

Paul and Gender

Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision
for Men and Women in Christ



CYNTHIA LONG WESTFALL



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To those who are ready to accept
a paradigm shift from God:
May you find a reason to believe.

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Preface

This book is an attempt to explain the Pauline passages that concern gender and to move toward a canon-based Pauline theology of gender. The passages concerning gender that are in the Pauline canon will be taken into account and interpreted according to the texts' terms and claims—that is, biblical texts that claim to be written by Paul demand that they should interpret, and be interpreted by, the other writings that claim to be by Paul. These texts also place themselves within certain contexts, including the narrative of Paul's life, so that they may be read in those contexts. There are five priorities that guide the interpretation and canonical theology:

1. The results will attempt to be faithful to the texts and contexts in the Pauline corpus.
2. The interpretations will seek to be intelligible within a reconstruction of the narrative of Paul's life.
3. The specific interpretations will attempt to be understandable within the context of language, culture, and situation in which the texts place themselves.
4. The interpretations will strive to be coherent within the general context of Pauline theology if possible, given the text, context, language, and culture.
5. Contemporary theological constructs and applications should strive to be consistent and coherent with an interpreter's contemporary (biblical) worldview.

While it is acknowledged that dissonance, incoherence, inconsistency, and changes in thought are possible within any writer or speaker's collected work (contested or uncontested), if there is a coherent and relevant interpretive choice available that effectively lies within these five guidelines, that choice is preferable. In the case of the Pauline corpus, coherence and consistency with Paul's teaching and other apostolic teaching were transparent criteria for selection and inclusion in the canon.

Most studies that claim to be about Paul and gender or about gender and the Bible are really about the role of women in the church, home, and society. While women's issues are of central interest and clearly render this study timely and relevant, I take the position that the Pauline passages on women cannot be adequately understood or applied apart from a corresponding understanding of the Pauline passages on men. Furthermore (as stated above), passages on men and women must be understood and coherent within Pauline theology as a whole, and particularly in the passages and letters in which the texts are embedded. Finally, as I contend in this study, the Pauline texts address men's issues in the church, home, and society that are also of grave importance and relevance.

I wrote this book for four reasons. First, gender issues were important for Paul, and they continue to be important in the life of faith and the academy, particularly within the context of Western culture in the twenty-first century. Diligent work on a biblical and a systematic theology of gender needs to continue as a priority in the academy. Applications in denominations, local churches, and the home need to be placed under an informed biblical scrutiny and accountability. This discussion should not be cut short or settled by authoritative statements, political strategies, or the popular influence of conferences, charismatic speakers, or internet blogging. We have barely begun to scratch the surface of issues that concern humanity as male and female, issues that may well be as complex as the theology of the Trinity or the theology of the relationship between the human and divine in the person of Christ. Its complexity demands commensurate effort.

Second, I had acquired a new set of perspectives and methodological lenses with which to study the issues, not the least of which was modern linguistics. I predicted that I would be able to make a unique contribution to the discussion if I reexamined the texts within the contexts in which language is understood, particularly by studying the effect of context, genre, and register on meaning. I combined these new perspectives with an ongoing interest and specialization in history.

Third, a clear understanding of the issues and a conviction about how these passages may be interpreted and applied is essential for me to function

with integrity in the classroom, the academy, and the church. A woman in biblical studies who teaches in a seminary context, participates in a variety of forums in the academy, and functions in a local church cannot easily dodge the issue of Paul and gender; that issue is always the elephant in the room, and it is imperative to understand the dynamics at play and to serve with necessary conviction.

Fourth, I would like to make the way forward easier for others and particularly the next generation. This has been a controversial topic, with serious implications and consequences: social, political, and religious structures and use of power are at play; men have lost their positions and/or their reputation, whatever their view; and it is relevant for addressing the misogyny, abuse, discrimination, and pressure at various levels that are practiced against women globally and sometimes in faith contexts. At my stage of life and with my circumstances, I judge that I am in a position to take risks and pay whatever price is demanded to clear obstacles and make the paths hopefully straighter for those who come after me.

With this study, I hope to have something of value to offer various target groups. I intend to make a contribution to the academic discussion on gender that stands apart from considerations of faith and practice. I aim to help biblical interpreters distinguish between the text and what inferences and presuppositions have been assumed for interpreting the text. I want to demonstrate the relationship between context and the meaning of a text. I expect to advance understanding of the complex practice of gender in the social contexts of the first century. Finally, I hope to legitimize a place for reading the Pastoral Epistles in the discussion of a Pauline theology of gender, regardless of one's views about the origin of the text.

For the communities that hold the Bible to be authoritative in faith and practice, I intend to establish that an interpreter of the Bible can hold a high view of the text and its authority and at the same time interpret Paul in a way that departs from the more traditional or conservative interpretations and positions on the theology of gender.

Perhaps my most central target is the large number of people in the faith community who occupy a gray or middle area in this discussion, including those in denominations, churches, parachurches, and the academy. This study will demonstrate a way forward for many people in the faith community who have been uncomfortable with the more traditional teaching and practice in the church concerning gender but have not been convinced by alternate interpretations of some of the texts that have been central in the discussion (particularly 1 Tim. 2:12). I get the impression that some people are looking for a reason to believe differently, and I hope to offer some viable alternatives.

Finally, I hope that this study supports and equips Christians to serve boldly in the area of their gifting, regardless of their social status, race, or gender. I particularly want women to be fully free to follow Jesus and imitate Paul with prophetic conviction, sacrifice, and service whether they are supported by their faith community or not. After all, Jesus and Paul were never supported by the traditional religious authorities; they did not wait for permission, yet we all need to remember that their path was not the safe or easy way.

There are many people who have contributed to this study whom I cannot mention by name. I want to thank my mentors Dr. Craig Blomberg and Dr. Stanley Porter. Thanks particularly to the steering committees and participants in the ETS Evangelicals and Gender session, and to my students who contributed to the dialogue. Thanks to the group who conducted the survey on women who choose to veil, particularly my daughter Dr. Aubrey Westfall. Thanks to all my teaching assistants and particularly Dr. Jonathan Numada, who edited this manuscript. I offer a final thank-you to James Ernest of Baker Publishing Group for bringing all the protracted research and writing to completion.

