



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER  
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

# Reconstruction

The Deep Roots of Early Christian Theology

# Reconstruction: Objectives

- Deconstructing Christian faith is common
- Common outcomes: Collapse? Holes?
- Why construct at all?
- Early Christianity helps us discern a strong foundation

# Reconstruction: Objectives

- Identify controversial issues commonly debated in Western Christianity
- Examine early Christian views on the issue
- Identify if, where, and why Christians shifted on the issue
- Recover a framework for approaching the issue in today's context



# Reconstruction

## The Deep Roots of Early Christian Theology

- 4/30 Slavery: How the Early Church Got It Right
- 5/7 Women in the Early Church
- 5/14 The Goodness of God and the Healing of Creation:  
Ministry According to Athanasius of Alexandria
- 5/21 Does God Have a Dark Side? Hell in the Early Church
- 5/28 Scripture: How Authoritative Is It? Why Do We Need It?
- 6/4 Scripture: Is the Bible the Product of Empire? Violence?
- 6/11 Politics, the Church, and Jesus' Restorative Justice
- 6/18 Sexual Ethics and the New Creation
- 6/25 The Person, the Face, and the Climb Up the Mountain:  
Gregory of Nyssa and the Shaping of Desire



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# Women in the Early Church

Mako A. Nagasawa

The Anástasis Center for Christian Education and Ministry

# Outline

- Introduction: Women in the Greco-Roman World (10 min)
- The Early Church: Women's Vocations (40 min)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> century (5 min)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> century (5 min)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> century (5 min)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> century (10 min)
  - Discussion (15 min)
- Speech and Authority in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16 (20 min)
  - Presentation (20 min)
- Open Q&A

# Outline

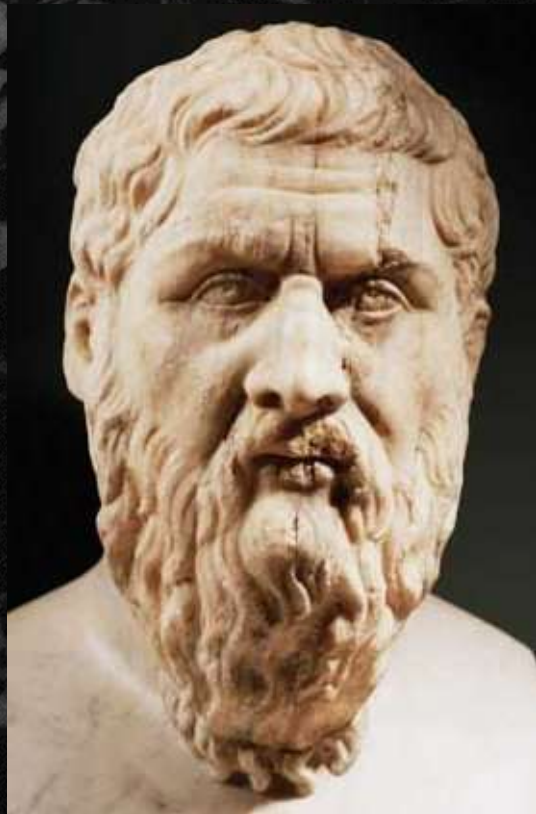
- **Introduction**
- The Early Church: Women's Vocations
- Speech and Authority in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16

# A Male-Dominated Field?

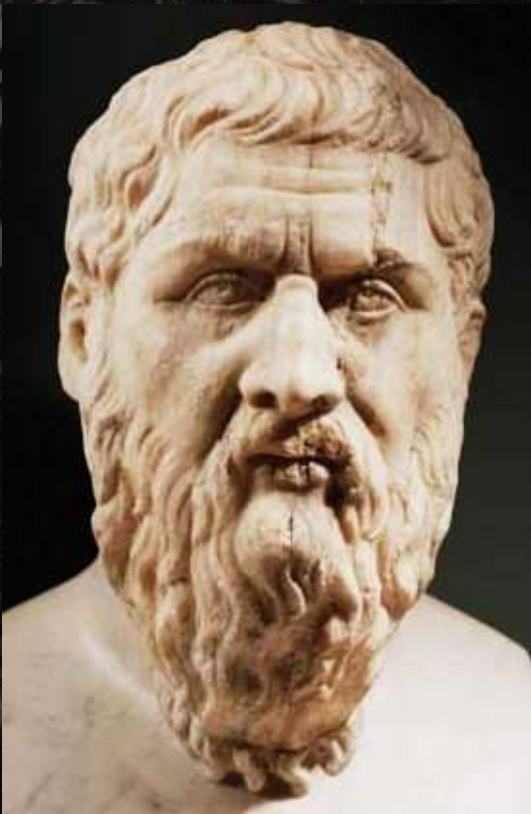




# Reasons to Not Expect Much



# Plato



- ‘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

# Aristotle

- 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



# Roman Empress Pulcheria

- Pulcheria, born in Constantinople in 398/9 AD
- Daughter of Emperor Arcadius and Empress Eudoxia
- Became an orphan with her siblings at age 10/11, in 409 AD
- Became guardian of younger brother Theodosius II at age 15/6, in 414
- **Became *augusta* in 414**
- With her sisters, took a vow of virginity to Christ



Photo credit: Classical Numismatic Group; CC by-SA3.0, Wikimedia and Flickr

# Roman Empress Pulcheria

- “She devoted her virginity to God, and instructed her sisters to do likewise. To avoid cause of scandal and opportunities for intrigue, she permitted no man to enter her palace. In confirmation of her resolution she took God, the priests, and all the subjects of the Roman empire as witnesses... It is said that **God frequently in many other cases revealed to the princess what was about to happen**, and that the most occurred to her and her sisters as witnesses of the Divine love. **They all pursue the same mode of life**; they are sedulous about the priests and the houses of prayer, and are munificent to needy strangers and the poor. These sisters generally take their meals and walks together, and pass their days and their nights in company, singing the praises of God.” *Sozomen, Church History*

book 9



Photo credit: Classical Numismatic Group; CC by-SA3.0, Wikimedia and Flickr

# Roman Empress Pulcheria

- Influenced the Third Ecumenical Council, Ephesus 431
- **Probably became sole emperor for a short time when Theodosius II died in 450**
- Married Marcian in 450, thus providing continuity, while keeping vow of chastity
- Influenced the Fourth Ecumenical Council, Chalcedon 451
- Died in 453, giving all her remaining wealth to the poor



Photo credit: Classical Numismatic Group; CC by-SA3.0, Wikimedia and Flickr

# Roman Empress Theodora

- 525 AD: 'Theodora had hardly been crowned when she started a crusade against prostitution... Brothel keepers and procurers of Constantinople were living off the earnings of poor women who were virtually their slaves.

Justinian and Theodora **rid the city of them and converted a palace into a convent** that might serve as a refuge for women who had escaped prostitution.'

- James Allan Evans, *The Empress Theodora*, p.31 - 32



# Roman Empress Theodora

- 534 AD: Actresses (also prostitutes) were free to leave the theatre; coercion made illegal
- 535 AD: Women cannot be imprisoned because male guards could rape them
- 541 AD: Marriages between social unequals was permitted and legalized
- Divorced wives given rights to children, finances, estate
- Justin II: divorce only by mutual consent



• James Allan Evans, *The Empress Theodora*, p.36 – 39



# Roman Emperor Irene

- Irene of Athens, born 752 AD
- Empress, wife of Emperor Leo IV until 780
- **Regent Emperor for her young son Constantine**
- Convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea 787
- Exiled by Constantine in 790
- Returned as co-ruler in 792
- Arrested and blinded her son in 797
- **Reigned as sole Emperor, until exiled because of intrigue in 802**
- Died in 803



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# Christian Tensions, West and East

- Emperor Charlemagne, “Emperor of the Romans”
  - Crowned by Pope Leo III of Rome in 800 AD
  - Latin-speaking “Holy Roman Empire” → Western Europe
  - Frankish law asserted that women could not own property, therefore could not rule
  - **Failure of Christian discipleship on women**
- Emperor Irene, “Emperor of the Romans”
  - Recognized by archbishops of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria
  - Greek-speaking *Romanoi*, “Byzantine” → Eastern Europe
  - **Christianity challenged Aristotelian ethic on women**

# Christian Tensions, West and East

THE WESTERN WORLD IN  
A.D. 800



# How Did We Go From... To... ?



‘The male is higher,  
the female lower,  
the male rules and  
the female is ruled.’

Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254 b 10-14



Emperor Irene (797 – 802)  
Emperor Zoe (1028 – 50)  
Emperor Theodora (1042 – 56)  
Emperor Maria (1180 – 2)

# Outline

- Introduction
- **The Early Church: Women's Vocations**
- Speech and Authority in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16

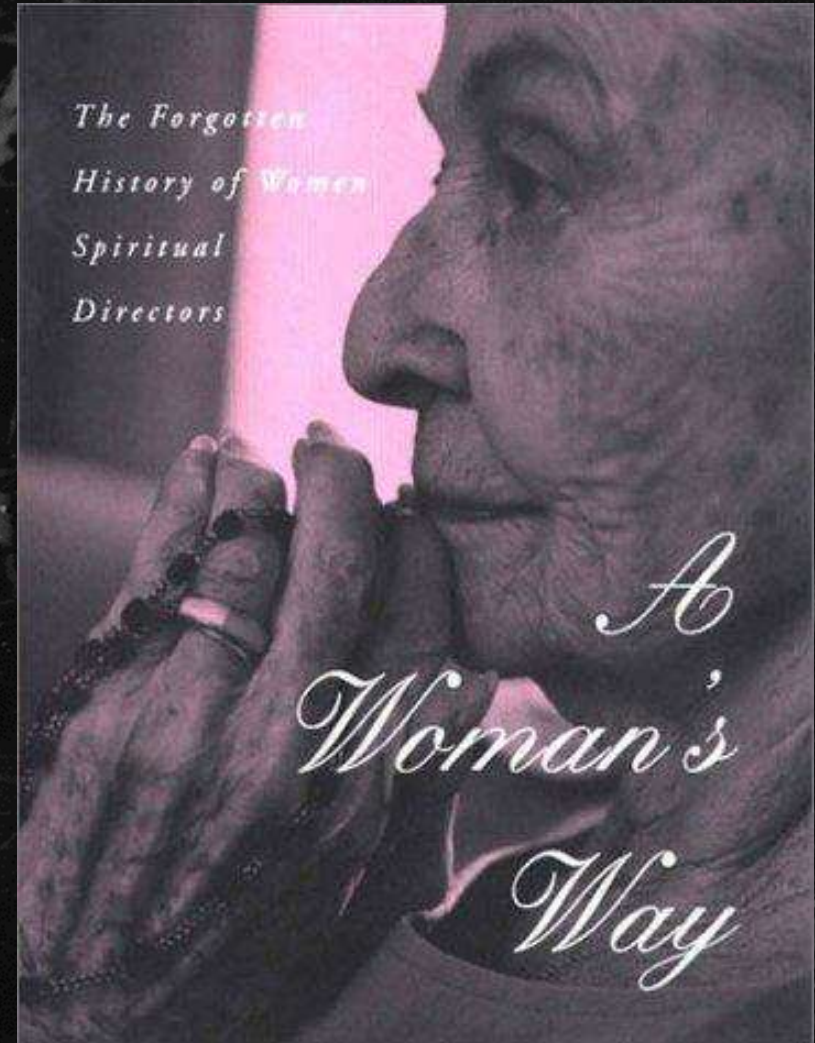
# For Discussion: Keep an Eye On

1. How did Christian faith open up new vocations for women?
2. What do you observe about early Christian engagement with
  1. The Genesis creation story?
  2. 1 Corinthians?
  3. Acts 2 and forms of speech?

# Early Church

- ‘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.



# Early Church

- Priscilla in the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome





# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Who was Priscilla?
  - Acts 18:1 – 2: Introduced with her husband Aquila
    - As exiled from Rome (home) by Emperor Claudius (49 AD)
    - Met Paul in Corinth (50 – 52 AD)
  - Acts 18:18: Became Paul's missionary companions
    - “Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.”
  - Acts 18:26: Taught Apollos in Ephesus
    - “But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Who was Priscilla?
  - 1 Cor.16:19: Leader of a house church in their home in Ephesus (55 AD).
  - Rom.16:3 – 5: Leader of a house church in their home, back in Rome (57 AD).
    - “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ... also greet the church that is in their house.”

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Pictured: First seven *prebyteroi* (elders) of the church at Rome

Thomas F. Torrance, "The Ministry of Women," *Touchstone*, Fall 1992



# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

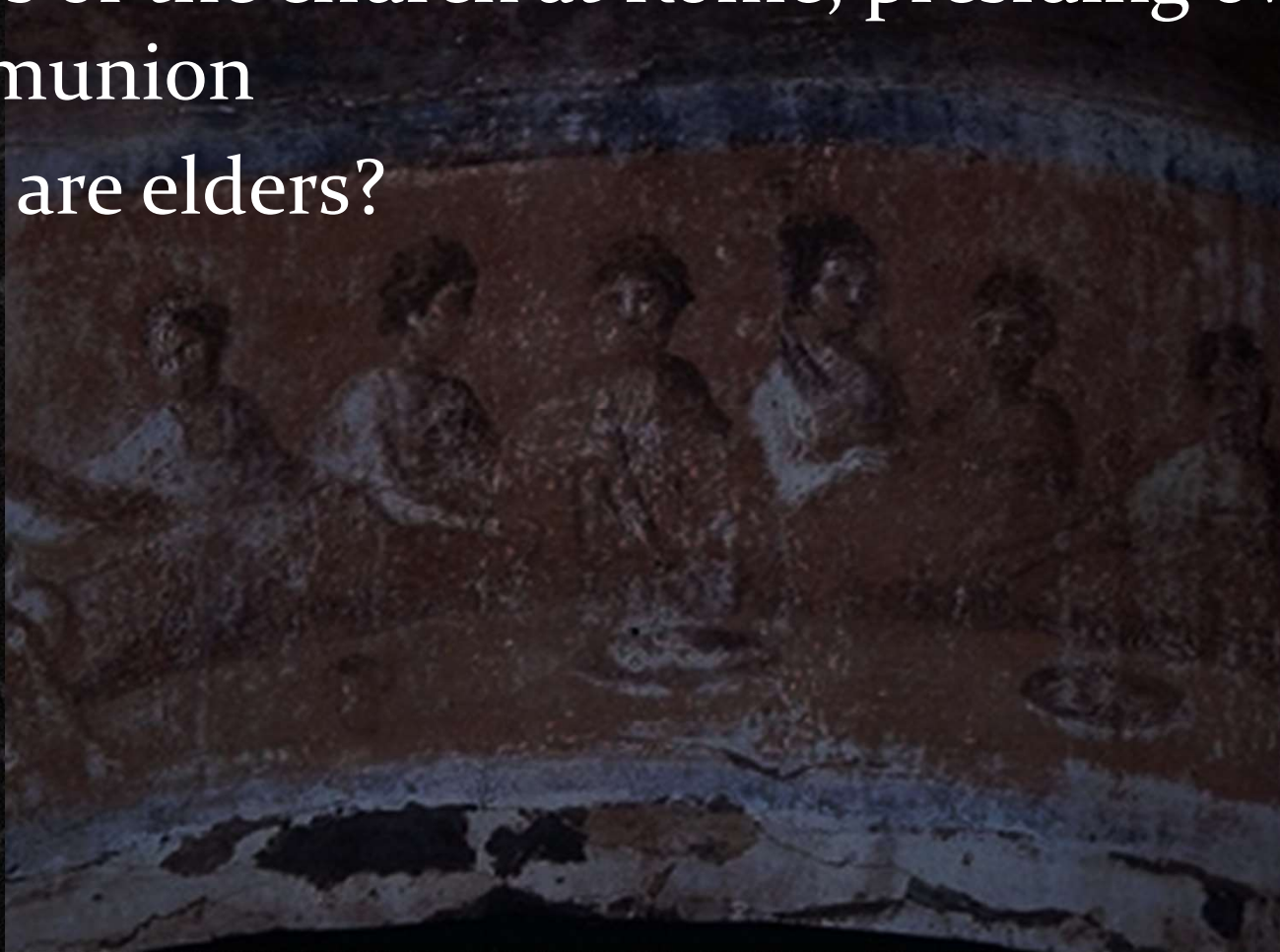
- Why seven elders? Jewish law and precedent
  - *Mishnah Sanhedrin*
- Sanhedrin in Jerusalem: 70 elders + 1 president
- Diaspora Jewish communities:
  - Larger synagogue: 23/4 elders (Alexandria)
  - Smaller synagogue (120 people): 7 elders

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- The earliest church in Rome
  - From Pentecost: “visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” (Acts 2:10)
  - Seven Jewish Christian elders of the Roman church
    - Patterned after seven Jewish elders
    - “Moreover the Jewish as well as the Christian character of this eucharistic celebration, together with its very early date, is accentuated by a rough Hebrew inscription in the foreground.” Thomas F. Torrance, “The Ministry of Women,” *Touchstone*, Fall 1992

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Pictured: Priscilla, with Aquila, as two of the elders of the church at Rome, presiding over communion
- Who are elders?



# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Israel's **earliest** leadership: male and female
  - Elders (Gen.12 – 50; Ex.4:29; 18:1 – 27)
  - Judges (Ex.18:1 – 27; Judg.4:4 – 5)
  - Prophetesses (Gen.24 – 27; Ex.15:20; Judg.4:4; Isa.8:3; 2 Ki.22:14 – 20; Neh.6:14)
  - Sources of Scripture (Ex.15:20 – 21; Judg.4 – 5; 1 Sam.2; Ruth; Pr.31; Esther; Lk.1 – 2)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Israel's **later** leadership: male
  - Priesthood temporary, fulfilled by Christ
  - Kingship\* temporary, fulfilled by Christ

See: John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (1992)

- \* Female kingship
  - **Athaliah** reigned as king of Southern Kingdom of Judah from 841 – 835 BC (2 Kings 11:1 – 2; 2 Chronicles 22:10 – 12)
  - **Salome Alexandra** reigned over Judea from 76 – 67 BC during the Hasmonean Dynasty



# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- The earliest church in Rome: Evidence of an eldership model
  - Jesus returned Israel to its earliest leadership model
    - “Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning” (Isa.1:26)
  - Jesus retold Israel’s story
    - Descended from Abraham (Mt.1)
    - Threat from a ‘Pharaoh’ and escape (Mt.2)
    - Return from Egypt, through water and wilderness (Mt.3:13 – 4:11)
    - Hearing from God on a mountain (Mt.5 – 7)
    - Fulfilled the Sinai covenant (e.g. Mt.5:17 – 20)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- The earliest church in Rome: Evidence of an eldership model
  - Jesus retold Israel's story, returned to Israel's earliest leadership model (cf. Isa.1:26)
    - Elders
      - Apostles: Junia (Rom.16:7)
      - Deacons: Phoebe (Rom.16:1)
      - House church leaders: Lydia (Acts 16:13 – 15, 40); Priscilla (Acts 18:18 – 26; Rom.16:3; 1 Cor.16:19); Chloe (1 Cor.1:11); Nympha (Col.4:15); probably Euodia and Syntyche (Phil.4:2) and Tryphena and Tryphosa (Rom.16:12); widows (1 Tim.3 – 5)
    - Judges (the function in 1 Cor.6:1 – 11)
    - Prophetesses (Acts 2:17 – 18; 21:9; 1 Cor.11:2 – 16)
  - See: Gordon Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of 1 Timothy 2:8-15." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (Summer 1992), p.341 – 360; cf. Mako A. Nagasawa, *The Implications of the Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership*.

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- The earliest church in Rome: Evidence of an eldership model
  - But what about 1 Timothy 2 – 3?
    - “I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man...” (2:12)
    - “If a man seeks to become an elder...” (3:1)
    - For more on this, see:
      - Appendix A
      - Mako A. Nagasawa, *The Implications of the Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership*
        - Here: [www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-messiah-paul-pastorals](http://www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-messiah-paul-pastorals)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- The earliest church in Rome: Evidence of an eldership model
  - But what about 1 Timothy 2 – 3?
  - Could Paul have possibly meant: “Women should never teach men, or be in authority over men”
    - Inside the church?
    - Outside the church?

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

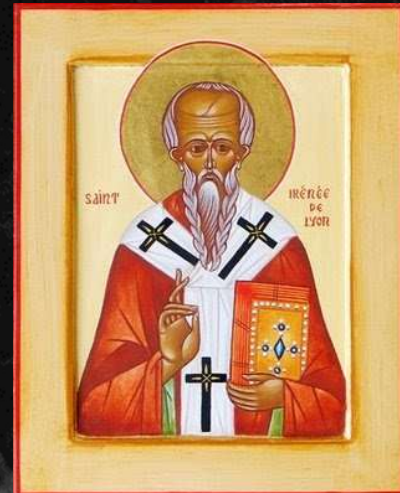
- The earliest church in Rome: Evidence of an eldership model
  - But what about 1 Timothy 2 – 3?
  - Could Paul have possibly meant: “Women should never teach men, or be in authority over men”
    - OT: Elders, judges, prophetesses, sources of Scripture
    - NT: Apostles, deacons, prophetesses, sources of Scripture
      - Phoebe and Paul’s epistle to the Romans (Rom.16:1 – 2)
      - Women prophesying and praying (1 Cor.11:2 – 16)
    - Early church evidence

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Martyrdom of Blandina of Lyons (177 AD)
  - “Blandina... constantly is looked to as a source of inspiration by the Christians undergoing torture. In one place, her direct encouragement to a young man in his hour of weakness allowed him to remain steadfast... **Notably, this feminine leadership occurs despite the presence of numerous men... including, among the Gallican Christians, the revered bishop Pothinus.**” Jackson Lashier, “In the Company of the Fathers: The Female Martyrs,” *Seedbed*, April 25, 2014
- Found in *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia*
  - An encouragement to Christian men and women to hold fast
  - Preserved by Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.1 – 2, 8
  - Almost certainly co-authored and compiled by Irenaeus of Lyons, the successor of bishop Pothinus

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus of Lyons (130 – 202 AD)
  - Trained in the community of Polycarp of Smyrna, who learned from the apostle John
    - Irenaeus' home region in Asia Minor was strongly Jewish
  - Bishop of Lyons after Pothinus, from 177 – 202
  - Clearest example of Christianity's biblical Jewish roots
  - Most important Christian writer of 2<sup>nd</sup> cent



# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus of Lyons (130 – 202 AD)
  - “Why also did it [the serpent] not prefer to make its attack upon the man instead of the woman? And if you say that it attacked her as being the weaker of the two, [I reply that], on the contrary, **she was the stronger... 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...” Irenaeus of Lyons, *Fragment 14*



# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus' *Demonstration*
  - Standard Christian discipleship material
  - Mixes terms and phrases from Genesis 1 and 2 (*Demonstration* 11)
    - Both “male and female” are encompassed
  - “Image of God”
    - Is (or includes) the body
    - “He traced His form on the formation”

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus' *Demonstration and Against Heresies*
  - Does not use a “rationality” or “psychological” model for the Trinity
    - E.g. Augustine's Mind, Knowledge, Will (cf. Origen)
    - Used to model the Trinity apart from, and prior to, creation
    - “Image of God” = rationality?
    - The divine *as* rationality →  
the divine *is* the rational →  
the human *is* the rational →  
the more rational is more human →  
men are more rational than women

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus' *Demonstration and Against Heresies*
  - Among writing theologians, gives the highest importance to physical bodies
    - Contra Gnosticism(s)
  - “Likeness of God” and “likeness to God” includes bodily, moral, relational growth
    - “To ascend” by the Spirit (esp. AH 4.38.3; AH 5)
    - Experience of bodily growth, reproduction
    - Experience of knowing, loving others and creation
    - Character and worship

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- Irenaeus' *Demonstration and Against Heresies*
  - Uses human models for the Trinity
    - Each person
      - Bodily form + life (immanence) and ascent to God (transcendence)
      - “The glory of God is a human being fully alive”
    - Each marriage
      - Life-giving bodily oneness (immanence) + life from God (transcendence)
    - Each human relationship in speech and self-giving love
  - Female bodies equally significant as male bodies
    - Body: Loving service → Martyrdom
    - Speech: Testimony → Teaching → Prophecy

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- 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)
  - Extremely popular
  - Shrines to Thecla *everywhere*

Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (2001)



Fresco of Paul and Thecla in Ephesus



# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> century

- The Acts of Paul and Thecla
  - Around 200 AD, Tertullian of Carthage, *On Baptism* 17, complains that ‘the example of Thecla’ is used by those who ‘defend the liberty of women to teach and to baptize.’
  - *Begs the question: What was the original Christian practice?*



Fresco of Paul and Thecla in Ephesus



# Early Church: 3<sup>rd</sup> century

- Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (203 AD)

- “For in the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and their sons and their daughters shall prophesy. And upon my servants and my handmaidens will I pour out of my Spirit; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. [Acts 2:17 – 18; Joel 2:28 – 29] And thus we — who both acknowledge and reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions as equally promised to us, and consider the other powers of the Holy Spirit as an agency of the Church for which also He was sent, administering all gifts in all, even as the Lord distributed to every one as well needfully collect them in writing, as commemorate them in reading to God's glory; that so no weakness or despondency of faith may suppose that the divine grace abode only among the ancients... since God always carries into effect what He has promised, for a testimony to unbelievers, to believers for a benefit.” *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, preface

