

Liberty University

A Reconciliation of Pauline Complementarian Theology and Egalitarian Narratives in the New Testament

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by

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Section 1 - Introduction

a. Statement of the Problem

The debate about women having authority over men or serving in leadership roles within the church is a controversial topic that has existed for some time. There are different interpretations of the complementarian and egalitarian debate surrounding specific areas in scripture. The Bible is a source of wisdom and truth that is used to direct the lives of Christians and the church. However, both sides point to the same text as the justification for their beliefs. The complementarian and egalitarian debate is far-reaching, but I plan to look at one subject within the larger debate. The scope of my thesis will be to examine the Pauline complementarian literature considering the various narratives of women within the New Testament. The scope of my research will not be exhaustive but will use select examples from New Testament narratives to compare against the Pauline literature which excludes women from many activities. There is an apparent disconnect between some of Paul's commands and the actions of women in the New Testament, so my focus will be on how to reconcile these and examine them in a systematic posture. There is a historical trend for a complementarian interpretation of Pauline literature, but with modern research tools, historical exploration, and critical frameworks, there is much to be added concerning this portion of the debate. The goal of the thesis is to reconcile narratives of female leadership within the New Testament compared to the limitations placed on women within Pauline literature.

The Bible is thousands of years old and to properly honor the text, readers need to be educated in the cultural and historical nuances of the time of authorship. Without the proper context, readers are going into scripture blind and can make poor interpretations of the text. The main hermetical tool for this thesis will be to focus on a systematic and historical reading of the

literature. This is not a new way of reading scripture, but it is imperative to the identification of female leadership and how it correlates to the Pauline literature present in the New Testament. I address this as a problem that will be analyzed within my thesis because it is the driving factor of my position. I am examining the impact of narratives within the whole of the New Testament and placing them side-by-side with Pauline literature. Throughout my research, I have seen complementarians focus solely on the passages within Pauline literature to support their claim. I have also seen egalitarians solely use narratives to support their claim. Therefore, I am trying to reconcile the two through this thesis which requires a historical and systematic approach to reading these areas of scripture.

Overall, the problem I am tackling is as follows. There is a disparity between the writings of Paul and the narratives of the New Testament concerning the role of women within the church which require a historical and systematic study to reconcile their apparent differences and provide a unified message of female leadership within New Testament texts.

b. Statement of Purpose

The Bible is a collection of narratives and genres which display a beautiful masterpiece that brings glory to God. Although there are various narratives, writings, and genres within scripture, they all point to a unified message of God's love and purposes. This unified message of God is apparent throughout scripture, but some areas seem to have a contradiction. The purpose of this thesis is to tackle one of those areas in the reconciliation of the narratives of the New Testament and the commands of Pauline literature. For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul commands women to be silent in church. However, there are various narratives in which women freely speak in church and their silencing would have limited the sharing of the gospel (John 20:17, Matthew 28:10, Acts 18:26, Romans 16:1-2, etc.). Is the message of God not

unified on this topic? Are women completely shunned from speaking at all in church? Reconciling Paul's teaching and narrative is the purpose of my thesis. Additionally, my thesis cannot, due to certain constraints, be exhaustive. Therefore, I am examining the main commands in Pauline literature which limit women who may have several references but only use the overarching command. The commands I am examining will be, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, Ephesians 5:21-33, and 1 Timothy 2:9-15, 3:1-13. These four passages include all the limitations placed on women within Pauline literature which I will focus on within my thesis. I am then finding specific examples of female narratives which correspond to these commands. Rather than looking at every mention of a woman in scripture, I am isolating certain narratives which show women teaching, women as deacons, as Apostles, etc. I then investigate the historical and cultural backgrounds and reconcile the two for one unified message from the Bible. Applying a narrative contextualization as well as a historical context of the verses will allow outside sources to help validate or invalidate different arguments within the debate. For example, are Paul's commands isolated from the specific churches he is addressing, or are these universal commands for the church? How did Jesus treat and support women within His ministry compared to Pauline commands? This is laying the framework to reconcile the apparent differences within the New Testament. Defaulting to the narrative and cultural contexts will also assist in being clear and less biased in my conclusions.

Overall, the purpose of my thesis is to show that there is no contradiction in the revelation of God concerning the addressed passages. I believe that the message of God revealed in the New Testament does not contradict itself but is unified in its message concerning the role of women within the church. Reconciling these passages is not only an important component considering the complementarian and egalitarian debate but goes to show the unified nature of

scripture. God is not a God of misunderstanding, but unity and harmony (1 Corinthians 14:33).

c. Statement of Importance of the Problem

The importance of the complementarian and egalitarian argument is that it engages half of the human population and limits half of the church from leadership roles. If God ordains this segregation, then most of the church is functioning according to His purpose. However, if this is not the environment that God intended for His church, then it is the church that is limiting the potential for God to use His congregation and is preventing Christians from using their spiritual gifts. For the church to possibly be standing in opposition to God's plans requires an assessment of whether the church is honoring or not honoring God. The debate on female authority is also imperative for how the church and family life functions within Christian circles. This is not a secondary issue like what day is the sabbath supposed to be. But the complementarian egalitarian debate impacts Christians' daily lives and is essential for the leadership and continuation of the church. I do not get into contemporary issues of female leadership because it is outside my thesis's scope. However, there are plenty of examples within Christendom of women who feel called by God and are spiritually gifted to teach others and do great things for the kingdom of God. After going through my study, have found that women are empowered to lead and participate in the church and its leadership. God made mankind male and female and it is through His creation that His will is being done. Jesus was not afraid to empower women and encouraged their engagement in His ministry. Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul all supported women in authoritative positions, and to move away from the commission of women is to act in opposition to how Jesus intended. Having a cultural and historical understanding of the first century is imperative to come to these conclusions. If the modern church would reject something that Jesus did, then there is a problem in the church that must be corrected.

Additionally, the reconciliation of the actions of Jesus and the literature of Paul is imperative for scripture. Although I am only focusing on the select areas within my thesis, this is an important problem when it comes to the bigger picture of the bible. As explained in my purpose, I know that there is one message coming from God, but there appears, on a surface level, to be contradictory material. The reconciliation of these passages is not only important for the complementarian and egalitarian debate, but also the integrity of scripture.

My education at Liberty has armed me with the ability to read, with assistance, Koine Greek and Biblical Hebrew. Additionally, I have a passion for theology and history outside of my degree and I enjoy reading scholarly work on these topics. I have real-life experience in traveling and seeing Italy, Greece, Israel, and Egypt and I have been educated on the histories of these regions. For the past few years, I have had a personal goal of reading 10,000 pages per year and my favorite pastime is to read and devour information. Depending on books I have read for leisure, as well as a passion to learn, have prepared me to research and speak on this topic. By combining historical and cultural studies with the Bible, I am using my favorite tools of theology and history to develop Biblical interpretation. Additionally, I believe in the unification of scripture and that there is one central message coming from the Bible. If there is a surface-level contradiction, then it must be examined to find out the message that God has revealed to His people. I trust that God does have a plan for the church, and this must be in unison, not a pull to rip the church apart. Because of these things, I am confident that I am qualified to address the debate of complementarian and egalitarian theology, as well as use historical criticism as a hermeneutical tool.

Overall, my thesis is important for two major reasons. Primarily, the complementarian and egalitarian debate impacts half of the church and greatly limits the engagement of the female

population of God's people. Complementarian and egalitarian theology have a wide bearing on the church and must be examined. The position of my thesis is specifically on the reconciliation of New Testament narratives and Pauline's commands to add a perspective to this debate, as well as a preservation of the integrity of the Bible. Additionally, I am well qualified to tackle this topic due to my formal and informal education and passion for the integrity of scripture.

d. Statement of Position on the Problem

After writing the rough draft of my thesis and conducting scores of hours of research, I have a solid position when it comes to the reconciliation of New Testament narratives and Pauling literature. I am firmly convinced that within the Gospels and Acts, there are a plethora of narratives in which Jesus and the early church commissioned women to have leadership roles within the church. Additionally, Paul mentions many women who have leadership positions within the church and are applauded for their instruction and ability to teach others. When looking at the New Testament as a whole, it is evident that women were fundamental in the life of the early church and served in many leadership roles. Additionally, the verses which are complementarian leaning are, for the most part, taken out of cultural and historical context as well as logical context for that epistle. It is not only allowed, but celebrated by Jesus, Paul, and others within the early church that women were in key leadership roles with authority to teach others the message of God. The passages which need reconciliation are not at odds with one another but are in step with one another and show a unity of female leadership and the breaking of gender boundaries within the church. The Gospels speak of unity within the body of Christ, and these passages show that unity is being established across culturally established gender roles. However, there is a topic of familial headship which did not produce a concrete notion. The verses I examined not only discussed female leadership in the church but also in the home.

The main thrust of my thesis is to examine narrative examples of women in the New Testament, but there are little to no narratives of how a Christian family functioned. Because of this, the hermeneutical tools which I am advocating for do not necessarily apply within the scope of the addressed verses. Therefore, I am not as confident in my comprehensive understanding of familial headship as I am when it comes to female leadership in the church. This is not a primary subject within my thesis, but I must include my position because it is included in the verses I examine.

Secondarily, my stance on the unity of scripture is that it is not divided when it comes to female leadership roles but is harmonious in its message of women leading and having authority in the church. Many of the Pauline commands are local to the church he is speaking to and do not have the same theological weight as narrative examples of Jesus. Through a cultural study, it is evident that the surface-level reading may seem at odds, but the writings of Paul enable women to achieve a level of equality unknown to his contemporary culture. Additionally, Paul instructs men to submit to a lesser role that is associated with them by their contemporary culture. After conducting my research there is little to no contradiction in the teaching of Paul and the narrative examples in the New Testament.

Overall, my position is that women are concretely given the authority to have leadership roles in the church, teach in the church, and lead men and women. When it comes to familial headship, there is still a need for further study. I have shown that there is no contradiction within these texts but there is a unified message of God across the scriptures.

e. Limitations/Delimitations

There are many limitations I have encountered while doing my research. Primarily, any study of culture or history is flawed. Covering large subjects like the World Wars or the Norman

invasion does not fall prey to missing information at the large level. However, diving into cultural or historical studies and trying to get into the mind of one person or the minds of a group is impossible without first-hand knowledge. All that modern researchers can do is try our best to recreate the worldviews of these peoples and do our best to see which facets would have been central to whom we are analyzing. Culture and worldviews are not centralized, and everyone has their way of looking at the world, which is what makes us unique. Therefore, trying to piece together the “why” of Pauline epistles will be fundamentally flawed, however, it brings us closer to the original understanding rather than importing the alien culture of our modern day. This is a big limitation, but it is imperative to do our best to recreate the “why” which inspired Paul to write his letters. This limitation is important because the act of reconciling the narrative and the command requires an understanding of culture. Knowing why Jesus did something shows the significance of His message which frames other areas of scripture. Additionally, the only proper way to read and understand scripture is within its cultural and historical context. Without that, interpretation has a limited basis and can quickly become ingenuine.

Additionally, my thesis is strictly concerned with the New Testament. Although there is a lot to discuss concerning the Old Testament, this is outside of the scope of my thesis. To include the Hebrew Bible would require a whole other section on how to read the Hebrew Bible and an analysis of the cultures which influenced that authorship and composition. By sticking with the New Testament, I am focusing on the teachings of Jesus and how Paul instructed the church. There is a lot to learn from the Old Testament, but that is unfortunately outside my thesis’s scope. However, the application of a systematic study of scripture can be and should be, applied to the entirety of scripture, Old and New testaments alike. The study of the Old

Testament is outside of the scope of my thesis, but the reconciliation of passages within scripture is important for the understanding of scripture.

There are limitations when it comes to understanding historical cultures and limiting my research to only the New Testament. Applying historical and cultural consideration to the text is vital for an authentic message to resound from scripture. This is difficult to achieve but necessary for understanding scripture. Limiting myself to the New Testament is necessary for the focus of the thesis. However, the same principles used within my thesis can be applied to both the Old and New Testaments.

Section 2 - Method

a. Research Methods

My thesis is a historical and literary study of the Bible. There are a few metrics that are being analyzed, but data is not a part of the thesis. Although I use many narratives to show ample examples of women within leadership roles, there is no statistical analysis that goes to improve or discredit my thesis. My focus is to do my best to learn about women in antiquity, understand the cultural worldviews exhibited by people in this time, and use that framework to better understand the writings of Paul in the New Testament. Types of research being conducted include reading primary texts, scholarly articles on the topic, books, as well as some modern assumptions of this debate. I use modern examples to give a current example of how the church views this debate rather than as a source of research. I am merely trying to show how some come to their conclusions and then dive into history when I make my legitimate conclusions. There will be no statistical analysis and any mention of statistics is limited to a study performed by others concerning linguistics or simple examples of female leadership.

b. Tests or Questionnaires

There is no testing being conducted because I am looking at the historical and cultural implications of the first century which everyone who lived in that time is long gone. Any testing of individuals would not serve historical value and would import modern culture into the research of this paper. Although current ideas on the debate are important, they are outside of the scope of my thesis.

c. Data Collection

The data collection method is primarily looking through the Bible and finding narratives of importance that include women in leadership roles. I then look at their impact on the narrative arc of scripture and use that example to support the thesis. Data in this instance is not a large pool of information, but examples here and there concerning the addressed topics of complementarian and egalitarian theology. For example, when Paul mentions that women cannot teach, I then look at the various examples of women teaching in the New Testament. This is not an earth-shattering statistic because I am merely counting, but some data analysis is necessary for making a claim. Without ample examples, my argument will fall flat because there is no basis for disagreement or discussion.

d. Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted by weaving together examples to prove a point or address a concern. There is no legitimate statistical analysis but bringing certain verses against a narrative that is in opposition to the statement in Pauline literature. For example, I spent the first third of my thesis establishing the historical and cultural context of the New Testament. I then reference these points as I explore various verses within Pauline literature. By bringing the paper together in this manner, I can unite the paper and analyze the data or information I have displayed within the paper. Additionally, I look further into certain narratives to gain a better grasp of what is

going on. For example, is one of my examples a moment where a woman was teaching or evangelizing? This distinction is important when counting the times, a certain activity took place to better grasp that narrative being established.

Section 3 - Proposed Development of Thesis

a. Working Outline for the Thesis

Introduction

Introduction To the Debate

Complementarian Stance

Egalitarian Stance

Historical Context

Jewish

History of Judaism

Main Influences

Impact on Women

Hellenistic

History of Hellenism

Main Influences

Impact on Women

Roman

History of Roman Culture

Main Influences

Impact on Women

Paul's Influences Within These Worldviews

New Testament Studies

Female Leadership in the New Testament

The Gospels

Background on the Books

Narrative Examples

Acts

Pauline Epistles

“Problematic” Verses in Pauline Theology

Conclusion

I recognized that my current outline needs major revision as I was writing. These are the main points I made, but there are more subpoints that I need to develop as I edit my work. While writing, I realized that certain aspects of a position needed to be worked out and require a whole section to themselves. I have only made it through about half of my thesis on this first round of edits and I am surely going to make additional changes as I get through the text. I plan to have the two main chapters which then have their supporting points and sub-points. My goal is to make this thesis clear, concise, and understandable for the reader. Some long points are consistently referenced throughout my thesis, so losing a reader is a concern of mine. However, I hope to drill down what the necessary material is needed in my writing so there is no information overload and I lose a reader. Assistance from my reader and mentor will be very important in structuring my paper and making sure that it flows well with a reader.

b. Proposal for Chapter Division

The two main chapter divisions will be between the cultural background and the actual study of the Bible. These two chapters are important to make a cultural framework in which to

understand the rest of the Bible, and then to read the bible within this framework and how it is applied to the text. It also gives a clear focus to each section and allows the reader to better understand what is being discussed. The first chapter is a bit long, but it is necessary to get a grasp on what is going to be addressed throughout my thesis. There is a lot of information to cover, and I am working on limiting the context sections to what is being addressed within the thesis. Overall, the division of chapters is important, but this can be adjusted depending on advice from my future mentor or reader.

c. Proposed Summary of Each Chapter

The first chapter covering the context of the debate is crucial to understanding the rest of the paper. Chapter one gives a brief overview of the history of the debate, tools to read the Bible, and the historical contexts of each primary culture that influenced the New Testament. The main goal of my thesis is to show how understanding the historical and cultural context of the passages will illuminate their meaning and provide a legitimate context for proper exegesis. This is the foundation I consistently return to throughout my second chapter to point back to historical or cultural points being made. It is through this lens that my analysis is being conducted.

The second chapter covers the application of the worldview framework I established in the first chapter. Additionally, I discuss how the New Testament should be read in greater detail and the need for a systematic reading of scripture. Applying the cultural context shows how these verses are taken out of their original context. Additionally, living in western society, we take a lot of cultural things for granted. However, that was not the life that people in the first century enjoyed. Having a correct cultural background allows for a better understanding of the narratives in the Gospels and Acts which provides a unique opposing example to the Pauline

literature. It is within this chapter that a majority of my conclusions are developed.

Section 4 - Results

The goal of this thesis is to use cultural and historical studies to better understand what is being presented within the New Testament. Various worldviews impact the way people read and understand scripture. Without having an appropriate background in the text, there is a lot lost and improper interpretations are developed. The main conclusions that I hope to come to are those that honor the original message and meaning behind the text. For example, female education in modern America is taken for granted in our culture. Compared to the first century, this is a drastic proposition that breaks cultural and gender roles within society. Jesus and Paul both allowed women to be educated and celebrated in their learning. Without knowing that this practice would have been taboo in their day, the implications are lost to a modern reader.

What I have discovered through writing my thesis is that there is undoubtedly an allowance within the New Testament for women to hold leadership, teaching, and authoritative positions within the church. There is overwhelming evidence of women with authority in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline literature shows that this was an acceptable practice. Familial headship is a concept that needs further study, and the application of narrative examples is insufficient for this specific topic.

