

Women in Church Leadership

by Mako A. Nagasawa

- This is Part 2
- Part 1 of this presentation is found:
<http://nagasawafamily.org/article-women-in-church-leadership-p1.pdf>

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- Jesus was a man
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men

Does Jesus' Gender Matter?

- The New Testament never makes this argument
- Two human natures: male and female?
- Only one human nature, which Jesus takes, heals, and gives back to both men and women



Does Jesus' Gender Matter?



- ‘It would be a grave biblical and theological mistake to bracket the incarnation with the gender or sex of Jesus in such a way that everything in his incarnate life and work depended on his maleness, for that would seriously call in question the salvation of female human being and detract from the incarnation as the assumption of complete human being.’ (T.F. Torrance, *The Ministry of Women*)

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- ~~Jesus was a man~~
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men

The Twelve Apostles?

- The New Testament never makes this argument
- Jesus seems to have selected twelve apostles to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel; he was uniquely renewing Israel once and for all
- The symbolism of twelve does not appear to have been significant afterwards



The Twelve Apostles?

- Jesus trained female disciples along with male disciples
 - The picture of 'loving God' (Lk.10:25) is not a man learning Torah in a synagogue but Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet (Lk.10:38 - 42)



The Twelve Apostles?

- Jesus traveled with female disciples along with the men (Lk.8:1 – 4); very unusual and scandalous for a Jewish rabbi (Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*)
- Jesus was preparing his followers for this:
 - ²⁸ It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and **daughters** will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and **female** servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28 – 29)



The Twelve Apostles?

- In John 20, Jesus appears to a woman, Mary, in a garden, to bear a word of new life to the men. Jesus seemed to see his female disciples as a renewal of Eve.



The Twelve Apostles?

- Women leaders in the early church:
 - Lydia (Acts 16:13 – 15, 40)
 - Priscilla (Acts 18:18 – 26, Rom.16:3)
 - Philip's daughters, prophetesses (Acts 21:9)
 - Chloe and Nympha (1 Cor.1:11, Col.4:15)
 - Euodia and Syntyche (Phil.4:2)
 - Phoebe (Rom.16:1)
 - Tryphena, Tryphosa (Rom.16:12)
 - Junia (Romans 16:7) probably an **apostle** (NASB, NRSV, etc.)



Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- ~~Jesus was a man~~
- ~~Jesus' twelve apostles were men~~
- Paul's elders were men

Paul on Elders



Paul on Elders

- ¹ Tim.2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- What about 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16, where Paul wants women (dressed as women) to pray and prophecy to all?
- Does 'gyne' = 'woman' or 'wife' here?
- The word *autentein* (not *exousia*) which is translated 'exercise authority over' is difficult to pin down with surety; 67% of the time the word appears in the extant Greek literature, there are significant negative connotations connected to it, including the sense of 'instigating or perpetuating a crime'.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- The word sometimes translated 'silence' in v.12 is the same word which is given the more measured translation 'quietness' (NASB) in 1 Timothy 2:2 and 11.
- The word 'if' in v.11 is better translated 'when' or 'when and if'.
- The verb 'will be saved' refers to a single female, but the verb 'to continue' refers to women in the plural.
- The word 'childbearing' has the definite article before it in Greek, thus reading '*the* childbearing' and perhaps referring to Jesus' birth.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- ‘^{2:12} But I do not allow a wife to *‘lead a husband into error’*, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. [implied: *And Adam was in knowing rebellion against God through his own participation.*] ¹⁵ But ‘she’ [i.e. *Eve*] will be saved through ‘the Childbearing’ ‘when and if’ they [i.e. *the wives referred to in 2:9*] continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.’
 - See Gordon Hugenberger, Gordon Fee, Douglas Moo, Gilbert Bilezikian, Ann Bowman, Aida Besancon Spencer

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- What was the problem Timothy was facing?
 - ^{1 Tim.4:1} But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith... ³ men **who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods** which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; ⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

Jewish

- Physical bodies good
- Death is the enemy
- Hope for bodily resurrection
- Care for the poor
- High sexual ethic of marriage, from creation order

