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### The Mission and Role of Women in Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian Contexts

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ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE MISSION AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN GRAECO-ROMAN AND  
JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CONTEXTS

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts Religion

By

Fabienne Liana MASLET

April 15, 2019

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## ABBREVIATIONS

NAS	New American Standard (Bible)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJ	New King James Version
NRS	New Revised Standard Version (Bible)

## INTRODUCTION

The place of women in the world has changed and progressed in the past decades. When I was a young girl, women were not really valued in the Church and in the service for God. There were always excuses not to allow them to serve God and they were rejected in a lot of areas in the Church service. However, the worse thing is that frequently women are the ones who are belittling themselves, who denigrate themselves, who undermine themselves or the capacities that God gave them to be used in Church. This occurs because they had been educated this way and do not know anything else. Therefore, they continue in the tradition they had been brought up, formed, instructed. The devaluation of women throughout history is the result of sin in the world. However, the status of women has been raised. Through Christ, women have the opportunity to live another life, a life that they were not expecting in the human's institutions and traditions.

I undertook this study for all the women in the Church, who think that God does not esteem them enough to be in ministry. This study is to help women to understand how priceless they are for God and how much God considers them as a precious stone, even in the ministries that God gives to the Church. Even if women's lives change with the coming of Christ, were they able to minister in the mission that Jesus gave to his disciples? Was it possible for the Holy Spirit to use them in this mission? This mission could be done in which areas, and with which gifts?

In this dissertation, I expose a small background determining how women were considered in the New Testament. This dissertation shows firstly the role of women through history in the world in parallel with the women in the Church. It will

explore how women were considered in Jesus' eyes, and in the Holy-Spirit's perspective and then developed into what ministry they can be involved in and what are the requirements or the criteria for such ministry. Finally, the possibility of women becoming ministers will be explored and compared with the criteria given above.



## WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

At the time of the New Testament three cultures were predominant the Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures.

### **Women in Ancient Greek Society**

Women were considered as low members in Greek society.

Doubtless the most important overall factor was the emergence of the *polis*, and the opposition to aristocratic domination which arose within it. The power of the aristocratic clans was underpinned by relationships with ruling groups in other areas, created in part by marriage exchanges. In the *polis*, the role of handling relations between communities was increasingly taken over by political institutions and women's significance as means of communication between men was diminished. One by-product of this change may have been the gradual development of the dowry system. The new system for the creating political relationships was associated with a change in marriage practices, and women to a growing extent married within their own communities. This enabled heads of the households to maintain a degree of control over their daughters even after they married, and if the need arose they might now be used as alternative suppliers of male heirs. Again, the dowry system may have contributed to this control. Within the *polis*, women's social role was increasingly limited to that of reproducing the *oikos*, whose economic independence was considered crucial to the stability of the state. In order to guarantee that its members possessed adequate property, complex laws of inheritance were introduced. At the same time, the integrity of the *oikos* was protected by state legislation regulating the sexual behavior of the women.

A switch in the early Archaic Age from pastoral to agrarian farming may have contributed to a new ideological view of the female. Pastoralism was more leisurely and less labour-intensive means of production. With the switch to labour-intensive agrarian farming, the division of labour between husband and wife in the peasant class would have become more obvious. To a writer like Hesiod, it may have appeared that women were not doing their share. Women were seen as being economically unproductive, and therefore as having no significant role to play in the functioning of society. At the same time, rapid growth in population would have produced a diminution in women's biological status. Too many children were burden, and the role of reproducing society which was increasingly being accorded to women was at the same time being downgraded. A wife who was seen as having no contribution to make as an economic producer was also not valued as a reproducer. Once she had given birth to the requisite male child, her usefulness was over, and she was regarded as a parasite.

The emergence of the *polis* was associated with a movement away from an estate-centred way of life to one based on an urban centre. The city rather than the home became the focus for the conduct of social life. This, coupled with the restraints on the behavior of women, would have produced a sharper division between private and public spheres. The institutions which grew up in the city were male-dominated and revolved around characteristically male activities-politics, warfare,

athletics and drinking parties. These activities, embedded within the formal apparatus of the state, operated as elaborate and prestigious arenas for male competition. The home was increasingly seen as the woman's domain, while at the same time male domination of the *oikos* was regarded as a key element in the maintenance of the social and political stability. This urbanization of the culture was associated with the emergence of a new element in the masculine code of honour. Within the competitive arena of the *polis*, the protection of the chastity of women, which guaranteed the integrity of the *oikos*, would have become an important aspect of the masculine behavior, and would have come to be as a worthwhile end in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Here it is described that women were not a pillar of society and the domain of the women was at home, nowhere else. And later, even at home the men started to take control as well. Therefore the women were totally under the dominion of the men of the house, their husband.

Under Athenian law a woman was classified as a child, regardless of age, and therefore was the legal property of some man at all stages in her life. Males could divorce by simply ordering a wife out of the household. Moreover, if women were seduced or raped, her husband was legally compelled to divorce her. If women wanted a divorce she had to have her father or some other man bring her case before a judge. Finally, Athenian women could own property, but control of the property always was vested in the male to whom she 'belonged'.<sup>2</sup>

In cities the women were not seen in public places and that was established to maintain their probity. Thus women were not on political, social places. The place they had to stay was the house.

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<sup>1</sup> Sue. Blundell, *Women in ancient Greece*. London: British Museum Press, 1995, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney. Stark, "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women." *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 3 (1995), 234-35. Guttentag, M., and P. E. Secord. *Too many women? The sex ratio question*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1983. M. I. Finley, *Economy and society in ancient Greece*. New York: Viking. 1982. S. B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, whores, slaves: Women in classical antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books. 1975.

## Women in the Ancient Roman Society

Suzanne Wemple and Victoria E. Pagán wrote, as did Jane F. Gardner, that even though the Roman women had more rights than those in others cultures, they were still in subjection to men. They were under the control of their fathers. If the father died they would come under “the control of guardians” and if they married a transfer of control was done to their husbands.<sup>3</sup> However, to help bolster the growing of the population, Augustus offered a reward of exemption from a guardian for a free woman having three children and a freedwoman having four children.<sup>4</sup> It was still a way of controlling the women, but at least they had the possibility to be freed from men’s submission. This was not really the case as women were still under men’s control, not especially under their husband’s control. However they could remain under the control of their father, which was applicable “three days every year”, and at the death of their father they could choose their “own tutor”.<sup>5</sup> They were not totally freed from men’s control, but were at least from their husband’s control. They could by this way have economical power, equal inheritance with their brothers. According to the law they could select their husbands, a better choice should be in the same rank as them. The women could obtain a divorce and remarry, if their husband were accused of infidelity with a married woman of the same caste. For the women a “double standard of sexual behavior” was imposed. In this standard they were used as “sexual objects ... dutiful wife and mother.”<sup>6</sup> Respectively, the lower classes, which were the slaves and the upper classes should follow a certain pattern, but both were

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<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Fonay. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society Marriage and the Cloister, 500 To 900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, 24; Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr, 1986. Routledge, 2016, 4-23; Pagán, Victoria E. “Toward a Model of Conspiracy Theory for Ancient Rome.” *New German Critique*, no. 103 (2008): 27-49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669218>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 25

under the control of what the men desired in their exploitation in a certain way, and if they were not following the pattern given, they were punished in case of adultery or fornication. The Roman women had more rights than others women of their time, but the “Augustan legislation encouraged women to remain home”, bear children and be confined to unhappy unions.<sup>7</sup>

Even if the Roman women had more rights, they had an illusion of freedom, whatever social caste they were. Roman law strikes every woman with incapacity. Since she was considered perpetually as a minor, the girl was passed from the tutelage of her father to that of her husband or remained under the constant dependence of “paterfamilias”. The paterfamilias translated as “father of the family” in Latin was the man of highest rank in a Roman household, which held the “patria potestas” which is the “paternal power” over his wife, children and slaves. This potestas was “the right of life or death,” and was life-giving, and extinguish itself, except adoption, until death. It is the oldest man in the family. Respect is therefore a primordial element of the figure of the paterfamilias.<sup>8</sup> The wife was systematically relegated out of the political sphere, could be repudiated by her husband, and he could even kill her if she was guilty of adultery against him, without being worried himself when he failed to do his duty of conjugal fidelity.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> J. Paul. Sampley, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*. 2003, 457-65

## Women in Ancient Jewish Society

Jewish women were not better off than the Greek and Roman women during Jesus' time. They were not treated like the men with equality. The women were considered inferior to men. Peter expressed or determined them as **ἰσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει**, “weaker vessel, weaker partner or weaker sex” (1 Pet 3: 7). They were as well objectified, in the fact that they could be changed as men wished, by giving them just a repudiation letter or a certificate of divorce (Matt 19: 3-12). On the other hand, women could not in any case and from their own free will, separate themselves from their husband. They were condemned if they were found in an act of adultery without men being worried of their duty of conjugal fidelity (John 8: 2-11). Jewish women had no right to be on the religious, educational and political scene. Their right was to make children (1 Tim 2: 15). They were constantly considered minor in the legal sense of the term, they were depending all their life on a man: after their father, it was their husband or their eldest son who served them as guardian (John 19: 25-27). They never had true independence. Their condition was scarcely better than the women of the two other cultures.

Pamela Scalise gives the conditions the women in the Israelite society in the Old Testament:

The place of the women in the Israelite society was narrowly circumscribed by law and custom. An adult woman was a minor in the eyes of the law and lived under the authority of her nearest male relative. Even her vows to God could be cancelled by her father or her husband (Num 30: 3-16). Her husband could divorce her (Deut 24: 1-4) or take another wife (Ex 21: 10; Deut 21: 15-17), but she could not divorce him. She was subject to a terrible ordeal if her husband even suspected her of unfaithfulness (Num 5: 11-31). She could inherit the family lands only if there were no male heirs, but she could only marry within her own clan because the land would then pass to her husband (Num 27: 1-11; 36: 1-13).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Stanley, Grenz, and Denise Muir Kjesbo. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995, 65; Pamela J. Scalise, “Women in Ministry: Reclaiming Our Old Testament Heritage”. *Review & Expositor*. 83, no. 1(1986): 8.

Women in the Greek, Roman, and Jewish society were not really involved in the society, and were part of the society without really being a participant of it. Women were not especially well appreciated in their society at the time of the New Testament, and could even be seen as superfluous, embarrassing and should not be really a good element for society.

## WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament does not contain a theology of women. The question of women does not arise anymore for New Testament theologians, because Jesus gave them another perspective of God, and what he expected from his disciples. The almost casual freedom of Jesus has jostled the barriers; his affirmations dislocated religious classifications, and sacked the hierarchies admitted to the people of Israel. “Who is my mother or my brothers? And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about him, and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, is my brother (ἀδελφός) and my sister (ἀδελφή) and mother (μήτηρ) (Mark 3:35).”

Jesus never despised anyone, not even women. He never crushed them or rejected them. On the contrary, especially as recorded in Luke he saved them from loneliness (Luke 7: 12-15)<sup>10</sup>, from injustice (Luke 18: 1-8)<sup>11</sup>, from deformation and infirmity (Luke 13: 10-17)<sup>12</sup>, from sin (Luke 7: 36-50)<sup>13</sup>, and qualified them as disciples par excellence (Luke 10: 38-42)<sup>14</sup>. “Jesus is the compassionate Benefactor of the poor,”<sup>15</sup> the unhappy, the misunderstood, the meek, the persecuted (Matt 5: 22). “Luke’s own desire expresses emotion and draws attention to Jesus’ care for

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<sup>10</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 290.

<sup>11</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977, 447.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 375.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 234.

<sup>14</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 434-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 290.

women.”<sup>16</sup> “When anyone is in need to an unusual degree, Christ takes a special interest in him or her.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Consideration of Women by Jesus**

Christ’s dialogue with women is reported many times in the gospels, whereas in the Palestinian world men, especially if they were rabbis, spoke little with women, unless they had to judge one of them and even then they would not speak much with them. Even the apostles were surprised that Jesus was conversing with a woman, indeed a Samaritan (John 4: 27).

They were astonished to find him carrying on a conversation with a woman. Whatever might be thought of the propriety of asking for a drink (John 4: 7), no rabbi would have carried on a conversation with a woman. One of their sayings ran, “A man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter, on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men may say.” Yet, though the disciples were astonished, they did not question the action of the woman (the first hypothetical question) or that of their Master (the second). They had learned enough to know that, while Jesus did not always respect the conventions of the rabbis, he had good reasons for what he did.<sup>18</sup>

Christ’s relationship with women is quite different<sup>19</sup>, whether it is the woman who touches the fringe of the mantle, where Jesus highlights her faith and proclaims her renovated purity and life in front of the crowd (Luke 8: 43-48),<sup>20</sup> or the nameless sinful woman at Simon the Pharisee’s house (Luke 7: 36-50)<sup>21</sup>: it is Jesus who

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<sup>16</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek testament commentary. Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978, 286.

<sup>17</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977, 375.

<sup>18</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, 242-43.

<sup>19</sup> Groothuis, chap 1

<sup>20</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 346-48; François Bovon and Helmut Koester, *Luke 1 : A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002, 338.

<sup>21</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Luke Vol.*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004, 176.



initiates the conversation with them, even more, he announces forgiveness,<sup>22</sup> healing, and peace (Mark 5: 27-34; Luke 7: 36-50)<sup>23</sup>. In the land of Tiro and Sidon, at the meeting with a woman of faith and humility<sup>24</sup>, a Syrophenician, pagan by birth and culture<sup>25</sup>, who was in an intense grief<sup>26</sup>, Jesus accepts the dialogue and grants healing (Mark 7: 24-30)<sup>27</sup>.

