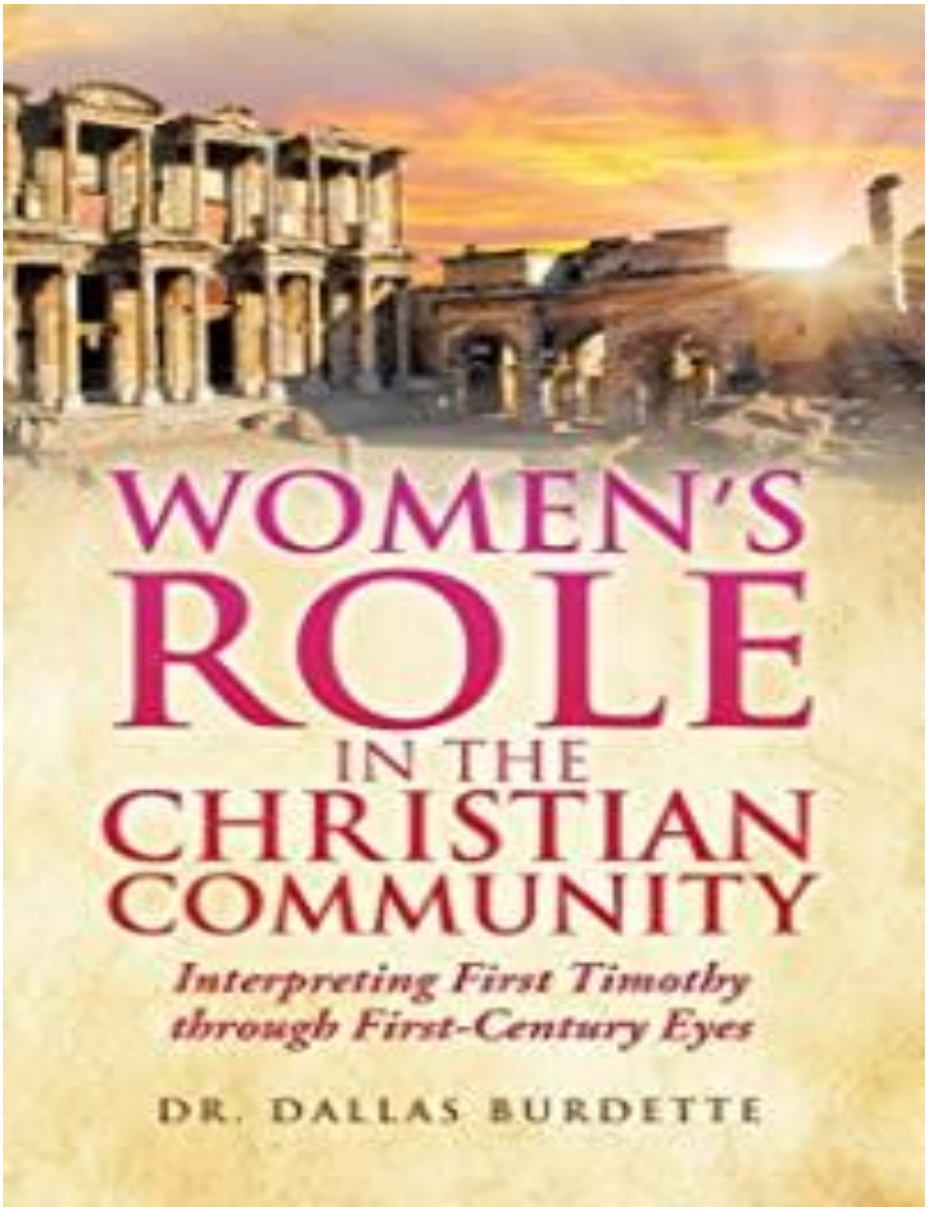

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Women's Role in the Christian Community:
Interpreting First Timothy through First Century Eyes
by Dr. Dallas Burdette

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To the Memory of

My Grandfather and Grandmother

Elbert Dallis Miller
November 4, 1885 – February 19, 1969

Fannie Williams Miller
December 31, 1890 – July 13, 1981

Even though my grandfather and grandmother died physically, they are still alive spiritually. Both were resurrected from sin-death many, many years ago when they accepted God's Way of salvation "in" and "through" Jesus. In their acceptance of Jesus, they passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. Someday, we will see one another again and that will be a glorious reunion. I will always cherish their faithfulness to Jesus and their financial support to send me to a Christian school. Their custom was to meet with God's people every Sunday. I am praying that others will imitate their faithfulness to God's will and their desire to read God's Word. As a result of their instilling into my heart a love for God, I have served the Lord as far back as I can remember. I was baptized by a Baptist minister (Lee Gallman) when I was about twelve years old. My grandfather told to me that I expressed to him that I wanted to be a preacher when I was about seven years old. My memory of these two great saints will never fade!

Appreciation to the Following Servants of God's Kingdom

First, I am appreciative to Katrina Burdette (my wife of fifty-three years), for her spiritual support and encouragement to continue to write about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Second, I am also indebted to Dr. Jimmy Crabtree, David Richardson, Frank Law, Randy Strattis, and Katrina Burdette who proofread and made suggestions to make this book more readable and understandable.

Third, I am also grateful to the members of the New Covenant Fellowship who encouraged me to put my writings into book form.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the rich blessings that the Lord Jesus has bestowed upon my life. Since becoming a Christian in 1949, I have been guided by God through many changes that have led to personal growth and development. God in His kindness allowed me to enter Amridge University and Erskine Theological Seminary to begin in-depth studies that eventually concluded with the Doctor of Ministry degree from Erskine Theological Seminary. As a result of this biblical training, God has allowed me to have a writing ministry. Also, I am thankful to my wife, Katrina Burdette, for reading and correcting my manuscript. She offered encouragement and suggestions to me in order to make the book more readable. I am also grateful to the untold hours that Dr. Jimmy Crabtree, David Richardson, Frank Law, and Randy Strattis devoted to reading and correcting. I am indeed appreciative for their support and ideas about the writing of this book. They have all worked with me on the preparation of this book through reading every chapter and making suggestions for clearness and intelligibility. I am appreciative for the financial support to publish this book from the following: Doug and Rachael Evans, David and Patsy Richardson, Frank and Jan Law, and my wife (Katrina Burdette).

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FOREWORD

The theme of this book is a reexamination of long-held traditions that have divided God's family into warring factions. These eight chapters seek to remove the difficulties of interpreting the Word of God in order that Christians may listen anew to the biblical text. Without thinking, many believers prune Scriptures in order to uphold their presuppositions about what they suppose a particular text teaches. This book is a call to God's children to reevaluate and reinterpret the various understandings handed down through the centuries. This in-depth study of misunderstood Scriptures questions the various readings that have been passed on by generations of interpreters. For many sincere followers of Christ, the "faith of the fathers" has become the watchword for the accepted view of the church. Hopefully, these chapters will remove many obstacles that stand in the way of interpreting the Word of God more faithfully.

If we are to assume responsibility in the way we read the Scriptures, we must be willing to lay aside preconceived ideas and reconsider the various renderings of isolated texts received from earlier generations. We must be willing to rethink and readjust our thinking concerning explanations passed on to the company of the redeemed by godly men and women. Many Christians have been indoctrinated through the churches of their childhood. Regrettably, we have been influenced by outside sources more than by the context of God's written Revelation.

My comments in the various chapters are not designed to slander Christian brothers and sisters or to accuse them of intentionally misinterpreting the Word of God. This book is intended to help believers to go back to the drawing board to see if what they have been taught concerning the role of women in the church is what the authors of Holy Scripture meant to convey. Even when we do not see eye-to-eye, we should not accuse one another of deception, or dishonesty. There is a difference between an honest mistake of the heart and rebellion against God. The title of this book, *Women's Role in the Christian Community: Interpreting First Timothy through First-Century Eyes* is calculated to encourage believers to go back to the text(s) to establish if what they have been taught is in agreement with the author's intentional meaning as found in the Scriptures.

Dallas Burdette, D. Min.
Montgomery, AL
June 2015; revised: June 20, 2020

BIOGRAPHAICAL STATEMENT OF AUTHOR

I was born July 4, 1934. I have been a serious student, teacher, and preacher of the Bible for just a little over sixty-eight years, supporting myself for many years as an agent for AFLAC. I have written numerous articles for religious journals, as well as many essays and sermons which are available on my website (www.freedominchrist.net). I am also the author of fourteen books. Within my ministry, I developed a keen interest in promoting unity among God's people through a more accurate reading of the Word of God. I hold the B.A., M.S., and M.Div. degrees from Amridge University (formerly Southern Christian University), and I hold the Doctor of Ministry degree (1999) from Erskine Theological Seminary. Also, I was the Director of Extended Learning with Amridge University for about five years.

INTRODUCTION

> We do not start our Christian lives by working out our faith for ourselves; it is mediated to us by Christian tradition, in the form of sermons, books and established patterns of church life and fellowship. **We read our Bibles in the light of what we have learned from these sources**; we approach Scripture with minds already formed by the mass of accepted opinions and viewpoints with which we have come into contact, in both the Church and the world. **Inevitably, we grow up children of our own age, reflecting in our outlook the mental environment in which we were reared**. The process is as natural as breathing in the air around us, and as unconscious**. It is easy to be unaware that it has happened; it is hard even to begin to realize how profoundly tradition in this sense has moulded us**. But we are forbidden to become enslaved to human tradition, either secular or Christian, whether it be 'catholic' tradition, or even 'evangelical' tradition. **We may never assume the complete rightness of our own established ways of thought and practice and excuse ourselves the duty of testing and reforming them by Scripture**.[1] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

As we explore the role of women in the church, we need some background into the field of biblical interpretation. How should we interpret the Word of God? Is the **context** a necessary ingredient for proper exegetical studies? Should we consider the intent of the author or just cite his words without a reference to **immediate**, **remote**, **larger**, or **cultural context**? In order for the reader to learn how to interpret the Word of God more accurately, this "INTRODUCTION" is designed to prevent the reader from falling into the same pitfalls that I fell into in the earlier part of my ministry. In order to call awareness to my troubled spiritual journey of unfounded explanations of certain Scriptures, it is necessary to give a brief biography of my association with the men who influenced me with their methodology of interpretation as I sought to learn more about God's Word and how to teach God's Word. **As we seek to understand God's Word more clearly, sometimes we have to be willing to go in directions that contradict our heritage**. I am still conscious that it is very difficult for older generations to escape their cultural bondage.

Even though I mention the names of godly individuals in this study who influenced me, nevertheless, this naming is not to be taken as an attack or denunciation against these sincere and saintly men. This scenario of my own journey of faith will set the tone for the first chapter in this book ("How to Interpret Holy Scripture"). Chapter 1 of this book deals directly with the principles of how we should interpret Scripture. We need to be conscious of the correct principles of biblical hermeneutics (science of interpretation) in order to prepare ourselves for a precise and correct reading of First Timothy and I Corinthians 14:34-35 as it relates to the role of women in the Body of Christ. **When we start with an incorrect premise as to what we think Paul meant by what he wrote, we will reach a conclusion that is not true**. It is not uncommon among Christians to build a superstructure on that foundation of a false premise or proposition concerning women's place in the proclamation of God's Word both publicly and privately.

My second chapter focuses upon the "Role of Women in the Great Commission," which study examines Chapter 24 of Luke's Gospel. This chapter is prerequisite to an adequate understanding of women's place in the Christian community. This study of Luke 24 unravels the role that women played following the Resurrection of Jesus. Chapter 3 surveys the philosophy of interpreting the Word of God with literalism and, at the same time, scans the practice of isolating a particular text from its cultural context. **This chapter ("Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy Scripture") examines this mind-set of a "stilted or wooden" interpretation as far back as the seventeenth century among the church fathers.** When we cite book, chapter, and verse without consulting the context, we misapply the Scriptures just as much as Satan did in his exact quotations from the

[1]J. I. Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 69-70.

Septuagint (LXX) to Jesus. Even though Satan quoted the Scriptures verbatim, nevertheless, Jesus corrected his application. Satan failed to give the intent of the author's saying(s).

Following this chapter, we respond to the question: "Are Women to Announce the Good News of Salvation to the World?" In Chapter 4 ("Paul and the Silence of Women in the Church"), we call attention to the prepositional phrase "**from Galilee**" and its importance in arriving at an accurate understanding of the role of women in the church. In addition to this emphasis, we also scan negative statements concerning what women can do and cannot do with reference to their part in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 dissect First Timothy as a book **in its cultural context** in order to grasp the significance of the vocabulary employed by Paul. In probing the **cultural context**, we need to visit the city of Ephesus with the backdrop of Acts 19. Unfortunately, many people in the "pew" are quite gullible when it comes to searching the Scriptures for themselves. In other words, the average person in the pew rely upon their preacher or elders to determine what the Bible teaches. If one goes outside their border of knowledge, one then faces excommunication.

Chapter 8 will focus upon the negative statement about women found in 1 Corinthian 14:34-35. Did this declaration originate with Paul or did this account come from the religious leaders? Too many Christians rely upon the man in the pulpit for their interpretation of God's Word. **It is time that we, as followers of Christ, cease to reflect upon our own interpretation and turn our attention to the intent of the author**. Chapter 8 of this study will demonstrate that these often cited negative statement about women in 1 Corinthian 14:34-35 constituted the **oral law of the Jews**. Our present-day understanding of this pericope (unit or section of Scripture) is grounded upon our teachers in the pulpit or professors in our seminaries rather than the Bible.

MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FAITH

When we ignore the **cultural context** within which the author penned certain words, we will continue to follow in the steps of the religious leaders in Jesus' day. When Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, He had to combat two-hundred years of **oral tradition**, which tradition later became known as the Babylonian Talmud. Today, as Christians, we, too, are confronted by hundreds of years of oral tradition. The following comments by Leroy Garrett (1918-2015) should grab our attention about our failure to learn from history:

> The value of history is variously appraised, from Henry Ford's insistence that history is bunk to Montaigne's [1533-1592] view that history is the window through which we look out upon our world. If Hegel [1770-1831] saw history as the story of mankind's struggle to be free, Thucydides [460-411 BC] saw the study of the past as a means of interpreting the future. Harvard's George Santayana [1863-1952] spoke to us all when he warned that those who ignore history have to repeat its mistakes. And we can all probably agree that there is at least some truth in that line engraved on the cornerstone of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.: *The Past Is Prologue*.[2] (Emphasis mine)

Gullible's Travels

I have sought to learn from my own personal history in my journey of faith. An examination of my own spiritual journey of faith reveals that I, too, relied upon the preachers in the pulpit for my interpretation of Scripture. Hopefully, this biography of my spiritual journey will set the tone for others to properly interpret

[2]Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (College Press Publishing Company, 2002), 1. The Stone-Campbell Movement was a nineteenth-century movement that sought to unify Christians under one body and return to apostolic Christianity. Its focus was to disassociate from denominationalism and restore primitive Christianity. Its two prominent leaders, Barton W. Stone and Thomas Campbell originally started the restoration movements independently, but united their vision in 1832. While the Restoration Movement has divided over the years, its history remains significant. This volume is possibly the best reference book ever written on the American Restoration Movement.

God's written Revelation. Confidently, I believe that my brief biographical journey will help other Christians to avoid the many difficulties that I encountered during the early part of my ministry. During the first twenty-one years of my ministry, I cited Scriptures to justify my beliefs concerning the mandatory silence of women in the assembly.

At that time, I knew nothing about the **immediate** context, the **remote** context, the **larger** context, or the **cultural** context of Scripture. This "INTRODUCTION" is designed to help prepare the reader to identify himself or herself in the various stages of their own pilgrimage of faith. I, too, can identify myself with a large majority of Christians who still hold to the traditional view—silence of women—since I maintained the same hand-me-down tradition that I received from my church fathers. Regardless as to our denomination, we need to study our past history in order to not repeat the same mistakes of other godly men and women in our study of God's Word.

In this overview of ***how*** to interpret God's Revelation, I am seeking to call awareness to the ***how*** and the ***why*** of **differences** within the Body of Christ. This overview should alert every believer to go back to the Scriptures to see if the context of any pericope or section of Scripture has been consulted in trying to arrive at a correct exegesis of God's Word. As stated above, Chapter 1 of this study will explore the techniques of the proper methodology of interpretation. The primary objective of this "INTRODUCTION" is to identify with the average reader since I too have had a distinctive spiritual journey that I sometimes refer to as Gullible's travels.

MY BIOGRAPHICAL SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Initially, the beginning of my spiritual journey as a young seventeen year old preacher boy may be described as "Gullible's Travels," not Gulliver's Travels. I accepted what I was taught without question. I memorized verses from the Bible by the hundreds. In the early stages of my ministry, I did not understand that one might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background or context. In the beginning of my spiritual leadership, as preacher and teacher,[3] my instructors taught me to commit to memory Holy Writ, not to analyze its context.[4] In fact, I had never heard of the word *context* utilized as a means of arriving at a correct interpretation of the author's meaning. I never employed context in my preaching or my teaching.

My statement about these righteous men in this "introduction" is not to be taken as a diatribe or as an attack against them in our disagreements. We must all strive for peace and unity among God's people. My first sermon,[5] "What Shall I Preach?" was the dawning of my dogmatic, partisan, factional, biased, and sectarian views concerning other believers. Even though I quoted the Word of God verbatim; nevertheless, my application of the Word was not in harmony with the context. I. Howard Marshall[6] correctly states an exegetical principle concerning interpretation that we should read and reread:

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[3]I started my public ministry on January 21, 1951 in LaGrange, Georgia under the leadership of E.H. Miller (1909-1989), my uncle.

[4]This was **not intentional** on the part of the ones who taught me. These godly men devoted their lives to God with immense zeal. I still thank God for their efforts to instill into me a belief in the trustworthiness of the Scriptures as God's inspired Word. They were children of their culture, as we all are. They taught me as they themselves had been taught. Because of different circumstances in life, I have been exposed to other writers who helped me to develop principles of interpretation that they had not been exposed to.

[5]My first sermon was delivered during the chapel service at the Montgomery Bible College, now known as Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama. In 1949 (I was about 15 years old.). Later, I moved to LaGrange, Georgia. On January 21, 1951, I delivered this same sermon at the Murphy Ave. Church of Christ.

[6] **I. Howard Marshall** (1934– 2015) is Emeritus Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Honorary Research Professor at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, specifically in the department of Divinity and Religious Studies. He earned his BA from Cambridge, MA, BD, and PhD University of Aberdeen, and his DD from Asbury University. Marshall currently serves at the chair of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical and Theological Research and was formerly president of the British New Testament Society. His main interests in

First, in interpreting a passage a number of different lines of investigation must be followed. Textual [based on a piece of writing] and linguistic [relating to word or vocabulary] study, research into the background, study of sources, form and context—all these have their vital part to play in exegesis.[7] (Emphasis mine, underlining)

Needless to say, in the earlier part of my ministry, I never consulted context as a part of my interpretation. If anyone disagreed with my exposition of the Old and New Testament writings, he or she was anathema. In other words, for one to depart from my so-called mental sharpness, or understanding, meant that one did not have a clear insight into the truths of God, so I thought. I labored under the impression that I knew all the answers about the supposed prescribed five acts of a ritual worship service. If one failed to observe these rituals in a specific way, we refused fellowship with the one who rejected our views. **I struggled under the impression that fellowship could not be extended to those outside our four walls.** As a result of this mind-set, I identified my particular "odd" fellowship with the "true" church of Jesus Christ. As a result of this frame of mind, I excluded all other believers from belonging to Jesus.

In order to describe my spiritual journey of faith, it is necessary to discuss the inner workings of my mind as I endeavored to walk in the ways of God. To do this, I will probe certain areas to give emphasis to my reasoning that led me out of my sectarian spirit. **In my earlier ministry, I went to the Scriptures to prove what I already believed**, but eventually, as a result of further studies, I went to the Word to see what it taught. This intense study is what got me into trouble with the fellowship that I was associated with in the early stages of my ministry (1951-1972). This odd movement demanded the use of "one" drinking vessel in the observance of the communion. If one used individual cups, he or she was considered anathema.

My downfall in this movement resulted from my acceptance of M. S. Whitehead who was a devoted follower of Jesus and, at the same time, accepted individual cups and Sunday school. He did not make a so-called confession of error as required by this particular body of believers that I was associated with for twenty-one years. Therefore, according to this group, he was still a child of hell for his practice of drinking of the fruit of the vine from individual cups. In spite of the negative criticism he received, he remained in the one-cup fellowship in Montgomery, AL until his death. As a result of my acceptance of this devoted follower of the Messiah, E. H. Miller (1909-1989), my uncle, sent letters to the one-cup churches, which letters brought about my dismissal from the one-cup movement. Even though I continued to use one cup and rejected Sunday school, nevertheless I was told that that practice was not sufficient to insure my fellowship with God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. According to my uncle, we had to know that individuals would go to an "eternal burning hell" if they worshiped any other way than the way the one-cup movement practiced.

THE LONE-RANGER MENTALITY

As a young boy, I listened to the Lone-Ranger and Tonto with excitement. Tonto, whose name means "dimwit," seldom spoke, except for his meaningless phrase "kemo sabe." He was seen as a projection of his white leader, and the Lone-Ranger never seemed to take the time to listen to him. Today, there is still a type of the Lone-Ranger mentality with the teacher and his student within the one-cup fellowship of God's people, which philosophy is still true in various factions among God's people. The teacher never takes time to listen to

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research have been the Gospels of Luke and Acts, the Pastoral Epistles, and aspects of New Testament Theology. He is the author of numerous publications including titles in the Tyndale Commentaries and the New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament, and the Gold Medallion Book Award winner *New Testament Theology*.

[7]I. Howard Marshall, "Introduction," in I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, Edited by I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 15. I highly recommend this book as a necessary tool for how to accomplish correct biblical interpretation.

his "Tonto." Tonto only projects his Bible teacher. Bible study is often done by the Lone-Ranger, even in private, in the same sort of meaningless company with Tonto. Tonto (student) looks to the Lone-Ranger (teacher), his hero of the faith, for the correct interpretation of the Scripture without questioning. For many Christians, it is a disgrace or scandal to question the *status quo* (the existing state of affairs).

When I interrogated the status quo of my offbeat fellowship, the wrath of the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship dealt me a heavy blow; I was thrown out of the synagogue as an apostate.[8] These are just two of the issues that divided this godly fellowship. The role of women is still an issue within this denomination. I was so accustomed to reading the Bible as I had been taught by generations of interpreters that for me to question the traditional interpretations was tantamount to my questioning the Word of God itself.

The tendency, on my part, was to identify what Scripture said with what I had been taught. This identification was one of the main obstacles that I encountered in trying to liberate the Bible from our traditions. In my search for truth, I did not initially understand the basic principles of exegetical studies. Instead of doing *exegesis*, I did *eisegesis*. ***Eisegesis*** **involves one reading into the text his or her own ideas, biases, preconceptions, and so on**. What does *exegesis* mean? The following comments by Ralph Martin[9] are on target:

> Exegesis means interpretation and as we apply the term to the books of the New Testament we may begin with a provisional definition of the task. To practise exegesis in regard to the New Testament literature is to enquire [as to] what was the meaning intended by the original authors. **The process is one of uncovering that meaning, and the technique is known as heuristics**, i.e. the study which explains how to discover the sense of a passage of Scripture. This is to be the interpreter's primary aim, requiring that his approach to Scripture be one of honest enquiry and a determined effort **to find out the intended meaning of the author for his day**.[10] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

In short, **exegesis** means that we **draw out of** Scripture what the author intended to convey in what he wrote. In my early ministry, I confused our long-held traditions of explaining the Scriptures with the text itself. I had to learn how to reevaluate and reinterpret what had been handed down to me.[11] **When I was about**

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[8]For an excellent study on the lone-ranger philosophy of Bible study, see Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 48-68.

[9] **Ralph P. Martin** (1925–2013) served as scholar-in-residence at several schools, including Fuller Theological Seminary, Haggard School of Theology, and Azusa Pacific University. He was a professor emeritus of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary and an associate professor in biblical studies at the University of Sheffield in England. Martin earned degrees at University of London and King's College. He has written several commentaries and books, including *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, the commentaries on *2 Corinthians* in the Word Biblical Commentary series, and many more!

[10]Ralph P. Martin, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. Marshall Howard I. (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1977), 220.

[11]When we exercise this prerogative of discernment, we must be prepared for the wrath of the ecclesiastical party and its preachers to wreak havoc on our character and accuse us of dishonesty. In my own personal journey of faith, I was thrown out of the Synagogue overnight. It was as if I no longer existed. Letters were sent out to alert Christians that I was no longer "sound" in the faith, even though I was still a part of the one-cup and non-Sunday school faction. Relatives and friends no longer considered me faithful since I could not support the sectarian attitude manifested by the one-cup and non-Sunday school philosophy.

Not one of the so-called faithful preachers contacted me to see why I changed my views on fellowship. When I applied Romans 14 and 15, along with 1 Corinthians 8, I was castigated, or hauled over the coals. I remember sharing 1 Corinthians 8 with one of my first cousins (Alton Bailey, 1932-2014). After paraphrasing

sixteen years old, the "faith of the fathers" became the watchword of orthodoxy for me. Their interpretation became normative and was passed on as authoritative. For me, the Christian Scriptures had been turned into another law, a law that was more stringent and more damning than even the first Law set forth by Moses.

One of the most difficult obstacles in my pilgrimage of faith was to approach the text without my strong personal biases.[12] I studied the Bible with "colored glasses," which led to distortion. **I tended to give preconceived beliefs the same authority that I gave to the Bible.** In other words, my preconceived authority was equal to that of the Scriptures. My own personal journey of faith made it very difficult for me to view the Scriptures without prejudice. My understanding and interpretation made it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text. **I allowed the context of my culture to control the text of the Bible**. It became necessary for me to exercise a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose my own agenda upon the interpretation of Scripture. I am still conscious of how difficult it is to block out a person's cultural heritage in interpreting the ancient text.

Hopefully, this record of my own personal journey with its struggles and heartaches will give others encouragement to reexamine their own traditions in the light of the context of Scripture. **Christians should never forget that their own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum**. I was so used to reading the Scriptures as my uncle and many other godly men had taught me that any questioning of their interpretation amounted to questioning the Scriptures. The hand-me-down explanations made it almost impossible for me to read the Bible accurately. I had **to relearn** and **to reassess** and **to reinterpret** what others had passed on to me.

WE SPEAK *WHERE* THE BIBLE SPEAKS

As a part of my former training, I was taught "to speak ***where*** the Bible speaks and be silent *where* the Bible is silent."[13] This slogan is still cited by many well-meaning Christians to justify their separation from other believers. On the surface, this *cliché* appears to express that which every Christian strives toward. The "catch phrase" sounded excellent and still has a nice ring of truth, but, there is a problem in quoting this group

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8:1-3, he responded by stating that that statement was NOT in the Bible, even though he had read that Scripture hundreds of times. He had eyes to see, but he could not see; he had ears to hear, but he could not hear. Why? His traditions did not allow him free access to the Word of God. His preconceived ideas did not permit him to approach the Bible without his spectacles. **His understanding was not out of rebellion on his part, but rather an honest mistake of the heart**. He was a saintly man who was dedicated to God. For many years, I, too, had read this same Scripture but failed to see the implications of Paul's admonition.

[12] Because of my earlier training, I found it difficult to deal with a number of Scriptures in context. I struggled to find answers in harmony with the whole of God's Word. Since this "Introduction" is about my pilgrimage of faith, it is necessary that I quote from those who helped me the most in my study of the Scriptures. I am thankful to M. S. Whitehead for the many papers that he mailed me concerning a multitude of controversial issues that I struggled with for such a long, long time. I am also grateful to Whitehead for introducing me to the writings of Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989) and Leroy Garrett (1918-2015).

But even prior to my acquaintance with these various authors, I was very fortunate to have had some guidance from Ervin Waters (1918-2020) in the field of hermeneutics (science of interpretation). As a result of his assistance, I became aware of many problems in my handling of the Scriptures. The books recommended by Waters prepared me to digest the writing of M. S. Whitehead, Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, F.L. Lemley, and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). I met Whitehead for the first time in the late fifties at the Lowery Church of Christ (one-cup and non-Sunday school), where I preached on a regular basis (at least once a month), while was attending a Gospel meeting conducted by J. D. Philips (1904-1981).

[13]For a thorough investigation of this phrase as to its original meaning and its history, see Dallas Burdette, "Where the Scriptures Speak," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 87-152.

of words—no one adheres perfectly to this catchy construction. First of all, there is a difference between speaking ***as*** the Bible speaks and speaking ***where*** the Bible speaks.

God's people may cite Scripture as Satan did in his encounter with Jesus, but just as Satan did not give the intent of the Scripture cited, so today, many Christians refer to certain "pet" Scriptures, and, at the same time, do not speak ***as*** the Bible speaks. **Even though Satan quoted Scripture, he did not interpret Scripture in light of its context**.[14] It took me a long time to learn this basic rule. To interpret any text faithfully, the interpreter must endeavor to transfer himself from the present era to the historical situation of the author, look through his eyes, observe his surroundings, feel with his heart, and catch his emotions if he or she wishes to accurately apply the Word of God to the twenty-first century church. **This means that the interpreter must guard himself or herself carefully against transferring the authors of the first-century to the twenty-first century and then interpret their words in the light of his or her own twenty-first century understanding.**

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

> *The Bible is affected and influenced by the **cultural environment** from which each human writer wrote*. This means that the Bible interpreter needs to give attention to cultural matters. An ignorance of certain cultural customs may lead to faulty interpretations. These cultural areas include, among others, agricultural, architectural, geographical, military, and political aspects of life.[15] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text.[16] To fathom a passage involves the ***immediate*** context, the ***remote*** context, and the ***larger*** context. The ***immediate context*** includes verses preceding and following the Scripture that one is studying. The ***remote context*** may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the *larger context* may embrace the whole of God's written Revelation. This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that we attach to a distinct phrase. If the various contexts are not considered, the interpreter may impose his or her conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author means by what he says. Without a conception of a context, a person's own particular context tends to shape his or her understanding and interpretation of the message.

Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the sense of the text. No one denies the truth of passages often enumerated to maintain the *status quo*, but we may deny the conclusions often reached by certain individuals. The following comments by Arlie J. Hoover (Professor of history at Seaver College of Pepperdine University) on *status quo* is superb: "These ideas account for much of the decadence in the *status quo*—which is Latin for 'the mess we're in!'"[17] Every Scripture citation is the Word of God, but we must not equate our interpretation with the Word itself. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. We must not employ Holy Scriptures in a way that the Holy Spirit did not employ them. Dr. Leroy Garrett points out that interpreters must distinguish between God's Revelation and his or her interpretation. Listen to Him as he pinpoints this thought-provoking perception:

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[14]For a detailed study on the fallacy of citing Scripture verbatim to uphold certain traditions without consulting context, see Chapter 3 ("Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy Scripture."

[15]Donald K. Campbell, "Foreword," in *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*, ed. Craig Bubeck Sr. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991), 64.

[16]For several examples of misapplied Scriptures, see Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009).

[17]Arlie J. Hoover, *Ideas and Their Consequences*, The Way of Life Series, No. 129 (Abilene, Texas: Biblical Research Press, 1976), 1.

People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. **Revelation** is what God has given us in scripture. **Interpretation** is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[18] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent" became the battle cry for the birth of the Reformation movement initiated by Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). This slogan became the impetus for a movement that resulted in three distinctive bodies: (1) Churches of Christ, (2) Christian Churches, and (3) Disciples of Christ. All three bodies subpoena this *cliché* to call attention to their reliance upon the Bible and the Bible alone for their faith and practice. **The Campbells did not intend to start another denomination, even though this is what eventually happened in their quest for unity among God's people.** Even though all three movements rely upon the same motto, none can agree upon the exact blueprint, or exact pattern, for a so-called worship service supposedly set forth in the New Testament.

These three ecclesiastical organizations cannot agree over the scripturalness of missionary societies, Bible colleges, located preachers (A located preacher is one who assumes the role of pulpit minister for the local church.), orphan homes, kitchens in the purported church buildings, and so on. These groups, as a whole, cannot agree upon a corporate worship pattern to be observed in the self-styled worship service; For example, they cannot agree on whether to have or not have Sunday school, individual cups or one common cup, instrumental music or vocal singing only, wine only or grape juice only, to *break* the bread or *pinch* the bread in the Lord's Supper, and so on.

RE-EVALUATION OF MY STUDIES

What caused me to re-evaluate my understanding of the Scriptures? Approximately fifty-two years ago, J. Ervin Waters,[19] a well-known evangelist, writer, and debater) suggested that I read a book on biblical hermeneutics by Dungan,[20] which I did. Later, I read another monumental study in this same field by Milton S.

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[18]Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," in *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 69.

[19]Ervin Waters (1918-2019) was associated with the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement, even though the major faction in this movement refused to recognize him as in good standing with the group known as the *Old Paths Advocate*—a religious journal published by the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship. This mindset was still true at the time of his death (4-1-2019).

[20]D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Co, n.d.). **D. R. Dungan** (1837-1920) served as chaplain of the first State Legislature of Nebraska. He afterwards was unanimously chosen to be chaplain of the Senate of that state. He served as regent of the State University at Lincoln for six years and three years of that time he was moderator of the school board of that city. He gave the first sermon in Omaha and Lincoln, presenting our plea. He returned to Iowa in 1874 and remained in that state until the summer of 1890, when he returned to Lincoln, Nebraska, to accept the presidency of Cotner University, which place he held till the fall of 1896, when he resigned and returned to Des Moines, Iowa. Between 1874 and 1890, he served the churches at Oskaloosa, Eldora, Mt. Pleasant, Davenport, and the church at University Place, Des Moines. He became the teacher of the Bible in Drake University in the fall of 1883, and continued till he resigned in the spring of 1890. For five years he was vice-president of Drake University, and for four years he did the work of the president, as President Carpenter was in the field working endowment for the institution. **In the course of his lifetime, he authored six books. Perhaps the best known, and most utilized volume from his pen was the work on biblical interpretation called, "Hermeneutics**: A Text Book," that he produced in 1888. **This volume of 400 pages clearly defines sound principles of interpreting the Scriptures in a way that preserves the intentions of the Holy Author**. This work has been reproduced time and again, and is still used as a standard text book in preacher's training schools, and in Bible Departments of Christian colleges

Terry.[21] Both of these writers had a profound influence on my re-evaluation of my long-held cherished beliefs. Waters also introduced me to *Christianity Restored* by Alexander Campbell and to Robert Milligan's (1814-1875) book on the *Scheme of Redemption.* In addition to these works, he sent me five books by the famous Greek scholar from Moody Institute, Kenneth Wuest (1893-1962) to assist in my spiritual growth. The writings of these authors contributed toward leading me out of my sectarian spirit.

Soon after this exposure to the science of interpretation (in the early sixties and early seventies), I started reading the writings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, M. S. Whitehead,[22] Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989), Leroy Garrett, and F. L. Lemley.[23] These men sought to recapture the original intent of the Word of God. They called upon Christians to reexamine their long-cherished traditions. They addressed the subject of fellowship with its ramifications upon Christian unity. They also tried to bring back the original meaning of the word *ekklesia* (commonly translated "church") and its implications toward a broader fellowship of believers. They questioned the practice of rebaptism and its devastating effect upon the Christian community for unity.[24] They investigated the distinction between Gospel and doctrine and its implications upon our understanding of fellowship. What they wrote shocked me to the point that initially I thought they were all a little nuts.

But as I read more and more of their writings, I began to reinvestigate my earlier teachings. As a result of their writings, I had to re-evaluate many of my former convictions. For example, I had to reflect upon the original meaning of the word "*church*" (*ekklesia*), the concept of limited knowledge about God's Word as the norm within the church, the meaning of the word "*Gospel*" as being "Good News," the correct use of the word "*doctrine*" as employed in the New Testament, rethink the roots or causes of divisions within the Body of Christ, and to confront squarely the question of so-called "brothers and sisters in error."

As a result of my in-depth studies, I had to alter, or rethink, my position on many doctrinal conclusions. **For the first time in my life I went to the Bible to see what it taught rather than to prove what I already believed.** I learned that one must transfer himself mentally into the minds of the first-century authors and stand upon their threshold and look through their eyes and see things as they saw them, rather than transfer the writers of the first century to the twenty-first century and then interpret their words in the light of my present day understanding.[25] Even when we present the teachings of the Holy Spirit in context, truth still requires the capacity on our part to receive it in spite of those who refuse to examine the context. When we teach God's Word, we too must be open to learn. We must be willing to listen and to learn from others. The words of

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throughout the world. Christians of today and for future generations will continue to be indebted to the memory of this man, just for the help he has given in the area of understanding and applying the word of God properly.

[21]Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics:* A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988). **Milton Spenser Terry** (1840-1914) was a pastor and professor who taught apologetics, comparative religion, and Old Testament. Finding Jesus in every corner of the Old Testament was his specialty, and he frequently gave sermons and addresses on Old Testament prophecies, revealing the God of the Old Testament as a God of grace. He wrote extensively on apologetics, philosophy, comparative religions, and dogmatics, developing his own massive works on Christianity's fundamentals.

[22]M. S. Whitehead, a few years after our meeting in Lowery, AL., placed membership with the Vonora Ave. Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL. Vonora Ave. is still a one-cup and non-Sunday school church. Even though he met with the one-cup group, he did not believe that the use of individual cups was sinful.

[23]I quote extensively from the writings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Carl Ketcherside, and Leroy Garrett in this chapter. Why? It is simply that these men are the writers with whom I started reading after my initial studies in the field of hermeneutics. Immediately, after reading their books, I recognized the same principles in their literature that I had read from Dungan, Terry, and Berkhof's works on Hermeneutics.

[24]For a detailed study of this subject (rebaptism), see Dallas Burdette, "Rebaptism in the Stone/Campbell Movement," in *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 196-235.

[25]L. Berkhof (1873-1957), *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 115.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691, English Puritan Church leader, poet, hymn-writer, theologian and controversialist) captures the mind-set of so many Christians as they seek to understand God's Word:

> Not one in ten people ground their faith in the Scriptures; rather, they base their understanding on the credit of their teachers. Therefore, they think that if they can bring you to suspect your teachers and reject them, then you will be like sheep without a shepherd.[26] (Emphasis mine--underlinging)

Assemblies of the Anointed One

One of the most difficult questions that confronted me in my early years of ministry had to do with the so-called name of the church. My spiritual teachers taught me that one could read about the **churches of Christ** in Romans 16:16, which is true. I could quote Romans 16:16 by memory. From this kind of literal citation of Scripture, without regards to the context, I developed my theology about the name of the church, which just happened to be the "Church of Christ" that came out of the Stone/Campbell Movement. We reasoned like this: Where in the Bible do we read of a Baptist Church or a Methodist Church or a Presbyterian Church? We can read about the Church of Christ Church in Romans 16:16, but we cannot read about the others.

On the surface, the argument appeared to have some validity, but the dilemma in this kind of dialectic was/is that Christ (**ὁ χριστός**, *ho christos, the anointed, the Messiah*) was not our Lord's name, but rather, His official appellation (title).[27] Matthew (1:21) tells us that His name was Jesus. For some reason, we never cited Romans 16:4 that speak of "the **churches of the Gentiles**." Is "churches of the Gentiles" also the name of the church? Also, we never called attention to Galatians 1:22 where Paul writes: "I was personally unknown to the **churches of Judea** that are in Christ." Is the "churches of Judea" the name of the church also? To advance the notion that Romans 16:16 is the name of the church is to outrun the evidence in the text. **The position of women in the church is also based upon the fallacy of failure to read the biblical text in context**. Chapters 5 through 8 of this study on the Role of Women in the Church will investigate the role of women as set forth in First Timothy.

After spending considerable hours in the science of biblical interpretation, I resolved to go to the Book of Romans to see what it said, rather than to prove what I already believed. After studying Romans 16:16, I discovered that the name *Christ* is simply the transliteration of the Greek word *Christos*, which is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Messiah.*[28] Christ was a designation that God gave to prophets, priests and kings. Prophets were "christ," priests were "christ," and kings were "christ," but Jesus was not just one Christ among many christs; He was "the Christ," that is, the Anointed One of God. According to the Greek text, what did Paul write in Romans 16:16? Since the word *christ* means "anointed," and since the word *church* means "assembly," then, the correct translation is: the assemblies of the Anointed One salutes you**." This verse is simply referring to the various assemblies as belonging to the Anointed One of God, not simply the Churches of Christ as a distinctive denomination**. The following comments by J. Lanier Burns are extremely helpful in understanding the combination of the words Jesus and Christ:

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[26]Richard Baxter (1615-1691), *The Reformed Pastor: A Pattern for Personal Growth and Ministry*, originally published in 1656 (reprint 1982, Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press), 9.

[27] "**MESSIAH** (מָשִׁיחַ, *mashiyach*; "anointed" or "an anointed one"; "messiah"). Rendered into Greek as **Χριστός** (*Christos*), cognate to the verb **χρίω** (*chriō*, "to anoint"). In this sense, it is essentially the same to say that Jesus is the "Messiah," or the "Christ." In contemporary Bible translations, the former is sometimes used when the term is functioning as a title (the Messiah) and the latter when the term is functioning as a name (i.e. Jesus Christ)."

[28] See Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989), "The Name of the Bride," Mission *Messenger* 19, no. 4 (April 1957): 9-10.

JESUS CHRIST (ca. 5/4 BC–AD 30/33). According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God, the Creator and Savior of the world, the founder of Christianity, and the sinless exemplar of its principles and practices. "Jesus"—His personal name—is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Jeshua" (or "Joshua"). In Matthew 1:21 the name was divinely appointed, "for He will save His people from their sins." Since the name was common in His lifetime, He was usually referred to in a more specific way, such as "Jesus of Nazareth" (John 1:26; Schaeder, "Nazarēnos, Nazōraios," 874–79). "Christ," the anointed one, is a title that acknowledged that He was the expected Messiah of Israel. In the Gospels, Jesus is usually identified as "the Christ." After Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2:38, He was usually referred to as "Jesus Christ." This composite name joins the historic figure with the messianic role that prophetic expectation and early Christianity knew that He possessed.[29]

The question that confronts every Christian, as it did me, is: does Paul designate the denominational Churches of Christ in Romans 16:16 as the Churches of Christ today? In the beginning of my ministry, I was taught that the Churches of Christ that Paul addressed in Romans 16:16 were the one-cup and non-Sunday churches with which I was associated.[30] The true Church of Christ had to do with my particular fellowship, no one else, all others were digressive.[31] In fact, we taught that everyone who disagreed with our brand of orthodoxy was on the way to "hell."

This philosophy is still advanced by many sincere and devout believers within the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement.[32] Today (6-20-20), many within the Churches of Christ (not just one-cup and non-Sunday school churches) do not recognize any other fellowship of believers as members of the Lord's church. On the other hand, the one-cup and non-Sunday school Churches of Christ do not even recognize those within the Churches of Christ as Christians who use multiple cups in the distribution of the fruit of the vine and utilize Sunday school in their curriculum for teaching both children and adults.

Almost without exception, the Churches of Christ do not accept Baptists as Christians. Don King, son of the late Homer L. King (1892-1983) and editor of the *Old Paths Advocate,* republished just a few years ago (February 2006) an essay written in 1969 in the *Old Paths Advocate* by J. Wayne McKamie concerning "The Baptist Church."[33] Many within the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement do not recognize anyone as Christian who do not subscribe to the narrow views of their distinctive fellowship. For example, as a result of this same mind-set, King's son, Don King, now editor of the OPA, writes: "Listen, brethren: we believe it is

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[29] J. Lanier Burns, "Jesus Christ," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). This work is available through Logos in digital format.

