

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

THE CONTESTED ROLE OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE EVIDENCE IN THE GOSPELS, THE PAULINE LETTERS, DEUTRO-PAULINE
LETTERS, AND SELECTED EXTRA-CANONICAL TEXTS

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CONTENTS

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. PAUL	3

Paul and Women

Robin Scroggs- Paul as the Spokesman for the Liberation of Women

3. JESUS	19
----------------	----

Jesus and Women

John Dominic Crossan-A Historical and Sociological Critique on Jesus

4. 1 TIMOTHY	40
--------------------	----

1 Timothy and Women

Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Linda M. Maloney's Feminist Critique of 1 Timothy vs. John

H. Yoder's Revolutionary Subordination

5. CONCLUSIONS	60
----------------------	----

WORKS CITED	64
-------------------	----

Religious scriptures and texts are an integral part of many religious traditions. These texts often articulate the fundamental beliefs, ideologies, and concepts within the tradition. As a consequence, the texts are considered authoritative. For Christian communities, the Bible is considered the authoritative text. However, this text does not reveal everything. There are gaps, inconsistencies, and obscure references throughout the Bible. As a result, Christian communities have attempted to negotiate the tensions within the text through interpretation. Throughout the centuries, Christian communities have interpreted the Bible using a variety of methods in order to discover what the text was revealing and concealing. These interpretations have influenced the way modern society is structured.

Feminist Biblical scholarship has begun to present interpretations of the Bible that differ from earlier text and form biblical criticism. Feminist scholars are negotiating the tensions and contradictions within the text and highlighting the presence and importance of women. Some feminist scholars, cognizant of the powerful influence this authoritative text has exerted and continues to exert within society, are stressing the presence of women in the text and asserting that women were important members of the early Christian community. These new interpretations are influencing the way women and men read the texts. However, the conflicting and tension filled status of women within the Christian tradition can not be reconciled solely through new interpretations. The authoritative nature of the text and the centuries of interpretation that have preceded the feminist scholars must also be acknowledged.

The status of women in the early Christian church is not a one sided issue, but multifaceted. The status of women in the early Christian church is questionable because the texts

themselves do not reveal all aspects of the political, social, and religious aspects of the first century. Furthermore, the texts themselves are full of conflict and tension concerning the status of women. The central problem in this paper is to illuminate the conflict and tensions within the text in order to highlight the status of women in the early Christian community. By illuminating the conflicting texts, I hope to demonstrate the complexity of the issue of the status of women in the early Christian community. I diagram three separate groups of text, written during a period of approximately fifty years, illustrating what the evidence for the status of women is, why this evidence is in the text, and why it is contested. I have chosen the Gospels, the non-disputed Pauline letters, and the one of the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy as illustrations of the tension surrounding the status of women in early Christianity because I think that they portray the changing nature of the Christian community and have references to the status of women.

The first section examines the non-disputed Pauline letters and highlights the presence of women in his ministry, and how the idea of women in his ministry was questioned, challenged, and redefined within the text itself. Thus, a clear picture of women in Paul's ministry remains illusive. The second section examines the Gospels and the Jesus tradition. This section makes numerous concessions to particular interpretations of history and specific methods of dating, and also acknowledges the influence of a person's own social and political location in the interpretation of the figure of Jesus. The last section examines 1 Timothy and the conflicting interpretations of this text over the status of women in the Christian community. All of these sections attempt to acknowledge the relatively scarce data that is available for examination, scholars' biases, and my own personal biases.

The story I tell is a story of conflict. Women's roles are contested, defined, then

redefined. Egalitarianism is contested and questioned. Contemporary reflection, my reflection, is a reflection of this conflict and tension in the early Christian community. By illuminating the tension and conflict within the text, I demonstrate that it is almost impossible to construct a clear picture of the status of women in the early Christian community.

Paul and Women

The non-disputed Pauline corpus, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon is considered by many scholars as the earliest material in the New Testament. These letters were written approximately between 50 and 57 C.E.¹ thus they pre-date the Gospels which were written approximately between 70 C.E. and 90 C.E. The particular churches that Paul writes to provide the earliest material on the first century Christian community.

Upon closer examination of the texts, it is apparent that something that Paul preached created conflict and turmoil within various communities. The exact idea or message that created the tension and conflict is difficult to ascertain due to the limited amount of material by Paul that is collected in the New Testament. It can be hypothesized that the underlying impetus behind the tension and conflict in the communities to whom Paul is preaching is the shifting of social boundaries. Paul articulated a “new creation” that was not structured along the lines of Jewish law, the predominant religion of his converts and his own native religion. Paul delivered a message to his followers that was at times ambiguous and difficult to interpret. As a

¹Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul : Conversations in Context*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, Kentucky : Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991) 83, 87, 99, 104, 113, 116.

Romans 55-57 C.E., 1 Corinthians 52-55 C.E., Galatians 50-55 C.E., Phillipians 55-56 C.E., 1 Thessalonians 51 C.E., Philemon 55-56 C.E.

consequence, misunderstanding, conflict, and tension arose within the communities and is prevalent in the text itself. Paul's non-disputed letters illuminate the contested status of women in the early church. The texts themselves present conflicting descriptions of women, and the interpretations of these texts are also contested. This section of the paper examines the presence of women in Paul's ministry. I examine their status in light of their contested status and the tensions within the text. The presence of women in Paul's new creation is an example of the shifting boundaries within society.

Paul's teaching in the non-disputed letters depicts a new creation in which all people are equal participants. Paul described in his letters the end of the world, the old creation, and the emergence of a new world, the new creation in which Christianity outlined the ethical and social tenets of society. Paul states in 2 Corinthians:

with us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of anyone; even if once they counted in our understandings of Christ, they do so now no longer. For anyone united to Christ, there is a new creation : the old creation has gone; a new creation has already begun."²

As suggested in the text, the new creation described new roles for women and supported their inclusion in the public domain. Women were a present in Paul's ministry and they followed him throughout his ministry.³ He maintained that women were important to his mission. He states in 1 Corinthians, "Yet in the Lord's fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman."⁴ As a consequence, women are prevalent throughout the non-disputed Pauline corpus in a variety of

² 2 Cor. 5:16-17.

³ Acts 17:4 "Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great number of godfearing Gentiles and a good many influential women."

⁴ 1 Cor. 11:11.

leadership roles. (1 Cor. 16:19, Romans 16:1-7)

The non-disputed Pauline letters are letters to different communities of Christians. The majority of these Christian groups were worshiping in private homes at the time the letters were written. During this period, Christianity was still a minority, persecuted religion which had to conduct its worship services in private. The house church gave Christians an opportunity to meet and worship in a manner that was distinctively Christian. The early Christian community worshiped in the homes of their fellow Christians, that is in private spaces which were traditionally recognized as female domains. By worshiping in a private space the boundaries between public and private space began to be blurred. This blurring is particularly important to a woman's status in the community. By moving the public church into a private female sphere, women had more leadership roles and were able to be more active participants in the community.

Karen Jo Torjesen asserts that the public/ private ideology of antiquity pervaded the thoughts of first century politicians, philosophers, and rhetoricians as well as the common people who conversed in the streets of the Roman empire. This ideology emphasized the distinction between the public state (polis) and the private household (oikos). The public state was symbolically characterized as male, outdoor, mobile, civilized, and superior. In contrast the household was characterized as female, indoor, stationary, natural, and inferior. The public sphere of the state was inherently superior to the private sphere of the household; it constituted the only arena of freedom and civilized culture; it was the primary locus of male identity.⁵

⁵Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests : Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination* (San Francisco : San Francisco Harper, 1993), 59.

Christianity altered this conception of male and female identity through the blurring of the boundaries between the public state and the private household.

In agrarian societies, the home is the center of life. Jean Bethke Elshtain suggests that the home serves as an arena for economic production, it acts as a school, and is the place of human procreation and birth. It is actually and symbolically a potent place, where women are the repositories of several understandings of power associated with that sphere.⁶ Female power in the home is complementary to the more institutionalized, juridical authority of men. The roles and power ascribed to women are informal and not institutionalized, in contrast to the legitimated statuses and authority attributed to men.⁷ Female power is not institutionalized because of the location of that power base- the home. In contrast, the men's power base is the public arenas outside of the home and therefore is more regimented and institutionalized. As Christian communities began worshiping in the homes of families, women experienced an increase in power. This power became more institutionalized as the boundaries between public and private were eliminated in the house churches.⁸

The house church was a vital factor in the church's development during the first century. According to Floyd Filson it provided the setting in which the primitive Christians achieved a mental and physical separation from Judaism.⁹ The first Christians were very aware of the

⁶Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Christianity and Patriarchy : The Odd Alliance", *Modern Theology*, 9 (April 1993) : 116.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Floyd V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early House Churches," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 58 (1939) : 112.

religious law of Judaism and were probably members of the Jewish community before they converted to Christianity.¹⁰ As a consequence of Judaism's pervasiveness, Paul, throughout his ministry, had to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. One of the ways Paul achieved this goal was the establishment of house churches. The house church enabled the followers of Paul to have Christian worship and fellowship from the very first days of the apostolic age.¹¹

Women were leaders in some house churches, and provided the home and the monetary resources in others. Paul says, "Greetings from the churches of Asia. Many greetings in the Lord from Aquila and Prisca and the church that meets in their house."¹² Paul also mentions Phoebe, "I commend to you Phoebe a fellow Christian who is a minister in the church at Cenchreae."¹³ Prisca and Phoebe are both women who have churches in their homes, and who are the leaders of these churches. Phoebe is described as a minister (diakonos), which is a designated office with particular leadership and teaching responsibilities. This designation refers to her service to the church. Phoebe is also described as a helper of Paul. The term helper (prostatis) evokes a sense of patronage. She offered not only her home, but material support and moral encouragement to the Christian community.

Prisca and Phoebe are crossing boundaries which have been clearly defined in Greco-

¹⁰Jesus and Paul were both Jewish. Thus, attending the synagogue was a standard practice of their lives. However, Paul separated from Judaism it became necessary for him to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. He distinguished between the two religions both in the synagogues and in the house churches. Acts 17:2 recounts Paul's visit in the synagogue, "Following his usual practice Paul went to their meetings; and for the next three Sabbaths he argued with them, quoting texts of scripture." Jesus, unlike Paul, never officially broke from Judaism. He was a reformer within Judaism practicing a different form of Judaism. Luke 4 :16 states, "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he regularly did."

¹¹ Filson, 109.

¹²1 Cor. 16:19.

¹³Rom. 16:1-2.

Roman society. By assuming leadership roles in the house churches, these women are demonstrating the pervasiveness of Paul's message of egalitarianism present in the new creation. The texts appear to present the house churches as an important feature of Paul's ministry. Paul continuously greets the house churches in his letters and acknowledges the work of the female and male leaders of these house churches. Furthermore, the female owners of some of the homes are also presented as important components of his ministry. Paul says, "give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their necks to save my life, and not I alone but all the gentile churches are grateful to them."¹⁴ Women were included in the Paul's ministry and were important in the spread of Christianity through their physical offerings of their homes and money, and spiritually by spreading Christianity through their teaching.

The Corinthian women prophets are another example of the inclusion of women in the ministry of Paul. The Corinthian women prophets were a group of women who engaged in ecstatic prophecies and teachings. They had internalized Paul's message, I think somewhat incorrectly, of the new creation and were participants in the new creation through their faith in Christ. They understood Paul's message as giving everyone equal access to the teaching and preaching roles in the community. Paul had preached to the church at Corinth about the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. He stated:

In each of us the Spirit is seen to be at work for some useful purpose. One, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words...another has the gift of prophecy.¹⁵

¹⁴Rom. 16:3-5.

¹⁵1 Cor. 12: 7-8, 10.

The women, as Christians possessing the Spirit of Christ, were afforded the same leadership roles as the men. They could teach, preach, and prophesy. Antoinette Wire asserts that the Corinthian women prophets, "retain the house-church as their own space and signify that they are no longer determined by shame through sexual subordination but are determined by honor through the Spirit as persons who have put on Christ, God's image not male or female, and mediate God to each other."¹⁶ The women were realizing their role in community of Christ. They were legitimated in this role through the power of the Spirit which was embodied in the resurrected Christ.

The churches in Corinth were chaotic. The women were engaged in ecstatic prophesy and everyone during worship spoke in conjunction with one another, thus no one could be understood. Paul condemned this behavior by the women because they were perpetuating disorder. The women were not condemned because of their gender. Chaos is not a part of Paul's understanding of the new creation. He states in 1 Corinthians 14 :33, "for God is not a God of disorder but of peace." The disorder in Corinth was causing unrest and conflict. Paul sought to reestablish peace and order by providing the people in Corinth with a model for worship:

When you meet for worship, each of you contributing a hymn, some instruction, a revelation, an ecstatic utterance, or its interpretation, see that all of these aim to build up the church. If anyone speaks in tongues, only two should speak, or at most three, one at a time, and someone must interpret... You can all prophesy, one at a time, so that all may receive instruction and encouragement. It is for prophets to control prophetic inspiration.¹⁷

It is important to note in this passage that Paul says that everyone can prophesy. He has not

¹⁶Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 187.