Introduction

The study of the Bible is a lifelong adventure which is a privilege Western Christians often take for granted. This dense library of books spans about sixteen hundred years of history with the latest text being written close to two thousand years ago. These texts contain a rich record of history, culture, and information which contains enough material to cover an eternity of study. To properly read these texts, modern readers must recognize textual significance not only to the

modern era but most importantly, their importance to the original audience and readers. The word of God was revealed to real people living in real-time in history within their own unique culture and worldview. Each book in the Bible contains its literary genre and requires a specific way to read and understand the message which is presented. For example, reading the Psalms (ancient Levantine poetry) versus one of the Pauline Epistles (Hellenistic logical discourse) requires a different cultural framework and historical context. Approaching scripture in the Bible according to its unique genre allows the modern reader the ability to grasp a more authentic understanding of the text by having the same context and frame of mind as the original authors and readers. This refined way of reading scripture is paramount to a serious reader of scripture. Although there is a wonderful message of the love of God found at a surface level of reading, there is a deep meaning and nuance which takes careful study to appreciate and accurately develop. One of the clear ways in which scripture needs to be read is through its original historical and cultural viewpoint. For example, the message of Jesus to love your neighbor (Mark 12:31) is applicable to apply to a believer's life from a surface-level reading. Although there are some interesting points to be made from this simple command, its value is evident to anyone that can read the passage. However, a command like, "you shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain" (Deut. 25:4) does not provide a clear message to a modern non-agrarian reader. However, recognizing that this command was given to ancient Israelites who lived in an agrarian society with a close working relationship with livestock and the land allows this verse to take shape within the context of how to treat those who labor under one's care. The overall message behind Deuteronomy 25:4 is that a laborer should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.¹

¹ John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, 468.

Without a cultural understanding, this passage is seemingly irrelevant for someone not working with livestock. However, with cultural understanding, a reader can then interpret the message and apply it to their life today in various contexts. This is a simple exercise displaying how the cultural background of a text illuminates the truth within the text. This way of reading is imperative for an appropriate study and application of the text.

The study of anything in the Bible must be read through the lens of the original intended audience. Otherwise, the modern reader will be performing eisegesis (in which readers will input their ideas and framework into the passages) rather than performing exegesis (letting the text speak for itself). To fully understand any Biblical position, readers must have a decent understanding of the influences of the author, the cultural setting, and the historical impact of the text.² In addition to understanding the background of a passage, readers must use the full text of the Bible to support theological positions within the text. This method cannot be used for all portions of scripture because a specific topic may only come up once or twice. However, matters like complementarian³ and egalitarian⁴ theology require a full reading and understanding of the Biblical position. Systematic theology is vital to this concern because Systematic Theology gathers the collection of material and then synthesizes the material to form a position on a certain topic within the Bible.⁵ The practice of using a Historical-Critical Method and Systematic

² William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 312.

³ The view that men and women are created equal but have complementary and different roles in service to one another and to God.

⁴ The view that men and women are created equal and can serve in the same capacity with one another and before God.

⁵ Wayne A. Grudem. *Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 3.

approach provides a reader of the Bible the ability to understand the context of assessed passages, as well as the whole arc of a particular question within the Bible. When it comes to the debate between complementarian and egalitarian theology, it is not difficult to see that these two sides require reconciliation for their positions are at odds while using the same text to justify their position. By utilizing the historical-critical method in reconciling New Testament egalitarian narratives and Pauline complementarian theology, complementarian theology is not as stringent nor universally applied as it has been interpreted and women do have a divine authority to teach and lead within the church.

Introduction To the Debate

Female leadership within the church is not a new question or debate concerning Christian theology. Opinions on female authority have been passed along throughout the two millennia of the church's existence and its external cultural impact. Although the Church has had a steady complementarian stance for most of its history, the rise of egalitarian theology within the American church began during the 1800's corresponding with the rise of female education and liberation.⁶ There is a spectrum of beliefs concerning women's role in ministry, but it comes down to two main parties. The first is called complementarian or the traditional stance which acknowledges that men and women are equal before God in importance and status, but men and women are to hold different levels of authority with men being the superior authority between the sexes.⁷ The second is egalitarian theology which affirms the unique nature of men and

⁶ Britannica, Editors of Encyclopedia. "Anna Howard Shaw." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (February 10, 2022).

⁷ John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Crossway, 2021). 14-15, 38.

women, their equality before God, as well as their equal ability to serve in mutual submission between the sexes where one does not have superiority over the other.⁸ Today, there is not one agreed stance on this issue as various denominations throughout Christendom have different views. For example, the Roman Catholic church still holds to a strict complementarian view where only men can be in the leadership of the church. Contrary to that, many liberal churches within the West pride themselves on their female leadership and equal standing of the sexes.⁹ The debate concerning women in leadership is a complex one with many facets and thoughtful analysis and study on either side of the debate.

Complementarian Stance

The complementarian view on women in leadership within the church is not a new phenomenon but sees its roots throughout church history. Although this is the “traditional” understanding of gender roles within the church, the exact definition is open to interpretation. For example, the *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (CBMW) rejects the identification as the “traditional” view because of the misogynistic baggage associated with this title.¹⁰ However, the baseline for complementarian beliefs is that men and women are equal before God but not in authority.¹¹ Men are the ones who bear a leading role within the church and the family structure of the home as established by God.¹² The theology backing the complementarian stance can trace its origins to the early church in its justification of gender roles

⁸ Linda L. Belleville and James R. Beck, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 103.

⁹ The organization Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) provides resources to find churches based on egalitarian theology as well as egalitarian resources for those looking for more information.

¹⁰ Piper, *Recovering*, 15.

¹¹ Piper, *Recovering*, 14-15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 74.

within the church. Canon XIX of the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. stated that women were not to be considered for ordination and should not have a leadership role within the church.¹³ There are several other references to early Church fathers like Origen and Tertullian who spoke out against female leadership within the church.¹⁴ Cardinal Ratzinger, eventual Pope Benedict XVI, wrote a letter in 2004 that reaffirmed the stance of the Catholic church in the face of growing feminism. He stated that men and women are created equal in God's image but are distinct in their roles since creation into eternity.¹⁵ Complementarians position themselves not just on the shoulders of tradition and church history but go on the scriptures to prove that their position is a solid part of Christian doctrine. since the Church fathers, complementarians s use Pauline and Old Testament scripture to support their case. Dr. John Piper, arguably one of the most prominent voices in the complementarian community in the American church, together with Dr. Wayne Grudem, established the CBMW. The purpose of this council is to brace the evangelical church against the movement of secular and evangelical feminism which they claim is a departure from tradition and undermines the heart of the gospel.¹⁶ Within their edited book titled, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, Dr. Piper and Dr. Grudem along with many other contributors explain their understanding of scripture and how it aligns with the traditional complementarian understanding of gender roles within the body

¹³ Philip Schaff and David S. Schaff. *History of the Christian Church*, (Charleston, S.C: Nabu Press, 2011), 128-133.

¹⁴ Gryson, Roger. *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1980), 28.

¹⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, 31 May 2004, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html.

¹⁶ "Mission & Vision," CBMW, March 26, 2019, <https://cbmw.org/about/mission-vision/>.

of Christ. The CBMW asserts that men and women were created differently and then women are not to have authority over a man because this does not harmonize with the created order.¹⁷

Women may have prophesied in the early church, but complementarians argue that there is a difference between the public prophesy conducted in the Old Testament compared to that performed in the early church.¹⁸ Therefore, women who prophesied in the early church are still disqualified from teaching within the church. Additionally, only men were selected to be within the inner circle of the twelve disciples of Jesus, even though there were female followers.¹⁹ The CBMW specifically uses 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11 to demand that women are silent within the church and must rely on their husbands to provide clarity and instruction on the scriptures.²⁰ Ephesians 5:21-33 is also used to force women to submit to their husbands as God has intended through His created order and foundation of the marriage relationship.²¹ The culmination of these views is that women are subordinate to men in authority, ability to teach, and the role they play in the church. However, within this submission, women are still viewed as equal before God, yet must go through their husband's authority to interact with the world.²² These are the fundamental views of the complementarian class in which each gender has a specific role that is established by God. Overall, the complementarian interpretation of scripture

¹⁷ Piper, *Recovering*, 313.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 221-223.

²² *Ibid.*, 14, 74, 89-91, and 96-97.

is that men and women are equal before God, but complement one another in the active role in life, marriage, and church leadership.

Egalitarian Stance

The rise of the Egalitarian understanding of scripture is relatively new within Christian circles. Egalitarian theology has seen its rise with that of secular feminism in which women have been empowered to fight for equality within society. Rather than defaulting to the “traditional” or complementarian view of gender roles in the Bible, egalitarians began looking at the role of women in scripture outside of the traditional mold. Some of the key findings are that women are presented at pivotal moments throughout the Old Testament during times of crisis and war within the story of Israel (Josh. 2, Judges 4, 1 Sam. 1, Ruth 1-4, and Ester 1-10).²³ Modern researchers like Christin Bøsterud and Esther Fuchs have used the historical-critical method to examine the evolution of female roles in the Ancient Levant in correlation with Old Testament narratives which were influenced by a patriarchal gender hierarchy.²⁴ Recognizing the value of cultural influence was not only eye-opening for the conversation surrounding gender roles but has allowed researchers to examine the influence contemporary cultures had on the Bible and the meaning provided to certain biblical texts.²⁵ Throughout the Jewish Canon, women may be in a submissive role within the patriarchal governments of their day, but God still used women like Rahab, Ruth, and Ester in pivotal roles to support, and even save, the people of Israel. When encountering the New Testament, there is a dramatic shift in the role of women and how God

²³ Christin, E Bøsterud, "Women in the Bible: What can they Teach Us about Gender Equality?" *In Die Skriflig* 55, no. 1 (2021), 5.

²⁴ Esther Fuchs, "Biblical Feminisms: Knowledge, Theory and Politics in the Study of Women in the Hebrew Bible," *Biblical Interpretation* 16, no. 3 (2008), 209.

²⁵ Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels, 4th Edition - Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press International, 2016), 11.

uses them at the dawn of the Messianic age.²⁶ Examination of the prevailing texts from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Apostolic Age has shown that these materials were all written, interpreted, and developed by men throughout the past two thousand years.²⁷ Scholars and historians have sought to look at the Bible and historical documents outside of a patriarchal view and to recognize special nuances within Christianity, such as the fact that women are abnormally highlighted in the early church and their unique leadership role compared to their contemporary culture.²⁸ A few examples of this are Phoebe's role in delivering the letter of Romans and Lydia being the head of her house church. This new way of looking into the historical record concerning women is not a distortion of history but examines the New Testament writings within their historical and cultural contexts rather than modern standards and interpretations. Interpreting scripture within the context of its original audience and authorship provides an authentic perspective to help keep alien perspectives from changing a reader's interpretation.

Through this new look into scripture, several key points have been established within the realm of egalitarian scholarship. The principle point behind egalitarian theology is that men and women are equal in standing before God and before one another as the New Testament reveals that women took on exceptional leadership roles and introduced a revolutionary cultural shift in the roles of gender within the Greco-Roman world.²⁹ Egalitarians assert that men and women are equal autonomous genders both made in the image of God and are used and supported by God in

²⁶ Bøsterud, "Women...", 5.

²⁷ Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition, Second Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2006), 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁹ Bøsterud, "Women...", 9.

their own right.³⁰ This shift is drastic from the previous centuries, but egalitarians and Christian feminists point to other liberal changes which have been shifting within the church. For example, the view of slavery as a sin was a progressive shift in the church which had not occurred until that time. As the twentieth century encountered unprecedented changes, women in the secular world began to achieve more autonomy which impact how the church treated women.³¹ Across denominational bounds, Christian women saw a rising standard of equality with their Christian brothers.³² These changes were organic and included women starting to serve on staff within Baptist organizations³³ and assimilating into high echelons of authority within these Christian organizations which coincided with the rise of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴ The equality of gender roles within the church continued to expand as women became ordained and church denominations began to officially accept women as equal coworkers in the church.³⁵ This is when there was an increase in resistance to the notion of female equality within the church. The recent change in gender roles, which has occurred within a few generations, has resulted in many church denominations being cautious of their approval. However, there has been an increase in scholarly work to back up the claims of egalitarian theology, examples including Bøsterud, Fuchs, and MacHaffie as a few examples. One of the main impacts of this thesis is reconciling the two thoughts of complementarian and egalitarian theology. Both sides use the same text as

³⁰ Fuchs, "Biblical...", 216.

³¹ MacHaffie, *Her Story*, 276.

³² *Ibid.*, 277-231.

³³ Susan M. Shaw and Tisa Lewis, "'Once There Was a Camelot': Women Doctoral Graduates of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982-1992, Talk about the Seminary, the Fundamentalist Takeover, and Their Lives since SBTS," *Review & Expositor* 95, no. 3 (1998), 397-423.

³⁴ MacHaffie, *Her Story*, 280-282.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 305-310.

their justification but are on divergent paths. Reconciling both views is imperative for a cohesive and central message of the Bible.

Historical Context

As previously discussed, the reading of any ancient literature requires the reader to have a grasp of the social and cultural issues of the time. Without a proper understanding of the environment in which these texts are written, texts and stories can be taken out of context and many concepts within the writing will not bear fruit. The focus of this thesis is specifically on the writings of Paul and examples of female leadership within the New Testament. The three most significant cultural influences on Paul and others within First Century Judea and Anatolia are Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures.

Paul's missionary journeys begin by reaching out to Jewish communities within the Eastern Roman empire and then proceeded to share the gospel with those who were outside of the family of Abraham (Acts 13:14, 14:1, 17:1, 18:4, 26, etc.). The gospel message preached by Paul is rooted in the Jewish scriptures and thus carries with it a Jewish worldview (1 Cor. 3:18-23, Rom. 7:7, 10:8-15, Gal. 3:10-14, etc.). Jewish culture is the most influential within the writings of Paul and the New Testament.³⁶ The region in which Paul went on his missionary journeys are the former Greek and now Roman settlements within Asia Minor and the Peloponnese. Although now under Roman control, their culture is largely Hellenistic and has its founding within Greek society.³⁷ Roman society is also a chameleon of Hellenistic culture which existed in the East. Hellenism spread throughout the Judean and Levant areas after the conquests of Alexander the

³⁶ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 619-624, 634-638.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 232-237.

Great which significantly impacted those regions.³⁸ Although Roman by territory, these locations held onto their Hellenistic culture not only because of their history but because the Romans found Greek culture to be magnificent and injected the Hellenistic culture into its own Roman identity. Hellenism is the second most contributing factor to Paul's influence. The third most influential worldview would be that of the Romans. Paul himself was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:27) and was provided a prestigious education in Jerusalem.³⁹ Similar to Paul's cultural background being steeped in three cultures, Jerusalem was the center crossroads of Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures.⁴⁰ Although Paul is fundamentally Jewish, his Hellenistic education bears witness to the education Paul received which mirrors that of the great thinkers of classical Greece and, at that time, modern philosophers.⁴¹ Paul's writings vary in cultural significance but are largely meant for those in the greater Roman Gentile nation, as the various letters written were to cities within the Greco-Roman world.⁴² Conversing with Gentiles necessitated authors to write by those cultures and for their messages, so it would be well received, intellectually and subconsciously.⁴³ This then impacted the way that Paul addressed certain concepts as well as identified with those he was preaching to.

³⁸ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament - a Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 26-27.

³⁹ Elwell, *Encountering* 237.

⁴⁰ Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2012), 67-69, 82, 135-137.

⁴¹ Stanley E. Porter, and Bryan R. Dyer, *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 163-166.

⁴² Klein, et. al., *Introduction*, 541-542, 607.

⁴³ An example of this was the Septuagint which was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek used throughout the Greek speaking communities at this time.

These three main cultural groups influenced all the stories within the New Testament that did not exist within a cultural vacuum. All the narratives and letters within the New Testament took place within these cultural spheres of influence. Therefore, it is safe to say that these cultural groups greatly influenced the way Jesus, Paul, and other followers of Christianity interacted and existed within the first century, which has left a lasting impact on the modern church.

Jewish

History of Judaism

Jewish culture in the First Century was not as homogenous culture group as it may seem. The Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus accounts that various fierce groups were trying to attain power as well as religious arguments covering important facets of Jewish doctrine.⁴⁴ The New Testament Gospels also account that there were three main groups within Judaism: the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. Some of the main sources of information concerning these sects are found in the New Testament, and Josephus, and archeological findings that add insight to understanding Judaism in the Messianic Age.

Since the Babylonian exile, Judaism experienced intense cultural and identity issues within their community. The writings within the Old Testament speak to the religious struggle which Israel and Judah encountered and the pendulum of Kings which would swing wildly from strict adherence to Yahweh to all-out apostasy. Israel's texts were still being developed throughout the Old Testament period and were not fully canonized until later. The destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.E. and the scattering of the Jewish peoples required a fresh restart on the understanding of what it meant to be Jewish. Without the Temple and a Jewish homeland, there

⁴⁴ Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works*, Translated by William Whiston, (Nashville, TN: Nelson Publishers, 1998), 3-6.

was a need to form a cultural and religious framework outside of the physical elements of the Temple and land. It was in this period that the Babylonian Talmud was composed which provided guidelines on what it meant to be Jewish and established a foundation for their identity and cultural understanding.⁴⁵ Throughout the centuries of diaspora, Jewish culture became quite cohesive and served as a strong cultural foundation after the return to Judea while utilizing the Torah, Talmud, and other Jewish texts. The books of Ezra-Nehemiah show this establishment of Jewish practice post-exile in Judea. A semi-return from exile gave the Jewish people an opportunity to reclaim what they lost during the exile and establish their Jewish identity within the land of their ancestors under Persian rule. However, outside Hellenistic powers soon overtook the Persians, and once again the Jewish people became a vassal under an oppressive power in the second century B.C.E.⁴⁶ Following Greek occupation, the Maccabean revolt resulted in an autonomous Jewish state for a short while until the Romans began to dominate the Mediterranean and established their rule over the Jewish land and people.⁴⁷ This era of Roman occupation happened to coincide with the idealized Messianic era in which the prophecies of the prophet Daniel would come to fruition.⁴⁸ Some within the Jewish faith saw this period as a time to be strict in their adherence to the teachings of the Torah and hold fast to the cultural and religious underpinnings of society. The increased idealism and zealous nature for the Torah enhanced the focus on following Torah and cultural laws within the Jewish culture. It does not

⁴⁵ Klein, et. al., *Introduction*, 74-75.

⁴⁶ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 158.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

take long to read through the Gospels to see how strict and precise Jewish leaders were when it came to Torah and religious purity.

Main Influences

With the centralized nature of Judaism, there came about several main influences on the religious and cultural life of Jews living in Palestine in the first century. Different Jewish leaders had various interpretations of the Torah, but all had an increased influence on how the average Jewish man or woman saw themselves within their culture. These four major influences were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, and religious-focused Zealots: all with various degrees of influence upon the general Jewish society at the time.

