widows*, 19.
[304] Morgan, 'Redressing,' 95.
[305] The possibility the 1 Timothy was written for more than 1 community is discussed in chapter 4.

The outcome of the gender-debate in the early communities is clear from the fact that the canon contains documents representing one side of the debate, the side in which women are thought to be defined by their silence and submission. But, as Antoinette Clark Wire has clearly shown in her study of Corinthian women prophets, there was another side to this debate, and if we really want to understand the context from which Christianity emerged, we must take the time to reconstruct both sides of this struggle. As such, we will become informed readers of the biblical text, armed with the necessary information to decide that we are convinced by its arguments, or that we relate more strongly, to another, previously silenced, side of an ongoing debate.

PART TWO
Towards an Answer

CHAPTER THREE
1 Corinthians

In order to show that female identity was discussed in the early church, and explore the theological elements of this discussion, I have chosen 1 Corinthians as my first case study. The rhetoric of 1 Corinthians has been analysed by numerous scholars. Also, those with questions about early Christian women have often turned to this letter for answers. Throughout the chapter, I will draw out evidence that the meaning of femaleness was being discussed on a theological basis in the community. Conclusions about the parameters of this context will be formulated in order that they might be compared with the other case studies. The chapter proceeds as follows: I will begin with a brief section placing my discussion within the context of scholarship on 1 Corinthians. This will be followed by a discussion of what we know about the Corinthian context. Then, we will explore what can be known about the theology of the Corinthians from those who have reconstructed the community using rhetorical analysis. This will be followed by an outline of Paul's theology in this letter. And lastly, a discussion of the specific sections addressing women and issues surrounding gender identity will lead to conclusions about these texts in their ancient, theological context. By the end of the chapter, we will be able to conclude that the meaning of Christian womanhood was indeed under discussion in the community at Corinth and that debate arose around the

following theological issues: God's wisdom, the cross-event, the *parousia*, the meaning of baptism, proper interpretation of Genesis 1&2 and the presence of angels during worship.

A DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

Much of the scholarly literature on 1 Corinthians to date has focused on Paul and has attempted to discern his argument, theology and purpose as accurately as possible.[306] As such, interpreters have tended to follow Paul's lead in their description of the Corinthians as having gone slightly astray.[307] These interpreters then turn to the ancient world looking for a group or philosophy that may have been influencing the Corinthian mindset. To illustrate this point, I have chosen a few notable examples that will be discussed chronologically.

In his 1886 commentary, F. Godet states that the main reason for Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians was 'to combat certain corruptions.'[308] He argues that since Paul's initial visit, the Corinthian church had grown weak and that Greek 'lightness' threatened 'the Divine work.'[309] In 1938, James Moffatt described 1 Corinthians as a response to 'local emergencies,'[310] the worst of which was a 'feminist movement,' that he describes as an 'ultra ascetic movement with untoward claims to a freedom from moral restraints and to a sinister combination of low living and high thinking.'[311] Moffatt adds that on first reading, 1 and 2 Corinthians leave the reader with the impression that Paul's mission at Corinth had been 'wrecked.'[312] Commenting on the general immorality of the people of Corinth, F. W. Grosheide blames the seamen for polluting the Christians with their

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[306] See examples below.
[307] Here, I would like to note that most authors who follow Paul's lead in their reconstructions of the Corinthian community may well do this self-consciously. In particular, if their aim is to discuss Paul's theology and purpose.
[308] F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans. A. Cusin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1886), 1.
[309] Godet, *Commentary*, 19.
[310] J. Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Moffat New Testament Commentary; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), xxviii.
[311] Moffatt, *First Epistle*, xxix.
[312] Moffatt, *First Epistle*, xxx.

'special sins' of immorality, drunkenness and dissipations.[313] In 1971, F. F. Bruce blames similar factors for the Corinthian 'perversion' of Christian liberty into libertinism.[314]

An extensive list could be composed of interpreters that have tended to paint the community behind the letter in exactly the way that Paul portrays them, as immature and arrogant, assuming that they already posses the fullness of the wisdom of God.[315] Conversely, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Antoinette Clark Wire, among others, have highlighted the need to approach Paul's rhetoric as just that– rhetoric- namely, as arguments meant to persuade and encourage certain actions. As Wire says, 'Paul's letters' authority depends on free assent to Paul's arguments because they are convincing.'[316] Fiorenza defines rhetoric as that which 'seeks to instigate a change of attitudes and motivations, it strives to persuade, to teach and to engage the hearer/reader by eliciting reactions, emotions, convictions and identifications. The evaluative criterion for rhetoric is not aesthetics, but praxis.'[317] Therefore, in this study, I will avoid the temptation to paint the Corinthian believers as immature, and instead turn my focus toward an analysis of the Pauline letter as rhetoric, its goal persuasion, not description. But first, I will examine the works of four interpreters who have attempted this task already; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Antoinette Clark Wire, Ben Witherington and Richard Horsley.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

In, *In Memory of Her*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza traces the use of the so-called baptismal phrase found in Galatians 3.28 to its use in Corinth by reconstructing the

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[313] F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 14.
[314] Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinithians* (NCBC; London: Oliphants, 1971), 22.
[315] Admittedly, there has been a shift in the way that Paul is perceived in recent commentaries. Most modern interpreters are willing to admit that Paul's perception of his communities are precisely that: Paul's perception. See for example, Thiselton *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000) or Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, ANTC (Nashville TE: Abingdon Press), 1998.
[316] Wire, *Women Prophets*, 10.
[317] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians' *NTS* 33 (1987) 387.

situation behind Paul's first letter to the community. Fiorenza argues that the religious situation at Corinth was dominated by an egalitarian ethos in which slave, free, Jew, Greek, man and woman pray and prophesy together on equal terms. This vision of life together is beginning to be usurped by Paul as he struggles to deal with perceived communal problems in a concrete situation.[318] According to Fiorenza, in 1 Corinthians, Paul restricts the ministry of married women, and places unmarried women on higher ground, giving them a special, pure and holy status.[319] Further, Paul's use of the virgin-bride metaphor for the church, and the characterization of his apostleship as fatherhood, opens the door for the reintroduction of patriarchal values and sexual dualities in a community where equal rights had once reigned.[320] In 1 Corinthians, Fiorenza finds evidence of the seeds being sown which later sprout into the patriarchalisation of the church. This represents a move away from the egalitarian ethos of the early Jesus movement, and the bowing of Paul and other church leaders to the social pressures of the Greco-Roman world.

I would question Fiorenza's characterization of the Jesus movement as being egalitarian at any stage of its history, as I would question the appropriateness of using the term 'egalitarian' to describe anything in the ancient world. However, Fiorenza is right that in dealing with the situation at Corinth, Paul has voiced an opinion about marriage, and has restricted the actions and voices of married women considerably.

Antoinette Clark Wire

In what one reviewer called 'the most sophisticated study yet to emerge on a single aspect of the study of women in the Second Testament period,'[321] Antoinette Clark Wire has re-written the history of the women behind Paul's first known letter to Corinth. As has been seen,[322] Wire reconstructs the community at Corinth using rhetorical analysis

[318] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 220.
[319] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 235.
[320] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 236.
[321] Carolyn Osiek review of A. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets, BTB* 22 (1995) 44.
[322] See Chapter 1, 46-47.

as prescribed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.[323] She manages to avoid a discussion based solely on 'key' passages about women, and instead considers the wider themes of the letter assuming that women would have made up at least half of the Corinthian audience. This strength, however, also paves the road to her greatest weakness. In her analysis, Wire consistently imagines that Paul was speaking to the group of women prophets in almost all aspects of his letter, collapsing all his arguments into statements directed toward this group. There is no significant proof, however, that this is what Paul intends. The rhetorical situation that Wire imagines leaves us with only a partial image of the people who received the letter, and it cannot account for all the distinctive language in 1 Corinthians.[324]

Ben Witherington

In *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, Ben Witherington analyses the social and rhetorical factors that influence the exegesis of 1 Corinthians. Witherington argues against Wire that Paul's language of mutuality in Chapters 7 and 11 is not a rhetorical ploy, but aims to 'give women more security in marriage and to give them freedom to abstain from marriage... It is not necessary to envision a radical group of Corinthian women at odds with Paul's teaching on sexual matters... Most women surely would have welcomed Paul's attempt to reform the patriarchal approach to marriage and singleness.'[325] Witherington argues that Paul's concept of marriage could hardly be further from the 'status quo' of Roman society, thus, in this view, Paul's emphasis on mutuality is genuine, and not a rhetorical ploy, as Wire would have it.

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[323] C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).
[324] Richard Horsley, '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society' in his *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1997) 34.
[325] Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 177.

Thus, Wire and Witherington differ markedly in their analyses of Paul's use of rhetoric. Identifying Paul's purpose and exact use of rhetorical language is difficult, but crucial if our goal is to reconstruct the other points of view against which Paul is arguing.[326]

Richard Horsley

More recently, attempts have been made to interpret Paul in the Roman Imperial setting.[327] Richard A. Horsley is a great example of this. Against the Roman imperial backdrop, one can discover exactly where Paul goes against the imperialist grain, and where he does not. This approach will strengthen our understanding of the common assumptions between author and audience, and also, where they may differ.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Horsley affirms that 'a recent attempt,'[328] and socially more concrete approach working from Paul's rhetoric, argues that Corinthian women in particular had experienced freedom from their traditional patriarchal roles.[329] While acknowledging that this approach marks significant progress, Horsley feels that it does not deal sufficiently with all of the distinctive language in 1 Corinthians, and some important details of the 'rhetorical situation' of 1 Corinthians.[330] Of his own approach, he says, '[t]he approach followed here will attempt to take the Corinthian beliefs and behaviour addressed in all sections of 1 Corinthians into account and to understand them in the particular context of the socio-cultural ethos of first-century Corinth. Attention will be given both to the rhetoric of Paul's arguments in the letter and to the larger social context of the assembly to which it was addressed.'[331] In two separate articles, Horsley

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[326] This issue is complicated further by the fact that defence of or disapproval of Paul is often related to one's stance on some modern theological issues, such as biblical and apostolic authority and relevance.
[327] See Richard Horsley, ed. *Paul and Empire Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); and '1 Corinthians;' also, Neil Elliot, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).
[328] One can assume that Horsley is referring to Wire's, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, though he does not state this in his commentary.
[329] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 34.
[330] Horsley's criticism of Wire is similar to my own.
[331] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 34.

continues his quest to understand the rhetorical situation of 1 Corinthians by showing that Paul's language in the letter sought to subvert Roman Imperialism.[332]

In summary, in all the work described above we see evidence of a shift that has taken place in New Testament interpretation. To understand Paul is to understand Paul's rhetoric. Instead of taking Paul's words to represent a historically accurate picture of the community he addresses, the interpreter must look instead beyond the text, to the community in which Paul's was simply one of many voices. Yet as Fiorenza is quick to remind us;

> ...a full paradigm shift from an individualistic Euro-American malestream framework of interpretation to a fully political and communal paradigm of Pauline studies has not yet been accomplished. The reason for this, I suggest, is the hegemonic politics of interpretation. The rhetoric of Pauline interpreters continues not only to identify themselves with Paul but also to see Paul as identical with "his" communities, postulating that Paul was the powerful creator and unquestioned leader of the communities to whom he writes.[333]

Fiorenza describes a common pitfall that I hope to avoid in my study. In order to accelerate the arrival of the necessary paradigm shift, interpreters must not make certain assumptions about the canonical status of Paul and therefore give priority to his theological authority and rhetorical response.[334] Such claims to authority for Paul might not be maintained for the original situation. In order to assess Paul's authority we need

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[332] See Horsley's, 'Rhetoric and Empire – and 1 Corinthians' in his *Paul and Politics* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); and '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society ' in his *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1997). Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, however, would curtail Horsley's argument by pointing out that the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians serves both to subvert and to *reinscribe* the Roman imperial system. Paul believes that the Kingdom of God will replace the Roman rule, yet uses the language of imperialism to make his point, thus reinforcing some of imperialism's central assertions. For example, he uses the vocabulary of imperialism when he writes of the rulers of this age (2.8); reigning, or being king (4.8); and being 'subject' (14.33, 15.23-28, 16.16). Kittredge reminds us that though Paul is on one hand a 'social critic,' he is also very much a product of his time (Kittredge, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, 105).
[333] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Paul and the Politics of Interpretation' in *Paul and Politics* (ed. R. Horsley; Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 44.
[334] Fiorenza, 'Politics,' 51.

to start from a position that does not make assumptions about that authority. Rather than seeing Paul as the authoritative pastor, one must seek to understand the debates in Corinth as legitimate discussions within a community.[335] Thus, in agreement with Fiorenza, I will attempt to uncover the debate about the meaning of femaleness in the Corinthian community and in so-doing will discover how theology shaped female identity.

CORINTH AND THE CORINTHIANS

One of the advantages of studying Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is that we are able to 'locate' this letter in historical time and space more accurately than most of the other documents that comprise the New Testament. For example, we know where Corinth was and approximately when Paul visited the city and wrote the letters. 1 Corinthians is also among the undisputed letters of Paul, giving us a tangible figure on whom to centre our historical investigation. Further, the church at Corinth was founded by Paul himself. The church was established between 50 and 52 CE and 1 Corinthians was written in 54 or 55 CE. 1 Corinthians is actually the second letter Paul wrote to the church (5:9) and Paul wrote it when he was at Ephesus (16:8). All of these factors give the scholar a solid foundation on which to build a study of 1 Corinthians and the community behind the letter.

Corinth flourished as a Greek city-state well into the 2nd century BCE. The Romans destroyed the city in 146 BCE, and in 44 BCE the city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. The destruction and re-establishment of Corinth proves to be a great example of the extreme violence of Roman imperial practice and society. Horsley says, 'Populated by the descendants of Roman riffraff and deracinated former slaves, Corinth was the epitome of urban society created by empire: a conglomeration of atomized individuals cut off from the supportive communities and particular cultural traditions that had formerly constituted their corporate identities and solidarities as Syrians,

[335] Fiorenza, 'Politics,' 51.

Judeans, Italians or Greeks.'[336] When we encounter Corinth in the mid-first century CE, we encounter a city made up of the descendants of individuals who were uprooted only 100 years before. This may have cultivated an atmosphere of anger towards the establishment as well as making some individuals particularly receptive to 'new' religious claims. Further, the people of Corinth seemed uncultured and lacking in social graces, partly because the wealthy exploited the poor of the city.[337] Thus, Horsley concludes, 'the recently founded city full of uprooted people, yet striving for the appearance of culture, had an atmosphere of spiritual emptiness, of a hunger for status and security.'[338]

This has implications for our analysis of the formation of the Christian community and identity. Joining the community would have provided a meaningful context in which the Corinthian people could construct their identities. Horsley's view is that Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians is concerned with group discipline and solidarity over and against the imperial society; 'the present form of this world is passing away' (1 Cor 7:31).[339] In a context where identities were being forged by new language and new beliefs, an issue as central to identity formation as gender would no doubt have been under construction.

In geographical terms, Corinth was a 'double' port city situated at the crossroads of the east/west, north/south trade routes. Ancient texts often speak of 'Corinthian Bronze,' for the production of which the city was known.[340] The population of Corinth in the first century was likely in the ten's of thousands,[341] and we know that by the end of the second century CE, the Corinthian population had grown to 80, 000.[342]

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[336] Horsley, *Paul and Empire,* 242.
[337] See Alciphon, *Letters*, 15, 24 [3.51, 60] in Allen R. Brenner and Francis H. Forbes, trans. *The letters of Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus*, The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1949), 383.
[338] Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 31.
[339] Horsley, *Paul and Empire,* 252.
[340] See for example Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.201 and *Life*, 68 in Thackeray H. St. J. and R. Marcus, *Josephus with an English translation,* Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1934).
[341] Victor Furnish, *1 Corinthians* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1984), 2.
[342] Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 24.

We also know from Paul's letter that a large variety of people worshipped together in the church at Corinth: Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, rich and poor. Fee notes that among those mentioned in 1 Corinthians we find at least three Jews with Latin names, Aquila, Prisca, and Crispus, four others with Latin names who were probably Romans, Fortunatus, Quartus, Gaius, and Titius Justus, and three others with Greek names, Stephanus, Achaicus, and Erastus.[343] This is the kind of diversity one would expect from a Christian community in a city that was re-colonised by the Romans.[344] Therefore, the diversity of the city of Corinth as a whole is also evident it the Christian community itself.

James Dunn makes an important observation from archaeological evidence, namely, that a typical house in Corinth would have only accommodated thirty to forty people.[345] Four houses from the Roman period have been uncovered at Corinth, however, only one of these can be dated to the time of Paul.[346] Using data from the floor-plan of two of these houses (both from the first century, and both with wealthy owners), Murphy O'Connor discovers that the maximum number of people a house could accommodate in its public areas was fifty. In order for people to fit in the space comfortably, this number would be more like thirty to forty. If the entire community was able to meet at once in the home of one of its members, the community at Corinth must have only had thirty to fifty members. Dunn uses this evidence to make sense of the social tensions in the community, since such a small group of people would certainly have been aware of the details of each other's lives.[347] On the other hand, while Murphy O'Connor also thinks that house-size may explain some of the divisions in the community. He argues that not all members would have fit together in one house, and that perhaps worship was taking place in a few locations.[348] Thus, teaching may have been slightly different from house to house, causing controversy.[349] Also, there may have been divisions over who was allowed into the house, and once inside, who was able to recline in the limited space

[343] Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 3.
[344] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 23.
[345] James Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17.
[346] Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1998), 155.
[347] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 17.
[348] Murphy O'Connor, *1 Corinthians,* 158.
[349] Murphy O'Connor, *1 Corinthians,* 158.

available.[350] We can infer from Paul's comment on 'the whole assembly' in 14.23, that at times there were smaller group meetings (ie. in houses of about thirty to forty at a time), and at times the whole assembly of house churches met for the Lord's supper and discussions (11.18, 14.23).

Thus we have painted a portrait of the Corinthians as a thriving Christian community in a bustling, multi-cultural port town. These Christians may have suffered from a certain sense of 'rootless-ness' since less than 100 years earlier, their families had been displaced and sent to populate the Roman city. They likely met in smaller groups for theological discussion, prayer and prophesying, coming together at times for larger group sessions. The dimensions and exact contours of these theologies will be discussed in the next section.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CORINTHIANS

The first problem encountered in attempting to lay out what might have been the theology of the Corinthians, is that the Corinthians do not have a chance to speak for themselves. It is not known with any particular accuracy who individual community members were,[351] what they did, and what types of theologies they may have espoused. As mentioned above, too many interpreters have followed Paul's lead, and accepted the picture painted by him of the Corinthians as immature Christian believers.

We do know that Paul *perceives* there to be problems in the community because 1 Corinthians is a response to a letter from the community to Paul (5.9, 7.1), and because Paul has received reports from 'Chloe's people' (1.11) about 'quarrels' (1.13). It can be maintained that Paul's sources of information about the community are three-fold; the reports from Chloe's people (1.11), the Corinthians' own letter to him (7.1), and Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16.17). J. C. Hurd divides Paul's sources of

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[350] Murphy O'Connor, *1 Corinthians,* 159.

[351] Though a number of church members are named in the text of 1 Corinthians, here what I mean to say is that though they are named we do not know very much about them as individuals.

information from Corinth, and thus his responses, into 2 categories; written and oral.[352] The written information is presumably from previous letters to Paul from the Corinthians, and therefore represents the concerns of the church as they have articulated themselves to Paul. The oral reports would have represented the opinions of the person making the report.

Prior to Wire's attempt to uncover the community behind 1 Corinthians by analysing Paul's rhetoric,[353] Fiorenza attempted a similar task on a smaller scale in an article entitled, 'Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians.'[354] Fiorenza finds that 1 Corinthians is largely composed of deliberative rhetoric,[355] which has as its main goal to encourage the audience to take action by persuading them that this action is in their best interest.[356] The goal of 1 Corinthians as deliberative rhetoric is expressed in 1.10 where Paul advises the Corinthians that they should all agree without dissension. On this basis, Fiorenza concludes that the intended audience contains some leaders who have either social or missionary status and influence, and who disagree with one another on certain topics.[357] Thus, Paul's authority is not certain. The Corinthians have a complex faith and are led by prominent members of their own community.

Wire, Fiorenza, and MacDonald have both reconstructed the community behind 1 Corinthians as mature believers who happened to disagree with Paul in some instances. Indeed, more work has been done on reconstructing the community -and the women- behind 1 Corinthians than on any other Pauline correspondence. Thus, I will use these previous attempts to reconstruct the Corinthian mindset as a basis for my own discussion of this topic. The conclusions of various writers will be compared and critiqued under two headings; The Function of Galatians 3.28; and Wisdom Theology.

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[352] J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965 and Marcon GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 61-94.
[353] Discussed above, 107-108.
[354] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 386-403.
[355] As outlined by Perelmen et al. in *The New Rhetoric*.
[356] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 393.
[357] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 393.

The Function of Galatians 3.26-28

In *In Memory of Her*, Fiorenza argues that Gal 3.26-28 is an important phrase in the theology of the Corinthians, and was used in their baptismal ceremony.[358] She shows how form critical analysis has led to the conclusion that the phrase was a baptismal formula quoted by Paul.[359] One could say that Paul's ministry was largely based on this phrase, since he spent much energy abolishing the religious distinction between Jew and Greek. According to Fiorenza, for the Corinthians, Galatians 3.26-28 expressed the fact that irrespective of procreative capacities and social roles, persons became full members of the Christian movement in and through baptism.[360]

There is evidence pointing to the likelihood that the Corinthians themselves commonly quoted the traditional phrase found in Gal 3:27-28, 1 Cor 12:12-13 and Col 3:9-11. These three passages share a common structure and are used by Paul as accepted tradition to validate his arguments. The fact that the three texts are not identical would be expected for traditions that spread orally.[361] The third pair, male and female, may not have always appeared alongside Jew/Greek and slave/free, in the oral tradition since they do not appear in Corinthians or Colossians. However, this is not to say that the male/female pair was not a legitimate part of the phrase. For example, Paul mentions them in the Galatian letter even though there is no reason to do so in the context. The phrase is meant to bring Gen 1.27 to the minds of readers/hearers, where the terms 'male' and 'female' are used in relation to procreation and fertility. This interpretation of the phrase is consistent with the Gospel of Thomas (log. 22) and the Second Epistle of Clement (12.1-6).[362] The phrase, therefore, in Corinthian theology would 'not assert that there are no longer men and women in Christ, but that patriarchal marriage -and

[358] Fiorenza, *Memory*, p. 208. Fiorenza follows Wayne Meeks' argument as outlined in 'Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity' *HR* 13 (1973-74) 165-208.
[359] See Meeks, 'Images of the Androgyne;' also, Fiorenza, *Memory,* 208-218.
[360] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 211.
[361] Wire, *Prophets*, 123.
[362] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 211-12. Fiorenza argues that the sayings in these texts speak not of bisexuality or androgyny, but of presexuality.

sexual relationships between male and female- is no longer constitutive of the new community in Christ.'[363]

In her article, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians,' Margaret MacDonald points out that, though it is impossible to arrive at any certainty about the exact relationship of Galatians 3.28 and the females in Corinth, it is most often to this relationship that scholars point when discussing the theology of the Corinthians.[364] To demonstrate that this phrase from Galatians was at least a *factor* in shaping the Corinthian's theology, MacDonald points to the prominence of the pro-celibacy teaching, both in 1 Cor. and 1 Tim. Further, she feels that the phrase might be behind the discussion in 1 Cor 7.17-28 of circumcision/uncircumcision and slave/free.[365] She cites John Meier's argument that Paul had previously told the Corinthians that in Christ there is no male and female, and that they sought to put this gospel of freedom into practice by eliminating the distinction between the sexes.[366] She also cites D. R. MacDonald's argument that Gal 3.27-8 originated in a Dominical Saying from the Gospel of the Egyptians, which has similar versions in 2 Clement and the Gospel of Thomas. D. R. MacDonald believes that sayings similar to Gal 3.28 were common in Valentinian Gnosticism and Syrian Christianity and were commonly used in the baptismal ceremony.[367] Thus, the phrase seems to have 'travelled' to many communities in some form, and evidence points to its use in Corinth as well. MacDonald concludes by saying, 'If indeed the theology of the Dominical Saying inspired the pneumatic Corinthian women, the fact that some sought to avoid sexual relations at all costs should come as no surprise.'[368]

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[363] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 211.
[364] MacDonald, *Women*, 165. This line of thinking is usually traced to a book by Dennis R. MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981)
[365] MacDonald, *Women*, 165.
[366] John Meier, 'On the Veiling of Hermeneutics (I Cor. 11:2-16)' *CBQ* 40 (1978), 217.
[367] MacDonald, *Women*, 165. D. R. MacDonald concludes that what underlies 1 Cor 11.2-16 involves the activity of pneumatic Corinthian women who, during ecstatic worship, believed that they had transcended sexual differentiation and had become androgynous.
[368] Margaret Y. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7' *NTS* 36 (1990), 167.

Fiorenza concludes, and I would agree, that the rhetorical situation of 1 Corinthians could be conceived as follows: the Corinthians had debates and discussions as to how their new self-understanding expressed in Gal 3.28 could or should be realised in their world.[369] For example, should we be married? Should we keep previous relationships? Could or should a virgin or widow remain marriage-free? What about marriages to pagans?[370] As such, the Corinthians may have decided to write to various missionaries to collect opinions.[371] For Paul, the calling of the Christian entailed hardship, powerlessness, and foolishness, 'in the eyes of the world,' but for the majority of the Corinthians, their call meant new freedom and responsibility.[372]

Therefore evidence and scholarly opinion both point to the probability that a phase similar to the one found in Gal 3.26-28 was circulating orally among the Corinthians and may even have become part of their baptismal formula. As they sought to live out their lives as dedicated Christians in the days before the *parousia*, they looked on this phrase and took it to mean that, in very concrete terms, the distinction between male and female was no longer central to their identities as Christians. The phrase brought to mind the text that is most often used when questions of gender identity are addressed: the creation

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[369] See discussion of the importance of Gal 3.28 for Corinthian theology below.
[370] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 397.
[371] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 398.
[372] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 400. A change in spiritual status may have gone hand in hand with a change in social status in Corinth. Fiorenza notices that in a context where there 'is no male and female,' conversion and baptism into Christ for men implied a much more radical break with their formal social and religious self-understandings, especially for those who were wealthy slave owners, than it did for women and slaves (Fiorenza, *Memory*, 217). Like Fiorenza, Wire also notices differences in the way the social status of the women in Corinth changed compared to how Paul's social status changed (Wire, *Prophets*, dedicates an excursus to this topic, 62-71). Upon conversion to Christianity, Corinthian women generally experienced a rise in social status, which contrasts with Paul's declining social status. For example, prior to conversion, the women's social status was 'low' according to every indicator, wisdom, power, rank, ethnic support and gender. If Wire is correct, then this change in social status is reflected also in their theology, the belief that they have taken on new life, full in the spirit, with the self-confirming presence of the divine in them. Likewise for Paul, there is a close parallel between his loss of status and his view of what God is doing in Christ. God did not become known through wisdom and therefore chose to save those who would trust in the foolish announcement of Christ crucified (Wire, *Prophets*, p. 65). Here we are seeing a link between theology and social status. For Corinthian women, conversion meant an increase in freedom and wisdom, both socially and spiritually. For Paul, conversion to Christianity meant a decrease in social status, he was persecuted where previously he was a member of the religious elite. Now, his theology aligned with his change in class, and he embraced the 'foolishness' of the cross.

story of Genesis.[373] For Corinthian women, this meant relative freedom from the strict roles that they were expected to play under patriarchy, and fuller participation in the life of the community, and as we shall see, a new kind of spiritual insight.

Wisdom Theology

Though Wire 'overanalyses' the text somewhat in seeing the female prophets behind Paul's every word in 1 Corinthians, she has done a convincing job of uncovering some of the beliefs of the community, male or female. For example, Wire notices that we have no reason to doubt Paul's flattering description of the community in 1.5-7. If he was exaggerating it would 'threaten to turn his praise into irony.'[374] Thus, we can conclude that the Corinthians felt that they were rich in knowledge, not lacking in any spiritual gift.

In 1.23-24, the repetition of the word 'Christ' and unusual word order suggest that Paul was co-opting a Corinthian phrase and that the crucified Christ is divine wisdom in this community.[375] In these verses, Paul identifies the 'Christ crucified we proclaim' with 'Christ God's power and God's wisdom.' The repetition of 'Christ' is not required for clarity in the Greek. Also, there is a reversal of Paul's usual word order so that the genitive precedes the noun; 'Christ of God the power and of God the wisdom.' This suggests that Paul may be using Corinthian phraseology. Either way, Christ the crucified becomes Christ the wisdom that the Corinthians value. Reading 3.21-4.13, Wire concludes that some Corinthians 'take their new life as a full, independent and self-confirming presence of divine spirit in them.'[376] From Paul's arguments, it is clear that the Corinthians felt that they had received wisdom, strength and honour as a result of their calling. Paul thinks that they consider themselves too strong and too wise and uses this section to humble them with sarcasm and biting criticism. According to Wire, 'The issue at stake between Paul and the Corinthians is how God's purposes are fulfilled in the

[373] Specifically, Gen 1.27.
[374] Wire, *Prophets*, 40.
[375] Wire, *Prophets*, 51.
[376] Wire, *Prophets*, 45.

present- for Paul by shaming the wise and limiting all glory to God, for the Corinthians by giving the Spirit so that "we have the mind of Christ."'[377]

In agreement with Wire, Richard Horsley's view is that some of the Corinthians were cultivating higher faculties of intellect, enlightenment and insight and that they regarded themselves as wise, mature, spiritual beings.[378] These conclusions are largely based on his analysis of Paul's rhetorical use of the word *sophia*. In brief, in 1.18-20 *sophia* is the opposition to the cross, whereas in 23-24, *sophia* is the apposition to Christ crucified, and the power of God.[379] Paul's argument here culminates in 1.25, in the paradox that God's saving action is foolishness to human wisdom, but wiser/more powerful than human wisdom. Paul uses what Wire, following Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, would call 'the dissociation of concepts.' He takes the meaning of *sophia* as it is currently used by the Corinthians and reconstructs it in a way that serves his own purposes and argument. Thus, we can conclude with Horsley, that the Corinthian belief system was as follows:

> The "gospel" of a gracious and loving heavenly Sophia who could be known through the Jewish Scriptures, newly revealed by wisdom teachers such as Jesus and his interpreter Apollos, offered transcendence of those adverse and oppressive circumstances. Those who possessed Sophia, moreover, meant the discovery and cultivation of their own higher faculties of intellect, enlightenment and insight, previously denied them because of their social situation.[380]

When reading 1 Corinthians, one gets the impression that the Corinthian's theology was not just a matter of intellectual reasoning, but of spiritual *experience*. Paul confirms this

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[377] Wire, *Prophets*, 60.
[378] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 74.
[379] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 48. Horsley argues in a number of places that the Corinthians renounced physical marriage for a 'spiritual marriage' between themselves and the divine Sophia. See his 'Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: The Distinctions of Spiritual Status among the Corinthians,' *HTR* 69 (1976), 269-88; 'Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth,' *CBQ* 39 (1977), 224-39; 'How Can Some of You Say That There Is No Resurrection of the Dead?: Spiritual Elitism in Corinth,' *NovT* 20 (1978), 203-31; 'Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8.1-6,' *NTS* 27 (1980/81), 32-51.
[380] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 74.

in 1.5-7, when he says the community is rich in speech and knowledge and lacks no divine gift. Paul also makes frequent reference to the spiritual in his letter. For example, in 2.12-13 he includes his audience when he says that 'we' have received the spirit from God and speak in the works taught by the Spirit. In 10.1-4, Paul's audience is said to have the spiritual experience of being baptised into Moses, eating spiritual food, and drinking spiritual drink. Most strikingly, in 12.1, Paul begins this section with (Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν) 'Concerning spiritual matters,' which implies that the Corinthians have contacted him about these matters. Also in 14.12, Paul calls the Corinthians (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπεὶ ζηλωταί ἐστε πνευμάτων) 'zealots of spiritual things.' Thus, the wisdom theology that is circulating in Corinth is based in part on experiences of the divine through the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, the Corinthians were a community of vibrant dedicated Christians who were willing to make many lifestyle changes for the sake of their new identities in Christ. Being the owners of a great deal of wisdom, these Christians took seriously their calling to be one in Christ, where there is no Jew, no Greek, no male and female.

PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Paul's theology in 1 Corinthians hinges entirely on a 'between the times' mindset in which it is understood that Christ's death and resurrection have set the train of salvation in motion, though it has not yet reached its final destination. Paul's arguments concerning women follow on from this over-arching theological concern. In his lengthy volume on the theology of Paul, James Dunn aptly labels this theology 'already-not-yet.'[381] God's plan is already in action, but has not yet reached its conclusion. Redemption is something Paul's readers already have (Rom 3.24, Col. 1.4, Eph. 1,7), but in another sense they still await 'redemption of the body' (Rom 8.23, Eph 1.14, 4.30).[382] Gordon Fee also agrees with this view saying that 'Paul's theology has its focus on Christ's death and resurrection, and the subsequent gift of the Spirit. The fact that we

[381] Dunn, *Paul*.
[382] Dunn, *Paul*, 466.

still live in mortal bodies (15:49-53), the future *parousia* (11:26, 15:23) and resurrection (15:20-28) make it clear that though Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of the turning of the ages, what has begun has not yet reached its fullness.'[383] Victor Furnish also sees this 'between the times' theology as a central issue in Paul's thought, especially in 1.18-2.16 where Paul clearly distinguished between 'this age' and the age yet to come.[384]

Paul's Version of Wisdom

God's wisdom is a recurring theme in this letter to Corinth. Victor Furnish commits an entire chapter to this theme, noting that the distinction between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom is the focal point of chapters 1 to 4.[385] Paul argues that those who trust the wisdom of the world along with its human leaders will not flourish in the end. He instructs the Corinthians to become 'fools' that they might be seen as wise in God's eyes. This pattern of reversal, where weakness is contrasted with power, and foolishness with wisdom, also shapes Paul's own theological pattern of cross and resurrection. The cross-event is the most dramatic reversal of all, it is foolishness to outsiders, but wisdom to those who are being saved (1.18). In the cross event, God has reversed the world's polarities, folly is wisdom and wisdom is folly.[386]

A summary of Paul's understanding of God's wisdom might go something like this: the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (3.19). God chose what is foolish to shame the wise, and what is weak to shame the strong (1.28). Even God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, God's weakness stronger than human strength. Paul also ensures that his readers know that, though they might understand small portions of this wisdom through the Spirit, the depths of God's wisdom belong to God alone. God's wisdom is secret and hidden, Paul says, inaccessible (2.7). This wisdom can only be revealed to the Corinthians by the Spirit, but this Spirit cannot be controlled; it searches everything,

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[383] Fee, *First Epistle*, 16.
[384] Furnish, *1 Corinthians*, 49.
[385] Furnish, *1 Corinthians*, 46.
[386] Bassler, '1 Corinthians' in *The Womens's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992), 321.

even the depths of God (2.10). In fact, no one understands what is truly God's except God's spirit (2.11).