# Early Church: 3<sup>rd</sup> century

- Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (203 AD)
  - “Her memoir is the most lengthy, personal and intimate account by a woman of her own experiences to have survived from the whole of the ancient world, dwelling on her anxieties about her child and the dreams that she experienced in prison before she was sent to the **beasts.**” Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York, NY: Mary Bear Publications and Norton & Company, 2015), p.518



# Early Church: 3<sup>rd</sup> century

- Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (203 AD)
  - “...in her imprisonment Perpetua is given a series of heavenly visions, which she shares with the group to encourage perseverance. **Notably, this feminine leadership occurs despite the presence of numerous men... [The story also portrays] the women in ways scandalous to the norms of a patriarchal culture where women are defined by and have worth only through their roles as daughters, wives, or mothers.** Perpetua, for example, is first introduced in her roles as a mother (she has an infant son) and a daughter (she is visited in prison by her father). However, Perpetua refuses to heed her father’s pleas for her to deny Christ in order to save her life and raise her son. Instead, she gives up the care of her infant to her father, thus renouncing both roles to follow Christ. Far from condemning her, the narrative praises this action as one of **paradigmatic discipleship.**” Jackson Lashier, “In the Company of the Fathers: The Female Martyrs,” *Seedbed*, April 25, 2014; <https://www.seedbed.com/company-fathers-female-martyrs/>

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

- Montanism: The abuse of prophetic speech
  - Leaders
    - Montanus (male)
    - Priscilla (female)
    - Maximilla (female)
  - “Paraclete” (Jn.14) = Montanus
  - “New Jerusalem” (Rev.21 – 22) = Pepusa and Tymion
    - Two towns in Phrygia, in Asia Minor, near Laodicea
  - Ecstatic visions and prophecy
    - Pagan precursor: orgiastic cult of Cybele
  - Ascetic discipline
    - No second marriages
    - More fasting, etc.

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

- Montanism:
  - Montanus' possible range of activity: 135 – 177 AD
    - Maximilla died 179 AD
  - Montanus provided salaries for those who preached his doctrine, whereas the catholic-orthodox church did not
  - Significant: Female bishops and presbyters

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

- Reaction to Montanism: Irenaeus of Lyons
  - “Others, again [the Montanists], that they may set at nought **the gift of the Spirit**, which in the latter times has been, by the good pleasure of the Father, poured out upon the human race, do not admit that aspect [of the evangelical dispensation] presented by John’s Gospel, in which the Lord promised that He would send **the Paraclete**; [Jn.14:16] etc. but set aside at once both the Gospel and **the prophetic Spirit**. Wretched men indeed! Who wish to be pseudo-prophets, forsooth, but who set aside the gift of prophecy from the Church; acting like those [the Encratitæ] who, on account of such as come in hypocrisy, hold themselves aloof from the communion of the brethren. We must conclude, moreover, that these men [the Montanists] can not admit the Apostle Paul either. **For, in his Epistle to the Corinthians [1 Cor.11:4-5] he speaks expressly of prophetic gifts, and recognizes men and women prophesying in the Church.** Sinning, therefore, in all these particulars, against the Spirit of God [Mt.12:31] they fall into the irremissible sin.” Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.11.9

# Early Church: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

- Reaction to Montanism: Summary
  - Rejection of the idea that Montanus was the Paraclete
  - Criticism of excesses in “prophecy”
  - Perhaps the disciples were worse than the originators
  - No criticism that women could not be prophetesses
  - No criticism that women could not be *presbytera* or bishops
- Montanism finally died out in the 6<sup>th</sup> century
  - Church hierarchy was partly a response to heresy, but most early heresies were about the Son
  - Montanism was nominally about the Spirit, but more about practice, behavior – why not outright condemn ordaining women?

# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Council of Laodicea (c.360 AD)
  - Canon 11
    - “It is not allowed for those women who are called *presbytides* (‘presbyters / priests / elders’) or *prokathēmenai* (‘women presidents’) to be *kathistasthai* (‘appointed’) in the churches.”
  - Canon 45
    - “Women should not approach the altar”
  - No mention of Montanism, but exacerbated by it?
- Atto of Vercelli (885 – 961 AD), *Letter to Ambrose*, affirmed that they were referring to female ordained leaders

See discussion in Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek (editors), *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 192. See discussion in Marg Mowczko, “Atto of Vercelli On Female Priests in the Early Church,” *Marg Mowczko*, June 30, 2020; <https://margmowczko.com/atto-of-vercelli-female-priests-elders-early-church/>



# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century



# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Despite this trend, women continued to occupy important roles in mission and leadership
  - Nino of Georgia (c.296 – c.340 AD)
  - Melania the Elder (325 – 410 AD)
  - Macrina the Younger (c.330 – c.379 AD)
  - Paula of Rome (347 – 404 AD)
  - Brigit of Ireland (c.453 – c.524 AD)
  - Mary of Egypt (c.344 – c.421 AD)



# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Nino of Georgia (c.296 – c.340 AD)
  - Born in Cappadocia, central Asia Minor
  - Became a missionary to Georgia (Eastern Europe)
  - Attributed miracles
  - Conversion of King Mirian III in 334 AD
    - Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta now stands on the site of the first church building
  - One tradition: vision of a scroll with Scriptures to encourage her
    - Gal.3:28; Mt.28:19; Lk.2:32; Mt.26:13; Mt.10:40/Jn.13:20; Jn.11; Mt.10:28/Lk.12:4; Mt.28:10/Lk.24:10/Jn.20:17



See discussion in Marg Mowczko, “Nino of Georgia: A Woman Evangelist “Equal to the Apostles”,” *Marg Mowczko*, January 14, 2012; <https://margmowczko.com/nino-of-georgia/>

# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Nino of Georgia (c.296 – c.340 AD)



# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Nino of Georgia (c.296 – c.340 AD)
  - Georgian tradition: “In the Georgian traditions surrounding Nino, women feature prominently. Nino herself is tutored by an Armenian woman named Sara the Hermit; **Nino baptises** the 35 nuns who were about to be martyred in Armenia (including the well-known Hripsime); Nino gathers a number of women disciples in Mcxeta (the former capital of Georgia); **Nino baptises** the royal family (even after Greek priests were to have been sent by Helena and Constantine); and some parts of her story itself are attributed to women authors.” See discussion in Paul Crego, “St Nino and the Evangelisation of Georgia”, *St. Nina Quarterly* 3.1. Cited by Marg Mowczko, “Nino of Georgia: A Woman Evangelist “Equal to the Apostles””, *Marg Mowczko*, January 14, 2012; <https://margmowczko.com/nino-of-georgia/> footnote 8.



# Early Church: 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries

- Brigit of Ireland (c.453 – c.524 AD)
  - “Brigit went, with some other young women, to Bishop Mél, in Telcha Mide, to take the veil [i.e. to become a religious sister]. The Bishop was happy to oblige and Brigit stayed behind out of humility, so that she might be the last to whom the veil should be given. A beam of fire rose from her head to the ridgepole of the church’s ceiling. Bishop Mél asked: “Who is that woman?” MacCaille answered: “She is Brigit.” “Come, O holy Brigit,” said Bishop Mél, “that the veil may be imposed on your head before the other women.” **Then it happened, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, that the prayer that was read over Brigit was the form of ordination for a bishop...**

# Early Church: 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries

- Brigit of Ireland (c.453 – c.524 AD)
  - “MacCaille said: “The order of a bishop should not be [conferred] on a woman.” But Bishop Mél declared: “This lies outside my power because **it was through God’s doing** that this honour that transcends every woman was given her.” That is why the men of Ireland give the honour of **bishop** to Brigit’s **SUCCESSOR.**” *Leabhar Breac – On the Life of Brigit*, translated from the Gaelic by Whitley Stokes, in *Lives of the Saints; From the Book of Lismore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), p.188;  
<http://www.ministryforwomen.org/latin/brigit.asp>

# Early Church: Organization

- Itinerants: ministry by travel, by need
- Parishes: ministry by settled geography
- Monasteries: ministry for trauma recovery, and/or by gifting/charism

# Early Church: Organization

- Itinerants: ministry by travel, by need
  - Apostles (e.g. Junia)
  - Prophets (e.g. Philip's daughters)
  - Missionaries (e.g. Thecla, Nino)
  - Teachers (e.g. Thecla, Origen, Jerome)
  - **Many early opportunities for women**
- Parishes: ministry by settled geography
- Monasteries: ministry for trauma recovery, and/or by gifting/charism

# Early Church: Organization

- Itinerants: ministry by travel, by need
- Parishes: ministry by settled geography
  - From house churches to networks to cathedrals
  - From mentor-mentee to geographical jurisdiction
  - From apostolic reputation to major cities: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople
  - **Women in the record, but phased out**
- Monasteries: ministry for trauma recovery, and/or by gifting/charism