¹⁷1 Cor. 14:26-27, 31-32.

limited the women's involvement in the leadership of the worship service, he has only re-directed the pattern of the service. These statements by Paul are the beginnings of a church. In this passage, Paul has given the Corinthians a model of a church worship service which includes women.

The Corinthian women prophets were legitimated in their leadership roles by Paul and his understanding of the new creation. The new creation eliminated some of the power structures of the Hellenistic world. However, Paul's understanding of the new creation did not advocate chaos. The social context of the Corinthian women appears to be in a state of chaos. The Corinthian women gathered together for worship and instruction, but became possessed by the Spirit and began speaking in tongues, speaking in unison, and moving ecstatically throughout the room. Thus Paul, while advocating women's leadership roles, also attempts to redirect these women to correct their conceptions of their authority as participants in Christ. Paul's correction of these women has been read by some scholars as anti-woman rhetoric which sought to deny these women their leadership roles. I think that this is a questionable reading of the text. Paul's correction of these women does not subordinate women, but clarifies the theological and social relationships that are to exist in Corinth.

Paul's ministry was not an agrarian, fringe movement like the Jesus movement. Paul was working in the large, urban centers of the Roman empire. Thus, his ministry was directed toward an urban, middle- to upper-class group of people. Paul's ministry did not eliminate social institutions. Instead, he redefined them in terms of the new creation. In Romans 13:1 he states, "every person must submit to the authorities in power, for all authority comes from God, and the existing authorities come from God." It is important that Paul does not eliminate all structures

of this world, because if he does chaos will be the result. Thus, it was important for Paul to redirect the women in Corinth in order to promote the spread of Christianity and attempt to align it to some aspects of the old creation. Chaos does not build churches nor promote the spread of Christianity.

In order to establish churches Paul must give his followers a model of a church. Paul uses a metaphor to describe the church. The church is the "body of Christ". The "body" image is used by Paul to describe the relationships of Christians to each other within the church. The body is one, yet it is made up of different, interdependent parts. Therefore, within the body there needs to be an exercise and recognition of different gifts and ministries. This recognition of different gifts and ministries appears to suggest that the input of women is an important feature of the church. The image of the "body of Christ" also refers to the personal union between the believer and Christ¹⁸. The believers are described as the limbs of Christ¹⁹, and only together can the believers construct a church. The "body of Christ" does not distinguish between male or female; all people are a part of the church. Paul states in Galatians 3:26-28,

It is through faith that you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him, you have put on Christ like a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freedman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.

Paul's understanding of the church includes all people. There are no distinctions among the members of the community of Christians according to class, gender, or background. The new

¹⁸David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans, 1995), 184-185.

There has been plenty of speculation as to the source of Paul's idea of "the body of Christ". Scholars have compared the Greek idea of the citizens in a particular place as a body, the Stoic conception of mankind as a body, the rabbinic notion that Adam's body contained within it the whole human race, and the Gnostic ideas of the world as God's body. 185

¹⁹1 Cor. 6:15; 10:17, 12:12, 13; Romans 12:4.

creation has eliminated the boundaries of distinction.

By eliminating differences Paul is moving toward a one-ness of humanity. Daniel Boyarian asserts that what motivated Paul ultimately was a profound concern for the one-ness of humanity. This concern was motivated by certain universalistic tendencies within Judaism and the reinterpretation of these tendencies in the light of Hellenistic notions of universalism. Paul was troubled by and critical of "ethnocentrism" and the way it implicitly and explicitly created hierarchies between nations, genders, social classes. The dual structure of the spiritual body and the physical body was the answer to Paul's socio-cultural problems.²⁰ The model of the church as the "body of Christ" creates a community of believers that are interdependent. The church, like the Christ, does not recognize differences. If the church does not recognize differences, then the church recognizes women as equal participants in all aspects of the church.

Paul, in building his churches, preached to his followers a message of inclusion and elimination of difference. This message included women as leaders in the church. Paul, as suggested by the text, appears to have created conflicts within society by preaching for the dissolving of distinctions. The Hellenistic world was a world characterized by differences—male/female, public/private, patron/client, and slave/master. By absolving differences, Paul created a church which was egalitarian. But Paul could not completely absolve differences and conflict and tension ensued. As a result the place of women in the Pauline text is contested. The text appears to suggest that women were important in Paul's ministry, but the text also silences women during worship and in some places elevates men over women. The ideal church

²⁰Daniel Boyarian, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994), 52-53.

according to Paul was probably an egalitarian church which included women in a variety of roles, but the reality of the early Christian church was that women's roles were highly contested.

Robin Scroggs- Paul as the Spokesman for the Liberation of Women

Robin Scroggs interprets Paul as the "only certain and consistent spokesman for the liberation and equality of women in the New Testament."²¹ According to Scroggs, Paul probably received this affirmation of women from the earliest church. Scroggs also asserts that Paul does not consider the place of women problematic.²² The Pauline letters describe an eschatological community in which each person stands as an equal beside his or her neighbor.²³ In this community a person is not solely defined according to their sex. Women are considered as important in the teaching and leadership of the community as the men.

The baptismal formula in Galatians 3:27-28 asserts that there are no longer any distinctions between males and females.²⁴ This text suggests that baptism in Christ eliminates all distinctions and differences. Thus, all people become one in Christ. In discarding difference Paul creates an egalitarian community based on faith in Christ. Scroggs suggests further that Paul is asserting here that salvation rests upon the reception and justification of the Spirit through

²¹Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," in *The Text and Times* (Fortress Press, 1993), 70.

²²Ibid.

²³The eschatological community is a designation that refers to a new community that is understood in terms of the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul understands Christ's death on the cross as ushering in a new creation. Scroggs asserts that, "the new community under Christ and in the Spirit cannot be compared with the old world, does not live out of its values (1 Cor. 7:29-31), is not bound to its mores, its laws, its societal attitudes...Paul is continually, in fact, struggling against what he sees are slippages back into the old world. To interpret accurately Paul's comments about the believing community, one must see them as descriptions, however inadequate, of a reality totally different from past culture, history, law, and religion." 75

²⁴Galatians 3:27-28 states, "Baptized into union with him, you have put on Christ like a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freedman, male and female; for you are one person in Christ Jesus."

baptism.²⁵ Unlike the requirement for salvation in 1 Timothy, salvation in this text is open to all people and does not depend on biological or behavioral traits. Scroggs suggests further, that in the context of Galatians 3, Paul appears to be arguing against a view of Christianity that claimed circumcision and perhaps obedience to the law as necessary for salvation. Scroggs suggests that the male/female pair in this text might have been a rhetorical device used by Paul and does not function within the thought development of the epistle.²⁶

Scroggs asserts that this rhetorical device, the inclusion of the male/female pair, can be interpreted as an insertion by Paul of an early Christian baptismal liturgy.²⁷ Scroggs maintains that this is important because it demonstrates that early Hellenistic Christianity, apart from Paul, acknowledged the societal-leveling quality of baptism, and that the very event of initiation into the Christian community destroys the barriers between groups of people as defined in the old

²⁵Gail Paterson Corrington, *Her Image of Salvation: Female Saviors and Formative Christianity* (Louisville, Kentucky : Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992), 30.

Corrington agrees with Scroggs's interpretation of the text. She asserts, "For Paul, the act of salvation took place in the 'putting on' of Christ and thus the person of Christ as the victor over both sin and death. (Galatians 3:26-27) This corporate and incorporated 'person', with many members, had no differentiation into genders or social statuses." 30

²⁶Scroggs, 80.

²⁷Scroggs supports this assertion by citing similar contexts in two other New Testament passages where the same pairings are found. Scroggs states, "the first of these (1 Cor. 12:12-13) appears in the general context of the unity amid diversity of the Christian community. 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.' Although the male/female pair does not appear, it is easier to imagine Paul eliminating it here than irrelevantly adding it in Galatians. At any rate, the relationship between the pairs and baptism is as explicit in 1 Corinthians as in Galatians. The second passage is Col. 3:9-11: 'Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ all and all!' Here there are four pairs again within the context of putting on the new and putting off the old, with Christ the head of all. The metaphor of dressing again suggests a baptismal context. In all these instances we have the same three ingredients, and twice they occur in the same order- Gal. 3:27-28 baptism/putting on, pairs, unity in Christ; Col. 3:9-11 putting off and on, pairs, unity in Christ; 1 Cor. 12:12-13 baptism/ one body, unity in Christ, pairs. Thus, the location of the pairs within the baptismal liturgy seems almost certain." 80-81

world.²⁸ Scroggs suggests further that the radical equality of a person before God or in Christ is not a completely new invention of Paul. This equality was present in the earliest moments of Christianity. Therefore, according to Scroggs, any value judgements based on distinctions in human society are nullified by baptism.²⁹ Women and men in the Christian community are not distinguished by their sex. They are equal participants in the community.

Women are present throughout Paul's ministry. Scroggs cites Romans 16 in which Paul mentions six women, all who are said to have participated in the building up of Christian communities. Paul commends Phoebe in this letter and describes her both as diakonos and prostatis.³⁰ Scroggs says, "whether or not these words denote formal or technical offices, it is clear that she was an important person in the church at Cenchreae".³¹ Paul also names Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis who have also all labored for the church. Scroggs concludes that the evidence seems incontrovertible that women worked alongside of men in the Pauline churches, and there is absolutely nothing in the text to suggest that this work was of a subordinate character.³²

According to Scroggs, Paul not only includes women in his ministry, but he also

²⁸Ibid., 81.

²⁹Scroggs, 81-82.

³⁰E. Earle Ellis defines diakonos as a connotation which is used for a teacher, i.e. "one who has been entrusted with and is, therefore, to communicate the 'mysteries of God'. The diakonoi appear to be a special class of [Paul's] co-workers who are active in teaching and preaching. They appear in Paul's circle not only as itinerant workers but also as workers in local congregations."

E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers", *New Testament Studies*, 17 (1970-1971), 442.

³¹Scroggs, 83.

³²Ibid.

specifically addresses them in his letters to assert that both sexes have the same freedoms and responsibilities. Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians discusses sex, marriage, and divorce. In this chapter, Paul addresses both the husbands and the wives concerning their roles within marriage. Scroggs asserts that Paul has "gone far out of his way to demonstrate the equality of women in all of these situations."³³ 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 states,

The husband must give to the wife what is due to her, and equally the wife must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's.

Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's.

Scroggs asserts that Paul structures this entire chapter along the lines of double address to show that, on all of the issues concerning sex, marriage, and divorce, women and men are equally accountable. Furthermore, Scroggs suggests that it would have been easy, and in keeping with the times if Paul had stopped with the judgment that a woman's body belonged to the man. It is important to note that Paul does not make this assertion, and takes a position that is still far from accepted in the twentieth century. Scroggs concludes by asserting that 1 Corinthians chapter 7 is in complete accord with Paul's theological stance of liberation. He says, "in the homes well as at work in the church, woman is equal to man."³⁴

In the church at Corinth women actively engaged in the worship and community life of the church. Paul advocated their leadership, stating "Yet in the Lord's fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman."³⁵ However, also in this chapter Paul places a restriction on women's dress, asserting that they must cover their heads in church. He states, "a woman brings

³³Scroggs, 84.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵1 Corinthians 11:11.

shame on her head if she prays or prophesies bareheaded."³⁶ Some scholars have interpreted this passage and the passages which surround this citation as chauvinistic. Thus, these scholars conclude that Paul was a chauvinist and did not support women as equal participants in the church. Scroggs disagrees with these scholars, and asserts that Paul was not a chauvinist and this passage does not subordinate women. Scroggs suggests that Paul's request that women wear a head covering when they are leading church is only a distinction in dress. The text appears to suggest that Paul is just as insistent that men not cover their heads. This does not express or imply a judgment of female subordination.³⁷

Scroggs suggests that when Paul is arguing so vehemently for the head covering he is protecting the new freedom of women in the eschatological community. Scroggs cites Hooker and Barrett:

Far from being a symbol of the woman's subjection to man, therefore, her head covering is what Paul calls it - authority: in prayer and prophecy she, like the man is under the authority of God. Her veil represents the new authority given to woman under the new dispensation to do things which formally had not been permitted her.

Scroggs concludes by asserting that with the head covering women manifest their equal standing with men, an equality realized and witnessed in the life of the worshiping community.³⁸

³⁶1 Corinthians 11:5.

³⁷Scroggs, 88.

³⁸Ibid., 94.