[30]For the benefit of those who may not know about this fellowship, see Dallas Burdette, "A Brief History of the One-Cup and Non-Sunday School Movement," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 27-54

[31]The word *digressive* is employed to denote those outside the boundaries of one's own tradition(s).

[32]Today (**6-20-2020**), many within this movement are rethinking their traditions. About fourteen years earlier (**2006)**, I conducted two seminars on how to read the "*Word of God more accurately*." I had several preachers from the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship to attend. These preachers came under the cover of darkness, so to speak. I am still in contact with some of these men of God; they also still continue to read my writings. Many believers within this group are just now learning about God's grace. One of my second cousins (Wayne Bowen) was accused of being a "false teacher" for preaching on grace. He is still a part of the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement. This congregation has been disfellowshiped by many within this same movement, especially those associated with the *Old Paths Advocate* journal, which journal is one of the major papers within this body of believers.

[33]J. Wayne McKamie, "The Baptist Church," in *Old Paths Advocate*, Vol. LXXX, no. 2 (February, 2006): 8, 9.

wrong to use more than one cup. We believe people are going to be lost for using more than one cup."[34] By quoting individuals, I am not attacking the person, but I am seeking to set forth the different viewpoints set forth by other Christians (such as Don King), which differences often result in divisions within the Community of Christ.

In the earlier years of my ministry, I never questioned the truthfulness of this line of reasoning. However, years later, I did speculate about where the Church of Christ was when **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle in Wittenberg in 1517. Also, I wondered where the Church of Christ was when **Pope Urban II** (1049-1099) launched the first Christian crusade in 1095.[35] The truth of the matter is, there was no such ecclesiastical organization known as the Church of Christ as a distinct denominational body. Now, it is true that Christ's church was in existence, but not the denominational Church of Christ; it did not exist.[36] This particular group did not come along until the time of Alexander Campbell in the 1800s. In the premature part of my ministry, I rejected the concept that the Church of Christ is a denomination, but this was not the case with its founder, Alexander Campbell. **As early as 1840, Campbell wrote a letter to a Baptist scholar, Andrew Broaddus, whom he called brother, about his concern over the written history of the Reformation Movement**:

> Whenever the history of this effort at reformation shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and love of union with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion. In confirmation of this fact **I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities**. We, **as a denomination,** are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant (emphasis mine—underlining and bold).[37]

We, in the Stone/Campbell movement, have made the mistake of identifying the "church" with the Church of Christ that came out of the nineteenth-century Reformation Movement initiated by the Campbells and Stone, thereby excluding all others from belonging to Jesus. This unity movement by the Campbells ultimately led to what is now known as the "Restoration Movement," not a "Reformation Movement." The

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[34]Don L. King, "Editorial: Proper Perspective," *Old Paths Advocate,* Vol. LXVII, no. 9 (September, 1995): 2.

[35]I am indebted to Leroy Garrett (1918-2015) for calling attention to the origin of the Church of Christ Church with his article, "Is August 17, 1889 the Birthday of the Church of Christ? in *Restoration Review* 17, no. 1 (January 1975): 6-9.

[36]**Many Christians object to the word denomination as applicable to the Church of Christ**; many within the Churches of Christ identify their movement as the Lord's church in order to distinguish it from other denominations. For an excellent analysis of the meaning of the word "denomination," see Carl Ketcherside, "The Name Pattern," *Mission Messenger* 32, no. 3 (August 1970): 113, where he says,

> **The very word denominate, from the Latin *de* and *nominare*, to call by a name, means, "to give a name to; designate by a name or title; to call by a distinctive name or designation**." Any group which selects and appropriates to itself a specific name, title or brand, is a denomination, whether the title it selects is from words found in the Bible, or composed of words not even mentioned in the sacred volume. The *ekklesia* of God had no specific name in its inception. The saints were corporately designated only by simple nouns. All of these describe a relationship. Not a one was used as an exclusive title. (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

[37]Alexander Campbell, "The Editor's Response to Mr. Broaddus," *Millennial Harbinger,* New Series, 4, no. XII (December 1840): 556.

truth of the matter is, there is only one church. There is no such thing as a Baptist Church, a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian Church, or a Church of Christ Church. There is only one church, and that one church consists of all those who have put their faith in Jesus as the redeemer. Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989) uses the following pregnant words to describe the current dilemma of the Churches of Christ today.

> I do not believe there is any such thing as either "The Christian Church" or "The church of Christ." There are religious parties designated by these titles, but there is only one church. There never was but one. There will never be another. "The Christian Church" does not have all of the Christians in it, and "The Church of Christ" is not the church of Christ. Both of these parties which have been allowed to grow out of an American restoration movement launched by some ministers in the early part of the nineteenth century.[38] (Emphasis mine)

This article by Ketcherside was the beginning of my re-evaluation of the nature of God's church. Thus far, I have continuously employed the term *church* to describe the people of God. As stated above, I had a rude awakening when I discovered that our English word *church* was not an accurate translation of the Greek Word **ἐκκλησία** (*ekklēsia*) and that the word that Paul uses in Romans 16:16 merely meant an "assembly." In other words, God's assembly consists of those who put their faith in Jesus as God's Anointed One. As stated above, there is no such thing as a Baptist Church, a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian Church, or a Church of Christ church; there is only one *ekklēsia* and that body includes all believers. Unfortunately, God's people meet behind various labels that they have inherited from the church fathers. It is significant that the word *ekklēsia* appears eighty-one times in the Greek Old Testament (LXX), but it is never translated "church" in our English translations.[39] Leroy Garrett says it best: "It is as a family that we must come to see the church. It is not an institution or organization, but a family community of brothers and sisters."[40] Thomas Campbell, in 1809, penned the following words in his Declaration and Address:

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[38]Carl Ketcherside, "Fear and Suspicion," in *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 2 (February 1963): 27.

[39]Carl Ketcherside, "The Name of the Bride," *Mission Messenger* 19, no. 4 (April 1957): 9 where he says:

> The title "Church of Christ" as used by a large segment of believers today is employed in a denominational sense, just as the terms Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Christian Church, etc. This is very difficult for many to see, for they have been taught that their salvation depends upon the name "The Church of Christ" although that expression is not once found in the sacred scripture. The idea that a wife should wear her husband's name as he means it, is not a scriptural one. No married woman in Bible times was ever called by her husband's name. That practice is a fairly modern one and by no means universal even now. The word "church" is not a name at all. It is a common noun like "house" or "wife." His name was Jesus, and that is what he was called at birth, but "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Christ is no more his name than is the word "Lord." The word "Christ" is merely the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah" [מָשִׁיחַ, *mā·ši·yăḥ*, "anointed" or an anointed one"] It isn't a name at all: it is an office which God made him to occupy. (Emphasis mine)

I read this article in July 1964. This essay caused me to rethink my position on the name of the church. At this time I was still associated with the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement. In fact, I did not leave that movement until the early seventies. Even though all my so-called Gospel meetings and preaching engagements were cancelled, I continued in the movement until about 1972 or early 1973.

[40]Leroy Garrett, "The Catholicity of the Church," *Restoration Review* 15, no. 3 (March 1973): 45. The writings of Garrett are also available on the Internet. His website is: http://www.leroygarrett.org.

Prop. 1. That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.[41] (Emphasis mine)

Both Ketcherside and Campbell sought to capture the true essence of the Christian church. Thomas Campbell, too, focused upon the nature of the church. When he wrote these words (**Proposition 1**), there was no such thing as the Church of Christ Church. In fact, Campbell was Presbyterian during this period of transition. For him the church of Christ consisted of all who put their faith in Jesus as Lord. His objective in writing this *Declaration and Address* was to set forth biblical principles upon which fellowship is founded, not the traditions of men. He admitted that the church of Christ in his day comprised people from all denominations. He wrote in his second proposition the following succinct statement about the divisions existing in his day:

Prop. 2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.[42] (Emphasis mine)

Proposition Two set the stage for his comments on "**inferences** and **deductions**" from Scripture. Even today, it is not uncommon for Christians to try to force agreement based upon their **inferences** and **deductions** from the Word of God. This practice of forcing conformity as a condition of fellowship was also prevalent in my early ministry—my uncle (E. H. Miller) carried debate propositions with him in his coat pocket, ready to debate at the drop of a hat about differences that contradicted his interpretation of God's Word. Thomas Campbell captured my attention when he forcefully dealt with the philosophy of enforcement over one's "**inferences** and **deductions**" as essential to Christian fellowship. Thus, I had to deal with his comments in light of Scripture**. Proposition Six** goes to the very heart of this mind-set of enforcement:

Prop. 6. That although **inferences** and **deductions** from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.[43] (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

Fellowship and Agreement

Through my studies I came to understand that no individual possesses absolute knowledge.[44] Since all Christians possess limited knowledge, then, do we come into communion by agreement upon all Scripture?

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[41]Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* (St. Louis, Missouri: Mission Messenger, 1975, reprint), 44 [page numbers are from the reprint edition].

[42]Ibid., 44-45.

[43]Ibid., 46.

[44]This statement does not deny that God's Word is absolute, but rather, that our knowledge of God's Word is relative. This relativity of knowledge is one of the reasons that Paul rebuked the Corinthians and the Romans for not making allowances for differences. In the dawning of my ministry, I violated the principles laid down by Paul. I did not make a distinction between my interpretation of God's Word and the Word itself. In

Common sense tells us that we do not! **Fellowship is not a fruit of agreement but agreement is a fruit of fellowship**.[45] As a result of this revelation, I had to wrestle with the following question: If we do not enjoy flawless insight into the Scriptures, does God condemn us to an eternal burning hell? The answer to this question is an unqualified NO!

What is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit concerning this question? The Apostle Paul goes right to the heart of the issue when he writes: "We know that we all possess knowledge. **Knowledge puffs** up, but love builds up. **The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know**. But the man who loves God is known by God" (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).[46] Again, Paul writes, "Accept him whose faith is weak . . . who are you to judge someone else's servant? . . . Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:1a, 4a, 5b). Paul is saying that believers ought not to denounce one another as dishonest guides when they do not dot every **"i"** and cross every **"t"** in the same way.

Tolerance toward differences is the subject of Paul's admonition for unity, not absolute conformity in belief with other believers. But someone may ask, "**Are we in fellowship with error?" No, we are in fellowship with fellows**. The question is often asked, "Are you in fellowship with brothers and sisters in error?" My answer is yes, because this is the only kind of believers that I know about.[47] For some reason, my inconsistencies never became visible to me until the late sixties; it was then that I recognized that I was one of those brothers in error.[48]

How do we deal with truth and error in the church? This question confronted me head on. **I finally came to the conclusion that all truth is true, but not all truth is essential to our salvation; all error is error, but not all error will condemn our souls. Absolute freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all of us would be damned**.[49] We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge, but by faith in Christ Jesus. **All truth is essential to our well being, but some truth is essential to our being**. For example, let us consider the physical body for an analogy. All the members of my body are for my wellbeing, but if I lose a leg, an arm, or a finger, I would be only handicapped or incapacitated. But if, on the other hand, I should lose my head, I would be dead. The same analogy may be applied to Jesus. We may be wrong about some doctrinal point(s) and still be saved, but if we are wrong about Jesus, we can be lost. On this particular point, Alexander Campbell has captured this truth and is well worth citing:

> The Apostle says, 'There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all.' But **nowhere is it said in the sacred book, "There is one opinion**." If, however, unity of opinion were desirable, to attain it, we must give the greatest liberty of opinion; for though once theory with us, it is now matter of experience, that the more stress is laid upon unity of

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other words, I equated my interpretation with God's Revelation. I do not know why this never occurred to me in the earlier part of my ministry. In this perception, for lack of a better term, I was brain-dead.

[45]See Carl Ketcherside, "Thoughts on Fellowship," *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (July 1958): 2. The writings of Ketcherside are available through the Internet. His website is: http://www.unity-in-diversity.org. There are also audio files available on this website.

[46]As stated earlier, on February 21, 1969, I remember very vividly sharing the eighth chapter of 1 Corinthians with a relative of mine (He also was a preacher; he is now with the Lord in glory). There was utter rejection of what was stated about "knowledge puffs up." In fact, he even denied that that particular teaching was in the Bible. The amazing thing is that he had read that Scripture dozens of time, but, for some reason, it never registered with him as to what Paul was saying. The reason, perhaps, is that that specific Scripture did not coincide with his theology. It seems to me that the words of Jesus are very appropriate here: "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

[47]See Carl Ketcherside, "Fear and Suspicion," *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 2 (February 1963): 27 concerning an analysis of this mind-set of fear toward those who do not concur with your views.

[48]For an excellent treatment of the distinction between fellowship and endorsement, I highly recommend Carl Ketcherside, "Thoughts on Fellowship," *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (February 1957): 3-6.

[49]See Carl Ketcherside, "Another Gospel," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 1 (January 1965): 7.

> opinion, the less of it, and the more division; and the less regard paid to it, the less emphasis laid upon it, the more we will have of it. This is founded in a law of the human mind, on which it is unseasonable and unnecessary to expatiate [to expound].[50] (Emphasis mine)

In the early phases of my ministry, I did not distinguish between fellowship and agreement. I had never fathomed the idea that fellowship does not come as a result of our agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation, but rather our ability to reach agreement upon these things may come as a result of our fellowship. **We are not one in opinion; we are one in Christ**. It is not our study of Holy Scripture, our acquisition of knowledge, our learning of the Law, or our ability as teacher or expounder of God's Word that makes us children of God. **We become children by procreation, not education**. Ketcherside does well to remind us:

> Jesus died for persons and not for their opinions or ideas, right or wrong, and those for whom he died must be more important to us than anything for which he did not die. As God accepted us in our weakness, with mistaken ideas, warped views and unhealthful attitudes, so we must accept each other in the same state or condition. We must not make the kingdom of heaven to consist of our convictions, attitudes or opinions, but of citizens who must be tolerant of each other in such matters, else there can be no kingdom of heaven at all.[51] (Emphasis mine)

Gospel and Doctrine

Next, we need to distinguish between *Gospel* and *doctrine*, a distinction drawn by the writers of the new covenant Scriptures—a distinction that I did not make in the olden days of my ministry. At a later date, I did come to realize that there is as much difference between the Gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food that he or she eats after one is born. **Through my reexamination of Gospel and doctrine, I came to understand that Paul knew the difference between the seed from which life came and the daily bread upon which the children fed**. He knew the difference between Gospel and doctrine and between faith and knowledge. **He knew that the Gospel brought us into being while the doctrine was/is essential to our growth and wellbeing, and he did not make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion.** Ketcherside brought this point home to me, when he wrote: "Those who confuse chastisement of a child with begettal and cannot distinguish between correction and conception are in a sad predicament."[52]

In my early preaching I looked upon the Gospel as being composed of twenty-seven books. But, after investigating the word *Gospel*, I discovered that the Gospel may be epitomized in three saving facts: namely, the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The Holy Spirit does not identify the Gospel as everything recorded in the Bible. The fellowship of believers with whom I associated did not differentiate between Gospel and doctrine; therefore, for one to disagree on doctrine was tantamount to preaching another Gospel, for which a curse must be pronounced on the perpetrator. It is true that we must be correct concerning the Gospel, but an individual does not have to be accurate on every doctrinal teaching in the Scriptures to be saved—as I had previously been taught and advocated for several years. But in this philosophy, we were not always consistent. We made allowances for other differences, but we did not make concession for our ritualistic pattern of "five acts of worship" on Sunday morning.[53]

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[50]Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV," *Millennial Harbinger* 6, no. 3 (March 1835): 111-112.

[51]Carl Ketcherside, "Contrary to the Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 3 (March 1965): 35-36.

[52]Carl Ketcherside, "Gospel and Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 2 (February 1965): 23.

[53]For an explanation of this type philosophy, see Dallas Burdette, "Oddities in Pattern Theology," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation*, 55-86.

It appeared, so it seemed to me, that God made a separation between "**Gospel**" and "**teaching**." As stated above, there is as much difference between the Gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food that he or she eats after birth.[54] **The purpose of the Gospel is to enlist men and women into the army of Christ; the doctrine (teaching) constitutes a manual of arms and a book of discipline to develop the soldiers of Christ into a fighting force**. I confused chastisement of a child with begettal and did not distinguish between correction and conception. I discovered that it is the Holy Spirit that inducts a subject into the one body, not precise knowledge of the five acts of worship, as we commonly called them. Every sincere baptized believer is brought into the fellowship of the saints in spite of his or her inadequate understanding of God's Word.

Fellowship and Endorsement

Having arrived at a better comprehension of "Gospel and doctrine," I turned my attention to the subject of endorsement. In my early years of preaching and teaching, I did not differentiate between "**fellowship** and **endorsement**," which was one of the major "hang ups" in the brotherhood then, as well as it is today (2020). I labored under the impression that to have fellowship with someone with whom I disagreed was to endorse whatever the other person believed. After much soul searching, I finally came to the judgement that **fellowship** and **endorsement** could not possibly be the same. For example, who would be so naïve to give credence to the idea that God sanctions all things we perform, believe, or voice? Surely no one would hold to such a preposterous notion. Yet, we all maintain that we are in fellowship with God, in spite of our shortcomings in our lives and with our beliefs.

Many Christians do not think this lack of knowledge or failure in perfection affects their relationship with God—it just applies to other people. I had to struggle with the question: does fellowship with God indicate that God endorses everything we believe, do, and say? Surely, the answer is NO! For us to be in fellowship with God does not indicate that God puts his signature to the whole shebang of what we believe, perform, or pronounce. Since this is so, then, why can we not be in fellowship with others and not necessarily endorse the many things that the other person gives approval to or practices?[55] Ketcherside drew my attention to the fact that

> The fellowship of the new covenant is not based upon unanimity of opinion, interpretation, or even understanding of scriptural doctrine. It does not imply nor indicate endorsement of the position of one with whom we may differ. Fellowship is one thing; endorsement of a position taken by another is a wholly different thing. Fellowship of Christ, and in Christ, is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel; endorsement of an interpretation or idea of one in or out of that fellowship is a rational act of our own minds.[56] (Emphasis mine)

In my travel of faith, I came to grasp that I cannot make togetherness, or fellowship, dependent upon education. What I eventually came to understand about fellowship, later in my ministry, I also discovered that Alexander Campbell had written about these same issues in 1830—**fellowship** and **endorsement**. Alexander Campbell also faced the same kind of "know-it-all attitude" in the nineteenth century that I manifested in my earlier training. He said it best when he wrote:

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[54]I am indebted to Carl Ketcherside for this perceptive insight.

[55]Carl Ketcherside wrote one of the most informative articles that I have read about fellowship and endorsement. In his article, "Reply to Brother Thomas," in *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 4 (April 1963): 51-59. He nails the coffin shut, as it were, on the view that fellowship and endorsement are one and the same. I call attention to this perceptive essay on fellowship, because this response to Brother Thomas helped me to rethink the subject of biblical fellowship that is in keeping with the tenor of the Scriptures. This article is what I call common-sense interpretation.

[56]Carl Ketcherside, "Thoughts on Fellowship," in *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (February 1957): 4.

It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect. We have been censured long and often for laying too much stress upon the assent of the understanding; but those who have most acrimoniously censured us, have laid much more stress upon the assent of the mind, than we have ever done. We never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or in other words, because he could not assent to our opinions. All sects are doing, or have done this.[57] (Emphasis mine)

My postulation of perfect knowledge of every detail of God's Word required inerrancy and infallibility which I myself did not possess. This demand of perfection in knowledge, on my part, required that I be God. How are we reacting toward others today whose knowledge does not always agree with ours? Are we excluding men and women from the kingdom of God for mere feeblemindedness of intellect? In my earlier ministry, I excluded every person from God's kingdom who did not agree with our group. But thank God, I came to understand, through other godly men, a clearer perception of what Christianity is all about. **It is a popular error to suppose that what I believe is the Word of God, but what you believe is not.** In seeking to call attention to neglected truths, repetition is unavoidable. Leroy Garrett is perfectly right when he insists:

People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that **we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation**. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[58] (Emphasis mine—bold)

Unity in Diversity

In the beginning of my spiritual journey, I denied unity-in-diversity. Unity-in–conformity was the battle cry. If one did not conform to the traditions of the church, he or she faced expulsion, which is what ultimately happened to me. It never once occurred to me that Christians can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. This is just plain common-sense interpretation. A more excellent way of expressing the truthfulness of this philosophy is Ketcherside's comments about observation:

But we learn from observation, experience and the sacred scriptures that we do not all have the same degree of knowledge. God has made us all to differ in the intellectual realm as we do in the physical. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. No two of us upon earth attain to the same identical degree of knowledge about everything at the same moment. Any attempt to secure unity upon the basis of uniformity of knowledge or conformity in deductive or inferential process (e.g., doctrinal interpretation) is doomed before it begins.[59]

This article, by Ketcherside, helped me to crystallize my thinking in this area of "uniformity of knowledge." I saw division on every street corner. We were divided into approximately twenty-five warring factions. Each was claiming to be the "true" Church of Christ. In fact, the congregation that I helped to establish in Montgomery, Alabama had a sign that read, "The loyal Church meets here."[60] We had set up a system by

[57]Alexander Campbell, "Millennium. – II," in *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (5 April 1830): 122-123.

[58]Leroy Garrett, "What Kind of a Book Is the Bible? . . . 'It Means What It Says,'" *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 69.

[59]Carl Ketcherside, "Gospel and Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no.2 (February 1965): 17-18.

[60]This congregation was started in my mother's (Thelma Haygood, 1913-2000) and step-father's (Teddy Haygood, 1904-1978) home on Madison Avenue (1952). This church still exists and is known as the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ. The congregation continues to advocate the use of the common cup and no Sunday

which fellowship is conditioned upon alleged equality of knowledge, and, as a result, we created a state in which strife, division, and confusion prevailed. This fellowship of believers created an atmosphere in which no one dared to express an original thought.

If one dared to think, one would be sent to the chopping block—agree with the *status quo* or face excommunication. Before I was disfellowshiped from the one-cup fellowship, I asked some questions that put doubt into our traditions. I remember very distinctly receiving a stern rebuke from Lynwood Smith (1924-2007) about my inquiries concerning certain interpretations that we were advancing, which interpretations shut out other believers not in our camp. I was informed that I was never to ask questions like that again. He was sincere in his actions and a man dedicated to God, but I did not adhere to his advice. Since I refused to deny what I thought the Scriptures taught about toleration, I was eventually cut off from those Christians when I could not conform to their way of thinking. At the time, we were not in fellowship, so we thought, with "wine only" brethren,[61] with "bread breaking" brethren, with "individual cups" brethren, with "Sunday school" brethren, with "instrumental music" brethren, and so on.

For some reason, it never occurred to us that in the primitive community there were *diversity* of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-6), *diversity* of functions (Romans 12:4-5), *diversity* in knowledge (1 Corinthians 3:1; 8:1-13; Romans 14:1—15:1-7), a *diversity* in understanding (1 Corinthians 8:2), and *diversity* in customs (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-33), and *diversity* in opinions (Romans 14). The writings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell helped to call attention to diversity in the Christian community. I cite Alexander Campbell once more because of his unique insight into the human predicament. Since our minds are affected by the traditions of the church that prevail in Christendom, by which vital truths of Christianity are secretly undermined or openly denied, we need to reflect upon the growth in the spiritual life of every believer. Campbell (1788-1866) drew attention to the fact:

> Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion on matters of speculation?
>
> Indeed, in most cases where proscription [an imposed restraint or restriction **:** PROHIBITION] and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.
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> **If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away**; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from among them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study his Bible more than his companions –or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.[62] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

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school. Raymond Miller (1932-2010), my first cousin and son of the late E. H. Miller, preached for this local fellowship in Montgomery, AL until the day of his death.

[61]Some Christians in the one-cup and non-Sunday school advocated the use of wine in the Lord's Supper, not grape juice. As a result of this belief, the wine only brother or sister would not fellowship the grape juice only group and the grape juice only group would not fellowship the wine only group.

[62]Alexander Campbell, "Christian Union," in *Christianity Restored* (Rosemead, California: Old Paths Book Club, 1959), 127. I read this book in May, 1964.

Believers in Error

In my pilgrimage of faith, I became aware that in Christ Jesus all believers are in error on many doctrinal points. Through common-sense interpretation, I came to the realization that absolute freedom from error in all doctrinal problems is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. **We are not saved by attainment to an unmistakable degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus.** I came to realize that the only Christians we have are saints in error. In my earlier phases of changing, Christians often asked me if I were in fellowship with error. To this inquiry, I answered no! **I am in fellowship <u>with people</u>, <u>not error</u>**. Ketcherside expressed the basic problem well in his discussion of "Another Gospel."

> Those who were in Christ in the days of the apostles were in error on many points. They were mistaken about a lot of things but they were not charged with 'preaching another gospel." <u>Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus</u>. It is by belief of facts related to him, and not by grasp of abstract truth, that we are justified before God. Certainly it is neither by performance of meritorious deeds nor by legalistic conformity. **<u>When we postulate a program of justification by knowledge we hang ourselves on the gallows we have constructed to rid ourselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more ridiculous by affirming that we know as much as God</u>.**[63] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

Through my studies, I came to the realization that we must make a separation between "one's faith" and "one's opinion." It is not "**<u>What</u>** do you believe?"—the eager and sole inquiry of modern religious parties—but rather, "**<u>In whom</u>** do you believe?" This was the question addressed by Christ to one who sought to know the truth: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (John 9:35; Matthew 16:13-20). It is not **WHAT** but **WHO**! Campbell captures this truth when he writes:

> But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that THE BELIEF OF ONE FACT, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of ONE FACT, and submission to ONE INSTITUTION expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.[64]

CONCLUSION

As we explore the role of women in the church, we need some background into the field of biblical interpretation. In order to learn how to interpret the Word of God more accurately, my first chapter deals directly with the principles of "How to Interpret Scripture" in order to prepare us for a correct reading of First Timothy. My second chapter will focus upon the "Role of Women in the Great Commission," which study examines Chapter 24 of Luke's Gospel. Chapter 3 surveys the philosophy of interpreting the Word of God with literalism and isolationism of a particular text. This chapter ("Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy Scripture") critics this mind-set as far back as the seventeenth century among the church fathers. Following this chapter, we will respond to the question: "Are Women to Announce the Good News of Salvation to the World?" (Chapter 4).

My INTRODUCTION is written to help Christians to avoid the many difficulties that many believers encounter when they do not know how to read the Word of God in context. Our study of the role of women

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[63] Carl Ketcherside, "Another Gospel," ***Mission Messenger*** 27, no. 1 (January 1965): 6-7.

[64] Alexander Campbell, "The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union," *Christian Baptist* 1, no. 9 (April 1824): 177.

should not become a test of fellowship among God's people. Without knowing how to read the Word of God correctly, countless Christians will continue to hold on to the traditional views concerning the role of women in ministry. In concluding my remarks about my growth and travel in my spiritual journey of Faith, **I remind each reader that whenever we demand a program of justification by perfect knowledge of God's written Revelation, then, we hang ourselves on the gallows that we have constructed to rid themselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more foolish by affirming that we know as much as God.**

My prayer is that we will weigh carefully the concepts presented in this chapter and the following chapters so that we will not plummet into the same pitfalls that I myself made in the earlier part of my spiritual voyage. In this "introduction," As stated above, I have purposely introduced divergent views on many subjects that have divided God's people. These areas of disagreements are presented in order to assist God's people in the proper methods of hermeneutics. The role of women in the Body of Christ is just one of the many issues that have created warring factions within the Christian community. As stated earlier, Chapter 1 of our study will focus more on how to interpret the Scriptures more accurately. Without a proper understanding of how to study the Bible, we will continue to create havoc among God's people.

1

How to Interpret Holy Scripture

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[65]

In the nineteenth century Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834, theologian, philosopher, and biblical scholar) originated the idea of the **hermeneutic circle**. The hermeneutic circle philosophy simply means: "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[66] Interpretation is an attempt to understand the work as a whole by an analysis of its elements.[67] Hermeneutics[68] ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including *exegesis*.[69] Nevertheless, hermeneutics is often used in a much narrower sense to grasp the relevance of ancient works. In other words, it is concerned about the "here" and "now."[70] Louis Berkhof (1873-1953, American-Dutch Reformed theologian) makes the following succinct observation:

> The *necessity* of the study of hermeneutics follows from several considerations:

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[65]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[66]Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991), 97. This essay applies the hermeneutic circle in order to identify the false prophets in the Gospel of Matthew.

[67]Ibid.

[68] See Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, where Stein writes: "The term 'hermeneutics,' . . . simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation; see also Thomas H. Olbright, *Hearing God's Voice* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1996), 185, where he says, "In a large sense, hermeneutics constitutes a theory about how one person explains or communicates a text to another."

[69]See Morner and Rausch, "Exegesis," Ibid., 72,73, where they write, "Originally, the detailed analysis, explanation, and INTERPRETATION of passages in the Bible, or, by extension, of any literary or intellectual text. The term carries with it a sense of digging out the meaning of a difficult passage."

[70]See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 25.

(1) Sin darkened the understanding of man, and still exercises a pernicious [evil, malicious] influence on his conscious mental life. Therefore, special efforts must be made to guard against error.

(2) Men differ from one another in many ways that naturally cause them to drift apart mentally. They differ, for instance,

(a) in intellectual capacity, aesthetic taste, and moral quality resulting in a lack of spiritual affinity [a quality that makes people or things suited to each other];
(b) in intellectual attainment, some being educated, and others uneducated; and
(c) in nationality, with a corresponding difference in language, forms of thought, customs, and morals.[71]

John H. Hayes (Professor of Old Testament at Candler School of Theology) and Carl R. Holiday (Associate Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean at Candler School of Theology) define ***exegesis*** as an attempt "to reach an informed understanding of the text."[72] It is possible for us to miss the point of the text if we do not consider the "linguistic, cultural, and historical background to the inspired writings," writes Cedric Johnson (Clinical Psychologist in private practice).[73] It is also in this vein that Berkhof cautions us not to fall into the same trap that many fell into during the Reformation. He again sharpens the focus of caution:

> The militant spirit of the age found expression in hundreds of polemical writings. Each one sought to defend his own opinion with an appeal to Scripture. *Exegesis became the handmaid of dogmatics, and degenerated into a mere search for proof-texts.* The Scriptures were studied in order to find there the truths that were embodied in the Confessions.[74] (Emphasis mine)

To set the tone for this discussion, perhaps it would be helpful to review the experiences of numerous individuals within the Stone/Campbell Restoration Movement.[75] Many within this Movement encounter long-held traditions in his or her quest to understand the Word of God in its context.[76] In our study of Scripture, we need to study linguistics, that is to say, the use of words within its context. It is not uncommon for us to identify the traditions of our "interpretative community" with the Word itself (verbatim citations). Once more, Cedric Johnson expresses the basic problem well in his discussion of presuppositions:

> Generations of scholars in the field of hermeneutics have recognized the influence of preunderstanding on interpretation. C. S. Lewis observed that "what we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience."[77]

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[71] Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 12.

[72] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook, Revised Edition (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 23.*

[73] Cedric B. Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 20.

[74] Berkhof, *Interpretation*, 28-29.

[75] See, Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1981)* for one of the most objective works in this area.

[76] See Hayes and Holladay, *Exegesis*, 66, where they explain how to interpret a text:

> The best guide to the meaning of a word is the context in which it is used. This means, first of all, the **immediate context** of the passage in which it occurs. If a word has several meanings, one should explore the range of meanings and see how they fit or do not fit in the context. A **broader context** is the whole of the document in which the terms appear. One should explore how a term is used and what it denotes elsewhere in the document. (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

[77] Johnson, *Interpretation*, 45.

Untold numbers with whom I have discussed the science of exposition have shared their frustrations with me concerning the mistreatment from leaders within the Christian community. I too have experienced these same blockings and have described my own Christian journey as "Gullible's Travels." **We often accept what we are taught without question. It is in this sense that our interpretation is neither subjective nor objective**. In other words, we have never taken the time to employ our minds subjectively in analyzing the Scripture for ourselves, nor have we looked at the Scriptures objectively. **Our interpretations are "ready-made or prefabricated meanings**."[78] Our interpretations are hand-me-downs from our interpretative community. Again, Stanley Fish (b. 1938, literary theorist, legal scholar, and author) rightly says, "In other words interpretive[79] communities are no more stable than texts because interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned."[80] In spite of Fish's "deconstruction" philosophy, nevertheless, he is correct when he writes:

> And, moreover, the way of seeing, whatever it was, would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the "see-er" was an extending agent. This is what Sacks means when he says that a culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine detail"; it fills them so that no one's interpretive acts are exclusively his own but fall to him by virtue of his position in some socially organized environment and are therefore always shared and public.[81] (Emphasis mine)

Leaders, especially ministers within the various denominations, often memorize verses from the Bible by the hundreds. Frequently, their interpretations are not so much theirs, as it is the interpretation of a social structure to which they belong; that is to say, their interpretative community. Traditions still stand in the way of listening anew to the biblical text.[82] Once more, Justo and Catherine Gonzalezs' caution: "We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us."[83] It is still very difficult for us to conceive that we might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background. Have we placed ourselves within the voice of the text? If not, we cannot see or hear the intent of the author. If we expect to interpret a passage correctly within a given context, we must view the various components of a text in conjunction with the larger context—the book as a whole.

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[78]See Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 172, for this type of hermeneutical mind-set, which manner of interpretation is prevalent among numerous Christians.

[79]Fish does not use "interpretative community" but "interpretive community."

[80] Ibid. I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand Fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism," *NTC's Dictionary*, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction":

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques Derrida [1930-2000, French philosopher and critic]. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of a terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism makes possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s, deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM. (Emphasis mine)

[81] Ibid., 335.

[82]See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 48-68.

[83]Ibid., 31.

Some religious writers within the various fellowships among God's people suppose that they have all the answers. And as a result of this kind of intellectualization, the supposedly intellectually correct party ostracizes those who go against the grain with their particular interpretative community. To justify condemnation over against the so-called nonconformist, then Matthew 7: 15 is cited: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

We must be careful that we do not go to the Scriptures to prove what we already believe, but rather to see what they say. We are so accustomed to reading the Bible as previously taught by generations of interpreters that we cannot distinguish between our interpretation and God's written Revelation. In other words, for one to question the traditional interpretations is tantamount to questioning the Word of God itself.[84] This failure to discriminate between explanation and divine inspiration is one of the main obstacles that we encounter in our efforts to liberate the Bible from its culture and to maintain unity among God's people. The heritage of hand-me-down traditions is confused with the text itself. The faith of the fathers becomes the watchword for orthodoxy. The interpretation of the fathers becomes normative and is passed on as authoritative.

One of the most difficult obstacles for any Christian is to approach the text without any strong personal biases. Studying the Bible with colored glasses ultimately leads to distortion of the text.[85] People often tend to give preconceived beliefs the same authority as they give to the Bible. In other words, our preconceived political power is equal to that of the Scriptures. Our own personal journey of faith, with the ghosts of the past, makes it very difficult for us to view the Scriptures without prejudice. Our prior understanding and interpretation make it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text.[86] **The culture of our heritage controls the text of the Bible.** We should never forget that our own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum. Frederic W. Farrar (1831-1903, a canon of Westminster, rector of St. Margaret's Westminster, archdeacon of Westminster Abbey, and the Dean of Canterbury) draws attention to the religious hatred that generates from this know-it-all attitude:

> My opinions are founded on interpretations of Scripture. Scripture is infallible. My views of its meaning are infallible too. Your opinions and inferences differ from mine; therefore you must be in the wrong. All wrong opinions are capable of so many ramifications that anyone who differs from me in minor points must be unsound in vital matters also. Therefore all who differ from me and my clique are "heretics." All heresy is wicked; all heretics are necessarily wicked men. It is my religious duty to hate, calumniate [malign, injure the reputation of by calumny] and abuse you.[87] (Emphasis mine)

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[84] For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 68-71.

[85]See Cedric B. Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation*, 42, where he captures, in concise language, the subjective biases of all interpreters:

> My contention is that conflicting theological positions are in part due to the fact that we all approach a text, sacred or secular, with our strong subjective biases. Even though we have a commitment to read the Bible on its own terms; and even though we want the Divine and human authors to speak for themselves, somehow we still come up with contradictory views on some issues. (Emphasis mine)

[86] For an excellent presentation of this concept, see Justo Gonzalez and Catherine Gonzalez, "Difficulties in Hearing the Text," in *Liberation Preaching*, 29-47.

[87]Frederick W. Farrar, "Religious Hatred," quoted in Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 6 (June 1965): 92.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

One of the downfalls toward interpreting the Word of God accurately is our failure to transfer ourselves back into the first century and look through their eyes. It is not uncommon for us to transfer the authors of the first century to the twenty-first century and interpret their words in the light of our own theological heritage. Louis Berkhof is on target as he seeks to call attention to our modern-day plight or dilemma of transference of the present century to the first century:

> *Moreover, he will have to transfer himself mentally into the first century A.D., and into Oriental conditions*. He must place himself on the standpoint of the author, and seek to enter into his very soul, until he, as it were, lives his life and thinks his thoughts. This means that he will have to guard carefully against the rather common mistake of transferring the author to the present day and making him speak the language of the twentieth century. If he does not avoid this, the danger exists, as McPheeters expresses it, that "the voice he hears (will) be merely the echo of his own ideas" (Bible Student, Vol. III, No. II).[88] (Emphasis mine-underlining)

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text. To fathom a passage involves the ***immediate*** *context*, the ***remote*** *context*, the ***larger*** *context*, and the **cultural** context. The *immediate context* includes verses preceding and following the reference that one is studying. On the other hand, the *remote context* may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the *larger context* may embrace the whole of God's written Revelation. The **cultural** context is the time frame in which the book was written, which is also known as "audience relevance." This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that we attach to any distinct phrase. Otherwise, **the interpreter may impose conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author says**.

Without a conception of a context, a person's particular context tends to shape his or her understanding or interpretation of the message under consideration. 1 Timothy 2:12 is a classic illustration of how Christians often fail to examine the *cultural context* as well as the *remote context* in seeking to enter into the mind of the author. Sidney Greidanus (b. 1935, American pastor and biblical scholar) is correct when he says, "An interpreter must be careful not to read more into a text than is actually there at that particular stage of redemptive history."[89]

Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the meaning of the text. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. We must not employ Holy Scripture in a way the Holy Spirit did not employ them. Leroy Garrett points out with justification that:

> People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. **Revelation** is what God has given us in scripture. **Interpretation** is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[90] (Emphasis mine)

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[88]Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), 115.

[89]Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 71.

[90]Garrett, "It Means What It Says," 69.

One of the first Scriptures that I memorized came from Matthew's Gospel, which citation centered on "false prophets" (Matthew 7:15).[91] Anyone who failed to adhere to my interpretation of God's Word was looked upon as a "false" teacher. Many fellowships still cite this Scripture: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." This Scripture is cited correctly as far as the wording is concerned, but many Bible expositors do not speak ***as*** the Bible speaks. In other words, we may speak ***where*** the Bible speaks and not speak ***as*** the Bible speaks.

In order to understand this passage of Scripture, it is necessary to study the whole of Matthew's Gospel before analyzing the individual elements. This is also true with one's examination of the role of women in the church. 1 Timothy 2:12 cannot be understood correctly without investigating the whole of the book itself. Again, I repeat the words of Schleiermacher: "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[92] This Scripture citation (Matthew 7:15) is set forth to draw attention to the *remote context* is seeking to correctly identify who the "false prophets" were that Jesus issued His stern warning. As stated earlier, we must interpret each text in light of the whole. Yet, at the same time, we must also interpret the whole in light of the parts. Without reading a book as a book, we will draw conclusions that are not in harmony with the intent, purpose, meaning, or aim of the author's sense.

A BASIC PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION: VIEW OF THE WHOLE VERSUS THE PARTICULAR

The following analysis of the Gospel of Matthew is an example of how we should read the Pastoral Epistles. As we contemplate a study of the whole of Matthew's Gospel, it is imperative that we examine the full text before an examination of its parts (for example, Matthew 7:15). If a reader explores a specific verse without weighing its sum total, then one's reflection may radically alter a correct view of a particular text.

Examples of particularization of texts without contexts to support certain dogmatic presuppositions are rampant among many Christians. We may consider the following isolated Scriptures as examples of frequently cited texts that are misapplied by many sincere Christians to uphold a sectarian spirit that divides the Christian community for which Jesus prayed (John 17). I have purposely drawn from Matthew's Gospel four citations that Christians frequently misapply because of one's failure to consult the various contexts of these Scriptures:

- Watch out for **false prophets**. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. (Matthew 7:15)
- Enter through the **narrow gate**. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (7:13-14)[93]
- If your **right eye** causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (5:29-30)

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[91] I wrote my dissertation on "False Prophets in the Gospel of Matthew, Who Are They? This dissertation is available on archive.org. To access this dissertation, please type Dallas Burdette in the search box. I wrote this dissertation in 1999.

[92]See Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991), 97. This essay applies the hermeneutic circle in order to identify the false prophets in the Gospel of Matthew as well as the injunction against the women in 1 Timothy 2:12.

[93]See Dallas Burdette, "The Narrow Gate" for a contextual study of Matthew 7:13-14 in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 209-214.

- But I tell you, **Do not resist** an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (5:39)
- **Do not judge**, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (7:1-2)[94]

It is not uncommon for interpreters to impose their own conceptual grids on a text without due reflection. When we approach the Word of God, we should advance toward the author's words with a hermeneutics of suspicion. In other words, we should be conscious of our own fallibility in interpreting Scriptures. Our interpretation should always remain the object of suspicion and of critical evaluation. **We must have a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose our own agenda upon the exposition of Scripture**. This is especially true in the above Scripture citations as well as a multitude of other Scriptures.

For many believers, "false prophets" (7:15) are those who disagree with their brand of orthodoxy or their interpretation of Scripture. It is not uncommon for many Christians to appeal to the Scripture (7:13-14) concerning the small gate and the narrow road to give credence to their particular denominational stance as the only way to heaven. Some saints have even taken the self-mutilation language (5:29-30) as a call to physical impairment of the body.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we encounter many statements that are hyperbolical (bold exaggerations for the sake of emphasis) in nature. I began my ministry at the age of 17 among a very legalist group of believers who maintained that the turning of the right cheek in Matthew 5:39 provided justification for their position for not defending one's country in the time of war. In all fairness to this fellowship, this conclusion was not and is not rebellion against God. There is a distinction between rebellion against God and an honest mistake of the heart or mind.

We cannot necessarily just take the Scriptures at face value (surface reading) without seeking to understand the intent or meaning of the author. We are to employ sound methods of interpretation in seeking to unfold the intended meaning of any text. In our analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12, we will seek to employ the basic principles of interpretation that should be applied to any kind of literature. For an accurate interpretation of First Timothy, we should examine the literary techniques employed by Paul as he deals with the problem of those who do not know who Jesus is. We need to develop the habit of working with the text in order to hear what the original hearers heard. Hopefully, this study will assist us in our understanding of the original setting in order to help remove twenty-first century bifocals and journey back into the first century, to stand upon their threshold, to see through their eyes, and to think their thoughts.

God's people must pursue the reading of the Bible without colored glasses that often leads to distortions. We must guard against our interpretation as equal to or on par with Scripture itself. To accomplish these objectives of critical investigation, it is necessary to learn how to reread the Bible. To set the stage for our examination of First Timothy, I wish to briefly outline the Gospel of Matthew that will assist us in correctly identifying the "false prophets" in the Sermon on the Mount. This examination will act as a forerunner for our in-depth study of First Timothy, which book is frequently misinterpreted because of a lack of investigation into its *cultural background*.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

> Careful handling of the Bible will enable us to "hear" it a little better. It is all too easy to read the traditional interpretations we have received from others into the text of Scripture. Then we may unwittingly transfer the authority of Scripture to our traditional interpretations and invest them with a

[94]See Dallas Burdette, "Judge Not" for a contextual study of Matthew 7:1-2 in *Old Texts through New Eyes*, 189-205.