In light of the greatness and depth of God's wisdom, and the fact that it can only be revealed to Christians through the Spirit, it is not surprising that God's wisdom would seem foolish to those who have not encountered that spirit. God's message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, and wisdom only to those who are being saved (1.18). Jesus Christ became the embodiment of the wisdom of God (1.30), and was sacrificed as a paschal lamb (5.7). The wisdom of this reversal is that life has come through death, that the time bomb of salvation has been set in motion by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This, the Corinthians understand. What Paul is emphasising is that though God's plan of salvation has been set into action, it is by no means complete, and the method and timing of that completion are in God's hands alone.

Therefore, in contrast to the Corinthians who felt themselves to be enlightened and insightful in the spirit and *sophia* of God, not lacking in any spiritual gifts, Paul's wisdom theology was quite different. For Paul, true wisdom could not belong to an individual, but was God's alone, the depths of which were hidden and mysterious. God's wisdom is actually the reverse of human wisdom, since it is through death that God's wisdom has most recently been expressed. For the Corinthians, wisdom is much more accessible, and plays a tangible role in their lives in the present times.

Community and Spirit

Many of Paul's instructions in the letter reveal the fact that he considers community wholeness more important than individual faith and religious experience. Paul includes himself when he says to the Corinthians, 'we are God's servants working together, and we are God's field, God's building' (3.9). He repeats this point again in verse 16 when he says, you are God's temple, God's spirit dwells in you (3.16). If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person (3.17). Belonging to the community comes

with its rewards, but also its responsibilities. The consequences of misbehaving are harsh. Paul emphasises this point.

Chapter 12 reveals much about Paul's ideas regarding what the community is and how the spirit functions within it. There are a variety of gifts that have been bestowed upon the Corinthians, and the same God activates them in everyone (12.4-6). Paul uses the analogy of the human body to paint a picture for his readers of how the community should function as a whole. He starts by saying that by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, Jews, Greeks, slaves, and free (12.13).[387] The body consists of many members, each of which is valid and important and has its own function (12.14-17). God arranged the members of the human body, each one as he chooses (12.18). No member of the body can say to another member, 'I have no need for you' (12.20-21). Those members who seem to be weak are actually indispensable, those that seem less honourable are clothed with honour, and the less respectable members are treated with greater respect (12.22-23). God has arranged the body giving greater honour to the inferior members so that there may be no dissension within the body, but instead the members learn to care for one another (12.24b-25). If one member suffers, all suffer together (12.26). Paul ends by saying that the community at Corinth is the body of Christ and they are individually members of it (12.27). As it is with the human body, so it is with Christ's body and God has appointed various tasks to various members of the body (12.28).

It is important to Paul that his audience understand this relational theology because he believes it should govern their lives. Since the Corinthians were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God (6.11b), they are expected to behave as if this is true. Since *their* bodies are members of *Christ's* body (6.15), they are responsible for keeping their bodies blameless before God. Paul makes it clear that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God, not fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, nor robbers (6.9-

[387] It is curious that Paul has left out male/female from this equation, yet includes it in Gal 3. 28. This may be because of the concerns Paul is addressing in this letter.

10). As members of the community, Paul argues that their behaviour affects not only the other members, but Christ himself.

Parousia

It is chapter 15, in which Paul's theology of end times is revealed. Having emphasised the fact that the Corinthians are living 'between the times,' he now discusses what will characterise the final salvific actions of God. Prior to chapter 15, Paul alludes to the *parousia* only twice, in chapter 4 when he says 'the lord will bring light to the things hidden in darkness and disclose the purposes of the heart. Each one will receive a commendation from God (4.5)' and in 11.26. Chapter 15 therefore, holds incredible importance if we are to understand Paul's theology in 1 Corinthians.

Paul begins his exposition as follows; now, we are between the times; as all have died in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ (15.22). Then comes the end when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power (15.24). Christ will reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (15.25), and the very last enemy to be destroyed will be death (15.26). Then Paul goes on to argue that, when all things are subjected to Christ, then Christ himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all (15.28).

Since the process of salvation has begun, but has still not reached its fullness, those who are part of that process, who have experienced the Spirit of God, still find themselves in human bodies of flesh. When the *parousia* takes place, those who are saved will inherit 'spiritual' bodies. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earth is another (15.40). As in the above example, so it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable (15.42). It is sown in dishonour and weakness, raised in glory and power (15.43), sown in physical body, raised as spiritual body (15.44a). If there is a physical body there is also a spiritual body (15.44). It is important, therefore, to realise that as

long as we have flesh, the final *parousia* has not occurred since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can the perishable inherit the imperishable (15.50). At the end, we will not all die, but we will all be changed (15.51), the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and those who have the spirit of God will be changed (15.52). Finishing with a quotation from the Scriptures, Paul writes, when this happens what has been written will be fulfilled, 'death has been swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting?' (15.54-55).[388] Paul emphasises that when the *parousia* arrives it will bring a change from earthly bodies to spiritual bodies. The current power structure will also be changed and all things will submit to Christ.

Creation

Another piece of Paul's theology, only a trace of which only appears in 1 Corinthians, is his theology of creation. According to Paul, there is only one God from whom are all things (8.6), presumably including the created order. Paul's creation theology is tied inseparably to his christology. In chapter 15 he writes, 'it is written, "the first Adam became a living being" the last Adam became a life-giving spirit' (15.45). The first man was from the earth, from dust, and the second man is from heaven (15.47). As was the man of dust, so are those who are of dust, but as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven (15.48). Just as the Corinthians have borne the image of the man of dust, so they will bear the image of the man of heaven (15.49). Some of Paul's arguments about the position of women rest on his theology of creation (11.9), this will be discussed in further detail below.

To summarise, for Paul, how the community lived between-the-times was of central concern. True wisdom was the foolishness of the cross-event. The *parousia*, for which the community awaits, will bring a change both to the physical bodies of believers, and to the power structures of the world. One's behaviour affected the whole community, since the believer's body had become part of Christ's body.

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[388] Hosea 13.14.

While I do not feel that it is necessary or appropriate to talk about the theology of the Corinthians that we have reconstructed from Paul's text to be the exact opposite of Paul's theology, there are some notable differences. For example, some of the Corinthians seem to be claiming for themselves a special wisdom through God's spirit, a belief that Paul is keen to curtail. The claim that in Christ there is no male and female may be behind some of the teachings on celibacy that may have been popular in Corinth. The group Paul addresses in his letter have a dynamic faith and theological discussions are taking place among them. In the next section we will see how these theological discussions were related to the question of female identity.

THEOLOGY AND WOMEN

Chapter 7

What and Why?

The first piece of text that gives us a clue to the unfolding discussion of women in the community appears in 7:1-40. Here, Paul discusses issues of marriage, virginity and celibacy. We know that the Corinthians have been discussing these issues, and have seemingly come to their own conclusions, since Paul begins this section with a quotation from the Corinthians' own letter, 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman' (7.1).[389]

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[389] The similar phrase, 'now concerning' appears at the beginning of Paul's discussions of several other topics in 1 Corinthians in 7.25, 8.1, 12.1, 16.1 & 12. For an extensive discussion of how Paul is responding to Corinthian queries see Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 67ff. There is some consensus among interpreters that the phrase 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman' was a quotation from Corinth. See F. Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, NTD 7 (Göttingen and Zürich: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1994), 89; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, EKKNT. (Neikirchener, Verlag and Zürich and Düsseldorf: Neukirche-Vluyn, 1999), 59; R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 252; Gordon Fee, *First Epistle*, 272-77; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968),154-55; J. Moffat, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians,* Moffat New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 75; Bruce, *I and 2 Cor*, 66; H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1903), 53; R. J. Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Cambridge Greek Testament (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 70; Wire, *Prophets*, 87; W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Cor 7*, SNTSMS 83 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 110-114. Also of interest here is that the phrase to 'touch a woman' was a euphemism for sexual intercourse in Hellenistic culture (see Plutarch, *Alexander* 21.9)

Thus, it appears that in this section Paul is not answering questions but 'questioning answers.'[390]

Paul begins his argument about husbands and wives with the straightforward statement that each woman should have her own husband and each man his own wife (7.2). He declares that husband and wife should not deny each other's conjugal rights and that each has authority over the other's body (7.2-3). He recommends that married people not deprive one another, except for a short time for prayer that is agreed upon, coming together again when the time is right so that Satan would not tempt either partner (7.5). In 7.4, Paul makes a break from patriarchal principles for rhetorical reasons in claiming that a woman has authority over her husband's body, just as he has authority over hers.

It is possible that the comment about who has authority over whose bodies is made in order to lessen the claims made by some Corinthian women, that is, that women have authority over their own bodies.[391] It seems likely that it is to this that Paul is responding since it would make little sense in the context that men were claiming to have authority over their own bodies. This fact would have been assumed. Also, since the context is one where celibacy was a popular teaching, it seems to make sense that Paul is here refuting women's claims to have authority over their own bodies.

Having emphasised that married couples should remain married and act as if they are married, Paul goes on to say that it is better for the unmarried and widows to remain unmarried (7.8).[392] However, this advice is quickly followed by a warning that those

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[390] Wire, *Prophets*, 80.

[391] See Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 97; and Wire, *Prophets,* 82.

[392] Since unmarried women constitute a particular category for advice in verse 25, some have suggested that the masculine plural dative τοῖς ἀγάμοις means unmarried men. See Fee, *First Epistle*, 287; Demming, *Paul on Marriage*, 130; Collins, *First Corinthians,* 145; and Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, vol. 2, 93-94. However, most interpreters adopt the view that the masculine plural is meant to be gender inclusive here. See Barrett, *First Epistle*, 160; Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 30; B. E. Allo, *La première épître aux Corinthiens*, 2nd ed (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956), 162; J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vanderhoek & Ruprecht, 1968), 177; Bruce, *1 & 2 Cor*, 68; H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1877-1879), 199; Lang, *Die Briefe*, 91.

who are not practising self-control should marry, rather than be 'aflame with passion' (7.9).[393] From there, Paul quickly returns to his original point that married women should remain with their husbands and that married men should not seek to be divorced (7.10-11).[394] If a woman does separate from her husband, Paul thinks that she should remain single or reunite with her husband (7.11). An unbelieving husband or wife should not be divorced by the believing partner (7.12-13) since in time, the non-believing partner might be saved (7.16). Also, the children of a believing/non-believing couple are made holy through the believing partner (7.14b).

Paul seems to be walking on eggshells in this section. This may be because of his own celibacy, as evidenced in verse 7 where he may be assuming that the community uses his celibacy as a paradigm for their own behaviour. Paul establishes the celibate life as a 'gift' suggesting that those who do not possess this gift should remain married. This section is a witness to the strength of the movement among women and men to remain independent even to the point of separation for those already married. Such was their commitment to their faith. It also shows that remaining single was possible for a large number of women for a number of reasons. Whether they stayed in their parent's homes, in the homes of other believers, together, with or without children is unknown.[395]

From here Paul goes on to give the reasons for the commands from the Lord given in 2-16. The underlying emphasis of this section is that the Corinthians should remain in the condition that they were called (7.17,20,24). This rule should be applied to many aspects of life, eating habits, circumcision, even to one's status as a slave,[396] and now to married

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[393] In verse 9, some interpreters have noted a problem with the translation of πυρόω. It has been translated as 'to be aflame with passion' (NRSV), to burn with passion (NIV), or to burn (AV/KJV). The latter has been taken to imply to burn eternally, see M. L. Barré, 'To Marry or to Burn: *pyrouthsai* in 1 Cor. 7:9' *CBQ* 36 (1974), 193-202.

[394] The verses on divorce often come under debate because of their possible connection to the gospel tradition of Jesus sayings. See Wire, *Prophets*, 84; Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 99; D. Wenham, 'Paul's Use of the Jesus Tradition: Three Samples' in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, Gospel Perspectives 5 (ed. D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 7-37; D. C.Allison, 'The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels' *NTS* 28 (1982) 1-32.

[395] Wire, *Prophets*, 85.

[396] A note should be included here about Paul's application of the teaching to remain as you were when you were called to the situation of the slave in verse 21. Most interpreters prefer to interpret the meaning

life. These commands are linked to Paul's theology of the impending crisis. In such times, it is well for each person to remain as they are (7.26). Paul uses the language of bondage and suffering to describe marriage; do not seek a wife if you are free, do not seek to be free if you are bound to a wife (7.27), those who marry will experience distress in this life (7.28). As Elaine Pagels says, 'what married men and women have is equal bondage, to be subject to one another and to another person's authority.'[397]

While previously in this chapter, Paul's remarks have been balanced along gender lines, in 25-38, most of what Paul writes is addressed not to the virgins themselves, but to the *men* to whom they are engaged. Paul reassures these men that if they marry they do not sin, implying that someone in the community thought that it was wrong for virgins to marry. Horsley suggests that Paul is addressing an ascetic position that holds that it would be 'wrong' to violate the virginity of a young betrothed woman by proceeding with the previously arranged marriage.[398] This must be the case since in Jewish circles marriage was the norm, an obligation even. For a first-century Jew to have to reassure his audience that marriage was not frowned upon by the divine, he must have been working against a persuasive theology of celibacy. This suggests that it was not only the Corinthian women who desired to practice celibacy for theological reasons. In verse 28, it appears that Paul is addressing a group of both men and women who felt it was best if they did not go ahead with their intended marriages. Convinced that 'all things are lawful/authorised for me,' this group of young men and women maintained that, against patriarchal tradition, a woman had authority over her own body.[399]

There has been great speculation about whom or what might be behind the celibacy teaching in Corinth. At one stage, it was common for scholars to point to the parallels

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of the verse as something like this, 'If, instead of being a slave, you have the opportunity to be freed, this would be better for you, I would not stop you from enjoying your freedom.' See P. Trummer, 'Die Chance der Freiheit. Zur Interpretation des *mallon chysai* in 1 Kor. 7.21' *Bib* 56 (1975), 44-68; Moffat, *First Epistle*, 87; Bruce, *1 & 2 Cor*, 72; Fee, *First Epistle*, 315-18; Wire, *Prophets*, 86 and 86 no.10; R. B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 125-26.

[397] Elaine Pagels, 'Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion' *JAAR* 42 (1974), 542.

[398] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 106.

[399] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 110.

among Stoic and Cynic authors and 1 Cor 7.[400] David Balch finds parallels in Hellenistic Judaism.[401] Still others find evidence that realized eschatology is the main impetus behind the Corinthians' actions.[402] And lastly, scholars have pointed to first century Christianity, looking to Paul and the Corinthians as precursors to later forms of Christian asceticism based on evidence from the ascetic movements from the 2nd 3rd and 4th centuries.[403] Though scholars have grappled with the possibilities, it seems to me that one specific movement or philosophy may not explain the celibacy teaching at Corinth. Rather, I would be tempted to imagine a situation in which a genuinely unique Christian teaching gave rise to the Corinthian situation. I would argue that the Christians at Corinth are examples of a community with the ability to develop their own theological discourse and who discussed amongst themselves God's agenda for them in their current situation. Thus, I would argue that the Corinthians held a unique theology of celibacy that the historian unfortunately no longer has access to.

Translation of 'Virgins'

Before beginning the main discussion of the theological meaning of chapter 7, I will deal with the translation of the troublesome word παρθένος in verses 36-38.[404] This word, usually meaning virgin, is translated at times as fiancée, though this translation obscures

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[400] For example see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 114-46; Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I.II, 5th ed. HNT* 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969), p. 176.

[401] David Balch, 'Backgrounds of 1 Cor vii: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an Ascetic ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ in II Cor iii' *NTS* 18 (1971/72), p. 351-64.

[402] See Deming, *Paul*, 17-28.

[403] See Weiss 'Korintherbrief,' p. 204 and Allo, *Première*, p. 183.

[404] The trouble does not end with παρθένος, but extends also to the word ὑπέρακμος. The question is, who are the men and women addressed here? Three main positions exist among interpreters. First, there is the interpretation that is generally thought to belong to the church fathers that αὐτοῦ refers to a father and παρθένον to his virgin daughter (the extent to which this was the normative interpretation amongst the fathers is questioned by Thistelton, *First Epistle*, 595). Secondly, it has been argued that the man and woman are a couple who are living together but practising celibacy, i.e. the Corinthians were involved in 'spiritual marriages' of some kind See Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 206-209; Hurd, *Origin*, 171-180; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 134-136; Delling, *Paulus' Stellung zu Frau und Ehe*, 86ff. Thirdly, these verses have been taken to refer to engaged couples. This is the view that I prefer since it makes most sense of the term ἀσχημονέω in the context. See C. Senft, *La première épître de saint Paul aux Corinthiens,* Commentaire du Nouveau Testament (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), 105-6; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, vol 2, 197; Lang, *Die Brief*, 102-3; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 76; Harrisville, *1 Corinthians*, 127; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 184; and Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 41.

the original meaning of the word. But, by inserting 'virgin', we have difficulty interpreting the passage.[405] From the context, it would seem that παρθένος here refers to women who are betrothed.[406] Paul's argument is as follows: if anyone thinks he is not behaving properly toward his virgin, let him marry her (7.36). But, if he is strong in self resolve, let him keep her as his virgin (7.37). He who marries his virgin does well, he who does not marry her does even better (7.38). Though it is difficult to identify who exactly these 'virgins' were, it is clear that Paul's argument here follows the same lines as his case concerning married couples: it is best to remain as you are. However, if you are unmarried and cannot remain so without immorality, it is better to marry.

Equality or Patriarchy?

Paul is cautious about how he makes his case in chapter 7. He wants to be clear that celibacy is better than marriage, but not if it leads to immorality.[407] M. Y. MacDonald argues rightly that the primary concern of Chapter 7 is not marriage versus celibacy, but rather, the avoidance of immorality.[408] Ten times instructions are phrased and re-phrased, once for the male and once for the female. At first glance this appears to be an astonishing argument for what has been called 'the equal and reciprocal nature of sexual responsibilities.'[409] This form of rhetoric indicates that there are women in each group in the community; married women not having sex with their husbands, unmarried widows, women separated from their husbands, women with unbelieving husbands and unmarried virgins. In all these groups women have been living without sexual relations. Wire concludes that there must have been a movement of 'considerable proportions' that had celibacy as one of its key teachings.[410]

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[405] See Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 568; or Fee, *First Epistle*, 326. At least four possibilities present themselves for the meaning of παρθένος, and none of these are without difficulty; (1) unmarried women of marriagable age, in the same category as those in v.24, or (2) a sub-category of this group, (3) virgin men, since παρθένος includes men who do not have sexual intercourse, or (4) virgin men and women.
[406] Horsley, '1 Corinthians,' 104.
[407] Margaret Y. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7' *NTS* 36 (1990), 179.
[408] MacDonald. 'Body and Spirit,' 163.
[409] Wire, *Prophets*, 80.
[410] Wire, *Prophets*, 81.

As mentioned above, many interpreters of 1 Corinthians have noticed, as Pagels has, Paul's 'astonishingly egalitarian view of marriage, especially considering his background is Jewish.'[411] Pagels goes on to note that contemporary rabbinic discussion strongly endorsed male domination as divinely ordained.[412] Feuillet and Scroggs argue adamantly that Paul's view of marriage was completely egalitarian. Feuillet claiming that 'dans le domain conjugal, saint Paul met l'homme et la femme sur un pied d'egalité absolue: le mari appartient a son epouse, tout comme l'epouse appartient a son mari.'[413] Scroggs adds that Paul uses the 'double address' to men and women to the point of tautologousness and awkwardness.[414] Scroggs says that, 'it would have been easy, and keeping with the times for Paul to argue that the woman's body belonged to the man in marriage. But he doesn't. He takes a position of equality that is not accepted in many quarters, even in our times.'[415]

While on the surface Paul's argument seems to be one for equal rights within marriage, Wire has been right to question whether this is the primary purpose of the passage. The two forms of immorality about which Paul appears to be concerned, a man having his father's wife (5.1), and church members being involved with prostitutes (5.15-16), are both concentrated on male behaviour. Yet the solution to overcoming this immorality, marriage, involves women.[416] Wire says, 'At no point does Paul charge a woman with what he calls 'immorality.' This suggests that as far as Paul knows the women who have left partners are living without sexual relations in contrast to some of the men.'[417] Paul, therefore, aims to convince women who have left partners or have chosen not to have intercourse with their partners, to marry in order to prevent immorality among the men

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[411] Pagels, 'Paul and Women,' 542.
[412] Pagels, 'Paul and Women,' 542. Though the sources disagreed in the degree to which this domination should be enforced (!).
[413] A. Feuillet, 'La dignité et la rôle de la femme d'après quelques textes pauliniens: comparaison avec l'ancien testament' *NTS* 21 (1975), 157. Also, Merklein says that 1 Cor 7 reveals a Pauline bent toward marriage as partnership, "'Es ist gut für den Menschen eine Frau night anzufassen": Paulus und die Sexualität nact 1 Kor 7,' in *Die Frau im Urchristentum* (ed. Gerhard Dautzenberg et al; Freiburg, Basel and Vienna: Herder, 1983), 251.
[414] Robin Scroggs, 'Paul and the Eschatological Woman' *JAAR* 40 (1972), 294.
[415] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 295. See also Fiorenza, *Memory*, 224.
[416] Wire, *Prophets*, 78.
[417] Wire, *Prophets*, 91.

in the community.[418] For the Corinthian women, this means returning to their role in the patriarchal family. By asking these women to remain married, Paul is asking them to compromise more than the men.[419] By using a 'rhetoric of equality,' Paul 'disguises the gross inequality in his treatment of the woman who has chosen abstinence and the man who lacks "authority over his own desire."'[420]

Perhaps even more disturbing for Corinthian women might have been Paul's comments toward men's treatment of 'their virgins' (v. 26). This passage seems to suggest that a woman engaged to a lustful man ought to give in to her husband's desires.[421] The passage does not take into account the *women* who might find themselves in this situation, and suggests that *men* who can not control their urges should marry the woman to whom they are engaged. The virgin in this situation is thus being asked to sacrifice the spiritual and social privileges of virginity. Ironically, Paul does not seem to think that God has called the virgins of Corinth to make independent choices to remain as they were when they were called.[422]

Aline Rouselle has written a useful essay about the social expectations that were placed on a widow in the ancient world that may give us some indication of the expectations placed on virgins as well.[423] Citing numerous ancient sources, Rouselle shows that a widow was expected to marry within a year of her husband's death, and a divorcee, within six months.[424] The main factors that explain these expectations are: property issues, the procreation of children, the use of marriage to enhance status, and the low life-expectancy of women connected to the high number of deaths that occurred during childbirth.[425] In the Corinthian church, attitudes toward marriage were bound up between social, ascetic and theological/moral factors.

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[418] Wire, *Prophets*, 79.
[419] Wire, *Prophets*, 82.
[420] Wire, *Prophets*, 90. We should also not forget that the demand that a man restrict his sexual activity to his wife would have been radical in the context.
[421] MacDonald, 'Body and Spirit,' 181.
[422] Wire, *Prophets*, 97.
[423] See Aline Rouselle, 'Body Politics in Ancient Rome' in *A History of Women in the West, vol 1: From Ancient Goddess to Christian Saints* (ed. P. S. Pantel; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
[424] Rouselle, 'Body Politics,' 296-336.
[425] Rouselle, 'Body Politics,' 308-324.

In *In Memory of Her*, Fiorenza notices that it was characteristic of many early communities that Jewish and gentile women's position changed when they converted to Christianity since family and kinship did not determine the social structure of the movement.[426] This is exhibited in the baptismal formula of Gal 3.28, as discussed above, and as perpetuated by Paul's own preference for celibacy. In 1 Corinthians, the statement that it is good for widows and virgins to remain unmarried is innovative for Paul's time and culture when women were encouraged to marry early and raise many children.[427] Freedom from the constraints of women's traditional role was previously an advantage held only by certain elite members of Greco-Roman society, women from wealthy families, or widows of wealthy men and politicians. In 1 Corinthians, Paul was extending to 'ordinary' women 'the hope of a new kind of freedom in the social realm by offering them the possibility of remaining unmarried.'[428]

It is essential here that the portrait being painted of the Corinthian community and their relationship with Paul is not done in black and white. There is little need either to make Paul into some kind of a crusader for equal rights,[429] or to paint him as the evil spokesperson for patriarchy. As Francis Watson says, 'In the one case, the text is held to be implicated in the development and legitimisation of Christian 'patriarchy'; in the other, it is used to validate the contemporary conviction of the equality of male and female as authentically Christian.'[430] In effect, what we find in 1 Corinthians 7 is a debate about the importance and purpose of celibacy in a community that understood themselves to possess a new wisdom through Christ. The exact dimensions of this wisdom are understood differently by different community members, as is the purpose of celibacy in their new spiritual lives. It seems that the community, Paul included, would agree that celibacy is better than marriage. The question that remains is who should practice celibacy and who should not? Paul's letter represents the exact historical

[426] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 210.
[427] Bassler, '1 Corinthians,' 324.
[428] MacDonald, 'Body and Spirit,' p. 181.
[429] As Scroggs does in 'Eschatological Woman.'
[430] Francis Watson, 'The Authority of the Voice: a Theological Reading of 1 Cor 11.2-16' *NTS* 46 (2000), 520.

moment when this discussion was taking place. Differences in theology have driven people from diverse backgrounds to differences in practice.

For example, Paul did not suggest that believers remain celibate (v. 28) for freedom's sake alone. His ideas about gender were clearly linked to his theology. To Paul, the end times were drawing near, and would be coupled with a time of crisis. It was important that Christians remained as they were when they were called. As Wire says, 'Clearly Paul's ideal is that women's asceticism function to supplant the three-part role (daughter, wife, mother) with another all-consuming task under the pressure of the shortness of time.'[431] Married women are concerned with their husbands, and are distracted from the work of the Lord. Thus, it is best for everyone, both men and women, to remain unmarried if possible. The freedom that women may have gained from Paul's theology is only secondary to the belief that the work of the Lord must be prioritized. Most strikingly, Paul's theological formulation also unwittingly admits that all humans, men and women, can be more productive members of a community if each enjoys a certain degree of personal freedom from the cultural and religious constraints that might otherwise be placed upon them. In the case of Corinthian women, these constraints were related to their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

Believing that in Christ there is not male and female, and that they were in possession of a special spiritual wisdom, many of the Corinthians agreed with Paul, that celibacy was better than married life. Even some women who were already married took this to mean that in Christ they should behave as if they were celibate.

Married and Unmarried Women

In chapter 7, and elsewhere, Paul makes a clear distinction between married women and unmarried women. In this chapter he assumes that only unmarried women are capable of being fully devoted to the work of the Lord (i.e. 7.32-35). Fiorenza wonders 'how Paul could have made such a theological point when he had Prisca as his friend and knew other missionary couples who were living examples that his theology was wrong.'[432] In

[431] Wire, 'Women's Asceticism,' 313.
[432] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 226.

introducing a distinction between married and unmarried women, Paul relegates the former to a traditional role while ascribing the latter with a special holiness.[433]

Paul's arguments concerning the Corinthian's behaviour is rooted in his 'between the times' theology. As has been seen, Paul's letter is largely an exercise in rhetoric, which seeks to effect a change, not only in attitude, but also in praxis.[434] Paul feels that the Corinthians are not living as if they are 'between the times,' and his theology is therefore not being respected in the community, particularly in relation to their married and sexual lives. Because the Corinthians were a deeply religious community, and it is clear that many of them felt they had experienced the Spirit of God, Paul sought to change their behaviour by rooting his discussion of marriage in his own theology. This theology was one that was 'suited to a world which was on the verge of transformation, but which was still very much capable of inducing troubles in community life.'[435] As Paul says, 'in view of the present crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are' (7.26).

Conversely, the Corinthians felt that they had increasing wisdom in the Spirit of God. Their teaching must have had celibacy as one of its central values since women from all walks of life were opting for the celibate lifestyle, including virgins, widows, and women already married.[436] From 1 Cor 7.1, 4, 10, 12 & 25 we can assume that the Corinthians used various sayings to build this theology of celibacy.[437] These sayings include, 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman,' and deal with issues such as authority over partners' bodies (7.4) and virginity (7.25). Set apart from any conflict of interest between a husband's plan for her and God's plan, the Corinthian women were physically and spiritually free to represent God's glory in the community.[438] Both Paul and the Corinthian women draw a distinction between devotion to the things of the

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[433] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 235.
[434] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 387.
[435] MacDonald, 'Body and Spirit,' 167.
[436] It is noteworthy that the Therapeutides as portrayed by Philo of Alexandria (*Vita Cont.*) parallel the Corinthian women acsetics' position and behaviour in many respects. These Jewish ascetics had left their spouses behind in order to devote themselves to *sophia*.
[437] MacDonald, 'Body and Spirit,' 167.
[438] Wire, *Prophets*, 95.

world and devotion to Christ.[439] It is Paul's perception that the celibacy practised in Corinth has led to immorality. We have seen that the community displays self-confidence where Paul fears for their morality. This self-confidence flows from a belief that each man and woman has her own authority in the spirit. No one is subject to another, but each speaks independently in prayer and prophecy.[440]

Further, it seems that the women of Corinth did not make the same 'strange' division between married and unmarried as Paul would have them do. Women in both categories were acting with a certain freedom from their traditional roles in order to concentrate on their spiritual lives. This had the effect of drawing women from all walks of life into the spirit and allowing them to participate fully in God's community.

In summary, on close analysis it seems that the theological discussion represented in chapter 7 takes place in a context where all the arguments concern women and the meaning of Christian womanhood. First, we have the Corinthians who, through newly acquired wisdom, prefer a celibate life since, in Christ, there is no male and female. There is also Paul, who felt that men and women had authority over each other's bodies in marriage. Paul taught of a more community-oriented spirit, which unfortunately meant that he believed that women should be part of the solution to a largely male problem of perceived sexual immorality.[441] Paul also concedes that celibacy is preferable for those who possess the gift and therefore the ability to control themselves. Unfortunately his argument has the effect of relegating married and engaged women to a traditional role, while their unmarried sisters are able to conduct their faith in relative freedom. All the voices in the discussion about celibacy seem to agree on one thing; that celibacy is better than marriage if one aspires to do God's work in the community. For Paul, Christ's imminent return meant avoiding immorality at all costs. For some Corinthian women, full participation in the Spirit meant freedom from the constraints of one's traditional role.

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[439] Wire, *Prophets*, 95.
[440] Wire, *Prophets*, 96.
[441] It has been argued above that the perceived sexual immorality in the community was largely a male problem based on the fact that the only two examples of immorality found in the text are carried out by men (5.1 and 15&16).

11.2-16: Head Coverings

Paul's Argument (?)

I will begin my discussion of chapter 11:2-16 with a brief outline of the argument in this section of his letter. The number of translation and interpretative problems in the text should quickly become clear as many unanswered questions arise. The appropriate translations and interpretations of some words and phrases are debatable and no clear consensus has arisen. These words appear below in *italics*.

Paul begins with a fourfold image of the created order; Christ is the *head* of every man, and the *man* is the *head* of the *woman* and God is the *head* of Christ (11.3). Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his *head* (Christ), and any *woman* who prays or prophesies with *her head uncovered*, disgraces her *head* (man)- it is as if she had her head shaved (11.4-5). If a woman will not cover herself, then she should cut off her hair, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off, she should be covered as to the head (11.6). A man ought not to have his head covered, since *he is the image and glory of God*, but *woman is the glory of man* (11.7). Man is not made from woman but woman from man (11.8). Woman was created for the sake of man and not man for woman (11.9). For this reason, woman ought to have a sign of ἐξουσία [442] on her head, *on account of the angels.* (11.10). *In the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor man independent of woman* (11.11). Just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, but all things come from God (11.12). Judge for yourselves, is it proper for a woman to pray with *head uncovered* (11.13)? *Does not nature teach that if a man wears long hair it is degrading* (11.14)? If a woman has long hair, it is her glory. Her hair is given to her as a cover (11.15). If anyone wants to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God (11.16).

[442] The meaning of this word is so highly debated that I felt it was more appropriate to leave it in its Greek form for the time being.

It should be obvious by the number of words and phrases in *italics* how many problems one encounters in attempting to translate and suggest a viable meaning for this section of text. Paul's argument seems obscure and practically contradicts itself in some places. Jouette Bassler says, 'So convoluted is Paul's argument and so enigmatic are the terms he uses that it is impossible to determine exactly what activity lies behind these comments, why it is taking place, and what Paul objects to about it.'[443] In addition to all the textual problems, interpreters have also questioned whether or not this text is actually Pauline. Was it included in the original draft of the letter, or did an editor add it on at a later date?

G. W. Trompf is the main proponent of the view that 11:2-16 did not belong to the original text.[444] Trompf argues on theological grounds that this section is not Pauline. He claims that the introduction of a new topic in 11.2-16, 'handled so ambiguously, detracts substantially from the cunning of Paul's reasoning,'[445] noting further that 'when examined in the broader context, 1 Cor 10.1-11.2 and 11.17-34 hold together as a continuous argument about eating and drinking.'[446] Further, many of Paul's theological claims in this section resemble later writings, for example, the closest parallel to the Christ-man-woman hierarchy can be found in Ephesians, and the reference to Genesis material (11.8-9) resembles 1 Timothy 2:13-15.[447] Trompf finds it difficult to understand why Paul should have belaboured such an obscure point about dress in church,[448] and claims that 'the onus of proof is now on those who wish to argue that St. Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, who has just given careful but conspicuously liberal conditions for dining with pagans, now wants to impose a very culture-bound regulation which has its basis in the *kerygma* or fundamental teachings of the earliest church.'[449]

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[443] Bassler, '1 Corinthians,' 326.
[444] G. W. Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women in Paul and Paulist Literature: I Cor 11:3-16 and its Context,' *CBQ* 42 (1980), 196-215; also see P. Walker, 'The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Cor 11:2-16,' *JBL* 95 (1976), 615-621. Further, a critical response to Walker is offered by Murphy O'Connor in 'The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Cor. 11:2-16?' *JBL* 95 (1976), 615-22.
[445] Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women,' 201.
[446] Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women,' 198.
[447] Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women,' 205
[448] Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women,' 211.
[449] Trompf, 'On Attitudes Toward Women,' 202.

Trompf is right on at least one point, that Paul's views on other topics do not seem to connect with his argument here that women should follow a culturally-bound imperative to wear head coverings. However, the main problem with Trompf's argument is that it assumes that Paul is one hundred percent consistent in this theology, and that interpreters should be able to map this consistency with such accuracy as to exclude all those passages that seem to obscure their image of Paul. Surely this is not an appropriate method for the biblical scholar. Given that we have no textual evidence that 11:2-16 was added at a later date, it is only appropriate to assume that this section was part of the original work of Paul.