Corrington offers another explanation for Paul's insistence on head coverings. She asserts, "Paul's motives for referring to proper dress and behavior for female believers in a suspect religion was an apologetic motive-his motive was to avoid bringing upon them the ire of the Roman authorities by any suspicion of sexual impropriety, located in 'uncontrolled' female behavior." 88

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza also asserts, "Paul's major concern is not the behavior of women but the protection of the Christian community. He wanted to prevent the Christian community from being mistaken for one of the orgiastic, secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency. For, as we have seen, already in the second or third century B.C.E., a new-Pythagorean treatise from Italy, in discussing the behavior of women, had

Paul, as interpreted by Scroggs, appears to support, promote, and encourage women in his ministry. Scroggs interprets Paul as "the one clear voice in the New Testament asserting the freedom and equality of women in the eschatological community. Few subsequent Christians (except on the 'heretical' fringes) were able to accept this radical vision of Paul and he was quickly reinterpreted."³⁹ An example of this reinterpretation is evident in 1 Timothy. In 1 Timothy, women were subordinated and defined according to biological functions. The freedom and liberation of Paul was eliminated. Scroggs concludes by asserting that the reluctance of the church to read Paul unhampered by distortions in the deutro-Pauline texts, simply suggests that

stated: 'Public law prevents women from participating in these rites [secret cults and Cybeline orgies], particularly those rites which encourage drunkenness and ecstasy.'

Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 10th ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 232.

³⁹Scroggs, 95.

Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza agrees with Scroggs' assertion that Paul does not subordinate women, however she does not read all aspects of Paul's letters as promoting equality for women. Schussler-Fiorenza maintains that Paul introduced patriarchal imagery and language. Schussler-Fiorenza highlights Paul's missionary self understanding of the "father of the community". She states, "Paul not only uses the metaphor of 'father' but also that of "mother" and "nurse" to describe his relationship to the communities he has founded and to the individuals he converted to the gospel. By the transmission of the gospel he has begotten them, given them new life, nourished they like babes, and formed them as children of God. The slave Onesimus has become his child and Paul, in turn, it is his father (Phlm 10). Timothy has served with Paul in the gospel as a son with his father (Phil. 2:22). He is Paul's 'beloved and faithful child in the Lord' (1 Cor. 4:17). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to imitate him, because he became their 'father in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (4:15). They have many guides, but not many fathers. Paul threatens to come to Corinth and find the arrogant ones, asking : 'What do you wish? Shall It come to you with a rod, or with love in the spirit of gentleness?' (4:21)

Although Paul stresses his parental affection toward his 'children', whom he has converted, he nevertheless opens the door for the reintroduction of patriarchal authority within the Christian community. By his 'spiritual' fatherhood he allows for an understanding of the Christian community as the 'new family of God' that has 'fathers' here on earth. Although Paul can still 'mix' metaphors of father, mother, wet nurse, he nevertheless understands himself and his authority in terms of 'fatherhood' since he was a man. By claiming 'to have given ' life to his children he plays down the natural birthing power of mothers, and associates 'fatherhood' with baptism and rebirth. Thus Paul makes it possible for later generations to transfer the hierarchy of the patriarchal family to the new family of God. This is true, even though he himself certainly does not understand his ministry as patriarchal, but as the nurturing life-enhancing service of a nurse or mother." *In Memory of Her*, 233-234

the modern church has been as fearful as the early church of the liberty inherent in Paul's letters.⁴⁰

Jesus and Women

All readers of texts are influenced by their own social, political, and cultural backgrounds. A person's interpretation of the Gospels- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John- is shaped by these influences. It is difficult to assess who Jesus was and the nature of his mission because the texts themselves do not reveal everything.⁴¹ Yet they are authoritative for all Christian groups. Jesus has been presented in a variety of different roles- a social critic⁴², a philosopher, a Jewish peasant, a charismatic, "who was a healer, sage, prophet, and revitalization movement founder"⁴³, an eschatological prophet, and as the founder of the Christian faith⁴⁴. Each of these portraits of Jesus articulates a different understanding of his mission and place within Christian history. These portraits also present different perspectives on Jesus- the Jesus of

⁴⁰Ibid.

The deutero-Pauline Epistles are Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Thessalonians. Scholars cannot agree on the authorship of these epistles, but tend to agree that Paul did not write these epistles. Scholars have come to this conclusion based upon inconsistencies in the style and content of the text. These letters represent a large stylistic jump from the other undisputed Pauline letters.

⁴¹This statement can also be made regarding Paul, and other figures in the Bible.

⁴²John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

⁴³Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 15.

⁴⁴Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

history, the Jesus of faith or theology, and an ideological figure of Jesus who is not constrained by history or theology, but is shaped rather by the ethical ideals of the community who claims him as their own. Each of these interpretations influences how the text is read and understood.

The Gospels themselves also present different perspectives on Jesus. Each author of the Gospels had a different audience, agenda, and varying sources of data to work from, and as a result the Gospels present four different views of Jesus. One explanation for the variances between the texts and the portraits of Jesus is the passage of time. The Jesus movement occurred years before the Gospels were written. Mark is considered by some scholars as the first written narrative about Jesus, and this text is dated at approximately 70 C.E. Mark's narrative, as well as Matthew's, Luke's, and John's, all were written forty to sixty years after the death of Jesus.⁴⁵ As a consequence, there is a gap between the end of Jesus' life and the writing of the Gospels. Thus, the oral tradition of the Jesus movement was not recorded until many years after his death, so historical inaccuracies and author biases are probably prevalent throughout the text.

As a consequence, the central problem is that scholars cannot know who Jesus was. Most of scholarship involves hunches or guesses based upon scarce data. The text itself presents conflicting accounts of events and ideologies. The role of women in the Jesus movement is contested within the text itself and among scholars. The analysis in this section of the paper is made from a historical perspective. The historical figure I construct is based upon four different interpretations, Mark's, Matthew's, Luke's, and John's, of a man called Jesus. I examine the

⁴⁵Keith F. Nickel, *The Synoptic Gospels: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 11. Nickel dates the life and ministry of Jesus during the first third of the first century, C.E. He also states according to the Gospels that he was executed during the administration of Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman procurator in Judea from 26-36 C.E. Although the exact date is not certain Jesus is assumed to have been crucified around 30 C.E.

historical and sociological climate of the Jesus movement in attempts to illuminate the status of women in the Jesus movement. In illuminating the presence of women in the Jesus movement it is important to recognize the conflicting images of women which are present. Based upon my examination of the conflicting material in the Gospels the evidence in the texts appear to suggest that women were involved in numerous leadership roles in the Jesus movement.

Jesus, as presented by the authors of the Gospels, appears to maintain a view of women different than the Hellenistic perspective. Greco-Roman and Jewish women were primarily defined in terms of their biological and domestic functions. They were often excluded from religious rituals and, with the exception of some wealthy women, were excluded from the social and political world of the first century.⁴⁶ The social structure of Greco-Roman Empire was hierarchical and androcentric⁴⁷. As a consequence, women in the Hellenistic world had a prescribed and delineated role within a male dominated culture. Women were typically defined

⁴⁶ Ben Witherington, *Jesus: A Study of Women in the Ministry of Jesus: Attitudes to Women and their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life*, Society for New Testament Studies Monography Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2-10.

There can be little doubt that the family was almost exclusive sphere of influence for Jewish women. A glance at the titles of the subdivisions in the Mishnah under the heading Nashim indicates that women were only of importance legally to the rabbis in the areas of marriage and divorce, inheritance and heredity, and the extremes of holiness (vows) and unholiness (Sotah). A woman's sphere of influence or importance in the legal sense was confined to her connection to her family, her faithfulness to her husband, and her domestic responsibilities. This limiting of a woman's sphere of influence is partly attributable to Jewish marital customs of the day. The laws of inheritance, betrothal and divorce were heavily biased in the male's favor. In religion, women were exempt from studying the Torah. There were no 'official' leadership roles that Jewish women could assume, though on occasion women had roles that gave them *de facto* positions of authority. 2-10

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 79.

The approximate dates of the Roman empire are 31 B.C.E.- 364 C.E. when the empire was divided between East and West, with Valentinian I in the West and Valens in the East.

Ludwig Friedlander, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, 2nd ed. Translated from German by Leonard A. Magnus (New York: E.P. Dutton), preface.

by the males in their lives- either their fathers or their husbands.⁴⁸ The rank and standing of a woman and her titles, privileges and distinctions, were as closely gradated as those to the men. Generally the women shared the husband's station, but sometimes the Emperor would give the women consular rank. The wife was mistress of her household and shared with her husband responsibility for the supervision of the religious cult of the family.⁴⁹ Marriage for wealthy, upper-class women involved a measure of independence. The women of higher ranks left the silence and dependence of the home for the freedom of married life. In Rome, any wife could properly attend a banquet, or remain in the front part of the house and be seen and watch the events in the city.⁵⁰ According to Friedlander, wives were socially almost unrestricted due to the gradual breaking up of the family, the cessation of the ancient stern morality, and Augustus' empire.⁵¹ Wealthy women not only experienced the freedom associated with their social position as the wives of prominent men, but were also independent from their husbands as a result of their private money and holdings. The free marriage rule gave women, as opposed to their husbands, control over their money.⁵² The social institution of free marriage enabled women to support and

⁴⁸Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 67. A married woman was regarded as having assumed the social status of her husband.

⁴⁹John P.V.D Baldson., *Roman Woman : Their History and Habits* (New York : John Day Company, 1963), 45.

⁵⁰Friedlander, 239.
It is important to note that sources of information are scarce about the life of women, and the only information that is available is about the life of upperclass women.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., 238.
The free form of marriage permitted a wife to remain in power of their father, and after she turned twenty-five years old she was only subject to formal supervision by her guardian (tutor). She retained possession of her own property and could divorce her husband. Baldson, 45.

promote religious cults and movements.

In traditional pagan Greco-Roman worship and in mystery cults, women held religious and civic offices. Ross Kraemer demonstrates that these women were primarily members of the upper class and had the financial resources necessary to fulfill all of the requirements of their roles.⁵³ These women were not wholly defined by the males in their lives, but rather by their own status as religious and civic leaders within the community.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the wealthy women who held these public offices, "were still praised in terms that posed no threat to the traditional ideology of gender differences and appropriate roles for women".³ The Greco-Roman world accepted women in these religious offices because these roles were perceived as an extension of the woman's domestic and cultic responsibilities- "the extrusion of the private into the public, still as women's realm".⁴ The social realms in which the women held office - cities and towns - were depicted and conceptualized as an extension of the family, thus rendering the women's benefactions as "familial solicitousness".⁵ Thus, one concludes that upper-middle class women did not have the authority nor power that their male counterparts had in public and

⁵³Ross S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 84-85. Women typically underwrote the cost of religious festivals and public entertainment.

⁵⁵Ibid.

There are numerous examples of women who held religious and civic offices in the second and third century. Aba of Histria in Thrace was the high priestess of Cybele. Tata of Aphrodisias was the priestess of the imperial cult. Berenice of Syros was a magistrate as well as a priestess of Demeter and Kore. Menodora held a multiplicity of religious and civic offices, was the high priestess of at least two emperors, was the priestess of Demeter, and also was the priestess of "all the gods". In return for all of these women's gifts and benefactions to their communities they received substantial public honors and privileges.

³Kraemer, 88.

These designations included the use of such terms as "mother", "daughter", and "sister".

⁴Ibid., 89.

⁵Ibid., 88.

religious offices. These women were limited by their gender and were isolated in terms of influence and leadership capabilities so as not to threaten the existing hierarchical social order, nor the existing definitions of the appropriate roles and behavior for women of their social class.⁶

The Gospel of Luke contains the majority of the stories about females and their presence in the ministry of Jesus. The author of Luke consistently stresses male-female parallelism more than the other Gospel authors.⁷ In Luke 18:1- 8 Jesus tells a parable in which a widow repeatedly comes before a male judge demanding justice against her opponent. The widow persistently pursues her case, nagging and annoying the judge until he finally consents to give her justice. In this parable, Jesus expresses concern for a widow as well as a desire to present indignant (even nagging and annoying) women as models in at least one regard for the behavior of the disciples.⁸ Jesus is attempting to cultivate in his disciples the woman's persistence. Luke states that the parable is intended to demonstrate to the disciples that they should keep on praying and never lose heart.⁹ Luke's reversal of expectations of roles underscores the changes Jesus is promoting within society. Not only is a woman an example for others to follow, but also female

⁶Ibid., 91.

⁷ Witherington, 51.

⁸Witherington, 51.

As suggested by Professor Brown this supports the anti-woman stereotype, but I think that the overarching theme, a woman as an example to the disciples, is a stronger pro-woman statement. Jesus is using a woman as an example for his respected, male disciples.

⁹Luke 18:1.

activities are associated with and used to describe the kingdom of God.¹⁰ "He told them this parable : 'The kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour till it was all leavened.'" ¹¹ The kingdom of God, as presented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke was open to women.

The Gospel texts appear to suggest that within the kingdom of God women were able to occupy roles and positions that were previously denied them. The women in Jesus' ministry were not defined in traditional terms. Kraemer asserts, "remarkably few women in the Jesus movement appear to conform to the most socially accepted categories of virgin daughter, respectable wife, and mother of legitimate children." ¹² These women in the Jesus movement, Mary of Magdala, Joana, and Susanna in Luke 8:1-3, Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, Mary of Magdala in Luke 8:3, and Salome in Mark 15:40-41, are all disciples of Jesus who followed him and attended to him when he was in Galilee. These women appeared to occupy roles that

¹⁰The kingdom of God (kingdom of heaven in Matthew) is taught by Jesus in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew says, "So Jesus went round all the villages teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom." (11:12) Mark says, "After John had been arrested Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. The time has arrived; the kingdom of God is upon you. Repent and believe the gospel" (1:14-15) Each of these gospels also includes parables describing the kingdom of God. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each teach about the kingdom, what it is, who enters the kingdom, and how one enters the kingdom.