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false, even an idolatrous, degree of certainty. Because traditions are reshaped as they are passed on, after a while we may drift far from God's Word while still insisting all our theological opinions are "biblical" and therefore true.[95] (Emphasis mine-underlining)

As we approach the Gospel of Matthew, we are immediately made aware that this book is a book of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of Israel. This brief overview of Matthew's Gospel is an illustration of how we should approach Paul's first Epistle to Timothy. If we wrench Scriptures out of context, we will fail to interpret First Timothy as well as Matthew's Gospel correctly. The entire Book of Matthew is a story of numerous battles between Jesus and the leaders.[96] Without this concept of a religious war of hostilities, we can read Matthew 7:15 concerning "false prophets" and misapply.

Matthew's Gospel is remembered for its Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Golden Rule. The Gospel of Matthew is cherished for its union of Gospel and ethics, of faith and morality. Matthew's Gospel is concerned to recover the moral and ethical aspects of the Christian life, something that the Old Testament prophets also sought to capture. Matthew speaks against those who set themselves over against the ethical instructions of Jesus. For Matthew, it is not sufficient just to accept Jesus as the Messiah, but one must obey Him. This is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about—ethical behavior that is pleasing to God. Matthew's Gospel is also an examination of the *oral law* of the Jews versus God's written Revelation. The oral law of the Jews was later codified into the Babylonian Talmud.

In fact, Matthew includes the stern warning of Jesus against those who do not obey God: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (7:21). Matthew also concludes his Gospel with Jesus' admonition to His apostles to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (28:19-20). Thus, Matthew begins and ends the ministry of Jesus with a call to correct conduct. The following insight about interpretation from Roy B. Zuck (Chairman of the Bible Exposition Department of Dallas Theological Seminary) is extremely helpful in our evaluation of any text.

> *Each biblical writing was accepted or understood in the light of its context*. Understanding a word or sentence in its context is another aspect of normal interpretation, of how we normally and usually approach any written material. A single word or even a sentence may have several meanings depending on the context in which it is used. The word *trunk* may mean a part of a tree, the proboscis [snout] of an elephant, a compartment at the rear of a car, a piece of luggage, the thorax of an insect, a part of the human body, or a circuit between telephone line exchanges. Obviously it cannot mean all these things or even several of them at once in a single usage. The reader can determine its meaning based on how it is used in the sentence.
>
> The same is true of the sentence, "He is over the hill." The context may suggest that he is literally on the other side of a small mountain or that he figuratively is "over the hill" in the sense of having lived beyond middle age. Ignore the context and you lose a basic tool for interpretation.[97] (Emphasis mine)

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[95]D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), 14.

[96]For an in-depth study of false prophets in the Book of Matthew, see Dallas Burdette, *False Prophets in the Gospel of Matthew: Who Are They7?* (D. Min. dissertation, Erskine Theological Seminary, 1999). Available from UMI Dissertation Services—A Bell & Howell Company (800-521-0600, ex. 7020). A copy of my dissertation is found on **archive.org** under search: Dallas Burdette (6-20-2020). Bob Lewis, a very devout and dedicated Christian, has made this dissertation and many of my essays available on this cite.

[97]Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, Victor Books, 1991), 65.

The Gospel's Structure:
An Example of the Remote Context

We have employed the phrase "false prophets" to illustrate a principle of correct interpretation. It is not uncommon for sincere Christians to apply this phrase loosely as a label toward other believers who do not hold to their particular brand of orthodoxy. This example (Matthew 7:15) is a classic illustration of how a Scripture can be misapplied without considering the whole. Remember, any text must be interpreted with reference to the whole book. For us to interpret any Scripture correctly, we should consider the structure or focus of the book itself before dealing with all its individual parts. This is true for an accurate interpretation of Matthew 7:15 concerning "false prophets" as well as our interpretation of First Timothy concerning 1 Timothy 2:12, which text concerns instructions about women teaching..

The context of the Sermon on the Mount focuses upon the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and adherence to their oral traditions, which they placed on par with God's Law. The following structure of Matthew's Gospel should assist every individual in his or her understanding and application of the parts to guide the Christian community today.[98] As we peruse the Gospel of Mathew, we are conscious that there are three major divisions of Matthew's Gospel (1:1—4:16; 4:17—16:20; 16:21—28:20). Matthew also records five major discourses that should help us in the identification of the "false prophets" in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The following outline sets forth the five major discourses.

- The Sermon on the Mount (5:1—8:1)
- The Charge to the Apostles (chapter 10)
- The Parables (chapter 13)
- The Lesson on Forgiveness (chapter 18)
- The Judgment and End of Jerusalem (chapters 24—25)

Subsequent to these five discourses, Matthew gives a transition that concludes each major discourse:

- "When Jesus had finished saying these things" (7:28)
- "After Jesus had finished instructing" (11:1)
- "When Jesus had finished these parables" (13:53)
- "When Jesus had finished saying these things" (19:1)
- "When Jesus had finished saying all these things" (26:1)

Matthew's Gospel can further be divided into ten sections in which "doing" and "teaching" alternate.

NARRATIVE	**TEACHING**	**TRANSITION**
1—4	5—7	7:28
8:1—9:34	9:35—10:42	11:1
11:2—12:50	13:1—52	13:53
13:53—17:27	18:1—35	19:1
19:1—23:39	24:1—25:46	26:1
26:1—28:20		
Passion Week		

[98]For an in-depth literary analysis of Matthew's Gospel, see Dallas Burdette, "A Literary Analysis of the Gospel of Matthew," in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes,* 26-62.

Matthew portrays Jesus as *doer* and *teacher*. He records at least twenty miracles and six major messages. Approximately sixty percent of Matthew's Gospel focuses on the teachings of Jesus. It is also significant that he arranges his material in a topical, rather than a chronological order. For instance, he groups ten miracles together in chapters 8—9. The above outline helps us to look at the discourses in context in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the conflict that existed between Jesus and the Pharisees.

This particular study has sought to make us conscious of how prior understanding can affect our current understanding of Scripture**. All Christians who open God's Word and read it bring with them the structures of their lives formed by their history, their language, and their culture in which they live**. Therefore, it is imperative upon every reader to capture the original intent of the author. Since no one can approach the text without presuppositions, then one must exercise every safeguard to interpret the Word of God correctly. John H. Hayes (b. 1934, Professor of Old Testament, Candler School of Theology, Emory University) and Carl R. Holladay (Associate Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean, Candler School of Theology, Emory University) capture the labyrinth or web of confusion that Christians face as they seek to interpret a particular text of Scripture:

> To put it another way, the text itself should set the interpretive agenda whenever possible. This in no way suggests that the interpreter can bring to the text a mind which is a "blank tablet" for this is clearly impossible. In fact, every time we read a text, we bring to the text the total accumulation of who we are—our previous history, our previously accumulated knowledge, our outlook, our individual concerns, and our preunderstanding of what the text or passage means. It has been said that a literary work is like a picnic—the author brings the words and the reader brings the meaning…. The interpreter should allow the text to speak for itself. By this we mean that the text possesses its own voice, and at this stage the interpreter should learn to listen.[99] (Emphasis mine--underlining)

CONCLUSION

The next chapter in our study on the role of women in the church, we will examine Chapter 24 of Luke's Gospel in order to understand more clearly the role that women would play in the Great Commission. The context of Luke 24 reveals that women were not excluded in witnessing for Christ—privately or publicly. As we endeavor to interpret the Word of God more accurately, we need to learn to abide by the three major rules of interpretation—CONTEXT, CONTEXT, and CONTEXT. When we, as Christians, fail to examine the **remote,** the **immediate, the larger** context, and the **cultural** context, we will continue to observe divisions within the Christian community as long as we fail to read a book as a book. We must interpret the individual text in relationship to the whole and the whole in relation to the individual text. When we neglect or disregard adherence to an all-encompassing principle of *exegesis*, we will misconstrue Divine Revelation. Our subsequent study will also focus upon the prepositional phrase "**from Galilee**." This prepositional phrase is extremely important in seeking to determine who is to be involved in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary.

[99]John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook,* Revised Edition (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 133.

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The Role of Women in the Great Commission

> The understanding of a text involves the correct mental perception of a text's meaning. Another way of saying this is that understanding involves a correct grasp of the pattern of meaning that the author willed, each individual who understands the meaning will have the same mental grasp of the author's pattern of meaning. Some understandings may be more complete than others because of a greater perception of the various implications involved, but, if an understanding is correct, it must have the same mental grasp of the author's meaning as any other understanding. Thus, although one person's understanding of meaning may be greater or more exhaustive than another's (because of a greater awareness of the various implications involved), every correct mental grasp of the author's meaning, or understanding, will be the same.[100]

Has God limited the proclamation of His mystery to the male species? The Christian community, as a whole, limits the participation of women in the Christian community. Did God intend that both men and women take part in the sharing of the mystery that had been hidden from ages past? The mystery, as defined by Paul, is Christ in us, the hope of glory. We cannot help but wonder why God would decrease His work force by at least seventy-five percent in the proclamation of the Good News. In view of the fact that this study is about the role women are to play in the Great Commission, which is the sharing of the "Mystery" of God, which is Christ, we should briefly reread Ephesians 1:9 concerning the "mystery of His will" in which He will "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (1:10).

In essence, we can say that the "mystery of His will" is that the Gospel (justification through faith in His Son) is available to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. In Jesus, God revealed that His love, His concern, His grace, and His mercy were for all humanity, not just Jews. Prior to the coming of Jesus, humanity lived in a divided world. A part of the "mystery of His will" centered on demolishing the wall of hostility that separated Jew from Gentile. Jesus came into the world to wipe out division between the Jew and the Gentile (2:11-22) through His own body upon the Tree (2:16).

The prepositional phrase "in Christ" (**ἐν Χριστῷ**, *en Christō*) captures the very core of unity. "In Christ" occurs eighty-six times in the Pauline epistles. Paul, fourteen times in the Book of Ephesians, uses this phrase to capture the foundation of this phenomenon of unity created by God.[101] This phrase is a dynamic unity of celestial (heavenly) and terrestrial (earthly) dimensions. Paul expresses this truth with great clarity:

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[100]Robber H. Stein, *A Basic guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 49.

[101]Ephesians 1:1, 3, 9, 12, 13, 20; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32

> And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [10] to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

If we understand the "mystery of God's administration of grace," this awareness should assist us in seeking to bring about unity within the Christian community, a community that is shattered into many sectarian camps. A consciousness of the *mystery* of salvation puts us on equal footing—Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. The heart of this unity is that there is "one body" (2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 4:25). Since there is only "one body," we can say that this truth ("one body") is the means whereby Christ brings unity to all the warring factions (various divisions) within the Christian community. This "one body" brings unity to all the various races (every nation). This "one body" also establishes equality between men and women. Paul grabs hold of these various issues as he seeks unity among the hostile forces at work to disrupt the plan of God for the salvation of all peoples. Listen to Paul as he writes to the Galatians: "There is neither **Jew nor Greek**, **slave nor free**, **male nor female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

A proper concept of the phrase "in Christ" should bring about harmony among God's people. We are alienated into countless argumentative *cliques* over dogma. We are not speaking to one another over the race issue—blacks and whites. We are at odds over the role of women in the Christian community. We are on bad terms over the proper procedure concerning the so-called five acts of worship to be performed on Sunday morning during a so-called worship service. Since the Jew and Gentile, as well as the slave and free, are no longer problems for the church, perhaps, a few comments are in order to set the stage for the dismantling of other long-held traditions concerning the role of women in ministry and the dismantling of another long-held tradition about each distinctive group within the Churches of Christ as embodying the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We still fight like cats-and-dogs over the least infraction of our cherished beliefs, which destroys the unity of the "one body" for which our Lord prayed (John 17).

As we reflect upon the *mystery* of salvation (a salvation provided by God), we are immediately confronted with the role that women play within the Christian community created by God. Is she or is she not to preach the Gospel? Can she give testimony to the world concerning the coming of Jesus into the world as Savior? Can she give her testimony about salvation in the assembly? Can she teach in the presence of men? These are questions that this study will briefly address. Since this study is about the role women play in the scheme of redemption, it is appropriate to discuss who can proclaim the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:17). Is the Great Commission limited to the Eleven in Mark, Luke, and John? Or does the Great Commission include all the disciples of Jesus—both men and women?

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND CHURCH DIVISION

One of the most controversial issues within the Christian community is the proper role of women within the Christian gatherings—to speak or not to speak in the assembly. Many Christians still cite 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 without consulting the context of these two famous passages.[102] The traditional view contradicts other clear passages. Since the Word of God does not contradict itself, then we must seek to understand the two controversial texts, as cited above, in light of their context. Whatever these passages are teaching, we know that the traditional interpretation is not correct. **The Kroegers correctly point out: "It is necessary to compare Scripture with Scripture to find the current meaning**. We must consider *all* that the Bible has to say about the activities of women committed to God's will."[103] Many cite these two pericopes, or

[102]For a thorough investigation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, see Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); also see Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and The Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of The Religious and Cultural Milieu of The First Century* (New York: University Press of America, 1991).

[103]Ibid., 13.

sections, without reference to the context.[104] The role of women in the church has driven a wedge into the body of Christ. Do we have a right to keep alive the denunciation of women in ministry in the same way that the church employed the Scriptures to justify slavery in the nineteenth century?

In the first century church, Christians maintained diversified viewpoints. Yet, their differences were not to divide the body of Christ. Whether we employ the expression *churches of* Christ (Romans 16:16) or the expression *churches of the* Gentiles (16:4), as found in Romans 16, still there is just "one body" (Ephesians 4:4).[105] There was not "one body" for the meat eaters and "another body" for the non-meat eaters (Romans 14:1-4).[106] There was not "one body" for the Sabbath keepers and "another body" for the non-Sabbath keepers (14:5-8). There was not "one body" for the Blacks and "another body" for the Whites (Revelation 7:9-10). There was not "one body" for the Jews and "another body" for the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-18). There was not "one body" for the males and "another body" for the females (Galatians 3:26-29). The prophet Joel (835 BC) wrote about the Messianic Age in which he stated that God's Spirit would be poured out on "all people," which includes females as well as males:

> I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. [29]**Even on my servants**, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)

"Both men and women" were active in the ministry of Jesus as well as in the ministry of the apostles. In spite of what Joel wrote, still many churches will not allow women to speak in their assemblies or pray in their assemblies or request songs in their assemblies. In fact, some Christians will not allow women to give thanks for food in the presence of men, even in the home. Also, some advance the notion that women should not conduct private Bible studies on the off chance a man might drop in. Recently, I read two essays in which the writers (both males) took the position that women could not write about Christianity and place their essays on the Internet.[107] Why? According to these two preachers, the writer (female) of the essay would violate 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.[108] Yet, in chapter eleven of First Corinthians, Paul spoke of women praying and

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[104]Since this essay is not designed to analyze the role of women in the church, this paper will only call attention to the more positive elements that many Christians overlook. In a forthcoming study, I will do an in-in-depth analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in order to assist Christians in a proper understanding of these two most controversial texts.

[105]The expression *churches of Christ* is no more the name of the church than the expression *churches of the Gentiles.*

[106]Even though some of the Christians were right and others were wrong, still this misunderstanding was not sufficient to disrupt the unity of the body of Christ.

[107]Greg Gay, "The Internet – 4," *Old Paths Advocate* 74, no. 1 (January 2000): 3-5. Greg writes:

> *Is a woman posting a message on a web page publicly speaking?* The posting of messages on a site for the purpose of discussing the meaning of scriptures (sic) results in the blurring of men and women's roles in teaching. Each media must be carefully examined so we do not violate Biblical principles. A woman posting an opinion about a passage of scripture on a web site that any and all can access appears to be doing public speaking to me. (pp. 4, 5)

[108]See also Alan Bonifay, "WWW.Parents/Leaders Beware," *Old Paths Advocate* LXXIV, no 4 (April 2000): 3-5, where he warns about private Bible studies and women posting essays on the Internet. He writes:

> Just how many people that might entail is open to some discussion but it is certainly less than fifty – in fact, it is probably considerably less than twenty. What that means is that when wives and daughters contribute comments to a web page forum potentially open to hundreds, if not thousands, of contributors from all over the world they are violating 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (p. 4).

prophesying in the assembly (11:5). Whatever 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is saying, it cannot contradict 1 Corinthians 11:5.[109] Luke begins his Book of Acts with the Apostles as well as the women praying together, along with the brothers of Jesus. Luke writes:

> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk [a] from the city. [13] When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. [14]**They all joined together** constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:12-14)

Yes, even in the presence of the Apostles and the brothers of Jesus, one discovers that the women—even the mother of Jesus—were praying. Also, Luke records that Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (21:9). Where did they prophesy? Did they prophecy out in the cornfield to a bunch of corn stalks? Or did they prophesy to both men and women? Earlier, in his history of the Christian movement, Luke mentions the wife (Priscilla) of Aquila who participated in teaching Apollos "the way of God more adequately" (18:26).[110] Priscilla is also listed in the "hall of fame" in Romans 16 (verse 3). Eleven women are named in this chapter. Of the four names associated with the church of Philippi, three were women—Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3) and Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) and one a man (Clement—Philippians 4:3). Euodia and Syntyche contended (labored) with Paul at his side "in the Gospel" (4:3). Even at Thyatira (one of the seven churches of Asia Minor), the church had a woman teaching (Revelation 2:18-29). Listen to what Jesus said about this woman who calls herself a prophetess:

> Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. **By her teaching** she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. [21] **I have given her time to repent of her immorality,** but she is unwilling. [22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. [23] I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. [24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you). [2:20-24]

God did not condemn her (symbolic Jezebel) for teaching, but rather, He condemned her for **what** she was teaching—"sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols" (2:20). Jezebel was teaching Gnostic philosophy. She had in essence become a Gnostic leader. Once more, God gave "her time to repent of her immorality, but she was unwilling." If it had been wrong for her to teach, we wonder why God did not say

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[109]Look for a forthcoming study in which I will deal with 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in context as well as 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The traditional interpretations of these two Scripture citations contradict clear passages that allow women to participate in Christian ministry, even in the assembly. It appears, so it seems to me, that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 relates to what the Judaizers were saying, not Paul. I could not find one statement in the Old Testament where women were told to keep silent or could not take a position of leadership. **The "law" relates to the traditions of the Jews (oral law), not to the Old Testament Scriptures**. Also, one must interpret 1 Timothy within its cultural context along with 2 Timothy and Titus if one expects to understand what Paul had reference to.

a That is, about 3 | 4 mile (about 1,100 meters)

[110]Priscilla is mentioned, along with her husband, seven times in the New Testament (Acts 18:2, 18, 19, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19). Out of the seven listings, **Priscilla's name occurs first in five of the seven listings**.

something about that. This testimony is also inferred evidence that women did take a public role in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, otherwise she would not have been accepted as a public figure within the Christian community.

In the bestowal of the Spirit upon the Church, there was no distinction of sex. Acts 2:1-4 seems to include the women mentioned in Acts 1:12-14. If so, this accounts for Peter's citation of Joel 2 in order to give validity to the unusual circumstances on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21). The women disciples of Jesus had prepared the way for what happened on the Day of Pentecost. The right and duty of women to co-operate with men in carrying out the Great Commission cannot be questioned. All Christians are ministers of God. All believers, according to Paul, are ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2). If the traditional view concerning women is correct, we wonder why God would disenfranchise approximately three fourths, or at least one half, of His disciples from proclaiming the Good News about God's Way of salvation "in" and "through" Jesus. Since all Christians are to rejoice in the *how* of salvation, it is appropriate to briefly discuss those who have been disenfranchised from telling the *how* of salvation in any public manner, especially to men. This brief detour of the *how* and *why* of salvation focuses on an examination of Luke 24 to illustrate that the women were told to be witnesses as well as the men concerning the *how* of salvation.

Women Included in the Great Commission

Luke 24

Acts 1 and 2 are a continuation of Luke 24. If we wish to understand chapters one and two of Acts, we need to reread carefully Luke 24. Just a casual reading reveals that the women were included in the "you are witnesses of these things" (24:48). On the morning of the resurrection, Luke informs Theophilus (see Acts 1:1) that the "women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb" (Luke 24:1). Upon their arrival, they discovered that the stone had been rolled away (24:2). While wondering about this event, Luke says, "In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground" (24:5). Two men stood by these women in clothing that "gleamed like lightning" (24:4). These two individuals reminded these women that Jesus had foretold this event about the resurrection to them while He was in Galilee (24:6-8).

Luke gives the names of some of these women, but not all: "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles" (24:10). After talking with the two men [angels], they returned to the city to tell the "Eleven" and "all the others" (24:9) that Jesus was raised. Luke reports to Theophilus that after the women met with the Apostles, and the others, that on the same day, two of those present left and headed for a "village called Emmaus," about seven miles from Jerusalem (24:13). Luke informs Theophilus that Jesus suddenly appeared to these two men as they were discussing the events that had just transpired in Jerusalem about the crucifixion (24:13-32). During the course of the conversation, these two disciples related to the stranger (Jesus) what had been reported to them by the women who had gone earlier to the tomb (24:22-24).

Following this encounter with Jesus, Luke reports: "They got up and returned once more to Jerusalem" (24:33a). For a second time, we observe the gathering of possibly the one hundred and twenty mentioned in Acts 1. "There they found **the Eleven** and **those with them** assembled together" (24:33b), which included the women. Yet again, Jesus appears in their presence (24:36) as he had previously appeared before the women at the Resurrection and the two men whom Jesus had talked on the way to Emmaus. Just as Jesus had earlier unfolded the Scriptures to these men, Jesus again, unfolds the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning His sufferings and death and resurrection (24:45-47). After this revelation of the Messianic prophecies concerning Himself, He says to the Eleven and to the others, "You are witnesses of these things. [49] I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (24:48-49).

This promise—outpouring of the Holy Spirit—is generally limited to the Twelve on the Day of Pentecost. But this promise was to be poured out on both men and women, not just the Apostles. According to Joel, the promise of the Father was to be poured out on both men and women. Luke corroborates the fulfillment

of Joel's Messianic prophecy (Acts 2). Individuals who wish to reach certain doctrinal conclusions by assimilating their presuppositions and their attitudes toward women sterilize this truth—both men and women were present and were to receive the Holy Spirit (Joel 2).

Proper biblical hermeneutics demand that every interpreter look at the context. Our failure to appreciate the context will lead us to give undue acquiescence to an excessively biased point of view. According to the context of Luke 24, the women were also present among those in attendance with the Eleven. The context of Luke 24 reveals that the women, along with the men, were to be "witnesses of these things" and "clothed with power upon high" (24:48-49). The Great Commission was not/is not limited to the male species.

One Hundred and Twenty: Men and Women

Acts 1

We should read the first two chapters of Acts in conjunction with the last chapter of Luke in order to follow the continuity of Luke's comments in Acts 1 and 2. Luke 24 concludes his Gospel with two outstanding statements—(1) "witness of these things" and (2) "clothed with power upon high." Just a casual reading of the Gospel accounts reveals a revolutionary doctrine of liberation for women—a liberation from degradation and inferiority. As stated above, in Acts 1, Luke records the presence of the Eleven in an upper room, along with "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus," which also included the brothers of Jesus (Acts 1:12-14).

This number totaled one hundred and twenty (1:15). The significant fact is, as stated above, that the women prayed alongside of the apostles and the others: "**They all** joined together constantly in prayer, along with **the women** and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with **his brothers**" (1:14). This Scripture runs contrary to the practice of many Christians today. Not only did the women pray in this gathering of the one hundred and twenty, but they also took part in casting lots in the choosing of Mathias (1:22-26). There is no indication, from the context, that this selection process (casting lots) was limited only to the men.

Yet again, some repetition is necessary for us to follow the logical sequence of events in order to show conclusively that the women were present in the events that transpired following the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:36-49). Hopefully, repetition may be pardoned here, for the minds of many Christians are so leavened by the traditions of the church Fathers that vital truths are difficult to see. Since truth is so often the projection of the particular views of the powerful, it is necessary to go back to the Scriptures and reread with freshness. In other words, the traditions of the church make it difficult, if not impossible, to read the Bible afresh.

Once more, we cannot read this unit of Scripture (23:47-49) without a consciousness of two things: (1) the witnesses included women, and (2) the women who followed Jesus **from Galilee** were witnesses. Pay attention to Luke, as cited above, as he writes: "**The women** who had come with Jesus **from Galilee** followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it" (23:55). The phrase "from Galilee" flashes like neon lights alongside the mention of "women." Why? Were they to witness concerning Jesus? As Luke continues his scenario, he sets forth the prominence of the women's role following the Resurrection. Remember, following the burial of Jesus, the women took spices to the tomb (24:1).

They found the stone rolled away and entered the tomb (24:2). Whereupon, they were frightened, and Luke says, "**the women** bowed down" (24:5). The two men questioned them about why they were looking for the living among the dead (24:5). Again, we observe the use of the word *Galilee* in the course of the conversation by the two men: "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you **in Galilee**" (24:6). It was not just the Apostles that Jesus told about His impending death while in Galilee—women were included. The expressions ***from Galilee*** and ***in Galilee*** are important phrases in trying to ascertain whether or not women were included in the command to witness to others about the *how* of salvation.

Can we in our wildest imagination edit out the women from "those with them"? The women play a major role in this section of Scripture (see also Acts 1:12-15). Jesus appears to His disciples. Should we limit the word *disciple* only to the male species? Surely not! There is no evidence to uphold that the word *disciple* refers only to males. Suddenly Jesus stood among them (both men and women). Still there was unbelief on the

part of the disciples. He told them to look at His hands and His feet in order to prove that He was not a ghost, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones (24:37-41).

After that, He opened their minds so they could understand what the prophets had earlier spoken of (24:47). He then informed those present (both men and women) that they were to be "witnesses of all these things" (24:48). At that time, Jesus let them know that He would send the promise of His Father upon each of them (24:40). But they were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with this power from on high (24:49). Did the Eleven and the other disciples, which included women, understand that they were all to wait in Jerusalem for this outpouring of God's Spirit upon both men and women? Yes! As stated above, the first chapter of Acts reveals that there were one hundred and twenty who were gathered in Jerusalem waiting for the events to transpire (Acts 1:15).

Once more, if the women were not included, we wonder why Peter did not say so. In fact, he cited the prophet Joel to show that Joel had previously foretold the phenomenon that they were now witnessing:

> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. [15]These men (**οὗτοι** *houtoi*) are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! [16]No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: [17]'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. [18] Even on my servants, **both** men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. [19]I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. [20]The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. [21]And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" [a] (Joel 2:14-21)

In Acts 2:1, Luke writes: "When the day of Pentecost came, **they** were all together in one place." On the Day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit is generally limited to the Twelve among many interpreters of the Word, but, according to Peter, the outpouring of the Spirit was upon the one hundred and twenty:

> When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. [2] Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. [4]All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [a] as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

Women Who Followed Jesus from Galilee

Acts 13:31

In just a casual reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we do not, under normal circumstances, catch a glimpse of the importance of this phrase in analyzing the role of women in the proclamation of God's Good News. The phrase "**from Galilee**" plays a significant role in our interpretation of the role of women in Christian ministry. For example, an angel of God uses this phrase "**in Galilee**" in calling attention to their (the women) travels with Jesus (Luke 24:6). Another example is found in the Book of Mark. As Jesus hung suspended between heaven and earth, Mark gives an insightful note concerning the women who had followed Jesus "**from Galilee**." Luke specifically mentions three women at the crucifixion by name, but he does not stop there. He also says that in addition to these three there were "many other women." What is significant about all of this is what Mark says about where these women came from:

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a Joel 2:28-32

a Or *languages*; also in verse 11

> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. [41] **In Galilee** these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. (Mark 15:40-41)

Once more, the geographical name "Galilee" plays a major role in understanding the role of women in Christian ministry. Matthew, too, gives information about these women who came from Galilee:

> Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus **from Galilee** to care for his needs. [56]Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. (Matthew 27:55-56)

Again, this information about women following Jesus "**from Galilee**" is extremely important. Not only did Mark and Matthew call attention to this devotion among the women, but Luke also details this same information. Listen to Luke as he writes: "**The women** who had come with Jesus **from Galilee** followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it" (Luke 23:55). In the reading of Mark and Matthew, one name stands out in BOLD—Mary Magdalene. Following Luke's statement about the women "**from Galilee**," he then proceeds to list the names of some of these women:

> When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. [10] It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. [11] But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (24:9-11)

This information from Mark, Matthew, and Luke, along with the full context, leads us to realize that the Great Commission was not given only to the Eleven, but to all those present—both men and women. If we wish to understand the ones to whom this commission was given, we must read and reread the entire context for contextual understanding. An understanding of the full text sheds light on the role women were/are to play in the proclamation of God's Good News to a lost and dying world. The women who discovered the empty tomb returned to tell the Apostles what had transpired (Luke 24:9). Yet, the Apostles refused to believe, as Luke says, "nonsense" (24:11).

Once more, repetition is necessary in order to drive home the point that women did share in ministry in the early church and to keep continuity in the analysis of Luke 24 with reference to the women's presence with the apostles and others. On this same day, Luke records two of His disciples on the road going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem (24:13).[111] On this road, Jesus suddenly appeared to these two men and struck up a conversation. In the course of the conversation, these men related what the women had said about the empty tomb and that Jesus was alive (24:22-24). It was then that Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith (24:25). Jesus then explained to them what the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms had said about Him (24:27).

After Jesus went to their home and broke bread and gave to them, Luke says that their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus (24:30-31). As we seek to unravel the part that the women played in this part of God's announcement of the Resurrected Christ, we should always be conscious that this background is necessary in order to follow the logical sequence of what is about to follow. Following this episode with Jesus, Luke writes: "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and **those** with them, assembled together" (24:33). They found not only "the Eleven," but also "those with them." These two men related their stories, and while they were speaking, the Lord Jesus "stood **among** them" (24:36). He showed

[111]Some repetition is necessary in order to keep continuity in the development of the role women played in the proclamation of the Good News.

them His hands and His feet (24:39). A conversation erupted between Jesus and His disciples; it was at this point that Luke writes:

> Then he opened **their** minds so they could understand the Scriptures. [46] He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, [47] and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [48]**You** are witnesses of these things. [49] I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (24:45-49)

Both men and women were present! Jesus informed His disciples—both men and women—that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name to all nations. Jesus did not limit this commission just to the male species, but rather he issued this statement to all the disciples present—"You are witnesses" (24:33). Also, in verse 48, Jesus says, "You are witnesses of these things." All the disciples—both men and women—were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise from on high. Luke gives the fulfillment of this "promise from on high" in Acts 2.

While they were assembled, the one hundred and twenty cast lots for the selection of one to take the place of Judas (1:23-26). Luke writes: "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles" (1:26). The very next verse reads: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place" (2:1). On this occasion Luke reports:

> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3]They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. [4]All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [a] as the Spirit enabled them. (2:2-4)

As stated above, sometimes repetition is necessary in order to uproot long-held traditions. There are three laws of learning that everyone should commit to memory: REPETITION, REPETITION, and REPETITION. If this event did not occur upon both men and women (one hundred and twenty), we still wonder why Peter cited the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21) about "your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women" (2:17, 18). If the women were totally silent on the Day of Pentecost, why did Peter cite this prophecy about women?

Daughters and women stand out in this prophecy. Why did he stress "both men and women"? Our awareness of this prophecy calls to mind the words of Paul as he preached Jesus in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52). What is remarkable about this pericope (unit or section of Scripture) is found in his discourse about the witnesses (13:31). After relating to his hearers about Jesus' crucifixion and entombment and resurrection, Paul says: "And for many days he was seen by **those** who had traveled with him **from Galilee** to Jerusalem. **They** are now his witnesses to our people" (13:31).

According to Paul, whoever traveled with Jesus "**from Galilee**" are "now" witnesses of these events. Did women travel with Jesus "from Galilee"? As noted above, Mark, as he concludes his Gospel, calls attention to many women who had traveled with Jesus "**from Galilee**" to Jerusalem (Mark 15:40-41); Matthew also beckons notice to several women who traveled with Jesus "**from Galilee**" to Jerusalem (Matthew 27-55-56); Luke, too, summons awareness to women who had traveled with Jesus "**from Galilee**" to Jerusalem (Luke 23:55). Earlier, Luke records the number of several women by name who traveled with Jesus "from one town and village to another" (8:1-3).

Did Paul exclude the women as witnesses in Acts 13:31? If so, there is nothing in the context to indicate that God disenfranchised the women from witnessing concerning the Resurrection of Jesus. Were the women witnesses of the Resurrection? Did Jesus refer to women as witnesses when the disciples were gathered together after the Resurrection (see Luke 24)? Did Jesus promise His Spirit upon both men and women in the Great

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a Or *languages*; also in verse 11

commission (see Luke 24)? Again, two things stand out in Acts 13:31—"Those who had traveled with Him **from Galilee** to Jerusalem" and "They are now witnesses to our people." Earlier, Luke, in the conclusion of his Gospel, speaks of the women as witnesses of the crucifixion and their having followed Jesus "**from Galilee**":

> The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." [48]When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. [49] But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. (Luke 23:47-49)

The following Chapter (3) explores the myth of interpreting the Word of God with a wooden literalness as well as the fallacy of interpreting isolated Scriptures from its context. **We cannot, necessarily, just take the Scriptures at face value without seeking to understand the intent of the author**. We are to employ sound methods of interpretation in seeking to unfold the intended meaning of any text. We need to develop the habit of working with the text in order to hear what the original hearers heard (audience relevance).

Hopefully, this chapter will assist our understanding of the original setting in order to help remove twentieth-century bifocals and journey back into the first century, to stand upon their threshold, to see through their eyes, and to think their thoughts. As God's people, we must seek to reread the Bible without colored glasses, which "colored glasses" often lead to distortions. We must guard against our interpretation as equal to that of Scripture. It is one thing to speak ***where*** the Bible speaks (literal citation) and to speak ***as*** the Bible speaks (the author's intent).[112] To accomplish these objectives, it is necessary to learn how to read the Gospel of Matthew and the Pastoral Epistles. In our current position, among many Christians, concerning the role of women in the church, we have made the Scriptures uneven.

[112]Matthew's account of the temptation of Jesus is a classic example of the ***where*** and the ***as*** method of interpretation. Satan quoted the Scriptures verbatim, but he failed to examine the author's intent. Jesus corrected his application by reference to other Scriptures. Satan pitted, or eroded, one Scripture with another.

3

Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy of Scripture

> In order to gain a knowledge of any level, it is necessary to possess an appropriate preunderstanding that correlates with what is to be interpreted at that level. An appropriate preunderstanding means that generally four factors must be present: (1) there must be a certain amount of correct information about what is to be interpreted; (2) there must be an attitude present that is open and receptive to making contact with the subject to be interpreted; (3) there must be an ideological structure that is sufficiently flexible and adaptable to treat fairly and objectively that which is to be interpreted; and (4) there must be a methodological approach that is appropriate to the subject to be interpreted.[113]

We frequently read the Word of God with wooden literalness, and, at the same time, interpret Scriptures in isolation from their context. Through carelessness in not handling the Word of God properly, Christians repeatedly divide over the interpretations of particular Scriptures handed down through the centuries. It is not uncommon for us to replace long-held interpretations with the Word itself. Within the Christian community, misapplication of Scriptures became normative and was passed on to succeeding generations as authoritative. This chapter on 1 Timothy 2:9-15 explores several historical records of the way many Christians seek to strengthen their opinions through the quotation of Scripture.

For hundreds of years, we have cited the Bible to prove our traditions or opinions about science, about medicine, and about theology. In the distant past, we discover that Christians rejected the works of Galileo on so-called biblical citations. This was just the tip of the iceberg, the Scriptures were not only employed against him, but many Christians also rejected innovations in the medical field through the quotations of biblical passages. Today numerous Christians justify their intolerance of other Christians through the misapplication of selected and isolated Scriptures.

Unfortunately, tradition still governs many of the theological debates today. Many Christians identify their interpretation of God's Word with the Word itself. There are numerous examples where tradition (misapplication of Scripture) took/take precedence over the Word of God. One such example is found in the field of medicine. Donald. T. Atkinson (M.D.) wrote an informative book about the rise of medical science and its beginnings in ritual and magic and of the people who freed it from ignorance.

Just a perusal of his book reveals the illegal use of Scripture that many theologians and non-theologians relied upon in order to deny medical breakthroughs on unfounded religious claims. In one of his chapters, he went right to the heart of the human mind in its rejection of any new concept (We have never done it that way before.), which mental concept is still true not only of science but also of religious thought that differs from our

[113]Duncan S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986), 17.

own brand of orthodoxy. He calls attention to the devastating effects of tradition on the minds of both men and women with the following insightful analysis:

> The most hurtful habit of the human mind is this tendency to cling to traditions which have withstood the moss, rust, and decay of the past. We seem to hold to our old thoughts with a veneration which is as infallible as it is inexplicable. This unhappy mental faculty makes the mind inaccessible to plain reason and leads toward intolerance.[114]

Since this study is concerned with the abuse of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, within almost every Christian community, we must take pains to discuss the proper use of Scripture in drawing conclusions from a specific text. Before we undertake an analysis of this most badly treated text, it would be helpful to investigate other issues to call attention to the proper methods of interpretation as we seek to untangle the true meaning of a passage(s).

As briefly stated above, to set the stage for a correct appreciation of this most controversial text, it is necessary to scrutinize other oddities that were upheld by many sincere persons to give credence to their unfounded positions and the basic principle of interpretation. This present chapter will analyze the wooden literalness of Scriptural interpretation. The church as a whole has habitually read 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to uphold the time-honored belief that women are not to be trusted or used in the teaching of God's Word, especially in a congregational setting.

BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

History and Culture

As we seek to unravel this controversial text, we must always bear in mind that hermeneutics (interpretation) is not done in a vacuum. The interpreter generally gives his or her explanation of a passage within his or her own religious culture. In order to interpret the Word of God correctly, we must step outside our own spiritual heritage and read the text with fresh eyes. We must seek to exegete the wording in light of its context. We should never read into the passage(s) what we wish the author to say. We should guard against the common tendency to read into the text our own presuppositions. **Charles Trombley** gives eight rules to apply to a proper interpretation of any document. The following is his list of rules that legal experts employ:

1. **Rule of Definition**. Define the terms of words being considered and then adhere to the defined meanings.
2. **Rule of Usage**. Don't add meanings to established words and terms. What was the common usage in the culture and time period when the passage was written?
3. **Rule of Context**. Avoid using words out of context. Context must define terms and how words are used.
4. **Rule of Historical Background**. Don't separate interpretation and historical investigation.
5. **Rule of Logic**. Be certain that words as interpreted agree with the overall premise.
6. **Rule of Precedent**. Use the known and commonly accepted meanings of words, not obscure meanings for which there is no precedent.
7. **Rule of Unity**. Even though many documents may be used there must be a general unity among them.

[114]Donald T. Atkinson, *Magic, Myth and Medicine* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 272.

8. **Rule of Inference**. Base conclusion on what is already known and proven or can be reasonably implied from all known facts.[115]

First Timothy is embodied within a certain history and culture. Since this is so, we must seek from the context the problem(s) that the author was seeking to deal with. Without an understanding of what was going on at the time of the writing, we cannot expect to arrive at an accurate comprehension. As a result of this failure to consult the full context, this pericope (unit of Scripture) has become one of the most abused texts within the Christian community. Just a casual reading of the religious journals reveals that this pericope is plastic, that is to say, it is frequently and easily molded into the preconceived ideas of the interpreter, not the intent of the author.

The weakness of many interpreters is that one's presuppositions are often read into the Scriptures rather than being read out of Scripture. Countless Christians tend to confuse their view of Scripture with their own explanation. If someone disagrees with the long-established view of a passage, then that person is unsound, at least, according to some churches. On the surface, what seems plausible as our commitment to Scripture is often the commitment to our own reading of Scripture.

Isolation of Context

One of the great fallacies in the study of Scripture is reference to Scripture in isolation from its own unique context. There is nothing wrong with quoting Scripture, but we must exert every effort to apply the passage correctly. Numerous Christians labor under the impression that if they can quote a Scripture verbatim, then that settles the matter. But this exact quotation by the reader is not the whole story. **If we fail to hear the intent of the author, we neglect to pay attention to the Word of God.** We should allow the Word of God in its full context to be the final word, not tradition. It is not uncommon for us to pick and choose on the basis of our own cultural heritage in our own unique explanation of Scripture. We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us from the church leaders. Robert Stein is correct when he writes: "To understand the divine meaning of Scripture, then, is to understand the conscious meaning of God's inspired servants who wrote them."[116]

APPLYING SOUND PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[117]

To further illustrate how to apply sound principles in the field of biblical interpretation, this section analyzes certain key Scriptures from the Book of Matthew in order to drive home the point of watertight beliefs of interpretation before we advance a particular view about a text(s). In the nineteenth century, **Friedrich Schleiermacher** (1768-1834, German theologian and philosopher), originated the idea of the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle philosophy simply means: "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[118] Interpretation

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[115]Charles Trombley, *Who Said Women Can't Teach?* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, Inc., 1985), 135-136.

[116]Robert H. Stein, *A Basic guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 28.

[117]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

[118]Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991), 97.

is an attempt to understand the work as a whole by an analysis of its elements.[119] Hermeneutics[120] ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis.[121] Nevertheless, hermeneutics is often used in a much narrower sense to grasp the relevance of ancient works. In other words, it is concerned about the "here" and "now."[122] Louis. Berkhof (1873-1957), Reformed theologian, makes the following succinct observation:

> The *necessity* of the study of hermeneutics follows from several considerations:
>
> 1. Sin darkened the understanding of man, and still exercises a pernicious influence on his conscious mental life. Therefore, special efforts must be made to guard against error.
> 2. Men differ from one another in many ways that naturally cause them to drift apart mentally. They differ, for instance,
>
> (d) in intellectual capacity, aesthetic taste, and moral quality resulting in a lack of spiritual affinity:
> (e) in intellectual attainment, some being educated, and others uneducated; and
> (f) in nationality, with a corresponding difference in language, forms of thought, customs, and morals.[123]

Hayes and Holiday define exegesis as an attempt "to reach an informed understanding of the text."[124] It is possible for an interpreter to miss the point of the text if he or she does not consider the "linguistic, cultural, and historical background to the inspired writings," writes Cedric Johnson.[125] It is also in this vein that Berkhof cautions Christians not to fall into the same trap that many fell into during the Reformation. Berkhof again sharpens the focus of caution:

> The militant spirit of the age found expression in hundreds of polemical writings. Each one sought to defend his own opinion with an appeal to Scripture. *Exegesis became the handmaid of dogmatics, and degenerated into a mere search for proof-texts.* The Scriptures were studied in order to find there the truths that were embodied in the Confessions.[126]

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[119] Ibid.

[120] See Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, where Stein writes: "The term 'hermeneutics,' . . . simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation." See also Thomas H. Olbright, *Hearing God's Voice* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1996), 185, where he says, "In a large sense, hermeneutics constitutes a theory about how one person explains or communicates a text to another."

[121]See Morner and Rausch, "Exegesis," Ibid., 72,73, where they say, "Originally, the detailed analysis, explanation, and INTERPRETATION of passages in the Bible, or, by extension, of any literary or intellectual text. The term carries with it a sense of digging out the meaning of a difficult passage."

[122]See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*: A Guide to Understanding the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 25.

[123]L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 12.

[124]John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook,* revised edition (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987), 23.

[125]Cedric B. Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 20. See also Dallas Burdette, "Passover Traditions in the Time of Christ" in *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2008), 181-195 for an example of the application of the above principles—"**linguistic**, **cultural**, and **historical** background."

[126] Berkhof, *Interpretation,* 28-29.