Problems with Translation and Meaning

Confusion arises because it is unclear *which* women in the community are being addressed. The Greek word γυνή can take the meaning of woman in general, or wife. So, is Paul saying that all women's heads should be covered, or just those of married women? Conzelmann makes the important point that marriage is not being discussed here; therefore Paul must be referring to women in general.[450] I would tend to agree with this conclusion. Regardless of whether men and women, or just the women are being addressed in this passage, it is clear that in some way Paul disagrees with the behaviour of *some* of the women at Corinth. He feels that their heads should be covered during worship. For my purposes, I will assume that Paul is speaking to all women here, since marriage is not part of this discussion.

Baffling to most is Paul's use of the word, ἐξουσία. Joseph Fitzmyer presents the four translations of this problematic word that have been suggested by scholars.[451] First, the traditional view of the meaning of this word in this context is that it is the symbol of power to which the woman is subject.[452] More recently, scholars have suggested that

[450] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians,* 184.
[451] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of I Cor. XI. 10,' *NTS* 4 (1957-58), 50-53.
[452] Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumrân Angelology,' 51, cites eight exegetes who interpret the verse in this way including Chrysostom, and Bultmann.

ἐξουσία represents the symbol of the woman's own power, honour and dignity.[453] Others have suggested that it represents a magical power that the woman possesses to ward off the attack of evil spirits. And lastly, it has been taken as equivalent to the Aramaic word for veil.

The word ἐξουσία occurs 103 times in the New Testament and always takes the same meaning, the active one, representing a person's own power, dignity and authority. This meaning also appears universally in Philo and Josephus.[454] Further, ἐξουσία appears 7 times in 1 Corinthians 7-9, each time taking the meaning of liberty and autonomy.[455] It is unreasonable and irresponsible for translators to change the otherwise universal definition of a word simply because it does not seem to fit the context in which it is found. It is more responsible if we translate the meaning of a word as it is known, and only then deal with issues of interpretation. If a meaning is not forthcoming for a passage, we should admit the limitations of our knowledge. In this case, a definite meaning *does* arise if we place ἐξουσία in its context in verse 10. In such an interpretation, Paul is not attacking the Corinthian woman's freedom to uncover, but affirming her independence as a responsible member of the community.[456] Thus, a better translation for this verse would be, 'For this reason, a woman ought to have a sign of her authority on her head because of the angels.'

Another phrase that has puzzled interpreters is that found in 11.4 and 13, namely 'head uncovered' or 'uncovered as to the head'. There are two main views that scholars have espoused. First, there is the traditional view that when women are said to be uncovered they are actually discarding an external cover, such as a veil.[457] This is implied by the verb 'to cover.' A more recent translation that is based on the usage of the word in the

[453] This has been argued by Morna Hooker in her article, 'Authority on her Head: An Examination of 1 Corinthians XI. 10,' *NTS* 10 (1963-64), 410-16, and is followed by Fiorenza, *Memory*, 228.
[454] See Fee, *First Epistle,* 519.
[455] Feuillet, 'La Dignité,' 160, 7:37, 8:9, 9:4,5,6,12,18.
[456] Dale Martin also notices that historically, in 'veiling cultures,' the veil is both a sign of the woman's own authority and power as well as a sign of her weakness and relative powerlessness. See Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 245.
[457] See Hays, *First Corinthians*; and Wolff, *Der erste Brief.*

LXX is that 'uncovered' refers to 'loosened hair.'[458] Here, the woman is actually letting her hair down.

Jerome Murphy O'Connor presents an argument for the last of these two options, more specifically that 11:2-16 discusses hairstyles; the long hair of men, and the untidy hair of women. He claims that Paul's logic is that men should look like men and women like women.[459] He cites two of Paul's contemporaries who make a connection between long hair and homosexuality for men, Pseudo-Phocylides and Philo,[460] claiming that the antithesis to the men having long hair, was not the short hair of women, but untidy hair which Paul considered unbecoming.[461] Therefore, argues Murphy O'Connor, Paul presents 'a coherent multi-pronged argument against hair arrangements which tended to blur the distinction between the sexes.'[462] Fiorenza adds to Murphy O'Connor's point by pointing out that because verse 15 maintains that women have hair instead of a head covering, it is more likely that Paul is speaking of hair all the way through the passage.[463] She also cites the Septuagint passages; Num 5:18 where women accused of adultery are marked by loosening their hair; and also Lev. 13:45 in which long hair is one of the signs of uncleanness for a leper.[464]

It has been suggested by R. E. Oster that looking to the Greek world for the background to 1 Corinthians is misplaced and that instead we should look to archaeological evidence from the Roman east since Corinth was part of the Roman empire in Paul's time.[465] He says that 'the practice of men covering their heads in the context of prayer and prophesy was a common pattern of Roman piety and widespread during the late Republic and early Empire. Since Corinth was a Roman colony, there should be little doubt that this

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[458] See Fee, *First Epistle*; Murphy O'Connor, *1 Corinthians;* Padgett, 'Authority;' Fiorenza, *Memory*; and Horsley, *1 Corinthians.*
[459] Murphy O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic,' 485.
[460] Murphy O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic,' 485.
[461] Murphy O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic,' 488.
[462] Murphy O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic,' 488.
[463] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 227.
[464] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 228.
[465] Richard Oster, 'When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of I Corinthians 11: 4,' *NTS* 34 (1988), 487- 455.

aspect of Roman religious practice deserves greater attention by commentators than it has received.'[466] However, it has been shown elsewhere that the Roman practice of men veiling only took place at funerals, at least during the first century.[467]

In a 1995 article, 'Hairstyles, Head-coverings and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth,' Cynthia Thompson uses evidence from marble statues, miniature clay statuettes and coins from the late 1st century BCE to the 2nd century CE to help us understand the background of 1 Corinthians 11.2-16.[468] Many of her findings help to clarify the situation in Corinth. Interestingly, she finds that in all the Roman examples men have short hair.[469] The religious custom among men was of wearing the toga over one's head during pagan sacrifices.[470] Thus we can see that Paul may be shunning idol worship when he argues that men should not cover. As for the women, there is no doubt that long hair was the norm for Roman women, at least in the upper classes, and during the first century, hairstyles were becoming increasingly complex.[471] In fact, the only evidence Thompson finds of a woman with short hair is on a sculpture of a young girl, which she assumes is an example of a child's haircut.[472] Also interesting is her investigation of the wall paintings in Pompeii, which seem to suggest that veiling was a personal choice in the pre-79 CE Roman world.[473]

Thomson's important study sheds some light our ambiguous text. It seems that to Paul, the most important issue may not be the actual type of hairstyle or veil worn, but rather the fact that men should behave as men and women as women. This would explain Paul's appeal to nature in vs 14 and also the fact that he moves so swiftly from discussing head coverings to veils. Thus, I would conclude that in 11.2-16 Paul is

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[466] Richard Oster, 'Use, Misuse and Neglect of Archaeological Evidence in Some Modern Works on 1 Cor (1 Cor 7:1-5; 8:10; 11;2-16; 12:14-26)' *ZNW* 83 (1992), 68.
[467] See Thomson, 'Haristyles,' discussed below, 112.
[468] Cynthia Thompson, 'Hairstyles, Head-coverings and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth.' *BA* 51 (1988), 99-115.
[469] Thompson, 'Hairstyles,' 100-104.
[470] Thompson, 'Hairstyles,' 104.
[471] Thompson, 'Hairstyles,' 108.
[472] Thompson, 'Hairstyles,' 112.
[473] Thompson, 'Hairstyles,' 112.

commenting on *both* hairstyles and the practice of veiling, arguing first and foremost that gender distinctions should remain intact.

Dale Martin offers a unique and interesting study in which he looks to unusual corners of the Greek world to try to uncover the meaning of this section of Corinthians, including medical treaties. He notices that the word κάλυμμα, meaning veil, is also used for a stopper for a jug, or for the 'closed' uterus of a virgin in Homeric texts.[474] Thus, he concludes that wearing a veil represents covering the head as well as the genitals. A veil in Greek culture was used to protect a woman from the sexual glares of men and also to civilise her and protect society from the chaoticness of her sexuality.[475] In his cross-cultural study of the purpose of veiling, Martin discovers that most cultures in which women wear veils, they are also felt to have out-of-control sexual appetites.[476] Thus, veiling is universally attached to specific notions about female sexuality. Thus, Martin's conclusion that to veil the head is to veil the genitals is not as far-fetched as it first sounds.

As we have seen above, the community of Corinth was extremely eclectic, drawing peoples from all corners of the ancient world, Jews, Greeks, Romans, slaves, free persons, rich and poor.[477] Thus, to assume that all come from traditions where female head covering was the norm, or not the norm, would be unreasonable. Further, due to the cryptic nature of some of the arguments,[478] we can assume that traditions of head-covering were known to our audience. From the evidence from Roman Corinth it seems unlikely that veiling was the normative practice among women, though some may have covered as a personal choice. None of this uncertainty however changes the fact that Paul would prefer the women to cover, while many of the women themselves preferred to worship uncovered.

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[474] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 234.
[475] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 235.
[476] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 235-39.
[477] See p. 111-114 above.
[478] For example, the simple fact that there is such debate about whether Paul was referring to hairstyles or to an actual covering of some kind.

One question that remains unanswered with any degree of satisfaction comes from the strange phrase in verse 10, 'on account of the angels.' Why would a woman need a sign of ἐξουσία on her head on account of the angels? One's interpretation of this phrase is obviously dependant on one's translation of ἐξουσία, therefore, the problem of meaning in this verse is multi-layered. John Meier thinks that the angels are a reference to Gen 6:2 where angelic beasts lust after the daughters of men,[479] whereas Fitzmyer suggests that Paul had in mind a midrash which described the angels as mediators of the Torah, and as guardians of the created order.[480] On a similar vein, Morna Hooker suggests that, as in 1 Cor 4.9, angels watch over human actions, and the angels of 10:11 are guardians of the natural order and wish to see that worship takes place in a fitting manner.[481] Jason BeDuhn even goes as far as to say that Paul attributes the separate formation of male and female to a creative act of angels. His evidence comes from Gal 3:28, in which male and female separation is contrary to ultimate values. Also, in contemporary exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, angels played a mediating role in creation. And further, some gnostics attributed the formation of Adam and Eve to the angels.[482]

The phrase 'on account of the angels' has invited speculation since Tertullian (c. 200 CE).[483] Whatever the reason for Paul's inclusion of the phrase here, we know for certain that it would have made sense to his audience. Wire argues that if these women were praying and prophesying uncovered for non-religious reasons, then Paul would not need to appeal to theology as he has:

> There are indirect but significant signs that the Corinthians are appealing to tradition. If women prayed and prophesied uncovered because the custom of covering their heads was strange, or inconvenient, or seemed inappropriate in their home-based gatherings, it would have been counterproductive for Paul to make a cause célèbre of it. An argument from modesty, community benefit, or public

[479] Meier, 'On the Veiling of Hermeneutics,' 222.
[480] Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumrân Angelology,' 52.
[481] Hooker 'Authority on Her Head,' 412.
[482] David J. BeDuhn, 'Because of the Angels: Unveiling Paul's Anthropology in 1 Corinthians 11,' *JBL* 118 (1999), 308.
[483] Thistelton, *First Epistle*, 837.

> conduct would suffice. The theological weight of Paul's argument makes it likely that the women who prophesied uncovered chose to do so for some purpose with social consequences and *theological justification*. This would explain an appeal to Christian tradition, if not necessarily to written Scripture [emphasis mine].[484]

Further, Wire suggests that the abbreviation and obscurity of Paul's arguments suggest that he is not introducing certain language for the first time.[485] Thus, 'if Paul's letter does not provide sufficient data to understand what he means by 'having authority on her head' and 'due to the angels' and he does not develop his thought further, these phrases probably are known in Corinth. So, 'the woman is the glory of the man' could be contesting some other interpretation of women's glory in Corinth.'[486] Read in this way, the Corinthians are depicted as a community of men and women who were aiming to incorporate their new theological identities into all aspects of their being, including women's practices of wearing long hair and/or covering her head with a veil. In Chapter 7 we can see that the women have come to their own theological conclusions and that Paul enters into this debate to try and persuade the women with his theological standpoint. Thus, Paul joins a debate that is already taking place in the community in which, perhaps, conclusions have already been drawn.

Finally, on the topic of translation, the difficulties involved in translating the word κεφαλή must be mentioned (11.3,4,5,6,7,10&13). There are three main possibilities for the translation of this term. The first is that it carries connotations of authority, supremacy and leadership.[487] The most convincing argument for this case is presented by Joseph Fitzmyer who discovers that in the LXX, the Hebrew word for Head (*ro'sh*) takes on the meaning of leadership in at least 15 places.[488] A second group have argued that the most appropriate translation would be *source*, and most of these find that there is

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[484] Wire, *Prophets*, 122-23.
[485] Wire, *Prophets*, 123.
[486] Wire, *Prophets*, 123.
[487] Proponents of this theory in modern scholarship are, Weiss, *Der erste*; Allo, *Première Épître*; Kümmel & Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*; Héring *First Epistle*; and Joseph Fitzmyer, 'Another Look at κεφαλη in 1 Cor 11.3,' *NTS* 35 (1989), 506-9.
[488] Fitzmyer 'Another Look at κεφαλή' uses 2 Sam 22.44 as a key text, 506.

no reason to assume that Paul is in anyway suggesting male supremacy or authority.[489] A third group would argue that the word connotes pre-eminence.[490] Thiselton argues that this proposal 'has the merit of most clearly drawing interactively on the metaphorical conjunction between physiological head and the notion of prominence.'[491]

As we have seen, Scroggs feels that none of Paul's arguments in 11.2-16, 'express or imply a judgement of female subordination.'[492] By translating κεφαλή as source, Scroggs makes vs 3 a Christian interpretation of the creation narrative. Christianity interposed Christ as the agent of creation, and no subordination is involved in this expression, it is simply that the order of creative events is being made plain.[493] In verses 4 and 5, no value judgements are expressed, according to Scroggs, just a cultural distinction between the sexes.[494] The function of verses 7-9 is to support the rule of 4&5. Scroggs translates εικών as 'manifestation,' since woman was created second, she is the manifestation, but not the image of man.[495] Like Fiorenza, Scroggs thinks that Paul requires women to wear a head covering as a symbol of her authority in the community; 'when Paul is arguing so vehemently for the head covering he is protecting the new freedom of women in the eschatological community.'[496]

While I would agree that the only possible translation for ἐξουσία is one that takes on the active meaning, that women need a symbol of their own authority in Christ, I find Scroggs defence of Paul, as the ultimate feminist ahead of his time, slightly contrived. Even if Paul is attempting to defend women's freedom here, he fails to see that head covering on a woman will always ultimately have the effect of marking her as secondary

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[489] See Bedale, 'The Meaning of κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles,' *JTS* 5 (1954); Murphy O'Connor, '1 Corinthians;' Witherington, *Women*; Scrage, *Der erste Brief*; Scroggs, 'Escatological Woman;' and Fee, *First Epistle*. Further, Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, and Meier, 'On the Veiling of Hermeneutics,' argue for the meaning 'source' but *with* the implication of authority of male over female.
[490] See Martin, *The Corinthian Body*; Senft, *La Première Épître*; and Thiselton, *First Epistle*.
[491] Thiselton, *First Epistle,* 821.
[492] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 298.
[493] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 298.
[494] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 301.
[495] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 301.
[496] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 301.

in some way. In a patriarchal society, a head covering implies a certain need to 'hide' something, and in this case, it seems that what needs to be hidden is a women's sexuality.[497] The idea that Paul is suggesting that Corinthian women mark their 'equality' with a head covering seems almost absurd.[498] Surely a mark of equality would be to have the same freedom bestowed on the men, that is to pray and prophesy freely without 'hiding' one's female nature, or denoting it with some kind of symbol.

Theology

Wire sees that here Paul argues in two ways that women should cover their heads. First, there is the argument from shame, namely that shaving indicates social outcast. And second, the argument from the Genesis stories that man was made in God's image (Genesis chapter 1) and that woman was made on man's account (Genesis chapter 2).[499] Thus, Paul combines social and theological arguments as he attempts to persuade his audience.

Some have concluded that Paul is a man in conflict since they see contradictions in his argument. For example, Jouette Bassler notices that in verse 11 & 12, without warning, Paul has reversed directions in his argument, affirming the mutuality of existence and equality of origin that he earlier denied.'[500] Paul says, 'in the Lord women are not independent of men, nor men independent of women' (11.11), just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, but all things come from God (11.12). Walter Schmithals admits that 'Paul struggles desperately with the material, yet without being able rightly to achieve his intention.'[501] Robin Scroggs acknowledges that this is 'hardly one of Paul's happier compositions,' admitting that Paul's logic is 'obscure and contradictory at worst.'[502] Unable to connect the different strands in Paul's theology, Elaine Pagels concludes that 'he is a man in conflict.'[503] However, as we shall see

[497] As argued by Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 255.
[498] See Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 235-39.
[499] Wire, *Prophets*, 118.
[500] Bassler, ' Corinthians,' 327.
[501] Schmithals, *Gnoticism in Corinth*, 239.
[502] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 297.
[503] Pagels, 'Paul and Women,' 544.

below, this conflict only exists if we impose categories of equality and inequality on the text. Mutual dependence and complete equality are indeed different things.

On the other hand, 'all Paul's contorted reasoning at this point may obscure the astounding fact- astounding at least for a religious group arising from the Jewish synagogue- that women were free in church to pray openly and to prophesy under charismatic inspiration.'[504] This turn in Paul's theology is striking when compared to traditional Jewish exegesis. For example, in Philo's writing, woman is not equal to man in honour. She should serve her husband and show him honour.[505] Similarly, Josephus argues, 'The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man.'[506] Murphy O'Connor compares 11:11-12 to traditional Jewish arguments, saying that:

> The same God who created women from the side of man is also responsible for the fact that man comes from woman's womb. The traditional Jewish argument, based on the chronological priority of man in the creation narrative, is countered by the simple fact that the chronological priority of woman in the birth of a male is just as much part of God's plan for the order of his creation.[507]

Though Paul has made a significant departure from traditional exegesis, I would underline the fact that 'equality' for equality's sake was not Paul's concern. Paul argues that male and female are mutually *dependent*, meaning that they need each other somehow in the wholeness of the creative order. This is not necessarily to say that they are equal parts of this whole. Likewise, it is not to say they are not equal parts in Paul's view, but simply that he does not comment on this. Reading an argument for equality

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[504] Meier, 'On the Veiling of Hermeneutics,' 218.
[505] See Murphy O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic in 1 Cor. 11:2-16,' *CBQ* 42 (1980), 496, no. 56. He bases his interpretation of Philo on R. Marcus, trans. *Philo, Supplement I: Questions and Answers on Genesis*. The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1953), 16.
[506] Flavius Josephus, *The Life Against Apion* (trans. by H. Thackeray; London: Heinemann, 1926), 2.24 §201.
[507] Murphy O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once Again,' *CBQ* 50 (1988), 273.

here is unfounded. Dale Martin follows Wayne Meeks' lead in assuming that behind verse 11 is an early Christian vision of the androgyne in the new creation.[508] Martin insists that one must not mistake the ideal of androgyny with equality.[509] We only have to look as far as the gospel of Thomas to see that androgyny does not equal equality (log. 114),[510] and Martin shows that it was a common assumption that women were simply imperfect men.[511] Therefore, in Paul's mind, women can never be equal to men because of the ancient definition of masculinity/femininity that was so pervasive.[512]

Despite the seemingly obvious difference between equality and mutual dependence, interpreters of all generations have felt that verses 3 and 11 somehow oppose one another and have sought to discover a theology that could reconnect these two verses.

One interpretation that has been presented in various ways by scholars and clergy from Calvin until today, is to assume that Paul is here making some kind of distinction between the fallen created order (σάρξ) and the spiritual realm of Christ (πνεῦμα).[513] A similar interpretation but that does not create such an extreme duality is to say that it is 'in the Lord,' ie. in the new creation that men and women are mutually dependant.[514] For example, Walter Schmithals argues:

> If the *pneuma* is the real self of the person, then the person ("man") is neither male nor female, but a part of the cosmic *soma Xristou* which in every respect is equal to others. Differences of sex belong only to the sphere of the *sarx* and therefore cannot serve to judge the person. Paul unintentionally confirms this when in vs. 3-9 he argues from the basis of sexual differences rooted in creation, only then in vs. 11-12 to affirm that *en kuriō* all differences are taken away.[515]

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[508] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 229. See also, Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne.'
[509] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 229.
[510] In this saying, Jesus states that women will become like men at the *parousia*, thus achieving perfection by becoming male.
[511] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 230.
[512] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 249.
[513] Schmithals, *Gnoticism in Corinth*, 239.
[514] See Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 153; Fee, *First Epistle*, 523; and Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 107.
[515] Schmithals, *Gnoticism in Corinth*, 239.

According to this interpretation, the 'head covering' of these verses becomes a symbol of female authority in Christ, 'with reference to the equal status of the two sexes some were declaring the custom regarding covering the head during worship, which was different for men and for women, to be irrelevant. Over and against this, Paul takes his stand on the inequality of the sexes.[516] Robin Scroggs ascribes to this interpretation also, yet strikingly draws the opposite conclusion about Paul and equality; 'since the created order man had assumed (or been given, Gen. 3) a dominating role based on his priority in creation, but since in the eschatological age there is no priority, woman must show by the head covering that she has left that old order and now lives in the new.'[517]

The above interpretations are based on an assumption that Paul was one hundred percent consistent in this passage in a way that makes perfect sense to our modern categories of gender equality. I see no reason to make such an assumption. Jouette Bassler is also not convinced by the solution presented above, that for Paul the distinction between the sexes only exists in the created order. She asks poignant questions of scholars such as Scroggs and Schmithals. First, Paul emphasises that woman was created for the sake of man, and not vice versa. Secondly, if removing veils and wearing short or loosened hair was simply crossing a gender line, it would not need to be emphasised that men are 'heads.' It seems obvious that the wearing of veils acknowledges not only gender differentiation, but male superiority.[518] To add to Bassler's queries, I would question how Scroggs and Schmithals incorporate verse 3 into their interpretation. The line of headship is God-Christ-male-female. So do God and Christ belong to the realm of σάρξ also?[519] Obviously Paul felt that, in Christ, male is the head of the female. Hence two

[516] Schmithals, *Gnoticism in Corinth*, 238.
[517] Scroggs, 'Eschatological Woman,' 301.
[518] Bassler, 'Corinthians,' 326.
[519] Here Scroggs would likely argue that verse 3 actually refers to the relationship of male and female at creation, by translating κεφαλή as source, the order only refers to the order of creation. However, if this was the case, then Paul would have to be referring to some form of Christian tradition in which Christ was formed first, then the man, then the woman and Genesis is not at issue at all.

parallel lines of authority have been drawn by Paul in 1 Cor; first, God, Christ, Paul, then the other teachers, and second, God, Christ, man, woman.[520]

The obscurity of Paul's theology in this section from our point of view makes it likely that Paul is here referring to a debate happening within the community, the exact contours of which have been lost to time. The theological weight of Paul's argument makes it likely that the women who prophesied uncovered chose to do so, as Wire says, for some purpose with social consequences and theological justification.[521] This theological justification is likely founded in the interpretation of the Genesis tradition. We know this because of Paul's allusion to Genesis 2 and 3 in a section of text that only really makes sense if we assume that we are only party to one side of a discussion in which other voices represent different views.

From the conclusions we have drawn in this section, it would appear that in Paul's first letter to Corinth, we have a snapshot of a theological debate about the place and role of women in the early church. Paul wishes that all women wear a symbol of their sex on their heads during worship, which may simply amount to a proper women's hairstyle. His desire is that her gender identity be more prominent or obvious. From verse 7 and 8, we know that Paul interprets the Genesis tradition to support his theology, and it seems likely that the Corinthians did the same. Further, an element of angelology enters into Paul's thought, and it has been concluded that this is because it is the Corinthians whose theology involved angels.

14.34-35: Silence

Paul's Argument

Paul's argument in these two verses is as follows: Women should be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak and should be subordinate, as the law also

[520] Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation,' 397.
[521] Wire, *Prophets*, 123.

says (14.34). If there is anything they want to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (14.35).

These two verses, which seem to stand in direct contradiction to chapter 11, where it is assumed that women pray and prophesy in church, are in fact found in two different locations in the manuscripts.[522] Though the verses appear in all known manuscripts, in some they are found in their usual place, after verse 33, and in others they appear at the end of verse 40. Most importantly, Wire points out that it is in the Latin versions of the texts that the verses are transposed to after verse 40. In all other manuscripts, the verses appear in their usual place.[523]

Various reasons have been given as to why the verses appear in two different locations. Gordon Fee outlines the three main reasons for this dislocation. First, Paul might have written them in their usual place and a later editor may have felt they were better placed after verse 40. Secondly, the opposite may have happened and Paul may have originally intended the verses to be after verse 40, but they may have been later transposed to their present location. Or lastly, and this represents Fee's own view, these verses may have been a very early marginal gloss that was later added in two separate locations.[524]

Others have argued that the passage is an interpolation, though the arguments for this theory are not very strong. Conzelmann is one recent interpreter to hold this view, claiming that the verses are 'a reflection of the bourgeois consolidation of the church,

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[522] For a complete discussion of the manuscripts see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1148-49; or E. Earle Ellis, 'The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34-35),' in Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon Fee (eds.), *New Testament Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

[523] Wire, Prophets, 152. For and in depth discussion see Wire, 149-152. Manuscripts that place the verses at the end of the chapter are D F G 88* $it^{ar,d,e,f,g}$. Those that place the verses in there usual place are p^{46} ℵ A B K Y 0243 33 81 88^{mg} 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 630 1241 1739 1877 1881 1962 1985 1985 2127 2492 2495 *Byz Lect* $it^{dem,x,z}$ vg $syr^{p,h,pal}$ $cop^{sa,bo,fay}$ arm.

[524] Fee, *First Epistle*, 699.

roughly on the level of the Pastoral Epistles.'[525] This would ascribe the addition of these verses to a later editor.

There are five main arguments supporting the interpolation theory.[526] The first is that the verses differ in theme from the rest of 12.1-14.40. However it could be argued that there is no difference in theme here since the author is interested in order during worship all the way through the passage. Secondly, it is argued that the verses interrupt the flow of instructions for prophets. Conzelmann says that the self-contained section 'spoils the flow of thought' of the passage.[527] In response, I would suggest that it is inappropriate to translate a verse that 'spoils the flow of thought' as an interpolation. As it is, the verse was clearly omitted and then added later, likely by Paul himself or his amanuensis. As such, it would be expected that this addition would spoil the flow of the text. The third argument for the interpolation theory is that these verses contradict 11.5. However, as will be shown below, the author here may be making a distinction between women and wives, and between speaking and questioning, asking wives *specifically* for quietness, since they have the option to ask their husbands questions at home. These verses use language that is not normally used by Paul. For example, επιτρέπεσθαι is only found in this sense in 1 Tim 2.12, and ὑποτάσσεθαι is typically used in household codes (1 Col 3.18, Eph. 5.22). But surely we can allow Paul to make use of different language at different times? The fact that he uses two words in different ways than elsewhere does not mean these words are not his own. Lastly, Conzelmann argues that vs. 37 links up with 33a and not with 36. But what is really his argument here? What is meant by 'links up'? Surely this is just a repeat of his first argument that the verses seem to interrupt the flow of thought of the passage as a whole? In which case, we have already answered to this claim.

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[525] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 246. Others who hold the view that the verses are an interpolation are Weiss, *Die erste*; Fee, *First Epistle*; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*; Moffatt, *First Epistle;* and Barrett, *First Epistle*.
[526] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 247.
[527] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 247.

A more likely explanation for the positioning of these verses is given by Earle Ellis who argues that the marginal gloss was added by Paul himself.[528] After 1 Corinthians was written by a scribe on the apostle's behalf, Paul added these two verses in the margins during an editing process. Ellis says,

> A letter-writer of the first century would often employ an amanuensis who drafted the letter from short-hand notes. When the author received the draft from the amanuensis, he would add a closing greeting and make any desired additions or corrections. In 1 Corinthians, Paul employed an amanuensis (1 Cor. 16: 21) and he, or the amanuensis at his instruction, could have added 1 Cor. 14:34-5 in the margin of the manuscript before sending it on its way to Corinth.[529]

Ellis notes that those who find 14:34-35 to be an interpolation also interpret *theological* difference as chronological. But Ellis argues that, 'more fundamentally, one must question the validity of a procedure that automatically interprets *theological* difference in New Testament documents in terms of *chronological* distance.[530] This is almost certainly true. It is unreasonable and irresponsible to interpret a movement as diverse as early Christianity along some kind of a theological time line.[531] Since these verses appear in all known manuscripts, we have no reason to assume that they were not part of the original text, as it was received by the Corinthians in the first century.

Translation and Meaning

As in Chapter 11, a question arises here around the use of the word γυνή. To whom are these verses addressed, to women in general, or just to wives? Since husbands are actually mentioned in verse 35, it seems likely that it is only married women who are

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[528] Earle E. Ellis, 'The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34-35),' in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Claredon Press, 1981), 219.

[529] Ellis, 'Silenced Wives,' 219.

[530] Ellis, 'Silenced Wives,' 215. This corresponds to Schrage's numbers four and five above.

[531] In her article 'Irredeemably Hostile to Women: Anti Jewish Elements in the Exegesis of the Dispute About Women's Right to Speak (1 Cor 14.34-35),' *JSNT* 79 (2000), Marlene Crüsemann warns against the assumption that the 'silence' here is based on a 'woman-hostile' Jewish tradition. She finds similar attestations for female silence among Greco-Roman authors, 19-36.

being addressed here. If unmarried women were also being addressed, to whom would they pose their questions at home? Ellis agrees that wives and not women in general are being addressed in these verses since, 'the principle that one's ministry is to be consistent with and qualified by one's marriage obligations accords with Paul's teaching generally.'[532] Also, in 1:11 women legitimately exercise a public ministry, so in order for 14:34 to be consistent with the other teachings and praxis of the letter, this verse must rest on some other grounds than the fact that they are women. These grounds are likely Paul's view of the role of wives.[533] Fiorenza agrees that it is wives who are addressed here since Paul ascribes a special holiness to unmarried women and virgins (7:1&34). She concludes that it is possible that Paul allowed pneumatic participation of 'holy women,' just not wives.[534]

What is the exact meaning of the silence that wives are to keep in the churches? Scholars have proposed a number of situations and contexts in which Paul may have felt it was appropriate for wives to remain silent. Harold Holmyard explains the tension between 11:2-16 and 14:34-35 by suggesting that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 does not refer to congregational settings, and 14:33b-35 does, therefore, there is no conflict between the two.[535] He argues that:

> Believers in church gatherings represent the body of Christ, the society of God's people. Those who speak are in defacto leadership roles, since all others must listen. In planned, formal meetings men ought to assume these authoritative responsibilities. But in the many small, fortuitous groupings of everyday life a woman's speech need not imply authority over males.[536]

I would question, however, why a woman having authority over a man in speech is somehow against the appropriate workings of the body of Christ. Krister Stendhal

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[532] Ellis, 'Silenced Wives,' 217.
[533] Ellis, 'Silenced Wives,' 218.
[534] Fiorenza, 'Paul and the Politics of Interpretation,' 161.
[535] Harold R. Holmyard, 'Does 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Refer to Women Praying and Prophesying in Church?' *BS* 154 (1997), 461.
[536] Holmyard, '1 Corinthians,' 465.

presents a more likely interpretation for the meaning of the silence in verse 34. He says that, 'the context (vs 35) makes it clear that the silence here stands in contrast to "asking questions" not to preaching, teaching or prophesying. That being so, there is no tension between this passage and the clear reference in ch. 11 to the fact that women may prophesy.'[537] Also, it is possible that a situation existed in Corinth in which some married women were disrupting the worship service by asking too many questions. Paul is speaking in response to such a situation. Therefore, as Fiorenza suggests, 14:26-36 is best understood as directions for church order, with rules for glossolalists (27ff), for prophets (29-32), and for wives (33b-36). She also adds that Paul resorts to an authoritarian appeal since he guesses that his arguments are not holding any ground with the Corinthians.[538] I would agree with Fiorenza that the instructions here are likely for wives and not women in general, since it is only wives who would have husbands to ask at home. This also aligns with Paul's previous teaching on women in chapter 7 where he seemingly ascribes some kind of special holiness to virgins and attempts to make clear demarcations between the behaviour of married and unmarried women.

For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to note, that it is *questions* asked by wives that are seemingly disruptive. It seems unlikely that wives are the only category of people who were asking questions at a Christian gathering. Why ask wives to be quiet? It may be that many people asked questions when the community met for worship-indeed that theological discussions were taking place among them. Perhaps Paul felt that all the questioning and discussing was disrupting their devotional lives, and in an attempt to control the discussions, Paul here chooses to ask wives for silence. These two short verses supply added proof that extensive theological discussions were taking place in the community behind 1 Corinthians.

In summary, 14.34 & 35 must have been part of Paul's original correspondence with the Corinthians since they are found in all known manuscripts, though in different places.

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[537] Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 29.
[538] Fiorenza, 'Paul and the Politics of Interpretation,' 160.

The context for these verses is one in which instructions are being given for church order (vs. 26-36), and these specific verses are for wives who Paul feels are causing unnecessary disruption by asking too many questions. Here again it is wives who are being asked to be silent in order to maintain calm in the worship setting, though it is hard to believe that it was *only* wives who were asking questions, as if being married somehow made a woman more inquisitive, while her husband or unmarried sister remained silent. It is not hard to imagine that in an environment where Paul feels there is too much noise and he needs to ask someone to be quiet, that wives may be an obvious choice in a culture that value the male voice over the female voice, wives are the group of women who definitely have someone to ask at home. It is also not hard to imagine that in such circumstances, some women preferred to follow a theology that valued celibacy.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, it has been shown that in reading 1 Corinthians as a rhetorical text, we may begin to reconstruct the theological debates going on in the community. The first century community at Corinth was in a crucial stage of identity formation, and members may have felt anger towards the Roman establishment. This multicultural community met in both small and large groups for worship and discussion. The general air of discontent, coupled with the multicultural composition of this fledgling church of a relatively new faith, contribute to my thesis that theological debates about identity issues were occurring at Corinth, and not least among these issues was that of gender. In 14.34-35, Paul asks wives for silence during worship, which again supports the claim that the atmosphere was one of questioning and debate. In an attempt to control the noise, Paul here again asks that married women take a back seat for the sake of the community.