Abbreviations

Bible Texts and Versions

CEB	Common English Bible	NET	New English Translation (Bible)
ESV	English Standard Version	NIV	New International Version (2011)
ET	English translation (and its versification)	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version	NKJV	New King James Version
LXX	Septuagint	NLT	New Living Translation
MT	Masoretic Text	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NAU	New American Standard Bible (Updated, 1995)	TNIV	Today's New International Version
NEB	New English Bible		

Primary Sources: Ancient Texts

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Gen.	Genesis	Neh.	Nehemiah
Exod.	Exodus	Esther	Esther
Lev.	Leviticus	Job	Job
Num.	Numbers	Ps(s).	Psalms(s)
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Prov.	Proverbs
Josh.	Joshua	Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Judg.	Judges	Song	Song of Songs
Ruth	Ruth	Isa.	Isaiah
1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel	Jer.	Jeremiah
1–2 Kings	1–2 Kings	Lam.	Lamentations
1–2 Chron.	1–2 Chronicles	Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ezra	Ezra	Dan.	Daniel

Hosea	Hosea	Col.	Colossians
Joel	Joel	1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians
Amos	Amos	1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy
Obad.	Obadiah	Titus	Titus
Jon.	Jonah	Philem.	Philemon
Mic.	Micah	Heb.	Hebrews
Nah.	Nahum	James	James
Hab.	Habakkuk	1–2 Pet.	1–2 Peter
Zeph.	Zephaniah	1–3 John	1–3 John
Hag.	Haggai	Jude	Jude
Zech.	Zechariah	Rev.	Revelation
Mal.	Malachi		

New Testament

Matt.	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom.	Romans
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Phil.	Philippians

Apocrypha and Septuagint

1 Esd.	1 Esdras
1–4 Macc.	1–4 Maccabees
Sir.	Sirach
Tob.	Tobit
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

2 Bar.	2 Baruch (<i>Syriac Apocalypse</i>)
1 En.	1 Enoch (<i>Ethiopic Apocalypse</i>)
4 Ezra	4 Ezra

Ancient Nonbiblical Christian and Jewish Sources***Ancient Manuscripts***

P. Oxy. Oxyrhynchus Papyri

Apostolic Fathers

Mart. Pol. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*

Josephus

J.W. *Jewish War*

Philo

Abr. *De Abrahamo (On the Life of Abraham)*

Congr. *De congressu eruditionis gratia (On the Preliminary Studies)*

Flacc. *In Flaccum (Against Flaccus)*

Ios. *De Iosepho (On the Life of Joseph)*

Spec. *De specialibus legibus (On the Special Laws)*

Qumran Scrolls

1QH^a 1QHodayot^a

1QS *Rule of the Community*

Rabbinic Literature

<i>b. Git.</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Giṭṭin</i>	<i>b. Yoma</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Yoma</i> (= <i>Kippurim</i>)
<i>b. Menaḥ.</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Menaḥot</i>	<i>Pesiq. Rab Kah.</i>	<i>Pesiqta de Rab Kahana</i>
<i>b. Soṭ.</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Soṭah</i>		

Greek and Latin Works**Achilles Tatius**

Leuc. Clit. *Leucippe et Clitophon*
(*The Adventures of Leucippe and Cleitophon*)

Apuleius

Metam. *Metamorphoses* (*The Golden Ass*)

Aristotle

Eth. nic. *Ethica nicomachea* (*Nicomachean Ethics*)

Gen. an. *De generatione animalium*
(*Generation of Animals*)

Physiogn. *Physiognomonica*
(*Physiognomonics*)

Artemidorus Daldianus

Onir. *Onirocritica*

Athanasius

Syn. *De synodus* (*On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*)

Callimachus

Hymn. Dian. *Hymnus in Dianam*
(*Hymn to Diana or Artemis*)

Cicero

Att. *Epistulae ad Atticum*

Mur. *Pro Murena*

Cyril of Alexandria

Pulch. *De Recta Fide ad Pulcheriam et Eudociam*

Dio Cassius

Hist. rom. *Historia romana* (*Roman History*)

Epictetus

Diatr. *Diatribai* (*Dissertationes*)

Eusebius

Hist. eccl. *Historia ecclesiastica* (*Ecclesiastical History*)

Vit. Const. *Vita Constantini* (*Life of Constantine*)

John Chrysostom

Hom. Col. *Homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses*

Plato

Leg. *Leges* (*Laws*)

Resp. *Respublica* (*Republic*)

Plutarch

Pel. Pelopidas

Pseudo-Hippolytus

*Consum. De consummation
mundi*

Quintilian

*Inst. Institutio oratoria (Institutes
of Oratory)*

Seneca

Ben. De beneficiis

Ep. Epistulae morales

Stobaeus

Flor. Florilegium

Strabo

Geogr. Geographica (Geography)

Tacitus

Ann. Annales

Thucydides

*Hist. History of the Peloponnesian
War*

Ulpian

Dig. Digesta (The Digest)

Secondary Sources: Journals, Periodicals, Major Reference Works, and Series

AB	Anchor Bible
ABS	T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i>
ATJ	<i>Ashland Theological Journal</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BHL	Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BLG	Biblical Languages: Greek
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament

BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CamBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ChrTo	<i>Christianity Today</i>
Colloq	<i>Colloquium</i>
CTL	Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics
DEL	Describing English Language
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> . Edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
DPL	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i> . Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
DSar	<i>Daughters of Sarah</i>
ECHC	Early Christianity in Its Hellenistic Context
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FT	<i>Feminist Theology</i>
FZPhTh	<i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i>
GNS	Good News Studies
GPBS	Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship
Hist	<i>Historia</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IRM	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary Series
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JGRChJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Religion and Society</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSSR	<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
MNTC	Moffat New Testament Commentary
MNTSS	McMaster New Testament Studies Series
MSBBES	Monographic Series of “Benedictina”: Biblical-Ecumenical Section
MTSS	McMaster Theological Studies Series
NCCS	New Covenant Commentary Series
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–85
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NPNF</i> ¹	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTM	New Testament Monographs
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OELE	Oxford English Language Education
<i>PastPres</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PriscPap</i>	<i>Priscilla Papers</i>
PSt	Pauline Studies
PTh	Pauline Theology
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
<i>RefJ</i>	<i>Reformed Journal</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RHC	Romans through History and Culture
SBG	Studies in Biblical Greek
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SCJ</i>	<i>Stone-Campbell Journal</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>