Many Christians encounter long-held traditions in his or her quest to understand the Word of God in its context.[127] It is not uncommon for believers to identify the traditions of their "interpretative community" with the Word itself. Johnson expresses the basic problem well in his discussion of presuppositions:

> Generations of scholars in the field of hermeneutics have recognized the influence of preunderstanding on interpretation. C. S. Lewis observed that "what we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience."[128]

Untold numbers with whom I have discussed the science of exposition have shared their frustrations and have described their Christian journeys as "Gullible's Travels."[129] We often accept what we are taught without question. It is in this sense that our interpretation is neither subjective nor objective. In other words, we have never taken the time to employ our minds subjectively in analyzing the Scripture for ourselves, nor have we looked at the Scriptures objectively. Our interpretations are "ready-made or prefabricated meanings."[130] Our interpretations are hand-me-downs from our interpretative community. Again, Fish rightly says, "In other words interpretive[131] communities are no more stable than texts because interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned."[132] In spite of Fish's deconstruction philosophy, nevertheless, he is correct when he writes:

> And, moreover, the way of seeing, whatever it was, would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the "see-er" was an extending agent. This is what Sacks means when he says that a culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine

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[127] See Hayes and Holladay, *Exegesis,* 66, where they write:

> The best guide to the meaning of a word is the context in which it is used. This means, first of all, the immediate context of the passage in which it occurs. If a word has several meanings, one should explore the range of meanings and see how they fit or do not fit in the context. A broader context is the whole of the document in which the terms appear. One should explore how a term is used and what it denotes elsewhere in the document.

[128] Johnson, *Interpretation*, 45.

[129]See Dallas Burdette, "Dallas Burdette's Pilgrimage of Faith" in *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood FL: Xulon, 2008), 1-26, which chapter develops the evolution of my thinking in my Christian journey. This chapter is informative in that I discuss basic principles of how to interpret Scriptures. This study discusses many of the "pit falls" that I encountered on my spiritual journey as a boy preacher. To a great extent, my earlier spiritual journey could be described as "Gullible's Travels."

[130]Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 172.

[131]Fish does not use "interpretative community" but "interpretive community."

[132] Ibid. I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand Fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism," *NTC's Dictionary*, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction":

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques Derrida. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of a terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism makes possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s, deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM.

detail"; it fills them so that no one's interpretive acts are exclusively his own but fall to him by virtue of his position in some socially organized environment and are therefore always shared and public.[133]

Leaders, especially ministers, often memorize verses from the Bible by the hundreds. But their interpretation frequently is not so much theirs, as it is the interpretation of a social structure to which they belong; that is to say, their interpretative community. Traditions still stand in the way of listening anew to the biblical text.[134] Once more, the Gonzalezs' caution: "We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us."[135] It is still very difficult for us to conceive that we might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background.

Some religious writers suppose they have all the answers, and as a result of this kind of intellectualization, the intellectually correct party ostracizes those who go against the grain with their particular interpretative community. It is not uncommon for Christians to justify condemnation over against the so-called nonconformist by citing Matthew 7:15 out of context, which reads: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." We may quote Matthew 7:15 or 1 Timothy 2:9-15 correctly, but we must also examine the context before drawing conclusions.

We must be careful that we do not go to the Scriptures to prove what we already believe, but rather to see what they say. We are so accustomed to reading the Bible as previously taught by generations of interpreters that we cannot distinguish between interpretation and Revelation. In other words, for one to question the traditional interpretations is tantamount to questioning the Word of God itself.[136] This failure to discriminate between explanation and Divine inspiration is one of the main obstacles that we encounter in our efforts to liberate the Bible from its culture and to maintain unity among God's people. The heritage of explaining is confused with the text itself. The faith of the fathers becomes the watchword for orthodoxy; the interpretation of the fathers becomes normative and is passed on as authoritative.

One of the most difficult obstacles for any Christian is to approach the text without any strong personal biases. Studying the Bible with colored glasses ultimately leads to distortion of the text.[137] We often tend to give preconceived beliefs the same authority as we give to the Bible. In other words, our preconceived political power is equal to that of the Scriptures. Our own personal journey of faith, with the ghosts of the past, makes it very difficult for us to view the Scriptures without prejudice. Our prior understanding and interpretation makes it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text.[138] The culture of our heritage controls the text of the Bible. We should never forget that our own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum. Frederic W. Farrar (1831-1903, Dean of Canterbury and author), draws attention to the religious hatred that generates from this know-it-all attitude:

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[133]Ibid., 335.

[134]See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 48-68.

[135]Ibid., 31.

[136]For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 68-71.

[137]See Johnson, *Interpretation* , 42, where he captures, in concise language, the subjective biases of all interpreters:

> My contention is that conflicting theological positions are in part due to the fact that we all approach a text, sacred or secular, with our strong subjective biases. Even though we have a commitment to read the Bible on its own terms: and even though we want the Divine and human authors to speak for themselves, somehow we still come up with contradictory views on some issues.

[138]For an excellent presentation of this concept, see Gonzalez and Gonzalez, "Difficulties in Hearing the Text," in *Preaching*, 29-47.

> My opinions are founded on interpretations of Scripture. Scripture is infallible. My views of its meaning are infallible too. Your opinions and inferences differ from mine; therefore you must be in the wrong. All wrong opinions are capable of so many ramifications that anyone who differs from me in minor points must be unsound in vital matters also. Therefore all who differ from me and my clique are "heretics." All heresy is wicked; all heretics are necessarily wicked men. It is my religious duty to hate, calumniate [to utter maliciously false statements] and abuse you.[139]

Contextual Interpretation

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text. To fathom a passage involves the **immediate** context, the **remote** context, the **larger** context, and the **cultural** context. The *immediate context* includes verses preceding and following the reference that one is studying. On the other hand, the *remote context* may take in the entire book in which the text is found. The *larger context* may embrace the whole of God's written Revelation. Also, the *cultural context* deals with "audience relevance." This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that we attach to any distinct phrase.

Otherwise, we may impose conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author says. Without a conception of a context, a person's particular context tends to shape his or her understanding and interpretation of the message. Sidney Greidanus is correct when he says, "An interpreter must be careful not to read more into a text than is actually there at that particular stage of redemptive history."[140]

Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the meaning of the text. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. We must <u>not</u> employ Holy Scripture in a way the Holy Spirit did not employ them. Leroy Garrett points out with justification that

> People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[141]

To use an example as cited above, we may cite Matthew 7:15—"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"—correctly, but not necessarily speak *as* the Bible speaks. We may speak ***<u>where</u>*** the Bible speaks and not speak ***<u>as</u>*** the Bible speaks. In order to understand this passage of Scripture, it is necessary to study the whole of Matthew's Gospel before analyzing individual elements. The same is true with 1 Timothy 2:9-15. We must study the whole of the Pastoral Epistles before analyzing individual elements.

View of the Whole versus the Particular

As we contemplate a study of the whole of Matthew's Gospel or a study of the Pastoral Epistles, it is imperative that we examine the full text of each book before an analysis of its parts (for example, Matthew 7:15 and 1 Timothy 2:9-15). If a reader explores a specific verse without weighing its sum total, then one's reflection may radically alter a correct view of a particular text. Examples of particularization of texts without contexts to support certain dogmatic presuppositions are rampant among many Christians. We may consider the following

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[139]Frederick W. Farrar, "Religious Hatred," quoted in Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 6 (June 1965): 92.

[140]Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 71. **<u>Sidney Greidanus</u>** is professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary

[141]Garrett, "It Means What It Says," 69.

isolated Scriptures as examples of frequently cited texts that are misapplied by many sincere Christians to uphold a sectarian spirit that divides the Christian community for which Jesus prayed (John 17).

- Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

- Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (7:13-14)

- If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (5:29-30)

- But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (5:39)

- Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (7:1-2)

- I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,[10] but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. [11] A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. [12] I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve. [14]And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.[15] But women[a] will be saved[b] through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Timothy 2:9-15)

It is not uncommon for interpreters to impose their own conceptual grids on a text without due reflection. When we approach the Word of God, we should approach with a hermeneutics of suspicion. In other words, we should be conscious of our own fallibility in interpreting Scriptures. Our interpretation should always remain the object of suspicion and of critical evaluation. We must have a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose our own agenda upon the exposition of Scripture. This is especially true in the above Scripture citations (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; 1 Timothy 2:9-15).

For many believers, false prophets (7:15) are those who disagree with their brand of orthodoxy or interpretation of Scripture, especially with relationship to the role of women in the Christian community. Also, many appeal to the Scripture (7:13-14) about the small gate and the narrow road to give credence to their particular denominational stance as the only way to heaven. As a result of literalism, some Christians have even taken the self-mutilation language (5:29-30) as a call to physical impairment of the body. Among some religious movements, the turning of the right cheek (5:39) is cited as justification for not defending one's country in the time of war. Again, we must ask: what is the context?

We cannot necessarily just take the Scriptures at "face value" without seeking to understand the intent of the author. We are to employ sound methods of interpretation in seeking to unfold the intended meaning of any text. We need to develop the habit of working with the text in order to hear what the original hearers heard. Hopefully, this chapter will assist our understanding of the original setting in order to help remove Twentieth

a Greek *she*
b Or *restored*

Century bifocals and allow us to journey back into the First Century, to stand upon their threshold, to see through their eyes, and to think their thoughts. God's people must seek to read the Bible without colored glasses, which often leads to distortions. We must guard against our interpretation as equal to that of Scripture. To accomplish these objectives, it is necessary to learn how to read the Gospel of Matthew and the Pastoral Epistles.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE

Eufame MacLayne

A classic example of the misuse of Scripture is found in the tragic story of Eufame MacLayne (AD 1591). Her story reveals the mindset of literalness and isolation of Scripture by Christians in the Sixteenth Century. Bernard Seeman wrote a book about man's endeavor to relieve pain in suffering. He recounts the story of Eufame MacLayne who took an herb to lessen her pain during the birth of twins. But according to the church fathers, this action violated the Law of God and was also contempt for the Crown. They based their views on what God had said to Eve: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children" (Genesis 3:16).

As a result of a midwife's (Agnes Sampson—birth unknown—executed, January 1591, as a witch) concern for pain, she provided her with the medicine she needed to relieve some of the pain during childbirth. Because Eufame took something to help alleviate her pain, she was brought before the church leaders and condemned to death. She had her twins taken forcibly from her and then she was forcibly chained to a stake and reduced to ashes.[142] This mindset originated with the literal interpretation of Scripture, not its intent.

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[142]Bernard Seeman, *Man Against Pain: 3000 Years of Effort to Understand and Relieve Physical Suffering* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1962), 96. See also Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, vol., 2 (New York: George Braziller, 1955), 62, 63. Volumes 1 and 2 are combined in one volume. See also Dr. Donald T. Atkinson, *Magic, Myth and Medicine* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 271-272, in which he too recounts this tragic story:

> Looking down on the new beautiful Princes Street of Edinburgh, Scotland, is Castle Hill. Here in 1591 a crime was committed which illustrates the old-time psychology. Up this hill, one bleak morning, was forcibly dragged Eufame MacLayne, a lady of rank and refinement. A few minutes before, she had clung desperately to her twin babies, but these had been torn from her by the crown bailiff. At the summit a stake had been driven in the ground and around it wood had been piled. As she knelt, chains were wrapped around her body and in less than an hour ashes was all that remained of Eufame MacLayne. This execution was not the result of mob violence, for the victim had been tried by due process of law and had been convicted. Evidence was advanced which proved that she had employed a midwife, "one Agnes Sampson to administer unto her a certain medicine for the relief of pain in childbirth contrary to divine law and in contempt of the crown."
>
> Eufame MacLayne's fate had been sealed by precedent. Convention had made it an insult to the Deity to assist a woman in labor. This was a crime which always drew the extreme penalty in medieval Europe. In 1521 Viethes, a Hamburg physician was arrested for attempting to mitigate the pains of labor. By nature Viethes was generous and kind, and his patient, a frail woman, begged for relief. Her entreaties reached the heart of this good man and he complied with her request. Immediately the wheels of the law began to turn and a conviction was soon obtained for the crown. A few weeks later an unusual light shone one night over Hamburg. They were burning Dr. Viethes.

Sir James Simpson

Seeman also relates another story about the introduction of anesthetics for the relief of pain.[143] In 1847, Sir James Simpson (1811-1870), British physician, discovered the anesthetic properties of chloroform.[144] After learning about the success of ether in the United States, he immediately started using this with his patients. As a result of the smell and irritating actions of ether, he looked for a less troublesome anesthetic. He ultimately decided upon chloroform that had been recently discovered by a German chemist, Justus von Leibig.[145] After publishing his results, he came under attack from "fellow physicians, from the clergy, from teachers, from the so-called enlightened and intelligent. Newspapers, magazines and pamphlets joined to loose their arrows at him."[146] Andrew White (1832-1918, U.S. diplomat, author, educator, and founder of Cornell University), wrote:

> From pulpit after pulpit Simpson's use of chloroform was denounced as impious and contrary to Holy Writ; texts were cited abundantly, the ordinary declaration being that to use chloroform was "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman." Simpson wrote pamphlet after pamphlet to defend the blessing which he brought into use; but he seemed about to be overcome, when he seized a new weapon, probably the most absurd by which a great cause was ever won: "My opponents forget," he said, "the twenty-first verse of the second chapter of Genesis; it is the record of the first surgical operation ever performed, and that text proves that the Maker of the universe, before he took the rib from Adam's side for the creation of Eve, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam."[147]

Why was there such a vivacious attack against this Professor of Obstetrics at the University of Glasgow, Scotland? Seeman says, "At the core of the attacks was the belief that the use of anesthesia in labor was an attempt to contravene the decrees of Providence, hence reprehensible and heretical."[148] Numerous individuals objected to anesthesia in labor for childbirth as an attempt to circumvent the Genesis mandate: "with pain you will give birth to children" (Genesis 3:16). Since Dr. Simpson was well versed in logic and theology, he examined the objections on religious as well as scientific grounds. In his defense, he exposed his critics with the following words:

> Were the curse in Genesis to be accepted literally, as the defenders of pain were doing, then a man sinned each time he eased his labor by using an ox, a plow or even fertilizer to enrich the soil. Any labor-saving device was as much in contravention of the Lord's curse as pain-saving anesthetic.[149]

Boyer

We must exercise caution that we do not isolate a passage from its context. Boyer, early in the nineteenth century, presented inoculation as a preventive of small pox in France. Not long after this introduction of vaccination, theologians were soon finding reasons against the innovative practice. Rev. Edward Massey published (1772) a sermon entitled: "The Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation."[150] The Theologians

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[143]Ibid., 122-125. See also Andrew D. White, Ibid., 62, 63.

[144]See Monica Winefryde Furlong, "Anesthesia," in Microsoft ® Encarta ® Encyclopedia 2003 (CD Deluxe). © 1993-2002 Microsoft Corporation.

[145]Seeman, *Man Against Pain*, 122.

[146]Ibid., 123, 124.

[147]Andrew White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol., 2 (New York: George Braziller, 1955), 63.

[148]Ibid., 123.

[149]Ibid., 125.

[150]Ibid., 55.

argued that the disease of smallpox, as well as other diseases, was "sent by Providence for the punishment of sin; and the proposed attempt to prevent them is 'a diabolical operation.'"[151] Another preacher, Rev. Mr. Delafaye, also preached a sermon with the title: "Inoculation and Indefensible Practice."[152] White writes: "The same opposition was vigorous in Protestant Scotland. A large body of ministers joined in denouncing the new practice as 'flying in the face of Providence,' and 'endeavoring to baffle a Divine judgment.'"[153]

Another physician, Dr. Zabdiel Boylston (1676/79-1766), medical doctor, in 1721, inoculated his son. As a result of this experiment, he encountered bitter hostility. Another physician, Dr. Douglas, a Scotch, insisted that inoculation was "poisoning." The opposing party urged the authorities to try Dr. Boylston for murder. Again, White discloses the inner thoughts of the radicals: "That the smallpox is 'a judgment of God on the sins of the people,' and that 'to avert it is but to provoke him more'; that inoculation is 'an encroachment on the prerogatives of Jehovah, whose right it is to wound and smite.'"[154]

Many Scriptures were employed to bolster their claims against smallpox and inoculations. In their arsenal of isolated Scriptures, they also cited Hosea 6:1 to justify their negative reaction, which reads: "He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds." This Scripture was torn out of its context to give credence to their presuppositions founded upon an illegal use of Scripture. They used this Scripture as their means of justification against using means of healing for any disease, not just smallpox.[155]

How did they prove their presuppositions? By isolating Scriptures from their context, they were able to prove to the masses that they were right. In the evolution of medicine, we also encounter's Edward Jenner's (1749-1823), English scientist and doctor, discovery of vaccination. One of his professional colleagues, Dr. Moseley, in opposition to vaccination, wrote a title page for his book: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[156] In 1798 physicians and clergymen sought to suppress vaccination as "bidding defiance to Heaven itself, even to the will of God" by forming an Anti-vaccination Society.[157] But eventually right reason gained the day.

Dr. Ignatz Philipp Semmelweis

Dr. Semmelweis (1818-1865), a young Hungarian physician, went to Vienna (1848) for advanced studies in obstetrics. This hospital provided him with firsthand studies dealing with childbirth. This hospital frequently put new cases into the beds of those who had just died with the "Childbed Fever" without changing the bedding. He soon discovered that one out of every ten births left the baby motherless. Many reasons were associated with the sudden death of the mothers. One physician, Meigs of Philadelphia, one of the greatest obstetricians of his time, attributed the deaths to "Justification of Providence; a judgment instituted to remind us of the sin committed by the mother of the race."[158] Dr. Semmelweis performed post-mortems to try to determine the cause of death. But this resulted in no visible means of determining the cause of death.

He left Vienna and went to Venice as a discouraged, overworked, and nervous individual. A few weeks later, he returned to Vienna and discovered doctors performing an autopsy on the body of Dr. Kolletschka, who had just died from septicemia (ˌsep-tə-ˈsē-mē-ə, invasion of the blood-stream by virulent microorganisms—blood poisoning) as a result of a wound he had received in the dissecting room. This triggered his memory in the recall of deaths that were much higher in one section of the hospital than another over which the midwives were delivering babies. As he reflected upon this problem, he then realized that the doctors who performed autopsies left the dissected bodies to deliver babies without washing their hands. As a result of this discovery,

[151]Ibid.
[152]Ibid., 55, 56.
[153]Ibid., 56.
[154]Ibid.
[155]Ibid.
[156]Ibid., 58.
[157]Ibid.
[158]Donald T. Atkinson, *Magic, Myth and Medicine*, 274.

he had all his students to wash their hands with a solution of chloride of calcium before delivery. The death rate plummeted. Thus, this discovery transformed a theory into fact.

As a result of this find, he wrote a book, *The Cause, Concept, and Prophylaxis of Puerperal Fever*, "a work that would one day revolutionize the science of obstetrics."[159] Since his findings did not coincide with the traditional ideas, he was persecuted. In Austria, he was bitterly opposed by two individuals—Scanzoni and Carl Braun—along with leading obstetricians. As stated above, many physicians contributed the childbed fever to "bad ventilation, to bad water, to improper food, and to disordered psychic states. Yet, by the older and more devout physicians it was thought to be the result of the Edenic curse."[160] The "Edenic curse" would be Genesis 3:16. During the early part of 1865, the criticism became so severe that Dr. Semmelweis became insane. Physical disease set in and in November he died. Did he die for nothing? No! Later, the work that he did laid the groundwork for "Pasteur's discovery of the role played by microorganisms in the production of fermentation."[161] Later, the renowned surgeon, Joseph Lister (1827-1912, English surgeon and father of modern surgery), saw the principle of antiseptic surgery initiated by Dr. Semmelweis and proclaimed Semmelweis as his forerunner.[162] Once more, we can see the devastating effects of one's misuse of the Bible; it wreaks havoc upon God's creation.

Jesus' Confrontation with Satan

A classic example of context is Jesus' confrontation with Satan. Scripture citations came from both Satan and Jesus. Matthew's record of Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness is a masterpiece of how <u>not</u> to interpret Scripture and how to interpret Scripture. It is one thing to quote Scripture and another thing to give the intent of the passage. Matthew's account reveals Satan citing Psalm 91:11-12 to Jesus in order to bolster his claim that Jesus could jump from "the highest point of the temple" (Matthew 4:5). Satan quoted the Scriptures accurately, but he did not look at the intent. Jesus also cited another Scripture to Satan to demonstrate that he had incorrectly interpreted this section of the Psalm. Jesus cited Deuteronomy 6:16 to illustrate that one <u>cannot</u> pit one Scripture against another Scripture. The following chart sets forth Psalm 91:11-12 and Satan's citation of Psalm 91:11-12 in Matthew 4:6:

Psalm 91:11-12	Matthew 4:6
For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; [12] they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.	For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. [b]"

Give to One Who Asks

Another example from the Sermon on the Mount should help to drive home the necessity of context before building one's theology upon an isolated passage. Should we interpret Matthew 5:42 literally? Jesus says, "give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" (5:42). Can we utilize discretion in giving money to others who ask? How many Christians interpret this passage

[159]Ibid., 276.
[160]Ibid., 274.
[161]Ibid., 277.
[162]Ibid.
b Psalm 91:11,12

literally? Did Paul contradict Jesus when he wrote the following to the Thessalonians: "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat'" (1 Thessalonians 3:10)?

Again, how should we interpret the following words: "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39)? Does God expect us to interpret this literally? If someone should hit you in the head with a baseball bat, does God expect you to stand up—provided it does not kill you—and say, "Well, hit me on the other side"? The reason for stressing these matters is to call attention to the necessity of interpreting according to meaning.[163] Understanding of these principles of interpretation should also help one to discard so much tradition placed upon 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

Amos 6:5 versus 2 Chronicles 29:25

Another illustration of how some Christians misapply a Scripture in order to maintain their disapproving views toward the use of instruments in the corporate praise assembly is found in Amos 6:5. This Scripture is applied by many believers to prove that God did not approve of David's command to use instruments of music in praise to God.[164] I, too, cited Amos 6:5 the first seventeen years of my ministry to prove that God condemned David for introducing instrumental music into the Old Testament worship. I had to revise my earlier position—a position that I was taught as a teenager—when I discovered a passage in which God commanded David to use instruments. I then recognized that whatever Amos was saying, he could not be saying what I said he said. The following chart should put this misapplication in proper perspective:

2 Chronicles 29:25	Amos 6:5
He stationed the Levites in the temple of the LORD with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the LORD through his prophets.	You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments

If we employ Amos 6:5 to condemn the use of instruments, we fail to take into consideration the context of this passage. We cannot nullify 2 Chronicles 29:25 with Amos 6:5. To do so is to violate God's Word. Kevin Giles, (vicar of St. Michael's Church, North Carlton, Australia), warns about an invalid approach to the study of Scriptures with comments about 1 Timothy 2:9-15:

> Making 1 Tim. 2:9-15 the key to understanding what the Scriptures teach about women and the narrow lens through which the whole Bible is read on this matter distorts the overall picture. It is not a valid methodological approach. Parallels would be to make James 2:18-26 the focal point to begin working out a doctrine of justification, or Revelation 10:1-10 the commencement point for a study of eschatology, or Acts 8:4-25 the foundation for a theology of Spirit reception. To capture the overall drift of Scripture on any matter we need to listen to the whole, and take into account the passages of Scripture those with whom we differ think are important. The history of the church tells us that when this is not done Christians invariably fall into theological error. Indeed, the late Oscar Cullmann

[163]For examples of hyperbole (bold exaggeration for emphasis), see Dallas Burdette, "The Divorce Sayings in the Synoptics and Pauline Writings") in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Mainland, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 150-188,

[164]See Goebel Music, "The New Testament Commands Us to Use Old Testament Psalms," *The Spiritual Sword* 10, no. 1 (October 1978): 22-27.

[1902-1999] argued that 'the fountain head of all false Bible interpretation and all heresy is invariably the isolation and absolutising of one single passage.'[165]

CONCLUSION

As we approach the interpretation of any text, we should never attack the sincerity of those who follow a path that is not in keeping with the context—many of whom are no doubt good and godly men and women—but there is still a need to guard against an interpretation that does not ring true to the biblical Revelation itself. When we, as interpreters, seek to understand the part (isolated text), we must first seek to understand the whole (the entire book). In the study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, we should study the background of the Pastoral Epistles (First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus) before we undertake to understand the particulars. **Since 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is a part of a larger narrative, it seems that the reader should interpret this isolated text in light of the overall meaning of the book itself.**

Also, it is safe to say that a search for the theme of the book should go a long way to a proper understanding of the text in dispute. Robert Stein correctly says, "The way an author helps his readers understand the meaning he seeks to convey is through context."[166] As we seek to find an answer to the meaning behind 1 Timothy 2:9-15, we must always be conscious that our prejudice(s) can be so deep-seated that, in effect, a verdict is passed even before the evidence (the whole book) is considered. This mindset results in the impossibility of understanding the text. Yet again, the words of Kevin Giles[167] are to the point about looking for an overall theme in the interpretation of any passage:

> The prohibition on women's exercising authority and teaching in church in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is addressed to a particular situation. This text is to be understood against the backdrop of false teaching that had erupted in Ephesus, which had led both men and women astray. Women had been allowed to teach in church, since Paul first founded the church several years previously, but now he forbids them from doing so.[168]

Chapter 4 seeks to explore whether it is right or wrong for women to announce the Gospel message in public or private. First, this chapter will explore the purpose of the fellowship of believers. Since women are also priests of God (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9-10,we wonder why God would turn around and forbid them to

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[165]Kevin Giles, "A Critique of the 'Novel' Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, Women in the Church. Part II," *The Evangelical Quarterly* LXXII, no. 3 (July 2000): 207.

[166]Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 57.

[167] **Dr. Kevin Giles** is an ordained Anglican minister and worked in parish ministry for almost forty years before he retired from St. Michaels Church in North Carlton in 2006. He studied at Moore College in Sydney, Durham University in England, and Tübingen University in Germany. As a widely published author, his books include, *Created Woman* (Acorn, 1985); *Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians* (Collins-Dove, 1989); *What on Earth Is the Church?* (IVP, USA, SPCK, England, 1995); *Count Me In: A Confirmation Workbook* (Acorn, 1992); *Making Good Churches Better* (Acorn 2001); *The Trinity & Subordinationism* (InterVarsity, 2002); *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Zondervan, 2006); *Better Together: Equality in Christ* (Acorn 2010); and *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (InterVarsity, 2012). In addition to these, he has published more than fifty scholarly articles. He is a contributor to the IVP Dictionaries of *Jesus and the Gospels* and *The Later New Testament & Its Developments*, and the Zondervan *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. His research interests include the church, conflict in the church, ministry in the Bible and the modern world, the ministry of women in the apostolic age and today, and the Trinity.

[168]Kevin Giles, *The Trinity & Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God & the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity, 2002), 206, 207.

testify about Jesus and to serve in the advancement of God's salvation "in" and "through" Jesus. Second, this in-depth analysis will focus upon the question: Are women allowed to announce the Good News of salvation to the world? Are women to remain silent within the assemblies of God's people? In order to understand Paul and the silence of women in the church, we need to examine the context in which this well-known Scripture (1 Corinthians 14:35) is cited to justify the complete silence of women. The next chapter explores another text that needs to be looked at through new eyes. Romans 16:17 is in the arsenal of many Christian men and women who frequently cite this text in order to justify their separation from other devout and sincere Christians.

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Paul and the Silence of Women in the Church

> In the study of God's message to women, I wish you to approach His Book as though, like a pagan, you had never seen it before, and knew nothing about it. Will you endeavor to cultivate this spirit of fresh inquiry? When we have heard, over and over again, with unquestioning credulity an explanation of a thing, even though the explanation be grotesques, it comes back to us with all the force of natural fact. **The mention of the thing recalls to the imagination that explanation, and no other seems right**. If there be an error in the explanation, we arrive at a point where we can detect it only by a real effort; **the false view comes to mind first**, and hinders acceptance of the truth.[169] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

As we approach the role of women within the Christian community, we need to examine two avenues of thought—the *how* (God's activity) and *why* (God's purpose for His people) of salvation. Is the proclamation of the *how* (justification by faith) of salvation and the *why* (to proclaim God's Good News) of salvation limited only to the male species? Do the Scriptures prohibit women from sharing their faith in the Risen Christ? Regrettably, today, many Christians advance the notion that women are not allowed to express their faith in Jesus in a public way, which includes using the internet or religious journals. It is my conviction that both men and women are to give testimony to the "mystery" of God's administration of grace (the *how*). In Ephesians 1:9-14, Paul sets forth the *how* and the *why* of Salvation for God's people. In other words, Paul unfolds the mystery of *how* individuals become God's people as well as the *why* of salvation in the lives of God's children (3:10).

If we wish to appreciate God's salvation by grace through faith in His Son Jesus, we should answer the following two questions: (1) ***how*** did we become God's children? And (2) ***why*** did we become God's children? This study of the *how* and *why* of salvation seeks to answer these two questions. Paul reveals the *how* of redemption whereby sinful humanity can become a part of His new community. The new community is God's possession, that is to say, His heritage. We must not only be concerned with the *how* of salvation, but we must also be concerned with the *why* of salvation, which *how* and *why*.

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[169]Katherine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (Peoria, IL: God's Word to Women Publishers, 1923), 8. **About the author:** Katherine C. Bushnell (1856-1946) died at the age of ninety. She was a medical doctor as well as missionary. Katherine was proficient in both Hebrew and Greek. The Anchorage Mission in Chicago was started by her. This mission housed abandoned women—up to as many as 5,000 in one year.

PRIESTS OF GOD: BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

Why did God bring into existence a fellowship of believers? The ***how*** of salvation is found in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. He unfolds the "mystery" of God's salvation "in" and "through" Jesus. He then sets forth ***why*** God formed the "church" or the Company of the Resurrected One. Jesus "purchased to God" individuals from "from every tribe and language and people and nation" to serve Him as priest." Many Christians would exclude women as "priest." Are women heirs of salvation, but, at the same time, excluded from proclaiming salvation? Are women priests of God? Are women, too, included in God's kingdom? Listen to John as he discloses a scene in heaven in which Jesus took the scroll to unfold the seven seals:

> And when he [Jesus] had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men [**ἠγόρασας**, *ēgorasas*[170]] for God from every **tribe** and **language** and **people** and **nation**. [10]You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:8-10)

Did God only purchase "men for God" as translated by the NIV? The Greek text reads: "purchased to God." Were only "men" purchased "from every **tribe** and **language** and **people** and **nations**"? Both men and women were included in this listing. Both men and women became a part of God's kingdom in order to serve God as priests (the *why* of salvation). Women, too, are to share in the proclamation of the Gospel. As Christians, we need to focus on two aspects of our salvation—the *how* and the *why*. As set forth above, the *how* of salvation focuses on *how* one is put in a right relationship with God. On the other hand, the *why* of salvation is to serve Him in the proclamation of the Good News of salvation and ethical behavior. Paul expresses the *why* in his Second Epistle to the Christians in Corinth:

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21] God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Men and women Are to Declare Mystery of His Will

In the Ephesian Epistle, Paul seeks to disclose both the *how* and the *why* of salvation. We should briefly reread Ephesians 1:9 concerning the "mystery of His will" in which He will "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (1:10). The *how* is "in Christ" through faith. In essence, we can say that the "mystery of His will" is that the Gospel (justification through faith in His Son) is available to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, which justification includes both men and women. In Jesus, God revealed that His love, His concern, His grace, and His mercy were for all humanity. Prior to the coming of Jesus, humanity lived in a divided world. A part of the "mystery of His will" centered on demolishing the wall of hostility that separated Jew from Gentile. Paul expresses it this way in his Epistle to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, **male nor female**, for **you are all one in Christ Jesus**" (Galatians 3:28).

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[170] **ἠγόρασας**, (*ēgorasas*): verb aorist, active, 2nd person, sing—from **ἀγοράζω (***hagorazō***), which Greek word is not limited to the male species. Both men and women were "purchased" by God. The word "men" is not in the Greek text.** The *English Standard Version* renders the translation of the Greek text--You ransomed **people** for God."

Just as Jesus came into the world to wipe out division between the Jew and the Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-22), He also sought to wipe out the division between male and female (Galatians 3:28). How did He do this, Paul informs us that He accomplished this feat through His own body upon the Tree (Ephesians 2:16). The prepositional phrase, "in Christ," captures the very core of unity. "In Christ" occurs eighty-six times in the Pauline Epistles. Paul, fourteen times in the Book of Ephesians, uses this phrase to capture the foundation of this phenomenon of unity created by God.[171] This phrase is a dynamic unity of celestial (heavenly) and terrestrial (earthly) dimensions. Paul expresses this truth with great clarity:

> And he [b] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [10] to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

If we understand the *how* and *why* of salvation, this awareness should assist us in seeking to bring about unity within the Christian community, a community that is shattered into many sectarian camps. A consciousness of the *how* of salvation puts everyone on equal footing—Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. The heart of this unity is that there is "one body" (Ephesians 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 4:25). Since there is only "one body," we can say that this truth ("one body") is the means whereby Christ brings unity to all the warring factions (various divisions) within the Christian community; this "one body" brings unity to all the various races (every nation); this "one body" also establishes equality between men and women. Paul grabs hold of these various issues as he seeks unity among the hostile forces at work to disrupt the plan of God for the salvation of all races. We should pay careful attention to Paul, once more, as he writes to the Galatians concerning neither "**male nor female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Divisions within the Christian community are not just over the role of women in the Christian community, it is widespread over many religious concepts. A proper concept of the phrase "in Christ" should bring about harmony among God's people. Unfortunately, the Company of the Resurrected One is alienated into countless argumentative cliques over dogma. It is not uncommon for believers to draw lines over the race issue—blacks and whites. In some fellowships, God's people are on bad terms with other Christians over the proper procedure concerning the so-called five acts of worship to be performed on Sunday morning during a so-called worship service.

Within the Christian community, the people of God accept Jews and Gentiles. Since this issue is no longer a problem for the Christian community, perhaps, a few comments are in order to set the stage for the dismantling of another long-held tradition concerning the role of women in ministry and the dismantling of other long-held traditions about each distinctive group within the various divisions found within many churches of the Anointed One as embodying the whole truth and nothing but the truth in their distinctive fellowship. I do not question the sincerity of those who oppose the position set forth in this study; nevertheless, numerous Christians still fight like cats-and-dogs over the least infraction of their cherished beliefs, which destroys the unity of the "one body" for which our Lord prayed (John 17).[172]

As we reflect upon the *how* of salvation (a salvation provided by God), we are immediately confronted with the role that women play within the Christian community created by God, which study involves the *why* of God's new humanity. Is she or is she not to preach the Gospel? Can she give testimony to the world concerning the coming of Jesus into the world as Savior? Can she give her witness about salvation in the assembly? Can she teach in the presence of men? Can she write books or articles in religious journals without violating God's Word? These are questions that this study will briefly address. Since this analysis about is about the *how* and

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[171] "in Christ": Ephesians 1:1, 3, 9, 12, 13, 20; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32

[172] I spent the first seventeen years of my ministry within a movement that was extremely sectarian toward other Christians. Yet, it is not just this particular fellowship that is divided, but we also discover divisions within other denominations—sectarianism abounds everywhere. For an analysis to our problems of sectarianism within God's new humanity, see Dallas Burdette, "Introduction," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), xvii-xxx.

why of salvation, it is appropriate to discuss who can proclaim the Gospel, which Gospel is God's power (**δύναμις Θεοῦ**, *dynamis Theou*) unto salvation (Romans 1:17)—the ***how*** of salvation.

Is the Great Commission limited to the Eleven in Matthew, Mark, or Luke? Or does the Great Commission include all the disciples of Jesus—both men and women? This study draws attention to the role of women in the Great Commission. It appears, so it seems, that if God's children could really and truly understand the greatness and richness of what He has accomplished for humanity "in" and "through" Jesus, we would work harder to maintain the unity created by the Holy Spirit. We would return to the biblical teachings of God's Word concerning the role of women in God's redemptive community. If we properly appreciate the ***how*** and ***why*** of salvation, this perception should assist us in working together to bring about harmony among all God's people in every area of controversy.

The Role of Women and Church Division

Again, we ask, are women forbidden to share their faith in God's Messiah in public assemblies as well as in private gatherings? One of the most contentious issues within the community of redeemed ones is the proper role of women within Christian gatherings—to speak or not to speak in the assembly so-called worship service. Many Christians still cite 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 without consulting the context of these two famous passages.[173] The traditional views of these two Scriptures contradict other clear passages. Since the Word of God does not contradict itself, then we must seek to understand the two controversial texts, as cited above, in light of their context. Whatever these passages are teaching, we know that the traditional interpretation is not correct. The Kroegers (Richard and Catherine) correctly point out:

> It is necessary to compare Scripture with Scripture to find the current meaning. We must consider *all* that the Bible has to say about the activities of women committed to God's will.[174]

Regrettably, many saints cite these two pericopes (units) without reference to the context. The issue of the role of women in the church has driven a wedge into the Body of Christ. Do we, as believers, have a right to keep alive the denunciation of women in ministry in the same way that the church employed the Scriptures to justify slavery in the nineteenth century? In earlier times, many sincere and devout religious leaders cited the Scriptures in order to justify slavery. Today, numerous religious leaders quote the Scriptures to justify their positions concerning the role of women in the church.

The Christian community is not just divided over the role of women, but God's church, among some Christians, is divided over the name of the church. In the first-century church, Christians maintained diversified viewpoints. Yet, their differences were not to divide the Body of Christ (Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8). Yet, this mind-set is not true, as a whole, today in God's new society. Whether we employ the expression *churches of Christ* (Romans 16:16) as the name of the church or not, the name on the building, in and of itself, does not determine its true identity. In this same chapter, Paul uses the expression *churches of the* Gentiles (16:4), yet, we do not identify this term as the name of the church. In the Galatian Epistle, he referred to the churches in the province of Galatia as "the *churches of Judea* that are in Christ" (Galatians 1:22). A more accurate translation in Romans 16:16 would be "the *assemblies of the Anointed One* salutes you."

The expression churches *of Christ* simply identify the body of believers as belonging to God's Anointed One, namely, Jesus. Whatever label we meet behind, we need to remember that there is still just "one body"

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[173]For a thorough investigation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, see Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); also see Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and The Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of The Religious and Cultural Milieu of The First Century* (New York: University Press of America, 1991).

[174]Ibid., 13.

(Ephesians 4:4).[175] There was not "one body" for the meat eaters and "another body" for the non-meat eaters (Romans 14:1-4).[176] There was not "one body" for the Sabbath keepers and "another body" for the non-Sabbath keepers (14:5-8). There was not "one body" for the blacks and "another body" for the whites (Revelation 7:9-10). There was not "one body" for the Jews and "another body" for the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-18). There was not "one body" for the males and "another body" for the females (Galatians 3:26-29). The prophet Joel (835 BC) wrote about the Messianic Age in which he stated that God's Spirit would be poured out on "**all people**," which includes females as well as males:

> I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your **sons and daughters** will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. [29] Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)

"Both men and women" were active in the ministry of Jesus as well as in the ministry of the Apostles. In spite of what Joel wrote, still many churches will **not allow** women to **speak** in their assemblies or **pray** in their assemblies or **request songs** in their assemblies. In fact, some Christians will not allow women to give thanks for food in the presence of men, even in the home. Also, some advance the notion that women should not conduct private Bible studies on the off chance that a man might drop in. For example, two men (Greg Gay and Alan Bonifay[177]) espouse far-reaching views concerning women within God's new community. I read both essays by Gay and Bonifay, and I was and am astounded at the positions these two believers advanced concerning women. Both men took the position that women could not write about Christianity and place their essays on the Internet.[178] Why? According to these two preachers, if the writer is a female, she would violate 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.[179] Yet, in Chapter 11 of First Corinthians, Paul spoke of women praying and prophesying in the assembly (11:5). Whatever 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is saying, it cannot contradict 1 Corinthians 11:5.

The traditional interpretations of these two Scripture citations contradict clear passages that allow women to participate in Christian ministry, even in the assembly. It appears, so it seems, that 1 Corinthians

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[175]The expression *churches of Christ* is no more the name of the church than the expression *churches of the Gentiles.*

[176]Even though some of the Christians were right and others were wrong, still this misunderstanding was not sufficient to disrupt the unity of the body of Christ.

[177]These two men are associated with the one-cup and NonSunday school Church of Christ. For a brief history of this movement, see Dallas Burdette, "A Brief History of the One-Cup and NonSunday School Movement," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 27-54. Both of these men are men who love the Lord and seek to please Him.

[178] Greg Gay, "The Internet – 4," *Old Paths Advocate* 74, no. 1 (January 2000): 3-5. Greg writes:

> *Is a woman posting a message on a web page publicly speaking?* The posting of messages on a site for the purpose of discussing the meaning of scriptures results in the blurring of men and women's roles in teaching. Each media must be carefully examined so we do not violate Biblical principles. A woman posting an opinion about a passage of scripture (sic) on a web site that any and all can access appears to be doing public speaking to me" (pp. 4, 5).

[179]See also Alan Bonifay, WWW.Parents/Leaders Beware, *Old Paths Advocate* 74, no 4 (April 2000): 3-5, where he warns about private Bible studies and women posting essays on the Internet. He writes:

> Just how many people that might entail is open to some discussion but it is certainly less than fifty – in fact, it is probably considerably less than twenty. What that means is that when wives and daughters contribute comments to a web page forum potentially open to hundreds, if not thousands, of contributors from all over the world they are violating 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (p. 4).

14:34-35 relates to what the Judaizers were saying, not Paul. I could not find one statement in the Old Testament where women were told to keep silent in **the church** or could not take a **position of leadership**. The word *law* in 14:34 relates to the traditions of the Jews, that is to say, the oral law of the religious leaders, not to the Old Testament Scriptures. Since the word *law* is employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34, many Christians automatically identify this word *law* as denoting the Law of Moses.