Through the work of Antoinette Clark Wire, among others,[539] we have learned that central to the Corinthians' theology was a phrase similar to the one found in Gal. 3.26-28. Through allusion to Gen. 1.27, this phrase had come to mean that a believer's

[539] See full discussion, p 107-108 above.

identity in Christ was not dependent on her sexual identity. Further, the Corinthians felt that they possessed a special wisdom, and had cultivated their own enlightenment and insight. On the other hand, for Paul, wisdom was inaccessible, belonging to the hidden depths of God's Spirit. Community morality was important for Paul, more so than individual possession of wisdom. Paul's theology revolved around a between-the-times vision of God's work in Christ. Though Christ's work had begun, it was far from complete.

Based on the Corinthian's use of the baptismal phrase found in Gal 3.26-28, and Paul's preference in the shortness of time, all agree that celibacy is better than marriage. Paul's community orientation leads him to believe that avoiding immorality should be the responsibility of the whole community, men and women together. On the other hand for some of the community members, the fact that in Christ there is no male and female, allows these Christians to live in their preferred state of celibacy.

Another issue at stake in Corinth was the demarcation of gender identities during worship. Interpreting known tradition from Genesis (11.8-9 & 12), Paul argues that yes, women should be marked with a head covering during worship. A cryptic phrase about the angels leads us to believe that the issue of head-covering for women was somehow related to the presence of the angels during worship and that this issue was discussed in the community. Paul need only refer to this discussion in passing to make his opinion known.

Thus it has been shown that amongst the Corinthians, the discussion of female identity involved *at least* the following theological factors: 1) God's wisdom, its meaning and possession; 2) Christ's death and his return; 3) the presence of angels during worship. 4) the meaning of baptism and 5) the interpretation of Genesis 1.27.

CHAPTER 4

1 Timothy

The goal of this chapter is to uncover theological debates about the place and role of women in the communities[540] behind the first letter to Timothy. It forms the second case study in a collection of three, and unfolds in much the same way as the previous chapter.[541] I begin this task with a discussion of the ways in which 1 Timothy has been dealt with in the past in relation to questions about women. This is followed by a discussion of why I am choosing to isolate 1 Timothy from the rest of the Pastoral Epistles. The question of authorship, which is central to most discussions of 1 Timothy, will be approached, if only to argue that, for once, it should be left to one side. We will then proceed to uncover what we can about the shared theologies of author and audience, about the author's own theology, and about the theologies held by the other teachers in the community, those whose characters the author derides. From this discussion will emerge the conclusion that theological debate was a prominent feature in the life of the communities behind 1 Timothy. From here, we will proceed to discuss the passages that involve women directly. These passages provide a wealth of information about women in the community, many of whom were actively involved in theological discussion and leadership roles, including wealthy women, deaconesses, and various groups of widows. And lastly, it will be argued that proper interpretation of the Genesis story of Adam and Eve was widely debated, both in the ancient Jewish context, and in the communities discussed. Further, a more specifically Christian debate arose about the place of childbearing in the salvation experienced through Jesus Christ. It is on these

[540] In order to acknowledge the difficulties in knowing with any certainty who exactly the readers of 1 Timothy were, I use the terms 'communities' and 'readership' to describe the addressees throughout this chapter. This issue is discussed in more detail below.

[541] I have decided to discuss 1 Timothy before Ephesians for two reasons; 1) chronology is not important to my study since questions of authorship have been left to one side, exact dates for the texts used are not important; 2) the current chapter unfolds much the same way as the previous chapter on 1 Corinthians. My questions are answered more succinctly by these two texts than by Ephesians, which brings with it a host of different problems, and will therefore be discussed last.

grounds that the struggle over the meaning of 'woman' and her place was taking place in this community.

A DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

Dennis MacDonald

In a paper presented to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1979, Dennis R. MacDonald presents a context for the production of the Pastoral Epistles that pushes the boundaries of those contexts suggested by supporters of the post-Pauline theory of authorship.[542] Macdonald suggests that the author of the Pastorals objected to the depiction of Paul in Asian oral tradition.[543] The author's purpose in writing 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus was to correct the false stories of the storytellers,[544] who were largely female.[545] The stories that the author disagreed with were about celibacy, female teachers both young and old, and the use of wine and meat. Further, the author aims to 'reduce the order of virgins-widows to a vestige.'[546] In summary, Macdonald would remove the Pastorals from the mid-first century and place them, 'in the context of the controversies raging in second century Asia Minor where they belong.'[547]

While Macdonald has gone a long way in describing a potential backdrop for the Pastorals, his evidence is largely dependent on two assumptions, first that the Pastorals can be proven to be pseudonymous, a claim that many still find debatable. And secondly, that *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* is a suitable representation of an oral tradition about Paul, produced and reproduced by female storytellers from the beginning of the second century onward. The current chapter will leave the question of authorship to one side momentarily, as this question has dominated modern research on the Pastorals, and will instead focus on questions of theology and community, without the

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[542] D. R. MacDonald, 'Virgins, Widows and Paul in Second-Century Asia Minor,' in *The 1979 SBL Seminar Papers,* Vol. 1 (ed. P. Achtemeier. Missoula MA: Scholars Press, 1979).
[543] MacDonald, 'Virgins,' 179.
[544] MacDonald, 'Virgins,' 180.
[545] MacDonald, 'Virgins,' 169-70.
[546] MacDonald, 'Virgins,' 180.
[547] MacDonald, 'Virgins,' 180.

need to compare this theology to that of the other Pauline letters. Though Macdonald claims that his research *removes* the Pastorals from interpretations of Paul, it is also *dependent* on an interpretation of Paul, one which places these epistles outside the apostle's innovation.

Sharon Hodgin Gritz

A valuable attempt to offer an interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 has been offered by Sharon Hodgin Gritz in the published form of her doctoral dissertation, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century.* Gritz's method takes into account three contexts behind the verses in question, these are; the historical setting, both religious and cultural; the literary or interpretative context, the Old and New Testaments; and the context of the Pastoral Epistles themselves. Though Gritz's findings about the background of the passage are legitimate, she offers little by way of proof that the author of 1 Timothy (who she believes is Paul) was directly influenced by the practices she describes. For example, she finds that some female devotees of Artemis practised ascetic continence and sacred intercourse. While this could be true, it is not necessarily the case that Paul was concerned that outsiders would confuse Christian women with these pagan women as Gritz claims.[548] Further, on the basis that women were largely restricted in Jewish settings,[549] Gritz argues that Paul wanted them to 'relax in the equality before God that faith in Jesus Christ offered.'[550] Here again, she offers no suitable basis on which such a conclusion can rest.

The crux of Gritz's argument is also its weakest point as she attempts to contextualise the verses within the New Testament. The weakness of her argument goes back to an assumption that she makes at the outset that 'Scripture does not contradict Scripture.'[551] In this way, she aims to align 1 Tim 2.9-15 with 1 Cor 11.2-16 and Eph 5.21-33, and

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[548] Sharon Hodgson Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham MY: University Press of America, Inc., 1991), 43.
[549] This claim has been refuted by Brooten, *Women Leaders*, and Fiorenza, *Memory.*
[550] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 43.
[551] Gritz *Women Teachers*, 2.

argues that in all three cases Paul is speaking to husbands and wives, saying that, 'in the worship context, Paul insisted that women do nothing in their participation that would negate or jeopardise their relationships with their husbands.'[552] According to Gritz, the reasons why Paul feels that women are at risk of 'jeopardising' or 'negating' their relationships with their husbands is that they were wearing ostentatious and seductive clothing, had accepted ascetic tendencies, and had falsely understood the role of Eve.[553]

While all of Gritz's conclusions are certainly possible, she has failed to show that they are probable. Her conclusions are based on a cut-and-paste method from her findings in the 'concentric circles'[554] of interpretative contexts, but she offers no valuable proof that these conclusions are immediately relevant to the passage in question. Further, her assumption that an interpretation of the passage must not contradict interpretations of other texts from 'Scripture,' limits her interpretative options to those which gel with other passages on women.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also discusses the Pastoral Epistles in the final chapter of *In Memory of Her*. It is in this chapter that she solidifies her thesis that the shift in the church in the second century was not from charismatic leadership to institutional consolidation[555], but from charismatic and communal authority to authority vested in local officers.[556] This shift was from house church to church as the 'household of God.' As the 'household of God' the Christian community has become stratified according to age/gender divisions[557] and is modelled after the wealthy Greco-Roman household.[558] In the end, Fiorenza concludes that the 'the New Testament's sociological and theological stress on submission and patriarchal subordination has won out over its sociological and theological stress on altruistic love and ministerial service. Yet this 'success' can not be

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[552] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 89.
[553] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, chapter 6, 123-155.
[554] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 3.
[555] MacDonald also argues this in *Pauline Churches*.
[556] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 286.
[557] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 289.
[558] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 291.

justified theologically, since it cannot claim the authority of Jesus for its own Christian praxis.'[559]

The quotation above typifies the paradox behind Fiorenza's conclusions. In one sentence she speaks of a *theological* stress on submission and subordination and, in the next, on the fact that this stress cannot be justified *theologically*. However, the tradition that we find in the Pastorals is one that the author certainly justified theologically. As will be shown below, it is possible to extract the theologies that gel together the community behind 1 Timothy by analysing the way the author makes his points. Undoubtedly the author of 1 Timothy felt that his arguments were justified on theological grounds, given that he is so disturbed by teachers whom he feels do not share his theological bent. Diverging from Fiorenza's argument that submission and patriarchal subordination cannot be justified theologically, I would emphasise that, though the author of 1 Timothy and his followers may be able to justify subordination theologically, this justification should be critically assessed before being accepted by Christian women, ancient or modern.

Margaret MacDonald

In her book, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, Margaret Y. MacDonald reveals the sociological factors that shaped the churches in the Pauline tradition. She discusses the reasons for the increasingly patriarchal values of the early church. On the topic of the Pastorals, she argues that changes were occurring when effective leadership in the household became an important criterion for leadership in the church.[560] She concludes that, 'the desire to evangelise, the role of the Greco-Roman household as a model for the formation of the *ekklesia* and the tensions experienced in relations with outsiders were some of the social factors discussed with respect to the solidification of authority structures.' To add to Margaret MacDonald's conclusions, I hope to reveal the theological factors which were discussed as authority structures were solidified.

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[559] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 334.
[560] MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 236.

In this paper I will attempt to move away from various levels of 'apologetic' discourse on the Pastorals and move towards an understanding that accepts the author and audience as holding legitimate Christian theologies. This is done in two ways; first, by moving away from the question of authorship, and thus from comparison with Paul, and allowing the theology of 1 Timothy to speak for itself; and secondly, by moving away from the notion held by Margaret MacDonald and Fiorenza that the author of 1 Timothy was single-mindedly concerned with the public perception of the church. Instead, I intend to show that both author and audience struggled to produce a Christian theology that encompassed both their current lifestyles and the tradition from which they came.

WHY 1 TIMOTHY?

It is common opinion that 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are the work of a single hand, written either by Paul or in Paul's name, within a couple years of each other.[561] As such, it makes sense to treat them as a unit in an attempt to uncover the purpose and theology of the author. Also, since each of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are quite short and individually contain scanty bits of theology and instruction, treating them as a unit helps to provide a broader base from which conclusions can be drawn. The so-called 'Pastoral Epistles' are treated as a unit so often, that it would be difficult to find a commentary on one epistle alone, and not all three.[562] For example, despite the fact that she thinks that 1

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[561] For example Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ed. H. Koester; trans. by P. Buttolph and A. Yarbro; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), describe these letters as 'three expressions of one and the same concept (p. 71), and 'imply[ing] a unified, consistent concept (p. 8).'

[562] For examples see C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: NclarB, 1963); N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 4th ed (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969); Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*; L. R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tubigen: Mohr, 1986); P. Dornier, *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris: SB, 1969); B. S. Easton, *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Word Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1948); Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Leicester and Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Press, 1990); A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles,* NCBC (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans. 1982); P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London, Villiers Pubns, 1921); J. Houlden, *The Pastoral Episles: I and II Timothy, Titus* (London: SCM Press 1989); J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: HNTC, 1963); G. W. Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1992); W. Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924); I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the*

& 2 Timothy and Titus were written at different times, and have different concerns, Frances Young still treats them together in one book, making generalisations about the theology of the three together.[563]

However, the Pastorals themselves do not purport to address a unified situation. For example, they have two different addressees, and two or three different destinations.[564] Luke T. Johnson laments the fact that, in modern scholarship, the Pastorals are always treated as a group and almost never as individual books. He discusses some of the consequences of such a grouping.[565] First, characterisations are drawn from the evidence of all the letters together and then applied to each of them equally, even though a particular letter may have little evidence of that trait. Johnson says that 'such generalisations blur the distinctions between the letters and strengthen the perception of them as a single literary production.'[566] On a similar tack, J. Kelly notes that no adequate explanation has been presented as to why there are three letters rather than one or even two, should the author have written them all at the same time.[567] Therefore, in an attempt to isolate the particular character of a particular discussion in the early church, 1 Timothy will be treated as a separate letter from the other Pastorals. Using the text this way can only be inappropriate if 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus were written at the same time, by the same author, to the same community and were intended to be read together.[568] Despite the similarities between the letters, this seems highly unlikely.

Pastoral Epistles, CCHSONT (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); J. D. Miller, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents,* SNTSMS 93 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); D. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1988); and C. Spîcq, *Les épîtres pastorals*, 4th ed (Paris: Gabalda, 1969).

[563] Frances Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). It should be added here that this is in part due to the requests of publishers and those who compile series of commentaries. It seems that interpreters will often be asked to treat the Pastorals as a unit, by someone else's choosing.

[564] J.M. Holmes, *Text in a Whirlwind: A Critique of Four Exegetical Devices at 1 Timothy 2.9-15,* Studies in New Testament Greek 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 110.

[565] Luke T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1996), 7.

[566] Johnson, *Letters*, 7.

[567] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles,* 31.

[568] Holmes, *Text*, and Johnson, *Letters* and *Introduction to the New Testament,* both agree that the Pastorals do not address one uniform situation.

If we want to uncover the intricacies of a theological struggle taking place in a community, it is best to take one letter in isolation and try to imagine what might have been going on in *that* community that sparked the need for *that* particular letter.

CONTEXT

Author and Date

It is the case that one's views on authorship will largely shape one's decisions about the community behind the letter. This complicates my task in many ways. For example, if the letter is pseudonymous, as is often claimed, did the author expect his audience to believe it was by Paul, or were they all familiar with pseudonymy as a literary genre? Also, if the letter is not by Paul, as it claims to be, then is the entire situation constructed? How much of the letter is fiction and how much of it addresses real people with real problems? Fiorenza has similar difficulties in discerning the context of the Pastorals, 'Are Timothy and Titus in charge of one or several churches? How large are these churches and do house churches still exist at the time?'[569] Some of the above questions must be addressed before we can go on to discuss the connections between theology and women's issues in the church (or churches) behind the letter.

In the last 200 years of biblical scholarship, much attention has been paid to the question of authorship of the Pastorals. The logic behind this has been that one must make an assessment of authorship and date in order to place these letters in a context for discussion.[570] Martin Dibelius admits that the evaluation of the Pastorals has depended on a one-sided emphasis on the question of authenticity. After making a judgement in this regard, theology is often based on assumptions of attempted continuation with Pauline thought, and a judgement as to the author's success.[571] As mentioned above, it is my intention to remove the focus of study from the author of the text and his theology,

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[569] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 288.

[570] For example, on the first page of his commentary, Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, says 'It can safely be said that everyone who attempts a commentary on [the Pastorals] must begin by making his position on [the question of authorship] clear, because what he believes about their authorship will condition almost everything else he has to say about them.'

[571] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 8.

and refocus on the community as a site of struggle over a number of theological issues. Other exegetical and hermeneutical issues surrounding the interpretation of the Pastorals have often been based on prior decisions about the author. However, final decisions about authorship are deduced by proof that is convincing for some, yet rejected by others.[572]

Various suggestions have been made as to the author of the Pastorals. Starting with Schleiermacher in 1807,[573] a number of scholars have favoured the theory of non-Pauline authorship,[574] some claiming that the letters were written by a school charged with the preservation and circulation of Pauline teaching and traditions.[575] The judgement that the Pastorals may be pseudonymous is based less on a single argument than on the convergence of a number of arguments.[576] Metzger offers a host of reasons as to why an author may choose to write under a pseudonym.[577]

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[572] Holmes, *Text,* 19.

[573] First and Second Timothy and Titus were first called the Pastoral Epistles by Paul Anton (of Halle) in 1726; Easton, *Pastoral Epistles*, 1, due to their character and concern for church organisation. It was Friedrich Schleiermacher who was the first to take a step forward and express doubts as to the genuineness of 1 Timothy in 1807; A. Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 7. In 1812, Eichhorn made the claim that all 3 Pastoral epistles are by the same author and all are spurious. Eichhorn also claims to have submitted this view in a lecture prior to Schleiermacher's proposal in 1807; Schweitzer, *Paul*, 8. The Pastoral's were the first of Paul's works to be brought under question. In 1845, Baur states that he considers only Galatians, Corinthians and Romans to be confidently called Pauline. Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Thessalonians and Philemon he deems 'uncertain', and the Pastorals, he claims, have clearly been proven to be post-Pauline; Schweitzer, *Paul*, 9. In forty short years, Paul's letters were put to the test, the outcome of which left the Pastorals outside the list of authentic works.

[574] Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*; Easton, *Pastoral Epistles*; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*; Houlden, *PastoralEpistles*; Harrison, *Problem*; Young, *Theology*; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*.

[575] See G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 86.

[576] Dibelius and Conzelmann outline the six arguments that converge as proof of pseudonymity. First, there is the testimony of the early church: the Pastorals are not found or quoted definitively in any documents before the third century. Secondly, the polemic against the heretics is difficult to date to the first century, whereas it fits more suitably in the context of Marcion's perceived heresy. Thirdly, it is difficult to find a place for the Pastorals in Paul's life as it is known to us. Further, the vocabulary of the Pastorals appears to diverge markedly from that of the other Pauline Epistles. Also, Hans von Campenhausen demonstrates the non-Pauline character of the letters from the standpoint of the history of church development, arguing that they belong to the turn of the century or later Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (trans. J. Baker; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 106-119. And lastly, Dibelius and Conzelmann argue that many passages in the Pastorals give the impression of imitation and familiarity with the book of Acts

The 'fragment theory' of authorship, in which the author has access to a number of Pauline fragments, which he includes in the Pastorals, can be attributed to Von Soden (1893).[578] A related theory is that the Pastorals are composite documents, written over years and based on notes from Paul to Timothy and Titus.[579] In the end, there are numerous problems with the hypothesis that the Pastorals are pseudonymous and related theories such as the 'fragment' theory. Fee and Johnson remain unconvinced by the arguments that these letters are not written by Paul during his lifetime.[580]

Surprisingly, Donald Guthrie is able to name 24 modern scholars who have held the traditional position that the Pastorals are authentically Pauline.[581] A related theory is that the letters are Paul's but written using Luke as an amanuensis.[582] Keeping to Pauline authorship enables an interpreter to answer questions that those favouring pseudonymity

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(Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 1-5). Most scholars who hold that the Pastorals are pseudonymous hold these six, or some combination of these, as the main reasons for their assertion.

[577] First, a female author might have felt that her work had greater possibility of being accepted if she published it under a male name. Secondly, an author may want to conceal his or her identity when launching attacks at an opponent. Thirdly, there were financial gains to be had from association from a widely-read author such as Galen or Hippocrates. Fourth, someone might write something disagreeable and attribute it to someone else out of pure malice. Conversely, An author might write in the name of a great teacher out of honour and respect. And lastly, Metzger says that modesty may have been a key reason for writing pseudipigraphically; B. M. Metzger, 'Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha,' *JBL* 91 (1972) 245-247. In the case of the Pastorals, should they be pseudonymous, it is likely one of the last two reasons that the author had in mind as he penned the first letter to Timothy. Also, Metzger notes that in general, literary frauds were perpetrated in the interest of securing greater credence for certain doctrines and claims; Metzger, 'Literary Forgeries,' 11. This certainly seems to fit with the purposes of 1 Timothy.

[578] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 2.

[579] Miller, *Composite Documents,* 146.

[580] Fee claims that arguments for pseudepigraphy demand theories of 'compositional technique,' in which 'the author is viewed as purposeful in the overall scheme but negligent or without clear reason in the placement of some materials,' Fee, *Timothy*, 6. For example, the would-be author was crafty enough to compose three letters instead of one, but negligent enough that the situations he constructs do not fit into the known life of Paul. Johnson takes exception to the argument that the Pastorals are of a distinctly different character from the other Pauline letters. He argues that Paul's letters were *occasional* in that they were written to address specific problems in diverse communities and locations. Therefore it is difficult, if not impossible, to systematise Pauline thought. On this basis, no Pauline Epistle can be disregarded on the basis of content; Johnson, *Letters*, 28.

[581] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 21-22. Among them are Spîcq, *épîtres*; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*; and Fee, *Timothy.*

[582] George W. Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, Baker Biblical Monograph (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 3.

cannot, namely, why are there three letters, and why Timothy and Titus? Finally, and perhaps wisely, Donelson argues that we simply do not, and cannot know who the author is.[583]

Given that the question of authorship is so hotly debated, it is difficult to discern with any certainty what might have been the original date and setting of 1 Timothy. However, I would agree with Young that the problems in the churches must have been real enough to invoke the writing of the letter.[584] Further, the author had no reason to write three separate letters all at one time, so it seems most reasonable to assume that 1 Timothy as a whole was composed to deal with problems that the author saw in one or more churches at the time. We can assume it has some degree of literary integrity separate from the other letters, and that the social setting behind the letter may be slightly different from the settings behind 2 Timothy and Titus. We must allow ourselves to be warned by Johnson that, 'a satisfactory social setting for the composition of three such similar and yet quite different letters has not yet been provided.'[585] And since a satisfactory setting has not yet been provided, it is reasonable and responsible to address 1 Timothy alone when it comes to questions of social situation and theology. Obviously, the question of authorship has not been answered with any degree of certainty. For the purposes of this chapter, I propose to leave the question unanswered in an attempt to refocus the discussion on theology and women.

Having decided to leave the question of authorship to one side for the time being, we have not rid ourselves of it entirely. Instead, we have inherited the potential conclusions that come with each possibility. If the author of 1 Timothy was Paul, then we have no problems concluding that the author had a community in mind when he wrote the letter to his colleague. However, if the letter is written pseudonymously, then we have to deal with the possibility that the historical details of the letter could be fictitious, to the extent that there may not be a community or communities behind the letter at all. For example,

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[583] Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tubigen: Mohr, 1986), 7.
[584] Young, *Theology*, 19.
[585] Johnson, *Letters,* 24.

P. Trummer argues that 1.16 gives us in one phrase the author's entire motive for writing; 'for an example to those who believe in him.' As such, the letter's historical details were invented to provide a model for how church leaders should live.[586]

However, Richard Baukham, who argues that all three Pastorals were pseudonymous, also argues that there is a specific situation that gave rise to their writing.[587] After examining the particular literary character of pseudepigraphical *letters*, he concludes that Timothy and Titus were real figures at the time of writing and that the other teachers must represent a group (or groups) existing both at Paul's time *and* at the time of writing.[588] Many commentators also agree that 1 Timothy has a group of communities in view, rather than being a private letter or fictitious scenario.[589] I would agree with these commentators.

Having chosen not to answer the question of authorship, the dating of 1 Timothy must be broad. Those who wish to date the letter to sometime is Paul's lifetime, usually think that Paul wrote the Pastorals during his two years in captivity,[590] while those who feel the letter is non-Pauline sometimes date it as late as mid 2nd century.[591] Clues can be found in the fact that several passages in 1st Clement (c. 95) and Ignatian letters (c.110) seem to echo the Pastorals.[592] Futher, Polycarp was familiar with them and quoted them in his letter to the Philippians (latest, c. 135).[593] The Pastorals are also quoted in

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[586] Trummer, *Paulustradition*, 81-90.
[587] Richard Bauckham's study, 'Pseudo-Apostolic Letters' *JBL* 107 (1988) 469-494, is methodologically precise in that it deals with letter-writing in particular as it attempts to comprehend early Christian Pseudepigraphy.
[588] Bauckham, 'Pseudo-Apostolic Letters,' 492-93.
[589] Young, *Theology*, 4-5; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 42-43; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 83 and 200; Verner, *Household,* 127, 137, 139, 165; Bassler, *Widows,* 31; MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 23.
[590] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 10; also, Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 43.
[591] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 5.
[592] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 18; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 18.
[593] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 3; also see Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), xxiii; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 1; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12; Conzelmann and Dibelius, *Pastoral Epistles*, 1, argue that literary dependence of the Ignatius and Polycarp is not certain since these author's could be quoting traditional teaching and not necessarily the Pastorals directly.

Justin,[594] and also by Irenaeus (bishop of Lyon),[595] therefore were likely written by the first quarter of 2nd century. Interestingly, it is likely that the Pastorals do not feature in the Chester Beatty Papyrus (P46) from the early third century, which is one of the earliest Pauline codexes,[596] and are also absent from canon of Marcion.[597]

Those who attribute the letters to Paul usually date them somewhere between 63 and 80 CE.[598] Thus, 63 CE will be taken as the earliest possible date, and 130 CE as the latest possible date for the writing of 1 Timothy.

Destination

1 Timothy, and the Pastorals in general are commonly associated with Asia Minor.[599] This is because of the reference to Asia, and Ephesus in particular in 1.3. Also, the possibility of the texts being quoted by Polycarp lead us to Asia Minor, since he was the bishop of Smyrna.[600]

The likelihood that Ephesus specifically was the destination of 1 Timothy is debatable, especially among those who think the letter is pseudonymous. However, even in such circles, many would agree that the letter was likely meant for a community or communities in Asia Minor.[601] Both religiously and economically Ephesus was the centre of Asia Minor. The city was located at the mouth of the Cayster River on the western coast of Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey, between Smyrna and Miletus.[602] The port city acted as a commercial centre linking east and west due to its harbour.[603] It

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[594] Scott, *Pastoral Epistles*, xxiii.
[595] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 2.
[596] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 4.
[597] Conzelmann and Dibelius, *Pastoral Epistles*, 2.
[598] Alan Padgett, 'Wealthy Women at Ephesus: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in Context,' *Interpretation* 41 (1987), 20; Fee, *Timothy*, 8.
[599] Barrett, *Pastoral*, 12; Young, *Theology*, 15; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles,* 14.
[600] Barrett, 'Controversies,' 19.
[601] For example see D. R. MacDonald, 'Virgins,' and M. Y. Macdonald, *Pagan Opinion*, 165-176.
[602] Yamauchi, *The Archaeology of New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor* (London and Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, 1980), 79.
[603] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 12.

is likely that it was the fourth biggest city in New Testament times after Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, with a population of approximately 250 000.[604] Josephus (CE 37-ca.100) called Ephesus the 'metropolis of Asia.'[605] Further, Strabo (63 BCE- 21 CE) said of the city that it 'grows daily and is the largest emporium in Asia Minor this side of Taurus.'[606] Also of interest is the fact that the city held a large colony of Jews since the Romans allotted a quarter of the city to them.[607] Any members of 1 Timothy's audience from Ephesus would have lived in a well-populated city, encountering various cultures, philosophies and religious practices on a daily basis.

Though many religions shared Ephesus and Asia Minor, the city, and in fact the whole area, largely grew up around a temple dedicated to Artemis. The temple was so great that it was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.[608] According to ancient tradition, the original temple was set on fire and destroyed on the day Alexander the Great was born, July 20, 356 BCE.[609] The rebuilt temple was the largest structure in the Hellenistic World. It was built entirely of marble and was 110 metres long, 55 metres wide, and 60 feet high with 127 pillars according to Pliny the Elder.[610] 'The Artemission,' as it is sometimes called, stood outside the city, standing apart not only geographically, but also politically from the municipality proper.[611] Artemis (known to the Romans as Diana) was a female deity, a common feature of the mystery religions.[612] This also meant that women received appointments to the priesthood, and like other mystery cults, Artemis claimed the loyalty of many women from the region.[613] The goddess was also worshipped at Colossae, Loadicea and Hierapolis.[614] Thus, the mystery cult whose main temple was the largest structure in the known world, and whose

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[604] Yamauchi, *Archaeology,* 79.
[605] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.10,11 in H. St. J. Thackeray (trans) *Josephus*. Loeb Classical Library.
[606] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 11.
[607] Gritz, *Women Teachers,* 12.
[608] Gritz, *Women Teachers,* 12.
[609] Yamauchi, *Archaeology,* 83.
[610] Yamauchi, *Archaeology,* 103.
[611] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 13.
[612] Gritz, *Women Teachers,* 34.
[613] Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 35.
[614] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic,* SNTSMS 63 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 20.

followers were largely women who might expect to be accepted to the priesthood, would have been familiar to the recipients of 1 Timothy. It is not difficult to imagine how the place and role of married women may have become an issue in fledgling churches still struggling to solidify an identity in their world.

THEOLOGY

There are numerous problems in trying to map out the theology of one or more of the Pastoral Epistles. For many, the key problems have stemmed from the question of authorship. If the author was Paul, then we have a wealth of material on which to establish the author's theological agenda. Dornier laments that, 'd'une part elles contiennent des passages qui s'accordent parfaitment avec la theologie paulinienne la plus authentique, d'autre part elles présentent des développements difficilement attribuables à L'Apôtre.'[615] If the case is the latter, and we decide that 1 Timothy is post-Pauline, then we are left with very little on which to base our assessment of the author's theology. Likewise, if we reserve judgement on the authorship of 1 Timothy, and treat it differently from 2 Timothy and Titus, we must necessarily deal exclusively with the theological data we can glean from the text itself. The comparison of the Pastorals to the genuine Paulines have caused some to struggle to draw any conclusions about the theology of the Pastoral letters. Easton says that 'we can scarcely speak of the 'theology' of the Pastoral Epistles.'[616] Frances Young is a bit more optimistic saying that theological statements can be found but little theological argument.[617] I would agree with this statement and would add that the fact that theological statements are made at all, at least means that we can access the author's theology to some extent. Working with what we have is an essential starting point.

The lack of theological argument in the Pastorals has lead some interpreters to refer to it as a handbook or manual of church organisation, but E. F. Scott refutes this claim arguing that '...all that is said of organization is comprised in something like a tenth part

[615] Dornier, *épîtres*, 34.
[616] Easton, *Pastoral Epistles*, 22.
[617] Young, *Theology*, 24.

of the Epistles, and even in this there is nothing that can properly be called Church order.'[618] Guthrie claims that it is erroneous to regard the epistles as a manual of church order in the sense in which manuals were later used. There is, for example, almost complete absence of instruction on administration, civil relationships and conduct during worship, all features of later church manuals.[619] 1 Timothy, therefore, should not be regarded as a manual of church organisation.

The author of 1 Timothy undoubtedly had a theology of his own. He was a religious person, to the extent that he felt moved to sit down and write a letter which he hoped would influence the future of the church, a future that he felt involved in, and concerned about. These are the actions of a man who holds a very deep faith, no doubt the owner of a definitive theology. Further, by not addressing the question of authorship as a primary concern, we have changed the frame by which we judge our text. Since the question 'Pauline or not?' no longer remains, nor does the comparison to Romans or 1 Corinthians. When compared to a text like Romans, of course 1 Timothy seems to be lacking in theological argument, but take that comparison out of the frame, and 1 Timothy becomes strikingly theological. As Young says, 'these epistles may not make sense as Pauline theology, but they do have a theology of their own.'[620]

Thus, the theology of 1 Timothy will be discussed under three categories: the shared theology of author and audience, the theology of the other teachers, and the theology of the author.

Shared Theology: One God, One Mediator

As Wire has shown in *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, arguments from the structure of reality and arguments that appeal to logic, by their nature, reveal that with which the author expects his audience to concur.[621] The degree to which this form of argument

[618] Scott, *Pastoral Epistles,* xxvii.
[619] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 32.
[620] Young, *Theology*, 73.
[621] Wire, *Prophets*, 28-34.

allows us to glimpse the *actual* audience depends on the accuracy of the author's knowledge of his readers. In the case of 1 Timothy, the author addresses specific concerns he has with the conduct of some members of the community, and in 1.20 even names two community members specifically. We can conclude, therefore, that the author of 1 Timothy has specific knowledge of the community he addresses.

First, as Christians, Jesus Christ and his work are at the heart of the shared theology of author and audience. The author introduces 1:15-18 with the phrase; 'Faithful is the word and worthy of all acceptance.' What follows is part of an intricate argument from the structure of reality, with which the author hopes to gain the trust of his audience. Using himself as an example, the author unpacks his theology of Christ's role in salvation, basing it in Christian teaching that his audience would have heard and consented with. These theologies are that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that Jesus Christ has had mercy on Paul, and by implication all Christians, since Paul is the worst of sinners, and that those who believe in him receive eternal life. God is the only God, the King eternal, immortal, invisible and honour and glory should be upon him forever and ever. In 2.3-6, Paul speaks of 'God our Saviour,' who wants all to be saved, and to come to a full knowledge of truth. There is one mediator of God, that, Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all. On the basis of this argument, Paul legitimises his own status as an apostle, as well as the instructions that follow. This same theology is reiterated in 4.10, again as a way to legitimate the author's theology; 'we have set our hope on a living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of believers.' Finally, a similar theology of God and Christ appears near the end of the letter; God gives life to everything, and Christ Jesus made a good confession while witnessing before Pontius Pilate. God will bring about the appearance of Jesus in his own time. The author ends with a reiteration of 1.17, God is the blessed and only Ruler, king of kings and Lord of lords, who is the only one having immortality, who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one can see or has seen.

Secondly, purity of heart and sincerity of faith are important to the community. This can be deduced from the author's first argument from the structure of reality. In 1.5, the end-

point of the author's command to Timothy is love, from a pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith. From this we know that Timothy and his peers value these characteristics.[622]

Thirdly, the audience behind 1 Timothy was conscious of the Jewish tradition from which their faith emerged. An argument from the structure of reality typifies this point in 1.8-11. Here the author argues from known concepts about the importance of the law, 'We know that the law is good,' and offers an argument by contraries, that is, the law is for those who do whatever is contrary to 'healthy' teaching. This audience relates itself in some way to the laws of the Hebrew tradition from which it emerged. Further evidence for this comes in 5.17&18 where the author substantiates his claim that elders deserve double honour by quoting from known scriptural tradition (Deut. 25.4 & Luke 10.7).[623]

Thus some of the key theologies that bind the community have been extracted. These are that Jesus Christ came to save sinners and have mercy on them. He is the one mediator and has acted as a ransom on the community's behalf. Further, the community awaits Christ's return, and those who believe will receive eternal life, and a full knowledge of truth. The God of Christ Jesus is eternal, immortal and invisible, giving life to everything. It is on these beliefs that the faith of the author and audience rest.