The Sadducees were the religious elite in Jerusalem who shared power with the Romans by being the priestly and aristocratic authority over the Jewish population.⁴⁹ Although Herod was the king of the Jews, the religious leaders exercised more religious and cultural power over the people of Judea who saw themselves not only as ethnically Jewish but as religious Jews as well.⁵⁰ The Jewish social society revolved around the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Whoever controlled the religious functions of the city controlled the cultural and societal influences of the people as a whole. The Sadducees saw themselves as the powerhouse of religion within the city and encouraged all to follow their societal ethics which came from the Torah and rejected most if not all theology outside of the Torah.⁵¹ Although they did not see themselves as strict in their adherence as the Essenes, their main concern was of losing power (Matt. 26:57-68).

⁴⁹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 39.

⁵⁰ When the Jewish leaders brought Jesus before Pilate for punishment, they were the ones who exercised control over the religious population in Jerusalem rather than King Herod.

⁵¹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 39.

The Pharisees had a less stringent adherence to the Torah but that does not mean that they are a liberal wing of Judaism. Their beliefs were rooted in the Jewish identity found in the Torah, and God's promises found in the rest of the Tanakh. The Pharisees knew that they had physically returned from exile, but there was something wrong in the sense that there was no freedom like there should be due to living under the oppressive nature of Rome.⁵² The Pharisees exhibited great passion against those who fell out of line with their fundamental thinking. For example, Paul was a staunch supporter of the Pharisees and classifies himself as a part of their branch of Judaism (Galatians 1:13-14, Acts 9). There was a strict understanding of what it meant to be a Jew and that all members of the family of Abraham must fall in line with the teachings of the Torah. A quick reading of the Gospels shows how the Pharisees were not afraid to pick fights concerning their understanding and adherence to the Torah which they also saw as the way to return from exile and fulfill the commands of God (Matt. 16:1-4, 19:3-9, Luke 6:1-11, 13:10-17, John 8:1-6, etc.). Josephus was also a member of the Pharisees in which he was sent from Jerusalem to stop the rebellion from taking place within Galilee against their Roman counterparts around 60-67 C.E.⁵³ Although the Pharisees did not like the Roman occupation, warfare would have meant another extinguishing event like that of Babylon many centuries ago. After the fall of the Temple in 70 C.E., it was the Pharisees who eventually turned into the now Orthodox Rabbis who greatly influence Jewish culture in the modern era.⁵⁴ Adherence to the Torah and the Commands of God was paramount to the Jewish identity of the Pharisees.

⁵² Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 83-85.

⁵³ Josephus, *The Complete*, 2.

⁵⁴ Wright, *The New Testament*, 161-163.

One of the most eccentric of the influences was that of the Essene community which occupied Qumran and was devoted to writing, copying, and documenting their theology in scrolls that are preserved today.⁵⁵ This group believed that the religious elite in Jerusalem have once again gone astray and that they were the true followers of the teaching of Yahweh.⁵⁶ Part of their belief was to maintain strict hygiene, prayer time, and sexual ethics.⁵⁷ The Qumran community developed itself to be a male-only society in which the existence of women was excluded and not an influence on their community.⁵⁸ So much so, that the book of Ester is the only canonical book not found amongst the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵⁹ The Essene community believed it was going to be through their strict observance of the Torah that the Messiah would come for they saw themselves as paving the way in the wilderness.⁶⁰ Although this community separated itself from the ruling elite in Jerusalem, the writings found in Qumran are of interest to modern readers of scripture, and the Dead Sea is a short distance away from Jerusalem, the Essene presence would have been felt in Jerusalem. Additionally, some have theorized that John the Baptist may have been an Essen himself. Although this subject is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to point out the reach and influence of the Essene community.

⁵⁵ “Scrolls from the Dead Sea the Qumran Community,” Library of Congress, April 29, 1993.

⁵⁶ Elwell, *Encountering* 39.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Vermès Géza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin Books, 2011), 26-28.

⁵⁹ “Scrolls Content,” The Dead Sea Scrolls - Scrolls Content, accessed September 5, 2022.

⁶⁰ Elwell, *Encountering*, 40.

Finally, the Zealots located in the hills of Galilee saw themselves as revolutionaries and were willing to use force against their Romans and Greek compatriots.⁶¹ Although their identity was more so rooted in their ethnic and cultural beliefs, religious adherence also played a role in having a staunch dispute with Pagan overlords. It is these fringe groups that eventually gained power and cause the whole of Rome to come crashing down on the rebellious Jews in Judea.⁶² An example of a Zealot was the Apostle Peter who quickly cut off the ear of one of the men coming to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10). On the opposite end of the spectrum, there were some Jews who assimilated into Roman and Hellenistic culture which still saw themselves as Jewish but took on the civilization of their occupiers. A few examples of those who accepted Hellenistic culture are tax collectors like Zacharias and Matthew found in the Gospels (Luke 19:1-10, Matthew 10:3).

This overview goes to show that all of the main groups within the Jewish culture at the time saw that strict adherence to the Torah as well as social and cultural Jewish identity was an absolute for Jews living in Judea during the turn of the era. It is within this environment that all of the Jewish people mentioned in the New Testament would have been living in. Even Jews in Rome would have felt the politics of Jewish cultural clashes in Jerusalem just as modern Jews in New York feel the repercussions of Reform and Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem today. The focus of this thesis is not on the various groups of Judaism within the first century, but the overview goes to show that their influence was influential amongst the Jewish communities of Judea and within the Diaspora at the time of New Testament authorship.

Impact on Women

⁶¹ Ibid., 41.

⁶² Montifore, *Jerusalem*, 128-132.

The core of the Jewish scriptures finds itself in the Torah. These five books were written concerning the origin of the Israelite Nation and their narrative of being united with God. Judaism began as a patriarchal society in the bronze age located in the fertile crescent.⁶³ Many of the laws and regulations of the Torah are similar to that of their Babylonian, Assyrian, Canaanite, and Egyptian neighbors who all had a cultural influence on the Hebrew people.⁶⁴ The development from family, to tribes, to the kingdom, to splintered people groups all had lasting impacts on the society at large.⁶⁵ Many ancient societies were not the friendliest to women and females often held positions of subjection or lower authority than men.⁶⁶ Jewish customs and culture were not very different from their contemporaries in this matter and demanded a separation of the sexes which existed within the social, economic, familial, and religious spheres.⁶⁷ Women were extremely restricted when it comes to their sexual habits and whom they were allowed to marry was subject to male members of their family rather than their choosing.⁶⁸ Women found themselves at the mercy of men and had little voice in the overall structure of Jewish society (Exod. 21:10, 22:8, Num. 27:1-11; 36:1-12, etc.). Although a few women of merit did serve in higher roles, the overall structure of the culture in Judaism was masculine dominant

⁶³ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 82-84.

⁶⁴ John H. Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009). 10-13.

⁶⁵ E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 31-34.

⁶⁶ Katherine L. French and Allyson M. Poska, *Women and Gender in the Western Past* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2007), 29-31.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-32.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

with few exceptions for women.⁶⁹ Even today, women and men are divided from prayer and some of the holiest sites in Judaism are partitioned between the sexes.⁷⁰ It is only recently that women have begun to assume the role of Rabbi and exercise similar authority as their male counterparts within religious activities.⁷¹ Overall, the view of the female was that they are lesser beings than that of a man.⁷² Jewish societies did not view women as slaves or servants, there was often high regard for the female, but there was a level of subjection to which they were required to adhere, and men had the absolute authority. The Hebrew Bible does have many interesting sections in which men and women are called to be equal in stature before God, but that topic is not within the scope of this thesis.⁷³ Any Jewish influence within the first century in Judea would have been patriarchal in nature where women would not have been able to exercise as much authority as men and their role within their religious sphere was limited due to their gender. For example, after the Babylonian exile, religious leaders in Judaism reaffirmed their position that women are weaker than men and used the fall narrative to justify keeping women outside of teaching roles.⁷⁴ This influence may have been what Paul was alluding to in 1 Timothy 2:14.

⁶⁹ The Bible does mention a few instances of female Prophets who spoke the word of God. Although these were few, and around 20% were poor reflections in the eyes of the authors, it is important to note that although patriarchy was the normal, some women did experience a level of freedom of thought and expression.

⁷⁰ Menachem Schneerson, "Why Separate Men and Women in the Synagogue?" (Brooklyn, NY, March 27, 1961).

⁷¹ Sonia Moghe and Yon Pomrenze, "Rabbi Lila Kagedan: A History-Making Title in Orthodox Judaism," CNN (Cable News Network, April 5, 2016).

⁷² Aleksander Gomola, "The Myth of the Creation of Woman in Genesis 2: 18-23 and its Possible Translations - the Consequences for Christian Anthropology." *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego.Studia Religiologica* 47, no. 2 (2014): 77-88.

⁷³ Some examples include Genesis 1:26-27, Exodus 15:20-21, Judges 2:16, 18, 5:1-31, and others. Although the role of women in the Hebrew Bible is important, the study of this area is outside of the scope of this thesis.

⁷⁴ Paul Heger, *Women in the Bible, Qumran and Early Rabbinic Literature: Their Status and Roles* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 49-51, 376-378.

Hellenistic

History of Hellenism

A study of the Western value system will quickly take a reader back to Classical Greece and the Hellenistic era. A walk around Washington D.C., London, Paris, or Berlin will give a marvelous display of Greek architecture which was not present a few hundred years ago. The influence that Hellenism exerted upon the ancient and modern world cannot go undenied. The Hellenistic culture found its origins in the Greek City States and surrounding regions which came from the broken pieces of the Mycenaean Empire in the eighth century B.C.E.⁷⁵ Greek culture began to spread throughout the Mediterranean as their seafaring peoples explored the Mediterranean Sea. Multiple Greek colonies were established from Spain to Sicily, North Africa, and the Black Sea.⁷⁶ As their colonies spread, so too did the impact of Greek culture across the Mediterranean. Although these small pockets of Greek colonies did not make a huge impact on the cultures around them, they sowed the seeds for an eventual acceptance of the culture after the conquest of the known world. These Greek colonies and their mother city-states exerted some power, but it was not until their conquest and the unification of their culture they then proceeded to unify the western world.

The conquest of Alexander the Great is one of the most fundamental and inspiring narratives in all of European history. Alexander the Great was the king of Macedon who conquered everything from the Peloponnese to Egypt, through Persia, and into India.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁵ Robin Osborne, *Greece in the Making: 1200-479 BC* (London: Routledge, 2009), 101.

⁷⁶ Lukas Thommen, *An Environmental History of Ancient Greece and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 19, 22-24.

⁷⁷ Britannica, Editors of Encyclopedia. "Alexander the Great's Achievements." (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

expansive empire was a swift conquest that saw the subjection of people in the Near East in a blitzkrieg move that the world had never seen. The conquest of Alexander the Great instilled Hellenistic culture throughout his empire from the Peloponnese to India.⁷⁸ Although the empire was short-lived under Alexander, the multiple governments created in his wake resulted in the firm establishment of Hellenism throughout Egypt, Syria, and the Levant, as well as Asia Minor.⁷⁹ The establishment of Hellenism led to a massive shift in world views throughout the coastlines of the Mediterranean. Ptolemaic Egypt was now ruled by Greeks who exercised their power over the Nile and Levantine lands as well as Greek Syrian kings who wrestled with the Ptolemies for control.⁸⁰ These new kingdoms may have taken on the dressings of their ancient kingdoms, but their new cultures and set of beliefs were firmly set within the realm of Hellenism.

Main Influences

Hellenism finds its roots in classical Greek culture. Famously, Alexander the Great was a student of Aristotle himself and was heavily influenced by Aristotle's philosophical school. Macedon may have been a separate entity from the Greek City States, but Macedonian culture was similar, and Athenian philosophy was undoubtedly one of the most influential and recognizable traits within the Peloponnese at that time.⁸¹ Many hallmarks of Classical Greek thought such as Homer and the Greek Pantheon served as the foundation of the Hellenistic culture. There were high values set on male education, philosophy, masculinity, and honor within the society.⁸² These value sets were shared among Alexander's conquered and became the

⁷⁸ Wright, *The New*, 152-157.

⁷⁹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 182-183.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Wright, *The New*, 153.

⁸² Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 207-211.

de-facto belief system for many throughout the fractured empire. The poems of Homer and Athenian philosophy were read and shared throughout the Hellenistic world and shaped the worldview of those following Alexander the Great's wake. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle all have an important influence on culture and morality even today. Due to Alexander the Great being a pupil of Aristotle in Athens, these lessons expressed in classical Greek philosophy went a long way toward shaping the ideals of the Hellenistic culture which was then spread throughout the Mediterranean. Hellenistic culture also had a lasting impact on the incorporated Jewish communities living under the newly founded Greek kingdoms. An example of Greek influence is in the translation of the Hebrew texts into Greek called the Septuagint, which was translated in Alexandria, a city founded by Alexander the Great in Egypt. This text serviced Jews around the Mediterranean who did not continue the tradition of speaking Hebrew. Many verses within the New Testament quoted by various authors are the Septuagint usage of the Hebrew verses, hence why some do not match up word for word in translation. The influence of Greek and Hellenistic culture is undeniable in a massive shift in culture in and around Palestine. This influence was in full maturity during the New Testament period as evident in the writing of the New Testament in the Greek language.

Impact on Women

Women in Hellenistic society require considerable study. This is one of the cultures which has greatly impacted the modern world, and remains of the past have been carried into the culture of today. The classical heroes of Greek culture are readily available within the spheres of discussion, but not much is discussed concerning the women of this time.⁸³ There is plenty of

⁸³ French and Poska, *Women*, 42-43, 50-51.

literary, archaeological, and mythological information to read and learn about female society within the Hellenistic world. However, it is not a frequently referenced topic such as that of their male counterparts. It was not until the recent movements within feminism that women's studies began to come to light where critical work was done to understand what life was like for women within a Hellenistic culture.⁸⁴ Some of these studies have unveiled much about poor, common, and wealthy lifestyles and regulations imposed upon women within Hellenistic culture. Women within Hellenism had some amount of autonomy that was rooted within the home and over household matters.⁸⁵ Women within the Hellenistic sphere saw much of their power handed over to their male counterparts in which women were always under a male authority within their families. This authority was transferred during the marriage but was ultimately out of the hands of the women themselves.⁸⁶ Hellenistic society demanded women to have a strict adherence to monogamy in which the paramount goal of a marriage union, a de facto goal for women, was to bear children under the male's name.⁸⁷ Women were subject to be treated as property during war campaigns in their transfer from male to male just as cattle was done through treaty.⁸⁸ It was emphasized throughout Greek history that women were meant to govern the house as their role of mother, caretaker, and host for many middle-to-upper-class households.⁸⁹ The domestic life of Hellenistic culture was under the purview of the female while the male's role was outside of the

⁸⁴ Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 1-6.

⁸⁵ French and Poska, *Women*, 43-48.

⁸⁶ Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 23-25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-29, 64.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

home.⁹⁰ The extent of female authority was one granted to her within the home and exercised through the facilitation of hosting, preparation of food, and association of slaves and workers within the home.⁹¹ These activities were not excluded from Hellenic society but were a cultural norm through various contemporary cultures in the Mediterranean. Women were viewed as facilitating the domestic tasks and the deity who was over the hearth of the home took on a feminine persona as Hestia.⁹² Aristotle, Alexander the Great's mentor, confessed that male and female relationships in the home were unequal and that women existed to serve men and produce children.⁹³ Female education was sole, except for very rare occasions, focused on domestic physical labors instructed through their mothers. Although most women within Hellenistic culture were very similar, there were certain aspects of a woman which differentiated them from other women. A mark of a slave versus free woman was their adoration for their hair and jewelry.⁹⁴ Respectable women were also mandated to cover their hair in public or at any time outside of the home.⁹⁵ Without the hair covering, women were considered vagabonds, prostitutes, or those who are underpinning family and societal values.

Women in Hellenistic cultures were not just bound to their homes in the views of society, but the cultural implications of Hellenism even entered the bedroom of the women. None of the masculine gods within Greek society were virgins, engaging in homosexual and heterosexual

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Mika Kajava, "Hestia Hearth, Goddess, and Cult," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 102 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150030>, 1-3

⁹³ Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 74

⁹⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

acts, while three out of the five central goddesses were virgins and refrained from sexual dealings which prevailed as masculine and feminine archetypes throughout Hellenistic society.⁹⁶ This example by the gods gave a divine path on how male and female sexual experiences were meant to be honored. The religious archetypes were not limited to a cultural influence endowed on women in Hellenistic culture, but it was also a legal mandate pressed upon them. The sexuality of Greek women was strictly regulated by Athenian law in which if a woman committed adultery, her male guardian had the right to sell her into slavery.⁹⁷ Additionally, marriage aimed to produce children for the male line, if this was called into question, the result would be public humiliation for the male which was an affront to the Greek culture.⁹⁸ The husband of a raped woman was legally obligated to divorce her.⁹⁹ Such male-focused sexual ethics permeated in Greek culture and are a signate within most masculine or patriarchal societies. For example, the United Kingdom did not allow women to divorce their husbands because of adultery until 1937 while men could divorce their wives for the same act.¹⁰⁰ Throughout the Hellenistic world, this same irregular application of sexual morals and ethics impacted how women conducted themselves. Men were praised and lavished by having several heterosexual and homosexual partners while “respectable” women were confined to their bedchamber and any additional sexual partners must be invited by their husbands.¹⁰¹ The male

⁹⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 86.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Cretney, “The Ground for Divorce under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1937,” *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*, 2005, pp. 250-273, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199280919.003.0007>.