Christ also did not confine the woman's role to maternity, as it is written in 1 Timothy 2: 15: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing" (KJV). To the woman who declared, happy the woman who bore You and fed You (Luke 11:27), Jesus answers happy rather those who hear the word of God and put it into practice (Luke 11: 28). Thus it is not as a mother that Mary is honored, but as the one who meditates the word and implements, performs it, obeys it (Luke 1: 26-56). His concern for the recognition of the status of women was adduced by the frequency of encounters noted by the Gospels, especially in the gospel of Luke. He has meaningful encounters with Mary, Elizabeth, Anne, the widow of Nain, the sinner at Simon's house. He told about the woman who blessed the mother of Jesus, about the woman who was bent over (Luke 13: 10-17) he heals ... "Luke has portrayed her as one who hears and reflects on the divine word, who responds to it positively, even as one who proclaims it in prophetic fashion (1:26-38, 46-55; 2:19, 51)."<sup>28</sup> "Spiritual relationship

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<sup>22</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek testament commentary. Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978, 304.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 307.

<sup>24</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974, 259.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 260.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> James Luther Mays, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996.

<sup>28</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 461.

to Him is of much greater importance than natural relationship.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus does not make a distinction between man and woman when he says “he who does the will of my Father, he is a brother, a sister, a mother” (Matt 12: 46-50). Even the apostle Paul, who said to Timothy “the woman shall be saved by childbearing”, goes beyond this distinction when he writes: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3: 28 NRS).

Jesus overthrew and subverted the image that his contemporaries had of women and their place in society. His defense of women was evident and manifests itself constantly in their daily existence. He tells us about Martha and Mary, he even mentioned about the devoted women who serve him and follow him to the cross and the resurrection. Finally, there are many women who are to be described, sketched, drawn with certainty, in an expressive way by Jesus in the parables that Luke tells us.<sup>30</sup>

The fundamental reason why Jesus wanted to greatly elevate the status of women and to regard them as equal to men is that God himself, according to the Scriptures, considers all human persons to be equal. He offers his salvation to all human beings (John 3: 16), men and women without exception (Acts 8: 12). As a result, all have exactly the same rights (Gal 3: 26-28).

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<sup>29</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977, 331.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996, 2.

## Jesus, Protector of Women

The Jewish society of his time was strongly patriarchal.<sup>31</sup> Women went from the authority of their father (Num 30: 3-8) to that of their husband (Num 30: 10-15; 1 Cor 11: 3; Eph 5: 23), or from their brother (Gen 24: 29-50), or from their son (Luke 7: 11-17; John 19: 27)<sup>32</sup>. A woman could not be independent; it was unthinkable. Frequently, unhappiness and misery fell on unguarded widows (Mark 12: 42) or repudiated wives.

The Gospels evoke the extreme poverty of widows (Mark 12: 41-44, Luke 21: 1-4, Luke 7: 11-17, Luke 18: 1-8). As for the repudiated, they could be reduced, at best, to a situation of domesticity in the house of their father or brother and, or to prostitution<sup>33</sup> (Gen 38: 15-26, Judg 19), despite the fact that the Old Testament gave laws for the protection of the widows. The fact that the

Old Testament laws went to great lengths to protect widows testifies to their vulnerability to abuse (Exod. 22:21–23; Deut 14:29; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12; cf. 27:19); see also the prophets' denunciations (Isa 1:23; 10:2; cf. Job 22:9; 24:3; 31:16; Ps. 94:6). Widows are so potentially defenseless that God himself must defend them (Deut 10:18; Jer 49:11; Ps 68:6; 146:9; Luke 20:47; Jas. 1:27; 1 Tim 5:3–4, 8; 5:9–16).<sup>34</sup>

Thus Jesus follows God's laws of love that had been enshrined in the Old Testament towards the widows. Those laws were not really observed by God's people. Jesus' opposition to repudiation is obviously a prohibition on men getting rid

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<sup>31</sup> Stanley, Grenz, and Denise Muir Kjesbo. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995, 64. Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1997, chap 1. Alvera, Mickelsen, Patricia Gundry, and James I. Packer. *Women, Authority & the Bible [the Essays and Responses Here Were Selected from Among Those Presented at the Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible Held October 9 - 11, 1984, in Oak Brook, Illinois]*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Pr, 1986, 66.

<sup>32</sup> Watson E., Mills, Roger Aubrey Bullard, and Edgar V. McKnight. *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*. Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1997, 960.

<sup>33</sup> Melissa Hope Ditmore, *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work 1 I*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2006, 60; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub, 2002, 35-6; Gail Corrington. Streete, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, 44-6.

<sup>34</sup> Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.

of a wife like an old reformed garment (Matt 19: 3-11). In this matter, Jesus is indeed the protector of women against the “hardness of men’s hearts” (Matt 19: 8). “The Mosaic legislation in Deut 24:1–4 was thus not normative but only secondary and temporary, an allowance dependent on the sinfulness of the people. In that context it served as a control against abuse and excess.”<sup>35</sup>

It is true that Jesus considered the women, took care of them and protected them. However, did he want them as disciples? Was he teaching them as He was doing it to the fellow men, the disciples? Did Jesus give mission to be fulfilled by women?

### **Women’s Role for Jesus**

The gospel of Luke reminds that Christ, in his travels through towns and villages, was in the company of the twelve and several women (Luke 8: 1-3)<sup>36</sup>, three of whom are named, “Mary, called the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means (Luke 8: 2-3).” They are found around and at the foot of the cross (Matt 27: 55)<sup>37</sup>, at the burial of Jesus (Matt 27: 61; Mark 15: 47; Luke 23: 50-56) and then at the tomb for the first announcement of the resurrection (Matt 28: 1-8; Luke 24: 1-7).<sup>38</sup> It is to them that “an angel” (Matt 28: 5) or “two men” (Luke 24: 4), addressed the gospel, the good news (Luke 24: 1-7), and it is to them that the mission of announcing the resurrection to the disciples is

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<sup>35</sup> Donald A. Hagner, vol. 33B, *Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002, 548.

<sup>36</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 317-18.

<sup>37</sup> Trent C. Butler, vol. 3, *Luke*, Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 414-15.

<sup>38</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 831.

entrusted (Luke 24: 8-10, John 20: 17).<sup>39</sup> However, before going to announce to the eleven and the other men, Jesus presented himself to his group of following women, he came to meet the women's group, confirming to them to proclaim his resurrection and to go in Galilee to his followers (Matthew 28: 8-10). Jesus rewarded all the women who were serving him with their entire heart, and not only had he given them hope, but a great joy in showing himself to them.

During the announcement time, only three are named in the group of women. "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles" (Luke 24: 10). The least we can say is that the apostles considered their statements as nonsense, because for the men those women were maundering, blathering (Luke 24: 11). Because for them it was "senseless women's talk", so they did not believe them.<sup>40</sup> "Though Luke has a high view of women, he reflects here his awareness of the widespread tendency to discount the word of a woman."<sup>41</sup>

Richard N. Longenecker comments that

Many rabbis of the day doubted the ability of women to learn Torah and depreciated their worth. Jesus' attitude was totally different. By granting women the right to learn the good news of the kingdom and to participate in his ministry, Jesus imparted to women the new dignity and role. In so doing, he set a pattern for all his followers.<sup>42</sup>

Rebecca Merrill Groothuis epitomizes well that Jesus had another vision concerning the attitude towards women.

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<sup>39</sup> Rebecca Merrill. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1997, chap 1.

<sup>40</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977, 624.

<sup>41</sup> John Nolland, vol. 35C, *Word Biblical Commentary : Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 1191.

<sup>42</sup> Alvera, Mickelsen, Patricia Gundry, and James I. Packer. *Women, Authority & the Bible [the Essays and Responses Here Were Selected from Among Those Presented at the Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible Held October 9 - 11, 1984, in Oak Brook, Illinois]*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Pr, 1986, 71-2.

“He spoke to women in public (Luke 13: 10-13; John 4: 7-27), though women of that time had no place in public discourse. He taught women theology, both in private and in public, much to the surprise of his disciples (Luke 10: 38-42; John 4: 7-27; 11: 21-27) and contrary to the rabbinic belief that women and theology should have nothing to do with each other.”<sup>43</sup>

Even if the men did not consider what said the women, they fulfilled the mission that Jesus sent them to do. They went and announced the greatest message that humanity needed to hear. Jesus is resurrected from the dead, and by this act he is giving deliverance and joy to everyone who accepts this great news.

If the message has to be preached and announced by men only; why God did not send the angels to the men disciples directly to announce to them great news of Christ resurrection? Why did He choose to send the angels to those women who were looking for Jesus? Was it because they worried for the fact they were not seeing his body? Were they more sad than the men concerning Jesus’ death? What we know is that God sent messengers at the burial place to smooth those women’s heart, and especially to remain them the promises given by Jesus before his death.

They said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? “He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,” saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” (Luke 24:5-7)

The angel remained them what Jesus had already declared during his ministry:

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. (John 2:19, 21-22).

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<sup>43</sup> Rebecca Merrill. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1997, chap 1.

Afterward, Jesus presented himself to his female followers, he gave them a special mission, to go, testify that he is alive, and announce the news to his male followers. What a great honor!

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." (Mat 28:8-10)

There, it was not a question of gender. It was more a question of who were ready in their heart and mind to accomplish the mission given by Jesus. The men at the resurrection time were not ready to receive and proclaim any message, but the women were. Does it mean that they were replacing men at that point of time?

God uses those who are ready to go for the mission, not especially a specify gender. Those who are prepared, preconditioned, open their hearts and mind to receive and distribute the message given. For the Old Testament, God always used people to deliver a message from Him. Their responsibility was to speak the news coming from God. At the resurrection women received Jesus' message, because their hearts and minds were open for it, and took the responsibility to deliver it with joy (Matt 28: 8).

In Acts 10: 39-43, it is testified about the mission of those who saw Jesus, Peter is witnessing that:

"We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree." Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead." And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." (Act 10:39-43 NKJ)

What I find interesting, is that Jesus chose to show himself openly to women. Not all women, those who looked for Jesus with their entire heart and loved him. Did he eat and drink with them and commanded them to go and preach? The verses did not express anything about it. At least, after his resurrection, Jesus gave to the women the chance to testify and witness of the wonderful event that he promised to men and women, for after the fall. Did Jesus give to the women those testimonies and witnesses just for this point of time, and after this mission had been removed from them? This element will be exposed with the Holy Spirit's mission for men and women.

Jesus considers women as true interlocutors.<sup>44</sup> The Gospel of Luke thus shows it in the house of two women, Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, in Bethany (Luke 10: 38-42). Martha bustles in serving like a good hostess to welcome her guest with dignity, while Mary remains seated at the feet of Jesus, whom she listens to. But Martha does not hear it like this, and the evangelist, with a beautiful literary talent, shows us her frustration and the fact that she is furious, giving, in an almost single sentence, the reproach to Jesus and her sister: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me." The narrative bestows maybe the impression that Jesus does not care really for her concern of the moment. However, his attention is not focused on the same service than Martha. Martha was focused on the domestic service. On the other hand, the service Jesus was asking of her was her "discipleship". A service given without having a relationship with God is tiring, does not afford any joy, but give irritations. Joel B. Green, in the line with Turid Karlsen Seim, comments that what Jesus is asking to Martha is "to choose with Mary and to enter a relationship with Jesus in which one listens to his word rather

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<sup>44</sup> Anthony J. Gittins, *The Way of Discipleship: Women, Men, and Today's Call to Mission*. 2016. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4773741>, 27-8.



than being concerned about the table.”<sup>45</sup> Joel B. Green explained the attitude of Mary that Jesus wanted Martha to adopt, is this statement: “She is positioned ‘at the Lord’s feet,’ signifying her submissiveness, particularly her status as a disciple (cf. Acts 22:3).”<sup>46</sup> Mary was serving God in staying at his feet to understand what his demands were.

For Jesus, the “natural” role of women is not to be confined to the domestic service. If a woman wishes it, she is not only habilitated, or she is not only authorized, but Jesus requires of her to be part of what in traditional Judaism was reserved only for men.<sup>47</sup> She has the right to reflection and study.

Jesus did not just throw the women a few theological tidbits. Uneducated and socially undervalued though they were, he gave to women the real meat of his word. In all these things, “the equality of the woman before God and the created solidarity of man and woman is dealt with in real earnest over against the contemporary cultic and social degradation of woman.”<sup>48</sup>

Jesus never conformed to human traditions and this is one of the reason for which he was crucified, because human traditions were not according to God’s plan for humanity.

The Gospels are traversed by the manifestations of the humble and insistent faith of women. It is strange that this presence of women has been so little noticed for two thousand years. It is not the Gospels that are misogynous but the reading that is made of it, which pushes women back into the background and favors men who do not understand better what Jesus requires of them. Jesus chastised frequently his own disciples saying: “are you still so foolish” (Matt 15:16, Mark 7: 18 NET), “without

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<sup>45</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997, 434. Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message : Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Green. p. 435.

<sup>47</sup> Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message : Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 102-03.

<sup>48</sup> Rebecca Merrill. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1997, chap 1. Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2010, 52-65

understanding” (Matt 15:16 NRS, Mark 7: 18); Do you still not perceive (Matt 16:9 NRS)...”, “minds closed” (Mark 8:17 NJB), “hearts hardened” (Mark 8:17 NRS). It seems that Jesus was a bit harsh with them!

Jesus’ relationship with the women of his time is neither misogynistic nor feministic.<sup>49</sup> It is a relationship of love and respect. For Jesus, women are part of humankind like others. It is often said that he “dares” to surround himself with women, but it is still half of humanity! There is something very natural in Jesus’ attitude. Of course, he is innovative, but in the name of this humanity that has been made man and woman, it seems natural that he speaks to men and women, and surrounds himself with women, to listen to them, to benefit from their words, to teach them, and give instructions as disciples. What is surprising is that the evangelists, who were men, talk a lot about these women. They are not put aside in the evangelical stories. Let us see if the reaction and the relationship with the Holy-Spirit follow the same pattern of Jesus or adopts another one?