The other teachers

The author of 1 Timothy is obviously opposed to the teachings of some of the leaders among the readership. He accuses them of a variety of crimes, such as promoting controversies and rejecting their faith. He calls them names and derides their characters. But does he give us any hints as to what they may actually be teaching?

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[622] This is also reinforced in 1.19, where the author asks Timothy to fight the good fight 'having faith and a good conscience.'

[623] Interestingly, Paul quotes Deut. 25.4 in 1 Corinthians 9.9. The author of 1 Timothy (Paul or otherwise) was undoubtedly aware of Paul's previous use of this piece of scripture; perhaps our audience was as well?

Amongst the readership of 1 Timothy different teachings and the controversies that were ensuing as a result are at the heart of the author's concern in the letter. He considered some of these teachings to be 'godless chatter,' and useless tales. Therefore, though he does not spell out an intricate theology himself, he is concerned primarily with theology, namely ensuring that proper theologies were taught in the communities. A proper understanding of marriage and the household are important to the author that is why he requires overseers, deacons, and widows to fulfil their roles in this institution. For the purposes of this study, it should be added that the existence of different teachings and resultant 'chatter' offers proof that the addressed communities were lively ones, discussing and debating various issues, and hearing the opinions of various leaders.

Among other things, we can say that these teachers must have been Christian, since 4.1-7 states that the Spirit foretold that some would abandon the faith.[624] The other teaching is perceived by the author as a perversion of truth, rather than alien to it. Donelson argues that the others have Jewish roots to their teaching since they pursue μυθος and γενεαλογία, which were popular Jewish concerns at the time.[625] A further Jewish element is seen in 1.7 which describes an improper use of the law.[626] On the other hand, Barrett and Young have argued that μυθος and γενεαλογίαι refer to the cosmological schemata of the gnostics.[627] Further evidence of a gnostic background lies in 6.20, when Timothy is told to turn away from what is falsely called knowledge.[628]

An overall assessment brings us to the conclusion that our knowledge of various movements of Christian thought is too meagre to enable us to place these teachers

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[624] Young, *Theology*, 6. Some others who think that the teachers are Christians are; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 110-11; Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 253-54; D. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistle,* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 71 (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 176-78; Fee, *Timothy*, xxi; MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 165; T. C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Louisville KY: John Knox, 1989), 78.

[625] Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy*, 122. Also see Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 34-36 and Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus*, 13.

[626] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12.

[627] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13; Young, *Theology*, 10.

[628] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13.

precisely.[629] Some speculate that they represent some kind of 'Jewish gnostics.'[630] Guthrie speaks of a possible remote kinship with gnosticism.[631] Karris calls them a 'gnosticising group.'[632] The teachers could of course have both Jewish and gnostic elements since some have found evidence that gnosticism likely had Jewish apocalyptic roots.[633]

To be more specific, though we cannot be certain about their identities we have seen that these Christian teachers were teaching using Jewish tradition and that some type of asceticism was involved in their teaching which included the encouragement of celibacy and abstaining from certain foods (1 Tim 4.1-5).[634] Also, the author's harsh derision of the teachers' characters tells us that he perceived them to be a genuine threat to his own teaching. This suggests that they were influential and creative theologians. Further, they appear to have searched the scriptures and been willing to subject their results to public debate (1 Tim 1.6-7).[635]

Author's Emphasis: Different Teaching, Marriage and the Household

The arguments that prove to be the most characteristic of a text are often those that are of the greatest concern to the author, in particular, when those arguments are unique to the author compared with parallel texts of the time or other works by the same author. The most obvious concern for the author of 1 Timothy is that some are teaching a different doctrine (1.3-7, 18-20, 4.1-8 & 16, 6.3-5, 20 & 21). In 1.3 and 6.3 the author uses the word ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω (1.3, 6.3), which means literally, 'teaching differently'

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[629] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13.
[630] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13.
[631] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 43.
[632] R. J. Karris, 'The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,' *JBL* 92 (1973) 563.
[633] For example see R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroads, 1966); or Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982).
[634] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 21.
[635] Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy*, 124.

and is unique to Christian writing,[636] to describe that which he opposes. Further, these teachings have promoted ἐκζήτησις (1.4, 6.4), questionings, or that which has been sought,[637] which is often translated as *controversy*. This different teaching and resultant questioning has led some to ἀστοχέω (1.6), to 'miss the mark,' in their faith and do what is contrary to teaching that is ὑγιαίνω (1.10, 6.3), meaning literally physically healthy, but here presumably refers to spiritual health. Due to the repetitive nature of the author's statement about different teachings and those that teach them, we can conclude that this is one of the author's central concerns.

Many interpreters cite 'false teaching' as the primary concern and background feature of the Pastorals.[638] In 1.3-4 the author states directly that this is his reason for writing. Overall however, it is not false teaching that is emphasised in the text, but rather, tales, endless genealogies and godless chatter (1.4 & 7, 6.4 & 20) as well as questionings or controversies (1.4, 6.4) that are the author's central concern.[639] Instead of false hood, the emphasis falls on the seemingly pointless debate that has arisen as a result of different teachers teaching different things. This is the author's concern. What comprises proper teaching is not spelt out, it is just alluded to. He would prefer peace and quiet (2.2) to the controversies that he currently perceives.

In a few short sentences in chapter 1, the author has moved from a clear description of his own place in God's agenda, to describing the teaching of others as 'myths.' This leaves little space for argument or disagreement, for if someone disagrees, they have God to answer to. God's work is by faith, and apparently involves agreeing with the author and not asking questions or promoting different teachings. The author does not

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[636] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 314.
[637] Bauer, *Lexicon,* 240.
[638] For example, see Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 23. For Hanson, 'false teaching' is one of three central concerns. The others are, church leadership and assertion of Pauline tradition. Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 39, states that false teaching is 'of first importance' to the study of the epistles. Also see Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12-20.
[639] This is observed by Holmes in *Text*, 108. Further, the following argue that chatter and controversy are among the central concerns of the author; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 105; Fee, *Timothy*, 204; Oden, *Timothy*, 73; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 42.

attempt to debate the teachings he is opposing, but chooses instead to deride the character of those who teach (1.6&7, 9-11, 19&20, 4.2, 6.3-5). In fact, personal character is another primary concern in 1 Timothy. Not only does the author deride the characters of those who teach differently to him, but he is also very specific about the characteristics he expects of church leaders, from Timothy himself, to deacons, to widows (1.18&19a, 2.8-12, 3.1-12, 5.9&10).

1 Timothy is littered with references to the household, the family and marriage (2.15, 3.2, 4&5, 3.3, 3.12, 3.15, 5.1&2, 5.4&8, 5, 9-12, 6.1&2). References to this institution are made in relation to leadership positions, Adam and Eve, the church, and widows. The 'other' teachers are said to forbid marriage. Overseers and deacons must manage their households well (3.4&5, 3.12), if they expect to continue with their leadership in the household of God (3.15). Young widows are told to remarry and take up domestic life (5.14) and older widows must be known for having achieved in this area (5.9&10).

The author and readers' view of the institutions of marriage and the family would be coloured by their context. Greek and Roman families were thought to be the cornerstone of society,[640] while Jewish families were the institution that ensured that heirs were

[640] Prior to the first century, in ancient Greece, marriage was arranged as soon as a girl reached sexual maturity so that she would not be tempted to have sex before marriage; Walcot, 'Greek Attitudes Toward Women: The Mythological Evidence,' *Greece & Rome* 31 (1984) 38. Some felt it best to wait until a girl was two or three years into puberty before actually marrying, because a very young woman may not be fertile; Rouselle, *Porneia,* 36. The average age at marriage was 16-17 for women, and 30 for men. Since a husband was often much older than his wife, a groom's mother would, more often than not, outlive his father. In such cases, the groom's mother would still live at home and was able to initiate a new wife into the ways of the household, as well as ensure that a woman was doing her 'womanly' duties; Sarah Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexandria to Cleopatra* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 23. The failure to perform one's womanly duties, i.e., raise the children, keep the home clean, and husband and children fed, was seen as a character 'blemish' and could lead to a reputation of being a slut; Pomeroy, *Women*, 98.
The family was referred to as the οἶκος the meaning of which more closely resembles 'household' or 'estate' than 'family.' The οἶκος included those related by blood, marriage or adoption as well as property held by the family. The main difference between the Greek οἶκος and the modern family, is that the *οικος* includes humans *and* non-humans; Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece: Representations and Realities* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1997), 21. Both men and women held the power to terminate an unhappy marriage. Women did not need permission from a male relative. However, since the οἶκος was mobile, many women would not have means to leave since they were so far from parents and siblings; Pomeroy, *Women*, p. 94. Adultery and infertility were the leading reasons for a man to ask

produced to carry on the Jewish line.[641] There is also some evidence that attitudes towards women and their role were becoming progressively more liberal in the decades leading up to the first century.[642]

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for a divorce. However, a reason for divorce was not required, mutual consent was enough. In cases of divorce, children would stay with their father and the woman would return to her family home, or that of her brother; David Balch and Caroline Osiek, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), 62.

[641] Much of what is known about the status of women in ancient Israel comes from the laws and narratives of the Hebrew Bible. A single, unified portrait of women does not exist; Bird, 'Women-O.T.' *ABD* 6:951-57 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 952, but rather, a variety of images of women can be found in the text, which contains stories of women as mothers and wives, powerful Queens, prostitutes, and victims of brutal violence; Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 27. Behind these disparate images lies a common set of expectations for the Israelite woman, rooted in the need for women's domestic labour, childbearing and nurture. Motherhood in ancient Israelite society was expected and honoured and the reward for childbearing was security and social acceptance; Bird, 'Women-O.T,' 953. The rearing of children is important work in a society where the family is the basic social unit, and as the sexual division of labour in patriarchal society predicts, women were expected to perform these tasks. Phyllis Bird states, 'Fulfilment of that socially demanded, and rewarded role also meant self-fulfilment for most women, for whom barrenness was a bitter deprivation.' Bird, 'Women-O.T,' 952 Childbearing and nurture was not only an expected role, but an identity issue for women in ancient Israel.

The family was the basic unit of Israelite kinship and social structure; Bellis, *Helpmates*, 21. This institution held important military and judicial functions and was the basic economic unit of land tenure. Further, the family was of central importance to the experience and preservation of the covenental relationship between the Jews and Yahweh; Wright, 'Family-O.T,' 765. The family was patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal; Bellis, *Helpmates*, 27. That is, the father was the 'head' of the house, descent was traced through the father, and a woman moved into her husband's home upon marriage. In some instances, two or more women lived together as co-wives and families existed within families. Each of these sub-families had mother-heads, who held some degree of power in relation to their own children and servants; Baab, 'Family,' *IBD* 2:238-241 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 238.

The Hebrew name for the male-headed house is *bet'ab,* meaning literally: father's house; Bird, 'Women-O.T,' 952. The *bet'ab* included the head of house and his wife or wives, his sons and their wives, his grandsons and their wives, plus any unmarried sons or daughters in the generations below him, along with all non-related dependents such as maids and servants, Wright, 'Family-O.T,' 762. A large family was among the most tangible and desirable of God's blessings. It was seen as the essence of Abrahamic covenant, (Gen 15:5) as well as the promised blessing for obedience in the Sinai covenant (Lev 26:9, Deut 28:4,); Wright 'Family-O.T,' 766. Sons and daughters were valued differently in the *bet'ab*. A son would not remain economically dependent on his father past a certain age since he would become an independent, 'productive' member of society. A daughter on the other hand, if unmarried, could remain financially dependent on her father and brothers for her entire life. A daughter's economic value was related to the *mohar,* a sum paid to the bride's family as compensation, which could be expected at her marriage; Wright, 'Family-O.T,' 767. In the case of poverty, a man could sell his daughter as a maidservant or a concubine, or as a working pledge against his unpaid loans and other debts. For a plethora of reasons, male children were valued more highly than female children in the ancient world. Marriage in the ancient world was a contract, or covenant, between two families; Baab 'Family,' 239. Though monogamy was the ideal, it was one that was not always practised; Hamilton, 'Marriage-O.T,' 564. Polygyny is common in the Old Testament, in particular amongst leaders and other rich men. Victor Hamilton notes that, 'Wherever the emphasis of marriage is placed on procreation or the sexual satisfaction of the man, more than likely polygyny will flourish;' Hamilton, 'Marriage O.T,' 565. Marriage

Interestingly, the author of the Pastorals uses a traditional form of the Christian *haustafeln*, found also in Ephesians and Colossians, and applies it both to the household itself, and to the church.[643] According to the author of 1 Timothy, the church is 'the household of God' (3.15). As such, he has used a traditional code, familiar to his audience and applied it to a new situation, the church.

Having looked at the context of the text in Asia Minor, and made some observations about the Greco-Roman and Jewish family systems (see footnotes 586-588), it is clear that the author is a product of his time. Thus, as Margaret MacDonald and Fiorenza have attested, the church is starting to show signs of institutionalisation,[644] and a shift in authority from travelling apostle to local bishops and deacons.[645] However from the

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in the Bible takes place under a variety of circumstances for a variety of reasons including arranged marriage, marriage for love, and not least, marriage for procreation and to appease male sexual desire. Though the law encourages long-term productive marriage, all non-canonical sources from the second temple period are aware of the difficulties involved in marriage. The Essenes come closest, of all Jewish groups, to an outright rejection of marriage, though they never reject it completely; Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 62. The Christian preference for celibacy over marriage was a later development. A Greek funerary inscription from Tiberias speaks of a woman who was never married; Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 65. Though the date of the inscription is unknown, if the editors are correct, this tablet is a testimony to the life of a Jewish woman who remained single for her entire existence. This is exceptional in a context where women are usually referred to in relation to their husbands or sons. Also, it shows that there were at least a small number of women who did not follow even the most basic expectation of marriage upon reaching sexual maturity (The use of this funerary inscription as a source should be qualified by the fact that little else is known about the circumstances of this woman's life and therefore her reasons for not being married are unknown). In ancient Judaism, the family was the basic social unit with the father as the head. The Rabbis emphasised procreation as the central purpose of marriage.

[642] It has been argued that in the centuries leading up to the advent of Christianity, there was a 'gradual liberation of women,' though this liberation seems to have been stronger in theory than in practice; Bassler, 'Widows,' 25. Greek women in Egypt were making gains in legal a social status, taking initiative in contracting marriage, making greater demands on their husband's sexual fidelity, were able to effect divorce and increasingly were able to own and manage property; Verner, *Household,* 64. There is evidence that in Hellenistic times, women began to appear at social gatherings and were known to make a living as athletes, musicians and physicians. See Lefkowitz and Fant's source book, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, 2nd edition (London: Duckworth, 1992). Further, the Epicureans included women from diverse social backgrounds, and even promoted a *hetaira* to presidency; Bassler, 'Widows,' 26-27. The cynics attracted and accepted female adherents, but the philosophical schools on the whole remained voices for conservatism.

[643] The genre and place of household codes in Christian literature will be discussed in the next chapter on Ephesians.

[644] Macdonald, *Pauline Churches.*

[645] Fiorenza, *Memory.*

author's point of view, it is not a question of institution and regional authority. The author's central concern is proper theology, sound Christian teaching and proper conduct in one's household and in the household of God.

What we have seen so far is that the readership to which 1 Tim was addressed had a certain shared theology of Jesus Christ that gelled them together as a group. Yet this was also a community where different opinions and teachings were debated and questions were asked, and the author felt that this was a problem. Not only that, but the author disagreed with some teachers on various topics, most of which remain unnamed, though we know that celibacy was a contentious issue. The question now remaining is, was one of these topics about the place and role of women? And if so, what were the theological issues driving the debate?

THEOLOGY AND WOMEN

1 Timothy contains three key texts in which the author deals with questions directly related to women in the community. In chapter two, he discusses women's dress, teaching and place in the family. He mentions two groups of females, potentially leaders among the readers, in chapters three and five.

2:9-15

The text moves from a point about men's prayer (vs 8) to its first set of instructions for women. The author states that he wishes women to dress modestly (μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης), without braids, or gold or pearls or expensive clothing (μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ)(2:9). Rather, our author would prefer that women dress in a way that he feels is suiting to women professing reverence. The author goes on to say that women should learn in quietness and submission (2.11) and that a woman should not teach or have authority over a man, but be quiet (2.12). Unlike the above passage about dress, the author gives a theological explanation for why this is. Adam was formed first, then Eve (2.13). Adam was not deceived, but Eve (2.14). And

finally, he states that a woman will be saved through childbearing if she remains in faith, love and holiness (2.15).

One solution to the problem of the meaning of 2:8-15 has been proposed by Alan Padgett who notices that gold, pearls and expensive clothing can only be owned by those who can afford to buy them, namely, wealthy women.[646] Therefore, the author is addressing specifically the *wealthy women* in the community, and more precisely, those who have been following the different teachings that the author disapproves of. Further, Padgett feels that these women were advocating their teachings at house meetings taking place in their own homes and that some had even formed circles of widows in their homes (5.16). Though Padgett's arguments are convincing in some places, they are unconvincing in others. For example, he chooses to interpret all passages on women in the Pastorals as part of the same problem of wealthy women following false teachers. However, in some places connections are not evident. For example, it is not clear that the 'different teaching' the author so ardently opposes has anything to do with the widows in chapter 5. The only clue lies in verse 15, where some of the younger widows have already turned and followed Satan. Also, Padgett argues that it is female teachers who are causing the men to argue in 2.8,[647] but this claim is not substantiated. Despite these hesitations about Padgett's conclusions, his basic assumption will be accepted and that is that, in 2.9 and 10, the author is concerned with wealthy women who are dressing in a way that the author finds inappropriate.

The reader should not be surprised that appropriate dress for women is part of our author's agenda. The concern for modesty was considered a standard virtue for Greco-Roman women.[648] Elaborate hairstyles have generally come to be associated with the end of the first century CE in Rome.[649] Immodest dress, outlandish hairstyles and lavish

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[646] See Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 19-31.
[647] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 22.
[648] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 23. Also see Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe;* or Spicq, *Les Epîtres.*
[649] Maria Wyke, 'Woman in the Mirror: The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World,' in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night* (ed. L. J. Archer, S. Fischler and M. Wyke; Hamshire and London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1994), 144.

jewellery distinguish Roman *hetairai* from wives. Further, modesty was an issue in Hellenistic and Diaspora Judaism as well, where constructing a contrast between luxurious external adornment and the life of internal virtue was commonplace.[650] The ancient Rabbis sought to project the value of modesty at every opportunity.[651]

Some examples from the time illustrate the fact that female attire had widespread meaning and importance. In a scene from a play by Plautus (second century BCE), a maid claims that a woman is sufficiently adorned when dressed 'in charming behaviour.'[652] In an essay, Stoic philosopher Seneca (1st century CE), addresses his mother Helvia by saying that 'modesty is her adornment' and that she therefore lacks the flaws of other women.[653] Seneca is also known for saying that excessive care for the body by women signifies softening of the state's moral fibre.[654] In another example, the Vestal virgins dressed similar to a Roman woman on her wedding day. Departure from this dress signified departure from virginal status, into the realm of misconduct.[655]

The author gives no theological reason why the wealthy women addressed should dress as he feels is appropriate. Given that rhetoric regarding women's dress was widespread in the letter's social context, it may be that allusion to this debate was enough to bring to mind the need to assimilate one's dress code into one's Christian identity. Further, though the author gives no theological *reason* for his argument, he does give his opinion theological *meaning*. As far as the author is concerned women ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσέβειαν should be listening to him. That is, women professing to have reverence for God, or piety, would certainly dress modestly and inexpensively.

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[650] Johnson, *New Testament*, 399.
[651] Leila Leah Bronner. *From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 23.
[652] Titus Maccius Plautus, 'Mostellaria,' in *Mostellaria,* Loeb Classical Library (trans. R.M. Pinkerton, D.N.G. Reid and J.R.G. Wright; London and New York: Heinemann Ltd., G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 157-294.
[653] Seneca, *de consolatione 16*. See Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women's Lives*, no. 148 for an English translation.
[654] Seneca *epistulae,* 114.9, see Wyke, *Adornment*, 141.
[655] Wyke, *Adornment*, 143.

It seems that not all women in the community were dressing in a way that the author found appropriate, otherwise he would not make this statement. He sets up immodest dress and good deeds as opposite ways of 'dressing oneself.' It is possible that the Christian women who are dressing 'inappropriately,' do not see these categories as mutually exclusive, let alone opposites. Presumably, some women are dressing in a different fashion to the way the author would like, and *also* feel that they dress themselves in good deeds, appropriate for women who profess worship to God.

In 2.11, women are asked to learn ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ and ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ. The latter means submission or subjection, but it is the meaning of the former that requires investigation. The Septuagint, Philo and Josephus, among others, make use of ἡσυχάζω when they refer to quietness or rest.[656] 'Remain silent' is another translation for the word, and it is this meaning that is most often used by New Testament translators.[657] Thus, the word encompasses a large semantic field with meanings alluding to peacefulness and rest as well as absolute, literal silence. In the particular context of which we speak, there is nothing to suggest that someone forbidden to teach or have authority should be silenced completely,[658] therefore the translation 'quietness' is preferred.

On this point, Padgett argues that wealthy, influential women were being asked to learn in 'peace' rather than silence.[659] He believes that these women are not being asked to submit to men in general, but to male leaders in the context of worship. The emphasis for Padgett is on peace and quiet while learning.[660] On the contrary, L. T. Johnson feels that while in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:34-36 the context is one of charismatic worship where women were certainly prophesying and praying, here the instruction focuses

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[656] See Bauer, *Lexicon,* 349. Those preferring this translation are Fiorenza, *Memory*, 290, no. 19; Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 23-24; D. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1988), 138; Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 129.

[657] For example, KJV. Also, interpreters preferring this translation are; Dautzenberg, 'Stellung,' 195; Dewey, '1 Timothy' in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. Ringe. Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 355; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 138-39.

[658] Holmes, *Text*, 77.

[659] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 24.

[660] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 24. Guthrie also believes that the instruction for women to learn in quietness applies specifically to public worship, *Pastorals Epistles*, 85.

narrowly on the cultural unacceptability of women teaching in public.[661] We can conclude that in 2.11 the author is saying that peace should be kept during worship, by means of women's quietness.

In 2.13-15, lies the crux of the author's argument, where he legitimates his instructions with theological meaning. The theology presented here has a dual focus. First, we have the argument that women should do as they are told because Eve was created second, thus women are secondary in some way.[662] The author offers the fact that it was the γυνὴ who was deceived and not Adam as a second theological reason as to why women should be quiet and refrain from teaching. Here the emphasis appears to be on the deception, as the word ἀπατάω is repeated twice in the same sentence.[663] Strikingly, the idea that women fell into deception disagrees with the Genesis passage in which men and women are held responsible together (Gen 3.6).[664] The author's interpretation of the Genesis passage may be borne from the fact that it was women who were being 'deceived' by other teachers (5.15).[665] Padgett claims that 'it is the deception of wealthy women that brings out the author's use of Eve, not an anti-woman bias.'[666] Padgett is correct in suggesting that a tangible situation among the readers is probably behind the instructions and theology in 2.9-15. However, it is impossible to believe that the author does not hold any anti-woman bias, given that he argues against female authority by essentially blaming Eve, for the existence of sin.

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[661] Johnson, *New Testament*, 399.

[662] Here, the author seems to have forgotten that the sun, moon, sea, sky, plants and animals were all made prior to humanity and that it would logically follow that humanity should subject themselves to the beasts. However, it is unlikely that the author would have church-members bowing down to the animals. What is more likely, is that he has simply overlooked this logical extrapolation of his own argument.

[663] Here it should be noted that the Genesis account does not support the claim that Eve is more likely to be deceived than Adam.

[664] S. L. Davis, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 18.

[665] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 86. Other interpreters who view women's gullibility as the primary concern are Scott, *Pastoral Epistles*, 27; Hanson, *Studies,* 37; Houlden, *Pastoral Epistles*, 71.

[666] Padgett, *Wealthy Women,* 27.

In order to get behind the meaning of 2.13 and 14, let us look to parallel uses of the story of Adam and Eve from the ancient world.[667] Using Adam and Eve to legitimate a theological standpoint was widespread in ancient Judaism where guidance was often sought concerning the sexes from this archetypal story. As early as *Ben Sira* 25:24, Eve is seen as the author of death and sin, followed also by *The Life of Adam and Eve*, a first-century document.[668] So ingrained was exegesis of this Genesis story in the Jewish mindset, that interpretations of Eve became the rationale for rules and regulations guiding women's behaviour, a 'Jewish catechism of do's and don't's for females.'[669]

Sirach (as seen above) and *The Apocalypse of Moses*[670] share the view that Eve is responsible for sin. Philo also makes use of the story and his governing methodology was to allegorise the text, meaning that his characters came to stand for philosophical principles or spiritual truths. For him, Adam represents the mind, and Eve the senses.[671] He says, 'It was the more imperfect and ignoble element, the female, that made a beginning of transgression and lawlessness, while the male made the beginning of reverence and modesty and all good, since he was better and more perfect.'[672] Also, Philo's 'Questions on Genesis' 1.33, resembles 1 Tim 2.13-15 because Philo does not say that the man was deceived, but that the woman was.

In his version of Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis 3, Josephus makes a statement about the place of women through very subtly rewriting the story. According to him, 'God imposed punishment on Adam for yielding to a woman's counsel,'[673] rather than the

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[667] John Levison has drawn attention to the fact that the diversity of Jewish views of Adam and Eve have unfortunately been ignored because the focus has always been on uncovering the background for Paul; Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 14.
[668] For an English translation see Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* Vols. 1 & 2 (Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1985), 249-296.
[669] Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, 22.
[670] Apocalypse of Moses, 9.1&2, 10.2, 11.1-3, 14.2, 32.2.
[671] For a discussion of Philo's writings on Adam and Eve see, Cheryl Brown, *No Longer Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women* (Louisville KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 1992), 14. For an English translation see F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans. *Philo* Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1929), 62.
[672] Questions on Genesis, 1.43, in Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*.
[673] Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.49, in Thackeray, *Josephus*.

biblical 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree.' This change transfers the emphasis from condemnation of Adam's specific act that was suggested by his wife, to the general 'sin' of letting a woman tell him what to do.[674]

Other parallels are found in the *Protoevengelium of James* (13.1) and *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (31.6), where Eve is said to be deceived as well as seduced sexually. *4 Maccabees* 18.6-8 reveals knowledge of this tradition as well.[675] It is unclear whether the author of 1 Tim was aware of this tradition. A. T. Hanson argues that Paul himself was familiar with the tradition of Eve's sexual seduction but mentions it only in passing in 2 Cor 11.1-3. However, he feels that the author of the Pastorals believed that Eve's sin was sexual. In Hanson's mind, this helps to make sense of v.15, offering a background for why a woman might be saved through childbearing.[676] I do not think that the existence of the argument that salvation can come through childbearing is alone insufficient proof that the author takes Eve's sin as sexual. Though it is likely that he was aware of such a tradition, whether or not he followed that tradition is unknown.

It should be added that during the Hellenistic era views of Adam and Eve were more diverse than is often portrayed.[677] For example *Sirach* 41.3-4 sees death as man's natural lot and not as having been caused by Eve, and *Wisdom* 2.24 blames the devil for the introduction of death. In *4 Ezra,* sinfulness is blamed on the evil hearts of Adam and his descendants.[678] *2 Baruch* 23.4 portrays death as a consequence of Adam's sin. Also, in Romans 5.12, Paul places responsibility of the sinfulness of the world on Adam.

Despite these notable exceptions, the plethora of parallels from Jewish tradition show that the author is part of a long line of interpreters who have looked to the story of Adam

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[674] Cheryl Brown, *No Longer*, 16.
[675] Written sometime between 63 BCE and 70 CE.
[676] Hanson, *Studies*, 76. Other interpreters who believe that the author of the Pastorals had sexual deception in mind when speaking of Adam and Eve are Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 135; Dautzenberg, 'Stellung,' 200; and Dewey '1 Timothy,' 356.
[677] Holmes, *Text*, 269.
[678] For a discussion of this see Brown, *No Longer*, 21-22.

and Eve in order to make a claim about the inferior place and character of women in relation to men. Though many of these examples are similar, none of them correspond directly to the author's interpretation. This has led J. M. Holmes to conclude that 2.13-15 reflects the use of an oral tradition about Eve.[679] The proof for this, Holmes argues, lies in the fact that 3.1 actually relates backward to 2.13-15, and not forward, as it is usually understood. Thus, the teaching about Eve in 2.13-15 is the faithful saying of 3.1. However, Holmes' argument is not compelling for two reasons. First, the claim that 2.13-15 is an existing oral tradition is based on the idea that 3.1 refers backward. And secondly, the claim that 3.1 refers backward is dependent on the idea that 2.13-15 comes from known oral tradition. It seems more reasonable to conclude that 2.13-15 represents an interpretation of the Genesis story that is unique to the author of 1 Timothy, but based in known Jewish traditions (some of which would have been oral traditions).

Verse 15 of chapter 2 is perhaps one of the most difficult to interpret in the whole of the New Testament:

> Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.
>
> σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης·

There are five main points of confusion in this one small verse. First, what is the intended subject of the future passive verb, σωθήσεται, with respect to verse 14? The answer lies in the ἡ γυνή of v. 14, but its meaning is not so simply uncovered. Spîcq and Roloff have both outlined 6 possible identities of this woman.[680] First, some have proposed that she is Eve,[681] or, in order to make more sense of the childbearing aspect,

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[679] Holmes, *Text*, 267-298.
[680] Spîcq, *épîtres*, 382-83; Roloff, *Timotheus,* 140-41.
[681] E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek Text* (London: Tyndale Press, 1954), 48; Roloff, *Timotheus*, 139-40.

Mary.[682] Some have combined these interpretations, claiming that our author refers to both Eve and Mary.[683] Others prefer to see women in general between the lines,[684] while the women of Ephesus,[685] and Christian women,[686] have often been suggested as well. Since the context seems to be one of general instruction for women, I prefer one of the latter three solutions. Also, since, as we have seen, the author likely has a specific situation in mind, we can only conclude that he has particular women in mind as he writes.

Secondly, the sense of the verb σώζω has been questioned. Is its meaning physical or spiritual?[687] In all 'authentic' Pauline epistles σώζω has a spiritual meaning (Rom 5.10 And 1 Cor 7.16),[688] plus verse 15 is in juxtaposition with the sinful state of 'the woman' in v. 14, therefore it is her spiritual state that is being questioned.[689] Thirdly, the denotation of the word τεκνογονία is not clear. The word appears only once in the New Testament, but can be interpreted as child-rearing, rather than child bearing.[690] Fourthly, the function of the preposition διά with the genitive case has been questioned. And lastly, the shift from singular σωθήσεται, to the plural μείνωσιν has confused many. Who must remain in faith, love and holiness in order for the woman to be saved? Is it the

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[682] Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924); Oden, *Timothy*, 101.
[683] Oden, *Timothy*, 101; Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 28.
[684] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles,* 69; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 88; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 74.
[685] Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy*, 74-5.
[686] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 48; Houlden, *Pastoral Epistles*, 72; Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe,* 137.
[687] The *Hippocratic Corpus*, a collection of medical writings from the fourth and fifth centuries BCE, contains books of women's ailments, commonly called the gynaecological treatises (for discussions of these see Rouselle, *Porneia* and G. Sissa, *Greek Virginity* (trans. A. Goldhammer; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). These treaties deal with women's diseases, mostly in connection with the womb. Giulia Sissa, in her book, *Greek Virginity*, says that the ancient 'interest in the anatomy, physiology, and above all pathology of women is derived from the value and purpose ascribed to procreation;' Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, 44. Intercourse leading to the conception of a foetus was the natural remedy that the physician worked to achieve for any disease. As such, many medical prescriptions dealt with the treatment of sterility; Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, 45. Though knowledge of these texts by our author and audience would be a highly speculative assertion, it is interesting none-the-less to note the connection made by physicians between childbearing and the physical well-being of women.
[688] See also 1 Tim 1.15, 2.4, 4.16, 2 Tim 1.9, 4.18 and Tit 3.5.
[689] Stanley Porter, 'What Does it Mean to be Saved by Childbirth?' *JSNT* 49 (1993) 93.
[690] Spîcq, *Les épîtres*, 383-84; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 74; Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 136; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 56-57.

husbands and wives together,[691] the children of the woman,[692] or the women referred to in 11-15a?

Understandably some interpreters cannot fathom that the author would mean to say that a woman's salvation is dependent on her bearing children. For example, Padgett simply concludes that the author is suggesting that these women *return* to marriage and childbearing, and is not meaning to imply that a woman's salvation is somehow dependent on the bearing of children.[693] E.F. Scott has a slightly different solution, saying that the correct interpretation for the verse is: 'She will be saved even though she must bear children.'[694] Stanley Porter comes to a quite different conclusion on the matter, stating that 'regardless of what we may believe today about the roles and relations of men and women, and despite our best efforts to dismiss or obscure what the text says linguistically through ideologically or theologically dictated exegesis, the author of 1 Timothy apparently believed that for the woman who abides in faith, love, and holiness, her salvation will come by the bearing of children.'[695]

Obviously, no consensus has arisen for the meaning of verse 15, so what shall we conclude? If the meaning eludes us, that is not to say it eluded first-century women. There are two possibilities for why the meaning eludes us. One is that there is some kind of error in the original text, either in the manuscripts or made by the author and that is why the verse makes so little sense. Yet there is no evidence for this in the manuscripts. The other solution is to assume that we as readers are the ones who err, because we are missing information about the historical context. If the case is the latter, than we must assume that the original audience understood the meaning of 2.15. Thus it could be argued that the relationship between childbearing and salvation was debated in the community, and that the author had simply to state this one short sentence in order to

[691] Spîcq, *Les épîtres*, 74; Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 137.
[692] Houlden, *Pastoral Epistles*, 72-73.
[693] Padgett, *Wealthy Women*, 31.
[694] Scott, *Pastoral Epistles*, 28.
[695] Porter, 'Childbirth,' 102.

make his opinion on the matter known. This would suggest that the relationship between childbearing and salvation was an issue in the church behind 1 Timothy.

Wire has argued along similar lines in, *The Corinthian Women Prophets,* as she tries to unpack the significance of Paul's cryptic reference to 'the angels' in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 10. Her argument on this point is as follows:

> There are indirect but significant signs that the Corinthians are appealing to tradition. If women prayed and prophesied uncovered because the custom of covering their heads was strange, or inconvenient, or seemed inappropriate in their home-based gatherings, it would have been counterproductive for Paul to make a cause célèbre of it. An argument from modesty, community benefit, or public conduct would suffice. The theological weight of Paul's argument makes it likely that the women who prophesied uncovered chose to do so for some purpose with social consequences and theological justification. This would explain an appeal to Christian tradition, if not necessarily to written Scripture. The abbreviation and obscurity of Paul's arguments also suggest that he is not introducing certain language for the first time. If Paul's letter does not provide sufficient data to understand what he means by "having authority on her head" and "due to the angels" and he does not develop his thought further, these phrases probably are known in Corinth. So "the woman is the glory of the man," could be contesting some other interpretation of women's glory in Corinth.[696]

Likewise here, the fact that the author does not fully develop his thought could be because the issue of childbearing and salvation was contested. This is not difficult to imagine in a community where celibacy was often encouraged. The idea that the author may be alluding to a known debate in the community is also strengthened by the fact that there is no parallel to 2.15 in known Pauline tradition. Hence our author's unique claim must have a contextual reason. Porter reads 2.15 as a concluding statement for the entire section (2.8-15).[697] Within the section Adam and Even are used for illustrative purposes with the idea that it was the woman who was first deceived.