The word *law* (**νόμος,** *nomos*) must be interpreted according to the author's intent. For instance, the word *law* in the New Testament is found in Peter's introductory remarks to Cornelius and his household. In Peter's prefatory comments about his fraternizing with the Gentiles focuses upon the word *law*. In Peter's remarks to Cornelius and his household, he employs the word *law* in reference to the "oral law" of the Pharisees, not God's Law:

> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. [26] But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." [27] Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. [28] He said to them: "You are well aware that it is **against our law** for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. [29] So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" (Acts 10:25-29)

The NIV translates the Greek as "against our law." **It was not against God's Law for Jews to eat with Gentiles.** Peter speaks of the traditions of the religious leaders in his day. Another example is found in John 5:10. The religious leaders confronted the one whom Jesus healed on a Sabbath day. Let us listen in on the events as reported by John, one of the Twelve:

> Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." [9] At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, [10] and so **the Jews said** to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; **the law forbids you to carry your mat**." [11] But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" [12] So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" [13] The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. (John 5:8-13)

The traditional interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34 contradicts 1 Corinthians 11:5-6. Let us tune our ears to Paul's comments in Chapter 14:

> What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. [27] If **anyone speaks** (**τις λαλεῖ,** *tis lalei*) in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. [28] If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. [29] Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. [30] And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. [31] For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. [32] The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. [33] For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, [34] women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. [35] If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. [36] **Did the word of God originate with you?** Or are you the only people it has reached? [37] If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. [38] If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. [39] Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. (14:26-40)

In my research, I could not find where the Law ever commanded women to be silent in the church or assembly. Apparently, these remarks originated from the **oral law** of the Pharisees. Immediately, he asked, "Did the word of God originate with you?" What is actually found in the Law concerning women? A few examples from the Old Testament should suffice to refute the traditional interpretation. What about **Miriam (**mĭrʾĭ-ăm**)**, **Huldah (**hŭlʾdȧ**)**, **Deborah**, **Isaiah's wife**, and **Noadiah (**nōʾȧ-dīʾȧ**)**? **Miriam** (Moses' sister) was a **prophetess** and one of the leaders of the nation of Israel. Moses writes:

> Then **Miriam** the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. [21] **Miriam** sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." (Exodus 15:20-21)

Micah (735 BC) reports that Miriam was one of the leaders of Israel. He writes: "I sent Moses to lead you, and Aaron and Miriam" (Micah 6:4b). During the reign of Josiah (641-609 BC), Hilkiah the priest went to see Huldah the prophetess:

> Hilkiah [hĭl-kīʾȧ] the priest, Ahikam [ȧ-hīʾkăm], Acbor [ăkʾbôr], Shaphan [shāʾfăn] and Asaiah [ȧ-sāʾyȧ] went to speak to the **prophetess Huldah**, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. [15] **She said to them**, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, [16] 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. [17] Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' [18] Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: [19] Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. [20] Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'" So they took her answer back to the king. (2 Kings 22:14-20)[180]

During the time of the judges, the author of the Book of Judges gives the name of another woman (Deborah) who acted as a prophetess during troubled times in Israel, which took place following the death of Ehud (Judges 4:1). He pens the following words:

> **Deborah, a prophetess**, the wife of Lappidoth [lăpʾĭ-dŏth], was leading Israel at that time. [5] She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. [6] She sent for Barak [bârʾăk] son of Abinoam [ȧ-bĭnʾō-ăm] from Kedesh [kēʾdĕsh] in Naphtali [năfʾtȧ-lī] and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. [7] I will lure Sisera [sĭsʾêr-ȧ], the commander of Jabin's [jāʾbĭn] army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon [kīʾshŏn] River and give him into your hands.' " (4:4-7)

The Old Testament writings identify five women as prophetesses (Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, Isaiah's wife, and Noadiah). Isaiah writes about his own wife as a prophetess:

[180]See also 2 Chronicles 34:22, which records the same events.

Then **I went to the prophetess**, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz [māʾhēr-shālʾāl-hāshʾbăz[181]]. [4] Before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria." (Isaiah 8:3-4)

Nehemiah called upon God to remember the **prophetess Noadiah** (nōʾȧ-dīʾȧ) along with other prophets who sought to intimidate him over the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:14, [nēʾhĕ-mīʾȧ]). We should also take notice of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. In his final words to the Christians in Rome, he mentioned twenty-six names, ten of which were women (Romans 16). Luke begins his Book of Acts with the Apostles as well as the women praying together, along with the brothers of Jesus. Luke writes:

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk [a] from the city. [13] When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. [14]They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:12-14)

Yes, even in the presence of the Apostles and the brothers of Jesus, we discover that the women—even the mother of Jesus—were praying. Is it feasible that the women and the brothers of Jesus were excluded from praying verbally? Why would only the Eleven be allowed to pray? The wording by Luke includes other women, Mary, and Jesus' brothers. Also, Luke records that Philip the evangelist had **four daughters who prophesied** (21:9). Again, we need to inquire, where did they prophesy? Did they prophecy out in the cornfield to a bunch of corn stalks? Or did they prophesy to both men and women in public gatherings as well as private gatherings?

Earlier, in his history of the Christian movement, Luke mentions the wife (Priscilla) of Aquila who participated in teaching Apollos "the way of God more adequately (28:26).[182] Priscilla is also listed in the "hall of fame" in Romans 16 (verse 3)—ten, possibly eleven, women are named in this chapter. Of the four names associated with the church of Philippi, three were women—**Euodia** (yū-ōʾdĭ-ȧ) and **Syntyche** sĭnʾtĭ-chē, (Philippians 4:2-3) and **Lydia** (Acts 16:11-15) and one a man (Clement—Philippians 4:3). Euodia and Syntyche contended (labored) with Paul at his side "in the Gospel" (4:3). Some Christians want to assign the women's duties as just cooking and, possibly, washing Paul's clothes. Is this what Paul meant when he said they "contended at my side in the cause of the gospel"? If so, did this chore also include Clement? Pay attention, once more, to Paul's phraseology:

I plead with **Euodia** and I plead with **Syntyche** to agree with each other in the Lord. [3] Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with **Clement** and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. (Philippians 4:2-3)

Even at Thyatira (one of the seven churches of Asia Minor—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea), the church had a woman teaching (Revelation 2:18-29). Listen to what Jesus said about this woman who calls herself a prophetess:

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[181] J. D. Douglas and Merrill Chapin Tenney, *New International Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 615.

a That is, about 3 | 4 mile (about 1,100 meters)

[182]Priscilla is mentioned, along with her husband, seven times in the New Testament (Acts 18:2, 18, 19, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19). Out of the seven listings, Priscilla's name occurs first in five of the seven listings.

> Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. [21] **I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling**. [22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. [23] I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. [24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you). (Revelation 2:20-24)

This so-called prophetess misled God's people into "sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols." Many refused "her teaching" and the "so-called deep secrets" of Satan. When Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul labored in Ephesus, which books were written to combat the same kind of philosophy of false prophetess in Thyatira. In the early part of my ministry, I cited these verses from Revelation chapter 2 to condemn women from teaching. Today, these verses are still used by godly men and women to condemn women teachers.

For a classic example of this mind-set, **Ronny F. Wade** (1936-2020, assistant publisher of the *Old Paths Advocate*), commented upon this section of Scripture to condemn women teachers. He writes: "**The church at Thyatira was condemned for allowing Jezebel to teach and seduce people to commit sexual immorality**."[183] There is a subtle distinction in his comments. In other words, if this teacher had been a man, he, too, would have been condemned. This woman was doing the very things that the women were doing in Ephesus and were told to learn in the spirit of quietness. **Are Wade's implications from this rebuke on target**? We must consult the context to see what is actually said. Jesus did not condemn her for teaching as a woman, but rather He condemned her for "what" she was teaching. She should not have been allowed to teach, not because she was a woman, but rather for *what* she was teaching. The Lord Jesus said: "I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling." She was leading God's people into sexual immorality as well as eating food sacrificed to idols (2:20).

The symbolic Jezebel was teaching Gnostic philosophy. She had in essence become a Gnostic leader. Once more, God gave "her time to repent of her immorality, but she was unwilling." If it had been wrong for her to teach as a woman, we wonder why God did not say something about that. This testimony is also inferred evidence that women did take a public role in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, otherwise she would not have been accepted as a public figure within the Christian community. When Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus, "certain men" were not allowed to teach because of what they were teaching (1 Timothy 1:3-4). When he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, he encouraged him to entrust the teaching to "reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out, Luke indicates that God poured out His Spirit upon both men and women. In the bestowal of the Spirit upon the Church, there was no distinction of sex. Acts 2:1-4 seems to include the women mentioned in Acts 1:12-14. If so, this accounts for Peter's citation of Joel 2 in order to give validity to the unusual circumstances on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21). The women disciples of Jesus had prepared the way for what happened on the Day of Pentecost. The right and duty of women to co-operate with men in carrying out the Great Commission cannot be questioned. All Christians are ministers of God. All believers, according to Paul, are ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17—6:2).

If the traditional view among many godly and sincere Christians concerning women is correct, we wonder why God would disenfranchise approximately three-fourth, or at least one-half, of His disciples from proclaiming the Good News about God's Way of salvation "in" and "through" Jesus. I have cited two articles from the *Old Paths Advocate* against women expressing their faith in any public way. Recently, another writer (Kelvin Presley, minister and evangelist within the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement) reaffirmed their

[183]Ronny F. Wade (1936-2020), "Removing Candlesticks," in *Old Paths Advocate* LXXXI, No. 3 (March 2009):1

stance concerning the role of women within God's new humanity. He entitled his objections under the caption: "Too Much Information." In this article, he objects to women expounding upon spiritual matters in any fashion. Under the subtitle "A BACKDOOR FOR UNSCRIPTURAL PRACTICES," he voices his views concerning women and the proclamation of the Word of God:

> Most of us would conscientiously take exception to a woman expounding upon spiritual matters via a radio program, television program or a street-corner pulpit. Well, FACEBOOK, forums, blogs and other such sites are just as public.[184]

In my analysis of the various citations from the *Old Paths Advocate*, I do not intend to imply that there was a deliberate intent to mislead. Even though these men are sincere in their views, nevertheless, their interpretations are not in harmony with God's written Revelation. These men have been influenced by the church-fathers, not the Word of God. Since all Christians are to rejoice in the ***how*** of salvation, it is appropriate to briefly discuss those who have been disenfranchised from telling the ***how*** of salvation in any public manner, especially to men. This brief detour of the *how* and *why* of salvation above is designed to cause believers to reflect more seriously about our present day theology. In our reflection upon our traditions, we now need to focus upon an examination of Luke 24 to illustrate that the women were told to witness concerning the *how* of salvation.

WOMEN INCLUDED IN THE GREAT COMMISSION

Luke 24

Acts 1 and 2 are a continuation of Luke 24. If we wish to understand Chapters 1 and 2 of Acts, we need to reread carefully Luke 24. Just a casual reading reveals that the women were included in the "you are witnesses of these things" (24:48). On the morning of the Resurrection, Luke informs Theophilus (see Acts 1:1) that the "**women** took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb (Luke 24:1). Upon their arrival, they discovered that the stone had been rolled away (24:2). While wondering about this event, Luke says, "In their fright **the women** bowed down with their faces to the ground" (24:5). Two men stood by these women in clothing that "gleamed like lightning" (24:4). These two individuals reminded these women that Jesus had foretold this event about His Resurrection to them while He was **in Galilee** (24:6-8).

Luke gives the names of some of these women, but not all: "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the Apostles" (24:10). After talking with the two men, they returned to the city to tell the "Eleven" and "all the others" (24:9) that Jesus was raised. Luke reports to Theophilus that after the women met with the Apostles, and the others, that on the same day, two of those present left and headed for a "village called Emmaus," about seven miles from Jerusalem (24:13). Luke informs Theophilus that Jesus suddenly appeared to these two men as they were discussing the events that had just transpired in Jerusalem about His Crucifixion (24:13-32). During the course of the conversation, these two disciples related to the supposed stranger (Jesus) what had been reported to them by the women who had gone earlier to the tomb (24:22-24).

Following this encounter with Jesus, Luke reports: "They got up and returned once more to Jerusalem." For a second time, we observe the gathering of possibly the one hundred and twenty mentioned in Acts 1. There they found **the Eleven** and **those with them** assembled together" (24:33), which included the women. Yet again, Jesus appears in their presence (24:36) as he had previously appeared before the women at the tomb and the two men with whom Jesus had talked with on the way to Emmaus. Just as Jesus had earlier unfolded the Scriptures to these men, Jesus again, unfolds the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning His

[184]Kelvin Presley, "Too Much Information," in *Old Paths Advocate* LXXXII, no 3 (March 1010): 7. I consider this man a godly and devout believer, but, at the same time, it seems that he is misinformed as to the true teaching concerning the role of women within the Christian community.

Sufferings and Death and Resurrection (24:45-47). After this revelation of the Messianic prophecies concerning Himself, He says to the Eleven and to the others, "You are witnesses of these things. [49] I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (24:48-49).

This promise—outpouring of the Holy Spirit—is generally limited to the Twelve on the Day of Pentecost. But this promise was to be poured out on both men and women, not just the Apostles. According to Joel, the promise of the Father was to be poured out on both men and women. Luke corroborates the fulfillment of Joel's messianic prophecy (Acts 2). Individuals who wish to reach certain doctrinal conclusions by assimilating their presuppositions and their attitudes toward women sterilize this truth—both men and women were present and were to receive the Holy Spirit (Joel 2). Proper biblical hermeneutics demand that every interpreter look at the context. Our failure to appreciate the context will lead us to give undue acquiescence to an excessively biased point of view. According to the context of Luke 24, the women were also present among those in attendance with the Eleven. The context of Luke 24 reveals that the women, along with the men, were to be "witnesses of these things" and "clothed with power upon high" (24:48-49). The Great Commission was not and is not limited to the male species.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY: MEN AND WOMEN

Acts One

We should read the first two chapters of Acts in conjunction with the last chapter of Luke in order to follow the continuity of Luke's comments in Acts 1 and 2. Luke 24 concludes his Gospel with two outstanding statements—(1) "witness of these things" and (2) "clothed with power upon high." Just a casual reading of the Gospel accounts reveals a revolutionary doctrine of liberation for women—a liberation from degradation and inferiority. As stated above, in Acts 1, Luke records the presence of the Eleven in an upper room, along with "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus," which also included the brothers of Jesus (1:12-14). This number totaled one hundred and twenty (1:15).

The significant fact is, as stated above, that the women prayed alongside of the Apostles and the others: "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and **with his brothers**" (1:14). This Scripture runs contrary to the practice of many Christians today. Not only did the women pray in this gathering of the one hundred and twenty, but they also took part in casting lots in the choosing of Mathias (1:22-26). There is no indication, from the context, that this selection process (casting lots) was limited only to the men.

Yet again, some repetition is necessary for us to follow the logical sequence of events in order to show conclusively that the women were present in the events that transpired following the Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:36-49). **Hopefully, repetition may be pardoned here, for the minds of many Christians are so leavened by the traditions of the church Fathers that vital truths are difficult to see**. Since truth is so often the projection of the particular views of the powerful, it is necessary to go back to the Scriptures and reread with freshness. In other words, the traditions of the church make it difficult, if not impossible, to read the Bible afresh.

Once more, we cannot read this unit of Scripture (Luke 23:47-49) without a consciousness of two things: (1) the witnesses included women, and (2) the women who followed Jesus from Galilee were witnesses. Pay attention to Luke, as cited above, as he writes: "The women who had come with Jesus **from Galilee** followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it" (23:55). The phrase "from Galilee" flashes like neon lights alongside the mention of "women." Why? Were they also to witness concerning Jesus? As Luke continues his scenario, he sets forth the prominence of the women's role following the Resurrection. Remember, following the burial of Jesus, the women took spices to the tomb (24:1). They found the stone rolled away and entered the tomb (24:2). Whereupon, they were frightened, and Luke says, "the women bowed down" (24:5).

The two men questioned them about why they were looking for the living among the dead (24:5). Again, we observe the use of the word **Galilee** in the course of the conversation by the two men: "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you **in Galilee**" (24:6). It was not just the Apostles that Jesus told about His impending death while in **Galilee**—women were included. The expressions **from Galilee** and **in Galilee** are important in trying to ascertain whether or not women were included in the command to witness to others about the *how* of salvation.

Can we in our wildest imaginations edit out the women from "those with them"? The women played a major role in this section of Scripture (see also Acts 1:12-15). Jesus appears to His disciples. Should we limit the word *disciple* only to the male species? Surely not! There is no evidence to uphold that the word *disciple* refers only to males. Suddenly Jesus stood among them (both men and women). Still there was unbelief on the part of the disciples. He told them to look at His hands and His feet in order to prove that He was not a ghost, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones (24:37-41).

After that, He opened their minds so they could understand what the prophets had earlier spoken of (24:47). He then informed those present (both men and women) that they were to be "witnesses of all these things" (24:48). At that time, Jesus let them know that He would send the promise of His Father upon each of them (24:40). But they were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with this power from on high (24:49). Did the Eleven and the other disciples, which included women, understand that they were all to wait in Jerusalem for this outpouring of God's Spirit upon both men and women? Yes! As stated above, the first chapter of Acts reveals that there were one hundred and twenty who were gathered in Jerusalem waiting for the events to transpire (Acts 1:15).

Once more, if the women were not included, we wonder why Peter did not say so. In fact, he cited the prophet Joel to show that Joel had previously foretold the phenomenon that they were now witnessing:

> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel": 17 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your **sons and daughters** will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' [a] " (Acts 2:14-21)

In Acts 2:1, Luke writes: "When the day of Pentecost came, **they** were all together in one place." On the Day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit is generally limited to the Twelve among many interpreters of the Word, but, according to Peter, the outpouring of the Spirit was upon the one hundred and twenty:

> When the day of Pentecost came, **they** were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where **they** were sitting. 3 **They** saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 **All** of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [a] as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

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a Joel 2:28-32

a Or *languages*; also in verse 11

WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS FROM GALILEE

Acts 13:31

With just a casual reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we do not, under normal circumstances, catch a glimpse of the importance of this phrase in analyzing the role of women in the proclamation of God's Good News. The phrase "**from Galilee**" plays a significant role in our interpretation of the role of women in Christian ministry. For example, an angel of God uses this phrase "**in Galilee**" in calling attention to their (the women) travels with Jesus (Luke 24:6). Another example is found in the Book of Mark. As Jesus hung suspended between heaven and earth, Mark gives an insightful note concerning the women who had followed Jesus **from Galilee**. Luke specifically mentions three women at the Crucifixion by name, but he does not stop there. He also says that in addition to these three there were "many other women." What is significant about all of this is what Mark says about where these women came from:

> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. [41]**In Galilee** these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. (Mark 15:40-41)

Once more, the geographical name "**Galilee**" plays a major role in understanding the role of women in Christian ministry. Matthew, too, gives information about these women who came **from Galilee**:

> Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus **from Galilee** to care for his needs. [56] Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. (Matthew 27:55-56)

Again, this information about women following Jesus **from Galilee** is extremely important. Not only did Mark and Matthew call attention to this devotion among the women, but Luke also details this same information. Listen to Luke as he writes: "The women who had come with Jesus **from Galilee** followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it" (Luke 23:55). In the reading of Mark and Matthew, one name stands out in BOLD—Mary Magdalene. Following Luke's statement about the women **from Galilee**, he then proceeds to list the names of some of these women:

> When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. [10] It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. [11] But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (Luke 24:9-11)

This information from Mark, Matthew, and Luke, along with the full context, leads us to realize that the Great Commission was not given only to the Eleven, but to all those present—both men and women. If we wish to understand the ones to whom this commission was given, we must read and reread the entire context for contextual understanding. An appreciation of the full text sheds light on the role women were and are to play in the proclamation of God's Good News to a lost and dying world. The women who discovered the empty tomb returned to tell the Apostles what had transpired (Luke 24:9). Yet, the Apostles refused to believe, as Luke says, "nonsense" (24:11).

Yet again, reiteration is necessary in order to drive home the point that women did share in ministry in the early church and to keep continuity in the analysis of Luke 24 with reference to the women's presence with the Apostles and others. On this same day, Luke records two of His disciples on the road going to a village

called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem (24:13).[185] On this road, Jesus suddenly appeared to these two men and struck up a conversation. In the course of the exchange, these men related what the women had said about the empty tomb and that Jesus was alive (24:22-24). It was then that Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith (24:25). Jesus then explained to them what the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms had said about Him (24:27).

After Jesus went to their home and broke bread and gave to them, Luke says that their eyes were opened and they recognized Him (24:30-31). As we seek to unravel the part that the women played in this aspect of God's announcement of the Resurrected Christ, we should always be conscious that this background is necessary in order to follow the logical sequence of what is about to follow. Following this episode with Jesus, Luke writes: "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the **Eleven** and **those with them**, assembled together" (24:33). They found not only "the Eleven," but also "those with them." These two men related their stories, and while they were speaking, the Lord Jesus "stood among them" (24:36). He showed them His hands and His feet (24:39). A conversation erupted between Himself and His disciples; it was at this point that Luke writes:

> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. [46] He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, [47] and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [48] **You are witnesses of these things**. [49] I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (24:45-49)

Both men and women were present! Jesus informed His disciples—both men and women—that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name to all nations. Jesus did not limit this commission just to the male species, but rather He issued this statement to all the disciples present—"You are witnesses" (24:33). Also, in verse 48, Jesus says, "You are witnesses of these things." All the disciples—both men and women—were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise from on high. Luke gives the fulfillment of this "promise from on high" in Acts 2. While they were assembled, the one hundred and twenty cast lots for the selection of one to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:23-26). Luke writes: "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles." The very next verse reads: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place" (2:1). On this occasion Luke reports:

> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where **they** were sitting. [3]**They** saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on **each** of them. [4]**All** of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [a] as the Spirit enabled **them**. (2:2-4)

As stated above, sometimes repetition is necessary in order to uproot long-held traditions. There are three laws of learning that everyone should commit to memory: REPETITION, REPETITION, and REPETITION. If this event did not occur upon both men and women (one hundred and twenty), we still wonder why Peter cited the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21) about "your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women" (2:17, 18). If the women were totally silent on the Day of Pentecost, why did Peter cite this prophecy about women? "Daughters" and "women" stand out in this prophecy. Why did he stress "both men and women"? Our awareness of this prophecy calls to mind the words of Paul as he preached Jesus in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52). What is remarkable about this pericope is found in his discourse about the witnesses (13:31). After relating to his hearers about Jesus' Crucifixion and Entombment and

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[185]Some repetition is necessary in order to keep continuity in the development of the role women played in the proclamation of the Good News.

a Or *languages*; also in verse 11

Resurrection, Paul says: "And for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people" (13:31).

According to Paul, whoever traveled with Jesus **from Galilee** are "now" witnesses of these events. Did women travel with Jesus "from Galilee"? As noted above, Mark, as he concludes his Gospel, calls attention to many women who had traveled with Jesus **from Galilee** to Jerusalem (Mark 15:40-41); Matthew also beckons notice to several women who traveled with Jesus **from Galilee** to Jerusalem (Matthew 27-55-56); Luke, too, summons awareness to women who had traveled with Jesus **from Galilee** to Jerusalem (Luke 23:55). Earlier, Luke records the number of several women by name that traveled with Jesus "from one town and village to another" (8:1-3).

Did Paul exclude the women as witnesses in Acts 13:31? If so, there is nothing in the context to indicate that God disenfranchised the women from witnessing concerning the Resurrection of Jesus. Were the women witnesses of the Resurrection? Did Jesus refer to women as witnesses when His disciples were gathered together after the Resurrection (see Luke 24)? Did Jesus promise His Spirit upon both men and women in the Great commission (see Luke 24)? Again, two things stand out in Acts 13:31—"Those who had traveled with Him **from Galilee** to Jerusalem" and "**They are now witnesses** to our people." Earlier, Luke, in the conclusion of his Gospel, speaks of the women as witnesses of the Crucifixion and their having followed Jesus **from Galilee**:

> The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." [48] When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. [49] But all those who knew him, **including the women who had followed him from Galilee,** stood at a distance, watching these things. (Luke 23:47-49)

BODY OF CHRIST DIVIDED INTO VARIOUS WARRING FACTIONS

Within the community of God's people, I, myself, am frequently confronted with individuals who are not open to change. We are reluctant to go back to the original author of the text to determine what intent he conveyed by his words. Again, the words of Longman are on target:

> The author's intention provides a kind of anchor in the sea of interpretive relativity. For Hirsch (b. 1928, a United States educator and academic literary critic], the meaning of a text is to be identified with the author's intended purpose[186].

It is not only the role of women in the Christian community that has estranged God's people, but Christians are at odds over a multitude of issues—Church treasury, instrumental music, individual communion cups, Sunday school, women cutting their hair, women wearing veils, worship service—five prescribed rituals, how to share the bread in the Lord's Supper—"break" or "pinch" the bread, and on and on it goes. The Baptist fellowship, too, is divided into numerous distinctive denominations.[187] Division is not just a phenomenon among those associated with the Stone/Campbell Movement. Unfortunately, division is the hallmark of God's church today. For example, within the Stone/Campbell Movement, we discover that the original movement is divided into numerous factions, each claiming to be the one true church. Churches have established barriers to segregate groups and individuals from one another within Christ's church.

God's people should seek to reestablish solidarity between the various factions that exist among His people, which includes Churches of Christ, Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and so on. Why? There is only "one body." God's people must react against the smug, withdrawn,

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[186] Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles, 10.*

[187]Frank S. Mead, Revised by Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States,* Tenth Edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 49-81.

and loveless attitudes manifested by so many who profess faith in Christ. There is only one church and that church consists of everyone who puts his or her trust in Jesus as the Savior of the world. Just a casual look at the various journals within the Christian community reveals the sordid mess that many sincere Christians advance, all in the name of Jesus. Christians are divided over the so-called issues, not Jesus. Many Christians are preaching another Gospel than the Gospel of God—God's Way of salvation, namely, Jesus. Numerous Christians are preaching another "faith" other than Jesus as "the faith" set forth in the Book of Ephesians.[188]

It is my prayer that God's people will continue to uphold the belief that the very existence and character of Christianity is a society of men and women redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The Church is simply a company of believers who endeavor to learn and practice the will of God in their lives. If we, as Christians, wish to recapture the unity for which Jesus prayed, we must take seriously the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ, not some splinter faction of the Body. There should be one essential ministry of believers, that is, the perpetual ministry of the Risen Lord.

Sadly, in some fellowships, the Church is divided over something that God never commanded—assemble to perform a worship service with five rituals to be executed in a prescribed manner. It is foolish to look for any hard-and-fast system of rituals in the New Testament for a so-called worship service. There is an absence of rigid conformity of worship in the New Testament writings. It is the responsibility of the whole Body of Christ to engage in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. The business of ministry is the business of the whole community, not just the paid preachers.

The church is important in the lives of God's people. We can say, at least to some extent that the life of the Chuch is the continuation of the messianic ministry that the Apostles and others were continuously engaged in. The Church of Jesus is the organism that He uses to carry out His purposes in the world. All of the early disciples—both men and women—were to engage in the proclamation of God's Way of salvation. All Christians—both men and women—engaged in the messianic ministry. Every believer must help the helpless, release the captives, and seek to save the lost through telling them about Christ. Today, the Church is the New Israel—the people of God's New Covenant. Many Christians are seeking to revert back to a Judaistic type of worship with its ceremonial laws through their concept of worship in a geographical location with its five ritualistic acts, which, in some sense, is parallel to Judaism.[189] Every congregation of Christ has an obligation to care for and, at the same time, to desire to be in fellowship with other congregations. For the Christian, there is one essential ministry—His.

Without a proper definition of the Church, it is impossible to define adequately the work of ministry. The Church is not the kingdom of God. The Church makes known the kingdom of God, that is to say, His rule. The local Body of believers should never be isolated from other believers, but rather, the church, as a whole, is one in community. We can define the term Church with a term such as "community." Whenever we define the Church as an organization, then the organization and rites fracture the community into warring factions, each claiming to be the true Church. The **ἐκκλησία** (*ekklēsia*, congregation or assembly) is not an institution. We cannot abstract community from institution, nor can we abstract institution from community. There is a distinction between the Church being organized and the Church becoming an institution.

The localized church implies the universal church and the universal church implies the local church. Without the church becoming concrete, the church does not exist. There is one church, but this one church meets behind various labels that it has inherited from its forefathers. Many Christians, unknowingly, have substituted Christianity for theology, that is to say, its own brand of orthodoxy. In other words, the church, as a whole, has substituted the love of Jesus, the love of God, and life in the community of all God's children for its own brand of orthodoxy. The church must sacrifice life in its own denomination for its life in Jesus.

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[188]For an in-depth study of the "one faith" in the Book of Ephesians, see Dallas Burdette, "One Faith," in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts Through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 339-382.

[189]For an in-depth study of worship, see Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Privileges,* Vol., 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 359-439.

Without a clear understanding of the nature of the church, there can never be any effective solution to the problems that presently divide Christians. The church, to a large extent, has degenerated into building religious cults—cloning. Worship trends in many congregations simply become habitual repetition of rites. The church today needs to reevaluate its concept of worship. The present concept of worship is divisive. Each congregation seeks to indoctrinate its members in the traditions of the forefathers. Many churches have developed and maintained a one-sided interest in their denomination.[190] The essence of the church is found in its oneness of communion with Christ by faith and fellowship with others in love. The church is rooted in communion with God through Jesus Christ and communion with others. The whole life of every believer is a worship of God. We, as Christians, need to understand that our lives are one continuous act of worship—twenty-four hours a day, not just Sunday morning between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

When we assemble on the Lord's Day, this common assembly is for the purpose of hearing the Word of God, for prayer, for fellowship, and for the purpose of sharing a meal in order to reflect upon Christ's redemption. These are the means whereby the church is ever conscious that they represent the ekklhsia. This awareness reinforces the idea that the ekklhsia is one with Christ and, at the same time, joined together through Him to others. The early assemblies were never considered a worship service, but, in its strictest and literal sense, a place for building up one another in the faith. The Lord's Supper is never spoken of in the New Testament as an act of worship, but it is simply the revelation of His righteousness, His love, and His justifying grace through the Branch—Jesus the Messiah.

The Body of Christ that Paul speaks of in the Book of Ephesians is essentially a fellowship of persons, not an institution. The Body of Christ cannot be an institution, or denomination, but a community of those who live by faith in the Son of God and in love with all of God's children. Unfortunately, many people today do not see the need of meeting with other Christians. Even though the call is made to individuals, nevertheless, the followers assume a collective identity with the people of God. The church remains God's instrument upon earth for the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation "in" and "through" Christ. Thus, there is "one body," not many bodies. This brings us to the *how* of salvation. Everyone becomes part of this "one body" through faith in Jesus Christ. Part two of this study discusses in detail the *how* and *why* of salvation. Hopefully, this next section will awaken within us a desire to serve Him with all of our hearts, our souls, and our minds—both men and women.

CONCLUSION

Presuppositions and Our Interpretations

We, as followers of Jesus, need to learn how to read the Word of God more accurately. Since every Christian has his or her own historical context as he or she approaches the text, we, as individuals, should reevaluate our own theological training and our own unique historical church context with its cultural background, experience, education, and training. In other words, since every believer approaches the text with certain presuppositions, assumptions, deductions, and beliefs, we need to be conscious of our own unique spiritual heritage. **Michael S. Heiser**[191] is extremely helpful in assisting us in our search for the intent of the

[190]For an excellent discussion on the church and its ministry, I recommend the following books: T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948); and H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).

[191] Dr. Michael S. Heiser is a former Scholar-in-Residence for Faithlife Corporation, the makers of Logos Bible Software. He currently serves as Executive Director of the Awakening School of Theology and Ministry at Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida. His varied academic background enables him to operate in the realm of critical scholarship and the wider Christian community. His experience in teaching at the undergraduate level and writing for the layperson have both directly contributed to Logos' goal of adapting scholarly tools for nonspecialists. Dr. Heiser earned his PhD in Hebrew Bible and Semitic languages and holds an MA in ancient history and Hebrew studies. He is the coeditor of *Old Testament Greek Pseudepigrapha with*

author. For example, he introduces us, in his series of lectures on biblical interpretation, to ten obstacles that hinder a proper hermeneutics in our endeavor to arrive at a correct interpretation. The following is his discussion of the "first obstacle" toward an understanding of sound biblical principles concerning interpretation:

> The first obstacle to hermeneutics, to Bible interpretation—again, that we face even before we start—is that of presuppositions. I'm speaking here of our own presuppositions, our own assumptions that we bring to the Bible consciously or unconsciously. We all think about the Bible in certain ways, and that colors the way we read it, the way we research it, the way we look at it, what we do once we find things in it. We can't escape things like our own experience, our own background, our own context—whether that be a Christian context, a church context, a denominational setting. We all bring things to the table that act as, again, conscious or unconscious filters with how we look at how we read, how we study, the Bible.[192] (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

One of the greatest obstacles to biblical interpretation is proof-texting, which methodology stems from our presuppositions. In other words we look for Scriptures that appear to uphold our views concerning various issues. Our practice of reading Scripture may come from a "church context" or a "denominational context." The following remarks by **C. Powell**[193] regarding the various interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 are quite informative concerning our conjectures as we approach the text:

> Presuppositions are inevitable scholarly appendages, indivisible from any theologian's task and visible at every level of exegesis. Scholer observes, 'The concept of genuinely objective biblical interpretation is a myth.… Generally, persons raised within holiness, pentecostal and certain Baptist traditions experienced women teaching authoritatively in the church long before they were equipped to interpret 1 Timothy 2:11–12 and never found that passage a problem. Conversely, persons raised in many Reformed traditions knew long before they were equipped to interpret 1 Timothy 2:11–12 that women were to be excluded from authoritative teaching in the church. They grew up finding the verses clear support for what they believed.'[194] (Emphasis mine)

The Reader-Response Approach Defined

> **READER-RESPONSE THEORY** An approach to the study of literature that focuses on the reader and the process of reading. This theory holds that meaning is created through the interaction of the reader and the text. **As a result, we can determine a text's meaning only by understanding the**

Morphology and *Semitic Inscriptions: Analyzed Texts and English Translations*, and can do translation work in roughly a dozen ancient languages, including Biblical Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Ugaritic cuneiform. He also specializes in Israelite religion (especially Israel's divine council), contextualizing biblical theology with Israelite and ancient Near Eastern religion, Jewish binitarianism, biblical languages, ancient Semitic languages, textual criticism, comparative philology, and Second Temple period Jewish literature. In addition, he was named the 2007 Pacific Northwest Regional Scholar by the Society of Biblical Literature.

[192] Michael S. Heiser, ed., BI101, *Introducing Biblical Interpretation: Contexts and Resources*, SEGMENT # 2, Obstacle # 1, Presuppositions, Learning Objectives, Introduction (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013). This video course is available through Logos/Faithlife (Logos bible Software—digital library). I highly recommend this biblical study dealing with "hermeneutics." His series of lectures are university training in the field of hermeneutics.

[193] **C. Powell** teaches New Testament and Greek at All Nations Christian College England.

[194] C. Powell, "A Stalemate of Genders? Some Hermeneutical Reflections," in *Themelios* 17, no. 3 (1992): 17.

> **original audience's likely responses to the text**. Many scholarly approaches to biblical interpretation seek to determine how the *writing* generates meaning or communicates a message to the reader. In reader-response theory, it is assumed that the *reader* contributes more to the meaning of a text than the author does through writing it (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 209). **The reader-response approach seeks to identify a hypothetical audience—the "implied reader"—of a particular text.** The narrative itself expects a particular audience, and expects this audience to have particular responses to the text (e.g., recalling earlier parts of the story, having certain emotional reactions; Archer, *A Pentecostal*, 232–33). **Reader-response theory uses the perceived social context and history of the hypothetical audience to find that audience's interpretation of the text**.[195] (Emphasis mine—bold)

It is not uncommon for the reader of the text to impose his or her own agenda to the text of Scripture. Unconsciously, many readers fail to read the text as the "**implied reader**" would have interpreted the book or epistle of Scripture written by the author to his particular audience. As we approach the Scriptures, we need to keep in mind that **we are** the "**real readers**," **not** the "**implied readers**." The "implied readers" are those who first received the book or epistle within his or her own cultural context. As we study the various books of the Old Testament or the New Testament, we need to bear in mind that the Scriptures were **not written to US but for US.** We should never allow our own "denominational setting" to determine the meaning of the original context of the "implied reader." Once again, the following comments by **Heiser** are helpful in avoiding the danger of separating ourselves from our own twenty-first century culture in order to arrive at a correct exegesis of the biblical text as the "implied readers" would have understood:

> The first obstacle to hermeneutics, to Bible interpretation—again, that we face even before we start—is that of presuppositions. I'm speaking here of our own presuppositions, our own assumptions that we bring to the Bible consciously or unconsciously. We all think about the Bible in certain ways, and that colors the way we read it, the way we research it, the way we look at it, what we do once we find things in it. We can't escape things like our own experience, our own background, our own context—whether that be a Christian context, a church context, a denominational setting. We all bring things to the table that act as, again, conscious or unconscious filters with how we look at how we read, how we study, the Bible.[196]

A consciousness of the reader-response theory sets the agenda for our own personal biases. In our examination of 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, many believers have allowed their inherited "theological traditions" to shape their interpretation of God's Word. This major flaw in our interpretation discards "audience relevance," that is to say, how the original audience understood these texts.

The Objective of the Church—the Why

Our next chapter (Chapter 5) will explore the purpose of God in creating a family of believers (the ***why***). Once more, **the Christian community is an organism, not an institution, which body is composed of missionaries or ambassadors for the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation by faith in the finished work of Jesus the Messiah upon Calvary.** Also, we need to understand that the Church is not a building, but rather, the Church is people. Why did God create a new humanity? The Body of Christ is to be a "light" to the nation as well as "salt" to the world. Is this new humanity composed of both men and women? Are only males allowed to proclaim God's message of salvation by faith "in" and "through" Jesus? Did He

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[195] David Seal, "Reader-Response Theory," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[196] Michael S. Heiser, ed., *BI101 Introducing Biblical Interpretation: Contexts and Resources* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013).

create a Church only of men? Or did God create a body of believers that consists of both men and women for the proclamation of God's Good News of grace? We are the church, which includes both men and women! Strictly speaking, we do **not** go to church because we are the church. The church is not the building but people. We should constantly remind ourselves about our status as members of the body of Christ. The following remarks are well-worth reading by Michael S. Heiser concerning the nature of the church:

> The tragedy of the billboards lies less in what they say than in their revelation of a suppressed premise concerning the central nature of Christ's cause. Many betray the same unargued assumption when they describe themselves by announcing which church they go to. The trouble with this response is that a church, in its very nature, is not really something which men and women go. Rather, it is something which they may be in. The difference is fundamental and far-reaching. We can go to a railroad station or to a motion picture theater or to a ball game; but a church is something which demands a wholly different human relationship, the relationship of belonging. If a man [or woman] is really in—really belongs to—a church, he [or she] is just as much a member of it when he [or she] sits at his [or her] desk in his [or her] business house as when he [or she] sits in a pew at his [or her] meetinghouse. The point is that the relationship, if real, is continuous, regardless of time and place and performance. Christians made a great step forward in human history when they took from Stoicism the germ of the membership idea and developed it.[197]

[197] Michael S. Heiser, ed., BI101, *Introducing Biblical Interpretation: Contexts and Resources* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013). This video course is available through Logos/Faithlife (Logos bible Software—digital library). I highly recommend this biblical study dealing with "hermeneutics." His series of lectures is university training in the field of hermeneutics.

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The Objective of God's Ἐκκλησία/Church

> What meaning fills our mind when we read the word church in Scripture? Biblically, it never refers to a building, nor to an organization. Yet in our world confusion exists between the building, the organizational structure, and the true church. To avoid this damaging confusion the Pilgrims, when they landed in Plymouth in 1620, built a "meeting house," not a church. They understood, as the writers of the New Testament had, that they themselves were the church. Now, after centuries of intermingling meanings, the word needs to be qualified very carefully to avoid confusion.[198]

The church is God's appointed seat of His presence with both men and women**.** We are the temple of God. Many individuals who profess faith in God and Christ see no relevance for the Church for which Jesus died. As a result of this mind-set, numerous Christians often live their lives in isolation from the Church that God ordained for the spread of His message of salvation by grace through faith in the Atonement of Christ. It is not uncommon for individuals to identify the Church as an ecclesiastical organization rather than the fellowship of Jesus Christ or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, many modern men and women have outgrown their need for the Church of Jesus the Messiah.

As we seek to understand the place of the Church in the lives of God's people, we are confronted with many questions. For instance, why did God bring into being the Church? Again, what is the purpose of God's new community of believers? What is the Church? Is the Church visible or invisible? What constitutes the Church? Is the word *church* employed in the New Testament in the same way that many Christians today utilize the term? Is the Church simply an ecclesiastical institution? Or is the Church in the New Testament writings the fellowship of Christian believers? As Christians, we need to approach the **place of the original reader** in our interpretation of God's written Revelation. The following citation from Grant R. Osborne[199] should awaken within us the need to study biblical hermeneutics:

> Hermeneutics, until very recently, has never considered sufficiently the power of the reader in coming to understanding. **It has too often been assumed that to read is to understand, especially**

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[198]D. M. Scholer, "I Timothy 2:9-15," in A. Mickelsen, ed., *Woman, Authority, & the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 215

[199] **Grant R. Osborne** (1942–2018) was an award-winning author and theologian. Osborne earned a PhD from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. He has also did academic research at the University of Cambridge and the University of Marburg. Osborne served as the professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Prior to that, he taught at Winnipeg Theological Seminary and the University of Aberdeen. Osborne was a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Evangelical Theological Society, and the Institute of Biblical Research. His areas of expertise included the Gospels, hermeneutics, and the book of Revelation. Along with editing The IVP New Testament Commentary Series and *The Life Application Bible Commentary*, Osborne also authored several titles including *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, the volume on Revelation in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* series, and several other commentary volumes.

after Scottish "common sense" reading gave the impression that we all have the capacity to interpret automatically what we read. However, that is not true. Every person brings to the task a set of "preunderstandings," that is, beliefs and ideas inherited from one's background and paradigm community. We rarely read the Bible to discover truth; more often, we wish to harmonize it with our belief system and see its meaning in light of our preconceived theological system (see chap. 16, "Systematic Theology"). Now, this is not all bad. Our preunderstanding is our friend, not our enemy. It provides a set of understandings by which we can make sense of what we read. In this sense we are all "reader response" interpreters. The problem is that our preunderstanding too easily becomes prejudice, a set of a prioris that place a grid over Scripture and make it conform to these preconceived conceptions. So we need to "bracket" these ideas to a degree and allow the text to deepen or at times challenge and even change those already established ideas. As readers, we want to place ourselves in front of the text (and allow it to address us) rather than behind it (and force it to go where we want). The reader's background and ideas are important in the study of biblical truth; however, this must be used to study meaning rather than to create meaning that is not there.[200] (Emphasis mine—bold)

These are questions that we ought to approach in seeking to understand what the Church is. Positively, we can declare that **the Church is the fellowship of Jesus Christ**? We can also state that **the Church is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit**. Where the Holy Spirit is, we can say, "There is the Christian communion." Within the Body of Christ, we, as the faithful, are bound to each other through our common sharing in Christ and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Church is simply composed of those who have a relationship with God through Christ. Within the Body of Christ, we have one thing in common, namely, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The Church of the New Testament is simply the society of Christian believers who have been purchased by the blood of Christ.

The Church of Jesus is not an "it," it is not "a thing," nor is it an "institution." But rather, it is a unity of persons. The Church is people, that is to say, it is a close association of individuals who have responded to Jesus as Lord in their lives. Many expressions are utilized to put across the very heart of the word *church*—the Israel of God, the seed of Abraham, the elect of God, the kingdom of God, the assembly, and so on. Unfortunately, many Christians read into "church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15) the image of the institutional church as it has developed within their own world of traditions handed down from their forefathers. Emil Brunner (1889-1966, Swiss Protestant [Reformed] theologian) is forthright in his description of the church of Jesus: "The *Ecclesia* of Jesus Christ is God's people, the elect people—that was also the rightful description of Israel."[201] The Church is fundamentally a fellowship of persons and not an institution, that is, an ecclesiastical organization.

This study focuses upon the positive (biblical) understanding of the meaning of the English word *church*. The optimistic emphasis should enhance our appreciation for the wonder and beauty of what God brought into being through the Death of Jesus upon the Cross. **What is the reason for the Church in God's scheme of redemption? Paul expresses to Timothy the true nature of the Church and its mission. Listen to Paul as he sets forth God's objective for His new group of people**:

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, [15] if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation, of the truth. [16] Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He[c] appeared in a body,[d] was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was

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[200] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. and expanded, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 29.

[201] Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 19.