STS	Studies in Theology and Sexuality
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TbTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TR	Theology and Religion
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VE	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WLQ	<i>Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Introduction

“Gender” refers to the characteristics that define, describe, and differentiate male and female. Paul’s theology, teaching, and practice concerning gender are currently central issues in biblical studies and areas that concern biblical studies. Some scholars are polarized on various issues, some scholars want to agree to disagree, many scholars have nuanced views that lie between the extremes of the various positions, some scholars are waiting to be convinced, and some wish to sidestep the issues and ignore them. Meanwhile, public opinion is being mobilized for battle in certain places such as the churches, denominational and interdenominational leadership organizations, higher education, and secular forums in such a way that makes any middle ground in the various views concerning gender difficult to occupy. This book reframes gender issues in the light of coherence within Pauline theology, consistency in interpretation, and a fresh application of methodology that will promote discussion and carry it to new ground. It also suggests some fresh readings that could resolve some of the notorious interpretive problems in certain passages. In order to address the issues effectively, this study includes the entire Pauline canon and reads the texts in light of their own claims of authorship, recipient(s), and circumstances.¹ This book is a call for all who study Paul and

1. For a summary of the discussion on the canonicity of Paul’s Letters, see A. G. Patzia, “Canon,” *DPL*, 85–92. This study is not precisely the same as canonical criticism, but it has some resemblance to that and to narrative criticism, which assumes the world that the author creates in order to understand and interpret the literature. For a canonical approach, see Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989). Alan Padgett argues for “the canonical sense of Scripture” in understanding the ethics of submission, gender roles, and servant leadership in the New Testament (*As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 21–30). For an example of narrative criticism, see R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). For those who

gender to learn to distinguish between the assumptions and presuppositions that they use to make sense of the texts.

Biblical scholars often assume that Paul's theology about gender directly corresponds with Greek philosophical thought (Aristotelian) and Greco-Roman social practices. There is no question that this is the assumption lying behind the traditional interpretations of the Pauline passages on gender. However, this study will suggest that the traditional readings on gender reflect Greek thought and categories that were not accepted by either Paul or Jesus. Rather, the presuppositions of Greek philosophical thought were imposed on the texts quite early in the history of the church and reinforced throughout the history of interpretation. Therefore, the traditional interpretation is a primary dialogue partner for this study.

While the power relationships between male and female are not by any means the only gender issue, the traditional interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 is often treated as a citadel that dominates biblical interpretation, church policy, and praxis on gender, which can be overturned (hypothetically) only with incontrovertible proof or a rejection of the canonical status of 1 Timothy and ultimately a rejection of the Bible as an authority for life and practice. This study will try to show that the traditional interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:12 and other passages on gender are based on information, assumptions, and inferences that are imposed on the text, part of the interpreter's embedded theology, and/or the direct and inevitable outcome of how the understanding of the passage has been taught, preached, and discussed in various venues by teachers, preachers, parents, and companions. Consequently, the traditional assumptions and inferences are often unacknowledged and even conferred with an inspired status of being "what God says." These assumptions have been combined with atomistic readings that are removed from the biblical situation, time, and culture.²

These traditional interpretations fail to recognize that Paul does not adopt the dominant culture but rather critiques it.³ Paul equates the Greco-Roman

dispute the Pauline authorship of any given epistle or set of epistles, this study of Paul can be compared to David Clines's study of the masculine Jesus in the canonical Gospels, which he distinguishes from the historical Jesus or the portraits of Jesus in the individual Gospels. See D. J. A. Clines, "Ecce Vir; or, Gendering the Son of Man," in *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Stephen D. Moore, JSOTSup 266 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 352–75.

2. Studies of the biblical time and culture are represented by Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart, eds. *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008).

3. For Paul's ability to move within various cultures in the Greco-Roman world and address them, see Clarence E. Glad, "Paul and Adaptability," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 17–41.

culture with the “world.” He urges the church not to conform to the “world,” and he calls the church out of the “world.” Paul particularly critiques and subverts the dominant culture’s construction of gender, sexuality, and power. Yet the first-century mission to the gentiles needed strategies to survive within the Greco-Roman culture and its values. This study suggests that traditional readings confuse Paul’s theology with his missional adaptation to the cultural gender practices; those strategies allowed the church to reach the Greco-Roman culture and to survive within that culture and even to thrive.

There has been a major problem with a lack of consistent methodology in the interpretation of the texts. Traditional readings of texts on gender are not based on hermeneutics that are consistently applied to passages addressing or concerning gender, nor are they consistent with hermeneutics that we generally apply to other texts to determine what a text originally meant. Within the tradition of interpretation, the passages that concern gender have not been understood in the contexts of the discourses in which they occur, the biblical theology of the Pauline corpus as a whole, the narrative of Paul’s life, a linguistic understanding/analysis of the Greek language, or an understanding of the culture that is sociologically informed.⁴ The support of the traditional readings assumes the strength of their position, and the analyses of the texts are therefore argumentative and assume the conclusions.

