Bowed Beneath Oppression's Load:

Early Christianity's Challenge to the Status and Roles of Women in the Late Roman Empire

It is something of an understatement to suggest that many women view the Christian tradition, concerning their gender, with a profound degree of unease. Indeed, when studying ancient history of any kind, especially that of the Late Roman Empire, the invisibility of women problematizes virtually all efforts at historical reconstruction. Thanks to feminist scholarship and renewed attention to texts and artefacts, however, the picture of women's status in the Empire and early Christian communities has begun to shift. This essay will explore how Christian tradition, with its roots in patriarchal Judaism, functioned as a challenge to the views of women adopted in the Late Roman Empire. Upon close reading of the New Testament texts, set against their imperial background, it seems that initially, early orthodox Christianity offered counter-cultural possibilities to many women; however, in attempting to contextualise the gospel to a largely Gentile imperial audience, late first century or early second century Christian communities began to restrict the ministry of women. By the time of Tertullian and his contemporaries, Roman society had thoroughly de-radicalised the egalitarian impulses of Jesus and the earliest communities.

Our approach will be straightforward. First, we will paint a picture of Roman women in the late Empire, including what we know of their roles and social status. Into this milieu, of course, comes the fledgling and increasingly established Jesus movement, with its own story that extends back into Judaism. Second, we will outline a view of the status of women in the Hebrew Scriptures; third, we will explore the egalitarian possibilities of the early Christian traditions as recorded in the New Testament. Fourth, there are tendencies in the later letters of the New Testament that Church Fathers like

Tertullian used to restrict the status and roles of women in their communities (with unintended and far-reaching consequences).

This discussion will not consider non-canonical scriptures for a simple reason: many of them, especially Gnostic gospels, seem to have a view of women that requires either a spiritual separation from the body-self or a masculinisation in order to attain spiritual insight. Although I am a social constructionist and postmodernist, questioning the stability of any kind of Neo-Platonic concept called 'gender', I believe that, contrary to feminist scholars that view the Gnostic gospels as empowering to women, Gnostic theology strips women of their voices by asserting a hyper-patriarchal gender essentialism: what is good is spiritual, which belongs intrinsically to men. This runs contrary to (even) some theological streams within biblical Judaism, which sees the body as a site of revelation and woman as participating in the divine life.[1] Mary T. Malone, whose work I found quite helpful for framing the discussion, notes, "Even today, many Christians associate the spiritual life with an anti-body, anti-worldly life, an attitude that is, in essence, more Gnostic than Christian."[2]

Students of ancient history, particularly feminist scholars, find reconstructing an accurate picture of the lives of late imperial women rather difficult. Two reasons are usually given. First, the textual material that we have tends to focus on aristocratic women. Second, the accounts themselves are written by men;[3] descriptions of women and women's lives tend may be more "symbolic" of women, particularly an idealization of virtue, than what many contemporary scholars would consider clear-eyed reportage.[4] Nevertheless, we can form a picture of Roman women from the period as long as we bear these two caveats in mind.

At first glance, the stereotype of women being "barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen" does not seem that far-fetched when applied to most women of the late Empire. Although some scholars argue that women were made equal citizens of the Empire along with men,[5] women were often still expected to marry quite young, perhaps 14 or younger, and would thereafter be "perpetually pregnant."[6] The *paterfamilias* could recognise a newly born child or condemn it to "exposure" or starvation, both legal forms of infanticide;[7] marriage, however, offered many women a great deal of social mobility and domestic power. A female head of household commanded her family's resources, including slaves,[8] and often graced her husband's side at meals, which would have caused scandal in earlier Greek culture. The text of the New Testament itself hints that upper-class women had a great deal of freedom on account of their business prowess, and there is no indication of marriage in their stories: "women of means" sponsored Jesus and his disciples on their iterations across the Judean countryside; and Lydia, a "seller of purple cloth," (Acts 16: 14 NRSV[9])—a luxury item—offered Paul her house for meetings of one of his communities (16:40).