Greek

- Physical bodies bad
- Death is release
- Hope for souls to be free; disembodiment
- Not much care for poor
- Have sex with anyone (Epicureans), or deny it (Stoics)

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- ‘^{2:12} But I do not allow a wife to *‘lead a husband into error’*, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. [implied: *And Adam was in knowing rebellion against God through his own participation.*] ¹⁵ But ‘she’ [i.e. *Eve*] will be saved through ‘the Childbearing’ ‘when and if’ they [i.e. *the wives referred to in 2:9*] continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.’
 - See Gordon Hugenberger, Gordon Fee, Douglas Moo, Gilbert Bilezikian, Ann Bowman, Aida Besancon Spencer

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- ^{1 Tim.3:1} It is a trustworthy statement: if **any man** (Greek *tis*; **anyone, male or female**) aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work **he** desires to do. ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the **husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴ **He** must be one who manages **his** own household well, keeping **his** children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a **man** does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** take care of the church of God?), ⁶ and not a new convert, so that **he** will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And **he** must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that **he** will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- The pronouns 'he' or 'his' are not present in Greek – that is an incorrect inference by English translators
- Greek, like Spanish, can conjugate verbs without specifying the pronoun; the pronoun is implied from the last occurrence
 - The last occurrence: In 3:1, the first pronoun 'anyone' (*tis*) includes male and female, and governs 3:1 – 7

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- We have already seen that the Old Testament roles of elder, judge, and prophet, were open to women, even though the Hebrew text uses the male language and male example. But furthermore...



Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy

- A. Fight the Good Fight (1:1 – 1:20)
 - B. The Christian Household and Witness, Part 1 (2:1 – 15)
 - C. Church Leaders: Elders and Deacons (3:1 – 13)
 - D. The Truth at the Heart of the Church (3:14 – 5:2)
 - C'. Church Leaders: Older and Younger Widows (5:3 – 25)
 - B'. The Christian Household and Witness, Part 2 (6:1 – 11)
- A'. Fight the Good Fight (6:12 – 21)

Widows as Heads of Household

- Elders... able to teach... (3:1 – 7)
- Elders (3:1 – 7)
- The husband of one wife (3:2)
- Hospitable (3:2)
- Temperate, prudent, respectable... not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money (3:2 – 3)
- One who manages his own household, keeping his children under control with all dignity (3:4)
- Have a good reputation with those outside the church (3:7)
- Deacons... not double-tongued... not malicious gossips, but temperate (3:8 – 11)
- Deacons... faithful in all things (3:8) ... beyond reproach (3:10)
- The elders... preaching and teaching (5:17)
- Older widows over sixty years old (5:3 – 10)
- The wife of one man (5:9)
- If she has shown hospitality to strangers...washed the saints' feet (5:10)
- If she has assisted those in distress, if she has devoted herself to every good work (5:10)
- Be put on the list... if she has brought up children (5:9 – 10)
- Above reproach... Having a reputation for good works (5:7, 10)
- Younger widows... not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention (5:11 – 13)
- Younger widows... get married, bear children, keep house, give the enemy no occasion for reproach (5:14)

Widows as Heads of Household

- Widowhood was common
 - Wives typically 15 – 20 years younger than their husbands
- Age and character requirements for older widows
 - Identical with elders in 3:1 – 7
 - For receiving charity??? NO
- Widows' ministry
 - Not simply recipients of charity (although all widows should be honored by financial support first from their children and grandchildren as per 5:3 – 4)
 - But being remunerated for ministry, as per 5:17 – 18
 - Paul returns to the topic of elders preaching and teaching in 5:17 – 25
 - Widows are now spiritual heads of households
 - Widows are a subset of elders (recall chiasm)