[c] Some manuscripts *God*

[d] Or *in the flesh*

preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:14-16)

When we enter into covenant with God, we enter into the New Covenant who is Jesus (Isaiah 49:8). This new relationship should renovate us in our day-to-day walk with God. We can also say that the Holy Spirit renews men and women from their old ways into the newness of Christ. Our priorities are different. What mental picture do we have concerning the church? How did Paul view the Church? He spoke of the church as "God's household" [**οἴκῳ θεοῦ**, *oikō theou*] (3:15), which is the same as saying that the Church is God's family. What is the purpose of the family or church? An answer to this question should increase our gratitude of God's wisdom in creating a body of believers to continue the preaching of God's way of salvation "in" and "through" Jesus Christ. Paul also addresses the intent, or aim, of the Church by calling attention to God's family unit as the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (**στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας**, *stylos kai hedraiōma tēs alētheias*), which truth is none other than the Gospel. E. F. Scott is on target when he writes:

> He has ordained the Church as **the pillar and bulwark of the Truth**, i. e. of the gospel, in which He has revealed Himself. The word translated **bulwark** means literally 'something to rest on,' and is commonly used for a basis or foundation. [202]

Paul defines this "pillar and bulwark of the truth" by calling awareness to ˜the mystery of godliness." (**τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον**, *tēs eusebeias mystērion*). What is this "mystery of godliness" that the church, as declared by Paul, is spoken of as the "pillar and the foundation of truth" (NIV)? This mystery is distinct from the mystery religions of paganism. The biblical mystery is none other than Jesus Himself. Pay attention to Paul as he explains this mystery: "He **appeared** in a body, **was vindicated** by the Spirit, **was seen** by angels, **was preached** among the nations, **was believed** on in the world, **was taken** up in glory" (3:16). For Paul, the Church builds its faith upon the Lordship of Christ, which he sets forth in this magnificent and breathtaking hymn. In this hymn, Paul speaks of the virgin birth of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, angels ministering unto Him, proclamation of Jesus as the Savior of the world, many believing on Him, and His ascension. The Gospel is about Jesus. **The Church exists to make known this truth**. Paul writes to the Galatians about the departure of some from this reality of God's redemption—justification by faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary:

> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— [7] which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! [9] As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-9)

The word *gospel*, like the word *church*, often receives a definition that is based upon our own distinctive fellowship, not according to the Scriptures. Prior to Paul's denunciation of those who perverted the Gospel of Christ (**εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ**, *euangelion tou Christou*), he defined the Gospel in 1:4: "Who gave himself for our sins." It is this truth that the Church is to maintain. Paul defended this Gospel by saying: "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him (**εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν**, *euangelizōmai auton*) among the Gentiles" (1:16). After his conversion, Paul reveals a visit to Jerusalem in which he says that he "set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles" (2:2). The Gospel focused upon how one is put in a right relationship with God. Again, Paul jots down:

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[202]E. F. Scott, The Pastoral Epistles, in James Moffatt, ed., The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936), 39.

We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' [16] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (2:15-16)

The Book of Galatians is a book about how we are justified before God. In defense of justification by faith, Paul calls forth Abraham (2166-1991 BC) to explain the Gospel in its fullness:

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance [**προευηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ**, *proeuēngelisato tō Abraam*, preached before good tidings to Abraham] to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'[b] [9]So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (3:8-9)

Again, he puts pen to paper: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,'[a] meaning one person, who is Christ" (3:16).[203] This "mystery of godliness" is unfolded in great detail in the Book of Ephesians. Paul employs the word *mystery* (**μυστήριον**, *mystērion*) seven times in this short Epistle.[204] This mystery is none other than Christ Himself. In fact, Paul, in the Book of Colossians, states emphatically that this "mystery" is Christ:

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. [25] I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— [26] the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. [27] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, (**μυστηρίου τούτου**, *mystēriou toutou*, "this mystery") which is Christ (**ὃς ἐστιν Χριστός**, *hos estin Christos*, "who is Christ") in you, the hope of glory. [28] We **proclaim him**, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. [29] To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. [2] My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the **mystery of God**, namely, **Christ**. (Colossians 1:24—2:3)

In Ephesians 1:3-14, Paul briefly unfolds the "mystery of godliness." He begins his comments with this startling statement: "He chose us **in him** (**ἐν αὐτῷ**, *en autō*) before the creation of the world" (1:4). This "mystery" is completely unique in the annals of history. Christianity is absolutely exclusive among the religions of the world. It has a history before its actual history commenced—a life before its birth. Paul calls this "mystery" the "mystery of his will" in 1:9. In Chapter 3, he also writes of this mystery as "the mystery," which mystery he identifies as "the administration of God's grace" (3:3), "the mystery of Christ" (3:4), "this mystery" is identified as the Gospel (3:6), and finally, "the administration of this mystery" (3:9).

As stated above, in the Colossian Epistle, Paul says plainly, "This mystery, which is Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27). In Ephesian 6:19, Paul requests prayers for strength to fearlessly proclaim Jesus as God's

[b] Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18

[a] Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7

[203]For an overview of the Book of Galatians, see Dallas Burdette, "Overview of the Book of Galatians," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 299-343.

[204] 1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32; 619.

way of salvation: "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." In Chapter 3 of Ephesians, Paul discloses the purpose of the Church in God's scheme of redemption:

> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. [8] Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. [10] His intent was that now, **through the church** (**διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας**, *dia tēs ekklēsias*), the manifold **wisdom of God** (**σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ**, *sophia tou theou*) should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, [11] according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. [12] In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. [13] I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. (3:7-13)

What is this "manifold wisdom of God" about? Paul discloses this "wisdom" in his first Corinthian correspondence. How could God be just and, at the same time, justify sinful humanity. Paul discloses how God was able to accomplish this act and remain just. Listen to Paul as he speaks of God's wisdom, which wisdom had been kept hidden from the foundation of the world:

> It is because of him [Him] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us **wisdom** from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. [31] Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."[b] (1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

God in His wisdom made Jesus "our righteousness, holiness and redemption." It is through the family of God that this information is communicated to a lost and dying world. Even the angels did not understand how God would redeem sinful humanity. Peter addresses this subject of the angels and their desire to know how God would justify sinful humanity in his First Epistle to God's elect by writing: "Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12). How can we, in good conscience, disassociate ourselves from God's family, which family is commanded to spread the Good News of salvation by grace "in" and "through" Jesus? We do not read in the New Testament of the concept of "apartness" from God's family. We, as believers in Jesus the Messiah, are not to live our lives in isolation from His kingdom. The Church, as a whole, is to tell the story of redemption initiated by God and accomplished by Christ with the sealing by the Holy Spirit on those who believe (Ephesians 1:13).

The Good News is that God loves the human race in spite of what they are. Emil Brunner (1889-1966) writes: "The cross of Christ is the point where God's love meets sinful man, if the sinful man, also, stands there, that is by faith."[205] **The Good News is that God's act in Christ gives men and women a new standing**. It goes without saying that as individuals we cannot forgive ourselves; forgiveness is His prerogative alone. God forgives! At the same time, though He does it in such a way that it becomes clear to the one forgiven as to how seriously God takes guilt into consideration. God takes away guiltiness through the Cross. Paul explains this paradox of justice and forgiveness this way:

> **But now** (**Νυνὶ δέ**, *Nuni de*) a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22] This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25] God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,[a] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his

[b] Jer. 9:24

[205] Emil Brunner, *Faith, Hope, and Love* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 20.

[a] 25Or *as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin*

justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— [26] he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)[206]

The Church is to continue to tell the story of how "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of Atonement." Is God's Church important in our daily walk with Him? In Paul's final farewell to the leaders (elders) from Ephesus, he speaks of the Church as significant:

> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God (**ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ**, *ekklēsian tou theou*), which he bought with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

Since the Church is purchased with the "blood" of God, can we, in all good conscience, treat the Church with contempt, dislike, or disrespect? Again, the author of the Book of Hebrews speaks of the Church of Jesus in glowing terms:

> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, [23] to the church of the firstborn (**ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων**, *ekklēsia prōtotokōn*, "church of firstborn ones"), whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, [24] to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Just a cursory glance of Holy Scripture reveals the importance of the Church in the lives of God's people. Prior to the author's reference to the "church of the firstborn," or "church of the firstborn ones," he admonished Christians not to abandon the assembly:

> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together (**ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν**, *episynagōgēn heautōn*, "coming together of ourselves"), as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (10:24-25)

Even in the face of daily danger, they were told not to give up (**ἐγκαταλείτω**, *enkataleitō*, "abandon, leave behind") the habit of meeting together. Immediately, upon the heels of what he had just written, he cautions these Christians to consider carefully their standing before God:

> How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (10:29)

Are we trampling "under foot" the Son of God? Do we treat the covenant blood as an unholy thing? Are we insulting the "Spirit of grace"? Not only are we exhorted not to "throw out" the habit of meeting together, but we are also taught to be holy:

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[206]For an in-depth study of this section of Scripture, see Dallas Burdette, "Overview of Romans," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 249-281.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (12:14-15)

The family of God should be living in such a way that the love of God is reflected in the daily activities of His saints. Peter, too, deals with the relevance of the Church in his First Epistle. He calls attention to "who" we are and to "what" we are to do as servants of the Most High God:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— [5] you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-6)

We, men and women, are "living stones" within the family of God. We are also, in the words of Peter, "being built into a spiritual house." As God's elect, we constitute a "holy priesthood." As priests of God, we are to offer up "spiritual sacrifices." Again, Peter writes down the very purpose of those who belong to God's people:

But you are a **chosen people**, **a royal priesthood**, **a holy nation**, **a people** belonging to God, **that you may declare the praises of him** who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (2:8-10)

Peter says essentially the same thing that Paul expresses in his Epistle to the Ephesians. By our declaring the praises of God for redemption, we are fulfilling the intent of God for His people as a part of His household. God's objective was and is that His manifold wisdom should be made known to the world through His Church, or community of believers. Unfortunately today, the common foundation for many churches is not Jesus, but rather their own brand of orthodoxy, which prevailing attitudes are identified as the "true church." The groundwork for God's new group of people has been laid, and the starting point is Jesus.

We, as members of the company of redeemed ones, need to recapture the essence of God's Church, which consists of people, not an ecclesiastical organization. If the Church is to capture the world for Christ, there must be a reflection upon our common relationship to one another. We are in partnership with each other. We need to cross over our denominational barriers and our long-held traditions and return to the New Testament concept of solidarity, which is expressed by Paul in his Second Epistle to Corinth. He writes: "Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

The collective body of God's people is called the Church, or **ἐκκλησία** (*ekklēsia*, "assembly" or "congregation"). In Romans 16:1, Paul speaks of the church in Cenchrea, which is a collective body of God's people. Then he speaks of "all the churches of the Gentiles" [**ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν**, *ekklēsiai tōn ethnōn*] (16:4). He also speaks of "the church" in the home of Priscilla [prĭ-sĭlʹà] and Aquila (ăkʹwĭ-là, 16:5). In 16:16, he speaks of the "churches of Christ" (**ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ**, *ekklēsiai tou Christou*). The expression "churches of Christ" is no more the name of the church than the expression, "churches of the Gentiles." The name "Christ" (**Χριστός**, *Christos*) is the title of our Lord, not His name. His name is Jesus (**Ἰησοῦς**, *Iēsou*s). Paul begins his first Corinthian correspondence with:

Unto the church of God (**τῇ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ**, *tē ekklēsia tou theou*) which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's.(1 Corinthians 1:2, KJV).

The Book of Galatians begins with the phrase: "To the churches in Galatia" (Galatians 1:2). Also, in this same chapter, Paul refers to "the churches of Judea that are in Christ" (1:22). In the Ephesian Epistle, he begins with: "To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). As Paul closes his Epistle to the

Philippians, he writes: "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16). To the Thessalonians: "To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 1:1).

The English word *church* is more accurately translated as "assembly." Peter calls the assemblies of Christ "God's elect" (1 Peter 1:1). The Book of Revelation also addresses "seven churches in the Province of Asia" (Revelation 1:4). The elect of God exist in various local assemblies. We, today, to some extent, are stuck with the English word *church*. Regrettably, the Reformers were baptized Catholics, and, as a result of their inherited traditions from the Catholic Church, there was not a total new beginning, but a slight cleansing of some issues that were devastatingly wrong. Sorry to say, the Protestant Movement failed in its true identification of the "church" as an organism rather than as an institution. This breakdown in classification resulted in divisions within the Body of Christ. As a result of the organizational structure of the church, numerous Christians have isolated themselves from other believers. Each secluded body of saints identified itself as the "true church." Emil Brunner goes right to the heart of this misconception:

> The isolationist tendency hostile to co-operation, arises precisely from the false opinion that a particular church is the true *Ecclesia*, the legitimate heir of the Christian fellowship of the New Testament.[207]

We need to recapture the spirit of *koinōnia* (fellowship, or communion) of His Body. *Koinōnia* should lead us to a common proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and to a common action in the Church. As God's people, we need to maintain the Spirit's unity [**ἑνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος**, *henotēta tou pneumatos*] (Ephesians 4:3). This unity of purpose is set forth in the Lord's Supper.[208] This harmony is the concord for which Jesus prayed (John 17). This unison is a world-embracing agreement of oneness—to all who believe in His name. Everyone who is called of God is a part of this "fellowship of the Spirit." Paul writes to the Philippians about this koinwnia:

> If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit (**κοινωνία πνεύματος**, *koinōnia pneumatos*), if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)

We play a part in a particular history—the act of salvation, that is to say, the life-giving activity of the Holy Spirit. When we reject God's new community, we throw out the life-giving movement of the Holy Spirit. Life for the believer is a constant sharing with each other. God calls us into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Paul expresses it this way: "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son (**κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ**, *koinōnian tou huiou autou*) Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9). To those who responded to Jesus in repentance and baptism, God added to His new humanity, which new household came into existence through the power of God. On the Day of Pentecost, Luke reports the reaction of the crowd to Peter's sermon, which account states that about 3000 repented of their sins and were baptized in the name of Jesus. Luke concludes his remarks by saying that the people were "Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

The saved met on a daily basis in the Temple courts (2:46). In this same context, Luke records: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"

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[207]Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 113.

[208]For an in-depth study of the significance of the Lord's Supper within the Christian community, see, Dallas Burdette, "The Significance of the Last Supper," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom,* 440-448.

(2:42). The KJV translates Acts 2:47: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The NIV translates this passage: "Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The English word *church* is not in the Greek text. The Greek text simply reads: "And the Lord added the ones being saved (**τοὺς σῳζομένους**, *tous sōzomenou*, "the ones being saved") from day to day together (**ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό**, *epi to auto*, together)." Those who responded to the Good News of God were added to the elect of God, not to a particular denomination.

When we speak of the Church today, we should be conscious that God's family continues to repeat the early testimony of the Body of Christ—Christ was Crucified and Resurrected and is Head of His family. The early Church did not venerate the body of a dead person, but they did worship the risen Lord. The Church wants to know Christ and the power of His Resurrection. The Church has always been made up of fallible and ordinary people—people saved by grace. For us, as believers, the Church is still the most important single phenomenon that human history has to show. The existing Body of Christ testifies to the authenticity of Christianity. When we repudiate, or renounce, the Church, we ignore the fact that we, too, are a part of God's new temple. It is in Christ that we escape the jungle of individualism.

The community of Christ is God's gift to humanity. The Church of Jesus is a radically new fellowship. The new people of God represent the new humanity—a people separated for God's service. It is in and through the Church that we are reminded that we are not our own. **Within the Body of Christ, we are consciously aware of the reality of God's redemption through the observance of the Lord's Supper and the practice of Baptism.** When we, as saints of God, gather to hear the Word of God preached, this hearing of the word helps us to renew our lives. Why do we assemble with other believers? We gather together in response to God's act of redemption in the gift of His Son.

When we congregate to express our worship in a corporate setting, we draw spiritual strength and encouragement from this gathering of God's people. Every meeting should be to encourage one another in the faith and to give honor and glory to the One who sent His Son to redeem us. Our collective gatherings as God's people should be a time for us in which the barricades of race, nationality, class, sex, and education are demolished, or bulldozed, into oblivion. This get-together should be a place where the needy, the browbeaten, the outcast, and the unloved find a welcome and feel themselves at home. This reunion should be a place where we find support and back-up.

With the coming of Jesus, we witness the breaking in of a new age in which Jesus creates a new **ἐκκλησία (***ekklēsia***)**. **The Church is the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and Earth**,[209] **and the Elect of God**. When God adds to His Body of believers, the faithful share in a new life. It is not within the Gospel of God for us to go on living in the old way when we have come face-to-face with the Kingdom of God. As we reflect upon the New Israel of God, we are mindful of the pure grace of God. The Church consists of those who have been set apart to be holy and to serve God. The Church does not allow for individualism, but fellowship in God's new association of redeemed ones.

This specialized study about the purpose of the church is written to help us to rediscover the Church as the New People of God. As the community of God, we are to seek unity among His sons and daughters as an answer to the prayer of Jesus (John 17). It is in this vein that W. A. Vissr't Hooft (1900-1985, secretary for the World Council of Churches) and J. H. Oldham (1889-1966, Scottish missionary in India) addressed the problem of division within the Body of Christ with all of its various denominations. They capture the very heart of the matter: "All agree that there is essentially only *one* Church, since there is only one Lord. As a reality of faith, the word Church has no plural."[210] **This concept of oneness is very difficult for many Christians, especially since many believers identify their particular church as THE CHURCH, which philosophy excludes all**

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[209]For a detailed study of the new heaven and earth, see Dallas Burdette, "A New Heaven and a New Earth," in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from Psalms ●Revelation ● Hebrews* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010), 257-302.

[210]Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft and Dr. J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its function in Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1937, 1938), 89.

other denominations as belonging to Christ. Once more, Hooft and Oldham focus on the heart of the issue when they write:

> If it is said that there is only one Church, this implies for some Churches that only one visible Church is the true Church, but for others that no visible Church can claim to be *the* Church of Christ, since all Christian Churches together represent that reality. These examples might be multiplied *ad infinitum*; but the point is clear, namely, that our belief in the Church is both the basis which enables us to meet together, and at the same time the barrier which makes us unable to speak with a united voice.[211]

Sorry to say, for countless sincere Christians, the Church often conveys the belief that in order for one to be a Christian, he or she must hold to the doctrinal formulation of their distinctive fellowship. What makes us one is not our adherence to certain doctrinal issues, but rather that we have been reconciled to God through Christ our Lord. The Church is a Christian group of people, that is to say, a fellowship of persons living together who have been redeemed through the blood of Christ. Yet again, Hooft captures the very essence of what the Church is and its mission: "The Church is the community which has been gathered and mobilized by the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill that part of the plan of God which must be fulfilled in the final period of History."[212] Christians are called into koinwnia (fellowship), which koinwnia is in Christ. Every local Assembly of God's citizens should have one primary goal—the proclamation of the Jesus as God's Way of salvation for lost humanity.

As stated earlier, when we assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper, this meal should be a constant reminder of unity among God's people. Unity is found in none other than Jesus of Nazareth. In spite of the divisions existing among Christians, God does not recognize the existence of parties or separated churches. Even with differences within the various communities of God's people, Christians still belong to the one and only people of God. When churches are characterized by self-centered denominationalism and institutionalism, God is not pleased. What is the calling of the Church? It is to fulfill the mission of spreading the Gospel of God, which Gospel has been entrusted to the Church.

We are united because we all share in one common calling. Unity in the early Church included all who called upon the name of Christ. Does the Good News of God's Way of salvation still radiate from our countenance? Is there little warmth in our hearts for God's "community of Resurrection"? As believers in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary, we should wrap ourselves up in the grace of God "in" and "through" Jesus. What does the Church mean to us? We should never forget that from the very beginning of the Day of Pentecost, the Christian society was a missionary society.

If we wish to become more and more like God, we must allow the community of the Resurrected One to become a part of our lives. In God's blueprint for His children, we realize that Jesus Christ and His kingdom are God's blueprint for His offspring. The Church calls attention to the fact that Jesus cried from the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (**ἠλὶ ἠλὶ λεμὰ σαβαχθάνι**, *ēli ēli lema sabachthani*) in order to keep us from crying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45).[213] Should we dispense with the Church? No! The Church exists for the sake of the world. **Every local congregation is intended to be missionary in purpose and missionary in design. Every Church should adopt a "GO" theology, not a "COME" theology.** The negative "wait" and "let come" is the very opposite of what Jesus taught His followers. We, as disciples of Jesus, come together in order that we might "GO."

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[211] Ibid., 90.

[212] W. A. Visser't Hooft, *The Pressure of Our Common Calling* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, 1959), 36.

[213]I am indebted to Emil Brunner, *I believe in the Living God*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 82-83, for this insight.

CONCLUSION

As we reflect upon the Church in our lives, we must ask ourselves, what does living under the Cross of Christ mean to us? We can say that our lives under the Gospel are the opening of our hearts to Christ Jesus. Is Christ first in our outlook? This opening of our days to Christ enables us to bring forth fruits that result in God's glory. When we allow God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit the right-of-way in our daily walk with Him, then we maintain a consciousness of God's Good News, and, at the same time, we make ourselves available to Him in order to be a channel that portrays His kingdom with a view of welcoming the fullness of God's glory.

Again, what does the Church mean to us? What does it mean to us to assemble with the saints during the week? Regrettably, many Christians abandon the assembling of themselves with other believers. Yet, a life under the Gospel is a life that is active in the Church. Life in the Christian community is not only something between Christ and the individual, but it is also life in the Body of Christ. In other words, if we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord in our existence, this acknowledgement involves our sharing our faith with others. To be a Christian means to be incorporated into the Body of Christ. The Church is the fellowship whereby the Gospel of God continues to be proclaimed throughout the world. We, as individuals, are nourished through the Church. As we witness Christian baptism[214] and the Lord's Supper, we are constantly reminded of our lives under the Gospel.

We should keep in mind that life in the Church is not a life of isolationism. We should identify ourselves with other believers. **Have we discarded the need for the Church in our way of life?** We should never forget that the function of the internal life of the Church is to enable us to grow together in the Body of Christ. Jesus purchased the Church with His blood. The ultimate authority for the Church is found in the power of God. Also, it is through the proclamation of the Good News of God that we discover the function of the Church in society. Out of the Good News of God, we discover the kingdom foretold by the prophets (See Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, and Joel 2).

We can say that the Gospel brought the Church into being and still keeps the Church in obedience to God. If the Church wishes to be a witness to the world, it must again and again search the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments for those Scriptures that testify about Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. If the Church is unimportant, we wonder why the Holy Spirit wrote: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). As we think about the significance of the Church in God's scheme of redemption, we need to be conscious that the essence of God's new humanity is the oneness of communion with Him "in" and "through" faith in Christ.

The Church is a spiritual organism; it is <u>not</u> an ecclesiastical organization. It is people. It is the elect of God. It is the community of God. It is the New Israel of God. Christ created a spiritual communion of persons redeemed by His blood, not a religious or clerical corporation. What is the purpose of the church? The body of Christ is responsible for proclaiming Jesus as the Mediator between God and humanity. Every believer is to be a minister of God's reconciliation. Do we seek to live our lives separate and apart from God's kingdom as foretold by the prophets and announced by Christ? Are we Christ's ambassadors for the advancement of His kingdom? Have we received God's grace in vain? It is in this vein that Paul writes:

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and <u>gave us the ministry of reconciliation</u>: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] <u>We are therefore Christ's ambassadors</u>, as though God were <u>making his appeal through us</u>. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21] God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might

[214]For an analysis of Christian baptism, see Dallas Burdette's three chapters on baptism, in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Responsibilities,* Vol., 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 209), 235-271.

[a] Or *be a sin offering*

become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. (2 Corinthians 5:17—6:1)

6

I Suffer Not a Woman To Teach: Principles of Interpretation

Part 1 of 3

> Theology is always earthed in a context. Over the centuries, Christian theologians have tried to construct theological systems which they have believed to be eternal, but in practice the statement of theological truths has to be constantly revised, because human language, human culture, human philosophies, etc. are all subject to change, and in the end theology has to be articulated for human beings in human concepts.[215]

The role of women is one of the most controversial issues within the Christian community today. One of the biggest obstacles in interpreting the Scriptures correctly is the citing of Scriptures in isolation from their context. When individual verses are yanked from their historical setting, we witness a breakdown in the author's intent. Two Scriptures[216] that have been etched into our thinking have molded the way we view the role of women within the Body of Christ. These Scripture citations have been cited so frequently that we have lost sight of the original background. If we wish to comprehend the Word of God properly, we must read the Scriptures within its own framework. Frances Young is on target when she explains:

> Christian theology therefore has to take seriously the particular historical context of those documents which are believed to be God's Word, and also the particular context in which those documents are being interpreted.[217]

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

> The first stage in serious Bible study is to consider the larger context within which a passage is found. **Unless we can grasp the whole before attempting to dissect the parts.** Interpretation is doomed from the start. Statements simply have no meaning apart from their context.[218] (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

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[215]Frances Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, New Testament Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

[216]1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-36

[217]Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters,* 1.

[218] I am indebted to Emil Brunner, *I Believe in the Living God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 82-83 for this insight.

Many Christians today have been taught piece-meal interpretation. We, as a whole, have not been taught to read a book as a book. As a result of this mindset, we have not learned how to interpret the writings of the Old and New Testament books. Before we enter into an explanation of the Scriptures relied upon today to stifle the proclamation of the Gospel by women, we need to examine the basic principle of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation). In order to come to grips with how to read and interpret the sacred Scriptures, we need to study the role that context plays in accurate exegesis.

I feel a need, once more, to briefly summarize the basic principles of interpretation (introduced in Chapter 1) as we seek to unload the heart of Paul's words to Timothy. For example, in the nineteenth century, **Friedrich Schleiermacher** (1768-1834, German theologian and philosopher) **originated the idea of the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle philosophy simply means:** "Each part of a text must be interpreted with reference to the whole; yet the meaning of the whole cannot be grasped without considering the parts."[219] Interpretation is an attempt to understand the work as a whole by an analysis of its elements.[220] Hermeneutics[221] ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis.[222] Nevertheless, hermeneutics is often used in a much narrower sense to grasp the relevance of ancient works. In other words, it is concerned about the "here" and "now."[223]

To set the tone for this discussion, perhaps it would be helpful to review the experiences of numerous individuals within their own unique fellowship of God's people. Many believers, within their own denomination, encounter long-held traditions in their quest to understand the Word of God in its context.[224] It is not uncommon for us to identify the traditions of our "interpretative community" with the Word itself. Cedric Johnson expresses the basic problem well in his discussion of presuppositions:

> Generations of scholars in the field of hermeneutics have recognized the influence of preunderstanding on interpretation. C. S. Lewis [1898-1963] observed that "what we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience."[225]

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[219]See, Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, "Hermeneutics," *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1991), 97, for an examination of Schleiermacher's philosophy of hermeneutics. This in-depth study of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics applies his hermeneutic circle in order to comprehend and apply Paul's intent in his Epistles to Timothy and to the church in Crete as well as Corinth.

[220]Ibid.

[221] See Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, where Stein writes: "The term 'hermeneutics,' . . . . simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation; see also Thomas H. Olbright, *Hearing God's Voice* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1996), 185, where he says, "In a large sense, hermeneutics constitutes a theory about how one person explains or communicates a text to another."

[222]See Morner and Rausch, "Exegesis," Ibid., 72,73, where they say, "Originally, the detailed analysis, explanation, and INTERPRETATION of passages in the Bible, or, by extension, of any literary or intellectual text. The term carries with it a sense of digging out the meaning of a difficult passage."

[223]See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 25.

[224]See Hayes and Holladay, *Exegesis,* 66, where they write:

> **The best guide to the meaning of a word is the context in which it is used**. This means, first of all, the **immediate** context of the passage in which it occurs. If a word has several meanings, one should explore the range of meanings and see how they fit or do not fit in the context. A **broader** context is the whole of the document in which the terms appear. **One should explore how a term is used and what it denotes elsewhere in the document**. (Emphasis mine—bold)

[225]Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation,* 45.

Untold numbers with whom I have discussed the science of exposition have shared their frustrations and have described their Christian journeys as "Gullible's Travels." We often accept what we are taught without question. It is in this sense that our interpretation is neither subjective nor objective. In other words, we have never taken the time to employ our minds subjectively in analyzing the Scripture for ourselves, nor have we looked at the Scriptures objectively. Our interpretations are "ready-made or prefabricated meanings."[226] Our interpretations are hand-me-downs from our interpretative community. As stated earlier (Chapter 1), Stanley Fish (b. 1938, a prominent literary theorist) rightly says, "In other words interpretive[227] communities are no more stable than texts because interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned."[228] In spite of Fish's deconstruction philosophy, nevertheless, he is correct when he writes:

> And, moreover, the way of seeing, whatever it was, would never be individual or idiosyncratic, since its source would always be the institutional structure of which the "see-er" was an extending agent. This is what Sacks means when he says that a culture fills brains "so that they are alike in fine detail"; it fills them so that no one's interpretive acts are exclusively his own but fall to him by virtue of his position in some socially organized environment and are therefore always shared and public.[229]

Leaders, especially ministers within the various religious fellowships of God's people, often memorize verses from the Bible by the hundreds. Their interpretation of a mixture of biblical texts frequently is not so much theirs, as it is the interpretation of a social structure to which they belong; that is to say, their interpretative community. Traditions still stand in the way of listening anew to the Biblical text.[230] Once more, Justo L. and Catherine G. Gonzalez caution: "We must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to us."[231] It is still very difficult for us to conceive that we might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background.

Some religious writers within certain communities of the saints suppose they have all the answers. And as a result of this kind of intellectualization, the supposedly intellectually correct party ostracizes those who go against the grain with their particular interpretative community. To justify condemnation over against the so-called nonconformist, then Matthew 7:15 is frequently cited: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

We must be careful that we do not go to the Scriptures to prove what we already believe, but rather to see what they say. We are so accustomed to reading the Bible as previously taught by generations of interpreters that we cannot distinguish between interpretation and Revelation. In other

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[226]Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 172.

[227]Fish does not use "interpretative community" but "interpretive community."

[228]Ibid. I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand Fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism," *NTC's Dictionary*, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction":

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques Derrida [1930-2004, French philosopher]. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of a terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism makes possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s, deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM.

[229] Ibid., 335.

[230]See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 48-68.

[231] Ibid., 31.

words, for one to question the traditional interpretations is tantamount to questioning the Word of God itself.[232] This failure to discriminate between explanation and Divine inspiration is one of the main obstacles that we encounter in our efforts to liberate the Bible from its culture and to maintain unity among God's people. The heritage of explaining is confused with the text itself. The faith of the fathers becomes the watchword for orthodoxy. The interpretation of the fathers becomes normative and is passed on as authoritative.

One of the most difficult obstacles for any Christian is to approach the text without any strong personal biases. Studying the Bible with colored glasses ultimately leads to distortion of the text.[233] People often tend to give preconceived beliefs the same authority as they give to the Bible. In other words, our preconceived political religious power is equal to that of the Scriptures. Our own personal journey of faith, with the ghosts of the past, makes it very difficult for us to view the Scriptures without prejudice. Our prior understanding and interpretation make it complicated to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text.[234] The culture of our heritage controls the text of the Bible. Context is essential to interpretation. Fish writes:

> **Context is king**. Seeing the Bible in context requires that we are ever mindful of keeping the Bible in its own context. Again, we just discussed when we talked about problems that context in biblical terms is not our context. It's not some other modern context. It's no context except for the context that produced the Bible itself. **It's time to get serious about interpreting the Bible in its own context—the biblical context**.[235] (Emphasis mine--bold)

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text. To fathom a passage involves the ***immediate*** *context*, the ***remote*** *context*, and the ***larger*** *context*. The ***immediate context*** includes verses preceding and following the reference that one is studying. On the other hand, the ***remote context*** may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the ***larger context*** may embrace the whole of God's written Revelation. Also, the **cultural context** is essential for any interpreter. This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that we attach to any distinct phrase. Otherwise, the interpreter may impose conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author says. Without a conception of a context, a

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[232]For an insightful article on the differentiation between Revelation and interpretation, see Leroy Garrett, "It Means What It Says," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 68-71.

[233]See Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* , 42, where he captures, in concise language, the subjective biases of all interpreters:

> Contention is that conflicting theological positions are in part due to the fact that we all approach a text, sacred or secular, with our strong subjective biases. Even though we have a commitment to read the Bible on its own terms: and even though we want the Divine and human authors to speak for themselves, somehow we still come up with contradictory views on some issues.

[234]For an excellent presentation of this concept, see Gonzalez and Gonzalez, "Difficulties in Hearing the Text," in *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed,* 29-47.

[235] Ibid., I disagree with Fish's philosophy of the text being unstable. If I understand fish correctly, he is a deconstructionist in his philosophy. See Morner and Rausch, "Deconstructive Criticism, " in *NTC's Dictionary, 50-51, where they explain "deconstruction"*:

> An approach to LITERARY CRITICISM based on the views and procedures of the French thinker Jacques [1930-2004. French philosopher]. Deconstructive criticism utilizes reader-centered theories of meaning that ignore reference to the author's intention and deny the possibility of terminate meaning or "correct" interpretation for any text. Deconstructive criticism make possible innumerable contradictory but "undecidable" meanings. First becoming prominent in the 1970s, deconstructive criticism is central to POST-STRUCTURALISM.

person's particular context tends to shape his or her understanding and interpretation of the message. Sidney Greidanus (professor of preaching and worship at Calvin Theological Seminary) is correct when he says, "An interpreter must be careful not to read more into a text than is actually there at that particular stage of redemptive history."[236]

Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the meaning of the text. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. We must not employ Holy Scriptures in a way the Holy Spirit did not employ. Leroy Garrett (1918-2015, author and lecturer) points out with justification that

> People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.[237]

WOMEN IN EPHESUS

> Religious conditions, the ancients maintained, were remarkably similar in Crete (the destination of the Epistle to Titus) and in Ephesus.[2856] Strabo (64/3 B.C.E.–C.E. 21) spoke of the intermingling of Cretan and Phrygian rites.[2867] Tradition held that some of the tribal groups of western Asia Minor, such as the Carians, had originally migrated from Crete. On that island Artemis was worshiped with the same rites as in Ephesus and had been given the title "the Cretan Lady of Ephesus."[2878] "The Cretans worship Artemis most religiously, calling her according to their language Britomart."[2889] The Ephesian celebration of Artemis's birthday borrowed discernible elements from the older Cretan rituals honoring the birth of Zeus.[238] (Emphasis mine)

Spreading Mythological Fables and Practicing Magic

We need to apply the correct principles of interpretation to our understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-36. If we lift these texts out of their historical setting, we may cite these two pericopes (units) correctly, but not necessarily speak *as* the Bible speaks. We may speak *where* the Bible speaks and not speak *as* the Bible speaks.[239] **In order to understand these Scriptures, it is necessary to study the whole of each book before analyzing individual elements**. The following citation by Jaroslav Pelikan (1923-2006, a scholar in the history of Christianity and medieval intellectual history) is on target as he cautions against the "pathology of tradition":

> Like any growth, development may be healthy or it may be malignant; discerning the difference between these two kinds of growth requires constant research into the pathology of traditions. But it is healthy development that keeps a tradition both out of the cancer ward and out of the fossil museum.[240]

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[236]Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 71.

[237] Garrett, "It Means What It Says," 69.

[238] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 71. **Sidney Greidanus** (b. 1935), American pastor, biblical scholar, nd professor of preaching and worship at Calvin Theological Seminary.

[239]For an in-depth study of this phrase, see Dallas Burdette, "Where the Scriptures Speak," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 87-152.

[240]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 60.

As we begin this in-depth study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, we need to determine where Timothy was when Paul wrote his two Epistles to him as well as his Epistle to Titus. An understanding of the geographical location of each recipient will enable us to comprehend his nebulous, or enigmatic, statements concerning women. The place of residence will assist us in properly interpreting this controversial unit of Scripture. Once we have established his landscape, we will then examine a mixture of different parts of the Pastoral Epistles in order to arrive at a more accurate explanation. This information will shed light on why Paul issued his injunction against the women in the city of Ephesus, which was Timothy's physical scene. Paul puts pen to paper as he identifies the town as well as some of the problems:

> As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, **stay there in Ephesus** so that you may command certain men [the Greek text reads, "certain persons"] not to teach false doctrines any longer [4] nor to devote themselves **to myths and endless genealogies**. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. [5] The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. [6] Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. [7] They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. (1 Timothy 1:3-7)

Just a casual reading of verses 3-7 reveals several things that we need to reflect upon as we begin our journey through the Pastoral Epistles: (1) "certain men," (2) "stay there in Ephesus, (3) "myths," and (4) "endless genealogies." The word *myth* (**μῦθος**, *muthos*, "tales, fable, or fanciful story")[241] is critical to a proper understanding of Paul's Epistles to Timothy. "Certain men" is a translation of the Greek indefinite plural pronoun ("certain persons").[242] In order for us to correctly interpret the Epistles of Paul to Timothy, we must understand something of the historical background of Ephesus, especially the Temple of Artemis with its practice of magic (**περίεργος**, *periergos*). Johannes Munck's comments on the city of Ephesus are quite revealing with reference to the function that magic played in the lives of those in Ephesus. The following extract will assist us in understanding why Paul issued an injunction about the women in the Christian community in Ephesus.

> [Chapter 19] 18-20. Ephesus was known as the city of the magicians. Just as it was natural for Paul to speak with philosophers in Athens, so it was equally natural for him to meet magicians in Ephesus. Nor was it strange that among the newly converted Christians there should be many who as pagans used magical arts. Where Christ was, there was no room for magic, and now they not only confessed to their sinful use of demonic names and powers, but they burned their magic books in an act of faith.[243]

Acts 19:8-41 is the background to understanding Paul's injunction against women teaching in his Epistles to Timothy. During Paul's third missionary journey, he spent three years in Ephesus. During this time, Paul rented the "lecture hall of Tyrannus" (19:9), which lasted for a period of two years (19:10). Prior to his lectures in the hall of Tyrannus, he spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months about the "kingdom of God"

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[241]The Greek word *muthos* (**μῦθος**) conveys the idea of tale, story, or special reference to unreliability or fanciful character. This word is used in the sense of gods and goddesses in Ephesus, which goes back to the time of Homer (8th century BC). Paul uses the plural (myths) twice in First Timothy (1:4; 4:7), once in Second Timothy (4:4), and once in Titus (1:14). Peter, too, uses the plural (μύθους, *muthos*, "tales or fables") in his Second Epistle (1:16).

[242]The word *tines* is an indefinite plural pronoun, dative, masculine/feminine. *Tis* (**τίς**) is an indefinite pronoun (for example, "anyone." In my judgment, the NIV incorrectly translates this "indefinite pronoun" as "certain men." It is more accurate to translate as "certain persons" (**τισὶν**, 1 Timothy 1:3)

[243]Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible, revised by William F. Albright and C. S. Mann, Volume 31 (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967, 1979), 191.

(19:8). Yet, these Jews refused to accept the teachings of Paul about the kingdom of God, and, at the same time, they "publicly maligned the Way (19:9). "The way" is a term that stands for Christianity. In order for us to grasp the scenario that Luke presents in his history of the Christian movement to Theophilus, we need to read his remarks. The following is his account of the city's reaction against "the Way":

> After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." [22] He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. [23] *About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.* [24] *A silversmith named Demetrius, who* ***made silver shrines of Artemis****, brought in no little business for the craftsmen.* [25] *He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business.* [26] *And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all.* [27] *There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that* ***the temple of the great goddess Artemis*** *will be discredited, and* ***the goddess herself****, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."* [28] When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "**Great is Artemis of the Ephesians**!" [29] Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. [30] Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. [31] Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater. [32] The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. [33] The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. [34] But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" [35] The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that **the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image**, which fell from heaven? [36] Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. [37] You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. [38] If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. [39] If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. [40] As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." [41] After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly. (Acts 19:21-41)

An examination of Acts 19:21-41 reveals the background for a proper interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles. Earlier in Chapter 19, Luke gives other comments that help us to understand Paul's negative comments in his two Epistles to Timothy. One word (**περίεργος**, *periergos*) utilized by Luke will assist us in our interpretation of the Pauline Epistles. Luke writes:

> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. [19] A number who had practiced sorcery (**περίεργος**, *periergos*, "magic") brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. [20] In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. (19:18-20)

G. K. Barrett makes the following succinct observation concerning the word *sorcery*: "*pierga*" is a semi-technical term for magical practices."[244] This is the same word that Paul employs in his First Epistle to Timothy as he reflects upon the practices of the women in the church in Ephesus. Paul unfolds some of the problems associated with the women in Ephesus:

> As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. [12] Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. [13] Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also ***gossips*** (**φλύαρος,** *phluaros*, "silly talk, nonsense, tattler, babbler") and ***busybodies*** (**περίεργοι**, *periergoi*), saying things they ought not to. [14] So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. [15] Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. (1 Timothy 5:11-15)

Unfortunately, some scholars, so it seems, fail to capture the luggage associated with *periergos* in 1 Timothy 5:13. Even though translations give "busybodies" as the translation of the Greek word, we still need to examine this Scripture in light of Acts 19:19. This unique term only occurs twice in the New Testament. Generally, this expression is associated or translated as "busybodies" or "meddlesome." In Acts 19:19, the word *pierga* (**περίεργα**) is translated correctly. This Greek word is a term for black acts of magic. This term pointed to the lengthy and various rituals involved in incantation ceremonies. Apparently, the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:13 were women who were going about from house to house meddling in magic, that is to say, they were involved in perverted activities. Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III make the following comments on Acts 19:19 concerning the Greek word *pierga*:

> **19** ***periergos*** (#4319) things belonging to magic. Also a t.t. [technical term] for a magical spell (BS, 323; BAGD; DPL, 580-83; BBC; MM; NDIEC, 1:47-49; 6:1099-96; GMP; for the well-known "Ephesian Letters," which were six magical terms thought to be words of powers. Trebilco, "Asia," BAFCS 2:314; CIE, 95f.[245]

Since the word *pierga* is employed by Luke in his brief episode that occurred while Paul labored in Ephesus for a period of three years (Acts 20:31), we need to examine Acts 19 before we embark upon our expedition of the Pastoral Epistles. Acts 19 is the background for a proper understanding of Paul's remarks concerning women. It is in this fashion that Sharon Hodgin Gritz correctly states as she begins her examination of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: "This study begins with the largest context—the historical setting."[246] Stanley M. Horton's comments on Acts 19:19 are also worth citing in order to set the stage for the historical background to the Pastoral Epistles. He cuts away the underbrush as he pens the following words:

> Another result was the fact that they now realized the true power over evil was only in Jesus. Ephesus was a center for the practice of magical arts, especially the putting of spells on people or things. A considerable number of the new believers had practiced magic, including attempts at foretelling or influencing the future. Most of them still had the books they used hidden away (Archaeologists have discovered books of this kind.)

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[244]C. K. Barrett (1917-2011), *Acts*, The International Critical Commentary, Volume II, XV – XXVIII (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1998), 912.

[245]Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 281.

[246]Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 3.

Now the believers saw that these books with their formulas, spells, and astrological forecasts, were of no value whatsoever. In fact, they were purely heathen, even demonic, in their origin. So they brought together all their books and burned them publicly. Books were very expensive in those days, and when they reckoned up the total price of the books it came to 50,000 pieces of silver (no specific coin is mentioned, though some believe it was the drachma). This was as much as 200 day laborers or soldiers would earn in a year.[247]

JEWISH: SORCERY/MAGIC

Seven Sons of Sceva—A Chief Priest

Upon Paul's arrival in Ephesus, he stumbled upon some individuals who were believers in Christ, but had only received the baptism of John (Acts 19:7). After they were baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus," Paul placed his hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit (19:5). Following this encounter, Paul entered a synagogue and spoke boldly for about three months about the kingdom of God (19:5). Even though he had converts from his preaching and teaching about Jesus, nevertheless, many Jews refused to align themselves with the "Way" (19:9). As a result of their inflexibility to accept Jesus, he withdrew himself from the synagogue and rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus for a period of two years (19:9).