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<sup>49</sup> F. Scott. Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2013, 101.

## The Consideration of Women by the Holy Spirit

### The Filling of the Holy Spirit

After the ascension of Jesus to heaven the eleven apostles stayed in Jerusalem and gathered in the upper room (Acts 1:13), with the women, the mother, and the brothers of Jesus, persevering in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:14). “Luke, in his Gospel, makes frequent mention of the women who followed our Lord, and generally of things that happened to women (see Luke 23:27, 49, 55; 24:10, 22, etc. See also Luke 7:37, etc.; 8:23; 10:38, 45; etc.). We notice the same tendency in Acts, here, and in ch. 2:17, 18; 5:14; 9:36; 12:13; 16:14, 16; 17:4, 34; 18:26; 21:9; 24:24; 25:23; etc.”<sup>50</sup> Acts 1: 15 declares that the number of persons in the upper room was of one hundred and twenty (Acts 1: 15). It is not explained how the number of the people increased to one hundred and twenty or if they were already together. Nevertheless, it is said that their number was one hundred and twenty and men and women were together persevering in prayer and supplication. F. F. Bruce explains that in reality the number of people was “wider”, because only men were considered like in the gospels, thus they were around five hundred counting men and women.<sup>51</sup> For Hans Conzelmann, Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews “One hundred and twenty men are necessary to constitute a local Sanhedrin (*Sanh.* 1.6). Luke does not have this requirement in mind, however, since women are also included in the group.”<sup>52</sup> It seems that for those three scholars the number of people was of one hundred and twenty. For this study we will remain on the number one hundred and twenty were men and women are together.

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<sup>50</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: Acts of the Apostles Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 4.

<sup>51</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988, 44.

<sup>52</sup> Hans Conzelmann, Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews, *Acts of the Apostles : A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, 10.

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1 NRS). Does this mean that the one hundred and twenty people from Acts 1: 15 were still there? Does this mean that the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were also in the same place on the day of Pentecost? In Acts 2: 2, 4, the Holy-Spirit filled the entire place and the people. When the Holy-Spirit filled the people did He select part of the population and reject the other one? Let us analyze the word “fill”, “whole” and “all”, in Acts 2.

The Bible used different words to express the fact of being filled. In the New Testament six Greek words are extracted. However, only some are used for the Holy-Spirit. In Acts 2, two Greek words are used corresponding to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

One of them is, **πίμπλημι** (verb) which formulates the idea of being saturated inside the heart, the mind, with a feeling, an emotion, a desire (Acts 5: 17, Acts 19: 29, Luke 6: 11). It indicates the idea of saturating a place, a space, an element, a container, the idea of being impregnate, totally wet, totally dip, inundate (Matt 22: 10; 27: 48, Luke 5: 7) it is spatially “fill with” ; passive, of intellectual and spiritual processes “be filled with, experience completely” (Luke 1.15). This word expresses the saturation of a state of mind (Luke 4: 28; 6: 11, Acts 3: 10), but is specially used for the idea of being saturated by the Holy-Spirit, and it is employed eight times in the New Testament (Luke 1: 15, 41, 67; Acts 2: 4; 4: 8, 31; 9: 17; 13: 9). The verb **πίμπλημι** is translated as “to fill, to be full, to complete, to fill up, to be fulfilled, to be completed, finished, elapsed, to satisfy a need totally, to satiate, to be satiated, to cause to be completely full, fill, fulfill.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature : A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur.*

In Luke 1: 15, one of God's messengers came and announced to Zacharias the high priest that he will have a son and this son will be full of the Holy-Spirit from the womb of his Mother. Why did the Holy Spirit fill John the Baptist while he was in his Mother's womb, while he could not speak and think, while he could not reason and choose by himself to have an interaction with the Holy-Spirit? Was it to change his way of reasoning, of thinking, of behaving? Thus, a question arises there, does a baby already have the capacity of reasoning while still in the mother's womb? If not, had the Holy-Spirit been given to John the Baptist, since his mother's womb to protect him from a future sinful behavior? That is an interesting subject to study in a new research. The Greek word **πίμπλημι** does not develop how the Spirit fills believers, because this word in others dispositions contains the idea of saturating a place, a space, a mind, an element. It is possible to say that the Holy-Spirit was saturating John by His presence, and used him as a vessel, a recipient, a container; as a house, as a boat, if we take the presupposition that a baby is not reasoning in his mother's womb. This fact happened before John was born. The Holy-Spirit is a verbal genitive of content for the verb **πίμπλημι** which indicate that the Holy-Spirit is the content and fills a container.

The Bible does not explain why John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit, since being in his mother's womb, but expounds that he would have a great mission to accomplish. A question can come to mind here: Is this great mission only reserved for special people or qualified people? Is this mission only for a short time, or like John the Baptist for a life time?

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Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 658; Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000, 313.

The other word meaning “to fill” is πληρώω (verb), which verbalizes the idea of being saturated inside with a feeling, an emotion, knowledge, wisdom, or understanding (Luke 2: 40, John 16: 6, Acts 5: 28, Rom 15: 14; 2 Cor. 7: 4, Col 1: 9, 2 Tim 1: 4). It reveals the idea of saturating a place, a space (Matt 13: 48, Luke 3: 5, John 12: 3), has the idea of great satisfaction, of being satiated, great abundance (Luke 6: 21; Romans 15: 13, 19, Phil 4:18, 19; Col 2: 10). It expresses also the fact of being filled by a bad spirit and evil (Acts 5: 3, Rom 1: 29). it also denotes the fact of being complete, perfect, totally finished, the condition when nothing is missing (Matt 23: 32; Luke 7: 1; John 3: 29; 15: 11; 16: 24; 2 Cor. 10: 6; Eph 1: 23; 3: 19; 4: 10; Phil 1: 11; 2: 2; 1 John 1:4; Rev 3: 2; 6: 11) the fact of being fulfilled, meaning that something had been accomplished that the result of what had been said happened, that an event became real and was finished or started its point; when a time, a period, a moment is fully arrived (Matt 1: 22; Mark 1: 15; Luke 1: 20; John 7: 8; Acts 1: 16; 2Thess. 1: 11; Jas 2: 23)<sup>54</sup>. It expresses the idea of being realized, being done (Acts 14: 26; Rom 8: 4; 13: 8; Gal 5: 14; Eph 5: 18; Col 4: 17).<sup>55</sup> It is used furthermore with the Holy Spirit and is employed four times in the New Testament and only once in the book of Acts.<sup>56</sup> In Acts 2: 2-4, during the day of Pentecost, a rushing mighty wind filled the whole house; here there is the idea of saturating a space, the entire place, but not the human beings. It is said that divided tongues, as of fire, sat upon each of them. Here, it is not possible to describe the inner part of each individual, but we have the certitude that a mighty wind was filling the environment of the disciples and tongues

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<sup>54</sup> Matt 2: 15, 17, 23; 3: 15; 4: 14; 5: 17; 8: 17; 21: 4; 26: 54, 56; 27: 9; Mark 14: 49; 15: 28; Luke 4: 21; 9: 31; 21: 24; 22: 16; 24: 44; John 12: 38; 13: 18; 15: 25; 17: 12; 18: 9, 32; 19: 24, 36; Acts 3: 18; 12: 25; 13: 25, 27; 14: 26;

<sup>55</sup> William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature : A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 670-72.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel, vol. 5, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998, 34.

of fire were over them. Verse 4 expresses an interesting point. It uses the verb **πίμπλημι** which is already explained above. Therefore it is possible to say that the mighty wind filled the whole environment, but as well the whole inner part of the people present in this place, as they were themselves a place to be filled. Here as well it was for a special mission, preach the good news to those who will come for the Pentecost feast. According to Wallace in Acts 2: 4, “The Spirit-filling (with **πίμπλημι**) in Acts is never commanded, nor is it related particularly to sanctification. Rather, it is a special imbuing of the Spirit for a particular task (similar to the Spirit’s ministry in the OT).”<sup>57</sup>

Since it is not said that one of the one hundred and twenty persons left, we can suppose that all of them remained in the room, because, all of them loved Jesus and wanted to serve Him, with all their heart and their strength. Therefore men and women were filled, saturated by the presence of the Holy-Spirit in them. The women were filled by the Holy-Spirit, God did not reject them. The Holy-Spirit sent those who were permeated by Him in mission in Jerusalem. When He filled the believers He did not make any selection. He filled entirely men and women. Because He did not do a selection when he filled the one hundred and twenty persons, did He make a selection at the mission time? Did He select only some to speak in tongue and to preach the “wonderful works of God” (Acts 2: 11). The twelve apostles, including Matthias the new one added by God, could not speak simultaneously at least fifteen tongues (Acts 2: 6-11), unless it was done alternately. In Greek the word used is **διαλέκτω** (Act 2:6 BGT) which comes from the word **διάλεκτος**, and is translated in

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<sup>57</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1999; 2002, 94.

the majority of the biblical versions as “language”.<sup>58</sup> However, I would take the primary meaning, which is “dialect”.<sup>59</sup> The author Luke is giving the detail of fifteen regions. Those regions are Parthia, Media and Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea, Capadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Lybia adjoining Cyrene, Rome, Crete and Arabia (Acts 2: 9-10). Why did Luke list the fifteen regions? Certainly, like nowadays each region had several dialects, and those dialects, those “way of speaking”<sup>60</sup> could elevate themselves at a number of one hundred and twenty. God never does things by accident. The twelve apostles would take more than the weekend of Pentecost to say the “wonderful works of God”. Even if the author is focused only on Peter and the eleven others apostles (Acts 2: 14), all the one hundred and twenty people were involved in the preaching mission. Therefore the women, included in the number, did the work as well. In case, the reader had any doubt that men and women were involved in the preaching work, that they were all together, filled, saturated by the Holy-Spirit, and were proclaiming the glory of God and not theirs, the author reminded it in Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem (Acts 2: 14-39). He is reminding the reader, the prophesy of Joel 2: 28-32:

*“And afterward,  
 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.  
 Even on my servants, both men and women,  
 I will pour out my Spirit in those days.  
 I will show wonders in the heavens  
 and on the earth,  
 blood and fire and billows of smoke.  
 The sun will be turned to darkness  
 and the moon to blood  
 before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*

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<sup>58</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000, 110.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



*And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved;  
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
there will be deliverance,  
as the Lord has said,  
even among the survivors  
whom the Lord calls.”*

However, in Acts 2: 17-21, at the beginning of Peter’s sermon, he does not use the word “Afterward” (μετὰ ταῦτα, or אַחֲרָיְכֶם (Joel 3:1)) expressed by the prophet Joel.

***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.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.  
I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.  
The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.  
And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Peter used the words “In the last days” (ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (Act 2:17)). Why did he use this expression? Does it mean that “the last days” started at the time the Apostles? “**Afterward**, *i. e.*, after what had been before announced in verse 23 in Joel 2; it is more indefinite than the **last days**, although, in general, the meaning is the same.”<sup>61</sup>

Let us explore what happened in Joel 2, before the “Afterward” (μετὰ ταῦτα, or אַחֲרָיְכֶם (Joel 2:28 or 3:1)). Nothing is an accident in the Bible, everything is planned. The meaning of every word, every element that presents itself can be sought,

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<sup>61</sup> John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Otto Schmoller and John Forsyth, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures : Joel*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008, 28.

dug, and meditated, without being able to exhaust or deplete it, because the sacred text does not have the same status as any other writing. It is fantastic to be able to reconcile the passion for God and the attraction for the Bible.

To understand Joel 2:28-32 that Peter used in his sermon, and see the reason why Peter explained the events to his contemporaries with Joel's prophecy, it is important to do a retrospective, it is important to return in Joel 2:21-27 and view what are the events happening before Joel 2:28-32.

To perceive better some events in the New Testament it is fundamental to know the announcements given by the prophets in the Old Testament, which are fulfilled in the New Testament.

### **Joel's Announcement of the Coming of Jesus and the Filling by the Holy-Spirit**

#### Joel's Prophecy about the Coming of Jesus

The book of Joel starts by the desolation of everything. The earth (Joel 1:4, 10), the people (Joel 1: 8), the trees (Joel 1: 12) and the beasts (Joel 1: 18, 20) are in confusion, in distress, because God is not among them. There is no joy and gladness on the entire earth. This book continues by the call of the people of Israel to repentance (Joel 2: 12-17). God seeing the desolation of the land, will have compassion for the people and wants to save them (Joel 2: 18-20). "In the midst of oppression, and disasters from foreign enemies, violence and corruptions from rulers at home, people needed comfort and consolation, and then God chose to give promises of future redemption."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, God is making a promise to all of them. He declares that He will be with them and as result the joy which was not there will come, will be given back to them in abundance in everything. Because God is with

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<sup>62</sup> Edward L. Curtis, "Some Features of Messianic Prophecy Illustrated by the Book of Joel." *The Old Testament Student* 3, no. 5 1884, 141. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3156452>.

them, Joel is declaring to the אֲדָמָה “earth, cultivated ground, landed property”<sup>63</sup>, (Joel 2:21) the place producing plant or the realm of the dead, to the בְּהֵמַת שָׂדֵה “animals of the field” (Joel 2:22), to the עֵץ (which is a singular collective) “trees”, especially the תְּאֵנָה the “fig tree” and the גֵּזֶן “vine”, and to the בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן “children of Zion” (Joel 2:23) to “be glad and rejoice” (Joel 2: 21, 23).

Why is the Prophet Joel specifying these specific elements, the “earth”, the “animals of the field”, the “fig tree”, the “vine” and the “children of Zion”?