Beyond unacknowledged or unexamined assumptions and presuppositions and problematic methodologies, there are significant indications that the traditional readings of the text are problematic on other levels. First and foremost, the traditional readings of texts on gender have not resulted in making sense of Paul’s Letters. For example, the traditional readings of 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 do not satisfactorily resolve the interpretive problems and superficial textual incoherence of the passages in their context, but rather increase them.⁵ Correct “guesses” or hypotheses about the information, assumptions, and inferences ought to make better sense of the text

4. Judith Gundry-Volf points out the importance of the narrative for a coherent reading: “Paul’s teachings on sexuality and gender are especially appropriate for conducting a test case of ‘narrative coherence,’ in that Paul’s discourse on gender is, arguably, one of the most glaring examples of dissonance in the NT” (“Putting the Moral Vision of the New Testament into Focus: A Review,” *BBR* 9 [1999]: 278). For an explanation of Paul’s theology in the context of the wider story of Paul’s life, see F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977). For the narrative world of an epistle, see Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). For reading Paul in the context of the larger story of Israel, see J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

5. See E. E. Ellis, “Pastoral Letters,” *DPL*, 658–66. It is difficult to accept that an early blatant attempt to hijack Pauline theology would be successful. Each interpreter comes to the text

by uncovering what the intended reader(s) would have to know, assume, and infer to make the passages coherent.

Second, traditional readings of the texts have been used and are being used overtly in a social construction of a theology of power and control that privileges one group over another (males over females), and those readings are controlled by the privileged group (males). Many representatives of the traditional readings are transparently invested in maintaining the power and control of men over the church, academy, and home. Students of linguistics have been sensitized about the use of language and interpretation to create and maintain power. Using power language and justifying it in the history of interpretation typically has gone beyond the Pauline texts while claiming that the traditional interpretation is what the text says, and anyone who rejects that interpretation is accused of rejecting Paul's teaching. However, the traditional interpretation of Paul's gender passages flies directly in the face of Paul's and Jesus's teachings on power and authority within the Christian community.

Third, until very recently (ca. 1980s), traditional readings have assumed the ontological inferiority of women through the entire history of interpretation, and it is implausible to think that an interpreter can effectively shed the foundational assumptions of the traditional view and still coherently maintain the remainder of interpretations and applications virtually intact. Unless a scholar or interpreter assumes the superiority of men and inferiority of women as a presupposition for understanding the texts on gender, they cannot legitimately claim that his or her interpretation is in line with the traditions of Christianity. Conversely, those who promote traditional practices concerning gender must recognize the trajectory that they occupy in church tradition. Can they legitimately use traditional support for their interpretations and applications while they try to dissociate themselves from charges that they promote the ontological inferiority of women and superiority of men?

Fourth, we understand now more than ever before how the individual impacts interpretation and how shared knowledge and culture of groups affect interpretation. Paul's passage on incorporating the diversity of the spiritual gifts of everyone in the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12–14 presumably would prevent one group or individual from privileging their own role over the church. However, though gender will clearly be one of the primary things that will reflect diversity in one's interpretation of passages on gender, the traditional male-dominated readings of passages about men and women have been effectively executed and maintained unilaterally. Women have been explicitly

with certain assumptions and tends to select the interpretive options that are consistent and coherent with their own presuppositions about Paul, the text, and the context that frames it.

excluded from explaining the texts to men or in many cases from even sharing or verbalizing their understanding of the texts, even though texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 and 14:34–35 primarily address women’s culture, concerns, and practices. In other words, women have not been fully included in the interpretation of their own mail. On the other hand, passages that address men’s culture are not often recognized or interpreted as gender passages. The result is confusion between what is addressed to all believers, what is addressed to women, and what is addressed to men.

Therefore, there are several reasons why the traditional interpretations of the Pauline passages on gender should be carefully examined and should not be privileged by the serious scholar or any interpreter who is dedicated to understanding the meaning of the biblical texts. This study will show that the first problem in understanding these texts is not primarily that the traditional readings are unfair or unjust, but that on several counts they are implausible readings in a first-century Greco-Roman context. On the other hand, this investigation will not necessarily support or privilege previous nontraditional interpretations or attempts to reconstruct the context in a way that changes the reading, but will apply the same critical standards to all interpretations.

This study will address some of the lacunae in the hermeneutics and methodologies that have been applied to the analysis of the Pauline passages traditionally understood as addressing gender.⁶ This introduction has explained the approach of the study. Chapter 1 discusses the impact of information about the Greco-Roman culture on the meaning of the texts, particularly in understanding the significant cultural practice of veiling and the part that men as well as women played in the practice. Chapter 2 explores Paul’s teachings on gender roles in the context of culture and concludes that Paul did not support traditional Greco-Roman gender roles for the church, even though he maintained the appearance of traditional gender relationships in order to protect the church’s reputation and enable its outreach, much like the practice of Western missionaries in Islamic cultures. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 construct a Pauline theology of gender from the Pauline teachings of creation, the fall, and eschatology. This places the discussions about central issues such as

6. In research that supports this study, I applied systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to the Greek language. One of the foundational theories of SFL is that in using language, members of a culture “construct the social semiotic, whereby social reality is shaped, constrained and modified” (M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* [London: Edward Arnold, 1978], 126). In addition, the study of the passages in their literary context has been informed by discourse analysis. Discourse analysis cannot be reduced to a single methodology or approach. However, for an overview with an explanation of key concepts, see Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, LNTS 297 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 22–87.

1 Timothy 2:12 and headship in the broader context of Pauline thought and other texts on these topics, and views gender practices in the light of Paul's eschatological goals (as Paul consistently does). Chapter 6 contrasts Paul's theology on gender and the body with the church's traditional theology and practice about gender and sex; it urgently calls for a concentrated development of a coherent biblical theology on that part of the professing academy and the church that addresses crucial issues for the contemporary church. Chapter 7 argues specifically for consistent hermeneutics on how biblical passages should be interpreted by both genders and applied to both genders: women should interpret and apply instructions to all believers concerning the function of each believer in the church and the call to ministry with exactly the same hermeneutics as used by men. Chapter 8 examines the central relationship of Paul and gender to his theology of authority; it finds that the traditional interpretations assume a theology of authority in ministry and Christian relationships that both Paul and Jesus opposed. Pauline theology of ministry was based on metaphors of slavery and service so that any believer (gentile, slave, or female) could assume any function in the house church without violating the hierarchy of the Greco-Roman culture. Finally, chapter 9 provides a reinterpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, drawing together the insights from the previous chapters. Crucial assumptions that affect exegesis are identified and evaluated, and then a plausible and coherent understanding of the text is suggested in light of the text's contexts and content. The conclusion summarizes the argument of this study and suggests applications in various contexts for the church and the individual who accept the Pauline teaching as authoritative for life and practice.