¹¹Matthew 13:33. The corresponding passage in Luke is 13:20-21. Luke 15:8-10 associates the joy of a woman who has found her lost coins with the joy of the angels of God when a sinner repents. The passages says, "Or again, if a woman has ten silver coins and loses one of them, does she not light the lamp, sweep out the house, and look in every corner till she finds it? And when she does, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me! I have found the coin I lost.'" In the same way, It tell you, there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Matthew 13:37 associates Jesus with a female animal. The passages says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings: but you would not let me."

¹² Kraemer, 133.

were atypical for Greco-Roman women.¹³ Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Susanna in Luke's gospel were said to be traveling with the twelve disciples, and "these women provided for them out of their own resources."¹⁴ They were wealthy women, indicated by the author of Luke by referring to "their own resources", who contributed money to support and maintain the daily operations of Jesus' movement. These women were women of high social and economic status. Joanna was the wife of Chuza, a steward of Herod. The Herodian family was the ruling family; thus it is intriguing to find her traveling with Jesus. Torjesen asserts that "certainly her connections to the Herodian family would have eased the way in any minor conflicts with minor local officials."¹⁵ These women were the patrons of the Jesus movement, and patronage is a position typically afforded to men.

In the Mary and Martha story¹⁶ Jesus is invited to the home of these two sisters. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teachings, while Martha attended to domestic tasks. Corrington asserts that Martha is the model of the disciple who is too preoccupied with fulfilling her social function of "service" to choose "the good part". Mary, in contrast, is the model of the ideal disciple, who sits at the feet of Jesus.¹⁷ Jesus encourages Mary to learn, a pursuit that was uncommon for women during the first century. Furthermore, the text could suggest that he is rejecting the confinement of women to domestic functions. "Martha, Martha, you are fretting

¹³These women can be considered Greco-Roman due to their physical location within the Roman empire and their immersion in Greco-Roman culture.

¹⁴Luke 8:3.

¹⁵ Torjesen, 32.

¹⁶Luke 10:38-41.

¹⁷ Corrington, 32-33.

and fussing about so many things; only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best; it shall not be taken away from her."¹⁸ Corrington asserts, "although the confinement of women to service roles does appear to be rejected in the case of Martha, Mary's actions are not illustrative of inclusiveness of women in the community that celebrates the kingdom of God, but of a woman taking on a male role : the male student 'sitting at the feet' of the male rabbi."¹⁹ Corrington's assessment is correct in that Mary *is* taking on a male role. It is precisely Mary's assumption of a male role that is radical and illustrates the boundaries Jesus is crossing in his ministry. Mary is depicted in the story as if she were a male student, but she is *female* and, nevertheless, was included in the community of Jesus. Corrington appears to be further suggesting that a woman must become a man in order to enter the kingdom of God. This suggestion is questionable. Jesus does not appear to be asserting that a woman must become a man in order to enter the kingdom of God. Mary and Martha are both invited to become followers of Jesus and assume roles beyond the confines of their household.

The final and most significant example of women in the ministry of Jesus occurs during the crucifixion and resurrection. The author of Mark²⁰ recounts the scene surrounding the crucifixion:

A number of women were also present watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, who had all followed him and looked after him when he was in Galilee, and there were many others who had come up to Jerusalem with him... and Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses were watching and saw where he was

¹⁸Luke 10:41-42.

¹⁹ Corrington, 33.

²⁰The parallel passage in Matthew is Matthew 27: 55-56 and the parallel passage in Luke is Luke 23:49 and the parallel passage in John is John 20:1-13.

laid.²¹

All four of the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion include the presence of women. The same women who were named as patrons of Jesus' ministry are present at his death. Their presence throughout the ministry and up to the time of his crucifixion underscores their continual presence in the ministry. The women, faithful throughout Jesus' life, remain faithful and "when the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic oils, intending to go anoint him."²² It is these three women who are the first to see the empty tomb. It is also these three women who are the first to receive the news, possibly from Jesus himself, that Jesus had been raised from the dead. It is important to note that it is the female members of Jesus' ministry who are the first to encounter the empty tomb, and that this aspect of the narrative of Jesus' life is present in all four Gospel accounts.²³ The inclusion of women at Jesus' resurrection in all four Gospels lends credibility to the narrative and demonstrates the presence of women in the Jesus movement.

Even if the authors of the Gospels did not approve of women in Jesus' ministry or women being the first people to encounter the empty tomb, they were unable to omit it from their Gospel. The women are told by a young man, "go and say to his disciples and Peter : 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee :there you will see him, as he told you."²⁴ The women are instructed to tell the male disciples of Jesus' resurrection. The presence of women at the empty tomb becomes an issue in early Christianity because this event appears to include women in a significant role in the death and

²¹Mark 15:40-41, 47.

²²Luke 16:1.

²³Matthew 28:1-8, and Luke 24:1-12.

²⁴Mark 16: 7.

resurrection of Jesus. This is problematic for a culture which typically regards women as subordinate, lower class members of society. If women were considered authoritative in the resurrection account, a very important facet of Christianity, then it could be assumed that they were not subordinate, lower class members of society, and furthermore Christianity could possibly be denigrated in the eyes of Greco-Roman society due to this presence of women. It was very important for early Christianity to gain converts and legitimate itself in the eyes of the surrounding culture if the religion was to flourish.

The resurrection account is also important in the development of authority. The women are told to go and tell the disciples that Jesus has been resurrected. This introduces the women as authoritative to the disciples. The authority of the disciples is established by Jesus. He names the twelve male disciples and gives them instructions and commissions them to teach, drive out demons, and heal infirmities.²⁵ The women also appear to be commissioned by a man, presumably Jesus, to go and spread the news of his resurrection. The question of who is authoritative, the male disciples or the women at the tomb, the idea of who is authoritative is problematic. The cultural and religious setting of Palestine is patriarchal and Jewish, thus women as authoritative is unsettling. The author of John attempts to reconcile this tension by saying that Mary of Magdala did not recognize Jesus at first and he had to tell her who he was. The author continues and says that Jesus appeared three times to the disciples, but only once to a woman.²⁶ Mark attempts to address the tension by saying, "then they went out and ran away from the tomb, trembling with amazement.

²⁵Matthew 10:1-16, Mark 6:7; 3:13-19; 6:8-11, Luke 9:1; 6:12-16; 9:2-5; 10:3.

²⁶John 20:13-16; 20:19-20; 20:26; 21:1.

They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”²⁷ The authors of Matthew and Luke do not attempt to diminish the place of the women, nor do they appear to question the authority of the women in the resurrection account. The women are instructed to tell the male disciples of Jesus' resurrection.²⁸ The place of women in early Christianity appears to be contested within the text itself. The only aspect of the narrative that is not contested by the authors of the Gospels is the presence of women at the resurrection, the implications of their presence and the status of the authority in the church are contested.

The figure of Jesus appears to be historically illusive. The tension and conflict of the place of women in the text, particularly the resurrection account is illuminated upon closer examination. The status of women in the ministry of Jesus is not obscured by the tensions, conflicts, and varying accounts of events in Jesus' life. Women appear to be present in many different facets of Jesus' ministry. The authors of the Gospels presented the women in predominately positive roles. They were described as faithful followers of Jesus and preserved throughout suffering and hardships. Some of the texts also show that Jesus' teachings and parables articulated a different understanding of the status of women in society. The historical figure of Jesus is illusive. However, there appears to be scarce data which presents a man who supported the androcentric structure of society. The data does to appear to suggest that the figure of Jesus did include women in his ministry.

John Dominic Crossan- A Historical and Sociological Critique of Jesus

²⁷Mark 16:8.

²⁸Mark 16:7.

John Dominic Crossan²⁹ reconstructs a figure of Jesus using historical and sociological material. His thesis hinges upon his historical dating. He creates his own chronology, using a source termed "Q" as the most important source.³⁰ Crossan also places another non-canonical text, the Gospel of Thomas, before the Gospels in the canon. Furthermore, he uses the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, omitting John, to narrate the life and teachings of Jesus.³¹ Crossan disregards sections of the Gospels and appears to stretch his dating system to include events that he needs to support his thesis. Thus, Crossan's reconstruction of Jesus is flawed, like all reconstructions, because it relies on scarce data and a questionable dating system.

As mentioned earlier, the central problem in this section is that one cannot know really who Jesus was. Crossan presents a convincing, yet somewhat skewed picture of a historical and sociological Jesus. His construction omits the Jesus of faith. This omission is considered by some scholars, particularly Luke Timothy Johnson, as a major flaw in his argument. However, Crossan

²⁹John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus : The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York:HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York:HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

³⁰"Q" is a hypothetical source which some scholars conjecture was used by Matthew and Luke to supplement Mark. The designation "Q" is generally assumed to have been derived from the German word quelle, source. The "Q" source probably contains one or more written documents. The content of "Q" is primarily speeches and sayings attributed to Jesus. This source does not contain a Passion narrative, and seems to lack reference to the cross event. This material has been divided into three sections: eschatological sayings, prophecies, and wisdom traditions. The "Q" source also does not appear to be concerned with the identity of Jesus. Roetzel, 84-90

³¹Crossan shows consistent commitment to certain methodological procedures. Crossan considers the sayings of Jesus found in extra canonical gospels (particularly the Gospel of Thomas) as of equal or even greater value than the canonical Gospels for reconstructing the teaching of Jesus. He employs an elaborate system of stratification for the Jesus traditions, confident that the criteria he employs enable him to detect not only the earliest traditions but also the various stages of development that subsequently are built upon them. 45

reconstructs the figure of Jesus using only historical and sociological methodologies³² which illuminates the social and cultural climate of the first century and, he asserts that Jesus was the founder of a social movement that developed into modern Christianity.

The authors of the Synoptics assume that their readers are first century eastern Mediterraneans, and are a part of the Hellenistic social and political world. As a consequence, the social context of Jesus' life and ministry is unfamiliar to modern readers. Therefore, Crossan asserts that in order to fully comprehend the radicalness of Jesus' ministry and his inclusion of women in this ministry certain social elements of the first century must be clarified. The social world of Jesus was structured by kinship networks, the patronage system, and honor/shame boundaries. According to Crossan, Jesus traversed and in some instances eradicated the social and political norms of Hellenistic society.³³ Crossan enumerates six aspects of Jesus' ministry that redefined Hellenistic society- Jesus' itinerant ministry, advocacy of open commensality, healings, the elimination of

³²Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

Luke Timothy Johnson asserts that Crossan has an anti-theological agenda underlying his historical portrayal. Johnson says that Crossan acknowledges that historical reconstructions are always just that, reconstructions, and that there is always a dialectic between a "historically read Jesus and a theologically read Christ." Johnson quotes Crossan closing statement in his major book [*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant*], "If you cannot believe in something produced by reconstruction, you may have nothing left to believe in." (*Historical Jesus*, 426) Johnson also quotes from Crossan's book *Jesus : A Revolutionary Biography* in which Crossan declares that all Christian belief is an act of faith in the historical Jesus as the manifestation of God. (*Jesus*, 200) Johnson asserts that this is a remarkable enough claim, but it makes intelligible the specific reformist thrust of his work. He asserts, "Crossan 'the historian' has a theological agenda : his reconstructed Jesus is to provide a vision of Christian faith that should overturn that of the Constantinian era (read : established Christianity)." (49) 48-49

³³Luke Timothy Johnson does not support Crossan's reading of Jesus. He asserts that Crossan has carefully manipulated the texts to construct a portrait of Jesus that fits "within the idealized ethos of the late twentieth-century academic". (46) Johnson asserts that "Jesus' 'kingdom' is, in short, a 'style of life' that enables all access to fellowship and wisdom without the 'brokerage' of social status and patronage. Jesus' ministry turns out fundamentally to be a social critique of established structure and hierarchical power. Crossan's peasant Cynic who preaches inclusiveness and equality fits perfectly within the idealized ethos of the late twentieth-century academic: he is non-patriarchal and constitutional; his kingdom consists of an open table where everyone accepts everyone else." 46

kinship networks, the patron-client system, and honor shame boundaries.

According to Bruce Malina, "social norms present the "oughts" of a group, the cultural cues guiding people to perceive and evaluate the persons, things, and events of their experience."³⁴

Kinship refers to the pattern of such social norms that regulate human relationships which are directly based on biological experiences of birth, development, and death. Kinship norms symbolize human biological interactions and the ongoing results of such interactions. These norms are rooted in the social perception that human relationships can be and actually are established among persons by their being born of certain parents or by the possibility of births resulting from the union of a marriage. Kinship norms create boundaries between "us" and "them".³⁵

The Jesus, as presented by Matthew, appears have challenged kinship norms and the kinship network through his ministry. Matthew 4:18- 20³⁶ states:

Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee when he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the lake; for they were fisherman. Jesus said to them 'Come with me, and It will make you fishers of men'. At once they left their nets, and followed him.