¹⁰¹ French and Poska, *Women*, 53-57.

appetite for sexual experience was so great, that laws were put in place to ensure that their wives were not sexually neglected. Although it was the women's main role to take care of the home, men were expected to produce more men for the better of society. Men were legally bound to have sexual relations with their wives three times a month due to the amount of extramarital sexual interaction with their husbands.¹⁰² Men were known to have more sexual relations with their male counterparts, prostitutes, concubines, or slaves rather than their wives.¹⁰³ Additionally, the society depicted by Homer reflects a robust system of patriarchal standards which limits women to property as the prize to winning and losing in war, increasing male prestige, and serving the purpose to rear the next generation of male warriors.¹⁰⁴ Plato and Aristotle argued that within a utopia of society, monogamous relationships would be discarded because of the communal sharing of property. This sharing of property included women who were labeled as *koina* and would be subjected to a community of wives, separate from men where all the men would satisfy their sexual appetites from an unlimited supply of women.¹⁰⁵ Plato argued for the removal of the family system and the sharing of wives and children amongst the men. Men and their wants and needs were the primary focus of this utopia, women were just an end to a means. Even with the unbalanced nature of sex between men and women, their education was meant to be similar for the benefit of rearing up the next generation.¹⁰⁶ The limited amount of education given to women prevented them from joining masculine circles of philosophy and enabled male

¹⁰² Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 87.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Lee Henry Desmond Pritchard and M. S. Lane (London: Penguin, 2007), 458A-E.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 457A-461E.

space to stay masculine by preventing female education. Women may have learned certain basics of education, but only what was fulfilling within their scope of responsibility within the home. Later, in *Laws*, Plato reinforces the traditional standards for men and women making women modest, temperate, and gentle, while allowing male aggression to run free in society.¹⁰⁷ Women were required to be monogamous and their education was limited to that of children, possibly because women were subject to marriage at the age of sixteen, thus ending their years of potential education and beginning their role as a mother.¹⁰⁸ The implications of young marriage years showed that the main focus of women was to be used as mothers and their education as a person ceased once they were able to produce children. Then the role of the mother was the paramount place for a woman. These regulations placed upon women seem today extremely archaic and problematic. However, this was a culture that existed thousands of years ago and was established under pretenses vastly different from the modern era. Women's role in society was a limited one in which their existence was completely controlled and determined by the male of their household, who exerted complete and unquestioned authority over them, and then the men of their culture and government.

Roman

History of Roman Culture

Roman society was built as a Frankenstein of many cultures which united into what became the greatest empire the Mediterranean has ever seen. The nature of Rome finds its origin in myth established under the rule of Romulus, one of two twins who were of royal decent from

¹⁰⁷ Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 118.

¹⁰⁸ Plato, *The Republic*, 785B-C.

the city of Troy and were raised by a she-wolf in the Italian peninsula.¹⁰⁹ These brothers rose to prominence until Romulus killed his brother Remus and became the first king of the Romans. Throughout various struggles with neighboring kings and the raping of their neighbors' wives, the city-state of Rome began to expand its influence into the Peninsula.¹¹⁰ Another neighboring regional power was the Etruscans which were soon taken over by the Romans but heavily influenced the Roman culture.¹¹¹ Moving south, the Romans conquered Greek colonies and absorbed their culture. The Etruscan and Greek cultures fused with the original Roman culture to establish the foundation Republican and Empirical culture known today.¹¹² As the Roman empire spread throughout the Mediterranean, it began to grow in its plurality and acceptance of various cultures. Once the Peloponnese were firmly under the control of the Romans, much of their culture took on the same values and myths as their Greek cousins. Romans were obsessed with Greek culture and sponsored Greek plays throughout the Empire.¹¹³ The architecture was Hellenistic and although Latin was the language of the Romans, business and other dealings were conducted in the Greek language. The Roman pantheon even took on Greek deities with merely a name change, their similarities are uncanny. Roman culture valued duty and loyalty to the empire above all else. Their concern was not to convert their conquered nations to Roman culture or religion, but to the loyalty of the state.¹¹⁴ The power Rome exerted came from their

¹⁰⁹ Christopher Hibbert, *Rome: The Biography of a City* (London: Penguin, 2001), 3-5.

¹¹⁰ Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York, NY: Liverlight Publishing Corporation, 2016), 60-69.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 118-125.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 197-207.

¹¹³ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 268.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 268-270.

military campaigns in which they crushed their enemies but recognized the value of preserving the conquered culture.¹¹⁵ This is why, after the Roman occupation of the Judean provides, autonomy was given to the Jewish residents as long as they pledged loyalty to their Roman overlords.¹¹⁶ Rome was identifiable Roman, but at its core carried on much of the same trappings of its Hellenistic counterparts. Roman elites sent their children to be educated in Athens and Greek philosophy was discussed throughout the Roman empire. The origin of stoicism finds its roots in Greek philosophy and inspired Roman thinkers and elites to be what they were. Through a unique mix of conquest and preservation, Rome forged itself into the Empirical powerhouse known today in history.

Main Influences

As previously discussed, Roman culture largely found itself under the influence of Latin and Hellenistic cultures. This crossroads created a unique society that mirrored itself its Greek counterparts but was also a very different type of society and structure. Although the arts and cultures of Greece fancied the Romans, their worldview and understanding of the way of life were vastly different. Compare, for a moment, the way that the Greek city-states were unable to unite and found themselves in a constant state of bickering. The Romans were able to find this solution by having a Roman identity and securely controlling much of the Mediterranean. Once the Republic ended, the unification of the Roman identity began to formulate into a stronger ideal centered on the Divine Emperor.¹¹⁷ August orchestrated various legal and ethical codes throughout the empire to codify a central roman idea.¹¹⁸ The Roman ideal family was a way of

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 267.

¹¹⁶ N. T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2020), 11-13.

¹¹⁷ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 321, 326-327.

¹¹⁸ Beard, *SPQR*, 355-358.

life and was codified within the power structure of the singular empire. Other emperors put their mark on what the Roman ideal was meant to be, but August got his start by creating a list of virtues that were encouraged, if not mandated, to be upheld by their Roman subjects.¹¹⁹ These ideals centered on what it meant to be a family and how their allegiance to the empire was supposed to look. Although minorities in the empire were given the ability to conduct life the way they saw fit, a growing nuance of being a Roman was emerging which included not only loyalty to the state but worship of their government. Similarly, in modern societies, these cultural impositions were first followed by the elite and struggled to make their way down to the lower classes. August claimed to be the “son of God” after his uncle Julius Caesar was seen to be sitting with the gods.¹²⁰ This change from a republic to Divine Empire began to radically change the way that Romans saw themselves and their culture. Like that of the Hellenistic cultures, it was no longer just an ideal way to live life, but there were eternal and divine implications to Roman culture. If these foundational cultural adherences were not met, there would be massive consequences for the local city and Rome as a whole.¹²¹ An example of this is the trial of Justin Martyr in which his Christian faith was seen as a form of Atheism.¹²² The charge was not due to the fact the Martyr did not worship the Roman pantheon, this was a minimal concern due to the enormous amount of authorized religions within the empire.¹²³ But that Martyr was abandoning

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 367-374.

¹²⁰ Hibbert, *Rome*, 34-36.

¹²¹ Beard, *SPQR*, 518-520.

¹²² Jules Lebreton, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), “St. Justin Martyr”.

¹²³ Beard, *SPQR*, 516-520.

all gods except for Jesus which was thought to remove the divine protection over the city and the empire of Rome and around the Mediterranean.¹²⁴ These same fears are exhibited in the narratives of Paul in Ephesus where the entire town went into a riot due to his preaching. These riots were not merely because Paul was preaching about different deities than the ones they worshiped, but the belief in the Christian God gave way to a collapse of the entire religious foundation of Roman society in Ephesus.¹²⁵ Rome's cultural identity was not only formed from outside forces such as the Classics of Greece or the philosophy of the Hellenistic world, but Rome was a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a pseudo-narcissistic manner, Rome became so obsessed with itself that unyielding loyalty to the eagle and the system of governance was the only way to live a life. From Spain to Judea, Roman men and women were expected to live their lives as they saw fit, as long as it did not disrupt the Roman society which they have established.

Impact on Women

The role of women in Rome was a limited experience of their male counterparts. Although much of their culture and understanding of life was influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, the Roman ideal of life gave women a bit more autonomy as they managed not only their households but had some participation in the empire.¹²⁶ Like in Hellenistic societies, Roman men and women had varying degrees of sexual ethics placed upon them in society. For example, men were able to have hetero and homosexual sex outside of their marriage with zero legal or social repercussions; while women were legally and socially forbidden from having sex outside of marriage.¹²⁷ In upper-class households, women were not educated past that of a

¹²⁴ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 311-318.

¹²⁵ Elwell, *Encountering*, 227, 290-291.

¹²⁶ French and Poska, *Women*, 87-88.

¹²⁷ Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 160.

child.¹²⁸ The growing adherence to stoicism within the Roman Empire upheld this traditional view of women that they are to exist in domestic life.¹²⁹ Zeno's beliefs of family values and domestication of the wife were extrapolated to Roman society at large and greatly influenced the suppression of Roman women.¹³⁰ Women were forced to convert to their husband's religion and renounced their prior faiths. The husband's ancestors became theirs, and the husband's guardian spirit or deity was worshiped within the household.¹³¹ Husbands could have their wives killed for adultery and the drinking of wine, an example of this was when one of Romulus's companions killed their wife without protest due to her having just a sip of wine.¹³² Even with the strict female role in the household, in Roman culture, there were other opportunities for women to gain a bit of autonomy. Roman women were able to become free of male guardianship through legislation purposed under Augustus. A freeborn woman who gives birth to three children and a freedwoman who gives birth to four would be liberated from their guardianship under Roman law.¹³³ Women were able to own property and were able to conduct business outside of their homes. There are several accounts of women having this ability and being educated enough to have a case in a court of law.¹³⁴ Women in Rome were not on equal footing by any measure, but there was an increase in their ability to self-govern and run the home from

¹²⁸ Ibid., 131.

¹²⁹ French and Poska, *Women*, 79-80.

¹³⁰ Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 132.

¹³¹ Ibid., 152.

¹³² Ibid., 153.

¹³³ Ibid., 151.

¹³⁴ French and Poska, *Women*, 87-89.

the inside. Widows were encouraged to remarry and continue to have children, but many ran the estates of their late husbands and did quite well in managing their families.¹³⁵ All of this is to say that Rome did have strict cultural and legal ideas placed upon women in which they were expected to live according to the Roman ideal set out by their emperor and culture.

Paul's Influences Within These Worldviews

The apostle Paul did not live in a cultural or stateless vacuum. As stated before, the various cultures examined all had their impact on Paul throughout his life. Paul was born in Tarsus and spent most of his youth being educated in Jerusalem.¹³⁶ Antioch was a Greek city located on the Mediterranean coast in Asia minor.¹³⁷ It served as one of the cultural crossroads between Roman culture, Hellenism, and Judaism within the Roman empire.¹³⁸ Paul was also a Roman citizen which enabled him certain privileges within Roman society and education. The impact of Paul's citizenship would have marked him from his peers, especially within Jewish society where not many Jews were given such an honor (Acts 22:25-28). Paul was staunchly Jewish and was steeped within the culture of Judaism. There is no doubt that Paul's heaviest influence was the Jewish society in which he lived. However, outside Roman, and Hellenistic culture influenced his worldview. For example, the writing style of Paul is like that of stoics and philosophers in his time.¹³⁹ Paul would have received an excellent Jewish education under Rabbi Gamliel. Gamliel's impact on Jewish society is still impacting modern Judaism today.¹⁴⁰ Paul

¹³⁵ Ibid., 95-98.

¹³⁶ Wright, *Paul*, 34-36.

¹³⁷ Elwell, *Encountering*, 236-237.

¹³⁸ Wright, *Paul*, 34.

¹³⁹ Klein, et. al., *Introduction*, 545.

¹⁴⁰ Rodney J. Mariner, *The Torah* (London: Kuperard, 2004), 13.

was an expert writer in Greek and had a thorough understanding of Greek debate. These factors indicate Paul's education was not limited to a Jewish education system, but he would have benefited from discussing contemporary philosophy with his Gentile peers.¹⁴¹ Paul also exhibits his understanding of various Greek philosophers as he may quote some of them within his works and debates with philosophers in Athens itself (Acts 17:16-34). It is without a doubt that Paul was through and through Jewish and everything he thought of would have passed through the filter of his Jewish background. However, just as in American society today, one cannot escape the surrounding influences of their culture no matter how religious they may be. Paul's worldview was constructed from a unique blend of all three worldviews which would have given him a distinctive way to apply Christian theology to those he met. Additionally, Paul's Jewish roots and disapproval of Pagan cultures may have negatively impacted him. Paul is identified as being tremendously Zealous within the Pharisaical wing. There would have been prejudice against certain aspects of Hellenistic and pagan life which Paul would have seen as an affront not only to his belief system but to the way that society was conducted. The morals and ethics established by Paul would have been made within the scope of these worldviews, Judaism being the primary view. It may be difficult to pinpoint what exactly influenced Paul on certain decisions, but it is not difficult for one to see connections to certain ideas which are presented within the framework of these three cultures. The survey of this thesis is to help establish where certain lines were drawn within Pauline theology which may have had more cultural influence rather than a biblical command from God himself. Recognizing that Paul is just a man gives a further ability to see that Paul is flawed and was doing his best to establish a Christian ethic for

¹⁴¹ Wright, *Paul*, 16-17.

this new sect of Judaism. There was a drastic change happening within the world at this time and the arrival of the messianic age meant there had to be a different way of life for the Jewish and Gentile peoples of the world. Modern readers should not discount or judge Paul for most of his interpretations but recognize that Paul used his world views to establish the society which was best to share the gospel and spread it within these three main cultural groups. Some questions Paul would have encountered are, how to best present the gospel to Jews and Gentiles? How do establish a social ethic within the Christian world without disturbing the established cultures of Hellenism and Roman influences? How does the Christian society look when trying to spread this good news to their neighbors? Is it more vital to establish the New Creation ethic now, or preserve the sharing of the message of God? Paul experienced intense persecution and it was vital to him to share the message. That was Paul's number one priority, to ensure the church was not snuffed out and share this message as far and wide as possible (Romans 15:18-20). Included in this worry is that if the Christian church presses too hard it could unravel society rather than hearing the good news of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21-23). The focus must be on loving and worshiping God, not petty cultural battles (1 Cor. 8:7-13). Paul's cultural influences must be taken into consideration when reading through his theology and how it may have impacted certain specific instances. For example, the letter to the Ephesians was meant to be shared and included various issues which various churches were experiencing.¹⁴² The point of the letter was meant to serve as a guidepost for various believers of Christ within a heavily Hellenistic and Roman area.¹⁴³ Compare that to the letters to Timothy which is one segment of personal

¹⁴² Elwell, *Encountering*, 294.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 291.

correspondence between two intimate people. There is much that is lost within these letters which requires caution in interpretation. Modern readers can read into what Paul is trying to say in these specific letters and instances. The best way for modern readers to read these words and interpret them is to at least have a cultural understanding surrounding the text. With the proper tools, a reader can better understand the underlying issues which Paul may be addressing. But by seeing what could constitute a cultural or legal issue within Roman society, a reader can better access the intent that Paul was getting at. Once this impact is assessed, the reader can then see if the recommendation of Paul is meant to be applied across all churches today. Such a wide gap in time and culture demands an appropriate understanding and use of Pauline literature within the modern church.

Judging Paul's complementarian or egalitarian theology based on today's views of feminism is inappropriate. It is not right to take writings from thousands of years ago and attempt to apply them today without an understanding of what Paul meant when these words were penned. It is easy to read Paul and believe that he is archaic in his writing, but that is because he wrote in an archaic time. However, when studying Paul within the context of his culture 2,000 years ago, it is clear that Paul is transformative in his understanding of women within the body of Christ. Appreciating Paul amid his culture is necessary when doing any sort of study of the ancient text. For many years the idea of God ordaining the institution of slavery ran rampant throughout American society and faith.¹⁴⁴ This example is deemed by some as low-hanging fruit in the argument of egalitarian views, but the example serves as an excellent example of the cultural application of Pauline theology. There are many verses in which Paul does not go out to

¹⁴⁴ Larry R. Morrison, "The Religious Defense of American Slavery before 1830." *The Journal Of Religious Thought*. 37, no. 2 (1980), 16-17.

say that slavery is bad within the Church. Paul also had many opportunities to address this topic head-on but did not for unknown reasons. Abolitionists fought long and hard showing that slavery had a very different construct within the culture of the Roman Empire and Paul's understanding was not the same as that experienced within the triangular trade in the Americas.¹⁴⁵ Although some used a proof-texting method to show that slavery was accepted under Pauline theology, abolitionists went outside of Paul's writings to show a Christ-centered ethic that recognized that slavery is horrible and no Christian should have any part in such a barbaric enterprise.¹⁴⁶ In the same sense, Paul has some verses, which will be examined, which at a surface level do petition for male authority over women and that women are to completely submit to their husbands. However, through a cultural investigation and an understanding of his influences, these examples are not as accepted as they were in the past. Additionally, when looking at theology outside of just the Pauline letters, there is a clear ethic that is being established in which women are not pushed out of the leadership role but were encouraged to join men. Again, there are many cultural issues at stake it takes a careful lens to examine and understand these issues early in their culture and time. Extrapolating the current western society onto the writings of Paul is not only disrespectful to the writings but develops poor theology. Additionally, by understanding the cultures within Paul's time, there are additional indicators of his stance on women. Nowhere in his letters does he tell men and women to pray separately. However, this was a normal custom within Judaism that is still practiced today.¹⁴⁷ Men and

¹⁴⁵ Beard, *S.P.Q.R.*, 328-333.

¹⁴⁶ John Jackson, *Reflections on Peace and War* (Philadelphia, PA: T.E. Chapman, 1846), 53-55.

¹⁴⁷ Shira Wolosky, "Foucault and Jewish Feminism: The *Meḥitzah* as Dividing Practice," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 17 (2009), 9-23.

women worshiped God in separate areas and did not share the same religious experiences.¹⁴⁸ Paul never commands new churches to do this, but there is often the impression that all of the saints worshiped together in one home and prayed together without distinction of their sex (Acts 1:14). This is incredibly important to understand the thought process of Paul while he was writing his theology. Already there are signs that Paul was much more egalitarian than he is given credit for. Also, the ethics portrayed within the New Testament are not ideal. But Christians can use the Bible as a guiding force to help establish good ethics and morals for the future that is experienced. For example, the Bible says nothing about electricity or social media. Does that mean that Christians should not use those things? Not at all. However, the stories and messages in the Bible give way to understanding how to live in the world and what to do as a Christian. The church is also being guided by the Holy Spirit to work out salvation and through prayer, study, and wisdom to understand God in the modern era.

Any Protestant can assert that sometimes the church needs to reflect and reassess the way the Bible is interpreted. Christians should not fear this but should be encouraged by new ways to apply biblical ethics in today's world. Limiting the church to interpretations of yesterday does not serve to share the gospel in a modern world. Limiting Christian theology to only that of Pauline theology is also limiting when there are many other books within the text of the Bible. Pauline theology is one of many that Christians should use to build a worldview that allows them to honor Christ and share the message of the gospel.