one

Culture

Our understanding of the language and culture of the first-century Greco-Roman world is vital to interpreting the Pauline Letters. This chapter shows how the context of culture helps to explain Paul's language when he addresses gender and gender concerns.¹ It is necessary to understand what Paul was trying to do with words in the light of the culture. The context of culture includes behavior that "is typical, recurrent, general."² These patterns of behavior are the way a culture works. It consists of typical social relationships and roles that apply across many situations, yet it also includes typical behavior within specific situations in that culture.³ Cultural and linguistic information about gender is demonstrated through the culture and specifically through the structure of the language, as well as the vocabulary, symbols, and metaphors. However, a culture's language structure, symbols, and metaphors that involve gender should not be equated with the message of a speaker who utilizes that

1. This approach can be compared to Norman Petersen's approach in *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); see the chapter "Social Structures and Social Relations in the Story of Philemon" (89–199).

2. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, ed. and trans. John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 176–77. See the introduction to Theissen's book by John Schütz. Instead of *culture*, Schütz refers to the "social matrix" or the "social world" of early Christianity (1–2).

3. This description combines a description of society from social science with linguistic descriptions of register. See, e.g., T. O. Beidelman, *The Kaguru: A Matrilineal People of East Africa* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 30; M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 31–32.

language. When Paul employs the structure and vocabulary of the Greek language or refers to cultural symbols, metaphors, or practices about gender, we need to be alert as to how much of Greco-Roman cultural practices and worldview are part of Paul's message, and what cultural assumptions are truly adopted by him. For example, in the patterns that merely express grammatical gender, there is no choice, so there is no meaning. On the other hand, does Paul utilize "filter mechanisms" that select some features of the culture and language as relevant to his message, while he excludes other features as irrelevant?⁴ Does Paul utilize and redefine common metaphors and practices in such a way that their meanings are transformed? The answer to this question in this study will be yes: Paul exploits Hellenistic literature, philosophy, symbols, and language to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). We will see this, for example, in his discussion about the veil and his use of the metaphor of "head." Paul used the Koine Greek language within a specific historical context; he was writing to specific recipients in specific historical situations. However, it does not follow that Paul accepted all historical-cultural and linguistic conventions that he utilized in communication as theologically normative for his Christian worldview. Precisely what was accepted as normative and what was rejected or altered must be determined.

1.1 Paul's Hellenism and Palestinian Judaism

Paul lived in and moved back and forth between the broader hellenized culture and Palestinian Judaism. How is Paul to be understood in his relationship to Greco-Roman culture? By definition, since he was a Jew born in Tarsus, Paul was a Hellenistic Jew. However, according to both Paul and Luke, Paul identified himself as a Pharisee descended from a Pharisaic line with impeccable Jewish credentials (Phil. 3:4–6; Acts 23:6). Paul's claim that he was "a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5) may have meant that he spoke Aramaic or Hebrew in the home.⁵ According to Luke's account, Paul most likely first received an elementary Hellenistic education in Tarsus,⁶ and then later received a formal

4. This is informed by linguistic theory regarding frames of discourse or scenarios that involve shared information between participants. One word, such as *restaurant*, can evoke a bundle of information. However, there is a limit on how much of the frame is incorporated. See Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 236–56.

5. See Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 22; W. R. Stegner, "Paul the Jew," *DPL*, 503–11, esp. 504.

6. Andrew Pitts's analysis of Acts 22:3 is persuasive, where he takes Tarsus as the referent of ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, therefore indicating that Paul was brought up in Tarsus and came to Jerusalem after receiving a basic Hellenistic education in Tarsus as well. We would not assume

education in Judaism in Jerusalem, where he was thoroughly trained in the law under Gamaliel (Acts 22:2–3). What does this say about his orientation to the Greco-Roman and Palestinian Jewish cultures of his day? In the first half of the twentieth century, it was argued that Paul's primary orientation was to a syncretistic hellenized Judaism, in which popular Greco-Roman philosophy provided the background of his thought.⁷ In the second half of the twentieth century, the consensus of scholarship experienced a profound shift and began to argue that Paul's primary orientation in life and thought was to Palestinian Judaism.⁸ However, Palestinian Judaism was clearly embedded in Hellenism,⁹ and first-century Jewish culture included complex sets of beliefs that were not uniform. Nevertheless, Judaism as a whole differentiated itself from the dominant Greco-Roman worldview and consciously resisted assimilation while continuing to exist as a subculture.

One area in which Palestinian Judaism differentiated itself was sexual ethics. It has been convincingly argued that there is continuity between Paul's ethical teachings about sexuality and the Jewish legal traditions.¹⁰ Most importantly, Peter Tomson demonstrated that Paul affirmed the law in his view on sexual relationships and sexuality.¹¹ In the Greco-Roman world wide-ranging sexual license was practiced, though a clear double standard existed

that he received formal classical rhetorical training, but rather continued with rabbinic training at the point that a Hellenist would study rhetoric. See Andrew Pitts, "Paul and Hellenistic Education: Assessing Early Literary and Rhetorical Education" (MA thesis, McMaster Divinity College, 2007), 26–69.

7. The traditional post-Reformation understanding is that Paul's opponents were Jews who were legalists and therefore did not regard Paul as having a Jewish worldview. F. C. Baur set the course for interpreting Paul within the Greco-Roman philosophical and religious world of his day in, e.g., *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and Doctrine*, trans. Eduard Zeller (London: Williams & Norgate, 1873).

8. The turning point was the introduction of "the new perspective on Paul." E. P. Sanders's contribution was to rethink the nature of Paul's "Judaizing" opponents. See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). James D. G. Dunn is one of the scholars best known for working out the implications of Paul's thought in, e.g., *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, WUNT 185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). "For the vast majority of scholars, Paul's world had suddenly changed," with Sanders's work as the tipping point (S. J. Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters," *DPL*, 673). Scholarship is moving toward the view that Judaism was diverse.