Prior to Paul's confrontation with Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis (19:24), Luke informs us concerning the miracles that God performed through Paul (19:11). Just a casual reading of Acts 19 reveals a distinction between the miracles Paul performed and the practiced magic by the adherents of the goddess Artemis[248] (19:11, 18-20). Luke informs Theophilus about an interesting account of some Jews (seven sons of a Jewish chief priest) who were practicing some outward appearance of magic. Luke writes:

> God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, [12] so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. [13] Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." [14] Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. [15] One day

[247]Stanley M. Horton, *Acts*, The New Testament Study Bibles, Thoralf Gilbrant, International Editor (Springfield, Missouri: The Complete Biblical Library, 1991), 461.

[248]See Pierre Grimal, *The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York: Penguin Group, 1951, 1990), 60-61. He comments on the goddess Artemis with the following explanation:

> **Artemis.** Identified by the Romans with Diana. She is sometimes said to have been the daughter of Demeter ["One of the Olympian deities, the Mother Goddess of the Earth".], but is generally regarded as the twin sister of Apollo ["An Olympian god, son of Zeus" ["Generally regarded as the greatest god of the Greek pantheon. He was essentially the god of Light, of clear skies as well as of thunder."] and Leto ["The mother of Apollos and Artemis by Zeus" and brother of Artemis.], their parents being Zeus and Leto. Artemis, the elder twin, was born in Delos and helped her mother to give birth to her brother. Artemis was always a virgin and eternally young, an untamed girl with few interest beyond hunting. Like her brother, her weapon was the bow, which she used while she was hunting stags as well as mortals, and she inflicted pain on women who died in childbirth. She was vindictive and there were many who suffered from her anger. One of her actions was to join Apollo in killing the children of NIOBE (2). They did this out of love for their mother, who had been insulted by Niobe, and it was in defense of Leto again that Artemis and Apollo, though scarcely born, killed the dragon which had come to attack them; in the same way they killed Tityus, who was trying to violate Leto. [The definitions of the various deities are from Pierre Grimal.]

the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" [16] Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:11-16)

"Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits" highlights that Jews were involved in magic. C. E. Arnold writes about Jews and magic in his very informative article on "Magic" in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters:*

5. Jewish Magic

Magic was by no means practiced only by pagans. Jewish magic flourished in antiquity (Alexander, 342). There are many testimonies to Jewish involvement in magical practice in the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Josephus, the earliest traditions within the Talmud and the midrashim, early Christian writings, pagan authors and even in the NT itself (Acts 19:13-20, "certain itinerant Jewish exorcists"). The Greek magical papyri also contain many magical formulas of probable Jewish origin.[249]

Barrett's comments identify these seven sons as individuals who thought that through incantations and formulas that they could drive out evil spirits. His remarks are informative for this study:

For Jewish exorcists see *StrB* (4.534f.); *NS* 3.342-79; Hemer (121). Their existence is presupposed in Mt. 12.27 = Lk. 11.19. Josephus, *Ant*. 8:45-49 is good proof of the fact that Solomon's legendary power as an exorcist was believed to have been transmitted, through incantations and formulas, to the first-century exorcists.[250]

W. H. Willimon also sheds some light on this particular scenario of Paul's miracles versus the magic of the Jews and Greeks. This story sets the tone for individuals to give up their goddess Artemis for the Way.

Lest anyone think that the power bestowed through the gift of the Spirit is mere magic, Luke inserts a vignette [sketch] about "extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul" (19:11–20). Paul is so close to this healing power that even bits of clothing which touch his body effect healing. Assuming that his power is a sort of magic, some itinerant Jewish exorcists attempt to invoke the name of Jesus to heal. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" asks the evil spirit who then jumps upon them and they flee naked away (19:15–17). While Luke considers magic to be a serious issue, he is not above treating it in a comical way. The healing power of Paul is no commodity to be seized and used (cf. the discussion of magic and Simon Magus in 8:18–23), not some miraculous force to be channeled at will. *Power* is part of a relationship with the Lord *who is personally known by the believer*. Seeing their black arts, astrology, and voodoo thus derided, once superstitious Jews and Greeks forsake their foolishness; and again, "the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily" (19:20), but not without the careful teaching and nurture of leaders like Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul. This faith is not simply about conversion nor is it only about wonder-working power; it is conversion into and power derived from a relationship with the risen Christ. No muddle-headed enthusiast, saying "It doesn't really matter what you believe as long as you are sincere," Luke insists upon correct belief and careful nurture of new converts.[251]

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[249]C. E. Arnold, "Magic," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, editors: Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 581.

[250]C. K. Barrett, Acts, The New International Critical Commentary, Vol., 2: 908.

[251]William H. Willimon, *Acts,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 147-148).

As a result of seeing their magic put down, or denigrated, this failure on the part of the seven sons caused great anxiety among superstitious Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:17), which may also account for Paul's warning against "Jewish myths" in his Epistle to Titus (Titus 1:14). Both Jews and Greeks are mentioned in 19:17, which immediately follows on the heel of the seven sons of Sceva. Immediately, Luke informs Theophilus that "Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds" (19:18). Apparently, many Jews also had accepted sorcery/magic. B. M. Newman and E. A. Nida affirm that the Jews were also infamous for their magic practices:

> Evidently Paul had used the name of Jesus in performing these miracles of healing and of ridding people of *evil spirits*. Luke now tells of certain Jews who seem to have looked upon the name of Jesus as another magic formula by which they could chase out evil spirits for profit (very similar to the understanding of Simon in 8:19). In the ancient world the Jews were notorious for their magical practices, and a papyrus fragment has been found on which is the statement "I command you in the name of Jesus, the God of the Jews." Since the context makes it clear that the command given by the Jews is *to the evil spirits*, the TEV [Today's English Version = Good News Bible] has added this phrase for clarity.[252]

Elymas: Jewish Sorcerer

The world of Paul was a world filled with sorcery, or magic. When Paul and Silas began their first missionary tour, they encountered Elymas the sorcerer ("Elymas the magician") on the island of Cyprus. Elymas was a Jewish sorcerer. Luke reports this encounter with Paul's drastic measures against him:

> The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. [5] When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. [6] They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a **Jewish sorcerer** (*magon*[253]) and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, [7] who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. [8] But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. [9] Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, [10] "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? [11] Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. [12] When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. (Acts 13:4-12)

Earlier in the Book of Acts (8:5-24), Luke reports an incidence with one who practiced magic, which occurred while Philip evangelized in the city of Samaria. Luke paints a picture of the man's own self-esteem:

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[252]B. M. Newman and E. A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series, Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 367.

[253]The word *sorcerer* is from the Greek word **μάγος** (*magos*). This word refers to one trained in astrology and dream interpretations. See Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, in Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition, edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martin, and Bruce M. Metzger (Germany: United Bible Society, 1966, 1993), 110, where he writes: "wise man (of one trained in astrology and dream interpretation); magician, sorcerer."

Now for some time a man named Simon had **practiced sorcery** in the city ["in the city using magic arts"] and amazed all the people of Samaria. **He boasted that he was someone great**, [10] and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." [11] They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic ["by the sorceries"]. [12] But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (8:9-12)

Simon listened to Philip concerning the kingdom of God and believed. He also submitted to baptism. Later the Jerusalem church learned of his acceptance of Christ as well as others. As a result of this revelation, the church sent Peter and John. Upon their arrival, these two prayed that these new converts might receive the Holy Spirit (8:14-15). In spite of Simon's conversion, he still did not apprehend the full story of the events that transpired concerning the Holy Spirit. Even though he earlier boasted about his powers, nevertheless, he did not exercise any supernatural power. He depended upon trickery. Yet, he was able to distinguish between the genuine and deception. He offered to buy the kind of gift that Peter and John exercised upon the believers. Peter then rebuked Simon and told him to pray and to request God's forgiveness (8:18-24). This story, too, illustrates how wide-spread the practice of magic existed in the first century. These episodes lead up to a greater understanding of the events transpiring in Ephesus with its temple of Artemis.

Testimony of Pliny the Elder

Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) wrote on natural history. He mentioned Jannes and Jambres (Exodus 7:9-13) who lived during the time of Moses and are still known for their practice of magic. In his account he calls attention to magic as also practiced by the Jews in the fifth century BC. Magic was taught openly in the society of Democritus (460-370 BC, ancient Greek philosopher). Pliny pens the following words about sorcery, which account includes the Jews' involvement:

> That these were accepted [books on magic] by any human beings and transmitted by memory is the most extraordinary phenomenon in history; so utterly are they lacking in credibility and decency that those who like the other works of Democritus [460-370 BC], deny that the magical books are his. But it is all to no purpose, for it is certain that Democritus especially instilled into men's minds the sweets of magic. Another extraordinary thing is that both these arts, medicine I mean and magic, flourished together, Democritus expounding magic in the same age as Hippocrates [460-370 BC], expounded medicine, about the time of the Peloponnesian War [431-404 BC], which was waged in Greece from the three-hundredth year of our city. There is yet another branch of magic, derived from Moses [1526-1406 BC], Jannes, Lotapes, and the Jews, but living many thousand years after Zoroaster [570 BC, some dates range from the 18th to the 10th century BC]. So much more recent in the branch in Cyprus. In the time too of Alexander the Great [356-323 BC], no slight addition was made to the influence of the profession by a second Osthanes, who, honoured by his attendance on Alexander, traveled certainly without the slightest doubt all over the world.[254] (Emphasis mine--underlining)

Paul, who wrote to Titus, about AD 65, on the Island of Crete, warned his fellow worker to be aware of certain Jews who were involved in myths. Listen to Paul as he cautions Titus against individuals who were ruining whole households with their sorcery:

> For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the **circumcision group**. [11] They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by

[254]Pliny, *Natural History, Vol., 7*.30.3.12, Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 418, Books 28-32, translated by W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1963, 2006), 285.

teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. [12] Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." [13] This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith [14] and will pay no attention to **Jewish myths** or to the commands of those who reject the truth. (Titus 1:10-14)

Once more, Pliny the Elder also gives testimony about magic in his own day, which attestation only confirms Paul's admonition to Titus. In the days of Pliny, magic was still the order of the day. Even though many Jews practiced magic in the fifth century BC, we still witness, according to Pliny and Paul, magical practices in the first century by Jews. The following comments by Pliny bear witness to the wide-spread practice of the detestable performances of magic:

> IV. Magic certainly found a home in the two Gallic provinces, and that down to living memory. For the principate of Tiberius Caesar [42BC-AD 37, third emperor of Rome from AD 14-37] did away with their Druids and this tribe of seers and medicine men. But why should I speak of these things when the craft has even crossed the Ocean and reached the empty voids of Nature? Even today Britain practices magic in awe, with such grand ritual that it might seem that she gave it to the Persians. So universal is the cult of magic throughout the world, although its nations disagree or are unknown to each other. It is beyond calculation how great is the debt owed to the Romans, who swept away the monstrous rites, in which to kill a man was the highest religious duty and for him to be eaten a passport to health.[255]

Daniel Arichea and Howard Hatton call notice to the word "myths," which remarks are extremely helpful. These *myths* were stories handed down from generation to generation about their gods and goddesses, which *myths* were still being circulated in the Christian community at Ephesus.

> *Myths* are traditional stories of ancestors and origins; these are present in most cultures, and people regard them very highly. Here, however, *myths* is used in a negative way; it is not simply that the myths referred to are made-up tales and legends (TEV), but that these stories have been substituted for the true Christian message. It is possible to read the text in such as way as to identify the myths with the *genealogies*, which are in turn described as *endless* in the sense of "long" (TEV). What these *genealogies* consist of is not at all clear, since the letter itself offers no clues.[256] (Emphasis mine—underlining)

The silly stories about gods and goddesses were kept alive by women who had a reputation for preserving nonsensical or dim-witted Godless fiction. Michael Moore calls attention to ancient myths that were kept alive in Anatolia by "old women." He writes:

> As "exorcist," the "old woman" was responsible for freeing and purifying clients from the unseen forces of the Netherworld, before which they lived in constant fear. This was one of her most important roles. In one text a North Syrian "old woman" lists some of these "demons" by name.[257]

This historical background of magic and the "old woman" plays a significant role in the correct interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles. Paul has to combat this mentality that is still rampant within the church at Ephesus. Again

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[255]Ibid., 7.30.4, page 287.

[256]Daniel Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 16.

[257]Michael S. Moore, *The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development*, SBL Dissertation Series 113 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 22.

Moore's comments help to shed light upon the problems Paul confronted in his instructions to Timothy. Once more, Moore seeks to highlight the place of magic as well as the place of "old women" in the ancient world:

> It is impossible to separate "magic" from "religion" in Anatolian praxis [habitual or established practice: custom], but it is helpful to distinguish, with A. Goetze, between "magic" and the more or less official "cult."…. At times of crisis, however, such as birth, death, plague, war, royal illness, or other calamity, Anatolians turned to a number of magico-religious specialists. To avoid calamity altogether (and perhaps also the exorcist's feet!), apotropaic incantations were inscribed on amulets [good luck charms], talismans [charms, trinkets], and homeopathic figurines [a system of medical treatment] and prominently displayed over entranceways or buried in the foundation of houses in order to protect and purify the persons of that house from the threat of portended evil…. The "old woman" enacted a wide range of roles and was the most prominent magico-religious specialist in Anatolia.[258]

THE IMPLIED READER

As we seek to interpret the Pastoral Epistles correctly, we need to draw attention to the implied reader versus the real reader. There is a fourth context that every interpreter must consider as he or she seeks to unravel the written Word of God, namely, the "cultural context." In order for us to understand more accurately the writings of the New Testament, we often have to go to outside sources in order to fill in the gaps that are missing in the Scriptures. The persons to whom the original writings were addressed understood their culture. We, today, live two-thousand years this side of the Apostles and the first-century church. The *implied reader* knew things that are not in the text. For this reason, we need to keep in mind that there is a distinction between the *implied reader* (original reader) and the *real reader* (us). This consciousness will assist us in drawing a more accurate reading and understanding of the original documents.

For example, the *real reader* frequently consults outside reading in order to understand the text more fully.[259] Seymour Chatman in drawing attention to the meaning of the *implied reader* puts it this way:

> The counterpart of the implied author is the *implied reader*—not the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book, but the audience presupposed by the narrative itself.[260]

Narrative criticism helps to narrow the gap between the *real reader* and the *implied reader*.[261] This in-depth study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is a narrative construction of the Pastoral Epistles in order to try to

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[258]Ibid., 20, 21.

[259]For an example of this distinction, see Dallas Burdette, "Passover Traditions in the Time of Christ," in *From Legalism to Freedom*, 181-195. This study concerning the Passover sets forth an example of the distinction between the *real reader* and the *implied reader*. The *real reader* goes to outside sources to discover what the *implied reader* already knew about the Passover traditions in the first century through first-hand knowledge. See also Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*, 19-21.

[260]Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 149-150; Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974); David Robert Bauer, "The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Literary-Critical Examination," (Ph. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1985), 24-26; Dorothy Jean Weaver, "The Missionary Discourse in the Gospel of Matthew: A Literary Critical Analysis," (Ph. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1987), 66.

[261]See W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), where he counsels Christians not to reject literary criticism.

comprehend as clearly as possible the discernment of the *implied reader* (original reader) as to why Paul had to issue an injunction against the women teaching in Ephesus to Timothy. This undertaking demands an understanding of gods and goddesses in vogue in the first century. Chapter 31 of this study will focus upon one of the Seven Wonders of the World in ancient times. To begin with, it is imperative that we examine this phenomenon of the pagan gods and goddesses during Paul's day.

Furthermore, an examination of the "old-womanish tales" in 1 Timothy 4:7 is indispensable to a proper understanding of the Pastoral Epistles. These mythological stories are legend about their gods and goddesses that were handed down from generation to generation and were known as "old womanish tales." The next chapter (31) draws attention to the need of interpreting a text or texts in light of the author's background. In addition to the proper method of interpretation, this in-depth study seeks to alert the reader to the English translation of the Greek word *periergos* ("busybody, magic") [1 Timothy 5:13]. In our next chapter, we also call awareness to the Greek word *phuaros*, which word means gossip, silly talk, nonsense, or tattler (5:13). Chapter 31 will also call attention to the prevalence of sorcery (magic) among many Jews in Asia Minor. We will also zero in on the very heart of God's Gospel, which is none other than Jesus Himself.

Religious thinkers should be sympathetic to criticism because it is a branch of philosophy; it is an effort to get at certain truths about signs, knowledge, and reality. If these remarks seem at all platitudinous, let me add that I have taken the trouble to make them because it seems to me possible for the thought and scholarship of religious persons (especially in America today) to be too far sold in the cultivation of certain merely historical, informational, and neutral techniques. This may have been for a time a necessary phase of competition with secular science and secular education. But there is no reason why Christians should be the last (or even be slow) to transcend the limitations of such knowledge, to outgrow pedantic misconceptions and participate in literary philosophy.

7

I Suffer Not a Woman To Teach: Ephesus and Magic

Part 2 of 3

> Abuse can be both intentional and unintentional. Much of what I identify throughout this study as the abusive reading and application of Scripture is not the result of deliberate, intentional abuse for the purpose of manipulation or control. These unintentional abuses are often the result of letting our backgrounds, preconceptions, or biases influence and control the way we read and apply Scripture.[262]

The world of Paul's day was filled with hundreds of pagan gods and goddesses. Not only did Ephesus house one of the Seven Wonders of the World (**The Temple of Artemis**), but the citizens also worshiped up to fifty gods and goddesses. Clinton E. Arnold's (professor and chairman with the Talbot School of Theology) comments about the spiritual climate of Ephesus unfold the mindset of one of the greatest commercial centers in Asia. His words shed light on the overall background to the proper interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles. The following observation by Arnold opens the door for understanding Paul's two epistles to Timothy. Since Timothy resided in Ephesus at the time of receiving Paul's Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy), this insight should assist us in discarding inherited traditions upon many of Paul's declarations to Timothy. The following commentary by Arnold sheds further daylight upon our comprehension of Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus:

> **A religiously pluralistic environment.** Although best known as the sacred home to the Artemis cult, up to fifty other gods and goddesses were worshiped in Ephesus. Among those worshiped in Ephesus were Zeus, Athena, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Apollo, Dionysus, Demeter, Hekate, Tyche, Theos Hypsistos, Meter Oreia, and Hephaistos. The two Egyptian deities Isis and Sarapis were also popular in the city. There was a spirit of religious tolerance among the people. In fact, people typically worshiped more than one deity.[263]

Unless we learn more about the world of the New Testament era, we will not be able to avoid erroneous interpretations of the various statements of Paul to Timothy. It is not uncommon for many Christians to construe the Bible from their own culture and, as a result, read the Scriptures in light of their own historical background.

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[262]Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing* Scripture: *The Consequences of Misreading the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009), 16.

[263]Clinton E. Arnold, Frank S. Thieman, and S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Clinton E. Arnold, general editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 5.

The ancient world was filled with local gods and goddesses, magic, and astrology. Without this backdrop knowledge, we will not apply the Scriptures correctly as we seek to comprehend the very heart of God's Gospel to a lost and dying world. Sharon Gritz's remarks about the temple of the goddess Artemis opens up tremendous light toward understanding Paul's announcement about not letting women teach. Her remarks are on target:

> The broadest context for the understanding of 1 Tim. 2:9-15 involves the culture of the people to whom Paul wrote. He was writing to Christians in Ephesus in the first century A.D. What kind of city was Ephesus? What aspects of that city influenced the believing community? Since the passage deals with women, one would have to look with interest at the women of Ephesus. From what backgrounds did they come? What roles did they perform in society? How did they live? In order to understand 1 Tim. 2:9-15 the interpreter needs an answer to the questions raised above. This chapter attempts to provide insights and understandings into the cultural context of Ephesus and the women who lived there.[264]

ESSENTIALS TO PROPER INTERPRETATION OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

As we approach an interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles, we must move toward the writings of Paul with knowledge of its context in order to clarify the biblical teachings set forth by him in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Ephesus was the gateway to the province of Asia. Ephesus was a city filled with intellectuals—philosophers and rhetoricians. Philostratus (AD 170-245) writes a biography about a holy man in the first century—Apollonius of Tyana (AD 40-120), Pythagorean philosopher and teacher.[265] In this biography Philostratus comments on the greatness of the city of Ephesus, which remarks reveal the intellectual climate of the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. He writes:

> But who will rob Ephesus of its preservation? It is a city founded at the very origin of our race from the most sacred land of Attica. It has surpassed all the cities of Ionia and Lydia: it has spread to the sea, after outgrowing the land on which it was founded. It is packed with philosophical and rhetorical studies, and those make the city strong not in cavalry but in tens of thousands of inhabitants, as a place that honors wisdom. What wise man do you think would hesitate to fight on behalf of such a city?[266]

Not only was Ephesus filled with philosophers, it housed, as cited above, one of the Seven Wonders of the World—the Temple of Artemis. Various deities were worshipped throughout the province of Asia. The primary deities in Asia Minor were female. The most famous of all deities in Ephesus as well as the whole of Asia Minor was the Greek Goddess Artemis. Richard Clark Kroeger's (retired pastor and college professor) and Catherine Clark Kroeger's (adjunct associate professor of classical and ministry studies at Gordon Conwell Seminary) explanation about the Great Mother are informative and helpful to the interpreter as he or she seeks to unravel the negative interpretation about women in First and Second Timothy. The following comments by the Kroegers radiate light upon the historical setting:

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[264]Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 11.

[265]For a brief background of Pythagorean philosopher, see Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environments*, translated by John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971, 1974), 250-251.

[266]Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana*, vol., II [Loeb Edition, vol., 17], Books V-VII, 8.25, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Christopher P. Jones (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1912, 2005), 353.

The Great Mother was given many names in different parts of Asia Minor, but she bore the same characteristics. Whether Great Mother of the Gods, the Mountain Mother, Ma, Bellona, Cybele [**Κυβέλη**, *Kubelh*], Demeter [**Δημήτηρ**, *Dēmētēr*], or Artemis [**Ἄρτεμις**, *Artemis*], she was the mother of gods and men, the mistress of wild animals. From her came all life, and the dead were gathered again to her womb. She stood guard over the tombs of her devotees.[267]

Paul's Missionary Activities in Ephesus

Acts 19:23-41 sets the tone for an understanding of the Pastoral Epistles. Luke reports the riot that occurred in Ephesus over the God that Paul proclaimed versus the goddess Artemis (19:23-26). Luke writes about the disturbance over "the Way" that Paul advanced. Luke narrates the following scenario in order to set the stage for reformation in the lives of many in Ephesus:

> About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. [24] A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. [25] He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. [26] And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. **He says that man-made gods are no gods at all**. (19:23-26)

When Paul preached and taught, he proclaimed Jesus as God's Way of salvation for lost humanity. In his Epistles to Timothy, he set forth the heart of his Gospel, namely, Jesus. **Paul dealt with "godless myths and old wives' tales" that were common in Ephesus (1 Timothy 4:7)**. As a result of Paul's Gospel, the temple of the goddess Artemis declined in attendance as well as experienced deterioration in the sale of the silver shrines of Artemis by Demetrius, a silversmith. As a result of Demetrius' arguments, the citizens were furious and shouted for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28). Demetrius asserted that the goddess herself "is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world" (19:27). Pausanias (AD 120-180, born in Lydia in Asia Minor), reported that all cities worship the Artemis of Ephesus, which testimony only confirms the tremendous outcry against Paul when the Ephesians thought that Paul had blasphemed their Great Mother Goddess, as reported by Luke. Pausanias writes:

> But all cities worship Artemis of Ephesus, and individuals hold her in honour above all the gods. The reason, in my view, is the renown of the Amazons [**Ἀμαζόνων**, *Amazonwn*], who traditionally dedicated the image, also the extreme antiquity of this sanctuary. Three other points as well have contributed to her renown, the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men, the eminence of the city of the Ephesians and the renown of the goddess who dwells there.[268]

Temple of Artemis

> To them she was a powerful and complex goddess whose influence spread far and wide throughout the ancient world. She was worshipped and celebrated as a goddess of childbirth, women, song, dance and of wild animals. As the daughter of the Titan goddess Leto by the Olympian Father god Zeus, Artemis would prove herself from the moment of her own birth, by assisting her mother with the birth

[267]Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 50-51.

[268]Pausanias: *Description of Greece*, vol., II [Loeb edition, vol., 188], Books III-V,4.31.8, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926, 2000), 345.

of her own twin brother, Apollo. Zeus, who fathered children with many other goddesses and mortals, had a special affection for Artemis from the start and gave her all the gifts she asked for and more, making her one of the most powerful of the Olympian goddesses.[269]

The size of the temple is one of the contributing factors that identified this temple as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.[270] **This temple was the largest structure in the ancient world**. John and Elizabeth Romer call attention to the size of the temple:

> This archetypal monument was designed by a Cretan architect and his son who, so the great hall of columns leading to the sanctuary would suggest, had visited Egypt and had been impressed by its gigantic standing temples with their halls of columns. 'The overall length of the temple is four hundred and twenty-five feet, its width two hundred and twenty-five feet," writes the Roman Pliny.[271]

The enormity of this building strikes the imagination. The building was about forty-two stories long, twenty-two stories wide, and over six stories tall.[272] **There were one-hundred and twenty-seven columns that surrounded this edifice, which columns were over sixty-feet tall (six stories).**[273] This temple generated a tremendous source of revenue for the city. Bluma L. Trell (1903-1997, professor and expert on Greece) describes this aspect:

> From the earliest times, Artemis attracted pilgrims and tourists, earning the income for her temple from them and from the ships that used her sacred port. She shared in the profits made by merchants who frequented her open courtyard: artisans who sold miniature silver copies of her cult statue and temple, fortune-telling magicians who sold oracles, and priests and priestesses who sold parts of the sacrificial meat.[274]

This temple also served other purposes—the law of asylum as well as the banking institution of its day. The temple of Artemis served a dual purpose—banking as well as a religious institution.[275] Trell addresses similarities with the goddess Cybele (**Κυβέλη**, *Kybelē*):

> Artemis Ephesia had almost the same attributes as the mother-goddess of Phrygia, Kybele. In fact, Artemis was named Kubaba (Cybele) in several Anatolian dialects. The frequent use in the Greek of megale-great- [**μεγάλη**, *megalē*, "great"], with her name suggests she as *magna mater*, the great

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[269]Cited on the back cover of Sorita D'Este, *Artemis: Virgin Goddess of the Sun and Moon* (England, UK: Avalonia, 2005). This book is highly recommended for those who wish to examine a comprehensive study of the Greek goddess with all of its myths and worship.

[270]For a detailed account of the Temple of Artemis, see John & Elizabeth Romer, *The Seven Wonders of the World: A History of the Modern Imagination* (London: Seven Dials, Cassell & Co., 1995, 2000), 129-164. For another exhaustive study of the Temple of Diana, see Edward Falkener, *Ephesus and the Temple of Diana*, reprinted (London: Day & Son, 1862). I highly recommend Claire O'Neal's book, *Artemis: Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology* (Hockessin, Delaware: Mitchell Lane Publisher, 2008) for a brief analysis of mythology.

[271]Ibid., 147.

[272]Even though stories depict heights (vertical), nevertheless, I am seeking to convey to the reader the enormous size of this building.

[273]Bluma L. Trell, "The Temple of Artemis at Ephesos," *The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*, edited by Peter Clayton & Martin Price (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 81.

[274]Ibid., 82.

[275]Ibid., 83.

mother-goddess, and in this the great goddess of Ephesos differs from the huntress goddess of purely Greek mythology. Her origins lie in the east, not in Greece itself.[276]

The history of the temple of Artemis is sometimes difficult to grasp as to its age. To help put this age in perspective, we call forth the testimony of Aristophanes (446-386 BC, **Ἀριστοφάνης**, *Aristophanēs*, a prolific and much acclaimed comic playwright of ancient Athens) to testify to the Lady of Ephesus in his fifth century BC play called *The Clouds*:

> Join me as well, Phoebus, Lord of Delos (**Δήλιε**, *Dēlie*), who dwell on Cynthus's sheer escarpment of rock; and you, blest Maiden, who dwell at Ephesus in the golden house, where Lydian maidens greatly revere you [Artemis]; and our own native goddess, wielder of the aegis [a shield or breastplate emblematic of majesty that was associated with gods—like Zeus and Athena], guardian of the city; and he who haunts Parnassus' rock and glows in the light of pine torches, eminent among Delphic bacchants, the reveler Dionysus.[277] (Emphasis mine—RDB)

Artemis was just one of many gods and goddesses in the ancient world. Even at Corinth, Paul had to combat the various religious cults. The Kroegers' state:

> The Egyptian mediator and savior goddess, Isis [**Ἶσις**, *Isis*, an Egyptian goddess and wife of Osiris], at times became virtually indistinguishable from Artemis of Ephesus, and was even addressed as Artemis-Isis. Both goddesses were lunar deities, well acquainted with magic and expert in delivery at childbirth. Indeed, Isis was popular all over the Mediterranean world. At **Dicte in Crete she bore the name of Artemis** and in Asia Minor she was worshiped, like Artemis, at crossroads. She even claimed a shrine for herself in the Artemisium at Ephesus.[278] (Emphasis mine)

The geographical location of Crete also catches the eye of the readers. We also recall Paul's Epistle to Titus concerning Jewish fables. Titus was told to combat the mythological stories circulating on this island (Titus 1:14). In Corinth, we also confront the goddess Artemis. She is revealed, according to Apuleius (AD 125-180),[279] as the procreator of all that is in nature:

> O queen of heaven—whether you are bountiful Ceres, the primal mother of crops, who in joy at the recovery of your daughter took away from men their primeval animal fodder of acorns and showed them gentler nourishment, and now dwell in the land of Eleusis; or heavenly Venus [the Phoenician goddess Astarte], who at the first foundation of the universe united the diversity of the sexes by creating Love and propagated the human race through ever-recurring progeny, and now are worshipped in the island sanctuary of Paphos; or Phoebus's sister, who brought forth populous multitudes by relieving the delivery of offspring with your soothing remedies, and now are venerated

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[276]Ibid., 87.

[277]Aristophanes, *Clouds ● Wasps ● Peace*, vol., II, 596-605, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998, 2005), 89. Plato (428-347 BC, **Πλάτων**, *Platōn*) singled out Aristophanes' play *The clouds* (**Νεφέλαι**, *Nephela*) as contribution to the trial and execution of Socrates (469-339 BC)

[278]Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 108.

[279]Apuleius wrote a novel called *Metamorphoses,* which is also called *The Golden Ass.* This story is about the adventures of one, Lucius, who experimented with magic and is accidentally turned into an ass. Apuleius also experimented in several cults as well as participated in the practice of magic.

at the illustrious shrine of Ephesus;[280] or dreaded Proserpina of the nocturnal howls, who in triple form repress the attacks of ghosts and keep the gates to earth closed fast, roam through widely scattered groves and are propitiated by diverse rites.[281]

Old-Womanish Tales

The stories of the gods and goddesses were still common in Paul's day. In fact, he called them "old-womanish tales" (1 Timothy 4:7). **The "old-womanish fables" were handed down from generation to generation about their gods and goddesses**. Paul began his first correspondence to Timothy concerning these tales. He wrote strong words about certain persons (**τισὶν**, *tisin*) promoting these invented stories about their gods:

> As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men (τισὶν, tisin, certain persons) not to teach false doctrines any longer [4]nor to devote themselves to myths (**μύθοις**, *mythois*) and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

The "myths" were equivalent to the "old wives' tales" (4:7). Again, Paul focuses in on the habits of the women, especially "younger widows" (5:11-13). Paul exhorts Timothy to "Have nothing to do with godless (**βεβήλους**, *bebēlous*, "vile, godless, irreligious") myths and old wives' tales (**γραώδεις μύθους**, *graōdeis mythous*, "old-womanish tales"); rather, train yourself to be godly" (4:7). Apparently, the younger widows were spreading these "old-womanish tales" and practicing magic from "house to house." Listen to Paul as he addresses this particular issue of rejecting the Gospel for these invented stories:

> As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For <u>when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry</u>. [12] Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. [13] Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also **gossips** (**φλύαροι**, *phlyaroi*, "ridiculous stories") and **busybodies** (**περίεργοι**, *periergoi*, "magic"), saying things they ought not to. (5:11-13)

Gossips

The word *gossips* is a critical word toward understanding the emphasis of Paul to Timothy concerning the myths and the practice of magic. The following comments by Philip B. Payne (specialist in New Testament studies) about the word *gossips* are exceptionally informative in trying to arrive at a more accurate understanding of Paul's concern about the undermining of the Gospel in Ephesus:

> The description of women in 5:13 includes **φλύαροι** [*phlyaroi*], meaning "silly talk, follery, nonsense, tattler, babbler." This word is commonly used to identify teachings or philosophies that are opposed to the truth. For example, 4 Macc 5:1—11 uses it to describe "preposterous (**φλυάρου**, [*phlyarou*]) philosophy. Josephus gives various examples of this: Ag. Ap. 2.22 describes an astonishing etymology as "nonsense," **φλυαρία**ς [*phlyarias*]; Ag. Ap. 2.116 describes a dubious

[280] Footnote 5. "Diana (and especially her Greek counterpart Artemis) was invoked to help women in childbirth under the cult title Lucina. At Ephesus in Asia minor she was worshipped as an Asiatic fertility goddess."

[281] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, vol., 2, Books VII-XI, Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 453, edited and translated by J. Arthur Hanson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989, 1998), 293.

historical narrative as a "ridiculous story," **φλυαρήμασι** [*phlyarēmasi*]; and Life 150 states, "I ridiculed the nonsense (**φλύαρον** [*phlyaron*]) of any arguments about charms.[282]

Just a cursory reading of the Pastoral Epistles reveals that Paul combated paganism with its mythological gods throughout the Roman Empire. As stated above, Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, warned him about "old wives' tales." Again, we should give notice to Paul as he calls attention to the problems existing among the women: "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly" (1 Timothy 4:7). The "old wives' tales" is a translation of **γραώδεις μύθους** (*graōdeis mythous*, old-womanish tales), which they were to refuse (**παραιτοῦ**, *paraitou*, having nothing to do with). These stories were "profane" (**βεβήλους**, *bebēlous*). Not only were the fables "profane," but they were also associated with the rituals of magic. Undoubtedly, the younger widows (5:11) were involved in these "old-womanish tales," which stories involved magic. Paul writes, as stated above, his warning against such behavior.

> Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also **gossips** (**φλύαρος**, *phlyaros*, "nonsensical stories told") and **busybodies** (**περίεργοι**, *periergoi*, "magic"), saying things they ought not to. (5:13)

These stories about their gods and goddesses were over fifteen-hundred years old. They had been handed down from generation to generation. In 1976, O. R. Gurney (1911-2001, an English Assiriologist and a leading scholar of the Hittites) delivered a series of lectures entitled, "The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy," which studies focused upon the Hittite Religion. The Hittites were an ancient Anatolian people (Anatolia: The part of Turkey comprising the peninsula of Asia Minor.). These people established a kingdom centered at Hattusa in north-central Anatolia in the 18th century. After 1180 BC, the kingdom went into decline. What is significant about this study is the information about the old-womanish tales associated with their magic. He cites from the Hittites' own writings in which they made mention of the "Old Woman" and magic.

Hittites

Gurney writes about the importation of gods into their culture with their rituals and magic: "It is from there that the Hittites imported a great mass of rituals, mainly magical, and typically performed by the so-called 'Old Woman.'"[283] One of his chapters (III) also deals with "Magical Rituals." In this study, he calls attention to the use of individuals in the dissemination of magic, especially by women who were known as the "Old Woman" as well as the "Wise Woman." He explains:

> The typical exponent of pure 'sympathetic' magic is the so-called 'Old Woman' or 'Wise Woman.' Her profession is generally written with the Sumerogram SU.GI 'old,' but the Hittite term is known to be *hasawas*, a word which may be connected, or even synonymous, with *hasnupallas* 'midwife'. Thirteen such women are known by name, but they function as **sorceresses** in countless rituals in which the name of the author is not preserved, and it is a reasonable assumption that the women are attested as authors by name only can be counted among their number, which is then raised to thirty-two. I know of only seven rituals whose authors are women of other professions: 3 'midwives', 1 'doctor', 1 'hierodule', 2 'temple singers'.[284] (Emphasis mine-underlining)

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[282]Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 301. I highly recommend this book as one of the most thorough studies that I have read dealing with First and Second Timothy and First Corinthians concerning the role of women in the church.

[283]O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion,* The Schweich Lectures 1976 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 16.

[284]Ibid., 44-45.

Again, he continues to develop the culture of the Hittites. He, once more, discloses the part that the "Old Woman" played in their culture:

> Divination was a well-developed and much practiced science at Hattusa, and its exponents were precisely the same three professions: the 'diviner' who was the expert in omens from the liver and entrails, the 'bird-operator' who interpreted the flight of birds, and the '**Old Woman**' who specialized in a type of oracle called the KIN which is little understood. The records of divination do not give the names of either the 'diviners' or the '**old women**'. Only the 'augurs' are occasionally mentioned by name. The 'diviner's' profession was evidently sufficient authority. Yet when the same persons practiced magic, the ritual was a personal document and the practitioners were frequently foreigners. Does this mean that the priests of the college of divination indulged in magic as a part-time activity without official sanction? Certainly Hattusili I is on record as expressing strong disapproval for the activities of the 'old women'.[285] (Emphasis mine, bold and underlining)

Philostratus the Elder

As late as the third century AD, Philostratus the Elder (a Greek writer who flourished during this century) commented on cruelties found in the tales told by women. He expresses his comments about the skill women exercised in the telling of their mythological stories:

> That Theseus treated Ariadne unjustly—though some say not with unjust intent, but under the compulsion of Dionysus [**Διόνυσος**, *Dionysos*][286]—when he abandoned her while asleep on the island of Dia, you must have heard from your nurse; for **those women are skilled in telling such tales** and they weep over them whenever they will. I do not need to say that it is Theseus you see there on the ship and Dionysus yonder on the land, nor will I assume you to be ignorant and call your attention to the woman on the rocks, lying there in gentle slumber.[287] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

Cicero

Cicero (106-43 BC, Roman philosopher) also addressed the subject of "old wives" who worked by "lamplight." In his *Nature of the Gods*, he reveals something of his own times concerning fairy tales being circulated:

> You yourself just now, when reeling off the list of philosophers like the censor calling the roll of the Senate, said that all those eminent men were fools, idiots and madmen. But if none of these discerned the truth about the divine nature, it is to be feared that the divine nature is entirely non-existent.
>
> **For as for your school's account of the matter, it is the merest fairy-story**, **hardly worthy of old wives at work by lamplight**. You don't perceive what a number of things you are let in for, if we consent to admit that men and gods have the same form. You will have to assign to god exactly the same physical exercises and care of the person as are proper to men: he will walk, run, recline, bend,

[285]Ibid., 46.

[286]"**Διόνυσος**, *Dionysos* also called Bacchus (**Βάκχος**, *Bakchos*) and identified in Rome with the Italic god Liber Pater, Dionysus was essentially the god of the vine, of wine and of mystery ecstasy." Also, "Dionysus was an Olympian deity, the son of Zeus and Semele." See Pierre Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, (London: Penguin Books, 1951, 1990), 128.

[287]The Elder Philostratus and the Younger Philostratus, *Imagines*, 1.15, Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 256, translated by Arthur Fairbanks (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931, 2000), 61.

sit, hold things in the hand, and lastly even converse and make speeches.[288] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

Dennis Ronald MacDonald's comments about women's tales are extremely informative, and, at the same time, his observations lend a hand toward grasping more accurately the problems that Paul had to confront in his Pastoral Epistles. MacDonald also alludes to *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius to illustrate the place of stories in the lives of men and women. He pens the following enlightening information:

> In *The Golden Ass*, by Apuleius (ca.123-180 CE [Common Era]), the character Lucius, who had been turned into an ass by misapplying a magical formula he had learned from a witch, travels in search of an antidote to return him to his natural state. While traveling, he falls into the clutches of bandits who hide him in a cave along with two women, one old and one young. The younger had been kidnapped from her wedding, and was terrified by her captivity lest she lose her lover. To console her the older woman says: "Now let me tell you some old women's tales (*anilibus fabulis*) to make you feel a little better." Then she tells the story of the tribulations Psyche [**Ψυχή**, *Psychē*][289] had to face before she married Cupid. At the end of it Lucius says: "I stood close by the girl prisoner listening to this beautiful story, and though It was told by a drunken and half-demented old woman, I regretted that I had no means of committing it to writing."
>
> This is but one example from antiquity of the prominence of women in transmitting oral narrative—especially myths. As in this passage, most of these references are pejorative [having negative connotations]. In Plato's *Republic*, for instance, Socrates tells his friend Adeimantus that in order to create their utopia they must control the content of the stories women tell their children.[290] (Emphasis mine)

Lucian of Samosata

Since the Pastoral Epistles are frequently misapplied, not consciously, I feel it is necessary to draw information from numerous sources in order to call attention to the problems that existed in Ephesus and Crete concerning the tales about their gods and goddesses. Lucian of Samosata (**Λουκιανός ὁ Σαμοσατεύς**, *Loukianos ho Samosateus*, AD 125-after AD 180, Assyrian rhetorician and satirist, who wrote in the Greek language) wrote about the telling of "preposterous tales." He is astounded at the lies that men are so fond of telling:

> Can you tell me, Philocles, what in the world it is that makes many men so fond of lying that they delight in telling preposterous tales themselves and listen with especial attention to those who spin yarns of that sort?[291] (Emphasis mine)

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[288]Cicero, *Nature of the Gods: Academics*, vol., XIX, 1. 24. 94, Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 268, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931, 2000), 93.

[289]"The heroine of a tale told by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses*. Psyche was stunningly beautiful and much admired, but whereas her sisters had found husbands, no one wanted to marry her because her beauty was so daunting." See Pierre Grimal, "**Psyche**," *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York: The Penguin Books, 1951, 1991), 379.

[290]Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 13.

[291]Lucian, *The Lover of Lies, or the* Doubter, 1, Vol., III, Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 130, translated by A. M. Harmon (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1947, 2004), 321.