# Early Church: Organization

- Itinerants: ministry by travel, by need
- Parishes: ministry by settled geography
- Monasteries: ministry for trauma recovery, and/or by gifting/charism
  - Egypt: Pachomius, Antony, Moses, Susan
  - Palestine: “Tall Brothers,” Mary, Melania, Paula
  - Urban monasticism: Macrina, Basil, Marcella, hospitals, etc.
  - Roman Gaul: John Cassian, Vincent of Lerins
  - Ireland: Brigit, Columba, Columbanus

# Early Church: Organization

- Itinerants: ministry by travel, by need
- Parishes: ministry by settled geography
- Monasteries: ministry for trauma recovery, and/or by gifting/charism
  - Never fully and easily integrated with the parishes
  - Most opportunities for women
  - Monasteries expressed vocation apart from family
  - Monasteries became Catholic orders and guilds, Protestant parachurches, secular corporations

# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Melania the Elder (325 – 410 AD)
  - Wealthy widow in Rome, joined Marcella's order
  - **Founder of a dual (male and female) monastic community on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, in 375 AD**
  - **Left her young son in Rome to do so, and was *honored for it* in Christian literature (!)**
  - Called a “Desert Mother”
  - Friend and sponsor of Jerome
  - Friend of Augustine, Paulinus of Nola
  - Mentor to Evagrius of Pontus



# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Paula of Rome (347 – 404 AD)
  - “Together with Jerome, Paula and Eustochium spent more than a year traveling throughout Jerusalem (where they visited Melania’s monastery) and Egypt (where they stayed with the desert fathers). Finally, they settled in Bethlehem, where **Paula used her own money and credit to establish two monasteries**—one for men overseen by Jerome, and another for women. The convent was a mix of women from different social classes and countries who were united by the vows they’d taken, their complete segregation from men, even eunuchs, and their renunciation of any personal possessions and all forms of vanity...

# Early Church: 4<sup>th</sup> century

- Paula of Rome (347 – 404 AD)
  - “Paula, fanatical in her practice, liked to say, “A clean body and a clean dress mean an unclean soul.” But her lasting impact is as an intellectual. **She managed Jerome’s scholarly work, and she suggested that he translate the Bible (then in Hebrew and Greek) into Latin. She helped him pull it off, providing all the reference materials. Having taught herself Hebrew, she edited the manuscript for him, and she and her daughter made copies by hand.** This version of the Bible, known as the Vulgate, became the standard version for the Catholic Church for about the next 1,500 years.” Alex Mar, “The Rebel Virgins and Desert Mothers Who Have Been Written Out of Christianity’s Early History,” *Atlas Obscura*, January 21, 2016; <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-rebel-virgins-and-desert-mothers-who-have-been-written-out-of-christianitys-early-history>

# Discussion

1. How did Christian faith open up new vocations for women?
2. How did early Christians engage with
  1. The Genesis creation story?
  2. 1 Corinthians?
  3. Acts 2 and forms of speech?
3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Augustine: rationality

Irenaeus: includes bodily, moral, and relational growth

  1. Which view is more prominent today?
  2. How might that affect views of women in leadership?

# Outline

- Introduction
- The Early Church: Women's Vocations
- **Speech and Authority in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16**

# Opportunities for Women

- Authority in the Church: 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16





# Opportunities for Women

- Spiritual Authority and Cultural/Biological Authority
  - Can a wife preach when her husband is part of the congregation?
  - Can a daughter preach to her father?
  - Can a former prostitute preach to honorable women and men?
  - And does it matter what she wears?

# Opportunities for Women

- Why were “head” and “headcoverings” coming up?
  - Roman law required:
    - Honored women: *stola* and *palla*
    - Prostitutes, adulteresses: male *toga*; braided, uncovered hair
  - How should ex-prostitutes gifted to preach dress?
    - Is she appearing like a man? Does that break Jewish law?
    - Is she sexually signaling?
    - Should we break Roman law to honor a Christian woman preacher? And not signal low status or sexuality?
  - Lots of other combinations involving head coverings
    - E.g. Men wearing head coverings – associated with funerals

# Opportunities for Women

- A: All churches do this
- B: Heads: Men uncover; women cover
- C: Women reveal who Humanity is
- D: Respect where you come from: Eve from Adam
- E: Gender interdependence in creation
- F: Women wear a sign of authority on their heads
- E': Gender interdependence "in the Lord"
- D': Respect where you come from: man from mother
- C': Women wear a hair covering
- B': Heads: Men uncover; women cover with hair
- A': All churches do this

# Opportunities for Women

- Embodying this thread of meaning of *kephale*
  - Head is the “organ” or “body part” of speech
  - “Head” refers to the person who speaks or supplies God’s words

# Opportunities for Women

- Embodying this thread of meaning of *kephale*
  - God was a “head” (speaker of words) to Moses
  - Moses was a “head” (speaker of words) to Aaron

“Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be *as God to him.*” (Ex.4:16)

- Compare: “God is the head of Christ” (1 Cor.11:2 – 3)

# Opportunities for Women

- Embodying this thread of meaning of *kephale*
  - The “heads” (leaders) to speak God’s words to the people: judge, instruct, and prophecy (Mic.3:9 – 11)

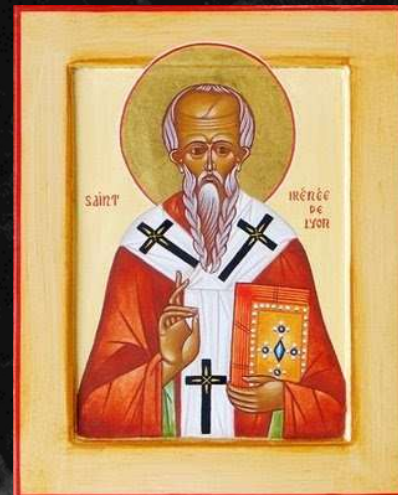
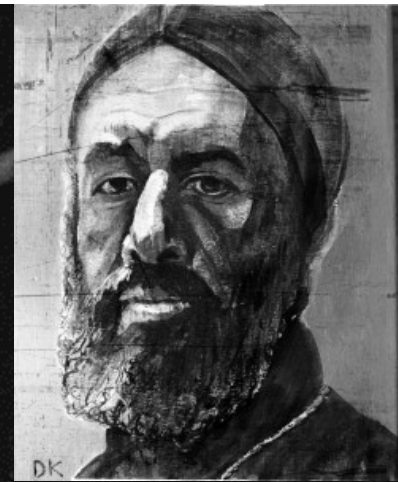
“Now hear this, **heads** of the house of Jacob  
And rulers of the house of Israel,  
Who abhor justice  
And twist everything that is straight...  
Her leaders **pronounce** judgment for a bribe;  
Her priests **instruct** for a price;  
And her prophets **divine** for money.” (Mic.3:9 – 11)

# Opportunities for Women

- Men, If You Lust, Think of Your Mother
  - Women listening to a male preacher: think of Eve honoring Adam as source (11:8)
  - Men listening to a female preacher: think of your mother, honoring her as source (11:12)
    - ‘Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching’ (Prov.1:8) – implied from Genesis 1 – 2
    - Even if she is your wife, daughter, or from lower class of honor
    - Lust, disrespect are your problems, men
    - Men: You don’t lust after or disrespect your mother (Mt.5:27 – 30)
  - “You gotta respect where you came from”

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Irenaeus of Lyons, bishop

- “The following are some specimens of what they [the gnostic Valentinians] attempt to accommodate out of the Scriptures to their opinions... They maintain, further, that that girl of twelve years old, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, [Lk.8:41] to whom the Lord approached and raised her from the dead, was a type of Achamoth, to whom their Christ, by extending himself, imparted shape, and whom he led anew to the perception of that light which had forsaken her...



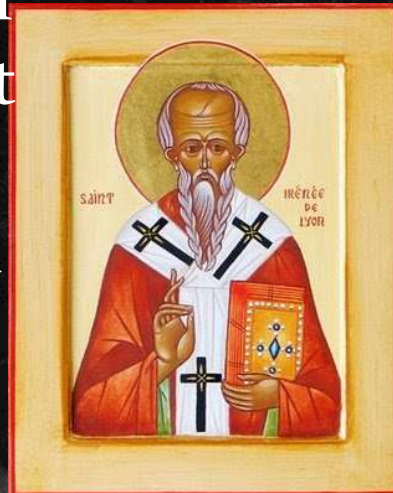


# Evidence of Women's Authority: Irenaeus of Lyons, bishop



- “And that the Saviour appeared to her when she lay outside of the Pleroma as a kind of abortion, they affirm Paul to have declared in his Epistle to the Corinthians [in these words], “And last of all, He appeared to me also, as to one born out of due time.” [1 Cor.15:8] Again, the coming of the Saviour with His attendants to Achamoth is declared in like manner by him in the same Epistle, when he says, “A woman ought to have a veil [*kalumma*] upon her head, because of the angels.” [1 Cor.11:10] Now, that Achamoth, when the Saviour came to her, drew a veil over herself through modesty, Moses rendered manifest when he put a veil upon his face...

- Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 1.8.2



# Evidence of Women's Authority: Irenaeus of Lyons, bishop

- Main Point:
  - Paul said a woman should have *authority* on her head as a woman
    - *exousian*: *ek* (out from) *ousia* (one's substance)
    - *kalumma* (veil)
    - How did *kalumma* get substituted in for *exousian*?
    - What about Moses' veil taken away in Christ (2 Cor.3:13)?
  - Wear a veil?
    - Valentinians said yes
    - Irenaeus said no
      - Irenaeus says this is one of many examples of how the Gnostics mishandle Scripture

# Evidence of Women's Authority: A Negative Trend

- Trends in the Early Church: Women...
  - Are authoritative as women: Irenaeus
    - Biblical, Hebraic view
      - Of bodies and embodiment, speech in creation and Israel
    - From Asia Minor: richest apostolic investment
    - A bishop, ordained by Polycarp (others are teachers)
  - Need to be veiled: Clement, Tertullian (teachers)
  - Should not speak publicly: Origen (teacher)
  - See Appendix B

# Evidence of Women's Authority: John Chrysostom, archbishop



- John Chrysostom (c.349 – 407 AD)
  - Priest in Antioch (386 – 397)
  - Archbishop of Constantinople (397 – 407)
  - One of three holy hierarchs and fathers of the Eastern church

‘Their women used both to pray and prophesy unveiled and with their head bare, **for then women also used to prophesy**, but the men went so far as to wear long hair as having spent their time in philosophy..’

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Homily 26 on 11:2 – 16

# Evidence of Women's Authority: John Chrysostom, archbishop



- John Chrysostom (c.349 – 407 AD), on whether Eve was subordinated to Adam from creation

‘Wherefore you see, she was **not subjected** as soon as she was made; **nor, when He brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her:** he said indeed that she was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh’

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Homily 26 on 11:2 – 16

See Hebrew Masoretic Genesis 2:20 + rabbinical commentary *Genesis Rabbah*: “a helper against him”

# Opportunities for Women

- A: All churches do this
- B: Heads: Men uncover; women cover
- C: Women reveal who Humanity is
- D: Respect where you come from: Eve from Adam
- E: Gender interdependence in creation
- F: Women wear a sign of authority on their heads
- E': Gender interdependence "in the Lord"
- D': Respect where you come from: man from mother
- C': Women wear a hair covering
- B': Heads: Men uncover; women cover with hair
- A': All churches do this

# Opportunities for Women

- Paul's Answer: D and D'
  - Paul does use “the creation order” from Genesis 2
  - But places men in the congregation in the role of sons to their mother!
  - Not men over women, or “maleness” over “femaleness”
- No inherent “conflict of position” by gender or status
  - Wives may preach to their husbands
  - Daughters may preach even to their fathers(!)
  - Formerly disgraced women to honorable men and women
  - Women should appear as women within their cultural context

# Opportunities for Women

- Preacher-congregation = “head-body” in a Christian context, because the “head”
  - Is authoritative because Jesus’ teaching is, when spoken from a transformed life
  - Shared preaching authority (shared pulpit)
  - Does not have authority over the congregation in every way, like whether you should get married (1 Cor.7:25)
  - Does not have permanent authority in his/her person



# Opportunities for Women

- How do we determine what “head” (*kephale*) means?
- In ordinary Greek usage, “head” had too many variations of meaning, so:
  - Jesus, apostles defined “head” according to how they established it in Christian worship
    - “Heads” could be gifted women and men
    - Jesus is the true “head” of his body
    - Preachers and pray-ers vocalize the “head” role temporarily and situationally on a rotating basis (1 Cor.11:2 – 16)
  - Context, context: “I’m mad about my flat”

# Opportunities for Women

- How do we determine what “head” (*kephale*) means?
  - Jesus trained male and female disciples:
    - Mary of Nazareth, Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary of Bethany, women who proclaimed the resurrection, etc.
    - Junia, “well known among the apostles” (Rom.16:1 – 2); etc.
  - God is restoring His *creation order*
    - Men look at women preachers as *mother*
    - *Not as wife, or potential partner, or daughter, or dishonorable temptress*
    - Men and women speaking together: **Joel 2:28 – 29 in Acts 2**

# Opportunities for Women

- Reflecting back on Genesis
  - ‘Head’ as source of *God’s words for shared authority*:
  - God → Adam → Eve
- Adam/Eve (in oneness, Gen.1:27) → their descendants
  - “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake **your mother’s teaching**” (Prov.1:8)
  - “A man will leave his father and mother” (Gen.2:25)
    - Every new married couple is a new “Adam and Eve”
    - Directly “under” God, not the extended family
    - Recapitulates/retells the story of the first married couple

# Opportunities for Women

- The challenge to Orthodox and Catholics:
  - Did jurisdiction by geography/territory really ever work?
  - Where is the order of creation in worship and leadership?
  - No uniform male leadership in
    - Scripture
    - History

# Opportunities for Women

- The challenge to evangelical Protestants:
  - If men lust, then spiritual formation is required
    - Preliminary discipleship and ethics come before evangelism!
    - Patriarchy is wrong
      - Men-women is *not* the head-body relation
      - Preacher-congregation relation is the head-body relation
  - On this occasion, interpretation of Scripture requires embodied Church practice and context
    - The Church comes “before” New Testament Scripture

# Opportunities for Women

- The challenge to liberal Protestants:
  - Not Western individualism
  - A larger relational vision and story: creation order
  - Gender matters
  - Some cultural norms about appearance matter

# For More Info

- On the webpage *The Church and Women's Leadership*:
  - <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/church-and-women-leadership>
- “Women Speaking Authoritatively in the Worship Service: Notes on 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16”
- “Women and Speech in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14”
- “The Implications of the Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership”
- “Paul's View of Headship in Marriage: How 1 Corinthians Interprets Ephesians and Colossians”