9. See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM, 1974), 103–6; Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998).

10. However, see David G. Horrell's overview of approaches to Pauline ethics (*Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* [London: T&T Clark, 2005], 7–46), and note his conclusion, in agreement with V. P. Furnish, that "neither Paul's 'Jewishness' nor his 'Hellenism' should be 'one-sidedly' emphasized" (45).

11. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Tomson, "Paul's Jewish Background in View of His Law

in the sexual expectations for men and women that reflected the culture's beliefs about gender, hierarchy, and privilege.¹² Paul's fundamental teaching on Christian behavior directly confronted prevalent Greco-Roman sexual practices and expectations:

Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. (1 Thess. 4:1–6 NRSV)

Paul not only confronted the sexual licentiousness of Hellenistic culture, but also, what is much more revolutionary, he continued the Christian and Jewish practice of not maintaining a double standard of sexual ethics.¹³ Although sexuality is only part of the gender issues, if Paul's sexual ethics have any logical coherence, then it is a significant indicator that Paul's theology of gender is going to be distinct from that of the dominant Greco-Roman culture. The claim that Paul would uncritically adopt a Greco-Roman model in the construction of his ethics or theology, particularly for his theology of gender, should be carefully reexamined.¹⁴

On the other hand, Paul was a part of the Greco-Roman culture and displayed familiarity with the formal and material characteristics of ethical

Teaching in 1 Corinthians 7," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, WUNT 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 251–70.

12. Rodney Stark summarizes, "Although virginity was demanded of brides, and chastity of wives, men tended to be quite promiscuous and female prostitutes abounded in Greco-Roman cities—from the two-penny *diobolariae* who worked the streets to high-priced, well-bred courtesans. . . . Greco-Roman cities also sustained substantial numbers of male prostitutes, as bisexuality and homosexuality were common" (*The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997], 117).

13. For Paul's confrontation with the sexual ethics of the Greco-Roman culture, see 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19–21; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3–5. See also Matt. 5:28; Heb. 13:4.

14. The view that Paul adopted Greco-Roman household codes that are based on Aristotle's teaching is prevalent among Pauline scholars. However, this assumption needs to be critically reexamined and challenged in the light of more recent perspectives on Paul, even more so in the light of the contexts of the codes themselves and the differences between the Pauline teachings and that of broader Greco-Roman literature. See below in chap. 2.

Hellenistic literature. Granted, he did not hesitate to “employ current forms, concepts, and standards, even secular ones, already familiar to his readers.”¹⁵ Paul was a first-century Hellenistic Jew who chose a Palestinian Jewish worldview as his primary orientation, and who also undertook a Christian mission to the Greco-Roman culture. In conducting this gentile mission, Paul lived within Greco-Roman culture as one who understood it and thus was well positioned to explain spiritual realities foreign to his recipients by using concepts that were familiar and easily understood. Paul stood at the intersection of Christianity, Judaism, and the broader Hellenistic world. From that position he reread the law in relationship to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and to his ministry experiences in the gentile revivals in Antioch and his gentile mission. As a result, he critiqued not only aspects of Greco-Roman culture but also aspects of Jewish culture and elements in the developing institutional culture of the early church. Paul’s utilization of Greco-Roman linguistic forms, cultural concepts, and ethical standards concerning gender needs to be carefully read and examined in light of the discourses and contexts in which these occur—in order to distinguish between what he critiques, what he transforms, and what he adopts.

1.2 The Pauline Relationship with the Church and Greco-Roman Society

Paul attempted to establish gentile churches within the context of the mainstream of Greco-Roman culture. His general purpose in writing his letters was to further his mission to the gentiles by spiritually forming, guiding, and correcting the gentile churches that had been founded by his mission team (with the exception of the church in Rome, which presumably did not have an apostolic foundation and was a unique mixture of Jew and gentile).¹⁶ Paul was very successful at contextualization for the purposes of communication and evangelism, which largely accounts for the success of his mission. One of the tricky aspects of Pauline studies involves accounting for the fact that in order to communicate spiritual realities, Paul would seek to use Greek language and metaphors that were meaningful to his Greco-Roman recipients (Rom. 6:19

15. Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 65. According to Furnish, this indicates that Paul approves the Hellenistic traditions he utilizes. However, this should no more be assumed than it should be assumed that I agree with Furnish’s argument because I quote him.

16. For the Jewish-gentile nature of the Roman church, see Robert Jewett’s discussion on the history of Christianity in Rome, in *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon J. Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 59–61.

NRSV: “I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations”).¹⁷ However, though he used Greek language embedded in the Hellenistic worldview, he intended for the church to be distinct from “the world,” which for him was a term that corresponded roughly to Greco-Roman society and culture.¹⁸ In other words, in order for his message to be communicated meaningfully, he deliberately employed commonly understood metaphors, conventions, and cultural institutions to transform the churches into a movement that was spiritually and ethically countercultural. To achieve this, Paul utilized common figures of speech, but did so in a manner so that such expressions frequently diverged from their normal meaning. Understanding Paul’s beliefs about gender cannot simply be a matter of studying the meaning of words, understanding facts about the culture, and then imposing Greco-Roman notions of gender onto Paul.

Instances of language and particularly figures of speech are to be correctly understood in the context of the communicator’s thought: the message of any communication must be understood in terms of its intended pragmatic effect on its recipients. When a speaker/writer is trying to motivate listeners/recipients to perform a given action, different rhetorical strategies may be used other than simply issuing direct commands for people to take a certain course of action. Although this latter practice may be effective in some cases, it will not be effective in all cases; sometimes the literal meaning is too provocative and may easily cause the listener/recipient to reject the message as unwelcome, inappropriate, or incomprehensible. A well-known example is found in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, where the dramatist re-creates Marc Antony’s eulogy for Caesar, which turned public opinion against Caesar’s assassins. Shakespeare’s speech features the repeated phrase “Brutus is an honorable man,” which is the opposite of what the eulogist really wished to communicate. Yet if Marc Antony had started his speech with “Kill Brutus,” the crowd would have turned on him. Instead, Marc Antony uses verbal irony (in a trope), whereby his words convey the opposite of their usual meaning. By doing so, Marc Antony slips under the hearers’ guard, and the speech has the intended pragmatic effect. Such speech practices that

17. See Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 155–74; also, for one clear example among many others presented by scholars in the same volume, see Hans Dieter Betz, “Transferring a Ritual: Paul’s Interpretation of Baptism in Romans 6,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 84–118.