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[696] Wire, *Prophets*, 122-23.
[697] Porter, 'Childbirth,' 93.

As we have seen, interpretations of creation and the fall were vast, and there seems to have been much discussion on the topic. Interestingly, this is the only obvious area in which the author attempts to present a theology of his own. As has been seen, the place of women was a 'hot topic' in and around the first and second century. In Jewish and Christian circles the debate flared up around this key story, a story that was invoked by those who felt that women should remain in their traditional roles. The passage from Genesis provides a pivot around which the following questions are discussed: First, what is the purpose of men and women in creation? And secondly, what is the meaning of 'the Fall' and sinfulness for humanity in the time preceding Christ's return? In analysing these two factors, who are men and women as they exist in God's creation and what is God's design and purpose for them? Also, what kind of punishment have men and women brought on themselves and do these punishments differ on gender lines? These questions are all debated in a new context- that is, that Christ Jesus has saved humanity, acting as a ransom (2.6) for the sins of all Christians. But how should that reality be lived at the time of writing? As in Corinth, the interpretation of various Jewish traditions take place on new ground as Christians understand themselves, their faith, and their world.

3:11

Chapter 3 turns from the instructions of Chapter 2 to descriptions of the characteristics that should be possessed by church members who are in official leadership positions. The passage discusses overseers and deacons. Strangely, in the middle of the discussion on deacons, a sentence is dedicated to γυναῖκας and the qualities they are to possess. There has been much recent discussion about the identity if these γυναῖκας. The two main possibilities are that the author is referring to the wives of the deacons; or to the female counterparts to the deacons, i.e. deaconesses.

Let us first look at the evidence that points to the identity of these women as wives. This position is held by G. W. Knight who argues, firstly, that 1 Timothy 3.8 and 12 refer to deacons, so why would the author diverge and deal suddenly with deaconesses? Secondly, if these instructions were for deaconesses, would they not have been more

detailed?[698] Knight feels these women are wives since there is no reference to their marital status and fidelity as there is with bishops and deacons.[699] And thirdly, if the author intended to address a group of female leaders, why would he not use a more explicit term than 'women,' which is, after all, synonymous with 'wives' in Greek.

On the other hand, the arguments for 'deaconesses' as a translation are strong indeed. This position is held by J. Kelly, and Jennifer Stiefel among others.[700] The arguments for this line of thinking are as follows: firstly, in New Testament times the word 'deacon' had no feminine form. This is exemplified by the fact that Phoebe is simply called 'deacon' in Rom 16.1. The early church, therefore, lacked a term for female deacons, which is why the author says 'women' here.[701] Second, ὡσαύτως, at the beginning of the verse indicates a new paragraph in a sequence of rules for different groups of officials. Third, the virtues required by this group of women are the same as those required by other officials. And lastly, if the author meant the wives of deacons, he could have used a possessive pronoun to say 'their wives,' but he does not.[702]

Stiefel argues that the women addressed here are partners in the ministry of the men in the passage. This seems even more likely if we take into account that fact that other female ministers were known in the early church, i.e. Phoebe and Prisca. Stiefel draws on linguistic and literary evidence to show that this passage proves that female deacons were part of the composition of the communities addressed in 1 Timothy.[703] One thing that is clear is that the women addressed here had some kind of status. How they are perceived is obviously important to the author. Given that the context is a discussion about deacons, they are likely deaconesses, some of whom may also be the wives of deacons. These women are held in high esteem in the church and therefore likely play some kind of leadership role, official or unofficial.

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[698] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 170.
[699] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 171.
[700] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*; Stiefel, 'Women Deacons.'
[701] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 84.
[702] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 61.
[703] Steifel, 'Women Deacons,' 442-457.

5.3-16: Widows

Chapter five of the letter is about a group who find themselves outside the typical family setup, either due to the death of a spouse or by personal choice. Verses 3-16 of chapter 5 are about the 'widows' among the readership. The author opens by saying, 'Honour those who are really widows' (5.3) Based on the next line which asks that the children or grandchildren of a widow take care of her, we can assume that by ὄντως χήρας, the author means women who genuinely have no family to support them. Also, τίμα here seems to mean, honour real widows by *financial* support.

The author wishes the readers to evaluate which widows deserve financial support. Further, the author sees caring for family members as part of the religious duty of the Christian and declares that those who do not care for family members are worse than unbelievers (5.8). Presumably, some families in the community were neglecting the women among them.[704] The instruction for families to care for widows among them may be rooted in the strong tradition of caring for widows found in the Hebrew Bible.[705] In 5.3-8, the author still refers to 'the faith' and 'worse than an unbeliever' giving theological meaning to his instruction. The refusal to support widowed relations places those men and women outside the Christian pale, according to the author.

Still on the topic of widows, the author now moves to the question of who should be on the church's official list of widows (5.9). These women, who are presumably to be supported by the church, must be 60 years old or more and must have been 'the wife of one husband' (5.9).[706] They must also have a whole list of personal and moral

[704] See Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115; Verner, *Household*, 137; M. Y. Macdonald, *Pauline Churches*, 184.
[705] Deut. 10.18, 24.17, Ps 118.15, Is 1.17.
[706] This instruction seems inconsistent in that the author later asks that young women remarry. Thus, if these women follow his advice, they would never be able to join the order of widows, and presumably, not receive financial support if necessary. Knight escapes this problem by suggesting that the author is referring to 'sexual and marital fidelity;' Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 223. Houlden agrees; *Pastoral Epistles*, 93. I do not find this argument convincing and find it more likely that the author simply did not notice this contradiction.

characteristics, much like the overseers and deacons (5.10). From there, the author turns his attention to younger widows who he would prefer that the church keep off their list because their sensual desires may lead them to the desire to marry (5.11). As such, these young women would bring judgement on themselves because they would be going against their first pledge (5.12). Similarly he fears that these women may become idle, going from house to house talking and gossiping about things they should not (5.13). Instead, the author feels younger women should marry and manage households. This would leave the church's enemies no chance for slander (5.14). It appears that the church's critics may have been quick to attack the behaviour of the women.

The author's concerns in writing chapter five are financial, moral and theological. Johnson and Kelly both feel that the author's concern about widows is purely financial; i.e. how should the church deal with limited resources?[707] However, Margaret Davis would be quick to add that the advice that young widows marry or remarry would answer Christianity's critics who may revile believers for allowing their women to remain unmarried.[708] In the Roman world, from the 8th century BCE to the time of Christianity, a *univera* was a woman who only married once, this became a pagan epithet for a good wife.[709] The author's instructions concerning widows parallel this epithet. Finally, the author's concerns are *theological* in that he is concerned that the readers care for its widows in a way that is 'pleasing to God' (5.4), that younger widows do not overcome their dedication to Christ (5.11), and not turn and follow Satan (5.15). Thus, the theological issues at stake here are pleasing the divine (5.4), the meaning of one's dedication to Christ (5.11), and renouncing Satan (5.15).

Was there an order of widows that had a religious function in the text behind 1 Timothy? D. Guthrie concludes that there is insufficient data in the text to conclude that there was an order of widows.[710] However, B. B. Thurston makes an argument for the existence of

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[707] Johnson, *New Testament*, 400-01; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 113.
[708] Davis, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 41.
[709] Thurston, *The Widows*, 16.
[710] Guthrie, *The Pastorals*, 114.

an order of widows based on, first, the context of 1 Timothy, where in the face of different teaching, the author deals with a series of church officials including widows (3.1-6.2).[711] Secondly, the office of widow was large and active enough to require detailed regulations (5.4-6, 9-11, 14 & 16). Thirdly, there is other proof that orders of widows existed in the second century; for example, Ignatius in *Smyrnaeans* 13.1 says 'virgins who are called widows,' referring to virgins who do the work of widows. This implies that some kind of an official post for widows was in existence.[712] There is also proof for the existence of an order within the text itself. For example, the use of the word καταλεγέσθω (v. 9), meaning let... be enrolled and the suggestion that widows take some kind of a vow of faith (v. 12).

Thurston argues that the author of the Pastorals is limiting an emerging institution.[713] There are three groups of widows that the author addresses: 'real' widows, those who are dependent and enrolled (5.3&5, 9-10); widows supported by other means, such as family or well-to-do women (5.4,8&16); and young widows (5.9,11-15).[714] The requirements to join the list of 'real' widows are that a woman must be 60 or older, have no other means of support, have been the wife of one husband, be known for good deeds of domesticity, hospitality, humility and compassion and have taken a vow of some kind. The duties of these 'enrolled' widows are prayer and intercession (v. 5), house calls, (based on an extrapolation of v. 13, where young widows are said to misuse this task), and teaching other women. The widows may have also been in charge of some house churches.[715] It may have been a wealthy widow who cared for other widows in her home in verse 16.[716]

The existence of a large group of so-called widows among the readers is interesting for this study for two reasons. First, it seems to imply that the teaching on celibacy that the author so adamantly rejects has a relatively large following in the community and

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[711] Thurston, *The Widows*, 44. See also Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115.
[712] Thurston, *The Widows*, 54.
[713] Thurston, *The Widows*, 53.
[714] Thurston, *The Widows*, 53.
[715] Thurston, *The Widows*, 50-53. See also Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 75.
[716] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 121.

secondly, those adhering to this teaching are women. Whatever this celibacy-centered theology is, it has encouraged action in the lives of women of all ages.

CONCLUSIONS

We have discussed a number of exegetical and hermeneutical issues surrounding the interpretation of 1 Timothy and have been able to come to many conclusions. First, there is the fact that Christian identity in the community to which 1 Timothy is addressed was grounded in a faith in Jesus Christ as a merciful Saviour, who paid the ransom for a believer's sin. This Christ was expected to return, though it is unclear how imminent his return was felt to be. The one God was depicted in rather distant terms, the immortal King of Kings. We know also, that there were other prominent teachers who the author perceived as a threat (1.4 and 7, 6.4 and 20) and that some of these teachers promoted celibacy. We know from passages such as 2.8-15 and 5.3-16 that issues about women's place and role were at the forefront of the author's agenda, probably because these were discussed in the communities as well.

Our analysis of 1 Timothy has drawn out some of the theological issues over which the community struggled in relation to gender. Interestingly, the author of 1 Timothy has recalled the story of Adam and Eve in order to legitimate his theology. He emphasises the fact that it was *the woman* who was deceived in the garden. Further, we have seen that this story was widely debated in the ancient Jewish context, and being a readership interested in proper interpretation of Hebrew tradition, we can assume that this was the case in our communities as well. Thus, the creation/fall accounts of Genesis 1-3 were at the heart of the struggle for the meaning of woman in this community.

Also, the cryptic nature of 2.15 has led to the conclusion that the relationship between childbearing and salvation was discussed among the readers and that various sides of the debate were well-known within the communities, if not to us. These Christians have cut straight to the core of the issues of biological sex by openly questioning women's reproductive role. They have also cut to the core of Christian theology by questioning

salvation. We can only guess what kinds of questions they may have been asking. Is childbearing really necessary for Christian women? Would it not be better for women to focus on other work, perhaps evangelism or teaching? Can women still be saved if they continue in their traditional roles as wives and mothers?

The author's responses to the community's questions are clear. He would prefer that women keep to their traditional roles in every way, from dress, to submission to husbands in church, to childbearing. We can only assume that there were other leaders who thought differently. Perhaps they taught that women were not to pursue the traditional path, and should feel safe in the knowledge that their salvation was secured regardless of their childbearing potential.

Lastly, we have seen that women themselves were active participants in the struggle for their own Christian identity, and we can assume that they came to a variety of conclusions. Women of wealth, deaconesses and widows of a range of ages struggled to understand their past in Jewish tradition and mythology, and their present and future in the salvation they received through their conversion to the Christian tradition.

CHAPTER 5
Ephesians

This final chapter brings the questions of theology and female identity that have been asked throughout this dissertation to the text of Ephesians. The argument will unfold in much the same way as the other chapters, discussing past scholarship, the theology of the audience (in as much as that is possible), the theology of the author, and the shared theologies of the author and audience. From there, I will proceed to a discussion of 5.22-33, the only text in Ephesians that deals with the topic of women directly. In the case of Ephesians, it is difficult to reconstruct specific theological discussions within a community, since the letter appears to have a general readership in mind, and gives no clues about individuals or current debates.[717] However, analysing Ephesians with my questions in mind has been fruitful for other reasons. For example, no other author entwines his ideal of the marriage relationship so completely with a theology of Christ, as to leave his readers unclear about which point is being emphasised. Further, the fact that the letter is likely intended for not one, but a number of churches means that the author felt that this was an important teaching, to be shared with churches across Asia Minor.[718] As such, Ephesians offers a number of insights that contribute to our understanding of the ways in which female identity was being created across the Christian world.

A DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

Ephesians is a 'risky' choice for a third case study for many reasons. Reconstructing its historical context is difficult, as we shall see. Due to this 'risky-ness,' fewer recent interpreters have asked serious questions about the text, and the single passage on women that appears within.[719] Some of those that have attempted an interpretation are discussed below.

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[717] See discussion of context below.
[718] Again, see discussion below.
[719] Note here that in the case of 1 Corinthians, a number of book-length studies have appeared in the last 10 years, but in the case of Ephesians, there have been none.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

Fiorenza's understanding of Ephesians is bound up in her theory of the increasing patriachalization, or 'kyriarchalization,' of the church that she traces though early Christian origins in *In Memory of Her*. She is most interested in the author's use of the household code,[720] in combination with the baptismal formula.[721] She says, '[w]hile the author insists on the mutuality, unity and equality of uncircumcised and circumcised in the here and now, he maintains such equality for slaves and freeborn only for the eschatological future.'[722] Likewise for women since, 'The general injunction for all members of the Christian community [5.21], 'Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, is spelled out for the Christian wife as requiring submission and inequality.'[723] Fiorenza does however, concede that the negative demand that men are not to be harsh with their wives is not repeated here (Col 3.19),[724] and that the requirement for husbands to love their wives may have been intended to overcome patriarchal marriage patterns.[725] She argues finally that if equality in marriage was the author's intention, he has not gone far enough in his argument, and that instead Ephesians 'christologically cements the inferior position of the wife in the marriage relationship.'[726] She finishes by stating that, 'The 'gospel of peace' has transformed the relationship of gentiles and Jews, but not the social roles of wives and slaves within the household of God. On the contrary, the cultural-social structures of domination are theologized and thereby reinforced.'[727]

Sarah Tanzer

Sarah J. Tanzer has argued in her entry in *Searching the Scriptures*[728] that Ephesians 5. 22-6.9 was not part of the original correspondence but was a later addition to the text. Tanzer makes this argument on two bases. First, without this section of text, 4.1-6.20

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[720] The definition and purpose of the household code will be discussed at length below.
[721] As has been shown, Fiorenza traces the use of the baptismal formula found in Gal. 3.26-28 throughout Christian origins.
[722] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 268.
[723] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 269.
[724] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 269.
[725] Fiorenza. *Memory*, 270.
[726] Fiorenza. *Memory*, 270.
[727] Fiorenza. *Memory*, 270.
[728] Sarah Tanzer, 'Ephesians,' in *Searching the Scriptures Vol. II.* (ed. E. S. Fiorenza; London: Crossroads, 1995), 325-248.

forms a more cohesive, logically ordered series of short exhortations that hold together thematically. The language of heavenly versus earthly does not appear in 5.22-6.9 though this language runs through the rest of the letter. Also, the language and themes of Qumran appear in the rest of Ephesians, but again, not in this section. Secondly, much of the first chapter of Ephesians is given over to advocating a kind of 'total equality' through Christ of Jew and Gentile, but the passage discussed creates a hierarchy and establishes dividing walls.[729] My own thoughts on this matter are that if there is no textual evidence on which to exclude a text, it is best not to exclude it on the basis of theological difference. What appears to us to be inconsistent, may not have been so for our ancient counterparts.

Clinton Arnold

In a reworking of his doctoral dissertation, *Ephesians: Power and Magic,* Clinton E. Arnold reconstructs a historical setting for Ephesians, a task that countless others have shied away from. Arnold sees that the language of power abounds in Ephesians through words such as δύναμις, ἐνέργει, ἰσχύς, κράτος and ἐξουσία.[730] His goal is 'to acquire a more complete understanding of the nature of a motivation for the inclusion of the power-motif in the epistle by studying the author's development of the theme against the backdrop of the spiritual environment of western Asia Minor in the first century AD.'[731] In particular, Arnold explores the Hellenistic magic tradition in order to understand the spiritual setting of Ephesians.[732] Magical sources are used together with relevant Old Testament and Jewish material to discern the background of the letter.[733] Arnold feels that, 'underlying the former beliefs and manner of life of all converts was a common and deepset fear of the demonic "powers."'[734]

The main problem with Arnold's reconstruction is that the letter itself gives up very few clues that this was the *actual* historical situation. His case would be strengthened if he

[729] Tanzer, 'Ephesians,' 341.
[730] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 1.
[731] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 2.
[732] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 3.
[733] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 3.
[734] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 122.

could demonstrate that 'the powers' were crucial to the rhetoric of the letter, showing how the author constructs his interpretation of these powers over and against competing interpretations. A scholar who takes up this very task is Cynthia Briggs Kittredge.

Cynthia Briggs Kittredge

In a book based on her doctoral dissertation, entitled, *Community and Authority, The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition*,[735] Cynthia Briggs Kittredge investigates the use of obedience language in the Pauline tradition and the history of scholarship on the topic. Her major contribution to this area of study is that she offers an alternative hermeneutical framework in which rhetorical analysis and historical reconstruction are combined. Her two case studies are Philippians and Ephesians. Interestingly, Tanzer's conclusion runs opposite to Cynthia Kittredge's in every way, yet their arguments are strikingly similar. Tanzer interprets differences in the text to mean that 5.22-6.9 are an interpolation, while Kittredge identifies these same differences, yet argues that this indicates the author's rhetorical climax.

Briggs Kittredge's study will be useful to my study as she is the only interpreter to have combined a rhetorical analysis of the text with the information we now have about the diversity of early Christian language and viewpoints, in particular in relation to women and their roles. Her study is discussed in greater detail below.

CONTEXT

Finding a suitable historical context can be half the battle in interpreting a New Testament text. However, when questions of author, audience and purpose are posed, Ephesians is among the most elusive in producing answers. The letter's general quality and uncertainty of references to specific problems are perplexing. Also notable, is the lack of addressee as no destination for the letter appears in the earliest manuscripts.[736] Complicating the issue still further is the question of authorship as there is limited

[735] Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press 1995).
[736] See discussion below.

consensus among scholars as to whether the letter was written by Paul, a Pauline secretary, a disciple or an admirer. One could safely say that finding a suitable historical situation for the construction of Ephesians is a difficult task.

Author and Date

Much time has been dedicated to the question of the authorship of Ephesians both in the commentaries and the plethora of articles written on the topic.[737] Since one of the aims of this dissertation is to 'locate' particular texts in historical space and time in order to see theological debates in communities, the question of authorship is important only in as much as it helps us to 'locate' the letter.[738] In the case of Ephesians, the question of authorship helps to date the letter.

Those scholars who make Ephesians Pauline usually date the text to the end of Paul's life, naming Ephesians among the prison letters.[739] Further, Ephesians is usually said to represent a mature, contemplative Paul, one who is a bit further on in life.[740] Thus, the earliest possible date for the writing of Ephesians is somewhere in the late 50's CE. Erring on the side of caution, I will take 55 CE as the earliest possible date for

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[737] See Best, 'Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians,' *NTS* 43 (1997) 72-96; Cadbury, 'The Dilemma of Ephesians,' *NTS* 5 (1958) 91-102; Cervaux, 'The Revelation of the Mystery of Christ,' in his *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959); Collins, *Letters;* Coutts, 'The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians,' *NTS* 4 (1957-58) 201-7; E. J. Goodspeed, *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933); Mitton, *Ephesians;* Murphy-O'Connor, 'Who Wrote Ephesians?' *The Bible Today* 18 (1965) 1201-9; and A. Van Roon, *The Authenticity of Ephesians,* NovTSup 39 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

[738] Complicating the issue of authorship is the question of the relationship of Ephesians to Colossians. These two letters share many words and phrases, too many to be considered a coincidence. One third of the words in Colossians also appear in Ephesians and Eph. 6.21-22 parallels Col. 4.7-8 almost word for word. These similarities can not be ignored and will contribute to one's final analysis of text and author. There are five possibilities for the relationship between Colossians and Ephesians in relation to the question of authorship; 1. Both letters were written by Paul, 2. Both were written by the same author, who was not Paul, 3. Both were written by different authors, neither of whom was Paul, 4. Ephesians was written by Paul and Colossians was not, 5. Colossians was written by Paul, and Ephesians was not.

[739] See G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon in the Revised Standard Version* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[740] See Bruce, *The Epistle to the Col, to Phil, and to Eph*; Caird, *Paul's Letters*; and Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*. Others who continue to uphold Pauline authorship in modern scholarship are E. Percy, *Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1964); M. Barth *Ephesians,* vols 1 & 2, Anchor Bible (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co, 1974); and H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epherser* (Düsseldorf: A. Töpelmann, 1971).

Ephesians. Those who claim post-Pauline origins for the text are limited in their dating to Ignatius' seeming knowledge of Ephesians (i.e. Ign., *Eph.* 19.3).[741] Ignatius' letters date from approximately 110, so 100 CE becomes the latest possible period for the writing of Ephesians.[742] From the letter we can surmise that the author respected Paul and his teaching. If the author was not Paul, he felt Paul's theology and letter format worthy of being imitated.

Audience and Purpose

Interpreters often note Ephesians' general quality. For example, Luke Timothy Johnson states, 'Ephesians is a letter only in the broadest sense, being generated not by the immediate circumstances of Paul or a specific community, but by the desire to communicate to a wider circle of gentile understanding.'[743] Johnson also notes that the author speaks of 'church' in the singular, meaning the assembly of churches (5:23, 1:22, 2:10, 2:21, 5:23-32), and not one specific church.[744]

The words ἐν Ἐφεσος are missing from the first line of Ephesians in the oldest known manuscripts.[745] This has caused further speculation as to which church or churches were the intended audience. The text itself gives the reader very few clues. Since the letter is written in a very general way, its instructions are less than specific. For example, when giving instructions for the household, the author assumes that all household members are Christian, an assumption that would obviously not be true in many specific cases.

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[741] See Goodspeed, *Meaning*; Mitton, *Ephesians*; Arnold, *Ephesians*; J.A. Allan, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: The Body of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1968); and also A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990); who interestingly changed his mind on the issue of Pauline authorship mid-way through his career.

[742] I choose to remain undecided on the issue of authorship for two reasons. First, the question is not critical for this study, in that the identity of the author is not of central concern. And secondly, having looked at the literature on the question of authorship, it has become clear that the issue remains largely unresolved.

[743] Johnson, *Introduction,* 367.

[744] Johnson, *Introduction,* 371.

[745]These words are missing from manuscripts P46 ℵ* B* 424c 1739 as well as from manuscripts known by Basil and the text used by Origen. See Bruce Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 104; and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 192.

The author gives no indication as to what would be expected if one's wife, husband, slave or parent were not a Christian believer.

Given the number of unanswered questions surrounding the production of Ephesians, it is not surprising that a wide range of suggestions have been made as to the occasion and purpose of the letter. Perhaps the most comprehensive and creative of theories belongs to E. J. Goodspeed.[746] Noticing that Ephesians is comprised of extensive quotations from every Pauline letter,[747] Goodspeed suggests that an early Christian leader who had a copy of Colossians, inquired as to whether other churches had similar letters from Paul. Delighted by the results of his inquiry, the leader collected letters from Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and Rome. This church leader, who Goodspeed believes to have been Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, wrote Ephesians as a summary or introductory letter to his compilation. Goodspeed calls the epistle 'a commendation of the collected Pauline letters to Christians everywhere.'[748] Though many of his assertions are questionable historically, at the heart of Goodspeed's work we have the assumption that Ephesians was produced for a diverse audience, in fact, the whole of the Christian world. C. Leslie Mitton, who follows Goodspeed relatively closely, comes to a similar conclusion, stating that Ephesians was produced 'for a new generation of Christians.'[749] Similarly, in one of his commentaries, Ernest Best notices that Ephesians lacks a 'sharp polemic aspect' as well as the personal references that characterise Paul's other letters.[750] Further, he notes that Ephesians has 'a certain serenity and timelessness about its language.'[751] Thus, Goodspeed, Mitton and Best, among others, have concluded that Ephesians was intended for all Christians everywhere, with Best even noting a certain 'timelessness' in the letter's essence.[752]

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[746] Goodspeed, *Meaning*. Though some of Goodspeed's claims lack historical plausibility, parts of his thesis have shaped scholarship in the area, in particular amongst those who claim non-Pauline authorship. For example, Mitton, *Ephesians*, follows Goodspeed quite closely.
[747] This does not include the Pastorals.
[748] Goodspeed, *Meaning*, 17.
[749] Mitton, *Ephesians*, 29
[750] Best, *Ephesians*, 10.
[751] Best, *Ephesians*, 10.
[752] One of the difficulties in consulting New Testament commentaries when the heart of one's inquiry is historical is that exegesis and hermeneutics are often intertwined for these scholars. This is typified here by Best, who sees a 'timelessness' in Ephesians, implying that the text's teaching is suitable for all ages.

Some commentators have pressed the question further, unsatisfied with 'all Christians' as an answer to the question of to whom Ephesians is addressed. Clinton E. Arnold suggests that the letter was intended as an encyclical, with copies being distributed to various churches across Western Asia Minor.[753] Since Ephesus was the leading city of Asia Minor, its practices would have held wide influences in the region. Arnold claims that the references to 'power' in Ephesians are in direct reference, and reaction to, magical practices and the cult of Artemis (i.e. Eph 6.10-20).[754] Andrew Lincoln also locates Ephesians in Asia Minor. He suggests that the letter was originally intended for communities at Hierapolis and Laodicea.[755] He makes these connections because of Marcion's familiarity with a tradition connecting the letter and Laodicea and because of Ephesians' extensive use of material from Colossians, in which a connection is made between Colossians and the churches in these cities (Col 4:13).[756] Further, the author's familiarity with Colossians makes it seem likely that he was from the same area, or spent enough time there to familiarise himself with the letter. Lincoln and Wedderburn wisely conclude that, 'rather than attempting the impossible by searching for a specific life-setting, the interpreter of Ephesians would do well to respect the letter's generality and focus on some of its overall features which may be of help in sketching the background against which its theology can be appreciated.'[757] Rather than press the issue beyond its natural limits, we should take the above factors into account, concluding that the letter was intended for a group of churches in Asia Minor. Given the general nature of the text, the lack of specific references, Marcion's early connection of the letter to Loadicea, the author's familiarity with Colossians, not to mention the fact that some manuscripts *do* have 'in Ephesus' written in the first line, it is only possible to

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This is a legitimate statement for Christian believers; however, for the purposes of this study, we must assume that the author of Ephesians has a particular setting and audience in mind when he wrote the letter. How much can be known about this setting is yet to be seen.

[753] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 6.

[754] Arnold, *Ephesians*, chapter 5, 103-109.

[755] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxxxii.

[756] Lincoln, *Ephesians,* lxxxii. For discussions of the relationship of Colossians to Ephesians see Van Roon, *Authenticity*, 4-6; and Mitton, *The Epistle.*

[757] A. T. Lincoln and A J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78.

assume that Ephesians was written for churches in Asia Minor. Further, these churches that were its destination were more than likely in the Western part of the province.

There are also a few insights to be gained from the text itself about the nature of its audience. We can surmise that at least some, if not a large portion, of the communities in question were Gentile Christians, since the author's implied readers have apparently passed their pre-Christian days in moral and religious darkness (4.17-19), qualities attributed to the Gentiles by the author. Further, these Gentile Christians have heard of Paul and his teaching, and have respect for him. As we have seen, one of two scenarios is likely for the context of the writing of Ephesians: either the letter was written by Paul late in his lifetime, and is a summary of his theology and key teachings, or the letter was written pseudonymously after Paul's death with a similar purpose. One would imagine that the communities in question would have heard of Paul, would be familiar with some of his teachings, and would welcome a letter by him to their area.[758]

Some interpreters have argued that Ephesians responds to a particular group of false teachers. For example, Michael D. Goulder has argued that the author is responding to Jewish-Christian visionaries,[759] though Gnostic opponents have been suggested more frequently.[760] This is because second and third-century Gnostic writers appealed to Ephesians and because there are some parallels between images found in Ephesians and in later gnostic texts, for example, Eph 5.23[761]and 32.[762] However, there is no direct evidence that Ephesians is responding to Gnostic opponents, in fact, the letter only refers to 'false teachers' once, in 4.14.

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[758] Also, if the letter is indeed pseudonymous then this genre was normative in the ancient world and the audience would not have been surprised by it. Presumably, they would still welcome a letter with Paul's name associated with it.
[759] M. D. Goulder, 'The Visionaries of Laodicea,' *JSNT* 43 (1991) 15-39.
[760] See H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 268.
[761] Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche*, 266-76.
[762] Some Gnostic texts present the division of Adam and Eve in Gen 2.22-23 as the source of death and suffering. In these texts, salvation comes through a return to androgynous perfection. See Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 165.

Margaret MacDonald argues that from a social-historical perspective, the places in the text where the author shapes or departs completely from tradition, are the places where the author's concern comes into play.[763] She says:

> For example, 4.25 clearly incorporates traditional material about the importance of avoiding falsehood, but the second half of the verse, which provides the motivation for this advice, offers an indication of the author's particular interests. The reference to being "members of one another" ties the exhortation to the previous section (4.1-16) and relates the exhortations to the general concern for unity that runs through Ephesians...[T]here is good reason to suspect that Ephesians responds to strong perceptions concerning threats to community life.[764]

MacDonald's interpretation is not too far removed from Arnold's suggestion that a fear of 'the powers' is behind much of the language of Ephesians. Further, as we shall see, many interpreters agree that community unity is the author's main concern.

Some have looked to chapter 2 in order to reconstruct a historical context. For example, in 2.11-22, the emphasis on Jewish –Gentile unity may stem from some kind of discord in one or all of the communities themselves. J. P. Sampley suggests that Jewish Christians were being pushed aside and ignored, and that the author responds with an emphasis on communal unity.[765] However, there is no *direct* evidence of this in the text itself,[766] though it is true that the author suggests that the Gentiles share in the heritage of Israel (2.12-14) and that he was trying to define the identity of a Gentile church in light of its Jewish roots.[767] Thus, despite the fact that we have no proof of any actual Jew/Gentile tensions, we can see that it is important for the author that the identity of an increasingly gentile church was well-rooted in Jewish history.[768]

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[763] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 320.
[764] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 320.
[765] J. P. Sampley, *'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': A Study of Tradition in Eph. 5:21-2,*. SNTSMS 16 (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), 158-63.
[766] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 253.
[767] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 153.
[768] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 253-59.

Thus, we can conclude that Ephesians was written in the second half of the first century to a group of churches across Asia Minor. Though various historical reconstructions have been attempted, none is fully convincing since the text itself gives little away to the probing scholar.

Ephesus the City and Asia Minor

Asia Minor is generally accepted as the geographical location of the readers of Ephesians for reason detailed above.[769] Since the letter seems to be intended for a general readership, we cannot rule out the possibility that this readership included Ephesus itself.[770] Some might argue that it is unlikely that Ephesus was among the destinations of Ephesians since Paul spent two years in the city and in the letter the author makes no personal references. However, we cannot rule out the churches at Ephesus as a destination for many reasons.[771] First, if the letter was indeed intended for many churches, some known to Paul, and some unknown, perhaps it was easier for the author to write in a general way, as if Paul was unknown to all readers. Further, since the audience was diverse and numerous, personal references would have been out of place and may have taken up too much space to include. Also, should the letter be post-Pauline, the seeming lack of knowledge between author and audience may be part of the pseudonymous framework of the letter. One can imagine that it would be difficult for a pseudepigrapher to imitate personal greetings, especially if those greeted were known to Paul, but were unknown to the author.

Clinton E. Arnold's book, *Ephesians Magic and Power*, outlines how the cultural context of Ephesus influenced the theology of 'power' in Ephesians. Arnold claims that

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[769] For recent interpreters who have argued that Ephesians destination was somewhere in Asia Minor, see Best, *Ephesians*; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians;* and Arnold, *Ephesians*.

[770] See Arnold, *Ephesians*, 5.

[771] For those who continue to find Ephesus to be an unlikely destination for Ephesians, for my purposes, it is still worth looking at some of the cultural and religious norms of the city since it was the commercial centre of Western Asia Minor, a thriving port, and the biggest city in the region. No doubt it would have had cultural, religious and economic influence over the surrounding area, an area which would have included the destination of Ephesians. Moreover, Acts 19:10 states that because of Paul's teaching in Ephesus, the Jews and Greeks living in the province of Asia 'heard the word of the Lord.'

Ephesus 'bore a reputation for being something of a centre for magical practices.'[772] For example, Acts 19 implies that there were a substantial number in the city who practiced magic.[773] This reputation for magic derived from the fame of the proverbial 'Ephesian Letters' (Εφέσία γράμματα) which are first mentioned in the fourth century BCE in a Cretan Tablet.[774] Further, the famous magical papyri from third and fourth-century Egypt contain formulas dating from the first century or earlier. The value of these papyri was in the fact that they possessed ancient and reliable formulas and recipes.[775] Given that Ephesus was a chief port in Asia Minor with frequent commercial contact with Alexandria, magical practices were probably shared between the two cities.[776] Thus, there is ample evidence that Ephesus was home to much magical activity, and with the city's size and influence in Asia Minor, the whole province will have been, at least aware of, if not involved in, magical practices of some kind. This magic will have taken the form of spells, charms and recipes to heal illness and ward off evil spirits, as well as words used in superstitious ways to bring prosper to a newly married couple or luck to an athlete.

As has been seen in the previous chapter, Ephesus was the economic and religious centre of the province of Asia Minor. As Hodgin Gritz notes, 'The commercial metropolis served as a hub or pivotal point from which Paul's teaching would spread, especially to the inland cities of the Asian province.'[777] The city was home to the temple of Artemis, a female goddess who was also worshipped at Colossae, Loadicea and Hierapolis. Magical practices also had a particular popularity among the inhabitants of Asia Minor in the form of spells, charms and recipes. The fledgling Christian churches were growing in popularity and Paul's teaching was spreading as he was becoming a well-known teacher. It is into this context that the letter to the Ephesians was received.