Of course, a great many women were slaves, at the very bottom of the social and household hierarchy. Some of these women were required to offer sexual services to their masters; many women served as streetwalkers.[10] Though prostitution was not illegal, it was then, as now, considered a thoroughly disreputable occupation.[11] It seems, then, that regardless of a woman's station or role, her life, revolved around men (except if she was wealthy enough to be independent): as wife, mother, or sex worker, all at the whims of Roman men.

Into and from this context emerges the fledgling Jesus movement. The very earliest movement brought "good news" of the "Kingdom of God"—the time and place of God's rule. This good news, or *gospel*, brought with it strikingly anti-imperial ways of living in the world, including, it seems, a great deal of freedom for women in the Empire, regardless of their social role or standing.

In order to see how striking this "good news" was, we need to trace some key features of the theology of Judaism, in which "the followers of the Way" situated themselves, since they believed that in Jesus of Nazareth, the God of Israel provides a way for his people to reclaim their vocation as "the light of the world." As we shall see, patriarchal Judaism was full of tensions regarding the status and roles of women.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This was the foundational claim of post-exilic Judaism—that YHWH/Elohim had proven himself much more than just a tribal deity who left his people when they were unfaithful to him. He was, in fact, the Creator and sovereign of the world, the only deity worthy of worship among all the gods of the Ancient Near East. In contemporary source-criticism of the Hebrew Bible, the author of Genesis 1 is designated the P(riestly) source. He has a particular concern with (re) establishing Israel's distinctive worship,[12] and writes a beautiful and hierarchical poem about the grandeur of creation and its creator in the context of Sabbath worship. P "has a place for everything, and everything [has] its place." He has a remarkable theological anthropology for his time. According to P, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness. So, God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God, he created them. Male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27). In a tradition in which men are the only

autonomous moral and legal agents, P's assertion that God makes both male and female as the divine shadow is nothing short of astonishing: "God blesses, speaks to, and authorizes both male and female"[13] as stewards of Creation. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, God energizes women's leadership with the prophetic spirit: two archetypal examples are Moses' sister, Miriam (Ex. 15:19-21), and the prophet-judge Deborah in the era before the monarchy in Israel (Judges 4-5).

Such women's voices, however, seem the profound exceptions to the rule, especially if we read from the implied male perspective of the text, rather than "from low and outside."[14] Though it is irresponsible to read Genesis 1 and 2 as justifications of the oppression of women, biblical Judaism deployed them in that way.[15] This kind of patriarchal reading is consistent with a view that women are merely the property of men, as we see even in the famous Ten Commandments of Exodus: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or *anything that belongs to your neighbour*." (Ex. 20:17, emphasis added).

The Torah only considers (physically undamaged) males full persons. The legal and sexual integrity of male personhood is valued so much, in fact, that it was deemed acceptable to hand over one's daughters to be raped rather than to subject a male guest to the abject shame of anal penetration (Genesis 19:6-9).[16] Biblical Judaism required absolute faithfulness of wife to husband (though whether men lived up to the reverse is a matter for strong debate). Even in the remarkable image of YHWH as husband to Israel, his bride sinks under patriarchal overtones. Only one example will suffice. In the book of Ezekiel, YHWH seems to countenance, because of Israel's unfaithfulness, her brutalisation and/rape at the hands of her lovers (16:35-43).[17]

Again, it is worth emphasizing the tensions within Biblical Judaism by pointing out that many of the prophets railed against the monarchy in Israel for mistreating the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the outcasts. For example, Second Isaiah, while indicting the technically correct but heartless religious practices of his people, says for YHWH:

> Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord. Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will settle the desolate towns. Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the disgrace of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called (Is. 53:1-5).