18. As Norman Petersen puts it, “Behind Paul’s superficially homogeneous language there lies an intricate network of social roles and relationships that spans two different institutional domains. To decode Paul’s role language, we need a sociological cipher as well as a dictionary of everyday language” (*Rediscovering Paul*, 24).

invert meanings were recognized as one of the four fundamental operations of figures of speech by classic rhetoricians.¹⁹ This chapter provides some cultural background in key areas that inform our interpretation of gender in Paul. It will show that Paul's intended pragmatic effects for some of his teachings on gender subvert and transform what was familiar to his recipients, even effecting the opposite of what is frequently held to be the literal interpretation.

1.3 Contrast between Rhetoric and Practice in the First Century

When we look at the first-century context of opinions toward gender, we are not dealing merely with actual recorded practices regarding gender, but also with first-century prejudices and rhetoric about what proper practices should be—that is, what the projected ideal man or woman should be.²⁰ In Greco-Roman society, legislating and enforcing the “proper” behavior of women was a major concern for authorities because they believed that disorder in the household had seditious ramifications for the welfare of the empire. Therefore, cults and sects were often attacked because of the wild behavior of the women participants.²¹ In order for Paul's gentile mission to succeed, the behavior of Christian women would need to be consistent with what was practiced by women in the broader first-century Greco-Roman world. Therefore, Paul's gender concerns were often missional when he addressed gender roles in the church and the home, and his intention was for believers to fit into the culture while remaining ethically pure. Fitting into the first-century culture was a different proposition than fitting into the culture of the twenty-first century. Modern Western preconceptions of how the genders normally behave and interact with one another are markedly different from the preconceptions of Greco-Roman culture.

19. See, e.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.1.4 for a definition of “trope.”

20. Margaret MacDonald writes about the importance of the interplay between the image of the ideal or stereotypical male or female and reality: “Image *shapes* reality. It is not only the case that image shapes reality in the sense that all communication about historical happenings is affected by the priorities, beliefs, and norms embedded in the systems of particular cultures; rather, we must also be aware that image shapes reality in the sense that during any given historical moment the *actors themselves* will experience and react to a reality that is profoundly shaped by such symbol systems” (*Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 120, emphasis original).

21. For discussion of how there were certain stereotyped criticisms of the Dionysus cult, the Egyptian Isis cult, and Judaism, which were attacked for their immoral effect on women, see David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 65–80.

1.3.1 *The Influence of Aristotle on the Rhetoric*

One of the factors that contribute to the disparity between practice and rhetoric is the continued influence of Aristotle on Greco-Roman society and culture. Wherever Hellenism went, it brought Athenian philosophy. With Athenian philosophy came rhetoric about the nature of male and female from the Athenian classical period that continued to be influential as early and medieval church philosophy developed.

Aristotle advised his male readers on how to govern their wives because of women's essential inferiority. Greeks believed that a gender-based hierarchy is based on the ontological nature of women and men rather than the standards or conventions of culture. According to Aristotle and Greek thought, the cosmic hierarchy is expressed in two genders that have mutually exclusive qualities. The perfect body is male/man, whose natural state is physical and political strength, rationality, spirituality, superiority, activity, dryness, and penetration. Meanwhile, female/woman embodies humanity's negative qualities, which are physical and political weakness, irrationality, fleshliness, inferiority, passivity, wetness, and being penetrated. Male and female represent the hierarchy (superior/inferior), societal status (more/less), and sex role (penetrator/penetrated).²² Platonic-Aristotelian ideas about the ontological nature of men and women and the relationship of the household to the general society had a direct influence on Roman Stoics and Hellenistic Jews such as Philo and Josephus, who appear to carry forward the same arguments and assumptions.²³ In classical Athenian society, women were restricted to the seclusion of the domestic sphere (cloistered) as a measure of control, and they could leave the house only for religious ceremonies and in the company of their guardian. Philo's ideal for women in first-century Alexandria was little different, if not even more restrictive:

A woman, then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion. She should not show herself off like a vagrant in the streets before the eyes of other men, except when she has to go to the temple, and even then she should take pains to go, not when the market is full, but when most people have gone home, and so like a free-born lady worthy of the name, with everything quiet around her, make her oblations and offer her prayers to avert the evil and gain the good. (*Spec.* 3.171)²⁴

22. Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 728a.18–20; 737a.25–35; 775a.15.

23. See, e.g., Philo, *Ios.* 8.38–39; 11.54.

24. Francis H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, Ralph Marcus, eds. and trans., *Philo*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–62), 7:583.

Philo, like Josephus and Paul, was writing for a hellenized Jewish or a Hellenistic-Roman audience, and there are a broad variety of views on women in early Jewish sources.²⁵

The Greek/Athenian model for gender was easily combined with the rhetoric of Octavian's strict moral laws (18 and 9 BCE) for at least the Roman upper class, which ostensibly were part of an effort to restore the traditional values of the Roman Republic in culture and religion.²⁶ Octavian's laws targeted promiscuity as well as a low-population crisis among the Roman elite. He promoted the marriage of women, discouraged women from committing adultery, rewarded motherhood, and established dress codes for women that signaled a woman's legal status and class.²⁷ Men's elite male rank was reinforced, and Octavian said that fathers were "worthy to be called by this name [father] in the same way as I am."²⁸ Octavian became the paterfamilias of the empire, and the empire was run by his "imperial household." His power over the Roman Empire was explicitly supported by a traditional view of the elite male, where the paterfamilias had absolute power over the family. Penalties and rewards pressured single men to marry and have children, and they were discouraged from having affairs with matrons.²⁹