Household Codes: Comparison

<i>Ephesians</i>	<i>Colossians</i>	<i>1 Timothy</i>	<i>1 Peter</i>
Wives, husbands (5:21 – 33)	Wives, husbands (3:18 – 19)	Wives, husbands (2:11 – 15)	Wives, husbands (3:1 – 7)
Children, parents (6:1 – 4)	Children, parents (3:20 – 21)	Children, parents (3:1 – 5:25) biological, spiritual	
Slaves, masters (6:5 – 9)	Slaves, masters (3:22 – 4:1)	Slaves, masters (6:1 – 11)	Servants (2:13 – 25)

Yet another reason why *gyne/aner* in 2:11 – 12 refers to:
wife/husband and *not* woman/man

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- ~~Jesus was a man~~
- ~~Jesus' twelve apostles were men~~
- ~~Paul's elders were men~~

The Big Story:

God Shares His Authority Over Creation

- God begins a covenant with a man
- The man
 - Communicates God's word and wisdom to others
 - Shares his authority with others
 - Is the inclusive one

The Big Story: God, Covenant, Communication

- Covenant communicated:
 - Adam → Eve
 - Adam & Eve → men and women share in messaging (Prov.1:8; 8:22 – 36) and rule of creation (Gen.1:28)
- Covenant communicated:
 - Abraham → Sarah
 - Abraham & Sarah → men and women in family line; shared authority in naming and blessing children

The Big Story: God, Covenant, Communication

- Covenant communicated:
 - Moses → Elders
 - Moses & Elders → men and women who become more elders, judges, prophets (e.g. Deborah is a “prophet like Moses”)
- Covenant communicated:
 - Jesus → Apostles
 - Jesus & Apostles → men and women share in the messaging (1 Cor.11:2 – 16) and rule of new creation (1 Cor.6:1 – 8) as elders, judges, and prophets again (1 Cor.11 – 14; 1 Tim.3 – 5; Acts 2:17 – 18 quoting Joel 2:28 – 29)

The Big Story: God, Covenant, Communication

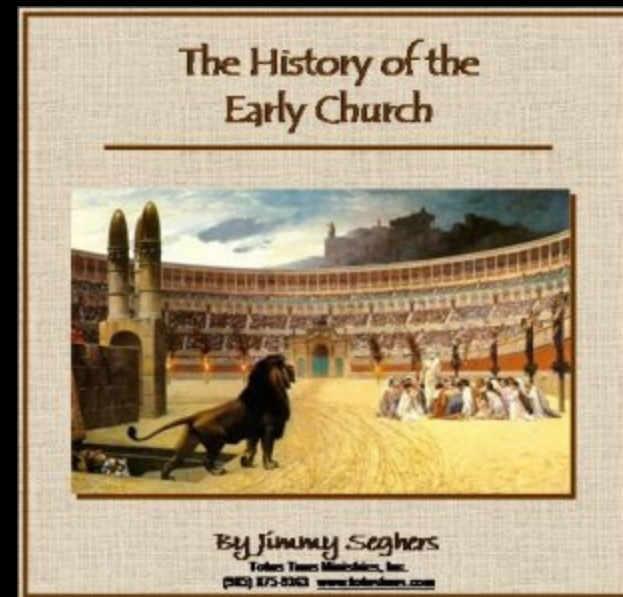
- “And God has appointed in the church
- first apostles,
- second prophets,
- third teachers,
- then miracles,
- then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” (1 Cor.12:28)
- Gift & Gender
- apostles: M/F (Junia)
- prophets: M/F (1 Cor.11)
- teachers: M/F (1 Tim.3 – 5; 1 Cor.14:26; Col.3:16)
- etc.

The Big Story: God, Covenant, Communication

- “And God has appointed in the church
- first apostles,
- second prophets,
- third **teachers**, requirement for elders
- then miracles,
- then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” (1 Cor.12:28)
- Gift & Gender
- apostles: M/F (Junia)
- prophets: M/F (1 Cor.11)
- **teachers**: M/F (1 Tim.3 – 5; 1 Cor.14:26; Col.3:16)
- etc.