New Testament Studies

The authorship of the New Testament was completed in quick succession after the resurrection of Jesus. Compared to the Old Testament, the texts of the New Testament are

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

isolated within the first century C.E. and are all influenced by the cultures addressed above. These writings have served as the backbone of Christian theology for the past several millennia. In addition to other Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical books, Christians have read, studied, and applied these texts in their individual, political, and cultural lives. The effects of Christian ethics and culture cannot be denied in modern western culture. Much of western society is built upon the evolution of European ethics which were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and the subsequent reformed church in the 1500s. An uncountable amount of time and pages have been spent writing on and devouring the Bible which still serves discovery and intellectual thought in the modern era. Although these texts have been studied for so long, their study has changed over the years and a wild spectrum of interpretations has formed from the texts. These vastly different interpretations are logically incapable of coming from the same source. If there is a text which promotes love, then it cannot also preach a narrative of killing someone just because they are different. This problem here is not the text themselves, but how they are read and interpreted. Although the New Testament serves as a liberating text and has inspired people for thousands of years, some have used these texts as tools to suppress others and use the Bible to justify their means.¹⁴⁹ This unfortunate use of scripture has caused much pain in the past. The message taught by Jesus and His disciples is not one of division but unity. Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane that all His children would become one (John 17:20-23).

The surest way to keep this text objective and not allow personal bias or desires to inform the reading is to use proper hermeneutical tools. Hermeneutics are tools by which one can read and interpret any source.¹⁵⁰ Even though hermeneutics is mainly mentioned in text-critical

¹⁴⁹ Alan V. Murray, *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara , CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 627-629.

¹⁵⁰ Klein, et al., *Introduction*, 42-43.

studies, these tools are used every day when anyone reads or experiences life. Differing opinions are established on certain topics because people bring different hermeneutical tools to the table. For example, should profits or worker rights be the most important lens to view a situation? These types of debates form the way that information is understood, and judgments are created. Ensuring that proper hermeneutics is used when reading scripture is vital to reading it as it is meant to. Exegesis is the ability to approach the text and understand what the text is saying rather than putting a basic story on top of it or reading what someone wants to read, also called eisegesis. Exegetical study and proper hermeneutics should be taught before an investigation of the Bible to keep the reader on the proper and appropriate path to understanding what they are reading. Two main hermeneutical tools which are advocated for in this text are a historical-critical view of the scriptures as well as a systematic theological approach to the Word. Historical-critical studies require a lot of research and background understanding to immerse oneself into the history and culture of the people groups who wrote and read the original texts. By doing this, the modern reader can get closer to an authentic interpretation of the text based on the original intentions of the author and the reception of the original audience. This information is becoming more and more readily available as time goes on. Advances in technology and archaeological discovery have led to an explosion of information which helps form an appropriate environment to study and understand these ancient texts. Spending considerable time and mapping out important cultural points are vital to understanding what the author meant in their works.

When it comes to systematic theology, this tool is important but does have its limitations within the text. For example, the mention of the Ancient of Days is only mentioned in the book of Daniel. If someone wanted to do a systematic theological study on the identity and

background of the Ancient of Days, they would be left with few examples, all contained within the same text. This limitation is a disappointment for many areas of study within the text where other hermeneutical tools will need to be used. However, on the topic of Complementarian versus Egalitarian views, the role of women is consistently highlighted within the Bible and there is a focus on their role within the New Testament. Systematic theology stresses the point that an idea in scripture should not be taken from one or two verses, but there is an overarching theme or message throughout the Bible that one can build an understanding of a certain topic. For example, if someone wanted to do a study on ritual purity in the Bible, there are various books, events, stories, and settings in which this topic is discussed and can be studied.

Employing a systematic study of the role of women in church leadership is a vital necessity to properly understand the theological message within the Bible. There are plenty of examples in the Old and New Testaments in one can pull from to complete a thorough understanding of this topic.¹⁵¹ Although the scope of this thesis will be on the role of women in the post-resurrection era, there is plenty of material to study and look at within the Old Testament texts.

The main reason why this is so vital is due to some of the limitations of Paul which were addressed earlier. Limiting Christian doctrine to the writings of one person limits the church to one point of view. The church should not focus solely on what one person has to say about a topic when there is plenty of other material from various authors which provide great information on this topic. Additionally, the Gospels record the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is God incarnate. It should be the teachings of Jesus and the character example

¹⁵¹ J. Van der Westhuizen and L. M. Mudimeli, "Unheard Voices of Women in the Bible with Implications of Empowerment in the Context of the Church Today.," *Acta Theologica Supp*, no. 27 (2019), 119-120.

that He provided which should supply Christians with the baseline for the ethical and moral foundation within the church. Paul has many great things to say, and Christian theology would be lifeless without the time, effort, and love which Paul sowed into His work. This point is not an attack on Pauline theology, but a reminder to Christians that they should take responsibility in building their Christian Doctrine not only from Paul but must include the example of the Son of God in their understanding of the world.

The focus of this section will be an examination of certain women within the Gospels, Acts, and within Pauline Epistles. These examples of female leadership, in addition to the cultural study, will go a great length to understanding what Paul meant in his writings and how to properly apply them to the modern church. Additionally, this exercise will go to length to help reconcile some contradicting points in which Paul seems to be Complementarian in his writing but supports Egalitarian principles in action.¹⁵² Reading the Bible is a wonderful but deep study of ancient literature that requires appropriate education before conducting a surface-level reading of these words. Not applying proper study tools diminishes the message of these texts and goes as far as oppressing and hurting people, needlessly. The Bible is a wonderful text with much to be offered in the appropriate study.

Female Leadership in the New Testament

The Gospels

The first four books of the New Testament are the three synoptic Gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke and the fourth Gospel of John. These four serve as the combined narrative of the

¹⁵² The book of Acts should always be considered when doing a study on Paul. Although the church has his writings and theology, Paul was a personable person. Most of his teaching and time in the church was spent in action, with the people. A few of these episodes are recorded in the book of Acts which serves as a tool to help correct the understanding of Paul.

life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and all provide a different viewpoint or portrait of the character of Jesus.¹⁵³ Although their differences and unique contribution to the narrative of Jesus is an extraordinary study, it is unfortunately not within the scope of this thesis. However, all four accounts of Jesus provide a unique view of how Jesus responded to certain stimuli and provide a concert example of how Christians should respond and have opinions on certain matters. The Gospels should serve as the bedrock for all Christian theology and understanding while the epistles should serve as commentary on the teachings of Jesus. Just as the Torah serves as the foundation of Jewish scriptures, the Gospels should mirror this relationship with the text.¹⁵⁴ The New Testament Epistles help give guidance on the theological understandings and Old Testament working of Christian theology, but the life of Jesus puts them into action. Additionally, the teachings of Jesus are the teachings of God. Christians should always lean on the side of Jesus and default to His teachings rather than anyone else. Any alteration of this conviction should be reconsidered as no single human should surpass the message from God directly. Running to another author to protect themselves from Jesus should raise a red flag in any Christian circle.

Background on the Books

The four Gospels contain narratives that are similar yet unique in nature and describe Jesus in a specific way. These narratives center around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (excluding the earliest renditions of the Gospel of Mark).¹⁵⁵ The Gospels contain stories of Jesus's teachings, healings, actions, and rebukes. Interestingly, there is not one example of Jesus

¹⁵³ Elwell, *Encountering*, 54-59.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁵⁵ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 320-321.

rebuking a woman at all. The only example which may be a slight rebuke is quickly the opposite when taken in context. In Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus is confronted by his mother and siblings asking to speak to Him as a member of His family. Jesus responds that anyone who does the will of God is his mother, brother, and sister (Mark 3:35). Matthew records that Jesus identified these men and women as His disciples (Matthew 12:49-50). The Greek is clear in that the accusative definite article agrees with the accusative μαθητὰς showing that Jesus meant His disciples including both men and women sitting before him. This is one of many examples which will be explored later, but in no instance throughout the Gospels was Jesus combative towards women, but always showed them grace, love, and positions of leadership within His ministry.

Accounts of Jesus were recorded by various disciples of Jesus within a few decades following His resurrection. Since the days of the early first through third centuries, the Gospels were authoritative and legitimate accounts of the life of the Messiah.¹⁵⁶ There are many ideas as to why these books were written and why several perspectives were created. However, the main underlying idea is that the church, as it was growing, needed a central message of what Jesus was and that the teaching of Jesus should be preserved for future generations of Christians.¹⁵⁷ There were various disagreements on what it meant to be a Christian and the message of Jesus. Many of the epistles within the New Testament were written to combat apostasy within the church and ensure that a central message of Jesus was being taught within these adolescent communities. They contain the central and most important factor of Christian theology, the resurrection of the Messiah. Without this facet, all of Christianity falls apart (1 Cor. 15:13-17). In addition to the resurrection, it is the central collection of all of Jesus' teachings which form the basis of

¹⁵⁶ Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 3: Latin Christianity - Its Founder, Tertullian AND 3:347.

¹⁵⁷ Elwell, *Encountering*, 58.

Christian ethics and foundation. The Gospels show the firsthand account of God walking with His people and sharing a message of love with those living in Judea.

The Gospel of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament for most Bibles, but this Gospel seems to have an unclear focus within the text. Compared to other Gospels, there is no mission statement or a clear underlying reason as to why Matthew wrote this Gospel. There are many similarities between this and the Gospel of Mark, so it may have been a reworking or expansion of the Gospel of Mark.¹⁵⁸ One of the more straightforward ways to read this Gospel is with the understanding that Matthew merely wanted to present the story of Jesus without a central focus other than a quasi-biography.¹⁵⁹ To the Gospel of Matthew, the supreme event in history is the resurrection of Christ and this moment must be recorded and properly preserved in the written record.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, when reading the Gospel, a reader must recognize that the stories contained in the Gospel of Matthew are meant to share the story of Jesus and invite the reader into this moment in history.

The Gospel of Mark is principally written as a shorter account of the life of Jesus. This Gospel frequently uses the word, εὐθύς, to convey a hurried nature in the Gospel. It is shorter than the rest and has a dramatic drop-off at the empty tomb. Mark's main purpose is to share the story of Jesus but is primarily focused on the identity of Jesus as the Son of God.¹⁶¹ The identification with the promised Messiah and association with the dove provides an interesting

¹⁵⁸ Bartosz Adamczewski, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Hypertextual Commentary* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2017), 11-12.

¹⁵⁹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 66.

¹⁶⁰ Jeannine K. Brown, Mark L. Strauss, and John H. Walton, *Matthew: Teach the Text Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 19-22.

¹⁶¹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 77.

viewpoint that the stories contained in Mark are closely associated with Jesus's role as the son of God. The title is closely associated with the title Augustus Caesar was given which is an interesting subject of study.¹⁶² Although the scope of this thesis cannot explore that arena, it should be noted that Mark may have been making a point to show that the ethics of Christians must be established from the true son of God, not the Roman ethics attempting to be established by the self-proclaimed "son of god", Caesar. Mark is clear that Jesus is no ordinary human but is divine in nature. Mark records the actions of the divine incarnate and the responses of people who interact with the living god.

The Gospel of Luke is an interesting two-part narrative that is split into Christian Bibles in the books of Luke and Acts. These are originally two-part series written by Luke as identified in Acts 1:1. The purpose of Luke is to share the testimony of Jesus with a gentile audience and to show God's universal work amongst the Jews and Gentiles.¹⁶³ Luke is unique in their many references to people and places that serve as legitimate markers in his accounts. Rather than just sharing a story of Jesus, Luke virtually invites the reader to ask those who were living at the time for their account of the events recorded in Luke.¹⁶⁴ Luke's work is lengthy, and his two-volume writings account for over a quarter of the entire New Testament. Although the work of Luke is vast compared to other writings like the Gospel of Mark, there are several themes throughout Luke's text which provide a window into the purpose of Luke's Gospel. Luke has four general focuses: God's universal work, Jesus as the savior of the world, the ministry of the Holy Spirit,

¹⁶² Hibbert, *Rome*, 34-36.

¹⁶³ Elwell, *Encountering*, 87.

¹⁶⁴ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/Apollos, 2015), 39-41.

and the role of women in His ministry.¹⁶⁵ Luke's Gospel is a treasure trove of interesting details about Jesus which have been methodically collected and presented to his readers. The second volume of Luke builds on this narrative to then share the story of Jesus's disciples who went out into the world to share the message of the good news.

The Gospel of John is unique as not being one of the synoptic Gospels. The term "synoptic Gospel" is used to differentiate the first three from the Gospel of John due to its unique nature. There are many theories as to why the Gospel of John is different in nature, but it creates a unique view of the life and resurrection of Jesus. John's primary point throughout the Gospel is to show the divine and mystical nature of Jesus.¹⁶⁶ The Gospel covers many similar stories of Jesus as the other Gospels but presents the story of Jesus within the light of being the son of God and unity with the God of the Old Testament. The Gospel is very interesting and is a clear-cut message about the divinity of Jesus and his role as God-incarnate on earth.

Narrative Examples

Even though the Gospels are unique and have distinctive qualities about them, they are all rooted in the same region. They all talk about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and have the central claim that He is the Jewish Messiah, and He is God. This central message and the storyline are woven throughout the texts with similar and differing stories of Jesus. A unique view that these books have is their ability to tell various stories either contained only within their text or shared amongst the other Gospels. Throughout the text, there are various stories in which one could write volumes and volumes (John 21:25). The focus of this thesis is specifically on women within the New Testament and specific moments when women are

¹⁶⁵ Elwell, *Encountering*, 87 – 90.

¹⁶⁶ Elwell, *Encountering*, 97.

mentioned. There are a lot of stories that include women, but the stories which will be focused on in this text will be ones that will provide insight into the complementarian verses within the Pauline Epistles. Even though each story deserves study, which is not within the scope of this thesis.

There are a few stories that provide insight concerning some of the limitations on women prescribed by the apostle Paul within his letters in the New Testament. The stories which will be included are Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), The Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4:1-42), The Virgin Mary and nativity narratives (Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 1:26-2:38), and finally the women who were present at the resurrection (Matthew 28:8-10, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20). This collection of narratives will serve to compare the stories of Jesus and His interaction with women which will then be reconciled while looking at the boundaries placed upon women within the Pauline Epistles. These discrepancies have been noted by not only secular feminists but also by evangelical feminists and biblical scholars alike.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, as already mentioned, Jesus includes women in the definition of His disciples and this fact should not be forgotten throughout the inspection of these texts.¹⁶⁸ Again, Jesus must be the main influence on any Christian who is building an ethic or creed on how to live their lives and be like

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 323.

¹⁶⁸ One point which Complementarians point out is that Jesus may have had female disciples, but the twelve were all men who symbolized the male-centered leadership structure which was established by Jesus. Additionally, there were three within the inner circle, also only men, and when there was needed to replace Judas, a man was selected. Women were not even a part of the conversation. Although these are valid points, there is more to this picture than just church leadership. Jesus was establishing His twelve disciples for a specific reason, in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus was beginning something new and the crossing of the Jordan during His baptism and calling of the twelve is one more way that Jesus is referencing the return from exile. The Bible is ambiguous on whether the seventy or seventy-two disciples were in fact all males. The idea of “two by two” may be a reference to the animals boarding the ark. More research is needed in this area. However, the main point is that the twelve were surely men, but the Gospel authors do not have such a strict line of gender roles when it comes to Jesus establishing His followers and their roles within His company.

Christ. The example of His ministry and how he treated women compatriots should be the paramount example of how women should be treated within the body of Christ.

The story of Mary and Martha is most likely familiar to those who have spent a considerable amount of time in church. There are two different narratives in the Gospels which include these two women. For this thesis, only the passage from Luke will be considered due to the focus being on the complementarian and egalitarian debate rather than the resurrection of Lazarus. Luke's Gospel focuses much on the involvement of women with the ministry of Jesus and how Jesus treated them. At the end of Chapter 10, Jesus comes to a village where Mary and Martha live. They invite Him and His disciples into their homes and begin preparations for their stay. However, there quickly becomes a disagreement on the preparations and hospitality of their guests. Martha has assumed the culturally proper role of cooking and performing the task of hospitality for her guests. Martha's sister, Mary, on the other hand, is not helping with the guests but is taking time to sit and listen to Jesus. As identified earlier, women did not receive the same education as men within Judaism. Such an opportunity to sit at the feet of a Rabbi and learn about the Torah would have been a real treat and nearly unheard of. Mary was not fulfilling her culturally established role and was sitting well outside of the bounds of what she "should have" been doing at this moment. Martha speaks up and asks Jesus to reprimand Mary and send her back into the kitchen to take care of the hospitality preparations for their guests. Rather than fall in line with the cultural norm, Jesus stated that Martha was worried about the wrong things while Mary is the one who is doing the better task (Luke 10:42). Mary is, again, not in the cultural or educational place she is meant to be. However, rather than rebuke her, Jesus invites Mary, and indirectly Martha, to take part in a position that was reserved for men.¹⁶⁹ A woman's main

¹⁶⁹ Sota 3:4.

priority was taking care of the household worries, as Martha states. But Jesus breaks that mold and reveals that the most important thing is to learn at the feet of Jesus. This story has been used in various instances which highlights the importance of biblical education and that women should be included in this.¹⁷⁰ Female education in the Torah was not a common practice and is only recently gaining steam within the Jewish community in the twenty-first century.¹⁷¹ This is one example of many where Jesus breaks religious and cultural bounds to support an equal stance between men and women. Luke did not record Mary as hiding trying to listen to Jesus, but she was sitting at His feet, the place of His disciples who were presumably learning at the same time. Thus, another indicator is that women were included in Jesus's discipleship, and this was not an odd thing for Jesus or His companions. This narrative in Luke shows that women are allowed the same education in the Torah at the feet of Jesus and this practice must be included within the church today.

Another instance of when Jesus broke through gender, cultural, and ethnic boundaries is when He approached the Samaritan woman at the well. One of the most incredible instances of the grace of Jesus is this moment as recorded in the Gospel of John chapter four. This story is introduced fairly early within the Gospel when it is already established that Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the Messiah (John 1:1-2), and has powers over the created order (John 6:16-21). John's Gospel focuses on the deity of Christ and His role as the son of God.¹⁷² Including this narrative within His Gospel, which is unique to John's Gospel, is important since it is in league with Jesus being God and breaking through human-made boundaries. John makes it clear that

¹⁷⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 208.

¹⁷¹ "Sara Hurwitz," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed June 27, 2022.

¹⁷² Elwell, *Introduction*, 97.