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[772] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 14.
[773] Acts 19:19.
[774] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 15.
[775] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 17.
[776] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 17.
[777] Gritz, *Women Teachers,* 13.

We also have access to some information about women in first century Asia Minor.[778] For example, we know that geographically, the greater movement of women into public life was strongest in the less-Hellenized areas of the West and in eastern locations under heavy Roman influence because of colonisation, including Corinth, Philippi and the province of Asia.[779] The best example of the movement of women in the public realm is the presence of women at banquets and formal dinners. In the Greek world, ἑταῖραι are the only women who dined with the men at such occasions. In Rome, women and men normally dined together.[780] Also, in the Greek house, the most important structural contrast was between the male and female space, whereas in the Roman house, this distinction was virtually undetectable.[781] The only space in the Roman world that was characterised by gender differentiation was the public baths.[782] Thus, women moved freely between public and private space.

The excellent road system in Western Asia Minor meant that churches were not isolated,[783] and there would have been a strong link between country towns and strong Christian centres such as Antioch or Ephesus. The large number of inscriptions and ancient monuments from Asia Minor that mention women is unusual, signalling women's widespread involvement in public affairs.[784] Further, there is evidence that women from Jewish communities were also influential at the time.[785] Therefore, the women who converted to the Christian movements of Asia Minor probably expected to be able to move freely and have access to leadership positions.

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[778] For a summary of women's leadership in Asia Minor see Fiorenza, *Memory*, 245-50 or Kraemer, *Her Share,* 84-88.
[779] Osiek and Balch, *Families,* 59.
[780] Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 59.
[781] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 8.
[782] Wallace Hadrill, *Houses*, 9.
[783] Fiorenza, *Memory,* 246, uses information from an older German study; see V. Schultze, *Altchristliche Städte und Landschaften: Kleinasien*. Gütersloh: Bertelamann, 1922), 1-62.
[784] See Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Lives*, for a comprehensive compilation and English translations of texts and inscriptions from the Greco-Roman world.
[785] For a full discussion of this see S.E. Johnson, 'Asia Minor and Early Christianity,' in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults* (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975).

In summary, many interpreters agree that Ephesians was intended for a general audience, probably a group of churches. These churches were likely in Asia Minor, since all the evidence and traditions surrounding the letter point there. The fact that Marcion connects the letter to Laodicea, the letter's similarity to Colossians, and the tradition's early connection of the letter with Ephesus (i.e. the fact that the city's name appears in the first line of some manuscripts) all point to the conclusion that the destination of Ephesians was Asia Minor. Ephesus was the cosmopolitan and commercial centre of Asia Minor. This large port city influenced the surrounding area religiously, culturally, and economically. On the boundaries of the city stood the great temple dedicated to Artemis, one of the largest structures in the Hellenistic world. The city also housed a diverse religious population, with its mystery religions (followers of Artemis being the key example), magical practices, and large Jewish population. The letter to the Ephesians was written and received in this climate of diversity in the latter half of the first century, between 50 and 100 CE.

From the outset the aim of this dissertation is to view early Christian communities through a lens that does not emphasize the voice of the biblical author, but rather sees *discussions* within communities about theology and women's position, highlighting the fact that a number of voices contributed to this ongoing debate. Ephesians is an interesting and different case from 1 Timothy or 1 Corinthians on a number of levels. First, we have very little information from the text itself from which to glean information about the community to which the letter was addressed. Due to the 'general' tone of the letter, we must conclude that it was intended for a 'general' audience, perhaps a few churches scattered around Asia Minor. In a text of this nature it is difficult to discern the voices from behind the text, the more specific voices of the women in the intended audience. In 1 Corinthians, it is obvious that the author is thinking of, and writing to, specific women who have been prophesying with their heads uncovered. However, in the case of Ephesians, the author does not have a specific concern. His comments toward women are more general in nature, asking them to be subject to their husbands, without specifying a context.

THEOLOGY

Shared theology between author and audience

Due to the 'general' nature of Ephesians, its use of Pauline tradition, and the non-argumentative tone of the first three chapters, it can be shown that much of the theology presented within the text would have been shared between author and audience. Margaret MacDonald notes that, 'It is unlikely that the author would write a piece so obviously intended to promote unity with language that was for the most part unfamiliar to the audience.'[786] Also, when we take into account the countless number of parallels between Ephesians and Colossians, as well as other letters in the Pauline tradition, it is reasonable to draw one of two conclusions;[787] either the letter is intended as an imitation of Paul's work, summarising his theology for a general readership, or it is intended as Paul's own drawing together of ideas, again, for a number of audiences. As such, most of the author's theology will not be new to the letter's audience. Instructions for churches, and women in those churches, are founded in familiar theological concepts. As we shall see, the author uses common ground to draw the battle lines as he presents his version of the Christian story and what it means to live in community.

Typically the letter has been broken down into two distinct sections; chapters one to three are largely theological, while chapters four to six contain instructions for the communities.[788] These two genres have been called epideitic and deliberative.[789] The former being employed in chapters one to three, and the latter in four to six. The epideitic genre attempts to persuade by increasing an audiences' allegiances to certain values, while deliberative arguments seek to influence individual's actions in the future.[790] As Lincoln and Wedderburn claim, 'chapters 1-3 serve to consolidate the implied writer's and the implied readers' common relationship to God and Christ and the common values and perspectives entailed in this relationship, and they do this in a way

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[786] MacDonald, *Churches*, 89.
[787] See Goodspeed, *Meaning*, for an exhaustive chart of parallels, 82-165.
[788] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, 81.
[789] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, 81.
[790] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, 82.

that appeals to the implied readers' religious experience, emotions and commitment.'[791] Having appealed to the audiences' religiosity and emotional experiences, the author then informs the audiences as to which behaviours form an appropriate response to such religious experiences.

Cynthia Briggs Kittredge has criticised this two-part analysis of the letter for its simplicity.[792] Her argument will be discussed in detail below, but, most importantly she notices that the second half of the letter *combines* theology and instruction, and the argument of 5.22-33 may be more central to the overall purpose of the letter than was once thought.

The community's theology?

For the purposes of this study, it is essential to discern, to whatever extent possible, the theologies held by the intended audience. It is only in this way that we will be able to catch a glimpse of theological discussions in the community. This task was more straightforward in the case of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy than it is here for Ephesians, for two, interrelated, reasons. First, in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, the author makes arguments that are obviously designed to influence the beliefs and theologies of the audience. Further, the historical circumstances behind the letters are much more 'obvious' and exact situations and even individuals are discussed. Secondly, a number of scholars have conducted very thorough investigations of the intended audiences, in particular of 1 Corinthians, but also of 1 Timothy. Thus, my discussions of the audience's theologies have basically been conversations with these scholars. However, in the case of Ephesians, my task is made difficult by the fact that the context of Ephesians is anything but obvious[793] and only limited consensus has arisen amongst scholars.

[791] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, 82.
[792] Kittredge, *Community*, 116.
[793] As has been seen above.

One scholar who has gone some distance towards unveiling the background and context of Ephesians is Cynthia Briggs Kittredge. By analysing the letter's rhetoric, Kittredge has been able to identify the author's central concerns as well as some of the theologies that he may have opposed.

Ephesians, like other texts, can be read as a rhetorical discourse 'designed to persuade an audience in the midst of competing understandings.'[794] As such, Kittredge aims to read tensions within the rhetoric of the letter as clues to different early Christian languages and interpretation.[795] She notes that because the author does not describe specific aspects of the historical situation, or name co-workers, interpreters have found it difficult to determine a precise historical situation for the work. However, she argues that this is no reason to assume that that text's rhetoric cannot offer some clues; 'a rhetorical perspective understands that Ephesians is provoked by some rhetorical exigency or problem, which the rhetoric seeks to respond to and overcome. Even if the audience is conceived very broadly, the letter was written to be persuasive to a certain argument.'[796] As such, Kittredge analyses how each part of the text functions in the author's argument, and explores how the 'symbolic universe' of the difficult passages in 5.21-6.9 functions within the 'symbolic universe' of the letter as a whole.[797]

Kittredge begins by re-evaluating the common categorisation of Ephesians into two distinct parts, 'affirmation' in chapters 1-3, and 'appeal' in chapters 4-6.[798] Instead, she perceives an interplay between the narration of divine events and ethical exhortation and this has implications for her interpretation. In this light, 5.21-6.9 is not a 'paraenetic epilogue' to the soteriological affirmations in 1.2-3.21, but the point to which the argument is leading.[799] Further, she argues that the story of salvation is told in such strongly positive terms by the author that it must be familiar to, and accepted by, the

[794] Kittredge, *Community*, 112.
[795] Kittredge, *Community*, 112.
[796] Kittredge, *Community*, 114.
[797] Kittredge, *Community*, 116.
[798] Or as epideitic and deliberative rhetoric as Lincoln and Wedderburn claim, *Theology*, 81.
[799] Kittredge, *Community*, 143.

audience.[800] The author refers to this story to confirm their common ground and provide a basis for his letter.[801]

Like others before her, Kittredge notices that unity is a main theme of Ephesians. She also notes that unity is discussed both at the beginning and at the end of the section she labels the *exhortatio* in 4.1-6.9.[802] She notices, however, a contradiction between the unity described in 2.14-16 and in 5.21-33.[803] In the former, the church is depicted in terms of joining two into one, but in the latter, subordination is required of certain groups.[804] She argues that this contradiction could be explained by the rhetorical situation. Chapter 2.14-16 offers the view of unity with which the audience was familiar and in agreement. As such, the author is attempting to gain their trust before modifying this view in chapter five.[805] Moreover, in this interpretation, in 2.11-21 the author cites known tradition regarding the unity of Jew and gentile in order to gain the audience's agreement about the value of unity.[806] Therefore, the author's focus on unity up until this point is an element of his rhetoric that is leading to 5.22-33. The length of the passage, plus the use of key 'unity' words, suggests that the wife/husband and Christ/Church analogy is of great concern to the author.[807] Kittredge further defends her point that 5.22-33 is one of the main purposes of Ephesians by noting that the author does not justify the instructions to children and parents with arguments by analogy, but simply states what he feels is right and quotes a commandment.[808] Kittredge is clear however, that she is not arguing that a discussion of the marriage relationship is the *raison d'être* of Ephesians. On the contrary, what she is saying is that unity, and its precise definition, is the author's central concern. As a by-product of this mode of argumentation,

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[800] Kittredge, *Community*, 121. As we have seen, MacDonald, *Churches* and Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, would all agree with this assertion.
[801] Kittredge, *Community*, 121.
[802] Kittredge, *Community*, 133. It is in this section where exhortations are mixed with theological reasoning.
[803] Kittredge, *Community*, 129.
[804] Kittredge, *Community*, 129.
[805] Kittredge, *Community*, 130, 135.
[806] Kittredge, *Community*, 136.
[807] Kittredge, *Community*, 136. Kittredge contends that it is the Christ/Church element of the argument that is of primary concern to the author, an extension on the theme of unity. In this interpretation the exhortation to husbands to love their wives is simply an extension of the analogy.
[808] Kittredge, *Community*, 143.

'kyriarchal structures are theologised and concretised.'[809] Kittredge concludes that, 'By constructing submission as the natural relationship of wife to husband and justifying it by analogy to Christ and the Church, the author has made obedience to husbands a requirement for wives.'[810] In this interpretation, the quotation from Gen 2.24 used in 5.31, echoes the 'two become one' ideal that is applied to Jew/Gentile relations in 2.14-16, but has an entirely different meaning for husband and wife. Moreover, the exhortations to wives/husbands, children/parents and slaves/masters 'operates to critique the notion of oneness characterised by equality and not subordination.'[811] It is this view of oneness that Kittredge believes is held by the audience of Ephesians.

By way of conclusion, Kittredge argues that the reason the author brings marriage into the discussion on unity is that the community held a different view of how unity should play itself out in the here and now. To clarify her argument, I will quote Kittredge extensively at this point:

> The author meets this rhetorical problem[[812]] with a variety of interrelated strategies. First, using the language of doxology, blessing and prayer, he retells again and again the story of the election of the community by God and their role in God's plan. Specifically, he uses language that recalls implicitly or explicitly their baptism and the imagery of coming to life from death and of two becoming one. He sharply contrasts their former life in sin with their present life. Quoting a well-known tradition about unity, he presents their past life- characterized by alienation and separation- and their present life of inclusion and incorporation (Eph 2.11-20). This contrast is expressed in traditional liturgical language and evokes gratitude and praise. Finally, he seeks to persuade the audience of his view of unity by gradually constructing a symbolic universe through statements about God and Christ. The culmination of this progressive construction is the passage at the end of the *exhortatio*, Eph 5.21-6.9, in which the language of obedience is concentrated. In the argument

[809] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 269; Kittredge, *Community*, 138. While I would agree with Fiorenza and Briggs Kittredge that the theologising of language of 'submission' or 'obedience' has had the unfortunate historical effect of concretising female subordination as being 'divinely ordained,' this conclusion has had the unfortunate effect of an avoidance of theology in feminist interpretations. This will be discussed further below.
[810] Kittredge, *Community*, 139.
[811] Kittredge, *Community*, 141.
[812] This refers to the problem of competing views of unity in the community.

> of these verses, the author tries to achieve all these purposes at once: redefine unity, interpret baptism and reframe the church.[813]

This is how the author slowly and carefully develops his argument.[814] From here, Kittredge places her analyses of the author's rhetoric under the picture of early Christianity as drawn by Fiorenza and Wire, among others, of an environment in which women were active participants, taking leaderships roles, and often preferring celibacy.[815] The observed expansion of Colossians 3.18-19 in 5.21-32 by the author of Ephesians provides further evidence that the male/female relationship was an issue.[816] She argues further that the author's lack of inscription of his audience was also part of his rhetorical strategy, saying, 'he describes them very generally, not because there was no conflict but in order to address that conflict in a way that would not inflame it.'[817] So to summarise, according to Kittredge, the best historical explanation for Ephesians is the context of a 'dispute over [the] interpretation of the oneness of Christian baptism and how that oneness plays itself out in the church.'[818]

Kittredge's work is valuable in that her insights help to reconstruct a context for the letter. Overall, her rhetorical analysis of the letter is fruitful, though I remain unconvinced by some aspects of her historical reconstruction. For example, she argues that the community in the author's mind had a preference for celibacy, and though this is certainly possible, textual evidence is lacking. Also, she argues that the lack of inscription of the audience is a rhetorical move on the author's part, so not to inflame the audience, but more probably the lack of inscription is simply due to the author's intended audience being a general readership.

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[813] Kittredge, *Community*, 147.
[814] In Kittredge's view, the instructions to husbands to love their wives attempts to mediate between the view of male and female as undifferentiated unity and the hierarchical notion of marriage; Kittredge, *Community*, 149.
[815] Kittredge, *Community*, 158.
[816] Kittredge, *Community*, 171.
[817] Kittredge, *Community*, 158.
[818] Kittredge, *Community*, 172.

It is interesting to see that through rhetorical analysis Kittredge comes to much the same conclusions as others have in the past, that unity in the community is of central concern to the author.[819] Her assertion that 5.22-33 represents one of the main points of the argument is not unreasonable. This makes sense of the author's expansion of the Colossians passage (Col 3.18-19). The claim that 2.14-16 and 5.22-33 somehow *contradict* each other may be slightly overstated. Though this contradiction exists in the modern mindset, in the ancient patriarchal world, this contradiction would not have been so obvious, in particular if the widespread appearance of household codes is taken into account. However, even without acknowledging a direct contradiction in the author's language, it is still possible to view the rhetoric of Ephesians as the gentle building of an argument based on known concepts. Once the foundation is set, then the author strikes, adding his own ideas to an already well-established understanding of Christian community. The author's clever use of the *Haustafel*[820] genre, with the injunctions to both men and women, thus becomes a paradigm for Christ's relationship for the church and vice-versa. In the passage at 5.22-33, the author solidifies his view of unity in the community, answering to communities in which unity may have involved differing views of gender roles. All these issues will be discussed further below.

The author's theology

A description of the author's theology in Ephesians is now long overdue. It will be shown that interpreters generally agree that the need for unity and identity formation are the keys to unlocking the author's theology. Also, we will unravel the theology of chapters one to three, a theology with which the author expected his audience to be both familiar with and in agreement with.

The theology of Ephesians revolves around two axes, unity and identity. Ernest Best sees three different ways in which the first of these themes, unity, is presented in Ephesians. These are the desire for harmony, the claim for unity of the cosmos, and the

[819] A discussion of some of the ways that unity is regarded as the central theological feature of the text appears below.
[820] See full discussion below.

statement of comprehensiveness.[821] Also, J. A. Allan claims that unity is the central theme of the letter.[822] He identifies four key theological points upon which the argument of Ephesians is built. Though not stated explicitly by Allan himself, these four themes could also be described as subsets of the major theme of identity. These themes are; first, the fact that all Christians become God's people, and secondly, become true sons of Abraham. Thirdly, baptism means incorporation into Christ for both Jew and Gentile, and lastly, Christians all form one body, which is Christ's body.[823]

Lincoln and Wedderburn underline the importance of Christian identity as the major theological theme saying that, 'Ephesians can be seen as an attempt to reinforce its implied readers' identities as those who have received a salvation which makes them members of the Church and to underscore the necessity of their distinctive role and conduct in the Church and in the world.'[824] Further, these scholars have analysed the theology of the letter in four sections, each of which turns around the central theme of identity. The first theological theme can be described as 'how the author wants the readers to see themselves,' that is, as members of the people God has set apart, incorporated into Christ's body, both Jew and Gentile. Secondly, 'how the readers have come to be the way they are,' that is, through God's mediation in Christ. Thirdly, 'how this affects the readers' future,' that is, what the readers hope for will determine their actions, the emphasis being on one hope in final unity in Christ. And lastly, 'how the readers should live,' that is, a call for the readers to live out their new identity with appropriate conduct.[825] Thus, Lincoln and Wedderburn see all the theological ideas of Ephesians, including, the incorporation of Jew and Gentile into God's plan, the mediation of Christ giving one hope to believers and the call to appropriate action, as various strands of the major theme: Christian identity.

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[821] Best, *Ephesians*, 63.
[822] Allan, *Epistle*, 33.
[823] Allan, *Epistle*, 35.
[824] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology*, 82. MacDonald also argues in her commentary that identity is of 'paramount significance' in Ephesians; see *Colossians and Ephesians*, 273.
[825] Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Theology,* 125.

And now to the text itself; the author's introduction in 1:3-14 is largely theological and gives the reader a clear indication of his theology from the outset.[826] From the foundational theological statements of these few verses, the author launches the rest of his discourse.[827]

In our author's theological frame, God is the Father of Jesus Christ (1.3). This God has had a plan since the creation of the cosmos (1.4). This plan, or will, which is the central theme of the introductory section, is a great mystery, one that God has recently chosen to share with those who believe in his son. Unity has been, and is still being achieved through this plan.

Christ is obviously central to the author's theology. Many of God's plans have been brought forth in and through Jesus, his death and resurrection. For example, in Christ, God has blessed believers in heavenly realms with spiritual blessings (1.3). He has adopted believers, in particular the Gentiles, as children in Christ (1.5). Christians have redemption through the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sin (1.7). Through Christ, God has given all wisdom and understanding (1.8) and has made known the great mystery (1.9). Through him they were chosen and made heirs to the promise (1.11), in short, God included them in 'The Plan' (1.13), giving them their identity as children of God, belonging to the body of Christ. Ephesians shares a 'cosmological' perspective with Colossians in describing Christ's identity and the nature of what God has accomplished in Christ (Col 1.15-20). The implication is that believers already dwell in heavenly places where Christ sits at God's right hand (1.20 & 2.6).[828]

God's plan or will also forms a central theme in 1.1-14. In accordance with this will, God has predestined believers to be part of it (1.5). The plan has been made known to

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[826] In Greek, Ephesians 1.3-14 is one long sentence, and in fact, it constitutes the longest sentence in the New Testament.

[827] Many hold that 1.3-14 is influenced by traditional liturgical language and traditional Pauline phrases. See MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 140; J. T. Sanders 'Hymnic Elements in Ephesians 1-3,' *ZNW* 56 (1965) 229; and Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 14.

[828] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 210.

the author and his audience in Christ and will be put into action when times have reached fulfilment (1.10). Everything is worked out in accordance with God's will (1.11) which is to unify all things under Christ, the head (1.10). It appears that the 'eschatological' perspective of Ephesians is something in between belief that all salvation is already present in Christ and anticipation of a future stage of salvation.[829]

Finally, the role of the Holy Spirit is introduced in this chapter. The Spirit is a seal for the believer (1.13), a 'deposit' that guarantees the believer's inheritance in Christ (1.14), again, solidifying the believer's identity. Therefore, even as the author outlines his theologies of Christ, and God's plan for believers, we can see that the oneness of the communities, and the new identities that Christians have received through Christ, are being emphasised in these few introductory verses.

The rest of the letter expands on and advances the themes introduced in 1.1-14.[830] Much more is said about God and, in particular, God's strength and power. As MacDonald says, 'There is a great emphasis in Ephesians on the power, sovereignty, and majesty of God.'[831] Also, the inheritance of believers in and through Christ is expanded upon, underlining the Christian identity that God has predestined for the community in Christ. In chapter two, the author elaborates on what has been accomplished by the cross, and how the Gentiles came to be heirs with the Jews in salvation, unifying Jew and Gentile in Christ. 2.11-22 is one of two passages that have received the most attention from the scholarly community.[832] Further, it is one of Ephesians' 'unity' texts. 2.11-22 focuses on the unity between Jews and Gentiles in a historical way, leading commentators to it frequently when seeking to construct a historical situation for Ephesians.[833]

Chapter three discusses further God's mysterious plan that has recently been made known to believers. And chapters four and five outline what it means to live as part of

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[829] Perkins, *Ephesians,* ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 41.
[830] Most of the themes of the letter are introduced in 1.3-14, though strikingly, the 'body of Christ' imagery that is central to the remainder of the letter is absent. Perhaps it is anticipated in 1.10?
[831] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 281.
[832] The other being Eph 5.22-33, discussed below.
[833] See MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 252, and as discussed above.

the Christian community that has Christ as its head. It is in these two chapters that the two main themes of the letter are drawn together, as the author explores what it means to have a Christian identity and live as part of the unity of the Church 'body.' It is in this section that we find instruction mixed with theological discourse, and it is in this section that we find directives for married women.

Scattered throughout the letter we find many indications of the author's vision of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Again, the author's emphasis on the oneness of all things becomes obvious, as he discusses various theological themes including creation, the cross, and community life. For example, the author's God created all things (3.19) and has incredibly great power (1.19). According to this power, God can do more than believers could ask or imagine (3.20). The oneness of God and the community are emphasised in chapter four; there is one God, Father of all (4.6), one Lord, one faith, one baptism (4.5), one body, one Spirit, one hope (4.4). The Holy Spirit has been sent to strengthen believers (3.16), that God might be known better among them (1.17). God's strength was also exerted in the resurrection (1.19) and many things were accomplished through the cross-event, bringing unity to two groups previously separated, for example, the wall between Jew and Gentile has been divided (2.14)

In the cross-event, God has abolished the law and the commandments (2.15) and has created in Christ one out of two (2.15). Presumably the 'two' are the Jew and the Gentile whom Christ has reconciled through his own body (2.16). Also, hostility has been put to death through Christ's own death (2.16). Christ's sacrifice is seen by God as a fragrant offering (5.2) for the church for whom he gave himself up (5.25) to make her whole, cleansing her with water and the word (5.26). Through the cross God has raised believers up with Christ and seated them with him (2.6). Lest the audience is tempted to think that their salvation has come through Jesus' sacrifice alone, our author is also careful to note that salvation comes through grace *by faith* (2.8), meaning that the Christian has a role to play in his or her salvation as well.

Another prominent theological theme that was introduced in Chapter One and also continues throughout the letter is that of God's mysterious will.[834] This plan was not known to people in other generations but has now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (3.5). The mystery was kept hidden in God in the past (3.9), but now God's wisdom should be made known to rulers and authorities (3.10). The mystery is this: that the Gentiles have become heirs together with Israel through the gospel, that as one body they all now share in the promise of Jesus Christ (3.6). This is the center point of the author's theology. It summarises his view that God has been the owner of a mysterious plan in which the Gentiles are destined to find unity with the Jews through Christ and his sacrifice on the cross by becoming believers, and joining the body of Christ. This interpretation of unity was most likely familiar to the audience of Ephesians. Here, the author stands on common ground.

The author of Ephesians speaks negatively about the life led by Gentiles before their conversion. This Jewish author states that before becoming Christians, Gentiles were 'dead' in sin (2.1) and followed 'the ruler of the kingdom of air' (2.2). They were darkened in their understanding and separate from the life of God (4.18). As a result of their darkened understanding, the gentiles were excluded from citizenship with Israel and were foreigners to the promise, without hope and without God (2.11-12). Since Christ has made two into one in himself (2.15) and reconciled Jew and Gentile to God on the cross (2.16), Jews and Gentiles are now heirs together, members of one body in Christ (3.6). In other words, the identities of Gentile Christians have gone through a transformation. While they used to find themselves outside God's promises to the Jews, they now find themselves belonging to that promise, unified through Christ's death on the cross. It has been argued effectively that spiritual powers in Ephesians are understood as deeply affecting the society in which believers live.[835] This is illustrated in 2.1-3. The real defence against 'the powers' is God's armour of ethical and spiritual virtues.

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[834] The word μυστήριον is often translated as 'mystery', though perhaps a better translation would be 'secret.'

[835] See Arnold, *Ephesians* and MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 225-26.

The 'body of Christ' forms the last theological theme of the letter, and again, unity and identity are in the foreground. The instructions that flow from this theology, including those for women, are part of what the author feels is the best way to live as part of that body. The author's 'body theology' follows a hierarchical structure as follows; God has placed everything under the feet of Christ (1.22) who is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly realm (1.20). The church is also under Christ's leadership and he is head over it as appointed by God (1.22, 4.15). The church in this metaphor is, therefore, Christ's body. From Christ, the whole body is joined and held together by every band (4.16). Each part does its work (4.16) as Christians are all members of the same body (4.25). The author then compares the relationship between Christ and the church to that between husband and wife. The husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the church (5.23). Just like a husband should ideally treat his wife's body as his own (5.28), so Christ feeds and cares for the church (5.29), the body that the Christians have become members of.

In summary, Ephesians is a highly theological text. One of the author's main purposes is to present a clear and detailed theology of God's plan and what it means to be part of that plan. The theology of Ephesians can be summarised as follows; God's will is a great mystery that has recently been made known to humanity through Christ. The mystery is that, through the cross of Christ, God has united Jew and Gentile and made them heirs together in the promise. The Spirit has been sent to believers as a guarantee of their inheritance. All those who believe have become part of one body, of which Christ is the head. This theology could also be articulated as follows; the unity that God has created in Christ has created the necessity for a common Christian identity as the body of Christ. Our author's theology appears to contain nothing new, yet cunningly has emphasised a central theme that serves his purposes. From this clever arrangement of theological concepts, the author expects that the instructions that follow will be complied with since they are presented as an obvious response to God's recent action and as the only appropriate way to live as a member of the church/body.

THEOLOGY AND WOMEN

5.22-33

Ephesians 5.22-33 contains a combination of theology and instructions for wives.[836] The author combines ideas familiar to his audiences from a variety of sources to make his point. First, he uses instructions that bear distinct resemblance to what have been called 'household codes,' or *Haustafeln,* a Greek genre relating to rules of the household. Secondly, the author's argument echoes traditional materials from the Hebrew Bible, as well as Jesus traditions. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the author uses theological analogies of Christ and Church and of Church as the bride of Christ, which has the final effect of wrapping his instructions in theological garb.

The author's instructions for wives in 5.22-33 are straightforward, and in keeping with the rest of the letter seem to speak to husbands and wives generally, rather than to a specific problem. The instructions come in the context of a group of instructions on how to live wisely and according to God's will. Be careful how you live, the author says in 5.15. Do not be foolish and be sure you understand the Lord's will (5.17). Do not get drunk (5.18). Always give thanks to God (5.20), and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (5.21). From there the author says, Wives, submit (ὑποτάσσω)[837] to your husbands as to the Lord (5.22). Verse 22-32 are concerned with instructions for husbands to love their wives.

Within the same paragraph as verse 22, the author includes two further instructions for wives which are equally straightforward as his first; wives should submit to their husbands in everything (ὑποτάσσω, 5.21). And finally, a wife must respect her husband (φοβέω, 5.33).

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[836] This observation aligns with Kittredge's argument that chapters 4-6 of Ephesians should be read as having more that just instructions as its central purpose; see Kittredge, *Communities*, 143. As we shall see, the author uses the analogy of human marriage as a continuation of his main theme of unity.

[837] The use of a variety of language of submission will be discussed below.

These instructions for wives appear alongside instructions for husbands, intertwined with a theological point that the author has emphasized throughout the letter about the relationship of Christ to the church. Husbands are instructed to love their wives (5.28), then a few lines later to love their wives as their own body (5.28). In order to further this point, a husband must love his wife as he loves himself (5.33).

On a theological level, the author uses the instructions for husbands and wives to continue his discussion on Christ and the church. The husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church (5.23). The Church is Christ's body, he is her Saviour (5.23), and by implication, this is similar to the relationship of husband to wife. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (5.25) to make her whole, cleansing her with water through the word (5.26). This is to present her to himself without stain or blemish, but holy and blameless (5.27). Christ feeds and cares for the church (5.29) and Christians are members of the body (that Christ feeds and cares for, 5.30). At the end of the paragraph the author refers back to his discussion of God's great mystery, here saying that the relationship between Christ and the Church is a profound mystery (5.32). From here, the author uses the text of Genesis 2.24, a common text used when speaking about the relation of husband and wife, to describe the mystery of Christ and the Church (5.32). At some points in the passage it is difficult to know whether the author's primary purpose here is teaching for married couples, or theological discourse on the meaning of community.[838]

The interpretation of this passage will be divided into 4 topics. First, the author's possible use of the Greek *topos* of household codes will be discussed. Secondly, I will analyse the ways in which the discussion of marriage is interwoven with a theology of Christ and Church. From there, I will discuss the reason and literary context for wives being asked to subordinate themselves to their husbands. And lastly, I will analyse the author's use of traditional material in this passage. At the end of this analysis, we will be in a position to discern what factors influenced the author's composition of a

[838] This will be discussed below.

gendered theology of human marriage. Also, we will assess to what extent it is possible to uncover different viewpoints of the author's intended audience.

Household Codes

Ephesians, among other New Testament texts,[839] makes use of a genre that has come to be known as the *Haustafeln*, or household codes. The *Haustafel* found in Ephesians contains an extensive section on wives and husbands, and in this way, differs from the passages found in Colossians and 1 Peter. These codes were common in the Greek world, from Aristotle, who compared the dualisms of man/wife to soul/body (Aristotle Pol. I 1255B and 1254AB).[840]

The circumstances and reasons for the inclusion of household codes into early Christian texts including Ephesians are difficult to discern. Further, some find it difficult to decide if New Testament authors used these codes consciously. In his commentary, Lincoln concludes that the precise reason for Christianity's adoption/adaption of household codes remains a matter of conjecture.[841] In her book about the institutionalization of the Pauline churches, Margaret MacDonald says that the question of whether New Testament household codes are an adoption from traditional materials or a unique Christian creation is still under debate.[842] I believe that in the household codes we have an example of a Christian adaptation of traditional norms governing the household- a theologization of the household code.

Though there are some parallels in ancient writings to Ephesians' household code found in chapters 5 and 6, there is no proof that the author simply reproduced generally accepted contemporary opinions.[843] For example, in his studies, Markus Barth found no evidence that anyone in Paul's environment held the opinion that the husband is the

[839] See Col. 3:18-4.1 and 1 Pet. 2.18-3.7.
[840] Barth *Ephesians 4-6*, Anchor Bible (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co, 1974), 618.
[841] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 358.
[842] Macdonald, *Churches*, 106.
[843] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 618.

wife's head, and the wife is his body.[844] Similarly, C. L. Mitton finds little resemblance between other ancient household codes and those found in the New Testament.[845] Some claim evidence of borrowing from Jewish or Stoic *Haustafeln,* but Mitton claims that these similarities are not very close.[846] While there is no doubt that outside material is echoed in the New Testament versions of household codes (as will be seen below), there is also no doubt that the New Testament authors offered their own distinct interpretations of these codes.

Thus, the 'general' resemblance between the New Testament household codes and Greek *topoi* 'concerning household management' are significant, though none is an exact replica of New Testament versions. For example, both feature three pairs of relationships children/parents, wives/husbands, and slaves/masters. Aristotle, Philo, and Josephus all use dominance/submission or similar constructs to describe the husband/wife relationship.[847] An example is found in Aristotle's *Politics 1*, 'Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled.'[848] Another example can be found in Philo's *Apology*, when he writes, 'Wives must be in servitude to their husbands...'[849] And in *Against Apion*, Josephus says 'The woman, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man.'[850] And lastly, in *Moralia,* Plutarch states, 'The rule of the household is a monarchy, for every house is under one head.'[851] The similarities between the words of these authors and the author of Ephesians are obvious.

What is new in Ephesians 5:22-33 is not the injunctions for women, nor is it the idea that wives should be submissive. The injunctions for husbands, however, find no

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[844] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 617.
[845] Mitton, *Ephesians*, 194.
[846] Mitton, *Ephesians*, 194.
[847] See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 357, or for a more thorough discussion of the existence of these three pairs of rulers and ruled see Balch, *Wives*, 21-62.
[848] Aristotle *Politics I*, 1260a: 9, as seen in MacDonald, *Churches*, 106 and Balch, *Wives*, p. 35. Or see Rackham, H., trans. *Aristotle: The Politics,* Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann Ltd and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932).
[849] Philo, *Apology for the Jews*, 7.3, in F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker (trans) *Philo of Alexandria*, Vol. 9, 425.
[850] Josephus, *Against Apion* II.199-201, H. St. J. Thackeray (trans) *Josephus*, Vol. 1, 372-73.
[851] Plutarch, Moralia, 142e as seen in Lincoln, WBC, 369.

ancient analogy.[852] In Jewish literature, husbands are rarely enjoined to love their wives, and when they are the erotic word στέργω is used, and not ἀγαπάω (Ps-Phoc 195-7 and b Yeb 62b).[853] Lincoln notices two key differences between Ephesians' household code and its Greek counterparts. First, 'after the exhortation to wives to submit, with its depiction of husbands as heads, what might well have been expected by contemporary readers would be an exhortation to husbands to rule their wives. Instead the exhortation is for husbands to love their wives.'[854] Secondly, Lincoln notices that in Ephesians, wives, children and slaves are addressed as moral agents, and this, unfortunately cannot be said about Aristotle, Philo or Josephus.[855] And in addition, the introductory exhortation to mutual submission is unique to the author.