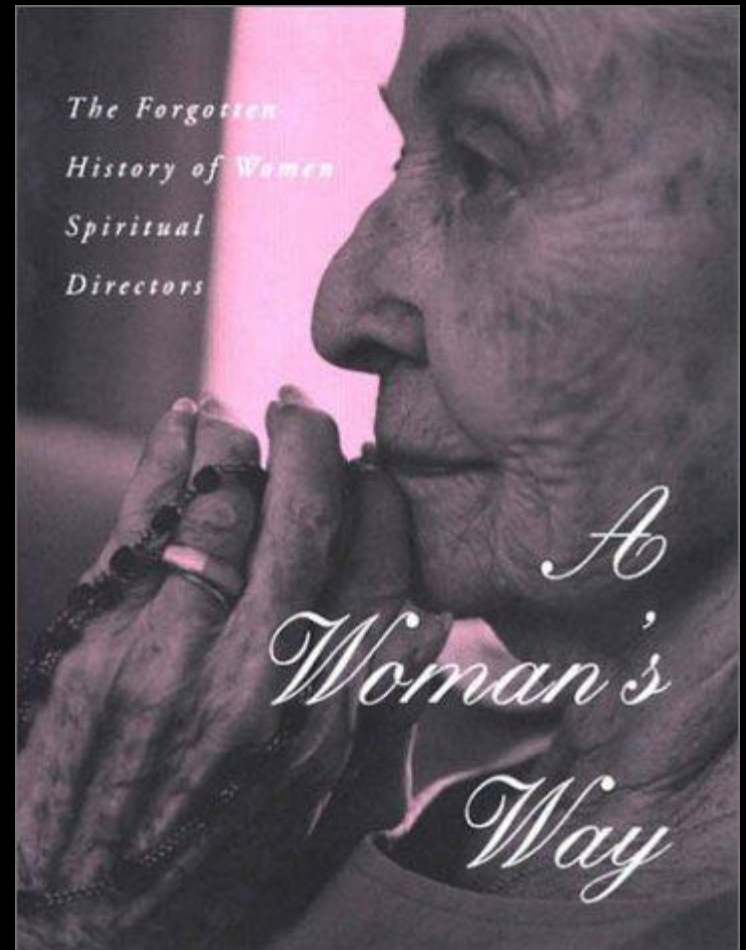
Two Vital Criteria

- Scripture
- Early Church History



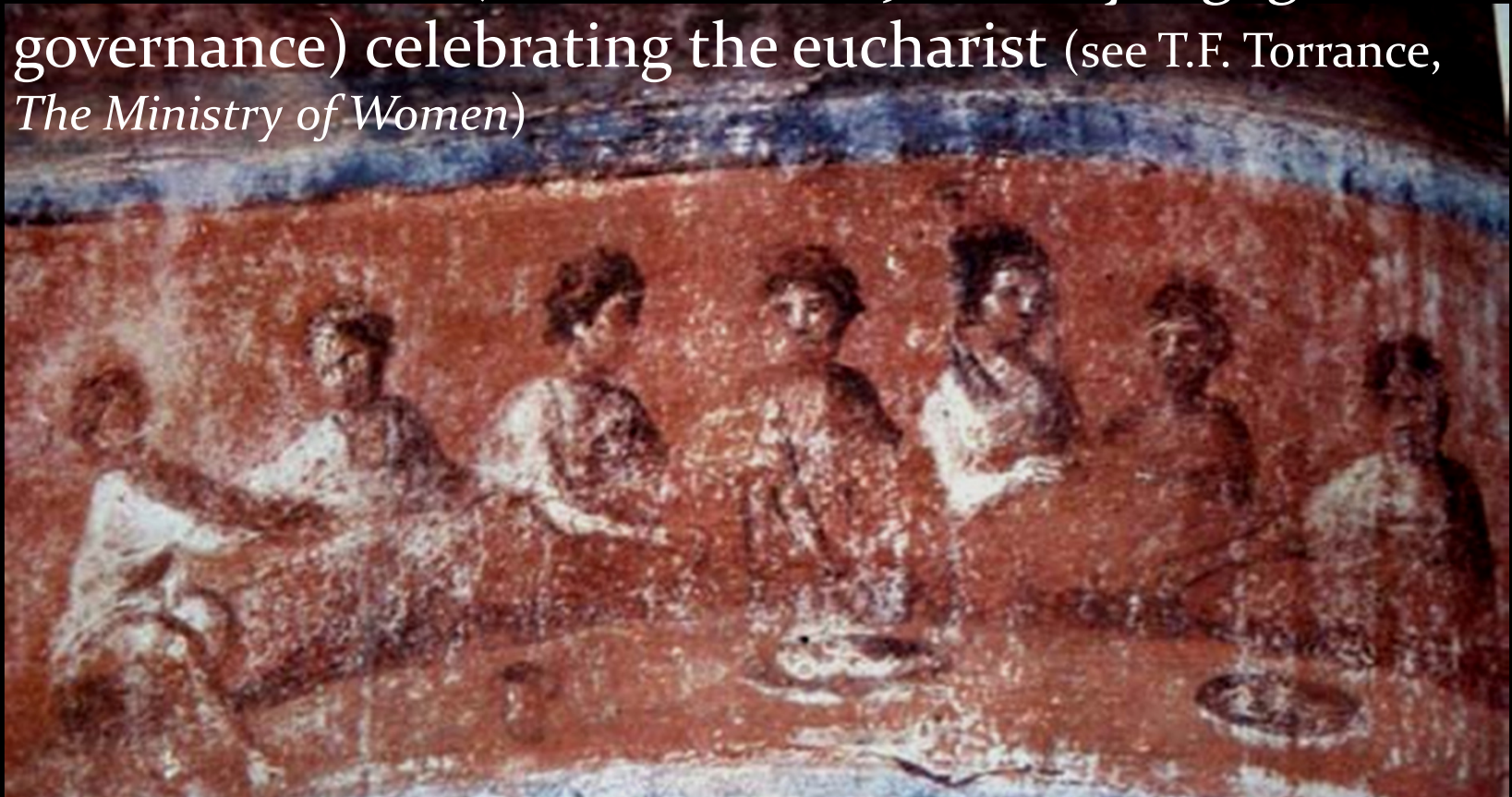
Early Church History

- ‘The premise that women are men’s spiritual equals is accepted and endorsed in all early Christian sources without exception.’
 - Patricia Ranft, *A Woman’s Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors*, p.26
- Women in early Christianity held positions of authority, were teachers and directors of men as well as women.

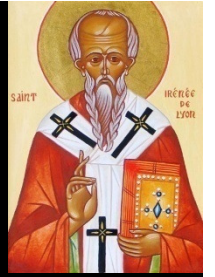


Early Church History

- From the *Catacombs of Priscilla*, in the *Capella Greca* in Rome, from the first century, depicting seven Jewish Christian elders (modeled after Jewish synagogue governance) celebrating the eucharist (see T.F. Torrance, *The Ministry of Women*)

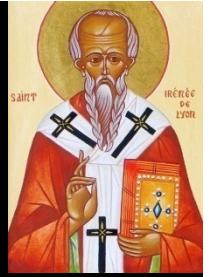


Early Church History



‘Why also did it not prefer to make its attack upon the man instead of the woman? And if thou sayest that it attacked her as being the weaker of the two, [I reply that], on the contrary, **she was the stronger**, since she appears to have been the helper of the man in the transgression of the commandment. For she did by herself alone resist the serpent, and it was after holding out for a while and making opposition that she ate of the tree, being circumvented by craft; whereas Adam, making no fight whatever, nor refusal, partook of the fruit handed to him by the woman, which is an indication of the utmost imbecility and effeminacy of mind. And the woman indeed, having been vanquished in the contest by a demon, is deserving of pardon; but Adam shall deserve none, for he was worsted by a woman,--he who, in his own person, had received the command from God...