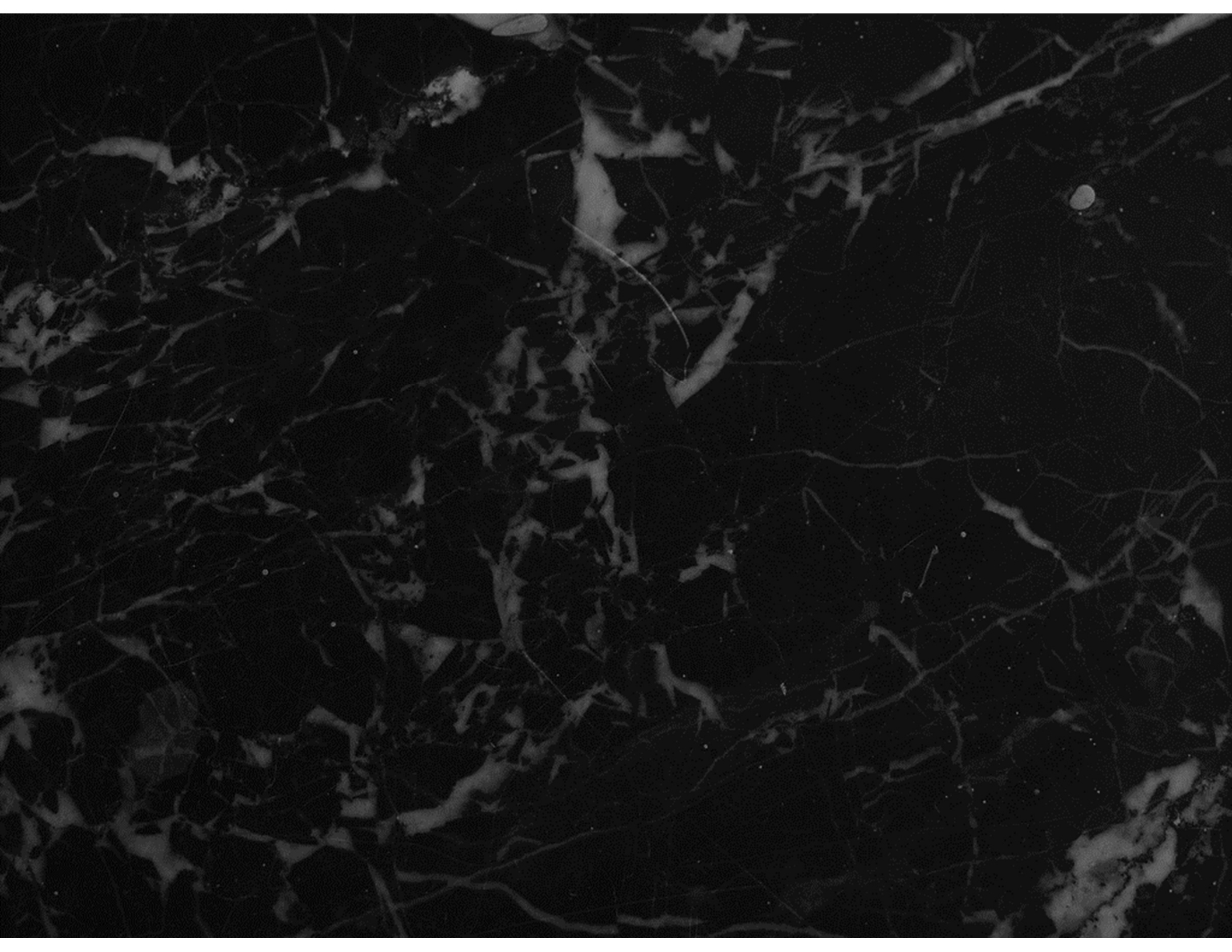
# For More Info

- “The Rights of Women in the Bible”
- “The Theme of Women in Judges, and the Portrayal of Deborah as Leader”
- And many other curated resources



# Discussion

1. How do the examples of women in the early church inform our reading of
  1. 1 Timothy 2 – 3?
  2. 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16?



# Appendices

- Appendix A: 1 Timothy and Women in Leadership
- Appendix B: Patristic Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16

# Appendices

- Appendix A: 1 Timothy and Women in Leadership
- Appendix B: Patristic Interpretations of 1 Corinthians  
11:2 – 16

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What About 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)

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- See Mako A. Nagasawa, *The Implications of the Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership*

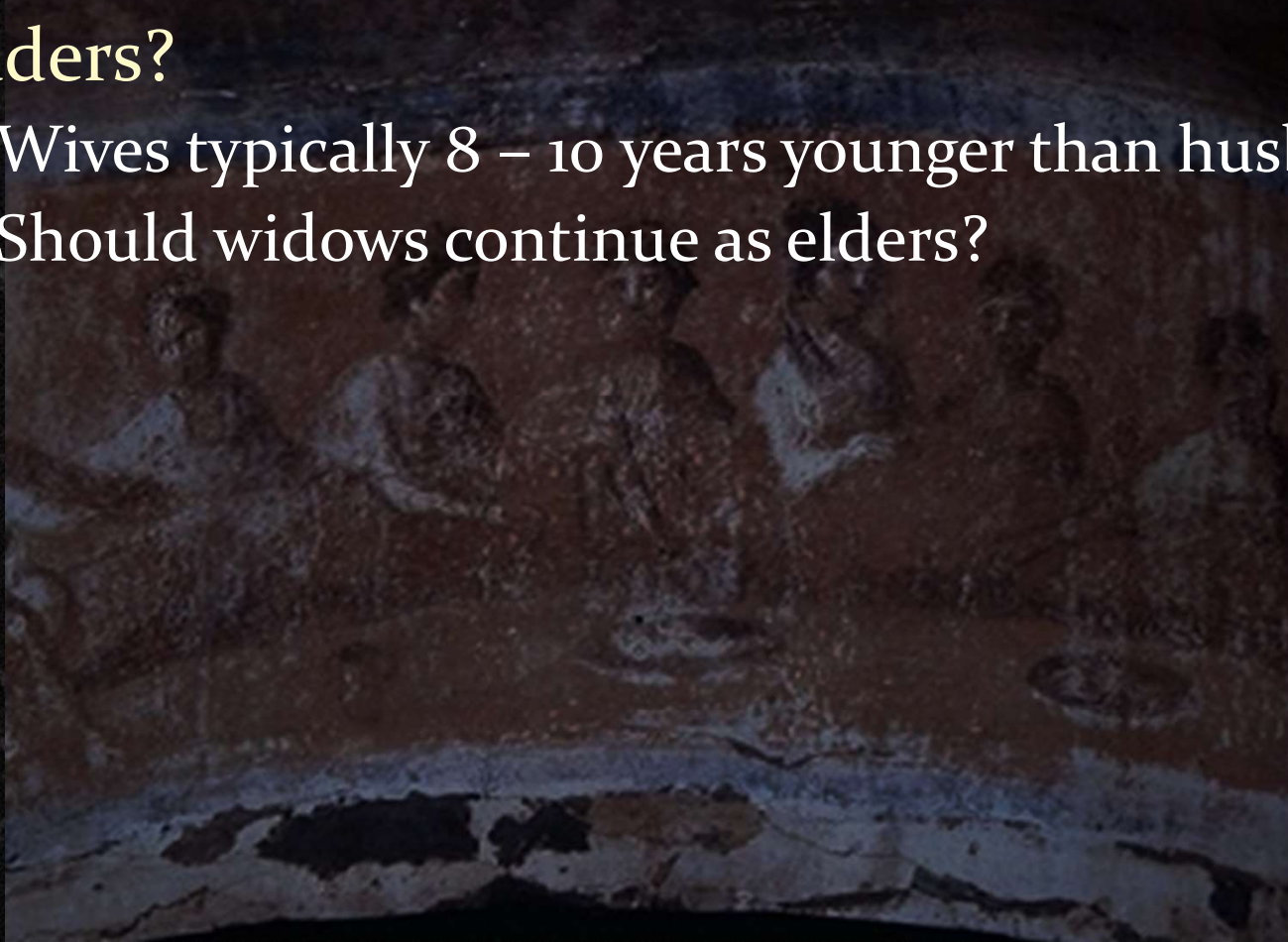
- [www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-messiah-paul-pastorals](http://www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-messiah-paul-pastorals)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Elders in 1 Timothy 3
  - “If any *one (tis)* aspires to the office of elder..” (1 Tim.3:1)
    - The masculine pronoun can indicate either a man or a woman
    - Inclusive masculine
      - Spanish “*el*” includes “*ella*”
      - English “*you guys*” includes “*you gals*”
    - “But **some men** joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and **a woman named Damaris and others** with them” (Acts 17:34)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What About 1 Timothy 5?
  - Do widows continue to be elders? i.e. house church leaders?
    - Wives typically 8 – 10 years younger than husbands
    - Should widows continue as elders?



# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What About 1 Timothy 5?

C. Church Leaders: Elders and Deacons (3:1 – 13)	C' Church Leaders: Older and Younger Widows (5:3 – 25)
Elders... able to teach... (3:1 – 7)	The elders... especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching (5:17)
Elders (3:1 – 7)	Older widows over sixty years old (5:3 – 10)
The husband of one wife (3:2)	The wife of one husband (5:9)
Hospitable (3:2)	If she has shown hospitality to strangers...washed the saints' feet (5:10)
Temperate, prudent, respectable... not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money (3:2 – 3)	If she has assisted those in distress, if she has devoted herself to every good work (5:10)
One who manages his own household, keeping his children under control with all dignity (3:4)	Be put on the list... if she has brought up children (5:9 – 10)
Have a good reputation with those outside the church (3:7)	Above reproach... Having a reputation for good works (5:7, 10)
Deacons... not double-tongued... not malicious gossips, but temperate (3:8 – 11)	Younger widows... not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention (5:11 – 13)
Deacons... faithful in all things (3:8) ... beyond reproach (3:10)	Younger widows... get married, bear children, keep house, give the enemy no occasion for reproach (5:14)



# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What About 1 Timothy 2?
  - Does *gyne* and *andros* in 2:11 – 12 refer to:
    - “Woman and man”?
    - “Wife and husband”?
  - Does *authentein* in 2:12 mean:
    - “Exercise authority”?
    - “Exercise immoral authority”?
  - Does *didaskein ... oude authentein* in 2:12 mean one or two things? (*hendiadys*)
  - What does “*she* will be saved through *the* childbearing” in 2:15 mean?

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What is Paul's concern in 1 Timothy 4?
  - Some are saying marriage is evil:
    - <sup>1</sup> But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons... <sup>3</sup> **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. <sup>4</sup> **For everything created by God is good...** (4:1 – 4)
  - Disembodied gnostic Hellenism(s) over Hebraic good, embodied creation
  - Ephesus: cults where women dominated

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- What About 1 Timothy 2?
  - Refers to marriages where the wife wants celibacy, from gnostic Hellenism(s)
  - A plausible reading:
    - <sup>11</sup> A **wife** [γυνή] must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> But I do not allow a **wife** [γυναῖκί] to *teach and exercise immoral authority* over a **husband** [ἀνδρός], but to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve [which shows the influence and power of Eve, since creation gets better]. <sup>14</sup> And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the **wife** [γυνή] being deceived, fell into transgression [whereas Adam was led knowingly to unfaithfulness, which is the very situation we want to avoid]. <sup>15</sup> But **she** [that is, Eve] will be preserved [σωθήσεται] through **the childbearing** [that is, of the Messiah, per Gen.3:14 – 15] if **they** [that is, the women] continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.
  - Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16 (men, women prophesying) to come!