Therefore, the rhetoric of Hellenistic culture and the language of empire gave a powerful message of inferiority, control, restriction, and even the seclusion of women. On the other hand, men were not free from pressures and punishments urging them to assume their prescribed gender roles. Men were seen in every part of the public sector, but they were restricted and constrained by the rhetoric about gender in ways that women were not. More was expected in terms of specific character traits if not actual labor, and a harsher measure was applied to them. A man who displayed emotions, behavior, or characteristics labeled as feminine was shamed and despised for assuming

25. See C. S. Keener, "Marriage," *DNTB*, 690.

26. Bruce Winter argues that Roman women appear to be traditionally less restricted to the private sphere than Greek women. But then, at the end of the Roman Republic, a "new" type of woman emerged in certain circles in Rome among the upper class who claimed the same sexual liberties as men, and Octavian's laws reacted against this development among the women (*Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 17–38). But see Lynn Cohick's critique of Winter (Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 72–75), arguing convincingly that the "new woman" was "more a poetic fiction and a political smear than a historical reality" (75).

27. As per the Lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis and Lex Julia maritalibus ordinibus, enacted in the year 18 BCE (further emended in 9 BCE by the Lex Papia Poppaea). See Winter, *Roman Wives*, 39–58; Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009), 32.

28. Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 56.3.6, 3.8, my translation.

29. Winter, *Roman Wives*, 49.

a categorical low-status role. For example, certain emotional expressions and displays of grief in mourning the death of a loved one were considered feminine. Men who lived in certain regions of the Roman Empire, or even Hellenists, could be disrespected and ridiculed by Romans as effeminate. This is because some areas, such as Egypt, were known for women/wives who exercised more freedom or authority than was allowed in the Roman ideal.³⁰ Although there was a real potential of upward mobility and increased economic prosperity in the Roman Empire, honor came from knowing and keeping one's place.³¹ The future of a man was more rigidly determined by his father's occupation, status, and entangling patron-client alliances, not to mention the fact that arguably the majority of adult males at any given time were not firstborn sons, who were heirs, but were still under the authority of a master or their own paterfamilias. All but Caesar were theoretically answerable to at least one patron, and patrons and male heirs had their own serious obligations to their clients.³²

1.3.2 *Greco-Roman Gender Behavior*

We need to recognize a distinct difference between the actual evidence concerning the behavior of men and women and the literary rhetoric about gender. In the Greco-Roman world there was a greater variety of gender behavior for women than is generally acknowledged in the literature, but it is revealed in inscriptions, the papyri (court cases and letters), and historical accounts. There were significant variations in functions for women in different locations in the Roman Empire. Athens, Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria represent a rough continuum, from the most restrictive roles for women in Athens to the most unrestricted roles in Alexandria.³³ Yet to some degree throughout the Roman

30. Marc Antony's infatuation with Hellenism (as opposed to the Latin culture here) and his relationship to Cleopatra as her consort, given her authority and her function in the Isis cult, gave Octavian the opportunity to characterize Antony as effeminate and extravagant.

31. The social stratification of the empire was concerned with the exercise of power: "Who gets what and why?" The system is intentionally set up so the upper strata control the power, wealth (land, slave labor, rents, taxes), and status.

32. As discussed below, "The patron-client relationship is the basic building block of the Greco-Roman society" (D. A. deSilva, "Patronage," *DNTB*, 766). The system was an infrastructure of networks of favor and loyalty between socially unequal persons.

33. For the conditions in Egypt, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, "Women in Roman Egypt: A Preliminary Study Based on Papyri," in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Helene P. Foley (New York: Gordon and Breach Science, 1981), 303–22. Yet in Alexandria, as mentioned above, Philo suggested that married and unmarried women be confined to the house in a way consistent with women's confinement in Athens during the classical period. See the breakdown of diversity of women's behavior in the first-century Roman Empire as given in Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10–26.

Empire, women were involved in a range of nontraditional activities, including functioning as patrons, business owners, and cultic and public officials. A woman who exhibited what were considered manly virtues and strengths might be given some positive recognition or honor, particularly if she were upper class and donated a large sum of money or performed a necessary service.

Thus during the first century there was social ferment and some fluidity for the actual behavior of women, but very traditional concepts of gender roles were alive and well for both men and women. While some inscriptions and papyri tell us the story of an increasing range of women's activities that are roads to some forms of economic and social power and honor, the funerary inscriptions and epithets do not praise women for things that would be considered accomplishments and sources of honor for men, but rather for their conformity to traditional female stereotypes and Roman ideals.³⁴ Behavior that might gain recognition and honor for upper-class women could gain criticism and condemnation for other women in different circumstances. Consequently, when a cult was considered dangerous, the activities of women and the authority of their husbands came under public scrutiny, and what might be acceptable behavior in their first-century context could be represented as dishonorable deviations from the rhetoric of the Greco-Roman ideal. In this way, the feminine and masculine Greek stereotypes and Roman ideals were used as primary weapons to attempt to control, discredit, or disable a dangerous cult or sect.

1.4 Gender and Greco-Roman Values

Several Greco-Roman values inform our understanding of gender in the Pauline corpus. The complementary values of honor and shame are clearly part of Paul's rhetoric when he addresses gender issues, and the context for his comments must be understood. In addition, the patron-client relationship and reciprocity that form the building blocks of the culture also inform the relationships between husbands and wives.

34. As Riet van Bremen states,

These "traditional" ideas about women are . . . not just the hobbyhorses of a few moralists, out of touch with reality. They are, to a great extent, mirrored in the language used in the inscriptions. In seeming contradiction to the public activities and independent behavior of these women, the most frequent epithets used for women are to be found in exactly the traditional feminine area of modesty, loving dedication to husband and family, piety, decency, etc., an ideology which also pervaded the numerous funerary inscriptions from all over the Greek world, set up by "ordinary" Greeks. ("Women and Wealth," in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt [London: Routledge, 1993], 234)

Thus there is a noted discrepancy between the ideology and the archaeological evidence regarding women's freedoms and activities.