Early Church History



...But the woman, having heard of the command from Adam, treated it with contempt, either because she deemed it unworthy of God to speak by means of it, or because she had her doubts, perhaps even held the opinion that the command was given to her by Adam of his own accord. The serpent found her working alone, so that he was enabled to confer with her apart. Observing her then either eating or not eating from the trees, he put before her the fruit of the [forbidden] tree. And if he saw her eating, it is manifest that she was partaker of a body subject to corruption.'

Irenaeus of Lyons, 2nd century, *Fragments* paragraph 14, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 1

Early Church History

- The Acts of Paul and Thecla
 - Known before 190 A.D.
 - ‘Go and teach the word of the Lord,’ so ‘she went to Seleucia and enlightened many in the knowledge of Christ...certain gentlewomen heard of the virgin Thecla and went to her to be instructed in the oracles of God’ (ch.10)
- An extremely popular work, read in many places, endorsing a woman teacher

Statue of St.Thecla in Syria



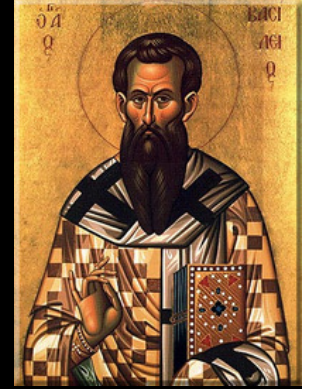
Fresco of Paul and Thecla in Ephesus



Early Church History

- Opponents of Christianity said the Christians were ‘led by women’
 - Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.55; cf. Margaret Y. MacDonald, ‘Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in Early Christianity’, edited by David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, *Early Christian Families in Context*, p.157 – 158
- Christian attitude towards marriage:
 - ‘We share all things but our wives’
- Christian attitude towards vocation:
 - Singleness became a holy vocation (1 Cor.7:17 – 35)
 - Widows as heads of household (1 Tim.5)

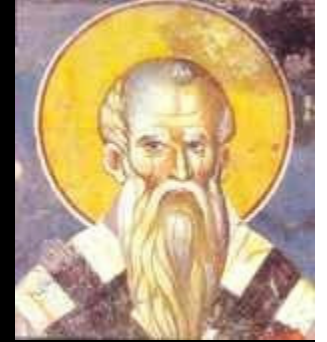
Early Church History



- Gregory of Nyssa's famous tributes to his sister Macrina the Younger, his mentor, a theologian, founder of a monastic community where slaves and free people were equals, and co-leader of a monastery
 - Gregory's *Life of Macrina* was his biography (379 AD)
 - Gregory's *On the Soul and Resurrection* were his dialogues with his sister as she taught him Christian doctrine
 - Macrina was the granddaughter of another Christian female philosopher, Macrina the Elder



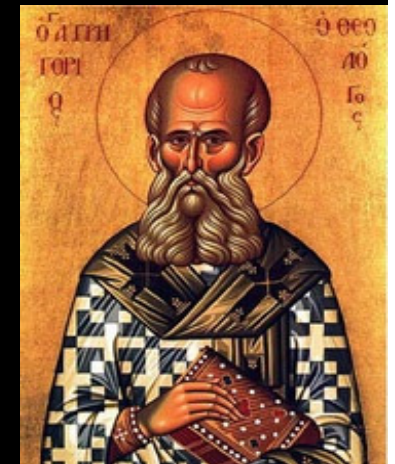
Early Church History



- Clement of Alexandria (c.150 – c.215), a teacher and theologian in Alexandria, Egypt, said that men and women needed to be treated equally:
 - ‘Let us, then, embracing more and more this good obedience, give ourselves to the Lord; clinging to what is surest, the cable of faith in Him, and understanding that the virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, the master of both is also one; one church, one temperance, one modesty; their food is common, marriage an equal yoke; respiration, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope, obedience, love all alike.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor*, chapter 4).