The “fig tree”, the “animals of the field”, the “earth”, are reminded by the prophet Joel in remembrance of what happened to them at the time when the human beings decided to sin, transgressing God’s law. The fall of humans was a disobedience to a commandment of God. In spite of the prohibition of God, they took of the forbidden fruit and ate it (Genesis 3: 1-6). Curse accompanies those who dare disobey the commandments of God: “I put before you the curse, if you do not obey the commandment of the Lord, your God.” (Deut 11: 28).

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, immediately after their disobedience, their physical strength, their vigor, their power of regeneration began to decline, to deteriorate, and God explained to them the consequences that their choice had engendered the animals are cursed, the earth is cursed, they will have much suffering, their decline will be expressed by troubles, sorrow, wickedness, iniquity, mischief, injustice, witchcraft, divination, idolatrous worship, murders, dominion on one and another, etc. Then they will die.

By the reminder of all the events that happen during the fall, for the prophet Joel, two elements are really important for the establishment of God’s Kingdom or

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<sup>63</sup> Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M.E.J Richardson and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1999, 15.

Israel's Kingdom. First, the coming of God on earth as a promise to reinstall joy to the earth, animals and human beings second, the distribution of the Holy Spirit on the human beings who are restored.

Joel 2: 21-27, voices great miracles and the fact that God said that "you will know that I am among you in Israel" (Joel 2:27 NJB). Joel 2: 21-27 is the symbolic of the first coming of Christ on earth, who will die for the restoration of the everything, granting joy to all of them. This restoration promised by God is needed because of the disobedience of humans which occurred from the beginning of the earth, which created desolation and confusion. The human beings and their environment will be restored through God's first coming on earth.

Curtis Edward L, explains that

"Joel in common with the other prophets speaks of Jehovah dwelling in Zion. Zion is the centre of the, Kingdom of God, and Jehovah actually dwelling among his people is an essential element of the O. T. representations of the Messianic times."<sup>64</sup>

Charles Elliot summarizes the events in the book of Joel in three points:

The arrangement of the prophecy, according to the symbolical principle of interpretation, is the following, viz.: (I). An announcement of desolating judgments on the backsliding people of God. These judgments are symbolized under the form of four invasions of locusts, perhaps with reference to the four great worldly powers, as set forth in Daniel. This concludes with a call to a thorough and a universal repentance (I.-II., 17); (2) an announcement of salvation to the penitent people, restoring what they had lost, and bestowing upon them richer blessings (II., I 8-29); (3) the contrast between God's dealings with the nations that had persecuted Israel, and his dealings with his restored people (II., 30 – III., 21).<sup>65</sup>

Elliott comments that in Joel's book, it is not exposed directly a "clear and precise" description of the "prediction of the coming of the Messiah".

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<sup>64</sup> Edward L. Curtis, "Some Features of Messianic Prophecy Illustrated by the Book of Joel" *The Old Testament Student* 3, no. 5 (1884), 144. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3156452>.

<sup>65</sup> Charles. Elliott, "The Book of Joel." *The Old Testament Student* 4, no. 6 (1885), 264. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3156771>.

“The basis of the hope of Israel's future and glorious destiny was the coming of the Messiah. Joel does not describe, in express terms, the Messianic foundation of Israel's hopes; but he evidently had a general conception of it; and his prophecy is a fundamental one with reference to this subject.”<sup>66</sup>

The Fulfillment of Joel's Prophecy with Jesus Life (Joel 2: 21-27)

*Joyfulness because of the Coming of God on Earth*

When Jesus came on earth as a baby, an angel came to “shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock” (Luke 2: 8-9), announcing to them that he brought for them good news “of great joy which will be for all the people” (Luke 2: 10), for it was born for them “in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2: 11). This angel joined a multitude of others angels and praised God, proclaiming peace on earth and kindness toward men (Luke 2: 13). The prophet Joel was announcing a great joy to the “children of Zion”. There the angels come to announce to the shepherds that the great joy promised before is there and they can rejoice about it. God's promise is fulfilled by the birth of the “Savior” in the “city of David”.

*Joyfulness Given in Jesus to Nature and to Human Beings*

Jesus lived in full harmony with creation, and the others marveled at it and were saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matthew 8: 27 NRS). He was concerned practically when life was threatened (tempered storm). He was offering the gift of “vital commodities” (bread in the desert, miraculous fishing, etc.). These miracles are impressive because they touch on “nature”, a domain reserved for God and, in the case of the sea, the seat of dark forces that man cannot control. Often Jesus takes the initiative. The discretion that follows these miracles contrasts with the extraordinary nature of the event.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 265

The Messianic time had been announced by the prophet Joel. He continues by the proclamation of another event which will occur just after this Messianic period.

Joel 2: 28-32 determines the distribution of the Holy-Spirit on all flesh, men and women. This event follows the time of the restoration, of the refreshment of the earth, the animals, the trees and the children of Zion, because of the presence of God in the midst of Israel.

Joel's Prophecy about the Mission of Restored People of God (Joel 2: 28-32)

Just after the event that God came on earth, in the life of Jesus, the prophet Joel announced the mission of the restored people of God. In this prophecy, everybody is involved God, men and women, old, young, and also God's menservants and God's maidservants.

The whole people will be the vehicle through which these highest spiritual utterances will be made, and as all barriers will be then broken down, woman is named by the side of man. To this prophesying are conjoined, in a sort of secondary way, other modes of divine manifestation, "dreams," "visions." As there is to be no difference of sex, so there is to be none of age, in regard to the sharing of this Spirit. Even those who would seem to be unfitted for it shall receive it—"old men and children." Why, it may be asked, shall "old men dream dreams?" Because they are better fitted for "dreams," just as young men, or children are for "visions," though the reverse of this would seem to be more natural. But the condition of things predicted by the prophet would be every way extraordinary.—**And the servants.** This is added as something very singular, וְגַם "and even." Nay, something unheard of shall then happen, namely, that slaves as well as freemen shall partake of this Spirit. In other words, this social distinction shall then be abolished.<sup>67</sup>

Pusey expressed it in a wider way, he presents "all flesh" with a wider meaning. For Him all flesh, "does not include every individual in the race, but it includes the whole race, and individuals throughout it, in every nation, sex, or condition, Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian, *i. e.*, educated or uneducated, rich or

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<sup>67</sup> John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Otto Schmoller and John Forsyth, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures : Joel*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008, 28.

poor, bond or free, male or female. On all was to be poured the Holy Spirit.”<sup>68</sup> It is observed here that God ignores social rank, ethnic origin, but also the sexual belonging of the individual. Is He really ignoring those elements? In the perspective presented, God is not neglecting the difference; He is not forgetting the difference. On the contrary, He is showing all of them, He is expressing all of them, to affirm, to confirm that He uses everyone.

Why did God promise to pour His Spirit on all flesh? Because God gave back this great joy to nature and to human beings. He gave a mission to men and women who know that they had been restored, who received this great joy of their restitution by Christ death, to go and proclaim it for the men and women who do not know it. This mission could not be done alone, the men and women needed a powerful help for the mission given by Christ. Therefore God promised, since the prophet Joel, that just after He would come on earth He would do something for men and women of each age and condition who know about their restoration. He would give His own Spirit to men and women to allow them to do a great job, an amazing mission.

#### The Fulfillment of Joel’s Prophecy with the Restored people of God

When Peter quoted Joel’s prophecy, he believed that the time he was living was the time where the Holy-Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. He believed it, because, it was the time just after the fulfillment of the restoration of the nations. It was the time just after God came on the earth, in the person of Jesus-Christ. The fact which was interesting, as mentioned earlier above, is that Peter thought that his time was already the last days.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>69</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988, 60-61.

The expression ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις “the last days”, is found in different contexts. One of them is with the virtuous woman who fears God, “She is clothed in strength and dignity, she can laugh at the day to come” (Prov 31: 25). There, it is presented a bit differently ἡμέραις ἐσχάταις but it has the same meaning and in Hebrew it is לַיָּמֵי אֶתְרֵךְ, translated “the days to come, at the time to come, the later days, the future, the last days” (2 Tim 3:1, Jas 5:3). The next time that this expression is found is in Isaiah 2:2 “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.”

Therefore, the last days, the future, the days to come, the later days started after Jesus came on earth, and the pouring of the Holy-Spirit with the purpose of mission started “the last days”, which is at the day of the Pentecost. It is seen in this study that God is calling everyone, men, women, old and young to do the mission controlled by the great general, the Holy-Spirit. Were the women seen at this moment just as a “spare wheel”, like it is frequently taught sometimes? It seems not. Women were part of the mission, because it was in the plan of God, and the prediction was done since Joel’s time.

When man and woman fell, they started their deterioration together, and bore the consequences together. The man and woman have been restored together by Christ’s death. Why they cannot do as well the mission together?

God’s will is that the entire humanity should be involved in His plan of Salvation. Both parts constitute the Humanity, men and women. Both had been degraded by the fall, both received the entire renovation from Christ’s death, and at the last days both parts are involved in the mission. God allowed it to start at the day



of Pentecost, and by Peter, we know that the mission can be done by men and women who had been restored.

If the last days were at Peter's time, just after the time that Jesus spent on earth, after the day that Jesus went back in heaven fulfilling the proclamation from the prophet Joel, at the days of the Pentecost when the Holy-Spirit had been poured out on men and women restored by God's presence, and where men and women were commissioned by God under the direction of the Holy-Spirit. Where does the idea come that women cannot be used in ministry, and only some gifts are reserved for them? Let us analyze this a little further.

At that time, women were accepted to do the work that Jesus asked each disciple to do in Matthew 28: 20: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20). For this sentence, the setting is different for Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the book of Matthew, only the eleven apostles were there to hear this command and they were on the Mountain appointed by Jesus in Galilee (Matt 28: 16). In the book of Mark, it is the same thing, only the eleven apostles received the command to go and make disciples (Mark 16: 15) but they were eating (Mark 16: 14). However, in the book of Luke, two disciples out of the eleven apostles met Jesus on the way going to the village of Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24: 13-24). Recognizing Jesus and his messages they went back in Jerusalem to announce the resurrection of Jesus to the eleven apostles and those who were with them gathered together (Luke 24: 28-43). At this time, Jesus

presented himself to them and commanded them to make disciples throughout the nations, starting with Jerusalem (Luke 24: 44-49).

Having the setting for the book of Luke and admitting that Luke is the author of the book of Acts<sup>70</sup>, it is understandable to discern why so much people were gathered together waiting for what Jesus had said to them.

The purpose of Jesus is that all human beings work together for his glory and to announce the “wonderful works of God” for them.

We have seen that men and women can work together in God’s work. Does the Holy-Spirit make a selection or a special distinction in the distribution of the gifts that He is sharing to those who became part of the church, to those who had been restored?

Peter is saying to the people of his time, through Joel’s prophecy, that the last time of this world is incepting in their period, and they have to be ready now, not tomorrow. If the last days started at the time of the apostles before even the time that Paul knew that he would become an apostle, and if the men and the women were working together for the expansion of God’s kingdom, all of them filled by the Holy-Spirit, where does the idea that women cannot be in ministry come from? Is it a biblical idea? Let us study, a little bit, the distribution of the gifts of the Holy-Spirit.

### **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Pauline Writings**

Now that we know that everyone is involved in God’s mission and that the Holy-Spirit fills men, women, old and young, equally, a question still remains. Does the Holy-Spirit do a selection in the gifts that he is distributing? A study of the different biblical passages will be done on this concern. Three texts are exposing the

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<sup>70</sup> Mark Bailey, Tom Constable, Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, *Nelson's New Testament Survey : Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the New Testament*. Nashville: Word, 1999, 194-95.

gifts and ministries from the Holy-Spirit, Romans 12: 3-8, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4: 7-16. Nevertheless in this study, I will dwell more on 1 Corinthians 12:28.

In Romans 12: 3-8, the gifts of the Holy-Spirit are presented, determining that there is one body in Christ (Rom 12: 5), and different functions of the members (Rom 12: 4, 6-8). In 1 Corinthians 12, it is a bit more detailed about the organization of the body with the gifts.

The Apostle Paul, expresses the fact that believers who are baptized (1 Cor 12: 13), are considered as part of a body, and this body is Christ body (1 Cor 12: 27). From whom is this body constituted? From baptized people as it is said earlier. Who are those baptized members? In Acts 8: 12 (NRS), it is said: “But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men (ἄνδρες) and women (γυναῖκες).” Therefore, men and women were part of the body of Christ at that time. In this body, “There are diversities of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries (NKJ) [many different ways of serving (NJB)] (διακονιῶν), but the same Lord” (1 Cor 12:4, 5).

**χαρισμάτων** is a neuter noun coming from the verbal noun **χάρισμα**, which is from the verb **χαρίζομαι** which is translated “to give”. The word **χάρισμα**, is denoting “what has been given, gift”; as the result of a gracious act of God “gift of grace, favor bestowed, benefit”, with the meaning varying according to the context: “privileges granted (Rom 11: 29), rescue from danger (2 Cor 1: 11), gift of redemption (Rom 5: 15-16)”; as a concrete manifestation of grace in the form of extraordinary powers given to individuals, often in the plural gifts, special abilities (Rom 12: 6); the ability

to be self-restrained in matters of sex (1 Cor 7: 7); the bestowal of special ability given through ordination what God has given, endowment (1Tim 4:14; 1 Pet 4:10).<sup>71</sup>

The Holy-Spirit gives abilities, privileges only to those who have accepted the grace, which certify, attest, or authenticate the concrete manifestation of the grace of God towards human beings. The gifts are conferred by the generosity of the Holy Spirit. Those gifts are perfect when we receive them, although the one who receives them can learn to use them better and better, or sometimes the Holy Spirit gives directly the ability of using it. The gifts of the Spirit can be conferred suddenly, at any point in the experience of the believer. The giving of the gifts of the Holy Spirit seems more or less independent of the maturity attained by the believer from the point of view of growth in grace; it is being understood that the Lord can judge the capacity of each individual. They cannot spring from the inner life but are only sovereign acts of the great donor, the Holy Spirit. They play an important role in God's plan. Spiritual gifts do not belong to us, they are God's property. We are only instruments that God uses to bring the spiritual gift where it is needed. The gifts of the Holy Spirit equip each person and give them to act in the call that God has for them (1 Cor 12: 8-10). Those gifts given by the Holy-Spirit allow a better service for God's work.