In the new covenant that YHWH makes with his people, YHWH will override the honour-shame codes that predominate in Israelite society, especially against women (though Israel will still be the bride in a patriarchal marriage, and it we may wish to leave open for debate whether or not this represents another ambiguous text about YHWH's stability as a spouse).[18] If Israel will return to just ways of living, then "your light will rise" and she will return to her vocation as YHWH's light in the world (Is. 58:6-7, 9-10).

When Jesus of Nazareth begins his public ministry in the Gospel of Luke, he announces his program with an explication of a key passage from Second Isaiah:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:18-21; compare Isaiah 61:1-2a).

Immediately we see that Jesus modifies the harshness of Second Isaiah's pronouncement: there is no "day of the vengeance of our God" (Is. 61:2b). In Luke's telling of that occasion, the people become angry with Jesus because he intends to extend his ministry: not to the people of Israel who feel that they can curry favour with the hometown boy, but instead to the Gentiles, and to the people who are double outcasts on account of being Gentiles—women and lepers (Lk. 4:23-30).

Jesus' interaction with and support of women is part of the warp and woof of all four Gospels. Luke and John, in particular, seem to place women, and Jesus' respect for them, at the centre of the tradition, especially as witnesses of the resurrected Christ. Scholars such as Malone do an excellent job briefly summarizing the women in the ministry of Jesus.[19] I want to focus on two key aspects of Jesus' praxis: his healings and his table communion with socially disreputable people, including women.

Jesus heals many women throughout his ministry: the woman with the issue of blood (Lk. 8:43), the "bent" woman (Lk. 13:11), and Jairus' daughter—resuscitation from the dead, according to the Gospeller (Lk. 8:49-56)! John Dominic Crossan, a major Jesus scholar who declines to believe the healing stories literally, nevertheless claims that remembering a distinction between disease (a malfunction of the body) and an illness (the social consequences of having a disease):

> I presume that Jesus, who did not and could not cure that disease [leprosy] or any other one, healed the poor man's illness by refusing to accept the disease's ritual uncleanness and ostracization. Jesus thereby forced others either to reject him from their community or to accept the leper within it as well...Jesus acted as an alternative boundary keeper in a way subversive to the established procedures of his society.[20]

Despite Crossan's problematic and resolute materialism, he makes two key points germane to this discussion: Jesus was interested in overturning domination systems that

oppressed women and other poor people; and Jesus' healings, whatever we feel they were, affected changes in the social locations and statuses of those he healed.[21]

Jesus also alters social boundaries "in a way subversive to the established procedures" by his "open commensality,"[22] as Crossan describes it. Human beings reclined at table, he claims, mirror the larger social world. By accepting associations with the social outcasts and "whores"—the general epithet for unmarried women outside of socially sanctioned male control,[23] Jesus enacted a very concrete and radical critique of not only Second Temple Judaism, but of the Roman Empire keeping Israel in exile—*all* women can come to the table, not just patricians who adorn their husbands' arms. "What Jesus…advocates, therefore," Crossan suggests, "is…an eating together without using table as a miniature map of society's vertical discriminations and lateral separations."[24]

The radical egalitarianism of Jesus' ministry carried over into the witness and ministry of the earliest Christian communities. Not only were women present at the Pentecost event in Acts, but Peter reaches back to the prophet Joel to highlight the fact that rather than being restricted to male prophets, priests, and kings, the prophetic gift of the Spirit is now democratic across gender and social boundaries, resulting, spiritually, in a cataclysmic change in the nature of reality:

> "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Acts 2:17-21).

The Apostle Paul, very much in line with this principle of the democratic Spirit, teaches in his early letter to the community at Galatia, "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female" (Gal. 3:28). Scholar Elizabeth Clark believes, "[P]robably, we can't take it as a wonderful slogan for equality, although women today would like to use it that way, and maybe they can go ahead and use it whatever Paul meant by it."[25] Not so, claims Malone: "Christianity offered new choices to those who heretofore had no choice about their state of life. Slaves, wives, the poor and [others] were inserted into a pattern of life that benefited others."[26] Just as Jesus seemed to have a gender-mixed group of disciples around him, women in the early Church "[covered] the length and breadth of the Mediterranean world in fidelity to the teachings of Jesus... [mingling] freely and publicly with men in their evangelistic tasks"[27] seeking to build a 'syneisactic' and inclusive community.