Jesus is the one who initiated contact with this woman who was trying to be alone while drawing water (John 4:7). She was surprised to not only have a male, but also a Jew speak to her out in public. This comment goes to show the gender as well as ethnic boundaries which were present between men and women, Jews, and Samaritans within the world of the New Testament. But once again, Jesus does not seem to have any regard for these frivolous boundaries as he continues to talk with her in love and grace. Throughout the conversation, Jesus offers her the gift of eternal life and the proclamation that the drink He offers will satisfy any thirst. The woman is willing to partake in this drink which is being offered by Jesus. There is no condemnation in Jesus's tone when addressing her relationship status but merely stating a fact to which she responds. Jesus continues to share that a new concept is approaching in which the Father will be accessible anywhere and everywhere. Jesus then reveals that He is the fulfillment of these things and that He is the Messiah (John 4:25-26). This is the first time Jesus claims this for himself in the Gospel of John and one of the most straightforward examples of Jesus claiming His divinity and identity as the Messiah. After His disciples interrupt the conversation, the woman leaves in such a bewildered state that she forgets her water jug, the whole reason for hiking to the well. Once she arrives in her town, she shares with the village that the Messianic age has arrived in the person of Jesus. John points out that many within the town came to believe in Jesus because of the testimony of the women (John 4:39-42). This is a clear example of how the teachings of a woman described the fact that the Messiah has arrived in the person of Jesus and the new age of creation is arriving. There is no other foundational or critical teaching with Christian doctrine than that of Christ's divinity. This story within the Gospel of John shows Jesus teaches a woman about His divinity which she then teaches others about Him and many in the village come to believe in Jesus. It was a woman who taught and shared the Gospel message with

others which resulted in many being saved. This happened without the supervision of a man, but a commission from the Messiah Himself. There is zero condemnation from Jesus, and it is not a far stretch to imagine that this whole circumstance was engineered by Jesus to use this woman as the first to share His message within Samaria which resulted in them turning their hearts to God. Jesus broke down religious, ethnic, and gender boundaries when He commissioned this woman to teach His message. The narrative of the Samaritan woman is exceptional for many reasons, specifically because this is a Jesus-appointed example of a woman teaching the message of Christ to others.

The most well-known and venerated woman in the Bible is none other than the virgin mother of Jesus herself, Mary. Mary has taken a significant religious role within various denominations of Christianity where she is marginally worshiped. Although her importance to the story of Jesus is imperative, there should not be a practice of deification in her character or identity. Rather, the importance of Mary should be seen by her actions and the why behind her choice as a messenger of God. The focus of this thesis constrains the narrative of Mary to her role as the mother of Jesus and the nativity narrative in which the reader gains a glimpse into how God used this young woman to legitimately carry the Messiah.

There is much debate on the role that Mary may have played in the upbringing of Jesus. Some believe that Jesus was born like a normal human and needs to learn how to eat, walk, speak, etc. While another camp imagines Jesus as fully capable and mature, even in infancy. This debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, both positions agree that the motherly acts of Mary were significant and her role as a surrogate for Jesus is an important role in the story of Christ. Mary fulfills one of the most important roles within the story of the Gospels as the bearer, nurturer, and messenger of God. Matthew and Luke identify Mary as the first one to know about

the arrival of the Messianic age as well as the first to tell others (Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:26-28). Once again, the main purpose of being a follower of Jesus is to tell others about His arrival and role in the world. It is Mary who is the first person to do this and shares that the Messiah has arrived (Luke 1:39-45). Mary is identified as special due to her faith and God selected her for this specific mission (Luke 1:28). Although one could argue that Mary had to be the mother of Jesus due to her being a woman, it is important to note that Joseph was not told about God's plans. It was initially shared with Mary, and then shared with Joseph when he was going to divorce her for alleged infidelity. The second person to then know about this and share it with others was Mary's cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45). Luke identifies the first messengers of Christ to be women who share critical roles in the arrival of the messianic age. These are two clear divinely appointed moments in the Gospels where God chose women to be the messengers and carriers of His plan. Luke also identifies a prophetess named Anna whom it was spoken about the arrival of the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38). Luke is apparent in his classification of Anna as a prophet and describes her as one who would never leave the temple and spent time sharing messages of God. There is not too much detail concerning her role within the temple, but it is safe to assume that she spoke, prayed, and participated in the temple services in Jerusalem. Within the first few pages of Matthew and Luke's Gospels, they show that women are the first to carry the message of the Messiah. It cannot be understated how important this fact is. Women introduced the arrival of Jesus and the fulfillment of the promises of God.

Matthew, Luke, and John explicitly show that women were the first to know about the arrival of the Messiah, yet it is all four Gospels that agree that women were also the first to announce the resurrection. There are very few instances in which all four Gospels share the same story and harmonize on a certain aspect of the Jesus narrative. In the case of the resurrection, all

four agree that it is women who first saw the risen Jesus and shared the good news with others. The Apostle Paul states that without the resurrection, everything within the message of Christianity is folly (1 Cor. 15:17-19). The resurrection of Christ is the most central, fundamental, and significant facet of the Christian faith. Without this occurrence, Christianity is nothing. The purpose of the church is to share this hope with others and to turn others to believe that Christ has been raised from the dead (Romans 10:14-15). Paul states in Romans 10 that salvation is through confessing Jesus and believing in your heart that He rose from the dead. It was women who first believed and confessed this to others. All four Gospels undoubtedly agree that Jesus shared this experience initially with women who then taught the other disciples and shared that Jesus was alive (Matthew 28:8-10, Mark 16:8, Luke 24:6-12, John 20:17-18). This moment is a commission by Jesus himself in which He chose women, once again to be some of the principal leaders to share the message of Christ with the world. Women were the first apostles who believed in the risen Christ and shared this message with others.¹⁷³ With all four Gospels harmonizing in this narrative, it is without a doubt that this occurred and was essential to the message each author wanted to share. Although the details are different from Gospel to Gospel, Mary Magdalene and other women are identified as being at the empty tomb, speaking with angels, and seeing the risen Christ. They were not filled with doubt but in the hope of the risen Christ. Such a statement of authority and commission to teach must be remembered throughout the rest of the reading of the New Testament texts.

Acts

The book of Acts is the second volume of Luke-Acts, a continuation of the Gospel of Luke which was written for a gentile beneficiary. It is within the same framework of Luke

¹⁷³ *Ultimate Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2019), 12.

documenting the history of the Church and relaying to future readers what occurred during these years. Many similar style techniques undeniably make this a Luke-authored document.¹⁷⁴ This portion of the New Testament is important for any reader because it gives a glimpse into the world of the new church and the growing pains it experienced while the first apostles shared the message of Christ across the Roman world. Christians can use this text to better understand the writings of Paul and other New Testament epistles because it was to these very communities that the Apostle wrote and ministered and covers the missions of Paul. It is within the book of Acts that begins the inconsistencies seen within the writings and acts of Paul. There are multiple narratives of women within the book of Acts that do not seem to correlate with the strict mandates made within his letters. It is these stories that add to the requirement of reconciliation concerning Pauline complementarian theology and egalitarian archetypes found in the book of Acts.

Within the first few chapters, Luke identifies two women as disciples, once again giving this title to women. Dorcas is associated with the new church and as a Disciple of Christ (Acts 9:36). This reoccurring example of women being named as disciples leaves the reader of the New Testament enough space to safely assume that women were included in the crowds of Jesus and shared in the actions of His ministry. It has already been established that Jesus commissioned women to teach and share the gospel, therefore, it is not farfetched to trust that these disciples, just like the other disciples, were given the ability to learn and teach the Christian message to others. Having the title of a disciple is an extraordinary indicator of their role within the early church.

¹⁷⁴ Elwell, *Introduction*, 194-195.

As the Apostles share the message of Christ, they are persecuted by the Jewish elite and Romans alike. Peter is thrown into captivity multiple times. On one such occasion, he is miraculously released by the power of God and goes to a place of safety. Luke records that Peter went to the house of a woman named Mary (Acts 12:12). There are two important points to be made about this passage. First, it is important to note that Peter would not have been venturing to any random person's house for safety but would have been a known location of a congregation of believers. Luke titles this location the house of Mary where Christians had gathered. Therefore, it is safe to assume that this house was a church in which believers came together to pray and share the gospel. An example of this is the house of Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum which has been turned into a modern-day church. These places of safety were the original house churches in which Christians gathered to pray and learn about Jesus. It was not a separate location but was under the hospitality of one of the benefactors of the church. Therefore, such a location that Peter went to must have been a church within the early years following the resurrection of Christ. The second important point is that the ownership of this house is under the name of a woman. As already explored, Hellenistic and Roman women were the overseers of their households and managed the comings and goings of their houses. Because no man is identified as the owner of this house, and women could own property in the Roman Empire, this house was surely owned, presented, and supported by Mary. Therefore, this house that Peter went to after leaving capture was not only a church, but a church that was under the authority and was overseen by a woman. Additionally, the house was being used for prayer and petition when Peter arrived (Acts 12:12). Peter then instructs that inside of the church to go and tell the other brothers and sisters what occurred (Acts 12:17). It is without a doubt that both Mary and her servant Rhoda were not the only women in the house and received the instruction from Peter

to go and tell the other brothers and sisters what happened. Once again, women are identified as having a role in the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Peter did not single out men for this task, nor did he go to a house that was ordered and headed by a man. Peter went to a church that was overseen by a woman and instructed both men and women to share with other men and women what occurred.

Later in the book of Acts, Paul was in the city of Philippi where he met Lydia. It is here that Paul taught Lydia the gospel and she came to know Christ (Acts 16:11-15). Lydia was baptized and so was her household. The text is not clear on who led her household to Christ, but there is some indication that it was Lydia who taught those within her house. Roman households followed the faith of their matron. If Lydia was to convert to Christianity, it is not a difficult concept to see that she would have shared this with her household, and they would have followed suit with the head of their household. Lydia then offers her house as a place to stay and supports the ministry of Paul. There is no instance in this passage, or elsewhere for that matter, in which Paul instructs women to be silent or to submit themselves to men throughout the book of Acts. There are several instances, including this one, where Paul is more than welcome to the support and leadership of women within the early church. Lydia was not told to step down from her leadership role but continued to lead, oversee, and manage her house and church.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, the story of Lydia is another example, with the house of Mary, in which women are the overseers of churches. It is theorized that Lydia's house became prominent in the church of Philippi, possibly becoming the very church Paul writes to in the letter to the Philippians.¹⁷⁶ Both Mary

¹⁷⁵ Peter Foxwell, "Was Lydia a Leader of the Church in Philippi?," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 10, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

and Lydia are prime examples of women leading ministries in their homes and supporting the spread of the gospel. Without these women teaching, overseeing, and acting in authority, who knows where the early church could have gone for support?

The final example in the book of Acts of female authority and teaching is that in a couple of Priscilla and Aquila. These two are identified as fellow tent builders whom Paul met in Corinth after the Jews were expelled from Rome under Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2). They then believed in the message of the gospel and served with the early church as compatriots of Paul. Just as Paul identified Euodia and Syntyche as coworkers who have labored with him side by side (Philippians 4:2-3). After their conversion, Luke includes a story when they instruct a Jewish man named Apollos in the message of Christ. Luke records that both Priscilla and Aquila explain the scriptures to Apollos and teach him the gospel. It is through their instruction that Apollos is led to Christ to advance the gospel. Luke does not stop the narrative to say that only Aquila teaches but is distinctive in showing that both Priscilla and Aquila were active in the instruction of Apollos. Priscilla was not silent and did not submit but was actively participating in the advance of the gospel and sharing of the message of Christ. The couple then wrote to the other disciples, thus an example of women writing and contributing to writings with authority to others within the church should not be overlooked (Acts 18:27). Luke's purpose in the book of Acts is to record the history of the church.¹⁷⁷ It is evident here that women did have an influence in at least one early writing within the church. Although there is more research to be conducted, some have considered the book of Hebrews to be written by Priscilla.¹⁷⁸ If this were the case that

¹⁷⁷ Elwell, *Introduction*, 196-197.

¹⁷⁸ Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, CA: Lost Coast Press, 2019), 1-6.

would mean that one of the canonized books of authority within the New Testament came from a woman, enabling female authority in the church. These subjects are out of the scope of the current thesis but deserve time to be spent in the investigation for the egalitarian impact they may have. However, the mere fact that Priscilla was active in the instruction of Apollos and writing a letter of encouragement to the other disciples is a clear example of the authoritative influence of women within the early church.

The book of Acts contains many of these foundational examples of women's discipleship, leadership within the church, and authoritative teaching and instruction. Luke portrays these women as key players in the early church and fundamental to the development of the juvenile congregation of believers in Christ. Luke's writing also captures many incidents with the missionary journeys of Paul which provide necessary insight into the churches he later writes to. It is the book of Acts that provides Christians a glimpse to see what was going on within the Apostolic church on a large scale, as well as within the individual churches. Acts must be considered when a reader works through the epistles, especially those to Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and the pastoral letters of Timothy who may have been at Ephesus. The Gospels and Luke's Acts point to strong and definitive female leadership and authority within the early church.

Pauline Epistles

The Pauline Epistles are one of the main focuses of this thesis. It is within these writing that most of the explicit complementarian theology is developed and an investigation into these letters is paramount to understanding the background of the argument and reconciliation of these instructions and narratives. First, there are many locations in which Paul honors and recognizes women who are doing meaningful work within the early church. One of the largest areas of

acknowledgment is in Romans 16 where Paul sends a greeting to many within the church in Rome. This is where Paul identifies ten women who are not ignored or told to submit to authority but are praised for their active work in the church. Priscilla is mentioned with other women who are working for the Lord (Romans 16:3). Paul also talks about Phebe, who will be explored later, as an example of Paul commissioning a woman to teach with authority (Romans 16:1). Paul names Junia, a woman, as an Apostle (Romans 16:7). Although this used to be a debated topic, it is securely settled that Junia is a woman named within the letter of Romans with the title of Apostle, a title given by Paul himself.¹⁷⁹ This significance of her apostleship cannot be overlooked. Additionally, women were the first ones to believe in their hearts that Jesus rose from the dead and the first to confess that He is Lord. They then shared this message with others, being the first ones to witness and share the resurrection with the world. Women filled every role within the church from Apostle, to Disciple, to Deacon.

The role of Phebe in the letter to the Romans is an interesting one. Paul recognizes and introduces Phebe as a coworker in the mission of Christ and instructs the Romans to accept her well. Many scholars explain that the reasoning for this is that Phebe is the one who would have delivered the letter of Romans to the church in Rome.¹⁸⁰ Even though Paul was a Roman citizen, he was not authorized to use the Royal mail system and would have preferred to use someone he trusted to deliver mail rather than trying to trust a random person navigating to Rome. Trusting Phebe with the letter of Romans not only shows his trust in a woman but also gives her the authority to teach. If a letter was delivered by a trusted patron, that patron was also trusted to

¹⁷⁹ Yii-Jan Lin, "Junia: An Apostle before Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 1 (2020): pp. 191-209, 201-208.

¹⁸⁰ Wright, *Paul*, 327.

explain the letters they delivered.¹⁸¹ Literacy rates in the ancient world were low, so the letter would have been read aloud and presented to the church of Rome. Because Phebe was the one to deliver it, she would have been the one to read and teach the letter of Romans. She would have also been prepared to answer questions and instruct others within the church concerning its contents.¹⁸² The letter of Romans is one of the most theologically rich letters within the New Testament and serves as a backbone for Christian theology.¹⁸³ For a woman to be trusted with this letter and have the capacity to teach it and explain the letter speaks volumes. This example shows that Paul not only encouraged women to teach others but commissioned them himself to share complex theological ideas and serve as his spokesperson within a church.¹⁸⁴ This action is like that of Jesus who trusted women to share the gospel with others and to teach the message of the Messiah. The example of Phebe is a clear indication that Paul was not opposed to women teaching or having authority over men but used their wonderful gifts to propel the church forward and encourage the body of believers.¹⁸⁵ Romans is one of the most important letters within the New Testament. And Paul entrusted a woman to deliver and teach this letter to the Roman community.

Secondly, Paul spent most of his time in person at these churches. The book of Acts records these various missionary journeys and interactions with the church in person. Although

¹⁸¹ Mark Cartwright, "Letters & Post in the Ancient World," World History Encyclopedia (<https://www.worldhistory.org#organization>, September 10, 2019).

¹⁸² Wright, *Paul*, 327.

¹⁸³ Elwell, *Introduction*, 256-257.

¹⁸⁴ Foxwell, "Was Lydia...".

¹⁸⁵ Jeff Miller, "What Can We Say About Phoebe?," *Priscilla Papers Academic Journal* 25, no. 2 (2011), 16-21.

Paul's impact on the modern church is solely through his writing, this was the smallest influence that Paul had on the church. Luke never records any of Paul's letters or that He used correspondence as a form of church formation or instruction. Paul was a personable person and strived to be present in the lives of his friends and church family. Limiting Pauline's theology to only the contents of what his preserved letters contained discards the main way in which Paul instructed and bore the church within the Roman Empire. While reading the Pauline letters, one must remember this facet of Paul's work for the church. Paul is constantly labeled as an active and in-person laborer for Christ.¹⁸⁶ Paul was not limited to these letters to convey theology. Additionally, the Pauline epistles are grossly incomplete. These are all one-sided conversations where parts of the story are missing and the background behind much of this correspondence is not revealed. The Pastoral correspondence is deeply personal in which the modern reader comes into the conversation blind and deaf to the background of communication between Paul and Timothy. The Corinthian correspondence has major holes in the narrative as there are missing letters that Paul was referencing and teaching (1 Cor. 5:9, 1 Cor. 2:3-4). The most severe loss is the in-person teachings and conversations which Paul had. Several times he states that he will explain more in person or reference an in-person conversation (1 Cor. 16:5). The Pauline epistles are very important for understanding Christian doctrine and theology, but they must be caveated with the understanding that Pauline theology can contain limitations due to his sin and requires a holistic construction of doctrine from the Bible. Without this acknowledgment, there can be gross mishandling and influence given to his letters. Paul is important for the modern church, but his letters must be read in the context of the overall environment in which they were written. There is a need for readers of scripture to engage the text in the historical setting it was provided.

¹⁸⁶ Wright, *Paul*, 399-404.

Additionally, Paul was one of many who were sharing the gospel. Using letters from James, Peter, and Jude all help to refine the focus of the Christian message and not let the church depend on one person's theology.