Jesus was inviting Peter and Andrew to become vagrants with him to recruit followers.³⁷ Jesus' invitation was also an invitation for Peter and Andrew to break with their social network (family, patrons, friends, and neighbors). Malina and Rohrbaugh assert that "apart from pilgrimage, both

³⁴Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 94.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 94-95.

³⁶The corresponding passage in Mark is Mark 1: 16-20. Luke does not include this part of Jesus' ministry.

³⁷The Greek term "to follow" us applied exclusively by the New Testament authors to indicate following Jesus. The term is used of people joining a noted teacher to learn a "way of life" whether in Israel (a teacher's disciples learning the Torah) or outside of Israel (a philosopher's following).

Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 44.

geographical mobility and the consequent break with one's social network were considered abnormal and would have been much more traumatic in antiquity than simply leaving behind one's job and tools."³⁸ Jesus asked Peter and Andrew to leave behind all aspects of boundary markers in their lives, kinship networks, and join his community of followers which is not defined according to kinship norms or networks. By traversing these boundaries, which have traditionally maintained and defined society, Crossan's reconstructed Jesus is creating a new society in which kinship is irrelevant.

Kinship networks and the patronage system established sharp class and power divisions in agrarian societies. Crossan cites G.E.M. de Ste. Croix³⁹:

Class, then, essentially a relationship, *is* above all the collective social expression of the fact of *exploitation* (and of course of resistance to it) : the division of society into economic classes is in its very nature the way in which exploitation is effected, with the propertied class living off the non-propertied... a propertied class is freed from the labour of production through its ability to maintain itself out of a surplus extracted from the primary producers, whether by compulsion or by persuasion or (as in most cases) by a mixture of the two.

Patronage and clientage are modes of social relationship and political organization. Mediterranean agrarian society was characterized by sharp social stratification and little opportunity for social mobility. Power in this society was highly concentrated in a few hands. According to Crossan, these conditions are ideal for the development of a patron-client system and a dependency ideology; "patronage relations provide a consistent ideological support for social inequality and dependency throughout the Mediterranean area."⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., 44.

³⁹John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (New York : HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 43.

⁴⁰Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 67.

As suggested by Crossan's interpretation of the Gospels, Jesus rejected the concentration of power and the class distinctions that arose within the patronage system. His rejection was a physical and ideological rejection of this system. Crossan's reconstructed Jesus did not remain in one location, nor did he establish a patron-client relationship with his disciples or followers. Crossan asserts that it is the "radical itinerancy" of Jesus that eliminated the patron-client structure of society within his ministry.⁴¹

In Mark 6:4⁴², Jesus says that his ministry was not an honorable mission in the eyes of his family. Crossan asserts that Jesus' family "believed quite fully in Jesus' power and importance, message and mission, but not at all the way he was carrying it out. What Jesus should have done, as any Mediterranean family knew, was settle down at his home in Nazareth and establish there a healing cult."⁴³ Jesus would be the patron of the cult, the family would be the brokers, and as his reputation spread the sick would come as clients to be healed. But, Jesus did not settle down in a central location and wait for the sick to come to him; he went to the sick.⁴⁴ Matthew 9:35 states, "So Jesus went round all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every kind of illness and infirmity." According to Crossan's

⁴¹Johnson criticizes Crossan's evaluation of Jesus' social critique of the patronage system. He asserts that Crossan desires Christianity to return to the vision of a "brokerless kingdom." The paradox is that the key to this vision- the historical Jesus- is precisely the "broker" whom Christianity must reject if it is to truly live by his vision. 49

⁴²Mark 6:4 "Jesus said to them, 'a prophet never lacks honor except in his home town among his relations and his own family.'"

⁴³John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York :HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 99.

⁴⁴Matthew 8:5-8 "As Jesus entered Capernaum a centurion came up and asked his help. 'Sir', he said, 'my servant is lying at home paralyzed and racked with pain.' Jesus said, 'It will come and cure him'. Mark does not include this healing in his gospel. The parallel passage in Luke is Luke 7:1-10

Matthew 8:14- 15 "Jesus then went to Peter's house and found Peter's mother-in-law in bed with fever. So he took her by the hand; the fever left her, and she got up and attended to his needs." The parallel passage in Mark is Mark 1:29-31 and the parallel passage in Luke is 4:38-39.

interpretation, by traveling throughout the countryside, Jesus eliminated the physical requirement, a central location, needed to establish a patron-client relationship. Furthermore, Crossan's reconstructed Jesus created a new "dependency ideology" based upon faith in God.

The old kinship network of patron-client was redefined in the new kingdom of God. The basis of the new community was not kinship ties, but association between disciples and Master, disciple and disciple.⁴⁵ " 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he replied. And looking round at those who were sitting in the circle about him he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'"⁴⁶ Jesus, as interpreted by Crossan, was slowly eroding the old power structures of the Hellenistic world.

The final boundary that Crossan's reconstructed Jesus challenged was the honor/shame demarcation. Malina describes honor as "the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is one's claim to worth) *plus* that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group. Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgment of worth."⁴⁷ Malina asserts that society incorporates the meanings and feelings contained within the symbols of power, sexual status, and religion into social demarcations. Whom you can control is connected to your male and female roles, which are also linked to where you stand on the status ladder group. When you lay claim to a certain status as embodied by your power and in your sexual role, you are claiming honor.⁴⁸

Crossan's reconstructed Jesus redefined the honor/shame demarcation through his open

⁴⁵ Witherington, 51.

⁴⁶ Mark 3: 33-35.

⁴⁷ Malina, 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

commensality, eating with all social classes, and bodily healings. Crossan asserts, "open commensality is the symbol and embodiment of radical egalitarianism, of an absolute equality of people that denies the validity of any discrimination between them and negates the necessity of any hierarchy among them."⁴⁹ Open commensality is defined by anthropologists as the rules of tabling and eating as miniature models for the rules of association and socialization. Table fellowship becomes a map of economic discrimination, social hierarchy, and political differentiation.⁵⁰ Furthermore, " in all societies, both simple and complex, eating is the primary way of initiating and maintaining relationships...eating is a behavior which symbolizes feelings and relationships, mediates social status and power, and expresses the boundaries of group identity."⁵¹

Crossan's reconstructed Jesus advocated eating with all classes of people, the poor, the outcasts, and physically disabled. Luke 14: 21b-23⁵² is a parable told by Jesus describing a marriage feast in which social divisions are eliminated through the invitation of all classes of people to come join a wealthy man's feast. Luke wrote,

When the servant came back he reported this [that no one was going to attend his feast] to his master. The master of the house was furious and said to him, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the

⁴⁹John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus : A Revolutionary Biography*, 71.

Luke Timothy Johnson asserts that Crossan's understanding of open commensality does not include religion or faith. Johnson asserts, "if Jesus' open commensality did not claim a specifically religious character of God's will as its justification , why should the religious establishment be worried about it? And if the religious establishment of Judaism did not actively participate in his demise [crucifixion], it is even harder to figure out how a program so utopian yet as bland as that attributed to this peasant might appear to Roman authorities as a threat to their brokered empire." (49-50) For Johnson, Crossan's portrayal of a peasant who created a utopian empire is one-sided and cannot account for why Jesus was killed, nor why Christianity spread. This appears to Johnson as a serious flaw in his argument.

⁵⁰Ibid. , 68.

⁵¹Crossan, *Jesus : Revolutionary Biography*, 69.

⁵²The parallel text in Matthew is Matthew 22:9-10.

lame.'
still

When the servant informed him that his orders had been carried out and there was room, his master replied, 'Go out along the highways and along the hedgerows and compel them to come in; I want my house full.'

The social challenge of egalitarian behavior is the most radical aspect of the parable. Crossan's reconstruction of Jesus asserts that Jesus lived out this parable. He made no distinctions between social classes. He was friends with tax collectors, sinners, and women, the socially undesirable aspects of the community.⁵³ Christianity, as suggested by Luke's Gospel, appears to be not about exclusive relationships, demonstrated through an exclusive table, it is an inclusive fellowship.⁵⁴ Luke 13:29-30 states, "From east and west, from north and south, people will come and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom of God. Yes, and some who are now last will be first, and some who are first will be last." The kingdom of God is not divided by social status or by class or patron-client relationships. Egalitarianism is an important feature of the kingdom of God.

Crossan's articulation of the table as a map of society and the radical egalitarianism of open commensality, derive at their most basic level from the human body as a microcosm for the macrocosm of political society. According to Crossan, Jesus' healings "are not simply private operations between individuals but social miniatures that can support or challenge, affirm or negate

⁵³John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus : A Revolutionary Biography*, 69.

⁵⁴Malina and Rohrbaugh, 192.

Malina and Rohrbaugh support Crossan's earlier evaluation of the table as a microcosm of society. Hellenistic sources illuminate the importance of eating and its impact upon social stratification. Old Testament food regulations are well known, as are the provisions for ritual purity required when eating. From the later rabbinic period one learns that people formed devotional societies which came together for table fellowship and vows of piety. To avoid pollution, they would not accept an invitation from ordinary people, the natives of Palestine, the Canaanites. Roman sources describe meals at which guests of different social rank are seated in different rooms and are even served differed food and wine depending on their social status. Malina and Rohrbaugh, 191

a culture's behavioral rules or a society's customary codes."⁵⁵ It is important to note that the historical figure of Jesus was teaching and preaching in a society that was not only structured along Greco-Roman socio-cultural norms, but also a society that was Jewish.

Religion in Judaism encompasses all aspects of life. Jewish law unites the entirety of life, including civil and domestic practices under the authority of God. Jewish law contained legal codes outlining purity and impurity.⁵⁶ E.P. Sanders asserts, "Jewish law required that the bodily processes connected most intimately with *life and death* be kept away from what was holy and *unchanging* : the presence of God."⁵⁷ Thus, Crossan's reconstructed Jesus violated the purity laws of Judaism as well the honor/shame boundaries through his healings. The most striking violation of these boundaries occurred when Jesus healed a leper. Mark 1:40-42 says, "on one occasion he was approached by a leper, who knelt before him and begged for help. 'If only you will', said the man, 'you can make me clean.' Jesus was moved to anger; he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, 'I will; be clean.' The leprosy left him and immediately, and he was clean."⁵⁸ By touching the leper, Jesus violated purity rules and thus would be considered unclean.

According to Crossan's interpretation of Jesus, his healings involved not only the physical

⁵⁵Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 76-77.

Johnson criticizes Crossan's careful selection of healings and miracles from the text. Johnson says that Crossan, "critically shifts through Jesus' parables and sayings to show how Jesus understood the kingdom to be made up of such 'nobodies' of the world as children, the outcast, and the poor. In effect, Jesus enunciates a vision of countercultural egalitarianism that, in Crossan's view, most resembles the ancient Cynic philosophers." 46

Johnson further asserts that Crossan's criteria for authenticity and support for his argument are those that make up the predetermined portrait that Crossan wishes to emerge. 50

According to Johnson, Crossan's selectivity of texts and predetermined conception of Jesus and failure to recognize other texts and materials that question or invalidate his argument does not illuminate the Christ of faith, only a historical reconstruction.

⁵⁶E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York :Penguin, 1993), 36.

⁵⁷Ibid. , 36.

⁵⁸The parallel passage in Matthew is Matthew 8:1-3, and in Luke is Luke 5:12-13.

disease but also the illness associated with the physical ailment. Arthur Kleinman⁵⁹ defines the distinction between disease and illness:

disease refers to a malfunctioning of biological and/or psychological processes, while the term illness refers to the psychosocial experience and meaning of perceived disease. Illness includes secondary personal and social responses to the ...disease...illness is the shaping of disease into behavior and experience. It is created by personal, social, and cultural reactions to disease.

Jesus' healing of the leper, viewed according to Kleinman's distinctions, involved the healing of a physical ailment, leprosy, and an illness, the personal and social stigma of uncleanness, isolation, and rejection.⁶⁰ Jesus, as reconstructed by Crossan, was not only healing physical ailments, he was healing social division. Crossan suggests that Jesus healed the leper by refusing to accept the disease's uncleanness and social ostracization, and thereby forced others to either reject him from the community, or accept the leper and the other people he had healed.⁶¹ The kingdom of God, articulated through Crossan's carefully chosen actions of Jesus, did not accept the honor/shame or purity boundaries.

The Jesus as presented by Crossan appears to have challenged and in some instances traversed the social and political norms of Hellenistic society. Jesus' itinerant ministry, advocacy of open commensality, and healings, according to Crossan, redefined Greco-Roman and Jewish society. Egalitarianism replaced social stratification, and the patron-client system was replaced by an open social movement that encouraged all people to follow Jesus. Honor/shame demarcations were denied by Crossan's reconstructed Jesus' numerous healings. The elimination of kinship

⁵⁹ Crossan, *Jesus : A Revolutionary Biography*, 81-82.

⁶⁰Ibid., 81-82.