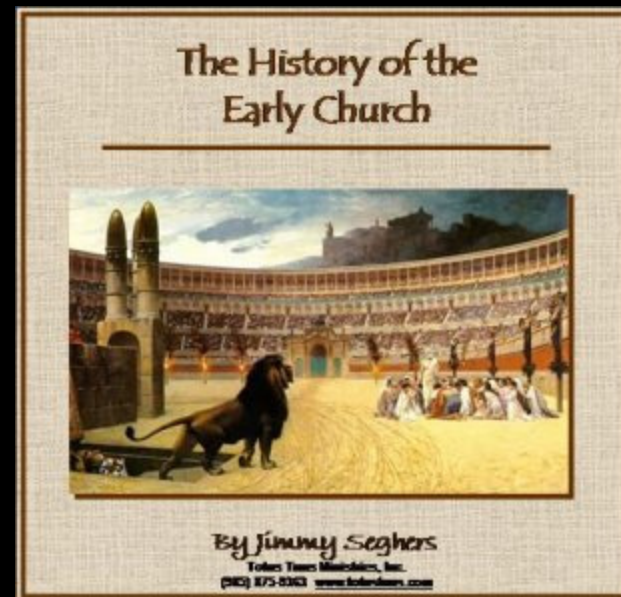
Early Church History

- Gregory of Nazianzus (c.329 – 390), archbishop of Constantinople, condemned laws made by men for men:
 - ‘Why did they punish the woman but considered the man innocent? The wife is considered sinful while the unfaithful man does not suffer. I don’t accept this legislation. I don’t accept this tradition. Men are legislators and all the laws are against women.’ (*Sermon XXXVII*).



Two Vital Criteria

- Scripture
- Early Church History

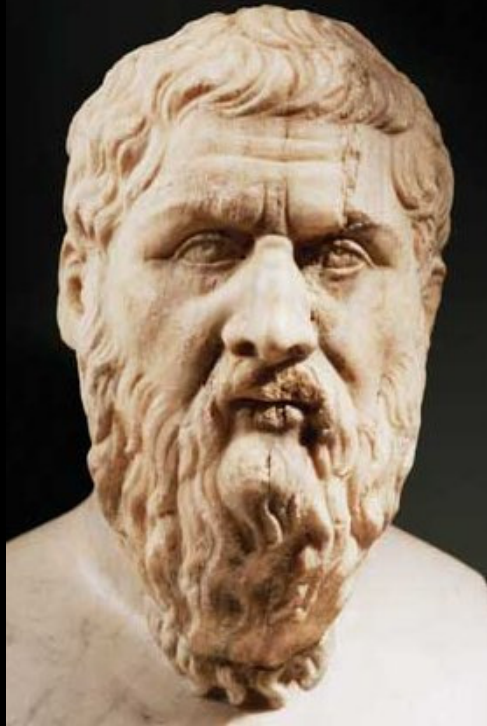


Then What Went Wrong?

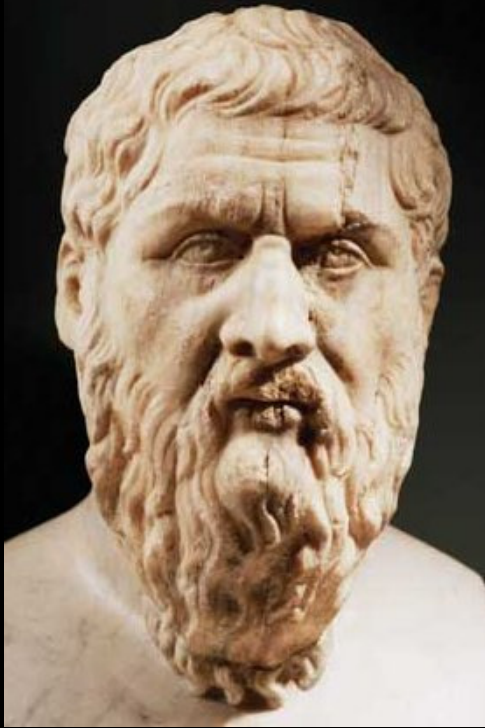
- “Roman women had a very limited role in public life. They could not attend, speak in, or vote at political assemblies and they could not hold any position of political responsibility. Whilst it is true that some women with powerful partners might influence public affairs through their husbands, these were the exceptions.”
 - *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, ‘The Role of Women in the Roman World’ by Mark Cartwright
- Probably affected Christians as they moved from house churches to larger public properties



Then What Went Wrong?