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

- Priscilla, Eldership, and 1 Timothy
  - Christian Eldership:
    - Men and women
    - Based on Israel's Elders
    - Reinvigorated by Jesus, recapitulation of Israel's story
  - Responsibilities:
    - "The elders who rule well... preaching and teaching" (1 Tim.5:17)

# Early Church: 1<sup>st</sup> century

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- Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 1.8.2



# Evidence of Women's Authority: Clement of Alexandria, teacher

- “Let her be entirely covered, unless she happens to be at home. For that style of dress is grave, and protects from being gazed at. And she will never fall, who puts before her eyes modesty, and her **shawl**; nor will she invite another to fall into sin by uncovering her face. For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray **veiled**.”

- Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 3.1

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Irenaeus of Lyons, bishop

- Main Point:
  - Paul said a woman should have *authority* on her head as a woman
    - *exousian*: *ek* (out from) *ousia* (one's substance)
    - *kalumma* (veil)
    - How did *kalumma* get substituted in for *exousian*?
    - What about Moses' veil taken away in Christ (2 Cor.3:13)?
  - Wear a veil?
    - Valentinians said women should when prophesying
    - Irenaeus said no
      - Irenaeus says this is one of many examples of how the Gnostics mishandle Scripture

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Clement of Alexandria, teacher

- “Let her be entirely covered, unless she happens to be at home. For that style of dress is grave, and protects from being gazed at. And she will never fall, who puts before her eyes modesty, and her shawl; nor will she invite another to fall into sin by uncovering her face. For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray veiled.”

- Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 3.1

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Clement of Alexandria, teacher

- Main Point:
  - Clement may be exaggerating the attire: “entirely covered”?
  - Clement twists the context of the passage where women are prophesying
    - Clement says, “Unless she happens to be at home”
    - But Paul’s churches met in private homes!
    - Paul’s churches were both “public gatherings” and “in private homes”! That’s why the situation was complex

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Tertullian of Carthage, writer

- “[P]oints of discipline and conversation admit the novelty of correction; the grace of God, to wit, operating and advancing even to the end. For what kind of (supposition) is it, that, while the devil is always operating and adding daily to the ingenuities of iniquity, the work of God should either have ceased, or else have **desisted from advancing?** Whereas the reason why the Lord sent the Paraclete was, that, since human mediocrity was unable to take in all things at once, **discipline should, little by little, be directed, and ordained, and carried on to perfection,** by that Vicar of the Lord, the Holy Spirit.’ Tertullian of Carthage, *On the Veiling of Virgins* 1

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Tertullian of Carthage, writer

- Main Point:
  - Tertullian claims the Holy Spirit caused a change in Christian congregational practice: to veiling women / virgins
  - Tertullian makes the veil *the* symbol of authority
    - Does not understand Paul saying, “Hair is enough” and can symbolize a woman’s authority on its own
    - Uses Valentinus’ word “veil” (*kalumma*)
    - Paul said Moses’ veil (*kalumma*) is taken away in Christ! (2 Cor.3:13)

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- “If the daughters of Philip prophesied, at least they did not speak in the assemblies; for we do not find this fact in evidence in the Acts of the Apostles. Much less in the Old Testament. It is said that Deborah was a prophetess ... There is no evidence that Deborah delivered speeches to the people, as did Jeremiah and Isaiah. Huldah, who was a prophetess, did not speak to the people, but only to a man, who consulted her at home. The gospel itself mentions a prophetess Anna ... but she did not speak publicly...

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- “Even if it is granted to a woman to show the sign of prophecy, she is nevertheless not permitted to speak in an assembly. When Miriam the prophetess spoke, she was leading a choir of women ... For [as Paul declares] ‘I do not permit a woman to teach,’ and even less ‘to tell a man what to do.’” Origen of Alexandria, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulami ad Corinthios (in catenis)*, Greek text published in Claude Jenkins, "Documents: Origen on I Corinthians. IV," *Journal of Theological Studies* 10 (1909), p. 41. English translation from Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1976), p.28



# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Main Point:
  - To deny women the opportunity and authority of preaching, Origen has to force interpretive errors

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Deborah
  - Deborah's Song is now memorialized in Judges 5
    - The author and redactor encouraged it to be recited in worship assemblies, recalling Deborah's voice
  - Origen fails to recognize the literary techniques which portray
    - Deborah in the mantle of Moses the prophet
    - Samuel the prophet in the mantle of Deborah
  - Deborah almost certainly spoke to all the people then, and does now

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Huldah
  - Was identified as a 'prophetess' in Scripture and known as such before she was consulted (2 Kings 22:14 – 20)
  - Origen misreports that she spoke to 'a man'; there were actually five men
  - Origen disguises their official roles in leadership as representatives of King Josiah, no ordinary man
  - Origen supposes they spoke 'at home' even though that detail is not provided by 2 Kings, more likely an official space

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Huldah
  - Origen conveniently neglects to mention the substance of their conversation:
    - How to interpret Scripture ("the book of the law")
    - Probably the status of the covenant itself
  - Origen also neglects to mention that King Josiah accepted Huldah's interpretation and led the nation in repentance

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Prophetesses in worship assemblies
  - The public assemblies *were* the context Paul was talking about in 1 Cor.11:2 – 14:40, which is what Origen tries to deny
  - Paul was explaining not just private conversations or events in the home but in the worship service, though Origen supposes otherwise

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Miriam
  - In Exodus 15 actually serves to illustrate women speaking in a worship assembly – of the entire nation
  - Miriam and “all the women” (Ex.15:20) “answered them” (Ex.15:21) – “them” being “Moses and the sons of Israel” (Ex.15:1)
  - The refrain of Miriam and the women is now part of Scripture, which is now part of the public worship assemblies

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: 1 Timothy 2
  - Origen quotes this without exploring the lexical range of words (aner/gyne), textual questions (literary structure indicating widows were elders), and contextual issues (like can a widow lead a household and/or a Christian household?)
  - Origen then conditions all else around it

# Evidence of Women's Authority: Origen of Alexandria, teacher

- Origen's errors: Phoebe the deacon (Rom.16:1 – 2)
  - Origen is not consistent with himself:
    - “This passage teaches that there were women ordained in the church's ministry by the apostle's authority.... Not only that – they ought to be ordained into the ministry, because they helped in many ways and by their good services deserved the praise even of the apostle.” *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament VI, Romans, p.355*
  - A significant admission by Origen, because Phoebe would have been entrusted by Paul:
    - To read his letter to the Roman Christians in their various house church worship meetings, and
    - To interpret the letter if they raised any questions



# Evidence of Women's Authority

## A Negative Trend

- Trends in the Early Church: Women...
  - Are authoritative as women: Irenaeus
    - Biblical, Hebraic view
      - Of bodies and embodiment, speech in creation and Israel
    - From Asia Minor: richest apostolic investment
    - A bishop, ordained by Polycarp (others are teachers)
  - Need to be veiled: Clement, Tertullian (teachers)
    - Clement: Hellenistic cultural ethic
    - Tertullian: Roman cultural ethic; legal
  - Should not speak publicly: Origen (teacher)
    - Origen: perhaps the most Hellenistic (he studied Middle Platonism under Ammonias Saccas) and/or Roman in his ethics towards women in public

# Evidence of Women's Authority: John Chrysostom, archbishop



- John Chrysostom (c.349 – 407 AD)
  - Priest in Antioch (386 – 397)
  - Archbishop of Constantinople (397 – 407)
  - One of three holy hierarchs and fathers of the Eastern church

‘Their women used both to pray and prophesy unveiled and with their head bare, **for then women also used to prophesy**, but the men went so far as to wear long hair as having spent their time in philosophy..’

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Homily 26 on 11:2 – 16

# Evidence of Women's Authority: John Chrysostom, archbishop



- John Chrysostom (c.349 – 407 AD), on whether Eve was subordinated to Adam from creation

‘Wherefore you see, she was **not subjected** as soon as she was made; **nor, when He brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her:** he said indeed that she was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh’

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Homily 26 on 11:2 – 16

See Hebrew Masoretic Genesis 2:20 + rabbinical commentary *Genesis Rabbah*: “a helper against him”