⁶¹Ibid. , 82.

networks, the patron-client system, and honor/shame boundaries radically reshaped aspects of the Hellenistic world.⁶² The changes that Crossan's reconstructed Jesus advocated within the social structure appears to have redefined some human relationships. According to Crossan, the new socio-cultural norms included a group of people traditionally forgotten-- women. Crossan's reconstruction of Jesus' social critique appears to be not only a critique of the hierarchical power structures, but also a critique of the status of women and human relationships.

1 Timothy and Women

1 Timothy is considered by scholars as a component of the Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles include 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. This collection of letters is considered pseudo-Pauline; according to many scholars the author of these letters is not Paul. Biblical critics assert that the language, style, and content of the letters is markedly different from the undisputed Pauline letters.⁶³

⁶²As mentioned previously, Johnson does not support Crossan's reconstruction of Jesus. For Johnson, Crossan's reconstruction is inherently flawed. He has a predetermined conception of Jesus and ignores relevant texts. Crossan's methodologies and use of cross-cultural patterns reduces Jesus to a stereotyped cultural category, that of a member of "peasant culture". (50) Johnson asserts, "Jesus is so much collapsed into the stereotype of 'the peasant' that he loses not only his uniqueness but even any distinctiveness as a human person. This Jesus, once more, is the embodiment of a cultural critique, more than a specific historical person. Nothing in his reconstructed mission, furthermore, seems to have a specifically religious character: once more, we see in this Jesus no interpretation of Torah; nothing of the judgement or forgiveness of sins; virtually no talk about God; and certainly no declarations concerning a sense of mission with regard to the Jewish people as God's people." (49) Johnson concludes by asserting that Crossan develops his own vision of what "Christianity" ought to be: "not a church with leaders and cult and creeds, but a loose association of Cynic philosophers who broker their own access to the kingdom of self-esteem and mutual acceptance." (50) I agree with Johnson's critique and think that Crossan has not adequately addressed the Jesus of faith or the status of the present Christian church, which looks nothing like Crossan's reconstructed itinerant Jesus.

⁶³Roetzel, 149.

Roetzel asserts that the more compelling arguments against Pauline authorship are linguistic and theological. Excluding proper names, about twenty percent of the vocabulary appears nowhere else in the New Testament, and approximately thirty percent of the language of the Pastorals is absent from the non-disputed letters. More decisive than the quantity of unusual words, however, is their character. The distinctive vocabulary of the Pastorals reminds one more of a Hellenistic-Jewish philosophical treatise than a Pauline letter. Furthermore, some of the vocabulary that is integral to the undisputed letters appears nowhere in the Pastorals. Such words as "uncircumcised" (14 times), "to die" (35 times), "to proclaim the good news" (18 times), "spiritual" (18 times), and "body" (59 times) are absent.

1 Timothy and the other Pastorals were written approximately 100 C.E.⁶⁴, approximately fifty years after the non-disputed Pauline letters and approximately ten years after the Gospel of John was written. Thus, the Christian community has significantly changed during this time period. The Christian community had grown significantly and, according to Roetzel, the Gentile mission, Paul's mission, was now in a position to determine its own agenda, to create its own theological idiom, chart its own course, heedless of the views of the Jerusalem circle.⁶⁵ The Roman-Jewish war (66-70 C.E.) had exacerbated tensions between Jews and Gentiles, which further threatened the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Roetzel suggests further that the growing theological disputes and animosity between synagogue and church were waving the Christian community toward a discursive structure. Furthermore, Roetzel asserts that the loss of confidence in the traditional religious forms, combined with a growing disenchantment with social institutions, sparked a vast array of world denying movements, particularly Gnosticism.⁶⁶ Jesus had not returned as expected by Paul even though Jerusalem was in ruins and Roman Christians had suffered severe persecution. As a consequence of these events, the community to whom the author of 1 Timothy was writing was in a state of turmoil over what teachings were correct Christian teachings. Gnosticism⁶⁷ appears to have become the standard teaching in the community. The author of 1

Also an important word like "righteousness" (45 times) appears in the Pastorals only five times with an altered theological meaning. 149

⁶⁴Roetzel, 157.

⁶⁵Ibid., 153.

⁶⁶Roetzel, 153-154.

⁶⁷Roetzel describes gnostic sects as displaying hatred for the world and things of the flesh. Their disdain for the creation spilled over into its creator; they reasoned that if the earth is evil its architect must also be evil. Christian Gnosticism, therefore, often contrasted the creator God of the Old Testament with the God revealed in Christ. One was seen as the "god of the world" and, therefore, diabolical; the other was viewed as the God of the

Timothy is addressing a community that has “strayed far from the faith” by laying claim to “knowledge” or gnosis.⁶⁸ In attempts to correct the community, the author relied upon the authority of the Apostle Paul, and offered an alternative to the Gnostic emphasis on asceticism and superior knowledge by delineating an organized church structure and a return to subordinate roles for women. 1 Timothy, in contrast to the Pauline letters and Jesus as presented in the Gospels, does not appear to support leadership roles nor discipleship for Christian women. 1 Timothy supports a return to the patriarchal, hierarchical norms of Hellenistic society. This text appears to relegate women to the periphery of the Christian community and places restrictions on all aspects of their conduct. The open, egalitarian message of Jesus in all of the Gospels, and the teaching and leadership roles for women in the undisputed Pauline letters appears absent in this text. The author of 1 Timothy advocates a rigid structure of society and behavior: marriage, child bearing, and the absence of leadership roles for women. Roetzel suggests that the traditionally subordinate position of women in the Pastorals was probably a reaction against the Gnosticism.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the apparent subordination of women in this text can also be interpreted as the elevation of their

highest heaven, and therefore, gracious and good. Salvation, naturally enough, was understood as liberation from this wretched earth and rescue from corrupted flesh. According to the Gnostic myth, through some tragic failure a spark of the divine was planted in some (but not all) persons and the memory of its divine origin erased. Humankind continued in its ignorant stupor until the high God had mercy and sent Christ to remind humanity of its true origin. Salvation, therefore, comes through knowledge (gnosis), but this gnosis is more than just intellectual awareness of the divine origin of one’s true self. Knowing for the Gnostic went beyond mental recall; it meant active reunion with one’s divine source through all kinds of ecstatic experience- dreams, visions, speaking in tongues, etc. In this return to the divine source, one is liberated from the bodily prison. 158

⁶⁸1 Timothy 6:20-21.

⁶⁹Roetzel, 153.

Roetzel says that “in their glorified state some Corinthians held that all distinctions between men and women were erased. Agreeing with Paul, they could say that in Christ ‘there is neither male nor female’. A similar viewpoint was likely shared by the Gnostics of the Pastor’s community. The Pastor attempted to refute such claims by reimposing on women the traditional social restrictions that the Gnostics had abandoned.” 153

domestic status. The role of mother and wife appears to be elevated, thus women might have been denied active leadership participation in the churches, but their domestic roles appeared to be revered. These two interpretations of the text demonstrate the conflict and tension inherent within the text itself. As suggested earlier, the text itself cannot and does not tell one everything about a community nor the religious life of the people. Thus, inferences and decisions regarding interpretations of the text must be made. This section of the paper examines the absence of women in teaching and leadership roles in the community. Women appear to no longer occupy roles they once occupied, and the central question becomes- why?

The text begins by instructing Timothy to chastise the people for teaching erroneous doctrines and devoting themselves to erroneous myths.⁷⁰ Thus, the author asserts that this letter is authoritative and contains the correct doctrines for the Christian church. These doctrines include the subordination of women. Women are no longer teachers or leaders in the church, but are required to become peripheral members in the leadership of the Christian community. 1 Timothy 4:11-12 states, "their [women] role is to learn, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit women to teach or dictate to the men; they should keep quiet." This appears to be in direct conflict with the Gospel texts and the Pauline letters. The new doctrine appears to advocate men as the only teachers and leaders within Christianity. Unless the doctrines are transmitted by the men, then, as suggested by this text, they are fallible.

The author of 1 Timothy defines the roles for each sex within the Christian church. Each position within the church is carefully delineated according to gender, marital status, and conduct. 1 Timothy 3 :2 states, "a bishop, therefore, must be above reproach, husband of one wife, sober,

⁷⁰1 Timothy 1:3.

temperate, courteous, hospitable, and a good teacher."⁷¹ The bishop must be a male. Females are denied access to this position. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 3:4 asserts that the man must be in charge of his household because this control within the domestic sphere determines his ability to manage a congregation. This represents another shift from the Pauline letters which assert that women were not only in charge of the domestic sphere and its functions, but also were leaders of Christian communities within their homes. The Pauline Corpus, according to Torjesen, Elshtain, and Filson, suggests that the household churches promoted a blurring of public and private space. 1 Timothy reasserts the clear demarcation between public and private space. The home once again becomes the private sphere.

Deacons, according to the author of 1 Timothy, can only be male. However, the text appears to promote men above women as deacons. There are two citations in the text which refer to deacons as male; 1 Timothy 3:9 "they must be male", and 1 Timothy 3:12 "a deacon must be the husband of one wife." Thus, the text appears to be mentioning women in association with a male leader, but this minor inclusion tends to be obscured by the prevalence of references to only male deacons. The text also enumerates the qualities that are required for a deacon. Once again, the text asserts that a man must be "good at managing his children and own household. For deacons with a good record of service are entitled to high standing and the right to be heard on matters of the Christian faith."⁷² This text appears to equate power in the domestic sphere with an ability to perform "good service" in the public sphere. Furthermore, this domestic power and service "entitles"

⁷¹1 Timothy 3 continues, "he must not be given to drink or brawling, but be of a forbearing disposition, avoiding quarrels, and not avaricious. He must be one who manages his own household well and controls his children without losing his dignity, for if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take charge of a congregation of God's people?" 1 Timothy 3:3-5

⁷²1 Timothy 3:12-13.

one to a higher position of authority. The author of 1 Timothy has created a complex set of conditions that are required for a person who is seeking a leadership role in the church. A position of leadership is an entitlement and, as the text suggests, constitutes a position of high status and respect.

The community outlined in 1 Timothy does not appear to support women in leadership roles. Women are clearly defined as subservient to men. The text of 1 Timothy not only limits a woman's influence in church leadership, but also dictates how women will be saved. 1 Timothy 2:15 states, "but salvation for the woman will be in the bearing of children, provided she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with modesty." Women are defined in terms of their biological functions and salvation is achieved through procreation. The text does not say that women receive salvation through motherhood, which extends a woman's role beyond a biological function; it says "in the bearing of children". Thus, the text appears to suggest that it is only through a woman's biological characteristics that she can achieve salvation. The author of 1 Timothy has not only severely limited women's leadership and teaching roles, but has defined women as solely procreative vessels. These limitations contrast with texts of the Gospels and the undisputed Pauline letters.

The salvation of women, as articulated in 1 Timothy, is derived from their ability to reproduce, but their salvation is also contingent upon a set of behaviors- faith, love, honesty, and modesty. Faith, love, and honesty appear throughout the Gospels and the undisputed Pauline letters; however, these texts do not characterize them according to sex. The text of 1 Timothy differentiates these behaviors according to sex by including modesty as a requirement for salvation.

The author of 1 Timothy states:

Women must dress in a becoming manner, modestly and soberly, not with elaborate hairstyles, not adorned with gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, as benefits

women who claim to be religious.⁷³

The author of 1 Timothy does not associate modesty with males, only females. He not only narrowly defines women's roles, but also places restrictions upon their dress. Furthermore, the text appears to suggest that there is a correlation between the physical aspects of femininity and a woman's ability to be a religious person. Thus, it could be concluded from the text that if a woman does not dress appropriately, she might have difficulty claiming she is religious.⁷⁴ Another reading of the text, as suggested by Roetzel, is that the author of 1 Timothy is responding to Gnosticism which has emphasized the similarity between males and females. By clearly differentiating between male and female, the author of 1 Timothy can probably distinguish his teaching from the Gnostic teaching.

The negative evaluation of women in 1 Timothy is not only apparent in the prescriptions for women's behavior and dress, but also in the terminology used to describe a woman's religious behavior. In the preceding text, the author states that women *claim* to be religious. "Claim" in this text suggests that women are not completely religious and are incapable of asserting their faith. The text does not say that men claim to be religious, rather it implies that men are naturally inclined toward a religious existence. 1 Timothy 3 discusses the roles of the bishops and deacons and never states in the text that men are inept or insufficient in their religious behavior.

A woman's place within the church is not only defined by her biological sex, but by her

⁷³1 Timothy 2:9-10.