**διακονιῶν** is a feminine noun coming from **διακονία**, which means or is translated as service generally, to prepare God's people for productive service. It expresses performance of a service (Acts 6:4; 1 Cor 16: 15; 2 Cor 11: 8; Eph 4: 12; 2 Tim 4: 11; Heb 1: 14; Rev 2: 19). It is a specific domestic service, engagement in preparations for a social event, such as preparing meals, serving, preparation (Luke 10:40). This word is presented as the role or position of one serving God in a special way, functioning in the interest of a larger public, task service, office of an

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<sup>71</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000, 407.

ecclesiastical overseer, receive a ministry (Acts 1:17; 20: 24; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12: 5; 2 Cor 3: 7; 5:18; 1 Tim 1: 12)<sup>72</sup>, ministry of service in behalf of the Gospel (Acts 21: 19; Rom 11: 13; 2 Cor 4: 1; 6: 3; Col4: 17; 2 Tim 4: 5), ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), rendering of specific assistance, as a charitable giving, Aid, support, distribution, arrangement for provision (Acts 6:1; 11:29; 12:25). διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας, in a kind contribution, was presented as a service in the context of rendered in an intermediary capacity, mediation, assignment, (2 Cor 9:12). It denotes intermediary function; the context informs the reader that the mission involves the bringing of a gift (Rom 15: 31; 2 Cor 8: 4; 9: 1). It is viewed as well as an administrative function, service as attendant, aide, or assistant (Rom 12: 7). It is also used in the context of spirits sent out on assignment (Heb 1:14).<sup>73</sup>

The word **διακονία**, used for the ministry that each individual should do in Christ's body. It is used with Martha. ἡ δὲ Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περι πολλήν **διακονίαν**, and ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν **διακονεῖν** (Luke 10:40 BGT).<sup>74</sup> This word is used in this context as a domestic service given to a guest, and there it was a domestic service given especially for Jesus. It is a domestic service administered to God. Martha can be compared to all the women who served God, with their entire heart.

She is one of a number of relatively well-off and autonomous women who have their own house and place it at the disposition of others, whether the community or itinerant preachers: she may be compared with Tabitha in Acts 9:36ff., Mary the mother of John in Acts 12:12 and Lydia in Acts 16:15, 40, who

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<sup>72</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000, 109.

<sup>73</sup> William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature : A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 184.

<sup>74</sup> Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message : Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 101.

actively compels Paul to be her guest. The parallel to Peter's mother-in-law in Luke 4:38f. and to the women who follow Jesus in 8:1–3 is also clear.<sup>75</sup>

The gift is given by God to fulfill a service, a ministry (*διακονία*) in the Body of Christ, which is compared to a domestic service done in a house. Each one who believes in God has a ministry to perform in this Body, in God's house, according to the gift that God has given to the person. Each gift is related to a ministry, or is linked with a service to fulfill. The gift is offered to those who are serving in God's house. God is the Master and He is distributing the spiritual gifts to His own servants. This reminds an image that Jesus taught through a parable in Matthew 25: 14-30.

With the gift, a parallel can be induced with the parable of the talents:

For *the kingdom of heaven is* as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.<sup>15</sup> And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.<sup>16</sup> Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.<sup>17</sup> And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.<sup>18</sup> But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.<sup>19</sup> "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.<sup>20</sup> "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'<sup>21</sup> "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'<sup>22</sup> "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'<sup>23</sup> "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'<sup>24</sup> "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.<sup>25</sup> 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.'<sup>26</sup> "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.'<sup>27</sup> 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.'<sup>28</sup> 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.'<sup>29</sup> 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.'<sup>30</sup> 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer

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<sup>75</sup> Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message : Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 101.

darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matthew 25:14-30 NKJV)

In this parable, the Master is the one who is distributing the talents to the servants. They receive the talents according to the capacity of each servant. The servants cannot say, I prefer this talent and not this one because they are the same. The value given seems to be in the quantity of the talents, but even there the Master rejoiced by the work performed by his servants who accomplished and multiplied it.

For the Apostle Paul, no one can perform any ministry in the Body unless he has received the corresponding gift. It draws our attention to one important thing: spiritual gifts are not meant to standardize the functioning of the Body. Paul emphasizes the notion of diversity as an asset for the Body of Christ. This diversity is not contrary to unity. He does not extol “uniformity”, but he exposes diversity for equilibrium of the Body, which allows this Body to be healthy. The exercise of spiritual gifts and different ministries requires us to understand that spiritual gifts are complementary, but have the same value in God’s eyes.<sup>76</sup>

It appears that the apostle Paul established a hierarchy in the gifts given by the Holy-Spirit. “God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers and pastors and evangelists (Eph 4:11), then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping (ἀντιλήψεις), of guidance or administration or leadership (κυβερνήσεις), and of different kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12: 28 NIV). However it is interesting to observe that Paul “lists gifts and deeds, not persons.”<sup>77</sup>

Women are not listed as apostles, but the fact is registered that women were prophets, the second gift in the hierarchy. Even if they were few, there is a record of them in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there are: Miriam, Moses’ sister (Exod 15:

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<sup>76</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987, 582-83.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 619.

20-21), Deborah, Judge in Israel (Judg 4: 3-9), Hulda of Jerusalem (2 Chr 34: 14-23), the unnamed prophetess in the book Isaiah (Isa 8: 3). In case some people do not validate the prophetesses of the Old Testament, some are also mentioned in the New Testament: Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2: 36-38) and the four virgin daughters of Philip the Evangelist, who prophesied (Acts 21: 8-9).

The gift of helping: “In Joppa there was a disciple (μαθήτρια) named Tabitha, which in Greek her name is Dorcas; she was always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36). It is interesting to notice that Tabitha was a disciple, which is not recorded frequently in the New Testament. Many women are listed as being around Jesus, being around the eleven or the twelve, but it is not written directly as it is here that women were disciples. This woman disciple had a gift and a ministry. She had the ministry of helping. She was doing it so well that when she fell sick and died, the disciples went to look for Peter in a place not too far from Joppa to do something for them concerning this wonderful ministering woman.

Therefore a question emerges. If the Holy-Spirit allowed women to have the second gift recorded on the hierarchical list of the gifts, why does He escape the third and the fourth to women? He granted the gift of helping, which is the fifth one but skipped the gift of guidance, administration or leadership, but gave the gift of different kinds of tongues to men and women during the Pentecost time? Why does the Holy-Spirit make a selection in the gift and did not do it when He filled the people? Why in the eight gifts presented the Holy-Spirit selected three ministries associated with the gift, the second one, the sixth one and the eighth one for women? Are they different than the others gifts given by the Holy-Spirit? Is it really the Holy-Spirit who made a selection of it or human beings themselves who did it?



If the Church believe in the hierarchy of the gifts and the ministries, why does the Holy-Spirit give the second position of the gifts to the women, which is one the highest one and cannot give the lower ones to them? Personally I do not understand, but this logic is interesting. It is like if a patron has a company and says to the women, you can have the second position in my company, you can guide all my employees, whatever the qualification you have, but you cannot do the other works because you are naturally too qualified for them. The women can only have the high position in my company. Is it sounding really strange? Which women would not want to go in this company? Yes it is sound strange, contradictory, and without sense. Is it this point that the New Testament is developing concerning the spiritual gifts, that women can receive only the highest ones?

The Apostles (ἀποστόλους) are persons delegated, sent, envoy by God for a message. The apostle is a messenger. The apostle ministry is considered by Paul as the highest, the most important, the most prominent, because, those human beings had the possibility to have a narrow connection, relationship, a close contact with Jesus-Christ. Some of the apostles did not have a close contact with Jesus, but they just saw him (1 Cor 15: 5-8). For Paul, the apostles received an appeal from Jesus mouth directly (Acts 9: 6), and they saw God face to face.

According to Paul's definition of an apostle, the one who receives a command from Jesus' mouth directly; is it possible to say that women were as well apostles? Let us analyze this little part:

In 1 Corinthians 15: 3-9 it is written:

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of

the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

It is interesting to notice that with Paul, the women are not on Jesus trajectory. Nevertheless, as we studied earlier Jesus presented himself first to the women and sent them to announce his resurrection to the eleven and the others who were with them. There is another interesting observation, Paul is not calling only the twelve apostle, but he is calling the twelve, the five hundred brothers and himself apostles, because all of them, had the opportunity to receive a message from Jesus, after His resurrection.

According to Gordon D. Fee

One cannot tell whether the addition “then to the Twelve” belonged to the creed itself or whether it is the beginning of Paul’s expansion on the final line. In either case, the reference is to an appearance such as that found in John 21:19. The use of the term “the Twelve” is a clear indication that in the early going this was a title given to the special group of twelve whom Jesus called to “be with him” (Mark 3:14). Thus this is their collective designation; it does not imply that all twelve were on hand, since the evidence indicates otherwise. This designation for Jesus’ disciples, plus the fact that Paul will later refer to another appearance to “all the apostles” (v. 7), suggests most strongly that the joining of these two terms into the title “the twelve apostles” had not yet taken place in the church. That is, in Paul’s view “the Twelve” were a distinct entity, no doubt considered apostles, but the latter designation covered a much larger group of people.<sup>80</sup> The idea that there were only twelve apostles belongs to a later—or different—stratum of Christian tradition.<sup>78</sup>

Anthony C. Thiselton explains that

Even if Paul uses **apostles** regularly in a wider sense than *the Twelve*, as foundational witnesses there is also a limit or boundary to those who are designated by this term. (On *apostle*, see above, 1:1, esp. 9:1, together with, e.g., 12:29, “are all apostles?” [also 4:9; 9:5; 12:28].) It is likely that the purpose of the phrase is to pave the way for v. 8: the entire apostolate are bound up together in witnessing to Christ’s saving work and resurrection: with his reference to his own calling in v. 8, this will complete the list and establish this common foundational

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<sup>78</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987, 729.

apostolic witness to the reality of the resurrection as one of the cardinal elements of the gospel (15:3).<sup>79</sup>

If we take the same logic as Paul, and knowing that Jesus was considering men and women equally, even in front of the plan of salvation and the good news He had for them, can we say that the women were apostles? I would say yes! Because it is the same pattern, the same skeleton, the only thing changing is the sex of the person. Jesus presented himself to several women, and sent them with a message. Paul Hemes expresses that Junia, in Greek Ἰουνιᾶν in the accusative form (Rom 16: 7), was the wife of Andronicus. She was as well an apostle in the same way than Paul and was really appreciated by the others apostles.<sup>80</sup> However, according to Bruce M. Metzger, among the scholars there is a dilemma on the name Junia, some express the opinion that Ἰουνιᾶν ending is a masculine accusative not a feminine one, others determine that because “the female Latin name Junia occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone, whereas the male name Junias is unattested anywhere, and when Greek manuscripts began to be accented, scribes wrote the feminine Ἰουνίαν (“Junia”).”<sup>81</sup> This dilemma remains between scholars to some extent today, to know if Junia was a man or a woman. Since it is recorded only one female disciple in the New Testament named Tabitha. It is possible to have as well the record of one female apostle. The debate has two antagonists, those who believes that there was a female apostle named Junia and others thought the

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<sup>79</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000, 1208.

<sup>80</sup> Paul. Hemes, *Les Femmes dans le Ministère et le Leadership*, transition 08 (2008), 22-23.

<sup>81</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 475; Al. Wolters, “ἸΟΥΝΙΑΝ (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew Name “Yēhunnī”.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 2 (2008), 399.

contrary.<sup>82</sup> In this debate, there is still the possibility or the eventuality that women could be apostle, as they were disciples, even if there is enumerated only one in the New Testament. Those women could be sent to give the good news given by Jesus to the entire world, or in their own region.

Prophets is the second most important gift, in the hierarchy given by Paul permitting the application of the ministry, or service stick to it. Why? Prophet is “the one who speaks for God, proclaiming what God wants to make known”. Prophet and the Apostle are both sent by God to give a message, but to qualify the prophet as second importance, there is a reason, isn’t it! The prophet does not have a direct interaction with God, at the exception of Moses and few others prophets. However, even him, did not see God face to face as the apostles did, that was his great desire, but he only saw His “back” (Exod 33: 18-23) or His representation (Num 12:8 LSG) or Yahweh's form (Num 12:8 NJB) or a similitude of the LORD (Num 12:8 KJV). The prophets receive the instruction given by God through vision or dreams (Num 12: 6).

The different gifts are:

God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (1Cor 12:28-31)

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. (Rom 12:6-9)

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<sup>82</sup> Rena. Pederson, *The Lost Apostle: Searching for the Truth About Junia*. Princeton, N.J.: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, 2007, 1-24; Elizabeth A. McCabe, *Women in the Biblical World. A Survey of Old and New Testament Perspectives Volume 1*. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2011, 117-29.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Eph 4:11-13)

The gift coming in third place is, pastors and teachers (1 Cor 12: 29-30) are secondary messengers, they do not receive the message directly by God, but they use word of others to transmit a message given by God. It is like a food web, which is an interconnection of food chains. In this food web there is the producer organisms<sup>83</sup>, which will be eaten by primary consumers<sup>84</sup>, those ones will be eaten by secondary consumers<sup>85</sup>, who will be eaten as well by tertiary consumers<sup>86</sup>, and all of them would be fractionated by decomposers<sup>87</sup>. Thus here, the producer is God, giving a message to human beings, face to face or by visions or by dreams. Those messengers, I will call them primary messengers because they received the message from the producer, who is God. From those messengers, others human beings will take the message from the primary messengers, and they will become messengers to others. However, because it is not coming directly from the producer God, I will call them secondary messengers, and those secondary messengers are the teachers, the pastors, etc.