Malone proceeds to give a good summary of women's leadership in the early communities: Prisca and Aquila are a pair of missionaries who "explained [the gospel] more accurately" (Acts 18:26) to a gifted orator named Apollos; leaders of house-churches, the earliest form of assembly we know of in early Christianity, included Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16: 14-15, 40), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), and Nympha (Col. 4:15). Most interesting of all, however, is Junia, called "prominent among the apostles" (Romans 16:7). We do not know much about her, but male church leadership of subsequent generations changed her name to "Junias," a masculinised form non-existent in all of ancient Near Eastern literature.[28] Male translators and leaders in the Church, assuming that women cannot be leaders, often try to diminish the role of the deacon Phoebe as well, making her merely a servant of Paul's.[29] The term *prostatis*,

applied to a male, "usually means 'leader', 'patron', or 'president', all terms signifying authority,"[30] claims Malone, and there is no justification in the text for such diminishment. (We should wonder why Paul would entrust an important letter like that to the community at Rome to such a lowly servant!) One final group of women who functioned outside the typical roles of Roman women are the daughters of Agabus, who seem, like their father, to be prophets to the community of Jerusalem in Acts, without any necessary implication of submission to their father's will (Acts 21:9). The activity of prophecy, in fact, leads us into a further discussion of the Apostle Paul, and the Pauline communities, in which we see a Weberian routinization of charisma, and a narrowing of the initial democratic vision of Christianity to limit the activities and status of women in the churches.[31]

We see the first controversy regarding the leadership or prophetic activity of women in 1 Corinthians 11. Prophets, argues Karen King, would give spontaneous prophecy, teach, lead public prayers, and perhaps even lead "the Eucharistic meal."[32] Paul takes issue, it seems, with the way some women are exercising their gifts in the assembly, and uses his authority as founder of the community to put boundaries on the offending women. Although one could argue that Paul is concerned that visitors to the community are not offended by women who seem to behave like prostitutes (as many evangelical exegetes do), the entire passage, especially verses 3-16, seems rooted in a patriarchal interpretation of the creation narratives and Roman honour-shame codes that seems, at first, to leave little room for the equality of male and female as the image of God (Gen. 1:27; compare 1 Cor. 11:7), never mind in Christ (Galatians 3:28); Paul does, however, remind his listeners that there is man and woman are interdependent "in the

Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11-12). He does try to preserve the reality of a democratic experience of the Spirit.

Malone argues that Paul finally loses patience with the women a short while later, instituting an apostolic gag order upon women in the churches (1 Cor. 14:34-35).[33] She notes correctly, "These few sentences have had enormous historical consequences in Christianity. They represent the first official and explicit modification of the Christian vision with regard to women."[34] I register strong disagreement, however, with her contention that these verses are not an interpolation. It seems illogical that Paul would spend so much time instructing his people on the correct use of spiritual gifts and of the agape meal (an anti-Roman example of Christian commensality) if it seems that these verses were the point all along (because they introduce an obvious contradiction into a text with the same implied author). It is also difficult to explain how the author of Luke-Acts, who seems to take a special interest in Paul's ministry and may that sense at least be called Pauline, would have an interest toning down the role of women in his writings if Paul had actually written these verses. New Testament scholar Andy Reimer believes that, since this block is found at various places within the text of the letter, depending on the manuscripts one consults, it does seem reasonable to conclude that someone interpolated these verses sometime soon after the letter was written.[35]

Briefly, we see another limitation of women's freedoms in Paul's letter to Ephesus. In the context of mutual submission appropriate to all Christians (5:21), Paul nevertheless seems to give sanction to the typical hierarchical imperial household: Wives must submit to husbands (5:22), children to parents (6:1), and slaves to masters (6:5-8). Once again, it seems that Paul struggles to introduce important modifications to the basic

model (husbands should demonstrate self-sacrificial love, fathers should not make their children angry, and masters should remember that they answer to Christ for treatment of their slaves).