⁷⁴Another reading of this text might suggest that this text is a rebuttal text to the Pauline text in 1 Corinthians in which women were teaching and prophesying in an ecstatic manner with their hair flowing wildly, and their clothes disheveled. Flowing hair and disheveled clothes can be suggestive of sexuality. Thus, the author of 1 Timothy is attempting to correct these women's erroneous behaviors and immodest decorum. By stating clearly the role of women and how they should behave and dress the author is able to legitimate Christianity within the Greco-Roman and Jewish world which advocates the submission and subordination of women.

marital status as well. As illustrated earlier, the text of 1 Timothy continuously asserts that bishops and deacons are to have only one wife. The author's point is readily apparent- marriage is an essential component for leadership in the church. However, marriage is also depicted in the text as a means of controlling women. Thus, widows and unmarried women are a threat to the stability and morality of the community. The threat these women pose to the community is illustrated by the author's careful description of the how the community is to control these women. The author devotes almost half of chapter 5 to the conduct of widows, differentiating between young and old. 1 Timothy 5:13- 14 asserts that young widows must marry again in order to protect the community of believers. The text says:

...in going round from house to house they would learn to be idle, indeed worse than idle, gossips and busybodies, speaking of things better left unspoken. For that reason it is my wish that young widows should marry again, have children, and manage a household; they will give the enemy no reason for scandal.

The author's negative opinion of women is apparent, and women are perceived as naturally inclined toward sin. Gossiping, considered a sinful practice, is only associated with women in the text. The text also suggests that marriage can be used to control these young women. Marriage provided the necessary boundaries and parameters for women's conduct.

The text of 1 Timothy appears in one reading as misogynistic and patriarchal. Women are discouraged and prohibited from assuming leadership roles in the church. Child-bearing is presented as a means for a woman's salvation. Marriage is described as an institution that controls and subordinates women. The text of 1 Timothy does not appear to advocate women as equal participants in the church community. Women are relegated to the background. The role of women in the ministry of the church appears to have shifted dramatically from the Gospels and the undisputed Pauline letters. Jesus and Paul both appeared to have included women in all aspects of

their ministry and considered them equal participants in the community. These ideals appear to be absent in 1 Timothy. However, 1 Timothy and the other Pastorals can also be interpreted as a reaction against Gnosticism according to Roetzel, and they can also be interpreted as reaction to a non-canonical letter, The Acts of Paul and Thecla.

The Acts of Paul and Thecla is a story, probably legendary, about a liberated female apostle of Paul. Thecla rejects her marriage to a wealthy man and begins traveling around the countryside following Paul. She leads an ascetic life, appears to reject social conventions, and is recognized by Paul as a teacher. The story recounts, "But Paul said: 'Go and teach the word of God!' ...But she herself went away to Iconium and went into the house of Onesiphorus, and threw herself down on the floor where Paul had sat and taught the oracles of God."⁷⁵ Dennis MacDonald asserts that the Pastorals' portrayal of women is a reaction and rebuttal against not only the Pauline corpus, but also the Acts of Paul and Thecla's portrayal of women. The Acts of Paul and Thecla are not canonized, but they still retain a theme consistent with Paul and allude to Paul as the author. The Acts of Paul and Thecla allude to people and places discussed in the Pastorals and provide a clear statement for the freedom of women as teachers and leaders in the Christian community.⁷⁶

In the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Thecla is commissioned by Paul to go and preach the word

⁷⁵Wayne A. Meeks, ed. *The Writings of St. Paul*, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1972), 207.

⁷⁶Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983). MacDonald asserts that only in the Acts of Paul and Thecla and the Pastorals in all of early Christian literature does one find a reference to Onesiphorus, and in both he is identified with Asia Minor, in both he befriends Paul during a time of imprisonment, and in both he always appears with his family. Likewise, only in the Acts and in the Pastorals can one find a reference to Hermogenes, and in both he is twinned with a companion and deserts Paul in Asia Minor. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Demas and Hermogenes tell Thamyris that the resurrection has already taken place. The only other place in all of early Christian literature where two people make this claim is in the Pastorals, where Hymenaeus and Philetus are said to have "swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some." (2 Timothy 2 :17-18) 60

of God. She is lured away from her lover, who is to become her husband, by Paul and the word of Christ. Thecla assumes an ascetic, celibate lifestyle as a leader in the Christian community. MacDonald asserts, "Instead of luring Thecla away from her lover and encouraging her to teach the word of God, the author of the Pastorals indicates that Paul would have had her marry, be submissive to her husband, raise lots of children and live happily - in silent domestication -ever after."⁷⁷ This is exactly the opposite path Thecla follows during her life. She was a woman prophet who experienced persecution for her religious authority. She says, "My God, and God of this house where light shone upon men, Christ Jesus the Son of God, my helper in prison, my helper with governors, my helper in the fire, my helper among the beasts, thou are God, and to thee be the glory forever."⁷⁸ Thecla was arrested, thrown into a pit of lions, almost burned at the stake and continuously questioned and persecuted.

The legendary Thecla was probably persecuted because she was a women. She was persecuted by a Hellenistic society that did not accept nor validate women who had leadership roles which opposed the hierarchical structure of society. Thecla appears to have challenged societal norms. In challenging these norms, she was perceived as a threat. Thus, the Pastoral Epistles, particularly 1 Timothy, possibly sought to correct Thecla and women like her and place them within a clearly defined hierarchical structure.

The text of 1 Timothy is full of tension and conflict. The status of women appears to be clearly defined, but upon closer examination other readings of the text are apparent. The community to whom the author of 1 Timothy addressed appears to be in turmoil over the organization and

⁷⁷Ibid. 59.

⁷⁸Meeks, 207.

beliefs of the Christian church. Timothy attempts to correct these interpretations, and in his correction women are no longer present in many of the roles they appear to have held in Paul's and Jesus movement. But, as suggested earlier the author's correction did not appear to completely subordinate women, because the household, the domestic sphere, was elevated in the eyes of the community. Thus, a clear statement on the status of women in 1 Timothy is very difficult to make, however, it is possible to note that the women were absent from some leadership roles.

Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Linda M. Maloney's Feminist Critique of 1 Timothy
vs. John H. Yoder's Revolutionary Subordination

Elizabeth Schussler- Fiorenza and Linda M. Maloney are feminist scholars who wrote about 1 Timothy. Linda M. Maloney suggests that 1 Timothy, and the other Pastoral letters- 2 Timothy and Titus, are among the most revealing parts of the New Testament and among the most frustrating from the view of feminist criticism. Maloney suggests they are revealing because nowhere else can one find so much concentrated attention devoted to women's roles in early Christian communities. At the same time, she asserts the Pastorals are both frustrating and depressing to the Christian woman who reads them: their tone (especially in regards to women) is negative, and it is this negative and oppressive quality that has dominated interpretation and authoritative application of these texts in the succeeding two millennia.⁷⁹ In contrast, John Yoder views the subordination of women as revolutionary and asserts that the early Christian style of ethical thinking addresses the subordinate person in the social order as the moral agent. Thus, for

⁷⁹Linda M. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles" in *Searching the Scriptures : A Feminist Introduction*, vol. 2, Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 361.

Yoder, 1 Timothy does not relegate women to the periphery of the Christian community, but addresses them as moral agents. The center of the Christian imperative is a call to willing subordination.⁸⁰

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza contends that 1 Timothy is an official document of instruction which contains instructions for different groups in the church. She suggests that its function is to protect and foster the true teachings of the tradition. It is intended to combat the proclamation of other teachings and instruct the community regarding "sound" or "good" teaching.⁸¹ According to Schussler-Fiorenza 1 Timothy's and the other Pastorals' teachings and instructions advocate the patriarchal order of submission.⁸² Maloney concurs with Schussler-Fiorenza saying, "there can be no doubt that the author of these letters had an agenda, and that agenda did not include fostering the advancement of women, whatever their class or rank, nor of slaves, male or female. The point of view is androcentric and patriarchal."⁸³ Yoder would probably concede that the author of 1 Timothy had an agenda, but he would interpret this agenda differently. Yoder asserts that the subordinate relationship, which is androcentric and patriarchal according to Maloney, is turned around and the dominant partner in the relationship is called to a kind of subordination in his turn. Parents are asked not to irritate their children, and husbands are called to love their wives. This reciprocal call to subordination is a revolutionary trait of the Christian ethic according to Yoder. Furthermore, the call for the acceptance of subordination by the subordinate person does not

⁸⁰John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus : Vicit Angus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), 174- 175.

⁸¹Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 288.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 289.

⁸³Maloney, 361.

consecrate the existing order, the Christian ethic relativizes and undercuts the existing order by immediately turning the subordination imperative around.⁸⁴

There appears to be a shift in tone from the Gospels and particularly the undisputed Pauline letters. Maloney suggests that this shift in tone is probably due to the author of 1 Timothy. Maloney proposes that the author of the Pastoral letters is not an authoritative figure who is instructing awed and compliant communities, rather the author is frightened and on the defensive against powerful and intelligent opponents who are not attackers from the outside, but are themselves active leaders within their local communities. These communities have women who are well organized, they preach, teach, prophesy, travel, preside at worship, and preserve certain "Pauline" traditions.⁸⁵ Thus, one can conclude the author of this letter was probably not Paul. As suggested earlier, the Pauline letters advocated teaching and leadership roles for women, and highlighted the churches in their homes.

The text of 1 Timothy appears to suggest that it was not written by Paul. Maloney, like Roetzel, alleges that the Pastoral Epistles are pseudepigraphical: "their author is someone other than Paul desiring to claim Pauline authority for his ideas. Undoubtedly, there is Pauline tradition here, but with a twist."⁸⁶ Maloney uses exegesis of the Pauline letters and the Pastoral letters to support her claim of pseudo-authorship. She maintains that the Paul of the authentic letters argues, reasons, and cajoles. The author of the Pastorals does not enter into discussion with the opponents, and he makes an attempt to win over those who disagree. In the Pauline letters Paul's rhetoric illustrates

⁸⁴Yoder, 180-181.

⁸⁵Maloney, 362.

⁸⁶Maloney, 364.

who opposed or argued with him. In contrast, Maloney suggests that the Pastorals do not show who the opponents of the text were, and maintains that one cannot ascertain the beliefs or actions of the opponents from the standardized list of vices that appear in 1 Timothy.⁸⁷ The author of the Pastoral letters cites Paul as the author to authenticate the teaching and assert that these letters were handed down through a direct and authorized channel.

One of the primary differences between the undisputed Pauline letters and 1 Timothy is the structure of the house churches. According to Schussler-Fiorenza, the house church is now stratified according to "natural" age and gender divisions, and the "new" family is understood in terms of the patriarchal household.⁸⁸ Maloney concurs with Schussler-Fiorenza and describes the pattern of the household as patriarchal "with God as the head, Christ as the son and heir, episkopoi and other elders as stewards, and the remaining members as obedient occupants of the roles of free women and slaves."⁸⁹ This understanding of the house church differs dramatically from Paul's understanding as of the church as the "body of Christ" in which all people are considered equal and important facets of "the body".

The new house church's overarching value is suggested by Schussler-Fiorenza as obedience and submission to those in authority, so that the community- and especially the subordinate members will be a credit to Christian teaching. She contends that Christians are good citizens, observing the patriarchal order of the household and praying for "sovereigns and for all in high

⁸⁷Maloney, 364.

⁸⁸Schussler-Fiorenza, 288.

⁸⁹Maloney, 367.

office so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life, free to practice our religion with dignity." ⁹⁰

This phrase by the author denotes a need to legitimate the religion, Christianity, in eyes of the world. Maloney suggests that the author's continual insistence on the value of social conformity for promoting the community's "image" in the world indicates a conservative stance opposed to the sorts of "Christian experiments that might result from a conviction that "in Christ there is...not male and female" (Galatians 3:28)."⁹¹ Furthermore, the author's instructions for the behaviors of wives, not husbands (1 Tim. 5:14) and for slaves, not masters demonstrates, according to Maloney, that the particular concern was defiance of social convention on the part of traditionally low-status groups : married or marriageable women and slaves of both sexes.⁹² Thus, the radical quality of Paul's new creation is rejected in order to conform to worldly standards.

Yoder, in contrast to Schussler- Fiorenza, would assert that Schussler-Fiorenza's understanding of the house church's overarching value is in accordance with the Christian ethic, voluntary subordination. Yoder asserts that the ethic of Jesus was transmitted and transmuted into the stance of the servant church within society. Thus, the voluntary subjection of the church is understood as a witness to the world. Yoder concludes by asserting that the subordinate person becomes a free ethical agent when he/she voluntarily accedes to his/her subordination in the power of Christ.⁹³ Yoder agrees with Schussler-Fiorenza and Maloney assertions that the church needed to develop an ethic in accordance with society's values. He states that the early church had to

⁹⁰ 1 Timothy 2:2.
Schussler-Fiorenza, 289.

⁹¹Maloney, 367.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Yoder, 190-192.

develop an ethic for living within the structures of society which was not immediately apparent with the teaching of Jesus himself.⁹⁴ But, Yoder asserts that the theologian Troeltsch and his disciples were “wrong in assuming that it [Christian ethic] must follow from the observation that the ethic the church did then develop was contradictory or unrelated to the ethic of Jesus.”⁹⁵ For Yoder, Jesus and his voluntary subordination and advocacy of servanthood is the Christian ethic. Therefore, the description of roles in 1 Timothy of women can be interpreted using Yoder as examples of servanthood.