Pauline epistles must be read as authoritative scripture but within the framework of the overall New Testament and its limitations. There is no evidence that Paul anticipated his correspondence to be read by others, and his circulatory letters were meant for specific communities. Paul would not have been able to perceive that his writings would be read for thousands of years by the various cultures up to the modern era. This concept would have been as bizarre as this thesis being written with the anticipation of human culture in two thousand years. Regarding this phenomenon, readers must place themselves into Paul's culture and understand his works with an appropriate historical-critical attitude.¹⁸⁷ These are major cultural and interpretive issues, but there are also literary critical points to be addressed.

Even though tradition points to legitimate authorship of Pauline Epistles, there is a growing consensus within the scholarly community that various letters may not have been written by Paul.¹⁸⁸ There is various reason for the trepidation which will not be a part of the exploration of this thesis, but the doubt surrounding the legitimacy of the letters should be considered. There is a three-tiered breakdown of authorship in which most scholars agree. The first is that Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, First Thessalonians, and Philemon are undoubtedly written by Paul.¹⁸⁹ There are then Ephesians, Colossians, and

¹⁸⁷ Klein, et al., *Introduction*, 313-315.

¹⁸⁸ David Edward Aune, *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 9.

¹⁸⁹ Elwell, *Encountering*, 239.

Second Thessalonians which may or may not be written by Paul.¹⁹⁰ Finally, Many argue that First and Second Timothy as well as Titus was not written by Paul but by a pseudo-Pauline school.¹⁹¹ It must be noted that there is a party that accepts the legitimacy of Pauline authorship.¹⁹² This topic is an ongoing debate so there is no definite accepted stance on the matter. There is a lot of cutting-edge research, some including artificial intelligence which has provided insights into the debate.¹⁹³ However, the raising of this topic was to address the concerns of Pauline legitimacy and to reflect on this when reviewing the Pauline literature. For example, the Timothy correspondence is the most severe in its status of women within the church. Due to it being regarded as illegitimate by many in the scholarly community, it should at least be considered when applying Pauline theology to the greater church. This practice should drive readers of scripture to investigate areas of theology not from a solely Pauline focus, but throughout the rest of the Bible. Additionally, one of the most supportive letters concerning female involvement is Romans which is Pauline. The letter of Romans aligns more appropriately with Paul's actions in Acts and does not call for the unnecessary submission of women to men. Recognizing the possibility of legitimate Pauline writing may aid in reconciling some of Paul's views because they may not have been his in the first place. For this thesis, the letters of First Corinthians, Ephesians, and First Timothy will be examined due to their overarching message and these three passages are the most obvious at surface-level reading.

“Problematic” Verses in Pauline Theology

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Wright, *Paul*, 285-286.

¹⁹³ Jacques Savoy, “Authorship of Pauline Epistles Revisited,” *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 70, no. 10 (2019), 1094-1095.

1 Corinthians 14:1-40. The letter to the Corinthians is an interesting diagnostic of the early church. First, as well as Second Corinthians are two of the longest letters within the New Testament and Paul provides a lot of guidance for this immature church. Many argue that the reason these letters are so detailed is due to the self-prescribed issues which the church was experiencing (1 Cor. 1:10-12). It is abundantly clear that the Corinthians church is struggling to maintain the integrity of the gospel and its message is suffering due to their sin. Paul does not hold punches within the correspondence in which he specifically calls out certain people for their actions and how it is eroding the church culture (1 Cor. 5:1). The tone of this letter varies throughout the writing and there is some debate as to whether this is two letters in one. In Second Corinthians, Paul mentions a scornful letter to the Corinthian church which has been lost. In Second Corinthians, Paul references this letter and laments for the intensity of his words (2 Cor. 7:8-9). The letter of First Corinthians is also the second letter that Paul has written to the church. This is indicated when Paul says he wrote an earlier letter (1 Cor. 5:9). The result of this discovery points to the fact that what modern readers are experiencing is one segment of long and personal correspondence with the Corinthian church. Paul started this church during his second missionary journey and has a personal relationship with many of those in the congregation.¹⁹⁴ Paul has also had in-person discussions and established relationships with those within the church. The modern reader is greatly limited by being separated by time and space in which they are not privy to the intimate dealings of Paul and the Corinthian church. As discussed before, Paul's main pastoral activity was through his actions and visitations rather than correspondence. It is a tragedy of time that those personal conversations and discussions have not been preserved for the modern church. Once again, due diligence must be applied to the

¹⁹⁴ Wright, *Paul*, 211-214.

reading of this letter due to the abrupt nature of modern interference. There is so much lost as a modern reader tries to make sense of the correspondence and what Paul meant for this church. There are some obvious questions raised on whether or not some of these commands should be applied to the general Catholic Church¹⁹⁵ or if it was specific to the Corinthians church. Some scholars argue that Paul's intense commands are a direct response to the sin which is holding the Corinthians church captive and not to be applied outside of their specific issues. Some of Paul's commands are identified as specific because of what he was hearing while in Ephesus. Unfortunately, the letter or message which alerted Paul to the troubles in Corinth is lost in time. Other than the addressed issues in the Corinthians correspondence, there is no way to know what else was going on within the church. However, Paul was addressing specific problems which the church was encountering within the Corinthians church. Much of this had to do with sexual sin and the Christ-centered gospel.¹⁹⁶ The city of Corinth was the largest in the Peloponnese and served as the Roman capital for the area.¹⁹⁷ The city was a shipping crossroads that serviced all kinds of cultures and religious cults. It is possibly due to this pluralistic society in which the Christians in Corinth were pulled in many directions and Paul was required to make corrections with the church.¹⁹⁸ Overall, the Corinthians correspondence was surely written by Paul and serves as an example of Paul's discipline within a church community.¹⁹⁹ This letter is important

¹⁹⁵ Catholic meaning global.

¹⁹⁶ Elwell, *Encountering*, 273.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁹⁸ B. J. Oropez, *1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 1-7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

for various church issues and is one of the instances in which Paul calls for silence for women within the church.

The verses which are of concern for this thesis are 1 Corinthians 14:34-37. Paul is using this time to explain what a Christian gathering should look like and the proper etiquette of believers when the body of Christ is together. There are numerous instructions, but Paul clearly states that women should be kept silent in church and are not permitted to speak (1 Cor. 14:34). Paul then wraps up the general commands on church service, including the portion of women being silent, by stating that it is a command from God (1 Cor. 14:35-38). There are various ways to begin looking at this segment for correspondence. First, the final justification statement by Paul claiming that it is a command from the Lord may be more so due to the lack of legitimacy Paul was facing in the church (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul uses this opportunity to defend his authority as an apostle and leans on God's commission as his main reasoning. It is clear in this letter, as well as others, that some were set out to hamper the spread of the gospel (1 Cor. 3-4). Paul established himself as an Apostle and uses his letters to credit himself with authority through various means. Although there is no quote from God and no mention of Jesus saying women must be kept silent in church, Paul claims that it is a part of the command from the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). This command does raise questions though when taken into consideration the previous verses in chapter 11. The discussion of head coverings is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, Paul uses this opportunity to describe women praying and prophesying in church (1 Cor. 14:26). Both of these actions require speech, and being kept silent in the church would not be possible. This leads to the question of why Paul contradicted himself if that is the case. Already there needs to be a reconciliation of direction from Paul within his letter! The mainstream evangelical complementarian would not hold this verse in high esteem because most churches do not enforce

that women are to be completely silent. Various Baptist denominations encourage women to teach children, pray, or even give announcements, or serve in other capacities. Therefore, if this verse was taken at face value, all these practices would be out of bounds according to the Corinthians correspondence.

An important understanding of this text is that Paul was addressing specific concerns within the church. There is overall guidance on how men and women are supposed to act while given prophecy and praying in the church, but then Paul dissuades any speech by women in the congregation. Some believe that this is because some women within the congregation are not keeping an orderly service.²⁰⁰ Most of chapter 14 is concerned with orderly service and requirements for a well-run church. The Corinthians were noticeably struggling to keep the structure, so this advice was most likely meant for the specific church. If things were out of bounds when it comes to sin, it is without a doubt that things were out of control of the orderly nature of the service. One of Paul's main desires was the spread of the gospel. If the church was acting senseless and others were dissuaded from joining due to the disorderly conduct of the church, this would have prevented Paul's purposes from coming to fruition (1 Cor. 9:23). The order of the church was paramount and if that meant that the women of this specific church need to be silent to not invite shame on the church, then so be it. Rather than take this verse as a general command across the entire church, one must recognize what is going on in Corinthians and the limitations the reader has when presented with these verses. The reader does not know the background, does not know the specific complaints, and is out of the loop when it comes to the "why" behind Paul's message. Contextualization is fundamental to the interpretation process. The fact that Paul seemingly contradicts himself within this letter and supports the opposite of

²⁰⁰ Oropez, 185-189.

these commands leads the reader to the conclusion that this is a specific command for a specific issue within the Corinthian church at that time. This command should not be extrapolated to the general church due to it being a sensitive issue that was contained within this specific church. Due to these findings, there is neither a complementarian nor egalitarian argument concerning the whole church coming from this verse. Paul is addressing a specific concern that the modern audience is unfortunately not made aware of. This local command to the Corinthians church should not be extrapolated onto the Catholic Church body in the modern era. Women and modern readers should look to Jesus and Paul's example of supporting female speech and activity within the body of Christ.

The letter to the city of Ephesus has some interesting facets to the letter and its overall impact on New Testament theology. This letter is perceived to be one of two things. First, a letter only to the city or area of Ephesus.²⁰¹ Or secondly, the letter to the Laodiceans is hinted at in other areas of the New Testament.²⁰² The reason why this is being highlighted as important is due to establish whether or not this letter was meant for a specific issue concerning the Ephesus church, or if it was meant to be a circulatory letter for all of Asia Minor. Due to Ephesus serving as the Roman capital of Asia Minor, it would make sense for this letter to then be shared with other churches in the area. The book of Ephesus is a document meant for explaining how to do church and assisting the young congregation. There are many instructions and guidance provided which are within this text. It is important to note that Paul spent years of his life here and would have known the church on an intimate level. Luke records Paul's time in Ephesus as impactful

²⁰¹ Robert Rollock, *Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Book, 2020), 26.

²⁰² Douglas A. Campbell, *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 267-271.

within the early church. Paul even made a big impact on the surrounding community as it disturbed the idol-making business and made the whole city rise in an uproar (Acts 19:23-41). The issues facing this church would have been well known to Paul and served as a launching pad to continue to explain and instruct this church.

The city of Ephesus was also important for various reasons within the Roman Empire. This city was a vital trade network within the Hellenistic era and was important for Roman control over Asia Minor.²⁰³ Ephesus also served as a religious hub in the worship of Artemis.²⁰⁴ One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was built there in the largest temple of the goddess Artemis. It is this temple and religious complex which would have resisted Paul's attempts to convert others to the Christian faith within the city. The impact of the Artemis cult cannot be understated in the influence it would have had on the early church as well as those who were hearing the gospel for the first time. The Artemis cult was largely run by women who served as the primary religious authority within the temple.²⁰⁵ Artemis was venerated as a fertility god and much of her worship surrounded the cult prostitutes who were both men and women.²⁰⁶ Because Artemis was a female, her presence executed large influence and power over the sprawling community in Ephesus. These religious and cult practices were intense with sexual gratification and the worship of the gods and prayers through sex. Such practices ran contrary to the Christian faith which was being established within the city.

²⁰³ Lynn H. Cohick, *Ephesians: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), 36-37.

²⁰⁴ Wright, *Paul*, 260-261.

²⁰⁵ Daniel Frayer-Griggs, "The Beasts at Ephesus and the Cult of Artemis," *Harvard Theological Review* 106, no. 4 (2013), 463-464.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 465-469.

Additionally, the city was serving as the center of Rome's cultural reformation. There was a lot of Greek peaking and culturally Greek people were slowly being transformed into a Roman ideal. The status of a Roman city and the economic, cultural, and religious capital of the area demanded that the people accept the Roman culture and support the spread of these ideals to others within the Empire.²⁰⁷ After Augustus became the emperor of Rome, he ensured that there was a Roman ethic placed upon the people and created ideal Roman family values which were to be followed by those within the empire.²⁰⁸ The creation and adherence to this culture would not have been overlooked by those living in Ephesus and would have been a heavy influence on those within the city. It is not surprising then to see that Paul would take the opportunity to create a moral code for those who were following Jesus in the Ephesian churches. When questioned about what family or moral ethic should be followed, Paul is showing how to live according to a Christian ethic that is superior to the Roman one established by Caesar. This is also one of the locations of the Imperial worship cult where the emperor and their family were venerated as deities.²⁰⁹ However, Paul testifies multiple times that the most important thing for the church is to share the message of the gospel. As discussed in the Corinthian church, Paul was worried about the orderly nature of the church and what others outside of the church would have thought about it. If Christians were living well outside of the culturally accepted bounds of the world around them, persecution would come knocking. Paul knows better than anyone else that persecution, specifically in Ephesus, was not far away from those who pushed against the Roman and Hellenistic systems. Although Paul did not default to the Romans' cultural system, there are

²⁰⁷ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 324-335.

²⁰⁸ French and Poska, *Women*, 90.

²⁰⁹ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 328-329.

areas where some of his instructions were to keep in line with this ethic. For example, women who were of the respectable class were to wear a head covering while in public or not under the authority of some men.²¹⁰ To not wear one would identify that individual as a prostitute, harlot, or vagabond who was destitute in society.²¹¹ When approaching the book of Ephesus, is also one of the questioned books concerning Pauline authorship. There is a divergence of whether or not the book is for sure written or not written by Paul. However, for the sake of this thesis, neither position will be taken. It does not add value to the argument in this instance.

The letter to the Ephesians is important for the modern church as an example of what it means to be a Christ follower and how that can look within a practical venture. The epistle addresses the family of God, as well as the personal family of every believer (Ephesians 4-5). The themes throughout the letter are quite like those social and familiar aspects outlined by Caesar Augustus.²¹² It is in chapter five that Paul addresses the relationship between men and women within the framework of a family. It should be noted that this passage has nothing to do with the leadership of the church but is concerned with the nuclear family. Paul commands women to submit to their husbands as they would submit to the Lord and names the man as the head or source of the wife (Ephesians 5:22-23). Many have taken this verse to interpret that man is the God-ordained leader of the family and their authority comes from Christ.²¹³ However, this verse is not a subjugation of women because the very next verse commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus lived His life in complete

²¹⁰ French and Poska, *Women*, 90.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 1277-1284.

²¹³ Piper, *Recovering*, 219-223.

submission to the father and went as far as death and putting aside his wants, needs, and desires for the benefit of the church. What Paul is saying here is that men and women must submit equally to each other and live their lives in love and mutual submission. Before the addition of verse numbers, nothing separated the statements, it was one thought that men and women should submit to each other. Paul then restates that men must love their wives as they love their bodies and that each husband must love their wife and wives respect their husbands. Paul spends more time focused on the responsibility of men loving their wives than he does on women loving and submitting to their husbands. The author's motivation is for several reasons. First, there were already legal and cultural laws that demanded that women submit to their husbands and have male guardianship, as explained above. Paul shows that this structure should still be maintained, but the authority comes from God, not from the state. However, Paul greatly emphasizes the male role within this relationship. There was limited responsibility placed upon the man to take his role in loving and taking care of his wife and family.²¹⁴ Under the guidance of being a Christian, the man must now also submit to his wife and use the submission of Christ as an example of how far to go. This idea was bending the gender norms established within Roman society. Jesus did not use his position to abuse, abandon, hurt, or exploit the church. Rather Jesus loved, protected, supported, and died for the church. So too must the husband in a Christian marriage. Additionally, this argument flow shows an equal standing of men and women within their relationship. Men and women are to submit to one another and love each other within their union. It is not for one gender to exploit or bear the responsibility of the family, but it depends on both. Women must continue to submit, which doesn't need explanation due to the cultural and legal submission already being practiced. But the men must now use Christ's example of

²¹⁴ French and Poska, *Women*, 79-81.

submission in how they are to love their wives. Complementarians and egalitarians agree that these verses are not a blank check used by husbands to abuse their wives or demand the complete submission of their wives. There has been a destructive past of using these verses by men to control their wives and make them little more than a personal servant. This is not the relationship Paul is explaining within these passages. Additionally, women may be commanded to submit in this passage because there may have been more women acting in non-submissive roles with their husbands due to the Artemis cult within the city.

Some key takeaways are as follows. The fifth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians is concerned with the relationship of family between husbands and wives. Paul does not mention that women must be silent, but that they must submit to their husbands, and husbands submit to their wives. Because this instruction is for married couples, there should be no extrapolation upon the general female population when it comes to their relationship with men. If they are not married, they are not included in these regulations. Paul says that it is better to not be married so it is safe to assume that non-married women did not have to apply these instructions in their everyday life (1 Cor. 7:7-8). Once again, the focus is on the male in this relationship, not the female. Men are instructed, three times, to honor and empower their wives and love them as Christ loved the church. The focus of this section should be on the submission of the husband to their wife, which was groundbreaking within the Hellenistic and Roman cultures. This matches the teachings of Jesus in how he broke through the cultural environment and gender roles when it came to women. Just like Jesus spoke with women and showed them love and taught them equally, so too is Paul leveling the playing field and establishing a system of mutual submission within marriage. Such an idea may not be groundbreaking in the modern western world, but the idea that men and women should love each other equally would have been radical in this day of

age. Rather than this chapter not fitting within the teachings of Paul and Jesus, it does fit as a mutual submission within the church. One can use the example of Priscilla and Aquila as an example of a married couple who submits to each other and share the gospel. They are coworkers within the body of Christ and their marriage. Nowhere within this chapter does Paul state that men must take the main authoritative role, but it is to be in submission and humility, just like Christ. Because of this, the use of these verses for a complementarian understanding of keeping women out of leadership positions in the church is not accurate. Paul is only speaking within the confines of a marriage, and it is meant to be mutual submission and humility.

Concerning the other women within the New Testament, it is clear that men and women work well together and function best when in equal submission, love, and unity. These verses are more for men to take a humble approach to their wives and submit as Christ did. This also has nothing to do with female leadership and should be left out of that argument.

The book of First Timothy contains the most outward stance of complementarian theology. This is also the final example of complementarian theology within the New Testament as it covers the final points that the other letters do not directly address. The primary verses which will be considered are 2:5-3:13. There are a few things that must be explained before diving into the content of this letter and its impact on the complementarian versus egalitarian debate.