Male church leadership represented by the Pastoral Epistles seems to remove even further opportunities for women, though accommodating the transitioning Christian communities even further to Roman expectations by giving the subordination of women grounding in an interpretation of Eve in Genesis 2 and 3. Eve was deceived, not Adam (1 Tim. 2:14), and women shall be saved through (socially sanctioned) childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15).

Despite this, accommodation to Empire only went so far. Arguing that Christians were trying to resist "the gospel of Rome," Marianne P. Bonz claims,

> The ideal of Christian citizenship expressed in the Pastoral Epistles is to not make waves, and to lead a life of undisturbed piety. However, the urging of prayers for the ruling authorities in 1 Timothy is immediately followed by affirmations that there is just one God and just one mediator between God and human beings, namely Jesus Christ (1Tim 2:5). This statement, together with further affirmations elsewhere in the letter that Jesus is the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and lord of lords, and that both immortality and dominion belong to him and him alone.... Therefore–and this is an important point sometimes overlooked–even for the author of the Pastorals, Christian piety means exclusion from the celebrations and civic rituals of the elite social and administrative structures of the empire.[36]

Unfortunately, the Church of the Pastorals, with a Roman hierarchal structure, seems to have forgotten the vibrant and flexible roles of women in the early communities, paving the way for even further erosion of the status of women Christianity. The structures of Christianity, even while resisting the claims of the *augusti*, do not offer a serious challenge to the Late Empire's views of women. The seeds of further oppression, and of

liberation, lie dormant in the text for the discovery of future Christians and other interested parties.

We have concluded that although Jesus and the earliest Jesus movement destabilizes the typical roles and status of women in the late Roman Empire (this in itself representing a break with patriarchal Judaism), the developing Christian communities gradually choked off the original charismatic impulse, and by mid-second century the seeds of further Christian oppression of women grew in the Church. Although the Church fought to resist Empire by setting up competing analogous structures, we can grasp, perhaps, why the Church Father Tertullian could utter these words to women in his congregation:

> And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.[37]

It is palpably ironic that a male theologian should invoke the name of Christ to control women in the name of Christian modesty. After all, "the Son of God" said to the religious leaders after standing a "bent" (oppressed) woman on her feet, "And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" (Lk. 13:16). Male church leadership since have "bent" women over once again, ostensibly to defend their quest to defend the good news of Jesus Christ.

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[1] My own "life in the body" includes my social position as a Christian male of European descent. This places me, for the most part, in the class most able to control the development of Christian theology and (unfortunately) concomitant Christian attitudes towards women. I became an evangelical feminist in Bible College, and came out as a gay man at age 22. Because of these experiences, I continue to grasp for a

coherent way to hear Scripture as a reflection of the sacred. Historical and theological study, for me, informs how I deploy these texts for the benefit of Christian communities, though that is not my direct purpose here. I am not necessarily interested in, "How then shall we live?" Nevertheless, whether or not this is an important question for historians is a debate unto itself (as Enlightenment historiography proves). On this point, see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Norton 1977; reissue 1995), 211. He claims, "[The philosophes] treated the past [history] ideologically because they were engaged in an ideological battle that knew no quarter [against Christian 'superstition' and mythology]."

[2] Malone, *Women and Christianity*, Vol. 1, *The First Thousand Years* (Ottawa: NOVALIS, 2000), 89.

[3] Mona K. Mason, "Roman Women: A Look at Their Lives," 26 June 2007, http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/roman_women.html, 1.

[4] Suzanne Dixon, "Roman Women: Following the Clues," 26 June 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_women_01.shtml, 1.

[5] Mason, 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid. See also *Oxyrynchus Papyri* 4.744, as cited in Crossan, 63.