Then What Went Wrong?



- ‘It is only males who are created directly by the gods and are given souls. Those who live rightly return to the stars, but those who are ‘cowards or [lead unrighteous lives] may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation’. This downward progress may continue through successive reincarnations unless reversed. In this situation, obviously it is only men who are complete human beings and can hope for ultimate fulfilment; the best a woman can hope for is to become a man.’ (Plato, *Timaeus* 90e)

Then What Went Wrong?

- Women are infertile males, are defective by nature (Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, I, 728a)
- ‘It is the best for all tame animals to be ruled by human beings. For this is how they are kept alive. In the same way, the relationship between the male and the female is *by nature* such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled.’ (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254 b 10-14)



Then What Went Wrong?

Jewish

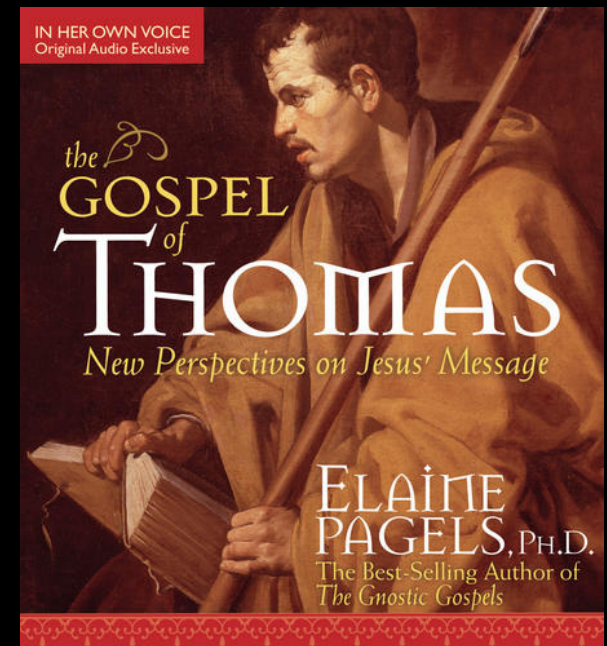
- Physical bodies good
- Death is the enemy
- Hope for bodily resurrection
- Care for the poor
- High sexual ethic of marriage, from creation order
- Men and women equal

Greek

- Physical bodies bad
- Death is release
- Hope for souls to be free; disembodiment
- Not much care for poor
- Have sex with anyone (Epicureans), or deny it (Stoics)
- Men superior to women

Example: A Woman's Death in the Greek Gnostic 'Gospel of Thomas'

- 114. Simon Peter said to them, “Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life.” Jesus said, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.”



Example: A Woman's Death in Orthodox Christianity

- 'But when day came it was clear to me from what I saw that the coming day was the utmost limit of her life in the flesh, since the fever had consumed all her innate strength... Nor as yet was I reconciled to the thought of losing the common glory of our family... For that she did not even in her last breath find anything strange in the hope of the Resurrection, nor even shrink at the departure from this life, but with lofty mind continued to discuss up to her last breath the convictions she had formed from the beginning about this life – all this seemed to me more than human... Therefore I think she revealed to the bystanders that divine and pure love of the invisible bridegroom, which she kept hidden and nourished in the secret places of the soul, and she published abroad the secret disposition of her heart – her hurrying towards Him Whom she desired, that she might speedily be with Him...' (Gregory of Nyssa in 379 AD, *Life of Macrina*)



Takeaways

- Biblical and Theological Foundation:
 - God made men and women equally in His image, loves them equally, and redeems them equally
- Ethical Foundation:
 - Christian faith offers a rational foundation for equal human dignity, with real historical testimony
- Prophetic Social Justice Mandate:
 - The influence of Plato and Aristotle and other cultural elements still need to be weeded out of the church, in this area, and others
 - Thankfully Christians who are not fully egalitarian on church leadership have still done much, and can do much, on behalf of women vis-à-vis social justice