The women are found in the first category of messengers, the apostles and the prophets, who are the primary messengers, receiving the message directly from God, and distributing to others. Interestingly enough, the women are not found in the secondary category of messengers, and only in part of the “tertiary” messengers, in which I make the hypothesis that are the gifts of healing, help, administrations and interpretation.

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<sup>83</sup> Andrew. Solway, *Food Chains and Webs*. Vol. 1st ed. The Web of Life. Chicago, Ill: Capstone, 2012, 8-11.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

All the members of the body are consumers of God's words. In this body, there are primary consumers, who are the apostles and the prophets. There are the secondary consumers, the consumers of a second hand, the teachers, and pastors, and it is possible to say that there are tertiary consumers. However, can we really consider the others ministries as tertiary consumers, since they can go to the word of God given by the apostles and prophets to study it? Those ministries are still focus on the word of God but in a practical way.

Some questions still remain: if the apostolate in a certain sense and the gift of prophesy are given to women, is it the same for all other gifts? Did God limit his gifts and his ministry to one category of persons as He did not limit His Son and the pouring of His Holy-Spirit to one category of people? The text is clear. "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor 12:11 NKJ). Therefore if God had decided to give a certain gift or ministry to a person, who am I to go against God's will? For centuries the Church did and is doing just this, determining who should have some gifts and ministries, and not giving to God who has to choose, who has the right to do it. Thus, the Church became the head, the Master of the Kingdom of Heaven, the one who commands, the one who is distributing; and Christ became the body, the one who is controlled by the head. Who really decides in God's mission?

As the Bible is not teaching that the women are not part of God's work, and she can be involved in any kind of ministry that God has given to them. It is Biblical that men and women can work together and speak about "the wonderful works of God". Where does the contrary idea come from? From where, comes this idea that the women cannot minister, or have only some kind of ministries?

## **Women in Pauline Writings and the Work of God**

The problem of the ministry of the women does not come from the world but from the church, with the world concepts of the women in mind. It seems that it started since the time of the Pauline writings. Is it possible to think that Paul reacted with the women according to the culture they were in?

## **Women in Ancient Greek Society and the Church during Paul's Time**

The Corinthians churches and the Asian Minor churches had the same culture, because they were part of the ex-Greek empire. It can be observed that the women were considered the same way that the world was considering them. In the world the women should be quiet in all the area of the society, and Paul required them to do the same in the churches of Corinth and from Asia Minor.

Why Paul did react this way? Was he a “misogynist or radical”?<sup>88</sup>

In 1Corinthians 14: 34-35 and 1Timothy 2: 12, the prohibition for women to speak in church given by Paul, may have been because questioning in public was a problem in Corinth. The questioning may have been out loud and occasionally inappropriate, rowdy, piercing and excessive and threatened good order in the meetings. In Corinth there was not a movement to put women on a par with men in respect to public speaking and leadership.<sup>89</sup>

It is implied that it is shameful in the sight of God since Paul has appealed to the Law in the previous verses of 1 Corinthians 34-35. It is implied that it is shameful

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<sup>88</sup> Lucy, Peppiatt. *Women and Worship at Corinth Paul's Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub, 2017, 133.

<sup>89</sup> Jill E. Marshall, *Women Praying and Prophesying in Corinth: Gender and Inspired Speech in First Corinthians*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017, 184-5.

in the opinion of people in general. It is insinuated that the woman will bring shame on her husband by doing this. The woman tacitly will disgrace herself.<sup>90</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 11-14 ... Paul is drawing on flexible discourses of sanctuary space and he combines these with other ideas to accommodate women into a ritual space in which their presence is problematic. But Paul is creative enough at least try. His strategies of integration can be placed along an axis between, on the one hand, constructing a hierarchy where women are placed at the lower level, and, on the other hand, excluding the female altogether from the level of representation, but still somehow presupposing her silent presence under cover as a man.<sup>91</sup>

If speaking to another man than their husbands could be considered or seen as cause of adultery that could be dangerous for women to speak in public, thus it would be safer for them to remain in the observance of their culture.

At that time, "Paul's concern is for integrity of all relationships for the good of the church to the glory of God."<sup>92</sup> He did not want confusion or noise in those churches, thus he suggested to the church to keep the same culture as in the world, to allow the reverence of God in the worship places. Thus, he wanted the protection of each members of the church including the women. If their life could be threatened by they were in, better do not go against it in public, but it was possible another way, that they received instruction in a private place, when their husband could teach them freely.

### **Women in Ancient Roman Society and the Church during Paul Time**

Paul had a different behavior towards women in the Roman society than the Greek one. He gave more importance to the women in the Roman society than the Greek one. Even the women could not have part in a lot of areas in the society, but they could do and have a lot of opportunities, if the men who were with them allowed

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<sup>90</sup> Ronald. Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Corinthians 10-16*, 2nd ed. Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008, 248-50.

<sup>91</sup> Jorunn. Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*. London: Clark, 2004, 169.

<sup>92</sup> Mark. Taylor, *1 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Holman Reference, 2014, 361.



it and as well according to the number of children she had. In the Roman culture women were restricted, but their lives were not threatened if they were taught by men and could receive instruction from them.

Therefore, in Roman 16, Paul is recommending several women to the Church of Rome. There, an element is interesting, Paul at the beginning of chapter 16, recommended a woman Phoebe from the Cenchreae church. Cenchreae is a city not too far from Corinth, nine kilometers at the east of it,<sup>93</sup> that means that the woman promoted by Paul was a Greek lady, with the Greek culture, where it was impossible for a woman to be in a public position and have an interaction with others outside of those from her own house. It was a true great letter of recommendation that the apostle addressed to the believers of Rome so that they receive this sister “in the Lord” and bring her all the help which she could need. Phoebe had been very helpful, helping many, and for himself also. Thus, even if the letter was for the Roman’s church, Paul was appreciating the work of the women, in the work of God, whatever her origin or her culture.

In the letter of Romans several women are presented. Their names are Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus’ mother, Julia, and Nereus’ sister. They are ten women among twenty seven persons, which is 37 % of the greeted population.<sup>94</sup> Compared to the culture where they were, this is a pretty great number, from 0 % participation in public and social areas to 37% in the Church. Nowadays it should be better since the mentality in the world has changed, allowing women to be in public and private areas! Because the Church is a follower of God’s will, thus the women’s value would be greater in the church than the world.

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<sup>93</sup> Jerome. Murphy-O’Connor, “The Corinth That Saint Paul Saw.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 47, no. 3 (1984), 158.

<sup>94</sup> Paul. Hemes, *Les Femmes dans le Ministère et le Leadership*, transition 08, (2008), 14.

Therefore in the Bible, even Paul was appreciating the women working with them as apostles, deaconesses, helpers in different areas. He was not a misogynist as it could be understood sometimes because of some texts misinterpreted (1 Cor 14:34-35). Paul loved all the members of the churches as a father loves his children, and was considering them each one as having a great importance in God's Church.

If Jesus on earth agreed for men and women working for Him, and having a part of the mission that he gave to all the disciples. If the Holy-Spirit had filled equally men and women and had given to each one the gift and ministry fitted with, for the mission to announce the wonderful news of God for those who do not know. If two Persons of the Trinity agreed for the same thing! Do we think that Paul could go against it? Of course not! Thus, Paul does a confirmation of what God wanted in His Church. Do we think that a simple employee can go against the decision of the board of directors, the governance, to help this Company to function well? Paul followed God's volition for the church because he was a follower of Christ, he was the imitator of Christ (1 Cor 11: 1).

It had been seen that in the Bible, especially in the New Testament that the women were involved in Jesus' mission on earth, that the Holy-Spirit operated in them to spread God's wonders. They were in the agreement of the Board of directors of the Universe: the Father, the Son, and the Holy-Spirit, for the mission on earth. We saw as well that Paul, who wrote 48% of the books of the New Testament, followed the same pattern as his head Christ! Another question emerges again. Where does come from the idea that the women had no value in the ministries that God had put for the edification of the church, especially as pastors and administrators or leaders? Where does come from the idea that those two ministries are the best ones and can be given only to men, that the men are spiritual and the women are not?

## THE TRADITIONAL VIEWS

Even if the apostle Paul had some apparent ungracious, disobliging or disagreeable expressions concerning women, the denigration, the disparagement, the depreciation of the women does not come from him. At the dawn of Christianity, many considered that Paul's message distorted Jesus' one. Even though the Epistle to the Galatians (3: 8, 26-28) proclaims the equality of all, the Epistle to the Corinthians (11: 9-12) and the Epistle to the Ephesians (5: 22-24) messages towards women seem to do not go in the same line than what Jesus was doing or showing concerning them. In both texts the impression is given that the woman must be doomed to silence and submission. Thus, some used those words to encourage, develop their own ideas, thoughts, on what Paul expressed.

### **Irenæus**

Irenæus (125-202 AD)<sup>95</sup> is a Greek clerical man of the second century. He is one of the Church fathers and the first Westerner to carry out a work of systematic theology. He wrote a collection of five books entitled *Against Heresies*. Defender of the true gnosis, he was illustrated by the denunciation of the dualistic ideology and the pseudo-Gnostic sects which professed it.<sup>96</sup>

Irenæus in his books *Against Heresis*, book III, chapter XI, wrote that only the four Gospels' book were accepted and he rejected the others coming after the four Gospels, because they were the only one "true and reliable." The epistles of the Corinthians written by Paul were ignored because "he speaks expressly of the prophetic gifts, and recognizes men and women prophesying in the Church."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus>

<sup>96</sup> Eric. Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 1-7

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, Alexander, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, Allan Menzies, Ernest Cushing Richardson, and Bernhard Pick. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers*

As seen before, it was hard for a Greek that women could be in the same area as men and the same level as men, because her place should be home and not in men's company. Therefore it was unacceptable that women could prophesy with men in the Church.

### **Tertullian's View**

The denigration of the woman in the church really began with Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian. Before it was among the philosophers as Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Musonius Rufus.<sup>98</sup> Tertullian was a theologian of the second century (A.D. 155-220)<sup>99</sup>, who was born and lived in Carthage, a city located in the north of Africa, in the region now called the Maghreb, more precisely in Tunisia. At that time Carthage was one of the centers of the proclamation of the Gospel and had a great influence on Christians of this time, and Tertullian was part of it.<sup>100</sup>

For Tertullian the women are agents of sin, as Eve was at the beginning. She brought sin in humanity and forced Christ to die for the cause of her choice. According to him, it is through the woman's fault that man has been seduced by the devil, and it is in this that she has broken the living image of the deity and condemned the human race to ruin.

He said to the women:

You are the devil's gateway, "you are the one who opened the door to the Devil", you are the unsealer, the first who plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, you are the first deserter of the divine law, you are the one who persuaded him whom the

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*Down to A.D. 325*. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 2008, 427-429;  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html>

<sup>98</sup> Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 48-77

<sup>99</sup> Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*. London, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2005

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. Because of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die.<sup>101</sup>

There, Tertullian qualified the woman to be even stronger in evil and seduction than Satan himself. Because the man was really strong he could not be touched by the devil, but the woman had not the key, but the “gateway”, the “door” to break the man and push him to sin.

With their ornaments women were as well the temptress of the angels and had possessed them.<sup>102</sup> He is counseling to the husbands to do not touch their wives it is “badness”, but to remain near to their wives without “intercourse”, because this will prevent, prohibit, handicap their life prayer. The abstinence from intercourse allows the women to be honored and the men to remain spiritually elevated. The contrary is an “insult”. Even if the woman is a loving one, “her love is compared to the grave, to the parched earth, and to the fire...” He explained that this abstinence determined the spiritual level of the couple. Even if it had been admitted marriage under the Law, those under the Gospel should remain virgin, because virginity was in the Paradise the condition, the norm of the first couple.<sup>103</sup>

A lot of concept of the Church came from the ideas or the biblical interpretation of Tertullian. He had a philosophical view of the women and a “lust for simplicity”<sup>104</sup>. For him the women were the evil minister, who allowed humanity to decline. To cleanse herself of this defilement, she should mourn forever, remain covered with rags, and devote herself to eternal penance.

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<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, Philip Schaff, “*On the Apparel of Women*, book I.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers vol 4*, 14; Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 78

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian, Philip Schaff, “*On the Apparel of Women*, book I.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers vol 4*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 84-6

<sup>104</sup> Eric Francis. Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003, 1.

## Ambrose's View

Ambrose (339-397 AD) was one of the most influential ecclesiastical and political men of the fourth century. From a Roman aristocratic Christian family who had a political influence, he obtained a good education, and he continued in the political direction until 373 AD. He became bishop of Milan from 374 AD to his death in 397 AD. He is the author of different books: *De Virginate* written in 377 AD, *Books of consolation and Resurrection* written in 378, etc., he wrote as well *letters*.<sup>105</sup> He wrote “exegetical works,” “Ethical writings,” “sermons,” “Hymns”.<sup>106</sup>

For Ambrose, the flesh is not guilty of sin but can be urged or solicited to become “minister of sin.” If a man is chaste, “the voice of modesty, the voice of gravity, the rein of caution, the care for integrity, the discipline of chastity, loosed the woman’s chains.”<sup>107</sup> For him, as human beings, “We bind chains on ourselves, as we read: “For everyone is bound with the chains of his own sins. (Proverbs 6: 2)”. It is because of “the fire of lust” that people are committing debauchery.<sup>108</sup>

Ambrose is underlining that the woman can be the one provoking the man to sins, and the man, because of the fire of his lust, because of the chains that he has from his own sins, will perpetrate what he is attracted by. In Ambrose's view there, women are not totally at fault about sin, but man also has a part in it. Even though in exposing Joseph's story he presented the woman as provocative and that Joseph had the guts to resist her. This is true in this story! Does it mean that all the women are provocative like the one who tried to seduce Joseph? Even though it was the case,

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<sup>105</sup> Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose. The Early Church Fathers*, London: Routledge, 1997, 16-44; Ambrose, Carole Hill, and J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz. *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches ; Letters, Book Ten, Including the Oration on the Death of Theodosius I ; Letters Outside the Collection (Epistulae Extra Collectionem) ; Letter 30 to Magnus Maximus ; The Oration on the Death of Valentinian II*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010. 5-24.