Lucian continues his concern about the "old wives' fables" that involve so-called magic with its various incantations. In section 9, he discusses the plausibility of some outrageous beliefs with his reference to such stories as simply fables:

> If, then, you do not first convince me by logical proof that it takes place in this way naturally, because the fever or the inflammation is afraid of a holy name or a foreign phrase and so takes flight from the telling, **your stories still remain old wives' fables**.[292] (Emphasis mine-bold and underlining)

Harmon, translator of *Lucian*, writes an introduction to *The Lover of Lies, or the Doubter*, that is similar to Paul's final remarks about these old-womanish tales. The following remarks by Harmon and Paul illustrate the desire for the fantastic:

Harmon/Lucian	Paul
Lucian's auditors, too, were credulous, and whether they fully believed such tales or not, anyhow they were eager to listen to them. Lucian for his part was uncommonly eager to repeat them because he was quite aware that he could do it very well. Was he to be debarred from that privilege simply because he did not believe in them? Not he! He could kill two birds with a single lucky stone, for he could tell what his audience craved to hear, and at the same time he and they could laugh at those who liked to tell and hear such stories.[293] (Emphasis mine)	In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: [2] Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. [3] For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. [5] But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5

Harmon captured the concept that Lucian "could tell what his audience craved to hear," which is exactly what Paul wrote to Timothy: "They will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3). Paul seeks to nip-in-the-bud the concept of many gods and goddesses in his Pastoral Epistles. Just a cursory reading about the gods and goddess of the pagans reveals that the priestesses of the pagan deities often assumed the role of mediators between the gods and humanity. This philosophy is

[292]Lucian, 9, Ibid., 335.
[293]Ibid., 319.

corrected by Paul in his remarks to Timothy: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5). It is in this vein that Sharon Gritz calls attention to the religious interest in the gods and goddesses in her most informative book. She pens the following words that give clarity to Paul's words:

> Religious interests permeated Ephesus and its greater metropolitan area. Indeed, part of the city's reputation derived from the great temple to the goddess Artemis and the cult associated with her. The Christian community at Ephesus found themselves in the midst of people whose lives possessed a religious orientation. Their primary deity, the Great Mother Goddess, seemed concerned about every area of their lives. **As one of the mystery religions, her cult attempted to satisfy all of the needs of her followers. What was a mystery religion? How did the mystery cult at Ephesus express itself?** The church at Ephesus no doubt numbered former Artemis worshippers among its converts. Therefore, an understanding of the dynamics of that church requires some knowledge of the previous religious views of all its members. This has to include also a study of the Jewish element in Ephesus. Since 1 Tim. 2: 9-15 relates specifically to women in the Ephesian church, **an examination of the religious context needs to focus especially on the roles of women in the mystery religions and in Judaism**.[294] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

YOUNGER WIDOWS

Turned Aside to Follow Satan

The culture in which Paul lived believed in many gods and goddesses. As a result of this kind of background, many of the women in Ephesus who had accepted Christianity brought a lot of excess baggage with them from their prior religious experiences, especially many of the younger widows. Paul writes about why he had to issue an injunction against women teaching in the Christian fellowship at Ephesus. We need to pay special attention to his comments:

> As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. [12] Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. [13] Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips [**φλύαροι**, *phlyaroi*, "silly talk, foolery, nonsense"] and busybodies [**περίεργοι**, *periergoi*, curious things, that is to say, magic arts], saying things they ought not to. [14] So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. [15] Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan [**τινες ἐξετράπησαν ὀπίσω τοῦ σατανᾶ**, *tines exetrapēsan opisō tou satana*, "some turned aside behind Satan"]. (1 Timothy 5:11-15)

Paul calls awareness to the various activities noted among the younger widows. In this catalogue of vices, there are two words (*gossips* and *busybodies*) in which our English translations of the Holy Scriptures do not fully capture the full force of the Greek words employed by Paul. Once more, an understanding of these two Greek words (**φλύαροι**, *phlyaroi*, and **περίεργοι**, *periergoi*), enables us to understand why Paul issued his injunction against women teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. These women were going about "from house to house" telling about the various tales, or fables, with reference to the gods and goddesses of their heritage. In addition to these cleverly invented stories, they were also engaged in the practice of their so-called magic/black

[294]Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teacher, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2: 9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1991), 31.

arts. These fables were simply silly talk as well as sheer nonsense,[295] and, at the same time, a denial of Jesus' role in the scheme of God's redemption.

Over again, in Paul's second letter to Timothy, he explained his reasons for his injunction against women teaching in his first letter to Timothy. He gives additional insight into the mental capacities of these women who had been influenced by certain teachers who turned them away from the Gospel:

> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. [2] People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, [4] treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— [5] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. [6] They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are **loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires**, [7] always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. [8] Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. [9] But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone. (2 Timothy 3:1-9)

Failed to Grasp the Full Knowledge of the Truth

These women, according to Paul, were "always learning," but, at the same time, were "never able to acknowledge the truth." The words "never able to acknowledge the truth" are from the Greek: **μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν δυνάμενα** (*mēdepote eis epignōsin alētheias elthein dynamena*, "never being able to come to a **full knowledge of truth**"). These women did not possess an accurate knowledge of God's Gospel, that is to say, God's Way of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. In Paul's second correspondence to Timothy, he calls attention to his Gospel:

> **Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David**. **This is my gospel**, [9] for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. [10] Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:8-10)

In Paul's first correspondence to Timothy, he reminded him of the "foundation of the truth," which truth centered upon Jesus:

> Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, [15] if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. [16] **Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great**: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:14-16)

Another example of Paul's concern is found in the same Epistle to Timothy, which also illustrates his concern over an inaccurate understanding of Jesus:

> I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— [2] for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all

[295]See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, revised by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1946, where they write: "**φλύαρος** [*phlyaros*]: silly talk, foolery, nonsense….II. tattler, babbler."

godliness and holiness. [3] This is good, and pleases God our Savior, [4] who wants all men to be saved and to come to **a knowledge of the truth** [**ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν**, *epignōsin alētheias elthein*, "to come to a **full knowledge** of the truth"]. [5] For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. [7] And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. (1 Timothy 2:1-7)

Just a casual reading of the Pastoral Epistles reveals that many individuals did not have correct knowledge about Jesus Christ and His redemption. They failed to recognize that there is only "one God and one mediator between God and men." They did not possess "a full knowledge of truth" concerning Jesus as the one and only mediator between God and humankind. Paul does not use the word **γνῶσις** (*gnōsis*, "knowledge"), but rather, he attaches a preposition (**ἐπί**, *epi*) to the word *gnōsis* (**ἐπίγνωσις**, *epignōsis*, "full knowledge") in order to intensify his concern. This word is employed in Holy Scripture to convey the idea of "knowledge," "recognition," or "insight."

The Greek word *epignōsis* is equivalent to the Hebrew word דַּעַת (*dă·ʿăṯ*), "knowledge, insight, discernment," see Proverbs 2:5; Hosea 4:1, 6). Paul uses this word *epignōsis* four times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). Peter, too, employs this word four times in his Second Epistle (2 Peter 1:2, 3, 8; 2:20). It is in this vein that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians about his desire that they come to fully understand Jesus. Listen to him as he speaks of his prayer for them:

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16] I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. [17] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so **that you may know him better**. [18] I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, [20] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21] far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22] And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

In Paul's farewell to Timothy, he pleaded with him to "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Timothy 1:14). Paul rebuked those who adhered to Jewish myths along with their practice of so-called magic. Certain individuals sought to undermine the Gospel with their mythological gods and goddesses. Unfortunately, some of the women had already turned aside to follow Satan. Paul, after his rebuke of some of the younger women (1 Timothy 5:11-15), writes about the departure of some of the younger widows: "Some have in fact already **turned away to follow Satan**" [**ἐξετράπησαν ὀπίσω τοῦ σατανᾶ**, *exetrapēsan opisō tou satana*, "turned aside behind Satan"] (5:15).

Apparently, some of these "younger widows" were advancing the gods and goddesses of their heritage as well as engaging in sexual immorality (5:11, 13). When their sexual desires overcame their dedication to Christ, they came under God's judgment for their immorality. For this reason, Paul counseled the younger widows to marry (5:14), in spite of the prohibition imposed upon individuals by some teachers not to marry (4:3). Paul, as cited above, penned in his last letter to Timothy that these women were "loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, [7] always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth" [**εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν**, *eis epignōsin alētheias elthein*, "to come to a **full knowledge** of truth"] (2 Timothy 3:6-7).

A Synagogue of Satan

We cannot read Paul's pointed statement about some women without reflection upon some of the statements by Jesus in His letters to the churches in Asia Minor. For example, in Christ's letter to the church at Smyrna, He writes:

> I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are **a synagogue of Satan** [**συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ**, *synagōgē tou satana*]. (Revelation 2:9)

Were the Jews involved in pagan myths, which Paul calls "Jewish myths"? In all probability, these Jews opposed Christianity and, at the same time, persecuted believers. Again, we are confronted with individuals who call themselves "Jews," but they are not Jews in the real sense. Numerous Jews were involved in sorcery/magic. We, too, are reminded of Paul's words to Titus concerning some Jews and their mythological stories:

> For there are **many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group**. [11] They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. [12] Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." [13] This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith [14] and will **pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth**. (Titus 1:1-14)

Some Jews rejected the Gospel. Paul calls awareness to those of "the circumcision group" who were advancing "Jewish myths." No doubt, this is the same group that Jesus refers to as "**a synagogue of Satan.**" John writes the following words from Jesus:

> I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a **synagogue of Satan**. (Revelation 2:9)

The Jews in Smyrna were carrying on a smear campaign of slander against those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah foretold by the Old Testament prophets. The Book of Revelation declares that many Jews were involved in a clandestine operation to eliminate Christianity. The church was confronted on two fronts—Judaism and paganism.

Jesus' addressed His third letter to the church in Pergamum. The citizens of Pergamum were followers of Zeus (Ζεύς, *Zeus*), which god was generally regarded as the greatest god of the Greek pantheon. Zeus was also known as the god of Light.[296] It is in this vein that Jesus announces:

> I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. (Revelation 2:13)

Apparently, some of the Jews as well as the Gentiles were involved in fables of the gods and goddesses of their culture. Harold R. Willoughby commented on this particular church in his book about pagan gods:

> The author of Acts, in a vivid scene, reflected the pride of Ephesus to be the "temple-keeper" for Artemis (Acts 19:23 ff.), and the Christian prophet of the Apocalypse, in his bitter words about

[296]For an excellent overview of the gods and goddesses in the world of Paul, see Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971, 1974), 222-252.

"Satan's throne," rebuked the satisfaction that the Pergamenes took in the great altar of Zeus (Rev. 2:12 ff.). Typically the gods of Greece continued to function as municipal saviors for cities widely scattered over the eastern half of the Mediterranean world, older local divinities frequently adopting the names and symbols of the Olympians. Altogether a greater vitality must be granted to established cults in their communal functioning than is usually allowed.[297]

Ralph E. Bass Jr. also calls notice to Pergamum being a hot-bed for pagan temples and worship of many gods. His comments also shed additional light upon the myths of the Gentiles as well as the myths of many Jews. He jots down the following informative comments:

Pergamum was noted for its many pagan temples. Where most communities had one major temple, at Pergamum there were temples to Zeus, Minerva, Apollo [**Ἀπόλλων**, *Apollōn*], Venus, Bacchus [**Βάκχος**, *Bakchos*], and Aesculapius [**Ἀσκληπιός**, *Asklēpios*]. The latter was the god of healing, and we get the medical emblem of a snake on a pole from this ancient cult. In addition, as early as 29 BC there was a temple there to worship the Roman Emperor Augustus. As a result emperor worship was particularly prevalent in this community. It is to these many temples that the phrase Satan's throne (Rev. 2:13) has reference.[298]

Jesus issues a stinging rebuke to the church in Pergamum. He speaks of Satan's throne as well as their holding to the teachings of Balaam and the teachings of the Nicolaitans. Listen to Jesus as He issues His call to repentance:

I know where you live—where **Satan has his throne**. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. [14] Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: **You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.** [15] Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. [16] Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:13-16)

The Deep Secrets of Satan

The fourth church (Thyatira) that Jesus addressed also received a rebuke for allowing a woman to teach the "**so-called deep secrets of Satan**" (2:24). What were the "deep secrets of Satan"? One can only surmise that the gods and goddesses were a part of the "deep secrets of Satan" as well as sexual immorality practiced by some in this congregation. Once more, we need to pay attention to the problems that Jesus focused on in His letter to Thyatira:

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she **misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.** [21] I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. [22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. [23] I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your

[297]Harold R. Willoughby, *Pagan Regeneration: A Study of Mystery Initiations in the Graeco-Roman World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929, 1960), 14.

[298]Ralph E. Bass, Jr., *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation* (Greenville, SC: Living Hope Press, 2004), 115.

deeds. [24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned **Satan's so-called deep secrets**. (Revelation 2:20-24)

This particular woman misled God's people into "sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols." Some had refused to become involved in "Satan's so-called deep secrets." Over again, Jesus speaks of the "synagogue of Satan" in His letter to the church in Philadelphia:

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. [9] I will make those who are of the **synagogue of Satan**, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. [10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. (3:8-10)

The Book of Revelation is quite revealing concerning the use of sorcery (**φάρμακος**, *pharmakos*, "one who practices magic or witchcraft") in Jerusalem as well as in the province of Asia Minor. Jesus spoke of the church in Thyatira as holding to teachings that He equated with "Satan's so-called deep secrets" (2:24). To the congregation in Philadelphia, He spoke out against those who were of the "synagogue of Satan" (3:9). He then called those who claimed that they were Jews, but, in reality, He said that they were not and were liars. Some members of the church in Pergamum were holding to the "teaching of Balaam," which teaching involved "eating food sacrificed to idols" and "committing sexual immorality." Jesus addressed these sinful issues to the churches in Asia, but He also addressed the heinous crime of sorcery, or magic. The old heaven and earth (Jerusalem/Judaism) passed away in AD 70 for its rejection of its Messiah.[299] In the closing of this book, Jesus lists sorcery/magic as one of their sins. John writes the following words of Jesus:

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts [**φαρμαμοῖς**, *pharmamois*, "sorcerers"], the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

As Jesus concludes His Apocalyptic disclosure to the Christians living in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, he lists practice of magic along with male prostitutes, fornicators, murderers, idolaters, and those loving and making lies.[300] Again, we listen to Jesus' castigation of certain unethical behavior:

Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts [**φαρμακοί**, *pharmakoi*, "sorcerers"], the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (22:15)

A **φάρμακος** (*pharmakos*) is one who practices magic or witchcraft. Practicing magic is placed on the same level as one who worships demons, one who steals, one who commits murder, and one who engages in sexual immorality. Once more, we tune in to the opening of the seventh seal, which seal unfolds the final overthrow of apostate Israel with the sounding of the seven trumpets (Revelation 8). With the sounding of the sixth trumpet, John paints a rather dismal picture of unrepentant souls. He enumerates some of their crimes:

[299]For a detailed study of the old heaven and the old earth, see Dallas Burdette, "A New Heaven and A New Earth," in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from Psalms ● Revelation ● Hebrews* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2010), 257-302.

[300]For a detailed study of the last days, see Dallas Burdette, "Last Days in the Old and New Testaments, Ibid., 303-337.

> The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. [21] Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts [**ἐκ τῶν φαρμακειῶν**, *ek tōn pharmakeiōn*, "of their sorceries"], their sexual immorality or their thefts. (9:20-21)

Chapter 18 of the Book of Revelation reveals the final overthrow of Babylon, which is none other than Jerusalem that had become apostate. Instead of reaching out to the Gentiles, she had seduced the nations through her ungodly acts, which acts are about to be punished with the total overthrow of Jerusalem (AD 70). What is significant is her involvement in the practice of magic, which many Jews were guilty of. Listen to the fateful words of the Lord:

> Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.' " [21] Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. [2]The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. [23]The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray [**ὅτι ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐπλανήθησαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη**, *hoti en tē pharmakeia sou eplanēthēsan panta ta ethnē*, "because of your **sorcery** all the nations were deceived"]. [24]In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth." (18:20-24)[301]

Apparently, many Jews were involved in magic. We can understand more clearly why Paul had to issue an injunction against the women teaching in Ephesus. When Paul wrote to the churches in the province of Galatia, he had to deal with magic—a practice that would forfeit eternal life. Listen to Paul as he lists certain practices that must go:

> The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; [20] idolatry and **witchcraft** [**φαρμακεία**, *pharmakeia*, "sorcery/magic"]; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions [21] and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

C. E. Arnold's comments are extremely helpful in trying to grasp the problems that the early church had to combat in the ancient world of paganism. He writes:

> **1. Nature and Characteristics**.
>
> Magic presupposed the existence of thousands of spirits—good and evil—involved in the affairs of day-to-day life. These spirits were thought of as gods and goddesses (e.g., Hermes, *angeloi, paredroi*), spirits of the untimely dead (*biaiothanatoi*), astral spirits, underworld spirits or various kinds of chthonic, or terrestrial spirits (*see* Religions). **The practice of magic also assumed a system of inner connections between physical objects in the universe**. An action performed on one object

[301]See Don K. Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2006) for an excellent overview of the Book of Revelation with evidence to show that the Babylon of Revelation 18 is none other than Jerusalem. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wishes to study the Book of Revelation in context.

was thought to have a corresponding impact on another (the principle of sympathy and antipathy).[302] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

The tales, or fables, about their gods and goddesses contradicted the Gospel of God. Apparently, sexual immorality was widespread as well as the custom of frequenting the various temples of the many gods and goddesses in Ephesus. These particular women, like the woman teacher in Thyatira, were forbidden to teach because they did not understand that there is only one God and one mediator between God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). They, like Eve, turned aside to Satan (1 Timothy 5:15). These women, too, in Ephesus, had turned aside to Satan. Many of these women failed to discard their stories about their gods and goddesses along with the practice of their magic. Again, Arnold's interpretation is informative and on target in dealing with magic, which beliefs discounted the One true God and the One Lord Jesus Christ. He declares: "In the ancient world magic was a method of harnessing supernatural power to gain protection from evil spirits or to obtain what one desired."[303]

The next chapter (Chapter8) will develop the prevalence of the gods and goddesses throughout the various cities that Paul traveled to in his missionary journeys as well as some of the churches addressed in the Book of Revelation. This study will help us to focus upon the pagan conditions that existed throughout the Roman Empire, which state of affairs occasioned Paul's negative reactions to the women taking the lead in the city of Ephesus. All of this background will prepare to analyze 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

Chapter 8 will also examine the significance of Paul's introduction of Eve into his prohibition of women from teaching. Just a perusal of his comments about Eve's deception should open the door for Paul's remarks in his two letters to Timothy concerning the deception of women in Ephesus. When we study Eve's deception by Satan, we see the parallel in reference to the deception that many of the women in Ephesus were also experiencing (1 Timothy 2:13-14). God provided a way of redemption for Eve as well as the women in Ephesus—the Incarnation promised in Genesis 3:15. Chapter 8 will also seek to unravel the enigmatic saying concerning "the childbirth" with its emphasis upon salvation (1 Timothy 2:15).

[302]C. E. Arnold, "Magic and Astrology," in Ralph P. Martin & Peter H. Davids, editors, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downer Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 701. This article is an excellent overview of magic and astrology in the New Testament writings.

[303]Ibid.

8

I Suffer Not a Woman To Teach: Saved through Childbearing

Part 3 of 3

> All readers of the Bible have a tendency to view what it says through their own culture and life circumstances. This can happen almost subconsciously as we read the pages of the text…. No doubt there is a need in the church for learning more about the world of the New Testament to avoid erroneous interpretations of the text of Scripture.[304]

As we seek to unravel the negative statements about women in Paul's two letters to Timothy, we need to examine the religious climate within the province of Asia Minor, which examination should include the letters of Jesus to the seven churches addressed in Asia. The historical context of first and second Timothy should help us to understand why Paul issued his injunction against women taking an active role in teaching. We have stressed four kinds of context that must be consulted in order to try to arrive at the intent of the author. The "larger context," as well as the "cultural context," is an extremely important context that must be consulted for a more accurate reading of the Pastoral Epistles. The "larger context" includes books outside of the book under scrutiny for clarity, intelligibility, and transparency. For this reason, we need to inspect the various messages of Jesus to the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation, which study should cast illumination upon Paul's letters to Timothy.

EPHESUS

> Scripture wasn't written as a sourcebook of prooftexts for twentieth century theological debaters. It was written as a detailed, integrated statement of the coming of God's grace to men and women living in a fallen antagonistic world. Although our understanding of most verses is generally correct without the historical background, knowing something about the history of the problems they address adds greater depth to their meanings. As we look at specific problem passages in both Testaments, we'll see that a knowledge of history removes many problems. But it's not just a problem-solving device. Knowledge of history is a learning tool we can use to come to a greater appreciation of the ways of the Author of history.[305]

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[304]Clinton E. Arnold, general editor, "Introduction," in Clinton E. Arnold, Frank S. Thielman, and S. M. Baugh, general editors, Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), vi.

[305]David E. O'Brien, *Today's Handbook for Solving Bible Difficulties* (Minneapolis, MN: David E. O'Brien, 1990), 30.

Prior to Jesus addressing His letters to the Christians in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, He makes a startling statement that would astonish the pagans with their gods and goddesses. Jesus tells John:

> Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17b)

In the prologue to the Book of Revelation, Jesus asserts His eternity and His supremacy over the so-called gods. Also, in the epilogue to His "revelation" concerning the final overthrow of apostate Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, He, once more, stresses His eternity. Listen to Jesus as He concludes this prophecy:

> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (22:13)

Jesus takes on the titles that God announced to Isaiah (739 BC) about Himself. Isaiah records the words of God: "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). Just a casual reading of this context, we see that God is contrasting Himself with idols, which in essence are no gods at all. Surely, Jesus' statement about Himself sets the stage for His letters to the churches of Asia in which He deals with unethical behavior associated with their numerous gods and goddesses. **The city of Ephesus worshiped up to fifty gods and goddesses**. Behind the seven letters written to seven churches in Asia Minor, we gather tremendous background information for understanding the Pastoral Epistles. Jesus' statement about Himself called into question the reality of their gods and goddesses. Pay attention, once more, to God's remarks, in the Book of Isaiah, concerning Himself as the First and the Last:

> This is what the LORD says—"Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the **first** and I am the **last**; apart from me there is no God. 7Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come." (Isaiah 44:6-7)

Following God's announcement about His being the "first" and the "last," He immediately draws a distinction between Himself and the idols of paganism. We cannot read Jesus' statement in Revelation 1:17b and 22:13 without a consciousness that Jesus, too, is contrasting Himself with the gods and goddesses of the ancient world. Isaiah continues the words of God as He draws a contrast between Himself and the gods of the pagans, which in essence are not gods:

> Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one." 9All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. 10Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing? 11He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and infamy. 12The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. 13The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. 14He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. 15It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. 16Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the

fire." [17]From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god." [18]They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. [19]No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" [20]He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?" (Isaiah 44:8-20)

Jesus' statement about Himself repudiates any trust in the pagan gods and goddesses of the ancient world. Richard Bauckham's remarks on this unique title chosen by God the Father and God the Son is on target. He writes:

> The designation encapsulates the understanding of the God of Israel as the sole Creator of all things and sovereign Lord of history, which Deutero-Isaiah so magnificently expounds and asserts polemically against the idols of Babylon. Unlike human-made gods, this God is the utterly incomparable One, to whom all nations are subject, whose purpose none can frustrate…. Hence the unique importance of the designation: 'the Alpha and the Omega'. God precedes all things, as their Creator, and he will bring all things to eschatological fulfillment.[306]

Chapter 1 of the Book of Revelation sets forth the omnipotence and omnipresence of Jesus as God. All the churches of Asia were recipients of Christ's declaration of Himself. We cannot help but wonder how the city of Ephesus reacted to this teaching by the church. The city of Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. **The population of the city numbered about 250,000 residents. Ephesus was also known as temple keeper of the goddess Artemis**. Luke writes:

> The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian [temple keeper or temple warden] of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? (Acts 19:35)

Ephesus regarded herself as the temple keeper of "the great Artemis and of her image." As noted earlier, this temple was the largest religious structure in the ancient world—**425' long by 220' wide feet.** Mark W. Wilson's comments about the worship of Artemis is informative and worth citing:

> Although the worship of Artemis is not mentioned specifically in Revelation, it remained an opponent of Christianity in the city until the temple's destruction by the Goths in about A.D. 262. At least fourteen other deities have been identified with temples in first-century Ephesus. The Ephesian Christians therefore had an ongoing struggle with the pervasive paganism in their city.[307] (Emphasis mine)

After approximately three years' ministry in Ephesus, Paul made another tour to Macedonia as well as to Corinth. Upon his return to Antioch of Syria, he stopped at Miletus (30 miles due south of Ephesus) and requested the elders of Ephesus to join him. After their arrival, he warned them of false teachers who would worm their way into the fellowship. Luke reveals the words of Paul to these leaders in his early history of the new community of God. He pens the following warning:

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[306]Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 2009), 27.

[307]Mark W. Wilson, *Revelation*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Clinton E. Arnold, general editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 18.

Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. [26] Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. [27] For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. [28] Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. [29] I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. [30] Even from your own number men [**ἄνδρες**, *Andres*] will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. [31] So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Act 20:25-31)

When Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians, he had to deal with the philosophy of the "Nicolaitans," which teaching, apparently, advanced the eating of food sacrificed to idols and the practice of sexual immorality. Paul stressed that there is only "one God" and "one Lord," and "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3-7). At the time Paul sent his Epistle to the saints in Ephesus, many had not yet fully understood the "mystery" of God. Paul writes:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. [18] I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, [20] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21] far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22] And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (1:17-23)

It appears that many believers did not possess "**full knowledge**" of Jesus. Paul's letter to Timothy also calls attention to some of the problems in the metropolitan city. Once more, take note to Paul as he calls awareness to the prevalence of paganism within the Body of Christ:

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men **not to teach false doctrines any longer** [4] **nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies**. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. [2] Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. [3] They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. [4] For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, [5] because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. [6] If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. [7] **Have nothing to do with godless myths** and **old wives' tales**; *rather, train yourself to be godly*. (4:1-7)

Paul sought to combat "**godless myths**" and "**old wives' tales**." In his Ephesian Epistle, he also wanted to combat illegal behavior (4:17—5:21). At the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, there were some in the church at Ephesus who opposed the teachings of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6). Yet, this practice, or conduct, was not condemned by some of the believers in Pergamum (2:15). Jesus' letter reads:

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. [13] I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. [14] Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. [15] Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans [Balaam]. [16] Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (2:12-16)

Pergamum is listed as number three in the list of the seven churches. Pergamum is about fifteen miles inland from the Aegean coast and about seventy miles north of Smyrna. The population for Pergamum in the first century is estimated to be about 150,000. In the city of Pergamum, we see a city that had at least four patron deities. Mark Wilson calls attention to these four:

> Its four patron deities were Zeus, Athena, Dionysus, and Asclepius, all of whom appear on the city's coinage. The temple to Athena Nikephoros ("Victory-Bearer") was the most important in the city. These temples were situated on a spectacular acropolis that towered a thousand feet over the lower city. Also located on the acropolis was the city's famous library, which totaled over 200,000 volumes, the second largest in antiquity after Alexandria.[308]

Jesus goes right to the heart of their mythological gods and goddesses in their city. In fact, He says, "I know where you live—where Satan has his throne" (2:13). Surely, this city was a city in which Satan lived (2:13). Their four patron deities were opposed to the Christ of biblical prophecy. As cited above, we observed that the church in Pergamum was involved in eating food sacrificed to idols as well as practicing sexual immorality" (2:14). These remarks were prefaced with the following comments: "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin" (2:14). This history is found in the Book of Numbers (Chapters 23—25). Moses records God's judgment upon their actions:

While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, [2] who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. [3] So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor [pēʾôr]. And the LORD's anger burned against them. (Numbers 25:1-3)

Peter calls attention to the activities of Balaam (2 Peter 2:15). He, too, zeroes in on the mythological gods and goddesses by referring to them as "cleverly invented stories" (1:16). In addition to his rebuke of the myths, he also addresses immoral behavior, which is what Paul dealt with in his two letters to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:11-13; 2 Timothy 3:1-7). Peter writes to five different provinces, one of which is Asia. He pens the following words:

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. [14] With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! [15] They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. [16] But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:13-16)

[308]Ibid., 24.

Our Lord's brother, Jude, also focused upon "Balaam's error," which also included sexual immorality.

Jude 4	Jude 10-11
For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.	Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion

The fourth church addressed (Thyatira) also had members who still clung to their membership in pagan associations. This church is known for its woman teacher whom Jesus assigned the notorious name Jezebel (Revelation 2:20). This name recalls Old Testament background just as the name Balaam in the Pergamum church. Jezebel, the queen of Israel, was condemned by Elijah for her idolatrous worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:31—21:25). God did not condemn her (Jezebel in Thyatira) for teaching, but He did condemn her for "what" she was teaching. Listen to Jesus as He addresses the problem of syncretism:

> Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. **By her teaching** she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. [21] I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. (Revelation 2:20-21)

Jesus gave her time to repent of "what" she was teaching. The letters to the seven churches in Asia set the background for Paul's negative statements about the role of leadership in the Ephesian congregation. Not only did Jesus rebuke the church in Thyatira, but He also castigated the believers who had accepted the Balaam philosophy, His warning also gave notice to other churches not to follow this kind of behavior. Again, we need to zero in on the words of Christ:

> I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. [24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): [25] Only hold on to what you have until I come. (2:23-25)

The "so-called deep secrets" of Satan (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ, *ta bathea tou satana*, "the deep things of Satan"), no doubt, refers to the esoteric teachings that emphasized acquiring knowledge of the mystery religions of the ancient world, that is to say, their mythological stories, or "old-womanish tales." It is possible that the "so-called deep secrets" of Satan also involved magic. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians sought to unfold the true "mystery" of God, namely, Christ.[309] Just a casual reading of the churches in Asia reveals the sordid conditions existing within the various congregations. The fifth church (Sardis) had a few people who had not soiled her garments with the gods and goddesses of paganism (3:4). Sardis was located about thirty-five miles southeast of

[309]For an in-depth study of the "mystery," see Dallas Burdette, "Overview of the Book of Ephesians," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 281-298.

Thyatira and sixty miles east of Smyrna. According to John Griffiths Pedley, a temple to Artemis was built in Sardis.[310] Once more, if we are to grasp the teaching of any Scripture, we should know something about the religious practices prevalent within the city to whom the Epistle was sent. It is in this vein that Heiser is on target as he seeks to alert the reader concerning the historical or cultural context:

> It's important to know what's going on religiously in the wider world other than just Israel because in some contexts, some passages, **a biblical writer is going to be sort of digging or referring back to or doing something to draw attention to the practices or beliefs of the wider ancient Near Eastern world**. You're only going to understand what the biblical writer is getting at when you understand that religious context. All[311] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

When we read the letter sent to the Christians in Philadelphia, do we know anything about the cultural context within that city? Yes, the seventh church in Asia (Philadelphia) also had "**cultic altars for at least ten gods and goddesses in the city**."[312] The geographical location of Philadelphia is about thirty miles southeast of Sardis. Jesus also referred to the "synagogue of Satan" (3:9), which may indicate persecution from the Jews, especially when they claim to be Jews, but are not (3:9). We can hardly read 3:12 concerning those who overcame persecution without reflection upon the temples of the pagan gods and goddesses. In Ephesus, the temple of Artemis appeared on many coins showing eight pillars that fronted the temple. Jesus took this imagery and applied this to those who overcame persecution: "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God" (3:12).

The last of the seven churches is none other than Laodicea. This city was situated forty miles southeast of Philadelphia. This church was "barren and ineffective."[313] When we read about these seven churches in Asia with their temples and sexual immorality, we cannot disconnect the letters of Paul to Timothy without serious harm to a proper interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Also, the Book of Ephesians provides background information that will assist a proper interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles. Paul had to issue an injunction against these women from taking a lead in the teaching of God's people. In Paul's last letter to Timothy, he asserted that the women lacked a full knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what He came to accomplish for sinful humanity. We should tune our ears to hear what Paul told Timothy:

> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. [2] People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, [4] treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— [5] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. [6] They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, [7] always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

These women were "loaded down with sins and were swayed by all kinds of evil desires." Both Peter and Jude, as cited above, called attention to this kind of immoral behavior. In addition to sexual immorality, Paul states emphatically that these particular women were "never able to acknowledge the truth." Apparently, they failed to understand that there is only "one mediator" between God and humanity. Paul writes about this subject before issuing his injunction against these particular women: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given

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[310]John Griffiths Pedley, "Sardis," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief, 6 Volumes (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:984.

[311]Michael S. Heiser, ed., *BI101 Introducing Biblical Interpretation: Contexts and Resources* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013).

[312]Mark W. Wilson, *Revelation*, 32.

[313]Ibid., 34.

in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Again, he focuses in on the One who gave himself as a ransom for all men, which response repudiates the "old-womanish tales" circulating throughout the province of Asia. Again, we need to tune in to Paul as he seeks to remove the rubbish of paganism and go right to the heart of God's Gospel:

> Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Immediately following Paul's restriction concerning women, he alluded to the virgin birth of Jesus: "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (2:15). The definite article is left out in the NIV translation, which is also true with many other translations. This omission, in my judgment, is based on a failure to examine the tenor of the two letters sent to Timothy. The Greek text reads "But she will be saved through the childbirth" [**σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας**, *sōthēsetai de dia tēs teknogonias*] (1 Timothy 2:15). "She will be saved" is a future passive third person singular, which is from the Greek word **σῴζω** (*sōzō*, "rescue, liberate, keep from harm"). The future passive (she shall be saved) is used in reference to Eve. The previous verse reads: "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (2:14). Right away, upon the rupture of the Eve's relationship with God, He, immediately, foretold the means of her salvation—the coming Son of God.[314]

Just as Eve was deceived by Satan, Paul, too, grapples with the deception of the women in Ephesus who had also turned aside to Satan (5:15). Their salvation as well as Eve's salvation depended upon her "offspring" (seed). Prior to Paul's statement about "the childbirth," he reminded, as cited above, the Ephesians: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (2:5). Shortly after his statement concerning "the coming One," he explained this "mystery." He writes:

> Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (3:16)

Both letters of Paul to Timothy are dealing with the Gospel. Paul zeros in on the very heart of God's means of justification for all humanity. He tells Timothy:

> So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time**, [10] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [11] And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. (2 Timothy 1:8-11)

Again, Paul focuses on his Gospel, which Gospel is none other than the promised seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15. Paul removes all underbrush and goes right to the heart of the matter:

> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, [9] for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not

[314]The most exhaustive treatment of 2 Timothy 2:14-15 that I have read is found in Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 399-441.

chained. [10] Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2:8-10)

God announced the birth of "the childbirth" through whom all humanity would be saved. **We can say that Christianity had a birth before its birth.** Paul told the Ephesians that this salvation in Christ existed before the creation of the world:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [4] For he chose us **in him** **before the creation of the world** to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love [5] he predestined us to be adopted as his sons **through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will— [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. [7] **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace [8] that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. [9] And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed **in Christ**, [10] to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [11] **In him** we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, [12] in order that we, who were the first to hope **in Christ**, might be for the praise of his glory. [13] And you also were included **in Christ** when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:3-14)

First Timothy 2:14-15 deals with Genesis 3:15. The following comments about the woman's seed explain Eve's salvation as well as the salvation for the women who were deceived in Ephesus.

GENESIS 3:15

Seed of the Woman

Just a casual glance of the Book of Genesis reveals the early rays of messianic glory foretold by Moses as he begins telling the story of creation by the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and eternal God. He begins this Book with a glorious statement about creation that is sublime and almost beyond human comprehension: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). After Adam's and Eve's creation and their being placed in the Garden of Eden, Satan (the adversary), the great enemy of God and humanity, wrenched from Adam and Eve their great heritage. In spite of the darkness that came over this couple, God did not leave them without hope of deliverance from their fallen state (3:15). God spoke to the serpent and said:

Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. [15]And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and hers; he will crush (strike) your head, and you will strike his heel." (3:14-15)

This prophecy, the first in God's written Revelation, sets before the human race the outcome of the conflict between Satan and God—ultimate victory for those who put their trust in Christ ("her seed" = the Seed of the woman). The Seed of the woman will eventually crush the serpent's head, even though the serpent will bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman by crucifixion. The unique expression employed by God, "the seed of the woman," or "her seed" never occurs anywhere else in all of Scripture. This expression is very striking. In biblical narrative, posterity is always reckoned after the male, never after the female.

Thus, Genesis 3:15 sets the goal toward which all history is moving—the coming of Jesus the Messiah. God announces this great event in a cryptic oracle. In this cosmic battle there would be enmity between Satan's seed your seed) and Eve's seed (her seed). Immediately, after stating the enmity between the two seeds, God says, "he will crush you (your) head" that is, the Seed of the woman would inflict a mortal blow to Satan. Moses does not stop with Genesis 3:15 concerning the coming of the Messiah, but he continues to give other prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah to redeem humanity to God the Father as he writes, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, about the promise made to Abraham.

GENESIS 22:18

Seed of Abraham: Jesus the Savior of the World

Men and women cannot remove the curse placed by God upon sinful humanity; only God Himself provides the remedy. God ordained this feat through the One foreordained before the earth was created (see Ephesians 1:4). Jesus was appointed to remove this curse of universal judgment of condemnation. It is in this same vein that Paul unfolds God's scheme of redemption to the Corinthians:

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who **reconciled us to himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21] **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 7 5:17-21)

The only way God could reconcile us unto Himself would have to be through Christ who is God's power as well as God's wisdom. Paul explained this in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (AD 65) the power of God as well as the wisdom of God [1 Corinthians 1:24]. Pay attention to Paul as he explains Christ as the only means of salvation:

> Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [21] For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of **what** was preached to save those who believe. [22] Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, [23] but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24] but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. (1 Corinthians 1:20-24)

The foolishness of **WHAT** was preached **was Christ** as God's power and God's wisdom. Paul explains **God's power** and **God's wisdom** as being His Son, who is Christ. Again, we should tune in our ears as Paul declares God's wisdom:

> It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, **who has become for us wisdom from God**—that is, **our righteousness**, **holiness** and **redemption**. [31] Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1:30-31)

What is God's wisdom? Paul writes that God's wisdom had to do with Christ. In other words, the only way God could justify sinful humanity was to make Christ our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption. God took the initiative, which wisdom was in effect even before He spoke this universe into existence. Once more, Paul unfolds this mystery in his Epistle to the Christians in Rome:

But now a **righteousness from God**, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22] This **righteousness from God** comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25] **God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement**, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— [26] he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

Down through the centuries, we witness a thread, as it were, of the coming of the Messiah. God preserved a remnant through which the Messiah should come. From Adam to Noah, God continued to protect this promise made in the Garden of Eden. From Shem, one of the three sons of Noah, God preserved the moral, spiritual, and religious realm.[315] **Shem was the one through whom the "seed of the woman" would be preserved. It was from the Semitic branch of the race that Abraham sprang**. To him (Abraham—2166-1991 BC), God gave the promise that through his seed (seed, descendant) all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). This promise was made three times to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Later, God confirmed this promise to Isaac [2066-1886 BC] (26:4) and reaffirmed to Jacob [2006-1859 BC] (28:14). The following is a citation from Moses (1526-1406 BC) concerning the promise (covenant) that God made with Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. [2] I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**." (12:1-3)

The promise is more specific in 22:18. In this passage, God speaks of the "seed" of Abraham. Moses writes about God's prophetic utterance to Abraham, which is also reminiscent of God's cryptic oracle to Satan. Listen to the words of God: "In your seed [by your seed] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (22:18, NKJV). In other words, God foretold that He would bless all the nations of the earth through one of his offspring. It is through this particular seed (offspring) that salvation, or blessing, would come to all who have faith in this Seed. This interpretation also coincides with Paul's words to the Galatians[316] about the announcement of the Gospel to Abraham:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would **justify the Gentiles by faith**, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." [9]So then **those who *are* of faith** are blessed with believing Abraham. (Galatians 3:8-9)

This citation from Galatians 3:8-9 is reminiscent of Genesis 15:1-3 and 18:18. The only way a nation can bless itself is through the "Seed" of Abraham, which is Christ. Two thousand years after this promise was made to Abraham, a Jewish convert (Saul/Paul) wrote to the Christians in the province of Galatia the following comments about God's promise to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 22:18:

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[315]Noah's father was Lamech (lived 777 years); Noah's grandfather was Methuselah (lived 969 years); Noah's great grandfather was Enoch (365 years old). God took Enoch without his having to taste death—"He walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Genesis 5:24). Noah lived 950 years. He was 500 years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32).

[316]For further studies on Galatians, see Dallas Burdette, "Overview of the Book of Galatians," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 299-343.

Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. [16] The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds" meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. [17] What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. [18] For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Galatians 3:15-18)

Paul, apparently, cites the Septuagint (LXX, "Greek Old Testament"), which reads: "in the seed of you". The LXX is the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Like the English word *seed*, the Hebrew word *seed* may be employed as a singular noun or be utilized in a collective sense. The context is the deciding factor in interpretation. For example, the collective sense appears in the following Scripture citations: (1) "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants (זֶרַע, *zĕ·rāʿ*)[317] also could be numbered" (Genesis 13:16); (2) "Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants (זַרְעֲךָ, *zăr·ʿăḵā,* "your seed") will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years' (15:13); and (3) "Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants (*zăr·ʿăḵā*, "your seed") as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants (*zăr·ʿăḵā*, "your seed") shall possess the gate of their enemies" (22:17). Even though the singular "seed" is used, nevertheless, the collective sense is obvious.

On the other hand, there are examples in which the Hebrew word *seed* (זֶרַע, *zĕ·rāʿ*) is singular in meaning. For instance, Moses gives Adam's statement: "God has granted me another child ((זֶרַע, *zĕ·rāʿ*) seed) in place of Abel, since Cain killed him" (4:25). Again, we observe the Hebrew word *seed* employed in Hannah's prayer to the Lord for a son:

And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son (literally, seed of men), then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." (1 Samuel 1:11)

Once more, we observe that the Hebrew word זֶרַע, (*zĕ·rāʿ*, "seed") is also translated "son" in 1 Samuel 1:11. Since the word *zĕ·rāʿ* has both individual and collective meanings, it is necessary to examine each context in order to ascertain its significance in any given case. The use of the word *zĕ·rāʿ* in Genesis 22:18 has its primary meaning in that of an individual of the race who would bring universal blessing and relief from the curse of universal condemnation. It appears, so it seems, that this promise to Abraham is but an expansion of the cryptic oracle in Genesis 3:15. The cryptic oracle in Genesis 3:15 and the promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 are but fragments (progressive revelations) of that "mystery" that Paul wrote about in Ephesians (AD 60):

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3] that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. [4]In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [6] This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:2-6)

[317]Noun, masculine singular construct with second person masculine singular.

CONCLUSION

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 have sought to put Paul's comments about women in context in order to help eliminate confusion over the role of women within the Christian community. Without examining the various contexts (**immediate**, **remote**, **larger**, and **cultural**), we will draw conclusions that are not accurate. We need to be like detectives in our search for greater apprehension of the sacred writers. We need to go wherever the evidence leads—even if the evidence goes against sacred traditions from the forefathers.

Because of the seriousness of the spiritual climate in Ephesus, numerous women had been deceived by certain persons. Apparently, these women were going about from house to house telling their mythological stories about their gods and goddesses as well as practicing magic. Sorry to say, many of these women were engaging in sexual immorality and participating in festivities in the temples of the gods and goddesses. Paul, in his final farewell to Timothy, called attention to the seriousness of the problem with the women:

> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. [2] People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, [4] treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— [5] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. [6] They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, [7] always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

After issuing this caveat, he, once more, drew attention to the mythological stories versus the Word itself. Again, he warns:

> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: [2] **Preach the Word**; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. [3] For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. [5] But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (4:1-5)[318]

As we conclude this study about mythology that Paul had to combat in Ephesus, we cite from Claire O'Neal's informative book dealing with Artemis and mythology.

Ancient Greek Religion

> The story of the ill-fated Actaeon [AK-tee-on] is a myth—meaning "story," "word," or even "speech"—told by ancient Greeks to describe the gods and goddesses of their religion. Greek religion was based upon many myths that sought to explain the mysteries of nature and life. In myth, gods had supernatural powers that caused natural events such as a sunrise or an earthquake. Gods also ruled the human body and mind. They were responsible for birth and death and for human emotions, especially love. Ancient Greek religion is no longer practiced, but people can study it today because the writings of its practitioners survive, and the myths continue to influence Western thought and culture. Myths also give us an opportunity to understand the culture and values of ancient Greece.

[318]See also Dallas Burdette, "The Role of Women in the Great Commission," in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts Through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 234-250. See also Dallas Burdette, "Literalism and Isolationism of Scripture," Ibid., 251-273.

No single book exists that records every Greek myth, because myths were developed piecemeal over a long period of time. Before Greek writing evolved in the eight century BC, myths were passed along through storytellers. Starting in the 700s BC, the Greek poet Homer wrote down some of the most influential stories. Others writers followed, each usually telling a myth a little differently. This variety sometimes complicated the stories, but the plots and major characters stayed mostly the same, giving all Greeks a communal knowledge of important myths.

There are literally hundreds of characters in Greek mythology, but most myths involve one or more of the twelve Olympians. These most powerful gods and goddesses were so called because they were thought to live atop Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. The Actaeon myth tells us about the goddess Artemis, a major player in the Greek pantheon.[319]

[319]Claire O'Neal, *Artemis: Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology* (Hockessin, Delaware: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2008), 9-10. This book is brief and concise, but it is extremely well-written.

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