The text of the undisputed Pauline letters appears to suggest that women were active and integral members in Paul's mission, serving as teachers and leaders. As mentioned previously, 1 Timothy eliminated and redefined the leadership of the church. Schussler-Fiorenza maintains that in the Pastorals, ministry and leadership are dependent upon age/gender classifications, not primarily upon one's spiritual or organizational resources or giftedness.⁹⁶ Leadership in 1 Timothy has become predominately male.

1 Timothy chapter 3 describes the ideal conduct of the bishops and deacons. Maloney points out that in this chapter the qualifications for these functions are not named, thus she suggests that the reader may suppose people offered themselves voluntarily as candidates for the "office" or duty and were confirmed or not through the communities choice, probably expressed through prophetic designation.⁹⁷ Maloney asserts that what the text describes are not qualifications, but qualities that,

⁹⁴Ibid., 191.

⁹⁵Yoder, 191.

⁹⁶Schussler-Fiorenza, 289.

⁹⁷Maloney, 368.

according to the author, people should exhibit. She suggests that the bishops are to have the qualities of a proper Greco-Roman household head. Maloney concludes by stating that the "ideal projected by the author is couched in terms suitable for males (as would be normal in the surrounding society, in which similar tables of virtues are at home), but does not of itself exclude the presence of females in these stations or 'offices'."⁹⁸

The author of 1 Timothy appears unable to distort the presence of women in some leadership functions. However, Maloney suggests that the list of virtues in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 are selectively repeated for the deacons (male), widows, and even the younger men and women of the church (Titus 2:2-8). She contends that the ideal bishop, as projected in 1 Timothy and Titus, was really the ideal Christian according to the author's androcentric point of view. Maloney states that this Christian ideal could well have represented a broad consensus in the churches, a consensus to which this author appeals- though some people probably would have questioned the conservative emphasis laid on sobriety and good sense, and the absence of prophetic powers. She concludes that some people would have probably found objectionable the subtle and or not-so-subtle efforts to restrict the ideal to manly virtues and to limit the functions of both women and of slaves.⁹⁹

In an effort to restrict the women's involvement in leadership the author explicitly states in 1 Timothy 2: 11-12, "their role is to learn, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit women to teach or dictate to the men; they should keep quiet." Maloney points out that this passage

⁹⁸Maloney, 369.

⁹⁹Ibid.

Maloney also points out that as late as 112 C.E., probably within a decade or less of the composition of the Pastoral letters, slave women were exercising leading roles in Christian churches in Asia Minor. The author of the Pastorals only urges slaves to be obedient, submissive, and loyal (Titus 2:9-10) a list which curiously overlaps with that of the qualities taught to young women (Titus 2:4-5). 369

is often linked with 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 which also asserts that women should remain quiet.¹⁰⁰ Maloney analyzes the two texts and asserts that the core idea, women should remain silent, is present in both passages, but the expression is very different. She contends that the two passages share a minimum amount of common vocabulary except for the verb "permission", used passively in 1 Corinthians, actively in 1 Timothy, and the word group for "submission" or "subordination", a verbal form in 1 Corinthians, a noun in 1 Timothy.¹⁰¹ The behavioral issues are also different according to Maloney. She suggests that Paul's purpose in 1 Corinthians was to "put a damper on women's prophesying in the assemblies."¹⁰² The author of 1 Timothy who, according to Maloney, refuses to engage in the debate chooses simply to ignore prophecy as a present phenomenon. His specific difficulty is with women as teachers and authorities.¹⁰³

The author of the 1 Timothy appears concerned with women, specifically widows. The author's interest in widows is not a new interest of the Christian community. Turid Karlsen Seim asserts that widows occur more frequently in Luke-Acts than in any other New Testament writing. She contends that the term widow in Luke has kept a traditional denotation of devastation, poverty, and vulnerability is not just another expression for the poor and outcasts. According to Seim, in Luke the widows appear to form special and respected groups, which are typically portrayed in a positive light. They transcend the roles of victims and receivers and act in such a way that they

¹⁰⁰1 Corinthians 14:34-36 states, "As in all congregations of God's people, women should keep silent at the meeting. They have no permission to talk, but should keep their place as the law directs. If there is something they want to know, they can ask their husbands at home. It is shocking thing for a woman to talk at the meeting."

¹⁰¹Maloney, 369.

¹⁰²Ibid., 370.

¹⁰³Ibid.

become prominent members of faith and piety.¹⁰⁴ Seim suggests that the controls and restrictions the author of 1 Timothy places on widows was an attempt to diminish supportive communities of unmarried women and limit the number of widows who could be enrolled in these communities.¹⁰⁵ Seim asserts further that the author's restrictions on widows demonstrates that in Christian communities provisions had been made for widows. She suggests that these provisions included young women as well as old; they were supported by the community, and they fulfilled tasks such as acts of charity and visitation in homes, but that their main occupation was intercessory prayer.¹⁰⁶ Thus, one can possibly conclude from the rules and restrictions placed on women in the text of 1 Timothy that women were not only teachers and leaders in the Christian community, but were engaged in other forms of Christian service which strengthened and supported the community.

The author's focus on women indicates that women's active participation and leadership in the Christian communities was the source of the author's anxiety.¹⁰⁷ Maloney suggests that it was these women, living independent and often celibate lives, many of them organized in groups of "widows", preaching, teaching, prophesying, discussing, theologizing, and leading their house

¹⁰⁴Turid Karlsen Seim, "The Gospel of Luke" in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, vol.2 Elisabeth Schussler- Fiorenza ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 757.

¹⁰⁵Seim, 757.

Seim suggests further that Luke seems to share the presupposition, inspired by Judaism and common among Christians, that the religious community has the duty of providing for widows (Acts 6:19, 9:39). It is likely that most of the women who were supported by the community, even the young ones, really were widows or divorced/abandoned women. But the system may have also entertained other women, who for various reasons had deliberately chosen a life free from material bonds. As most of these women would have difficulties providing for themselves, the regulations and care of the widows that one glimpses in Luke mean that even a poor woman had a real choice. Thereby a life without new marriage was not only desirable; it was also feasible. 757

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 758.

¹⁰⁷Maloney, 377-378.

Maloney asserts that twenty-eight verse out of the total 242 are devoted exclusively to women; if one were to include references to groups of unspecified membership that certainly included women, they would encompass more than half of the total. 377-378

churches who were attracting the criticism of this author and of other social conservatives.¹⁰⁸

According to Schussler-Fiorenza and Maloney, 1 Timothy attempts to limit and correct the teaching and leadership of women in the Christian communities. Women in teaching and leadership roles did not fit societal standards for women's conduct, thus it can be suggested that in order to legitimate Christianity in the eyes of society¹⁰⁹, the author of 1 Timothy sought to redefine the place of women. However, his persistent and aggressive tone toward women can be interpreted as suggesting that women were an integral feature of the Christian communities.

Schussler-Fiorenza and Maloney are feminist scholars who interpret 1 Timothy as a text which subordinates women. In contrast Yoder, understands this text and some Pauline texts as advocating voluntary subordination, an ethic in accordance with his interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. These two different interpretations of the same text illustrate the conflict and tension with the text itself and within the academic community. Due to the tension and conflict within the text and among scholars a definitive statement on the place of women in early Christianity is almost impossible. However, from Schussler-Fiorenza, Maloney, and Yoder, it is apparent that women had a role in the Christian community. What that role is exactly is debatable. Why women appear in

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 378.

¹⁰⁹Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone : The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 79.

Schussler-Fiorenza asserts that in order to survive in a patriarchal culture, the church had to adapt its ethos and structures to the patriarchy of Greco-Roman society. Whenever this adaptation is viewed negatively, it is pointed out that the household codes belong only to the later new Testament and apostolic writings, and are not found in the genuine Pauline letters. The adaptation of the gospel to its bourgeois society is usually ascribed to the disappearance of imminent eschatological expectations. Other supporters of this line of argument point out that the household codes strengthened the "cohesiveness" of the Christian group and provided institutional patterns that enabled them to survive. Whereas the Jesus movement was a conflict movement, the early Christian missionary movement was integrative because of its ethos of love-patriarchalism. The process of ecclesial "patriarchalization" was, in the development from charisma to office, from Paulinism to early Catholicism, from a millenarian radical ethos to a privileged Christian establishment, from the egalitarian structures of the beginnings to the hierarchal order of the Constantinian church. 79

roles different than the roles described by Paul and Jesus, is also debatable.

Conclusions

The Bible is an authoritative text for Christian communities. However, this text does not tell a person in a Christian community everything. There are gaps, inconsistencies, and obscure references throughout the text. The text is full of conflict and tension. Thus, a person must analyze the text, the social and political context of the text, and the community to whom the message was delivered in order to begin to fill in the missing pieces, clarify obscure references, and reconcile inconsistencies. Nevertheless, the status of women in the Jesus tradition, in Paul's ministry, and in the Pastoral Epistles is almost impossible to assess due to these conflicts and tensions. However, in the midst of all this tension and conflict, the presence of women in some capacity in early Christians communities is discernable.

I interpret Paul as including women in many aspects of his ministry. He appears to have supported public roles for women which were not acceptable for women in the Hellenistic community. The Pauline letters suggest that Paul commissioned female disciples, and had women teaching and leading worship services. Paul's theology of a new creation eliminates differences and promotes an egalitarian structure of society. I interpret the baptismal formula in Galatians 3:27-28 as a strong statement outlining the egalitarian structure of the community of Christians. Paul's reference to women as leaders of house churches reaffirms Galatians 3:27-28 and highlights their importance in his ministry. Robin Scroggs' interpretation of Paul as "the only certain and consistent spokesman for the liberation and equality of women in the New Testament" concurs with my own.

Thus, I interpret Paul not as a male chauvinist, but as a radical figure who gave women an opportunity for teaching and leadership roles in the Christian community.

The Gospels suggest that Jesus' ministry included women as disciples, patrons, and faithful followers. The women were the first to see the empty tomb at Jesus' resurrection, and the first to be told, presumably by Jesus, that Jesus had been resurrected. It was the responsibility of the women to insure that Christianity did not disappear after Jesus' death. The women were called, by Jesus, as disciples to spread the news that Jesus had risen. These women were important to the Christian community, and as suggested by Crossan their roles within the Jesus movement were atypical for women in the Hellenistic world.

Crossan's assertion that Jesus crossed boundaries and in some instances eliminated the social and political norms of Hellenistic society is a compelling argument. Jesus' itinerant ministry, advocacy of open commensality, and healings reshaped Greco-Roman and Jewish society. Egalitarianism replaced social stratification, and the patron-client system of the Hellenistic world was replaced by an open social movement that encouraged all people to follow Jesus. The boundaries between honor and shame were traversed through Jesus' numerous healings. The restructuring of kinship networks, the patron-client system, and honor/shame boundaries all influenced and redefined aspects of the Hellenistic world. But Crossan's argument does not account for the Jesus of faith. Luke Timothy Johnson asserts that Crossan's social critique of Jesus does not adequately account for the spread of Christianity. I think Johnson's critique is accurate and that Crossan's one-sided critique of Jesus does not address one of the most fundamental questions- why did Christianity spread? I would concur with Johnson and agree that Christianity spread for a variety of reasons, but one of those reasons was faith.

The Gospels and the Pauline letters both suggest that women were active in the Christian communities. But 1 Timothy and the other Pastoral Epistles do not appear to promote women as teachers and leaders, and relegate women to the periphery of the community. This is a dramatic shift from the egalitarian structure of Jesus and Paul. The text of 1 Timothy appears to be constructing a new order in the church. Women are instructed to be silent and not speak during worship services. They are not permitted to be bishops. The teaching and leadership roles of the Jesus and Paul have been replaced by a hierarchical structure. I agree with Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza's evaluation of the situation in the text of 1 Timothy. I think that the author of 1 Timothy recognized a problem that if anyone, especially women, could receive the word of God through the Spirit and claim authority for their utterances in the name of God, then there is not a structure for the legitimation of power. This was highly problematic for the delineated, hierarchical structure of the Hellenistic world. The author of 1 Timothy's response limited women's participation and began structuring a church that adhered more closely to Roman standards. I think this institutionalization of the church was necessary in order for the church to survive. The agrarian, fringe movement of Jesus and the radicalness of Paul's new creation needed to be reconfigured in order for the church to grow and become a stable component of society.

The 1 letter of Timothy, in my opinion, subordinates women. However, if this text is read in conjunction with the entire corpus of the New Testament a picture emerges in which women were present in a variety of positions in the Christian community. I think that it is important to read the New Testament as a collective whole in order understand the development of the early Church. I also think that it is important to read the New Testament from the perspective of a history of religion. Christian communities are consistently changing and growing, and the New Testament

chronicles the church's early growth. The conflict and tension within the text makes it very difficult to ascertain the status of women in the early Christian community. However, I think that the texts do demonstrate that women were present in leadership roles in the early church. These texts are authoritative for the Christian tradition, and I think should be read today in a manner that illuminates the conflict and tensions, while recognizing that in the midst of all the conflict women were not completely obscured. The status of women in the church today is contested, and will probably be contested for centuries to come, because the authoritative texts do not provide a clear definition of the status of women in the community.

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