<sup>106</sup> Philip Schaff, and Henry Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series : Select Works and Letters Vol. 10*. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1994, xviii-xxiii.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 342

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

Ambrose is saying that if the mind is disciplined in chastity, the incentive woman would not have influence on the mind of the man. If the man succumbs, it is because he was already chained by his own lust.<sup>109</sup>

Here Ambrose is still determining that the woman is the one initiating sin and the man is the follower to sin. He is more discreet, less rough, less violent, less brutal than Tertullian, but has about the same ideas. It is as if the woman was the “minister of sin.”

### **Jerome’s View**

Eusebius Hieronymus<sup>110</sup> also known as Jerome was born in 345 AD “at Stridon, near Aquileia, but in Pannonia.” He died in 420 AD at Bethlehem. His parents were Catholic Christians. His family was reasonably rich and he was able to access a good education. At the beginning he refused the acetic life, but decided to remain recluse, solitary. Having a lot of friends with acetic idea, he ended as one but not an austere one. He wrote on asceticism and the “preservation of virginity”. He was a great intellectual and brilliant scholar. He wrote the “Vulgate” (391-403 AD), Latin translation of the Bible and scholarly commentary on each of the Holy Books.<sup>111</sup>

In his letter XXII to Eustochium “written at Rome in 384 AD”, Jerome exposes how he is viewing the men and the women.

“Elijah lived a virgin life, so also did Elisha and many of the sons of the prophets. To Jeremiah the command came: “Thou shalt not take thee a wife.” He had been sanctified in his mother’s womb, and now he was forbidden to take a wife because the captivity was near. The apostle gives the same counsel in different words. “I think, therefore, that this is good by reason of the present distress, namely that it is good for a man to be as he is.” What is this distress which does away with the joys of wedlock? The apostle tells us, in a later verse: “The time is short: it remaineth

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p 341-42

<sup>110</sup> Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 82

<sup>111</sup> Jerome, Philip, Schaff, Henry Wace, W H Fremantle, and George Lewis, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series Vol. 6. Jerome : Letters and Select Works*. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1994, xvi-xxv. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206>.

that those who have wives be as though they had none.” Nebuchadnezzar is hard at hand. The lion is bestirring himself from his lair. What good will marriage be to me if it is to end in slavery to the haughtiest of kings? What good will little ones be to me if their lot is to be that which the prophet sadly describes: “The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread and no man breaketh it unto them”? In those days, as I have said, the virtue of continence was found only in men: Eve still continued to travail with children. But now that a virgin has conceived in the womb and has borne to us a child of which the prophet says that “Government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father,” now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman.”<sup>112</sup>

For him, the women did not have a lot of abilities to resist sin, only men could do it, because they could remain virgin. This resistance to sin came more with Mary. For him, those who remain virgin were sanctified. He declared: “Let us who served marriage under the law, serve virginity under the Gospel.”

### **Augustine’s View**

Aurelius Augustine<sup>113</sup> called as well Augustine of Hippo or Saint Augustine was born in Thagaste, to the mayor of the province of North Africa, in 354.<sup>114</sup> He was ordained as a priest in 391<sup>115</sup>. He became bishop in 395<sup>116</sup> and died in 430 in Hippo.<sup>117</sup> He was a philosopher<sup>118</sup> and Christian optimistic theologian<sup>119</sup> of the wealthy class.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers’ Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 87

<sup>114</sup> Peter Robert Lamont. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography : a New Edition with an Epilogue*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 2013, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p 108

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p 133

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p 445

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p 119, 315

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p 344



With Ambrose of Milan, he was one of the Church Fathers of the Western Church.

Ambrose of Milan had been influenced for the conversion of Augustine by his “art of rhetorician”<sup>120</sup>, and he had been as well acted upon a lot by his writings.<sup>121</sup> He explained in his books *Confessions*, that his mother was a holy praying woman, who cried and prayed for him in order that God guide him the way that God wanted for him.<sup>122</sup>

For Augustine, the man and the woman when God created them were living in a paradisiacal place, in a wonderful idyllic world. They had marvelous behaviors towards one and another. But after their rebellion, “God questioned, judged . . . , and pronounced sentence on them all – the devil in the form of the serpent, the woman and her husband in their own persons.”<sup>123</sup> He explained that when God said to the woman that her husband would “rule over” her, was not meaning that he would, abuse, brutalize, hurt, mistreat, misuse her. On the contrary, he should love her and treat her as his own flesh.<sup>124</sup> He contradicted some of his coevals who were saying that “women shall not rise women, but that all shall be men, because God made man only of earth and the woman of the man”. For Augustine “both sexes shall rise . . . , and there shall be no lust, which is now the cause of confusion.” He affirmed that “He

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<sup>120</sup> Ambrose, Carole Hill, and J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches ; Letters, Book Ten, Including the Oration on the Death of Theodosius I ; Letters Outside the Collection (Epistulae Extra Collectionem) ; Letter 30 to Magnus Maximus ; The Oration on the Death of Valentinian II*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010, 24; Augustine, and Edward Bouverie Pulsey. *The Confessions of S. Augustine*. Book 5 chap XIII. Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008.

<sup>121</sup> Philip, Schaff, and Henry Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series : Select Works and Letters Vol. 10*. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1994, xviii-xxiii.

<sup>122</sup> Augustine, and Edward Bouverie Pulsey. *The Confessions of S. Augustine*. Book 3, chap XI. Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008.

<sup>123</sup> Augustine, and Philip Schaff. *The City of God; Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003, p 289 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, and Philip Schaff. *The City of God ; Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003, p 289 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>; Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 88-9.

who created both sexes will restore both.”<sup>125</sup> For Augustine’s contemporaries, when God will come back to take the faithful, the women will disappear totally from the universe. They will not exist anymore. There, he differed from their thoughts. He readjusted it, in confirming that the same way that God created the man and the woman, God will resurrect the man and the woman as well.

Augustine quoted, “For God, the author of natures, not of vices, created man upright; but man, being of his own will corrupted, and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned children. For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man, who fell into sin by the woman who was made from him before the sin.”<sup>126</sup> Did He explain that even if the male sexual entity did not yet sin when the female sexual entity sinned? What I can understand there, is that the man had already sinned because the female sexual entity is part of the man. Therefore I deduce that whether Adam had sinned or not the man was already infected, because of Eve alone, which is an interesting view. Does it mean that it is only because of Eve that humanity fell in the mind of Augustine? He does not explain it, but like his predecessors, the woman is the only one who brought sin in the humanity. However, his vision on the women is more respectful and the women, who chose God, would resurrect as women.

Augustine commented the time before the flood and had as well another understanding in comparison to his predecessors. He gave a different point of view, which seems more in the Biblical line:

“When the human race, in the exercise of this freedom of will, increased and advanced, there arose a mixture and confusion of the two cities by their

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<sup>125</sup> Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology with Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women from Ancient to Modern Times*. Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983, 89-90.

<sup>126</sup> Augustine, and Philip Schaff. *The City of God ; Christian Doctrine*. Book XIII, Chap 14. Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003, p 251; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>.

participation in a common iniquity. And this calamity, as well as the first, was occasioned by woman, though not in the same way; for these women were not themselves betrayed, neither did they persuade the men to sin, but having belonged to the earthly city and society of the earthly, they had been of corrupt manners from the first, and were loved for their bodily beauty by the sons of God, or the citizens of the other city which sojourns in this world. Beauty is indeed a good gift of God; but that the good may not think it a great good, God dispenses it even to the wicked. And thus, when the good that is great and proper to the good was abandoned by the sons of God, they fell to a paltry good which is not peculiar to the good, but common to the good and the evil; and when they were captivated by the daughters of men, they adopted the manners of the earthly to win them as their brides, and forsook the godly ways they had followed in their own holy society. And thus beauty, which is indeed God's handiwork, but only a temporal, carnal, and lower kind of good, is not fitly loved in preference to God, the eternal, spiritual, and unchangeable good. When the miser prefers his gold to justice, it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man; and so with every created thing. For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love: it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinally; evilly, when inordinately. It is this which someone has briefly said in these verses in praise of the Creator: "These are Thine, they are good, because Thou art good who didst create them. There is in them nothing of ours, unless the sin we commit when we forget the order of things, and instead of Thee love that which Thou hast made."<sup>127</sup>

The point there determines that the women are not leading men to sin, but they are making their own choice deliberately. The women did not force them to do wickedness. They did not prove that they are more powerful than opposing forces which are the men. They were not victorious, with their beauty. He explained that the women of one of the cities, is true, had "corrupt manners first" and were beautiful, but the "sons of God" chose to love them. They fell because of the lust that they had towards the "daughters of men".

Augustine had another view than his contemporaries. Was it because he had a mother that he was considering as "holy"?

It is seen that at the time of the church Fathers from the second to the fifth century, the majority of them attributed, the culpability of sin only on the woman, and the women after Eve inherit the same statute. They accused the women to be the only

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<sup>127</sup> Augustine, and Philip Schaff. *The City of God ; Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003, p 303; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>.

one responsible of sin. Their theology concerning the women is that if the sin is on earth, it is only because of the woman's fault.

Therefore, it would be hard to put in place, a person, an individual, who had for only aspiration to accomplish sin in her life. It would be hard to put in ministry a person whose first role, the essence, is to fulfill and present only sin. Thus, for those persons it would be hard for the women to be part of God's plan for salvation, mission and ministry.

Even if the Bible teaches that the man and the woman had transgressed God's command and sinned. According to Victor P. Hamilton, "The woman does not try to tempt the man. She simply gives and he takes. He neither challenges nor raises questions. The woman allows her mind and her own judgment to be her guide; the man neither approves nor rebukes. Hers is a sin of initiative. His is a sin of acquiescence."<sup>128</sup>

The contemporaries from the fourth century believed that they will have only men at the time of the resurrection, women will not exist anymore. But Augustine disagreed in this point. He readjusted the fact that as both man and woman sinned, both would be restored, and both would inherit eternal life.

Was it the plan of God to exclude women from His plan of salvation, from His mission's plan, from His plan to live with Him for eternity? Does God have laws in his government based on the exclusion of the woman in His plan of re-habilitation, or from any individual that exist on earth?

God never rejected any of His creatures, especially the human beings, who repented themselves, who desired to have a relationship with Him and want to serve Him with all their heart. God's goal is the human's reestablishment. He is the one

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<sup>128</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990, 191.

who restores, who gives the gifts and make us grow. He is not making a selection concerning His salvation, His mission, who will be in heaven and on the new earth, but His desire is to have everyone. He is the one who chose who will do what and at which moment in His field, but His desire is to involve everyone male and female.

## GOD'S DESIRE FOR THE SERVICE HE REQUIRES IN THE MISSION

The work that God wants with the human beings is not a work of conflict between men and women. God's wish is that both work together for his Glory, with the gifts He is giving them. Many of the criteria that God requires for His mission had been mentioned in the chapters before. This one will be a reminder of those criteria and be completed by others.

### **The Criteria for Serving God**

#### **Belong to God's Family**

The one who is in God's family, God's Church, refers to a person who has asked God to transform his existence and who has accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. For that this person accepted the fact that he or she is legally guilty before God. The individual then asked God for forgiveness, knowing that his or her own efforts cannot erase one of his or her sins. This person solicited God that the blood of His Son, Jesus, cleanses him or her from all sin. This redeemed thus became "child of God" and definitely belongs to God. Lloyd-Jones Martin expresses:

As the result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ you are not only in fellowship with God, you have also become children of God; you are born of God. You are not only in a new relationship in an external manner, there is a vital internal relationship. It is not merely that you are having communion and association with God, but that you are in a vital union with Him. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you, and this vital thing has happened to you.<sup>129</sup>

Service to God only concerns those who have become truly part of His Family by personal decision. Those who are not part of the God's family cannot serve God because they do not know Him personally. Those who are aware that they deserved the death penalty for their sin and that it is only the love of God manifested by the Son

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<sup>129</sup> Martyn D. Lloyd-Jones, *Children of God*, electronic ed., 1 Jn 2:29-3:2.

who saves them, will have in their heart a love in return for this God so merciful. They will have a living relationship with the One who did everything for them.

### **“Saved to Serve!”**

At the beginning, after the creation, after the transgression of the man and the woman, they lost the union that God wanted for them and with them. God created and gave to mankind a domain, a place to rule over, where they could have authority and administrate over. The human beings were placed to reign and rule over the kingdom, the earth that God made for them, but they lost it as well. They were created to serve in harmony the God of the universe, but they lost the connection that they had with their Sovereign King.<sup>130</sup> When they were created by God, they were citizen of God’s Kingdom. Citizenship is the state or quality of being a citizen. It allows an individual to be recognized as a member of a society, “he who belongs to a city or a nation, by recognizing the jurisdiction, is entitled to enjoy, on its territory, the right of the city or the nation, and is bound to the corresponding duties.”<sup>131</sup> “Citizenship has great power as well as great privileges.”<sup>132</sup> When the first members of the earthly family rebelled against God’s governance, they lost their citizenship. They lost their power and privileges. Jesus by his blood brought it back for those who accept it. “The Father has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son.” God the Father transferred back to the human the privileges and advantages of being citizens of the Kingdom of heaven.<sup>133</sup> The people belonging to a kingdom

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<sup>130</sup> Myles. Munroe, *Kingdom Principles Study Guide: Preparing for Kingdom Experience and Expansion*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2008, 113-26.