[8] Anon, "Roman Society, Roman Life," 26 June 2007, http://www.roman-empire.net/society/society.html#women.

[9] All Bible references are to the New Revised Standard Version.

[10] Dixon, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_women_03.shtml, 1.

[11] Dixon, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_women_05.shtml, 1.

[12] Robert Walker, "Texts of Terror, Texts of Grace," unpublished paper submitted to Athabasca University, 2006, 7.

[13] Walker, 5.

[14] Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "Reading the Bible from Low and Outside," in Robert Goss and Mona West, Eds. *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 14.

[15] Walker, 7-9.

[16] Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbour?* Rev. ed (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 58.

[17] Dawn Robinson Rose, "Insider Out: Unmasking the Abusing God," in Goss and West, 143-152. Rabbi Rose argues, because of her experience of a physically abusive heterosexual relationship and further study, that YHWH often fits exactly the psychological profile of the typical bitterer. She concludes that Adonai would be in the intervention between abuser and victim, and therefore destabilizes this text and others like it, as "the word of the Lord."

[18] Part of the instability, this gay scholar suspects, is that Israel is imagined as female but the text implies a male reader. According to queer scholar Ken Stone's analysis of to a psychoanalytic reading offered by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "The discourse of the Hebrew Bible is overdetermined by an attempt to deny the implications of an unconscious homoerotic relation between Israel's male deity and... [the] male worshipper...A certain sort of homosocial relation...may even help to establish the domination of women by men." Stone, "The Garden of Eden and the Heterosexual Contract," in Goss and West, 67.

[19] Malone, 43-63.

[20] John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 82.

[21] I have difficulty with the proposition that Jesus didn't cure diseases, for two reasons: first, I (and many other scholars and faithful across religious traditions) have witnessed physical cures of diseases that seem difficult to explain using strictly materialistic reasoning; second, Crossan offers no compelling reasons why Jesus' challenge to accept "the unclean" would have any force for a Second Temple Jew *without* an actual cure taking place. Crossan's position, for all his fascinating exposition about social bodies (76-82), cannot accept that physical healing was *required* for (re)acceptance by the community. I would argue that Jesus healed or cured the sick precisely so that this acceptance could happen.

[22] Crossan, 66.

[23] Crossan, 69.

[24] Ibid, 69.

[25] Quoted in PBS, "The Roles for Women," 27 June 2007, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/roles.html, 1.

[26] Malone, 66.

[27] Ibid, 66.

[28] Malone, 71-72.

[29] Ibid, 72.

[30] Ibid, 73.

[31] I feel obligated to point out that for the purposes of this discussion, in seeking to explicate how Christian tradition affected Roman women, I am conflating what the text says, what it means, and how it was used. Although I think feminists, even in the evangelical tradition, can make solid exegetical arguments that place appropriate cultural limitations on strictures regarding women-ministries in the Church, the fact remains that misunderstanding or cultural accommodation very quickly and effectively silenced women in the churches. In other words, my position as a student of history is different from my opinion as a Christian theologian.

[32] King bases her contention on the *Didache,* a sort of manual of Church discipline. Karen King, "Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries," 27 June 2007, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html, 1.

[33] Malone, 76.

[34] Malone, 77.

[35] Andy Reimer, unpublished Theology III lectures (Regina: Canadian Bible College, 1999), n.p. Reimer is (as of this submission) the Academic Dean at Ambrose University College in Calgary, AB. He notes that no less an exegete than Gordon Fee argues that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is an interpolation.

[36] Marianne P. Bonz, "The Gospel of Rome vs. the Gospel of Jesus Christ," presented May 30, 1998 at Harvard University, 27 June 2007, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/symposium/gospel.html, 1.

[37] Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women*, Trans. S. Thelwall, in Phillip Schaff, *The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers* vol. 4, 28 June 2007, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iii.iii.i.i.html, Book 1, Chapter 1.

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