The emergence of a specifically *Christian* household code, with its theological background and reasoning is often attributed to increasing tensions between Christians and their social world. Lincoln, MacDonald and Balch all make this link.[856] Lincoln claims that, 'social tensions between Christians and society, as well as tensions within Christianity, need to be given their due in any account of the emergence of Christian household codes.'[857] MacDonald says that 'the connection of the purity imagery with household ethics in Ephesians underlines how firmly New Testament texts are rooted in their first-century setting. The subjection of wife to husband becomes a sign of an 'honourable' marriage in the Lord. The honourable marriage becomes a sign of the pure sect.'[858] MacDonald states further that, 'the exhortations intended to generate unity in the household fit well within a writing devoted to the encouragement of unity in the community as a whole.'[859] As is hinted by MacDonald, social tensions alone are not

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[852] Also, the command 'to love' does not reproduce the more negative statement in Colossians to 'not be harsh' (3.19).
[853] For a discussion of this see Best, *Ephesians,* 540. Best uses *Ps Phocylides* 195-197 and the rabinnic writing *b Yeb* 62b as examples.
[854] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373.
[855] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 367.
[856] Balch's study is essentially about the Christian household code found in 1 Peter, however, his conclusions could be applied to Ephesians as well. He claims that the author of 1 Peter encourages certain conduct 'which would contradict the Roman slanderers;' Balch, *Wives*, 119.
[857] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 358.
[858] MacDonald, *Churches*, 117.
[859] MacDonald, *Churches*, 115.

enough to identify exactly why this material is included here and theological reasons may have been behind the author's reasoning.

So, while the household codes of Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter are uniquely Christian on a theological level, on a sociological level, the injunctions for wives are in line with other writings of the first century. As Fiorenza has suggested, the author may in fact be trying to transform social norms by insisting on a husband's love and casting his comments in a world-creating Christian theological mold.[860] Fiorenza comes to the conclusion that 'One could say that the exhortations to the husbands spell out what it means to live a marriage relationship as a Christian, while those to the wives insist on the proper social behaviour of women.'[861] For New Testament writers, household codes have to do with proper relationships within the household as microcosm of the church, just as elsewhere the household has been seen as microcosm of the state.[862] So widespread is the appearance of household codes in ancient literature, that the household as microcosm of the state, or society, may have been a 'natural' identification; therefore, a shift to household as microcosm of church may not have been a huge leap, but a 'natural' progression. We should not be surprised by the presence of these codes in the New Testament, as it was probably the obvious place to start in any discussion of the household. We should not attempt to make sweeping generalisations about New Testament household codes, but should look to individual authors for individual reasons for using codes.

In Ephesians, the author's reason for making use of the traditional format of the household code is that he wishes to continue his discussion of the need for group unity as a means to standing up against the powers. Further, our author wishes to go beyond the usual code by placing some expectations on husbands, who are expected to love their wives with agape, as a sister in Christ. The author's reasons for going beyond the usual code are not entirely clear. The exhortation extends the author's analogy of

[860] Fiorenza. *Memory*, 270.
[861] Fiorenza. *Memory*, 270.
[862] Osiek, 'Bride,' 30-31.

Christ/church and husband/wife, and at the same time has the effect of 'equalising' instructions to husbands and wives. Further, dual exhortations to all parties is in keeping with the general theme of unity, and disguises the call to female submissiveness, though this may or may not have been the author's intent.

Christ and Church, Husband and Wife

Two distinct themes are interwoven in the passage we find in 5:22-33, and they are so interdependent that attempting to extract the 'dominant' one has divided interpreters. The source of this confusion is the fact that it is difficult to discern whether this section of text is about Christ and the church or human marriage since the author's theology and instructions are mutually dependent.[863] In his book on the mystery-theme in Ephesians, Moritz comes to the conclusion that the *Leitmotif* of this section is human marriage, since it belongs as part of a longer section on household codes.[864] While this conclusions seems logical, it also contradicts the author's own statement in verse 32, 'this is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.' Best comes to a more suitable conclusion arguing that the passage has two parallel conclusions, one about Christ and church, and the other about human marriage.[865] Elsewhere he says that, 'two themes intertwine, the relationship of husbands and wives and the relationship of Christ and the church, and they are used to throw light on each other.'[866] There seems no reason to conclude that the author had one particular theme in mind any more than the other. Instead, he has skilfully made use of an opportunity to emphasise two points at once.

A.T. Lincoln sees that human marriage has become part of the theology of community in Ephesians and states '...the standard and prototype for the writer's instructions about human marriage is the bond between heavenly bridegroom and his bride.'[867] In fact, human imitation of the heavenly could be seen as one of the major strands running

[863] Bouttier, *L'Epître de saint Paul aux Ephésiens*,CNT IX (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991), 240.
[864] T. Moritz, 'A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians,' *JSNT* (1998) 133.
[865] Best, *Ephesians*, 530.
[866] Best, *Ephesians*, 55.
[867] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 352.

through the section. The words 'just as Christ' are found 3 times in verses 22-33, the language of comparison seems to dominate the section. Michel Bouttier mentions this in his commentary, noting that the combinations *comme*, *comme aussi*, and *ainsi aussi*, appear in french versions of the text in verses 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, and 29, half the verses making up the section.[868] Imitation as a theme is also discussed by Barth who notes that 'every "ought" for men and women in vss 21-33 is supported by a Christological and ecclesiological "is".[869] Paul says nothing of marriage partners if he can not show a Christological reason.'[870] Indeed, the 'Christ-Church analogy supplies the hermeneutical parameters for understanding the husband's responsibility towards his wife.'[871] And, it appears that human marriage supplies the hermeneutial parameters for understanding the relationship of Christ to the church.

Comparing the image of Christ as 'Head of the Body' with human marriage is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, thus it is part of the author's own contribution to first century Christian theology.[872] 1 Corinthians uses the analogies of church as 'the body of Christ,' and of Christ as 'Head' of man, but it is here in Ephesians where Christ becomes the head of that body:

Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνήρ κεφαλὴ δε τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός. (1Cor 11:3)

ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος (Eph 5:23)

[868] Bouttier, *L'Epître,* 240.
[869] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 652.
[870] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 652.
[871] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 139.
[872] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 371.

The body of Christ language in Ephesians is used to describe the universal, even cosmic, reality of the church (2.16).[873] This is different than 1 Corinthians 12, which has a particular congregation in mind. While the same language of headship is used in both the verses above, 1 Corinthians describes an order of seniority, while the theology of Ephesians compares two kyriarchal relationships, Christ/ church and husband /wife.

Verses 22-33 of chapter 5 are unique to the New Testament in other ways as well. For example, where in Colossians wives are asked to submit to their husbands 'as is fitting in the Lord,' Ephesians asks them to submit 'as to the Lord.' This puts wives' submission on a new level, comparing it to behaviours that are part of their religiosity, and by implication, making submission to husbands one way in which a married woman should express her piety. In verse 24, the author asks women to submit to their husbands, 'in everything,' and puts wives' submission in terms of the Church's relationship to Christ.[874] Again, the author's desire seems to be to ensure that a wife's submissiveness is understood as part of the theology by which she lives.

In verses 22-33, the author has unknowingly made a major contribution to the church's view of marriage for centuries to come. These few verses are an important part of the process of the 'sacralizing' of marriage that began in the first century and carried on throughout Christian history.[875] As Lincoln says, '...the writer of Ephesians does not treat marriage as a second-best option,[876] but instead, by relating it so intimately to Christ's union with his church, gives it an exalted status and lays the foundation for the development of the Christian 'sacralizing' of the relationship.'[877] The author has instigated this 'sacralizing' by making marriage and one's behaviour as a married person part of one's Christian theological identity.

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[873] Johnson, *Ephesians*, 339.
[874] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 355.
[875] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 363.
[876] As has been seen in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.
[877] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 390.

Wives Subordinate Yourselves (?)

The words 'wives subordinate yourselves' do not actually appear in Ephesians. Both verses 22 and 24b are missing verbs, therefore, in the Greek, the author never actually says these three words together.[878] Problematic is the fact that verse 22 has no verb, and its meaning depends on the participle of verse 21,[879] as the implications of these two verses seem to be contradictory. Verse 21 asks Christians to submit to one another, while verse 22 turns and directs this instruction towards wives in particular.

On one hand, as is noted by Marcus Barth, 'the notion of mutual subordination seems to relativize, if not blur and destroy, any clear notion of authority and subservience.'[880] On the other hand, *within the same sentence, and indeed, depending on the same verb*, the author turns to wives, asking them in particular to practice subservience. Interestingly, the author does not refer to nature, standards of decency, the law, or the fall as reasons for wives to subordinate themselves.[881] Further, he does not refer to the order of creation, sin, nor the wearing of the veil as in 1 Corinthians.[882] The author's reasons for asking wives to submit are distinctly Christian, and distinctly theological.

A comment should be made about the language used to describe the wife's should-be relationship to her husband. For example, the word φοβέω in verse 33 is a strong word, meaning fear or respect. It is a stronger than ὑποτάσσω, 'subordinate' used in 21-22. Many are called to 'fear' Christ in 5.21. Also, φοβέω is a normal element in all authority structures; for examples see Romans 13.3, 4.7, 1 Peter 2.18, and Ephesians 6.5. Also, as has been seen, Ephesians instructions for women differ from those in Colossians in a key way; while Col 3.18 reads 'Wives be subject etc… *as is fitting* in the Lord,' Ephesians reads, *'as to the Lord'*. The difference between these two phrases is significant. In Ephesians, a wife's submission becomes part of her life as a Christian living in community.

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[878] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 620.
[879] Foulkes, *Ephesians,* 161.
[880] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 610.
[881] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 613.
[882] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 715.

We could say that a woman's call to subordination is qualified in three ways. First, as seen above, it is qualified by the call to mutual subordination. Secondly, it is qualified by the fact that wives are being asked to submit to husbands, not all men. And thirdly, it is qualified by specifying the wife's subordination in terms of the church's function before Christ.[883] In 5.21, the author has in mind a subordination different than the other forms of subordination that we find in Paul's writings such as the subjection of the creatures 'to futility' (Rom 8.19), the present and future subjugation of principalities and powers to the feet of Christ (1 Cor 15:25-27 & Eph 1:21-22), and the loss of all power and exposure to ridicule (Col 2:15).[884] About the interpretation of verses 21 and 22 Lincoln says, and I would agree that, 'justice has to be done *both* to the force of vs 21 *and* to the force of the specific types of submission in the household code. Modern interpreters might perceive the first admonition as undermining or deconstructing the others, but clearly the original writer did not find them incompatible.'[885] As has been shown in the previous section, the author of Ephesians has made a significant departure from the traditional household code, by instructing men to love their wives. Indeed, he has even made a distinct departure from Colossians.[886] Though a call for husbands to submit to their wives represents a stance that is well beyond the author's imagination, it must be acknowledged that his view of Christian marriage pushes the boundaries of his culturally conditioned mindset. It is exactly this boundary pushing that permits him to write vs. 21 and 22 without personal contradiction.[887]

The Use of Tradition

The use of husband/wife analogies in religious texts and traditions would not have been new to Ephesians' audience. The Hebrew Bible uses such analogies in a number of places, for example, Is 54:1-8, 62:4-5, Jer 3:6-14, 31.32, Ez 16.23, and Hos 1-3. Also,

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[883] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 620.
[884] Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 609.
[885] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366.
[886] See above discussion.
[887] That's not to say that from a 21st century perspective the contradiction should not be noted!

the Jesus tradition used marriage analogies in parables that may have been familiar to believers in Asia Minor, such as Matt. 9:15, 22:2-13, and 25:1-10.

Though our author may have had such passages and traditions in mind, Eph. 5.25-27 contains no explicit quotation from the Hebrew Bible. Also, there are some essential differences between the way the marriage relationship is used in the Hebrew Bible and the way it is used in Ephesians. In the Old Testament, the analogy is between Yahweh and Israel, here it is between the Messiah and the Jews and Gentiles. Further, in the Jewish Scriptures the groom pays a price for the woman, for example, Gen. 34.12, 1 Sam 18, 20-27, Ruth 4. 1-7, Hosea 3.2, and Isa 43, 3-4. Also, Jeremiah 3:6-14 & Ezekel 23 describe Yahweh as bigamous, whereas in Ephesians, Christ has one bride, the church. Also, in the Hebrew Bible, procreation of children was the primary purpose and blessing of a couple, and this does not extend to the analogy in Ephesians. The main difference between Ephesian's use of marriage imagery and that of the Old testament is that in Hosea and elsewhere human marriage is used to illustrate or explain God's faithfulness despite Israel's faithlessness. On the contrary, Ephesians, 'reverses the direction of the comparison by using Christ's relationship to the Church to illustrate how men ought to relate to their wives and women to their husbands.'[888] While the Old Testament tradition of using human marriage to illustrate the relationship of God to his people seems balanced and reasonable, using the Christ/Church relationship to illustrate the ideal for husband and wife, 'holds up a divine standard for human behavior.'[889] Elizabeth Johnson calls this an 'unavoidable contradiction.'[890]

Therefore, though the author of Ephesians echoes traditional materials, his use of the marriage analogy is unique and should be seen as part of his personal contribution to Christian theology. The force of this theology is to underline again the importance of what he feels is appropriate behaviour for Christians within marriage. He pushes the boundaries of previous theologies by claiming that human marriage ought to aim to

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[888] Johnson, *Ephesians*, 340.
[889] Johnson, *Ephesians*, 340.
[890] Johnson, *Ephesians*, 340.

imitate the relationship of Christ to the church, in the husband' sacrificial love for his wife, and in the wife's submission to her husband.

Also, it should be noted here that the author (as does Paul and the author of 1 Timothy), refers to the Genesis creation story as part of his theology of marriage. In verse 31, our author quotes Genesis 2.24 directly.[891] T. Moritz writes an elaborate analysis of Ephesians' use of the Genesis passage, setting the text against a background of contemporary debates about marriage and divorce.[892] Taking note of a somewhat negative stance towards the Torah expressed by the author in 2.13-17, Moritz is surprised to find him quoting it here. The use of Genesis in a discussion of marriage should not surprise us though, as it seems to have been the norm to allude to Genesis in such a discussion, as we have seen in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy as well. The fact that the Torah is not the first place the author has turned when discussing marriage[893] only reinforces this point.

Moritz argues that first century writers could presuppose the audience's familiarity with the original context and co-text of Hebrew Bible passages. A classic example of this is 1 Cor 10.7, where the author quotes (Exodus 32.6) 'the people sat down to eat and drink and rose to play.' Only when taken with the co-text of the golden calf does the quotation become meaningful.[894] In the Genesis context, the verse is almost an aside to the main story. Allusion to this story signals that the narrator firmly roots human marriage in God's order of creation.[895]

Moritz also reviews the interpretation of Genesis 2.24 by other contemporary Jewish and Christian authors. Most interestingly, he notes that in some Rabinnic texts, Gen

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[891] Some manuscripts also contain an allusion to Gen 2.23 at 5.30, 'from his flesh and bones.' See P. R. Rodgers, 'The Allusion to Genesis 2:23 at Ephesians 5:30,' in which he argues that this quotation gives evidence for the Gnostic background of Ephesians.
[892] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 120-127.
[893] See discussion on household codes above.
[894] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 119.
[895] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 119-121.

2.24 is regarded as a text calling for divorce, in contrast to other New Testament texts that interpret the verse as giving divine sanction to the one flesh union of husband and wife (see Mark 10.9).[896] Moritz concludes that the major contribution of the author of Ephesians 'was to lift Christian marriage from the level of natural attraction of the sexes to that of being rooted in the experience of Christ.[897] Further, the Genesis quotation here reinforces the meaning of oneness and takes the quotation to be a pro-marriage text, not an anti-marriage text, as it may have been interpreted in the community.[898]

CONCLUSIONS

The passage on marriage (and parent/child, slaves/masters relationships) in Ephesians 5 has been called, 'pastorally defective' by Ernest Best.[899] This harsh assessment is based on the fact that the letter does not deal with any of the problems of mixed households of believing and unbelieving members and the variety of circumstances that Christians would have found themselves in. Best says, 'by limiting himself to Christian households, AE[900] has failed to address many, perhaps the majority, of his readers in respect of their conduct towards their kinsfolk.'[901] This, among other factors has led to the conclusion that Ephesians was not intended for a specific audience, but for a more general readership in Western Asia Minor.

The theology of Ephesians 1-3 would have found widespread acceptance in Asia Minor since it simply tells a tale of common Christian identity. For various reasons it is almost impossible to recreate a community behind this letter, other than to say that it was designed for a general readership across Western Asia Minor. Thus, the readers of Ephesians were in the same cosmopolitan environment as those of 1 Timothy.

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[896] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 128-129.
[897] Moritz, 'Profound Mystery,' 152.
[898] Kittredge, *Community*, 156.
[899] Best, *Ephesians*, 526.
[900] This is Best's way of referring to the Ephesian author.
[901] Best, *Ephesians*, 526.

In chapter 5, the author uses an idealised image of Christian marriage to continue and reinforce his main focus on Christian unity. Through rhetorical analysis, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge has underlined the conclusion that the author's concern for unity finds one of its crucial expressions in 5.22-6.9 where the Christ/Church and Husband/Wife analogy comes into full bloom. The author adds his own theological twist to the existing Christian theology of church as the body of Christ, by making Christ the head of that body and by using the analogy of husband and wife. The author combines his theology of community with the common Greek genre of the household code which has the unfortunate effect of solidifying submission into the identity of the Christian wife. But here it should also be added that the author steps outside of expectation, based on other versions of the household code, both Christian and non-Christian, by giving some responsibility to the Christian husband. Further, the Christ/Church and Husband/Wife analogy alludes to Hebrew Bible traditions, of YHWH's relationship to his unfaithful bride Israel, though none is quoted explicitly. Like the authors of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, the author points to the Genesis tradition, here quoting Gen. 2.24.

In terms of the present discussion of female identity and theology, the study of Ephesians serves to underline the centrality of gender in Christian self-understanding. If Kittredge is correct in suggesting that 5.22-33 is the centre point of the author's purpose, then indeed a wife's submission is an integral part of her Christianity in our author's eyes. Further, the author draws on Gen 2.24 to reinforce this point, using the Genesis tradition in a very different way than say, the women in Corinth. In Corinth, a movement of considerable proportions drew on Gen 1.27 when they repeated their baptismal formula, 'there is no male and female,' and chose to live as celibates. The passage in Ephesians 5.22-33 is markedly different from anything else we have seen thus far.

There is some evidence that in the early communities, the Genesis story was interpreted by a variety of groups, coming to a variety of conclusions. In Ephesians, proper gendered behaviour in marriage has become solidified, in the author's mind, as part of the nature and identity of the church in Christ. This is important for my study, not

because I am able to show conclusively that there was an alternative ideal in the community, but because it exemplifies just how intertwined theology was with gender in terms of identity formation in the early church. In order to deal properly with feminist questions aimed at the New Testament, we must be prepared to admit that for these Christians gender relations were a matter of faith. We must be prepared to assess theologies, and then decide if we can condone the use of such theologies in modern times.

CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter I hope to reiterate the main points that have emerged from each of the three case studies above, as well as draw out some contrasts and comparisons. I hope that I have painted pictures of three very different theological situations and three very different communities. Further, by the end of the chapter, I hope to have shown that a more textured and colourful painting, or perhaps mosaic, is required of historical reconstructions of the early church and its women. In the communities behind each of the texts discussed above, three very different theological struggles were taking place about the place and meaning of Christian womanhood.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, we saw how feminist approaches to New Testament texts were often 'shy' when approaching questions of theology, since theologies make universal truth claims. My aim has been to begin to fill this methodological void by looking specifically for evidence of theological discussions in the early churches. Chapter two drew out a discussion from feminist and gender studies about methodological approaches to 'women' in history. This feminist debate is rarely imported to biblical studies directly, though its questions are central to any feminist inquiry. I hope to have created some kind of loose connection between the conversations about the meaning of womanhood in modern feminist thought, and the theological discussions of gender and women's roles in ancient Christian communities. In so-doing, I join the struggle for equality.

In all three of the letters and communities discussed in this dissertation there is evidence that issues of Christian identity and behaviour were being discussed in Christian theological terms. Further, debated issues included matters of gender and meaning, in particular in relation to women. In short, these communities struggled to find a working definition of the term 'woman,' and more specifically, 'Christian woman.' As such, early Christianity was one of countless historical locations in which the meaning of

gender in human identity has taken place. In each of the chapters, once evidence for a debate was established, then some attempt was made to show what theological issues may have been involved in the discussions. The theological issues that form the bases for these discussions could be used as a starting point for further study. In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the evidence for theological debates and outline briefly some of the theological concepts under discussion.

CORINTH

Evidence for theological debate

In the community at Corinth at the time of Paul's first letter, we find a large variety of people who worshipped together including Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, rich and poor. This is the kind of diversity one would expect from a Christian community in a bustling port city that had been re-colonised by the Romans. 1 Corinthians 7.1-40 is the first piece of text that offers a clue to the unfolding discussion of women in the community. Here, Paul discusses issues of marriage, virginity and celibacy. We know that the Corinthians have been discussing these issues, and have seemingly come to their own conclusions, since Paul begins this section with a quote from the Corinthians' own letter, 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman' (7.1). It has been shown that the community, Paul included, would agree that celibacy is better than marriage, though it seems that differences in theology have driven people from diverse backgrounds to differences in practice. In 14.34-35, Paul asks that wives remain silent in order to maintain calm in the worship setting. Paul was uneasy with the amount of discussion taking place in the community, and in keeping with other expectations of Christians wives, asks that married women in particular contribute to the peacefulness that he desires.

Terms of debate

It seems that in the first-century community at Corinth all agree that celibacy is better than marriage. Discord arose over who should have the privilege to live a celibate life and who should not. Some members of the Corinthian community had built a theology that included the phrase from 7.1, seen above, among others that dealt with issues of authority over partners' bodies (7.4) and virginity (7.25). Set apart from any conflict of interest between a husband's plan for her and God's plan, some Corinthian women

understood themselves as being physically and spiritually free to represent God's glory in the community.[902] Further, the women in Corinth may have called on a baptismal phrase similar to the one found in Gal. 3.26-28 to construct their theology. This phrase brought to mind Gen 1.27, and had come to mean that sexual relationships between male and female were no longer constitutive of one's identity in Christ.

The Corinthians had debates and discussions as to how their new self-understanding expressed in Gal 3.26-28 could or should be realised in their world. For example, should we be married? Should we keep previous marriage relationships? Could or should a virgin or widow remain single? What about our marriages to non-Christians? In 7.28, it appears that Paul is addressing a group of both men and women who felt it was best if they did not go ahead with their intended marriages. Convinced that 'all things are lawful for me,' this group of young men and women maintained that, against patriarchal tradition, a wife had authority over her own body.[903]

Paul too held the ideal that women's asceticism was preferable to her role as daughter, wife and mother, built on his theology of the pressures of the shortness of time and the return of Christ. For Paul, the celibate life was a gift, and he suggested that those who do not possess this gift should remain married. Paul's underlying emphasis is that Christians should remain in the condition that they were called (7.17,20,24).

Later in the letter, Paul argues that women should cover their heads during worship and he bases his request on two factors; an argument from shame, that shaving indicates social outcast, and a theological argument based on the Genesis stories (Gen 1&2). On the other hand, the Corinthian women knew themselves to be a new creation in Christ, made in God's image, not male and female.[904] They are defined by the new creation that

[902] Wire, *Prophets*, 95.
[903] Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 110.
[904] Wire, *Prophets*, 126.

has happened to them, and their conduct is no longer determined by the threat of shaming themselves and their husbands.[905]

Paul's letter does not provide sufficient data for us fully to understand what he means by 'having authority on her head' and 'due to the angels' in chapter 11. Since he does not develop his thought further, it is likely that these phrases were known in Corinth. It is the *theological* weight of Paul's argument that makes it likely that the women who prophesied uncovered chose to do so, as Wire says, for some purpose with social consequences and theological justification.[906] This theological justification is founded in the interpretation of the Genesis tradition, the phrase called to mind during the baptism of community members, a perception of the angel's presence during worship, and personal and communal experiences of the divine spirit.

1 TIMOTHY

Evidence for theological debate

In the case of 1 Timothy, the evidence that the community was involved in theological discussions about the meaning and place of women, among other issues, is considerable. As in Corinth, the community in Asia Minor lived in a multicultural and multi-religious context. Leaders were emerging amongst the readers who held distinct theologies of the relationship between gender and Christian identity. The author's harsh derision of these teachers' characters tells us that he perceived them to be a genuine threat to his own teaching (1.3-7, 19&20, 4.1-3). This suggests that they were influential and creative theologians. Further, they appear to have searched the scriptures and been willing to subject their results to public debate (1.4).[907] We know that issues relating to women were among the author's difficulties with these teachers since passages about women play a prominent role in the letter (2.9-15, 3.11, 5.2-16). The passage on widows suggests that a large group of women of all ages were living a certain lifestyle as part of their devotion to Christ (5.2-16).

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[905] Wire, *Prophets*, 127.
[906] Wire, *Prophets*, 123.
[907] Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy*, 124. See discussion above.

Terms of debate

The text of 1 Timothy offers numerous passages on women to sink our teeth into. There we find instructions for female dress and learning, a lengthy passage related to a large number of women living as widows, and the mention of childbearing and female deacons. Theological reflection related to these issues calls on Genesis 1-3, as well as mentioning the crucial issue of salvation. All these factors contribute to making 1 Timothy a text rich in sources for a discussion of the theological struggle over the meaning of women in the early churches.

In 2.9-15, the author argues that women ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσέβειαν should be listening to him and following his instructions. That is, women professing to have reverence for God, or piety, would certainly dress modestly and inexpensively. 2.13-15 contains the crux of the author's argument, where he legitimates his instructions with theological meaning. Women should do as they are told because Eve was created second, thus women should learn in all submission. The author offers the fact that it was the woman who was deceived and not Adam as a second theological reason as to why women should be quiet and refrain from teaching. The author's interpretation of the Genesis passage was borne from the fact that it was women who were being 'deceived' by other teachers.[908] Numerous parallels from Jewish tradition show that the author is part of a long line of interpreters who have looked to the story of Adam and Eve in order to make a claim about the inferior place and character of women in relation to men, in particular in the context of marriage. Though many of these examples are similar, none of them correspond directly to the author's interpretation. As for the cryptic phrase in 2.15, it has been shown that the relationship between childbearing and salvation was debated in the community, and that the author had simply to state this one short sentence in order to make his opinion on the matter known.

[908] See Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 86; Scott, *Pastoral Epistles*, 27; Hanson, *Studies,* 37; Houlden, *Pastoral Epistles*, 71.

The teaching on celibacy, taught by the other leaders, had a large following in the communities and amongst those adhering to this teaching were a large group of women. Whatever this celibacy-centered theology is, it has encouraged action in the lives of women of all ages. Thus, in the communities to whom 1 Timothy was addressed, the issue of women's identity was discussed in these contexts: the hermeneutics of Genesis 1-3; the relationship between salvation and childbearing; and how to live as married couples in their new-found faith.

EPHESIANS

Evidence for theological debate

Ephesians is the most 'troublesome' of the three case studies, since the text gives very little away with regard to the context in which it was received. However, since the letter was intended for a more general audience across Asia Minor, my questions are answered in a different way. For example, Ephesians informs us that, at least from the author's point of view, one's gender identity was central to one's Christian identity. Once again, the audiences of Ephesians most likely lived in an environment of multiculturalism, which included many competing agendas and ideas about the relationship between the sexes. The observed expansion of Colossians 3.18-19 in 5.21-32 by the author of Ephesians provides further evidence that the male/female relationship was an issue.[909] As Kittredge has pointed out, the best historical explanation for Ephesians is the context of a 'dispute over [the] interpretation of the oneness of Christian baptism and how that oneness plays itself out in the church.'[910] Interestingly, the author of Ephesians uses a gender-related example to expound his theological agenda.

Terms of debate

A close inspection of the key text of Ephesians has illuminated some of the distinctiveness of the author's theology and understanding of gender. For example, what is unique about 5:22-33 is not the injunctions for women, nor is it the idea that women

[909] Kittredge, *Community*, 171.
[910] Kittredge, *Community*, 172.

should be submissive, but rather the injunctions for men, which find no ancient analogy. Indeed, the author has even made a distinct departure from Colossians, as mentioned above. It may even be that the author has attempted to present some kind of reciprocal view of marriage. A call for husbands to submit to their wives in verse 25 would represent equality in keeping with verse 21, but this is a stance that is well beyond the author's imagination. However, it must be acknowledged that the author's view of Christian marriage pushes the boundaries of his culturally conditioned mindset. It is exactly this boundary pushing that permits him to write verses 21 and 22 without personal contradiction.

In chapter five the author also alludes to a Hebrew Bible tradition of analogy between YHWH/Israel and husband/wife. However, marriage imagery in Hosea, for example, is used to illustrate or explain God's faithfulness despite Israel's faithlessness. On the contrary, Ephesians entwines the two sides of the analogy so closely that it is unclear which is the author's main concern, and which is being used to illustrate that point. The image of Christ as 'Head of the Body' being compared to man's headship with regard to women, is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, thus it is part of the author's own contribution to first century Christian theology.

Despite a possible attempt to portray marriage as a reciprocal (and possibly equal?) relationship, the author's use of marriage imagery alongside Christ/Church imagery has the effect of putting wives' submission on a new level, making submission to husbands one way in which a married woman should express her piety. In verse 24, the author asks women to submit to their husbands, 'in everything,' and puts wives' submission in terms of the Church's relationship to Christ.[911] Further, the dual exhortations to all parties is in keeping with the general theme of unity, and disguises the call to female submissiveness. Kittredge concludes that, 'By constructing submission as the natural relationship of wife to husband and justifying it by analogy to Christ and the Church, the author has made obedience to husbands a requirement for wives.'[912] In this

[911] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 355.
[912] Kittredge, *Community*, 139.

interpretation, the quotation from Gen 2.24 used in 5.31, echoes the 'two become one' ideal that is applied to Jew/gentile relations in 2.14-16, but has an entirely different meaning for husband and wife.

Thus, the theological terms upon which the author of Ephesians discusses 'women' are related only to the marriage relationship. He draws parallels from Hebrew Bible tradition and once again, the Genesis story, this time from Genesis chapter 2. Lastly, the author draws on Christology as he places men and women's roles within marriage in the context of Christian community.

Comparisons

Students of women in the New Testament often interpret Paul and pseudo-pauline authors as making a distinction between the 'order of creation,' for example, the use of household codes, and the 'order of redemption,' for example Gal 3.26-28, though neither of these expressions are found in the New Testament.[913] It seems to me that this interpretation of Paul is in line with the normative modern view of male and female as 'equal but different.'[914] Such an understanding of early Christian reflection on gender does not reveal the true diversity of opinion that was a reality in the early Christian world. For example, though all authors discussed in this study use the Genesis story of creation and/or fall in their constructions of gender identity, none use these stories in the same way. Though plenty of ancient Jewish sources make similar use of Genesis 1-3, none are the same as our authors'. Further, in the community at Corinth, it seems that Genesis 1.27 was used to create two very different theologies, one where marriage was seen as necessary to avoid immorality in the shortness of time, and another, where even married people were encouraged to live as celibates.

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[913] For example see Robert Jewett, 'The Sexual Liberation of the Apostle Paul,' *JAAR* Supplements 47/1 (1979) 74-80.

[914] In her book, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250*, Prudence Allen argues that in modern time the 'equal but different' construction of gender is an internalised norm in the western world (Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge MA: Eerdmans, 1997).

In 1 Corinthians, a cryptic statement about angels allows a glimpse into the theological contours of a debate about women during worship, which is not found elsewhere (11.10). A similarly cryptic statement in 1 Timothy about the relationship between childbearing and salvation shows that this community was not afraid to cut right to the heart of the matters of female physiology and Christian salvation (2.15). Again, a discussion with these contours finds no other contemporary example. In Ephesians, the author seems to recognise a need to reform expectation by instructing husbands to love their Christian wives, but in so-doing makes female subordination a required part of a Christian woman's identity. For him, proper gender relations and unity in the church were part and parcel.

Having acknowledged the true theological diversity of the struggle for the meaning of 'woman' in the ancient church, I must also acknowledge that the debates in the three communities addressed have some similarities as well. The parameters of the debate are disappointingly narrow, and most of the debates revolve around the question of celibacy versus married life, while none consider the possibility of female participation regardless of marital status. I would point out however, that evidence is limited to certain texts and rhetorical situations reconstructed from those texts and so our insights will always be limited to the ways in which the authors understood the worlds in which they lived.

Deborah Sawyer's final chapter in, *Women in the First Christian Centuries*, includes a discussion of how gender categories were 'under construction' in the early church.[915] Like Fiorenza,[916] Sawyer sees an increased patriachalisation in the early church as a response to societal influences. She argues that when Christianity does consciously realise the need to conform to, rather that to challenge, society, it is compelled to argue for a particular understanding of gender.[917] However, Sawyer's analysis is done from the point of view of the development of ideals of 'male' and 'female' in Western history, and therefore she paints her history with a very wide brush. For example, Sawyer's

[915] Sawyer, *Women*, 146-157.
[916] Fiorenza, *Memory*, 251-284.
[917] Sawyer, *Women*, 146.

analysis jumps from 1 Cor 11.7-9 to John Chrysostom's interpretation of Adam and Eve!

In response to scholars such as Fiorenza and Sawyer, I would argue, based on the findings of my study, that a more 'textured' view of the theological debate of the meaning of 'woman' is required if we desire a more complex and thorough understanding of early Christian development. I would draw on feminist ideas of a 'mosaic' or 'quilted' history,[918] in which pieces are sewn together with the historian's creativity, yet at the same time acknowledging that there are other ways of combining the same pieces of cloth. Further, this approach takes into account the 'holes' and historical silences, which are the reason that the creative work of the historian is needed in the first place.

From a feminist point of view, I bring to the texts discussed questions of 'equality or inequality?' Theologies that encouraged 'patriarchal' or 'egalitarian' viewpoints and actions have both been found in the literature, even if these categories are beyond the scope of our author's worldview. Thus, rather than attempting to squeeze out our own preferred truth from the New Testament texts, I would suggest that modern Christians join the theological debate and take full responsibility for the ongoing struggle for the meaning of 'woman' in our world.

[918] Many feminist historians have used the analogy of the quilt for creative historical work. For a full discussion of this see Elsa Barkley Brown, 'What has Happened Here?' in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (ed. L. Nicholson; New York and London: Routeledge, 1997) 272-287.

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