As discussed earlier, the pastoral letters rank the lowest on Pauline's authenticity. Many reasons for this are beyond the scope of the thesis but recognizing that these letters may not be legitimate is an important clue while reading through the following verses. For example, how can someone reconcile the actions of Paul and his harsh words concerning women within this epistle? There is still tremendous debate surrounding this topic and it is surely one to cause

controversy. However, the reader should keep in mind that there is a debate and not take everything in the epistle at face value but reflect on the rest of the scripture.

Additionally, the letter to Timothy was written while Timothy was overseeing the church in Ephesus. Paul warns against false teachers and how they are disturbing the gospel of Christ. The overall message is how to help Timothy regain control over the church and establish order within the congregation. Like the Corinthians correspondence, one can see how the Ephesian church may have been going through a riotous time and needed Paul's guidance. There are many recommendations and instructions given to Timothy within this personal letter. These recommendations must be held in mind that it is to Timothy specifically and regarding the situation in the Ephesian church. One of the most complex portions of the New Testament to study is the personal letters between Paul and individuals. There is no way to tell how much communication preceded these letters or how many followed. While reading a letter to the Romans, Philippians, or Thessalonians, Paul meant for these to be read and shared by others. There are general instructions for the church and the establishment of doctrine within the Christian church. However, the personal correspondence does not provide any extra context to the situation. If someone was to intercept any letters shared between two people, there is a huge potential for things to be taken out of context and misused. There is not a lot of information on the situation going on in Ephesus, there is no information about Paul and Timothy's relationship at this point. Additionally, is no way to understand what Paul may or may not have instructed the church in Ephesus or Timothy while in person. All that is available to the modern reader concerning this situation is the two letters to Timothy. This is all to say that a reader must take caution when applying instruction from the letters to Timothy due to not having a full context of the commands. The environment for misunderstanding is wide. This is where the use of

systematic theology is imperative to read what the letter says and examine it and test it against other examples within scripture.²¹⁵ The first letter to Timothy is a great resource to read and learn how to be more Christ-like, but its teachings must be examined considering the rest of the scripture before full application. Timothy is instructed to engage in battle against the evil in the world and to have a good heart and consciousness (1 Timothy 5:11-21). Moving into chapter two is what the focus of this thesis will be about. It is here where the roles of men and women are addressed and the different ways in which they will serve roles within the body of Christ.

The letter to First Timothy begins with stern instruction to not fall prey to the false teachers or myths which are misleading those in Ephesus. There is a list of things that Timothy is meant to avoid and instruction to follow Christ in all things (1 Tim. 5:11-21). Men are called to pray without any anger and without quarreling. Women are then instructed to dress in modesty and not braid their hair or wear gold or costly attire. The purpose of this is that women should be adorned with good works rather than fancy material. Although this verse comes off as restrictive, there is an important cultural nuance that must be addressed. The early church was groundbreaking in the way that classes, races, genders, and people are united in Christ. Paul says that there is no difference between believers because all believers are one under Christ (Gal. 3:28). Jesus consistently broke the boundaries of culturally accepted behavior between different classes and viewed all humanity to be one. Jesus even prayed that the church is one while suffering in the garden in Gethsemane (John 17:20-23). Unity within the body of Christ has not only been a goal for the church but the single biggest failure within the church. In modern days as there are some three thousand denominations of Christianity.²¹⁶ However, this segregation is

²¹⁵ The purpose of utilizing Systematic Theology in this manner is meant to ensure a cohesive message throughout the New Testament.

²¹⁶ “Quick Facts about Global Christianity,” Center for the Study of Global Christianity, December 8, 2019.

not new. Paul wrote to the Corinthians to make them stop eating all of the food before the poor arrived (1 Cor. 11:17-22). The rich, who already have much, were eating the food meant for the community and those with less were left with scraps. Such behavior was unacceptable within the body of Christ. It is within this frame that Paul is once again addressing a social-economic variance among people. Dress and attire were a way in which individuals identified their class in Rome.²¹⁷ There were laws in place that only certain types of people were able to wear certain clothing options and it signified the higher or lower class of the person.²¹⁸ This philosophy of one person being better or of a higher standard than another is contrary to the message of Christ and the guidance Paul had given to the church. Therefore, it is not hard to see that Paul is arguing for those within the church to forgo their privileged fashion and be equal with one another while in the body of Christ. This instruction from Paul is not to limit women in what they can wear and ensure that women are subjugated, but he places the responsibility on those with power to give up that power to meet with those of less status.²¹⁹ Additionally, these requirements are when the body of Christ comes together, not as a general restriction. Throughout the scriptures, one can see where God humbles the proud and uplifts those who have been cast aside by society. In the same arc, Paul is creating an environment of equality within the church where there is no class system based on finances or status. One can see this occurring in the modern church where some “leaders” of the church purchase planes, fancy cars, and name-brand high fashion, all while

²¹⁷ Jonathan Edmondson, *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2008), 9.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ The same thought of limiting cultural or economic status can be found in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 where Paul instructs those who have the means to eat at home and allow those who do not have the means to feed themselves to eat. The church established by Jesus and supported by Paul is all about equality between its members in which social, economic, or other demographics are not meant to split the church.

commanding their congregations to give more and more to the church. Such action is unacceptable, and this is the same behavior Paul is condemning within the Ephesian church. Although there were rules for what women could and couldn't wear in society, these same restrictions were applied to men. Only certain classes could wear purple or wear a toga. This raises a question as to why only women were singled out in this instance rather than both men and women. As stated before, there are a lot of contexts missing from these letters. What makes the most sense however is that there must have been an issue in that present moment within that church where women were using their clothing or fashion as a status within the church. This may have its traces in the Artemis cult within Ephesus where Christian women were converting to Christianity but had difficulty removing their pagan culture and religious practices. The pretense of the Artemis cult in Ephesus is vital to see why more focus may be on women than men because the religious norm in Ephesus was largely female-run. Within this framework, the reader can see that this command is not for women to live in poverty or restrict themselves from looking well, but to avoid class distinction within the body of Christ. This command can be extrapolated to the modern church with the understanding that neither men nor women should use their wealth nor status to make a distinction within the body of Christ but to live in unity was one body of Christ, just as Jesus prayed in the garden before His death. To use this verse in any way to oppress female dress is wrong and does not take into consideration the cultural context of the message, nor the surrounding narratives which show that church unity is the primary concern.

Within the next verse, Paul states that women must learn in submission and that he does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over men, she is to remain quiet (1 Tim. 2:12). This verse provides the clearest exclusion of women from any leadership or teaching role within the church. Paul's justification for this is that Adam came first and that it was Eve who

was deceived, not Adam, therefore, women should not be allowed to teach or have power over men (1 Tim. 2:14). There is much to be said about these verses and it will take some time to break them down.

First, the Greek within these verses is imperative to look at. Whenever someone is reading a Bible translation, there is an interpretation within the translation. Languages and ideas do not easily translate into other languages, so translators do their best to transfer these ideas in their work. To gain better insight into what Paul was saying, there must be investigative work in the verse. The primary area in which the study has been focused concerns the word ἐπιτρέπω which translates to permit, allow, or in trust. Dr. Daniel Wallace states that this word is an example of a gnomic present that exists at all times and is indefinite in truth; like, “the wind blows”.²²⁰ Wallace states that this word cannot be a progressive or descriptive present because it lacks a temporal indicator.²²¹ The descriptive present would be focused on current and temporal issues such as in Matthew 25:8 where the lamps were going out.²²² However, this is inconclusive because there is no requirement for a temporal indicator for something to be a descriptive present, and the requirement to determine the aspect and time is through historical presents.²²³ Needless to say, the idea of whether or not this verse is gnomic or descriptive is a continuous debate for grammarians in which very smart and educated professionals can better debate this idea. However, due to the ambiguity, a grammatical explanation leaves readers without a conclusive answer, and to understand what is being said here must be looked at beyond the

²²⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament; with Scripture, Subject and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1996), 523-525.

²²¹ Ibid., 525.

²²² Ibid., 518.

²²³ Ibid., 515-525.

grammatical nuance. Wallace does say that this is not temporal due to Paul addressing the concept of Eve's sin, therefore it has historical standing to not be a present issue, but one which transcends time.²²⁴ However, with cultural context, this idea is called into question for two reasons. First, Paul states in First Timothy that it was the sin of Eve which disqualifies her from teaching because she was deceived, not Adam. However, there are many problems with this statement. For example, in Romans, Paul states that sin came through one man, Adam (Romans 5:12). The context of First Timothy is not concerned with original sin but is speaking about a disqualifier for teaching. While Romans 5:12-21 are very much so concerned with original sin and how humanity became joined with sin. Within that context, Paul points the blame on Adam, not Eve as the one who invited sin into the world. How then can the reader reconcile if it was Adam or Eves' fault for the sin of mankind? If one is to use the verse in Romans the same way as some use the verse in First Timothy, men are the ones who should not be able to teach because they are the ones who invited sin into the world. Additionally, Eve was not deceived by herself and enticed Adam, for Adam was with her. The Hebrew is clear that Adam was with Eve in the garden. The proposition of *הָיָה* concerns being together or with someone while an event is occurring. The fall of humanity was not a lone action but was a joint venture in which Eve ate first, but Adam was passively sitting back and watching it happen (Genesis 3:6). Therefore, it does not make any sense to place the blame on one of the candidates. According to Rabbinical tradition, this idea of women being easily deceived has its traces throughout the Babylonian Talmud.²²⁵ It has not been until the modern era that women are being ordained as rabbis within the conservative and orthodox communities. Women were barred from teaching within Judaism

²²⁴ Ibid., 525.

²²⁵ Sota 3:4.

largely due to the exact narrative which Paul is referencing. Therefore, Paul is not using a biblical mandate to discredit women from teaching, but due to his Jewish cultural influence, Paul references the rabbinical philosophy of women not teaching within this text.²²⁶ An interesting thing to note as well is that Paul is encouraging women to learn. This is important to note because women were not instructed in the Torah beyond their childhood years because there was no need. Yet Paul is encouraging this behavior. This matches the stories of Jesus allowing women to learn at His feet and including women in His group of disciples. Additionally, Paul did encourage women to teach and learn about God through his letters. As explained before, Phebe was entrusted with the letter of Romans to teach others and explain how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament scriptures. So how does one reconcile the seemingly oppressive teaching in First Timothy with the examples of Jesus's ministry as well as Paul's actions? By looking at the actions of Paul as recorded in Acts and the actions of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

Looking at this instruction within a cultural framework provides a clear pathway to better understanding what Paul is doing within this letter. Paul begins this section by pointing out that men and women must live in unity with each other and not use class as an excuse for one group of people to be above another through dress. However, there were other ways in which class or gender roles were differentiated. Male education was superior to women was their education within the Roman and Jewish worlds. The command for women to not teach and to be silent has the potential to be a temporary restriction which could be translated as "I do not permit a woman to teach, *right now*". This is a debatable issue but taken within the historical context and practical nature of Paul and Jesus allowing women to teach, it should not be taken as a universal never-ending command against women. Women were being permitted to learn which is a progressive

²²⁶ Ibid.

notion for women at this time who were usually excluded from a formal education within the Greco-Roman world.²²⁷ What makes more sense within the culture and other New Testament examples is that women needed to receive instruction before being able to teach and speak because of their limited education. Women were prohibited from having the same education as men and would have been disadvantaged in their ability to teach, which is something Paul and Jesus supported elsewhere. With all of this in mind, it would not be trying to suspect that Paul is establishing a temporary exclusion for women to teach for the present time because there needs to be a time to learn before a time to educate. Such an abrupt change within the culture of the Ephesian church is similar in the fact that, regardless of gender, those without education should not be given the mantle of a teacher. It appears that Paul is recommending to Timothy to allow women not to learn and then will be able to teach in the future, which parallels what Paul and Jesus did throughout their ministries. Additionally, the reasoning behind why this is a temporary situation is due to verse 15 in which Paul states that women will be saved through childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15). This verse has caused much debate and confusion within the Christian community; however, this may be a cultural reference which Paul is using to show the temporal nature of women having to learn in submission. As explained before, women had to have a male guardian who controlled their economic status in the world. This guardianship is either from their father, closest male relative, or husband. However, women were able to obtain their authority by having four or three children, depending on their freeborn status.²²⁸ There was already a cultural pretense for women to achieve authority and personal autonomy through the act of childbirth, which is very close to the Roman legal proceedings for women within the

²²⁷ French and Poska, *Women*, 110.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

Empire. Paul is drawing upon this nuance to show that just as women were able to one day achieve economic “salvation” through childbirth, so too can women achieve a type of “salvation” through faith, love, holiness, and self-control; all within the context of a temporary restriction of authority as well as learning to teach through their education. By having the cultural background, Paul was using this example to show that the restriction on women teaching is temporary within the church of Ephesus and that women must learn, and then teach. Paul mentions that women are to teach what is good in Titus 2:3, clearly enabling women to teach within the church.

The letter continues by stating the qualifications to be an overseer of a church. Some of these qualifications include being a husband of one wife, repeated twice, and that they must manage their household well, also stated twice (1 Timothy 3:2-4, 12). Paul stated that overseers must be a husband of one wife does not disqualify women from holding this role for various reasons. First, as stated before, men in Roman society did not have a sexual ethic to be bound by when it comes to marriage but were free to have multiple sexual partners of various genders and ages within Roman and Hellenic culture.²²⁹ Women did have legal and cultural rules to follow when it came to their sexual fidelity in a marriage, so no command would have been needed to ensure that women maintained a sexual ethic in marriage, this was already established. Secondly, this command does not necessitate that people have to be married at all. No one would argue that Paul or Timothy was excluded from church leadership. Paul was single, and no relationship status is named for Timothy, but it is safe to assume that he was single as well. Therefore, this qualification to be a husband of one wife is not restrictive to be married nor to have a wife but is to keep men in line who were sexually flippant and were not focused on their responsibility as a

²²⁹ Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 225.

husband. This argument is then supported when men are encouraged to be engaged in their household and to manage it well. This task was one that women were meant to perform, and it was not the role of the husband to be involved with the household or rearing of children. Encouraging men to fulfill a feminine role is odd if Paul was trying to establish a significantly masculine role for men within the church. Rather, Paul is focusing on men to ensure that they honor their wives and families by not having outside sexual relationships and being involved in their household. Additionally, in 3:12, Paul says that deacons must be married to one wife, but the role of deacon is given to women in other parts of Paul's letters (Romans 16:1-2). Deacon is also a Greek word meaning servant or slave which is used for various roles, the least of which is an office within the church.²³⁰ Women were encouraged to serve within the church and were qualified as apostles, disciples, and deacons by Paul and Jesus. Within the full scope of the New Testament, this verse cannot be used to disqualify women from leadership positions within the church. A focus on male ethics is present because of the lack of male requirements within the greater Roman and Hellenistic legal and cultural systems.

Overall, the addressed verses in Timothy are difficult at a surface level but become clear when looking at them through the cultural and theological scope of the entire New Testament. The key takeaways are as follows. Women are to watch how they dressed to ensure there was not a class struggle between the believers and to maintain unity or equality within the body of Christ. Women are to presently learn in silence which in the future they can then teach with authority, just like through an act of childbearing they are then able to exercise authority. There must be a task accomplished before this allowance of teaching. The role of overseer and deacon is not

²³⁰ This debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, but multiple times the title of deacon is given to believers who are servants in the church. All Christians are called to serve within the church, thus fulfilling the role of a deacon regardless of church leadership.

restricted to only men because of the mention of having a wife but is meant to create cultural and legal equality between men and women. Men are now expected to have the same sexual integrity and involvement within the household as their wives. Women were already expected to fulfill these things, so it is an equality of the roles of genders within the church. Women are now allowed to learn and teach, while men are now instructed to be as involved in the family as their wives have been. These verses do not support male superiority over women, but unity between the genders and equality unprecedented in the culture surrounding Christianity. Paul falls in line with the consistent teaching of himself and Jesus within these verses. There is no need to make Paul fit with his actions because these instructions to Timothy match those experienced throughout the New Testament. All it takes is to read the New Testament considering the culture and surrounding narratives of Jesus and Acts.

Conclusion

The Bible is a complex array of various books spanning thousands of years that require the utmost attention to fully grasp what is being stated. When it comes to the New Testament, nonetheless, the instruction comes from a very short period within specific cultures and political structures. The Pauline Epistles are very conserved with specific cultural issues plaguing the church. Therefore, the reader must understand the culture and time these instructions are being given in. Otherwise, there is a poor application of the verses to try and apply Greco-Roman culture to modern American culture which was completely foreign to the authors of the New Testament.

This exercise of examining the surrounding cultures, looking at examples of women in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline epistles, and reading Pauline theology has led to the following conclusions. The culture of Hellenism, Romanism, and Judaism all restricted women and was

beneficial to men. Men were free to be sexually explicit, excluding Judaism, and engage and leadership and education, while women were required to exist in domestic life and are concerned with the nature of the home. The teachings of Jesus and examples of Him within the Gospels show that Jesus disregarded the social and cultural boundaries by including women in his ministry, encouraging their education, and empowering their teaching, as well as viewing them as equal to men. Jesus is the primary example Christians should look to as to how to govern the church because He is God. Therefore, what Jesus did should not be questioned or debated, but implemented within the church. All four Gospels agree that women were called disciples and that women were the first ones to share the message of the risen Christ. The most important and foundational matter within Christianity is the resurrection of Christ which was entrusted to women who were the first ones to teach men and others about the miracle of Easter. This was done by Jesus, and his example must be followed. Paul follows this example by establishing women in places of authority and encouraging female involvement in the teaching of the church. He addresses them as disciples, deacons, overseers, and Apostles. These various titles were more often held by, men, but women were never excluded from the positions of authority. Contrary to this, Paul commissioned women to teach and fill these vital roles within the church. When looking at the complementarian sources within the New Testament for female oppression, it is found that these verses do not hold complementarian weight. When examined through the culture of the day and in light of other New Testament examples, primarily those of Jesus, it is clear that Paul is not excluding women from ministry. Paul encourages women to teach, and if there is any restraint in teaching, it is temporary to educate and prepare women to fulfill their obligations in the church.

The complementarian idea of keeping women out of ministry is not a biblical teaching but is used to create order and subjugation within the church. This idea runs contrary to the teachings of Jesus and examples found throughout the New Testament. By reading the New Testament within its cultural worldview, an egalitarian assessment of female authority and leadership is more appropriate and demonstrates the radical message of God in liberation, love, and unity. Paul and Jesus support female involvement within the church and their encouragement to be active within the church is a biblical mandate in which the church has failed for most of its existence. As Paul states in Galatians, there is neither male nor female, for all are one under Christ.

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