<sup>131</sup> Paul. Robert, *Le grand Robert de la langue française: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* 8, 8. Paris: Le Robert, 1996, 631.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 179.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 177-88.

should perform duties or services for<sup>134</sup> their kingdom, for their government, it is the same for God's Kingdom.

The one who serves, is generally called "servitor, servant, or minister"<sup>135</sup>. Serve for a nation or a kingdom refers to all obligations, duties, a person has towards a sovereign, a State, a society, an authority representing them, a master. Serve determines the activities fulfilling those duties or those charges. It is: accomplish a specific work, duty, which is useful, which is of common utility.<sup>136</sup> The person who chooses to follow Christ chooses to be in his service, to serve the Kingdom of God. Therefore this person accepts to do all the duties, the activities, the charges; this person should accomplish some specific work, distributed by God and with a common utility. Each nation or kingdom has general right and duties. Those nations have common duties that the people should accomplish, for instance, each citizen should respect the laws or the commandments of the nation he or she belongs to. Every citizen must respect the rights of others. The duties of citizens to one another are of a legal and moral nature. In addition to respecting the law, everyone has a duty to demonstrate public spirit and civility. There is as well the national service, which is the duty of defense, where any male and female is likely to be mobilized to defend the national territory in case of enemy attack, or, more broadly, to fight for his or her country.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>135</sup> M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996.

<sup>136</sup> Paul. Robert, *Le grand Robert de la langue française: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* 8, 8. Paris: Le Robert, 1996, 734-35.

<sup>137</sup> M. H. Berthoiné, H. Durand, and René Floriot, *Vous et la loi guide pratique de vos droits et de vos responsabilités*. Paris: Sélection du Readers Digest, 1983, 632-38.



For God's Kingdom, the citizens of His Kingdom have duties to follow. Those ones are equal to above, respect the law, everyone should respect others and their rights, and they have as well the duty of defense...

The first reason to serve is to give thanks in a concrete way, by the commitment of our whole being and all our life.

It is written in Romans 12: 1, 2: "Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice— alive, holy, and pleasing to God— which is your reasonable service (NET), your spiritual service of worship (NAS), your true and proper worship (NIV). And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2 NAS)"

"Here Paul succinctly and with vivid imagery summarizes what the Christian response to God's grace in Christ should be."<sup>138</sup> God did a lot of actions for the fallen humans in order to be saved, restored, renewed, and reestablished. The chapters 12 to 15 of the book of Romans display, exhibit, expose what God wants from human beings who had been restored, redeemed. By Christ sacrifice, God acquired all the rights over the lives of those who had been rehabilitated, delivered, emancipated... It is important to present to Him what belongs to Him: our bodies, as a living sacrifice. However, before serving, it is necessary that our renewed intelligence discern the will of the Lord. We cannot do anything to be saved: no work, no money, nothing of what comes from the defiled human can become purification. So "service, ministry" has nothing to do with the eternal salvation that Christ has given us on the cross. Thus, out of love and gratitude we want to please God and do what He asks us to do.

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<sup>138</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996, 748.

Second reason is that serving God is natural and spiritual. John 15: 16: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (John 15:16 NAS). In this verse Jesus chose the disciples so that they should bear fruit, not just a few. It is Jesus who “hires” the disciples. Leon Morris explained that:

We always tend to feel that the initiative is with us. Jesus now assures his followers that this is not the case. It was not they who chose him, as was normally the case when disciples attached themselves to a particular rabbi. Students the world over delight to seek out the teacher of their choice and attach themselves to him or her. But Jesus’ disciples did not hold the initiative. On the contrary, it was he who chose them. And not only did he choose them, but he appointed<sup>38</sup> them to their task. This is, first, to go; the idea of mission is frequent in this Gospel. The first function then of the disciples is that they are to be emissaries of Christ. The second thing is that they should “bear fruit” (see on v. 2). The fruit they bear is not transient but abiding. It is possible that here the bearing of fruit includes the thought of service leading to the conversion of others (why else should they “go”?), as in 4:36. It is perhaps unexpected that this is subordinate to the aim of prevailing prayer. The disciples are to bear fruit, so that their fruit may abide, so that whatever they ask God he may give it (the latter thought is repeated with slight variations in 16:23). “Whatever” is very thoroughgoing. Nothing is held back. For “in my name” see on 14:13. Here it is the Father who answers prayer, not Christ as in 14:14. Jesus foresaw that when he left the disciples they would not find life easy. The gospel they preached would bring them into collision with the worldly-minded, and indeed with the religious people of the day. So now he gives them counsel, warning them of persecution to come. For the true Christian opposition is inevitable.<sup>139</sup>

It is observed that once more, Jesus does not follow a human conventional way of thinking and working. In his time, the disciples were choosing the one they wanted to follow. Jesus obeys another pattern, another norm. He does not observe a human one, but the divine one, which is focused on love. All His followers should bear fruits. They should do the mission that their Master has commanded them. Go and make disciples! (Matt 28: 20).

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<sup>139</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, 600.

Each disciple receives a specific gift given by God Himself for His mission. “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4: 10 NAS). The word **διακονοῦντες** from the verb **διακονέω** “serve” is as well translated as “minister”, which is to attend to the needs of others.<sup>140</sup> God is calling the citizen of His Kingdom to apply the gift that He gave to His people to serve others. The gift described here is a spiritual gift allowing the disciple to fulfill not the “self-glorification”, not the “personal development, but for service (1 Cor 12:5), or for building up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14: 3–5; Eph 4:12).”<sup>141</sup> Peter H. Davids explains that:

Christians cannot control how God has gifted them but can and do control if and how the gift is used. Spiritual gifts are not autonomous entities outside a person’s control, but abilities that the Spirit gives and that a person must grow in and use, putting them into service. Thus the Christian is a “steward” of a gift... The steward was the person in a household (often a slave) who was responsible for managing the householder’s business and property, including providing what was needed for the family members, slaves, and hired laborers... Thus the Christian in Peter’s view is simply a household slave who has control over a certain part of God’s property, a gift. The shape of this gift will not be like that of another Christian, for it comes from “God’s varied grace” (cf. 1:6 where the Greek term for “varied” occurs in another context). But all alike are simply administrators of that which belongs to God; it is not theirs, but they are responsible for how it is used. They ought to be “good stewards.”<sup>142</sup>

God gave to His disciples gifts because of His grace. The gifts received are “gifts of grace”, they are given for the edification, the education, the enlightenment, the benefit of the entire Church.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004, 173.

<sup>141</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990, 160.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160-61

<sup>143</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004, 173.

## **Be Employed as a Member of the Armed Forces.**<sup>144</sup>

The armed forces are part of the services given to the nation that we belong to. The armed forces are the various military organizations and resources that a State devotes to the implementation of its defense policy. Their primary mission is to ensure the security of the State, the defense of its interests and the protection of its people and territories within or outside its borders.<sup>145</sup>

“These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.” (Num 33:1 NRS) Here Israel people are organized as an army. “Moses and Aaron were the human leaders, but Yahweh himself was the supreme commander.”<sup>146</sup> This allows us to understand how God sees our lives. Although He loves us all individually and has a wonderful plan for each of our lives, we must also remember that we are spiritual warriors of His army. God is our leader and we have a task to fulfill. To effectuate this labor of love, it is important to be armed. Generally, a nation provides everything for those selected to be in its armed force. For Israel’s case the entire people is considered as an army. God Himself provides the military equipment for His entire people. It is written in Ephesians 6: 13-18 (NIV):

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.<sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,<sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.<sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.<sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.<sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

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<sup>144</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>145</sup> Paul. Robert, *Le grand Robert de la langue française: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française 1, 1*. Paris: Le Robert, 1996, 541-43.

<sup>146</sup> Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993, 626.

A merciless struggle is raging all around us in the spiritual world. Invisible forces fiercely, ferociously oppose the Kingdom of God, our King and our mission. As soldiers of God's army, we have received authority (Ephesians 6: 12-19). We already won the battle through Jesus' blood, but we still have some battle to win, to overcome. We must exercise that authority and use God's weapons under the command of our leader God.

In God's criteria, which had been developed, it was not found that the entire elements were reserved for specific people, but it is understood that everyone is involved in God's criteria to be part of His plan of salvation, His family, His army, His mission. Every disciple is involved in God's vision, in God's plan.

## **Can Women Serve God in His Mission?**

God is not a God of discrimination, but a God of restoration. He loves the difference, which generally has a harmonious effect. He is the one who created differentiation, diversification, from the creation time. He created a domain, with different organisms. He created the human race, male and female, to rule over this domain together. We have learned that the human race lost this domain, and the blessings with it, when the man and the woman disobeyed God. God made a promise to them. They would be restored from this transgression. This had been fulfilled through Jesus-Christ. In Christ, everyone who is accepting his sacrifice is restored. It is the beginning of his or her regeneration, of his or her cleaning, or cleansing. This Good News is given as well for women.

## **Can Women Exercise what God Required for Being Part of the Mission?**

Because women can be baptized, she can be part of God's family. She had been restored by the blood of Jesus. Her mission, now, is to go, preach and teach this Good News of her restoration, with the governance of the Holy-Spirit. No one else, then her can do it for her! Her role, her mission, is to fulfill the gift that the Holy-Spirit gives her. The Holy-Spirit is the one who choose the spiritual gifts that the women should have. He will grant them according to the capacity of each one of them. Therefore, it can be any of the Spiritual gifts given:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. <sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.  
(1Cor 12:4 NAS)

God is the one who is giving the spiritual gift to the women, but Paul is saying to the believer how to apply the gifts that had been granted to everyone:

Then since the gifts that we have differ according to the grace that was given to each of us: if it is a gift of prophecy, we should prophesy as much as our faith tells us; <sup>7</sup> if it is a gift of practical service, or ministry (NKJ) let us devote ourselves to serving, ministering (NKJ); if it is teaching, to teaching; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, to encouraging. When you give, you should give generously from the heart; if you are put in charge, you must be conscientious; if you do works of mercy, let it be because you enjoy doing them. <sup>9</sup> Let love be without any pretence. (Rom 12:6 -9 NJB)

Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo explain that the full participation of the women in ministry is not determining that the women will supersede the men, but at the contrary they will minister mutually, they will act together in God's shield in all aspect of ministry.<sup>147</sup> All those things will be done for God's Glory, and for the announcement of his Wonders. If the bottle of God's shield was filled together, the bottle would be inundated, overflowed faster.

Everyone has value in God's mission, even the women! God wants to minister with them, not because it is missing men in the shield, not because men are refusing to be in ministry. It is because of women's uniqueness, because of the gifts that God grants to them, as He gives it to every human born on earth and who choose to be born again. Women are part of God's mission because they are precious to God. They have value for God. They are cherished, esteemed, priceless, respected, useful, etc. in God's eyes. God does not consider them as parasite or scrap of the society. He consider them, He sees them as a diamond just waiting to be discovered. He is the one who selects them to be in His mission field.

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<sup>147</sup> Stanley, Grenz, and Denise Muir Kjesbo. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995, 16

## CONCLUSION

The gospel of Jesus Christ breaks with the traditional conception of relations between men and women, both in Israel and in the pagan world. The place given to women in the New Testament is remarkable. Contrary to custom, Jesus did not fear to have women among his disciples. The book of Acts shows us the eminent role of some women in the development of the Church. In his teaching, the Apostle Paul repeatedly addresses the question of women's ministries. For the apostle Paul, woman is not without man, nor man without woman in the Lord. He boldly proclaims that the grace of divine sonship is given to men and women together. He expresses that everyone that is part of Christ's body is equipped with a spiritual gift granted by the Holy-Spirit. Therefore, a woman is part of Christ Body, will receive the spiritual gifts that the Holy-Spirit wants to give her, and she will fulfill and multiply it in order to rejoice God's heart.

The Bible had been written to remind humanity of the way they came into existence, how this world became a world of suffering, how human beings together transgressed God's law, God's command. It is reminding as well how this fallen humanity can be restored, regenerated, strengthened through Christ. It is a book calling to mind that God love the entire humanity and want men and women to find the restoration, the peace, the joy that He brought through Him.

God's desire is salvation for the entire humanity. He has granted a guarantee that all may be saved, and this can only be done by Jesus-Christ. Of course there are conditions to be saved. It is to enter the state of acceptance of the redemption granted to all. This state of acceptance allows the beginning of the regeneration in each and everyone. No sinner can be regenerated by himself or herself, only God can act in us.



This is why Christ gave his life, for no sinner could be and do anything by himself or herself.

There are people in this world who are really victims of mistreatment and suddenly they become the ones on whom no one looks favorably, who is not worthy of a given job, given their experiences or seniority; people disqualified because of a certain life they had in the past, because of their gender, because of their ethnicity and according to the human plane, they are not in the priority of choice.

God never rejected anybody for His ministry and in His ministry, even the women. God's perspective is different than ours. God wants everyone who heartily desires to serve Him. God never caught away and will never do it to anyone who feels the love to serve Him and minister to others, even the women. God never disregarded, never disapproved, never excluded women's ministry or women in ministry, because it means that the women are at His service. God needs, desires, the entire humanity near to Him. He yearns for a great relationship with each one of them. Therefore, He commands to those who received the restoration that He promised since the beginning of the world, and fulfilled by Jesus' sacrifice, to go and proclaim it to those who do not know it yet. God's desire, God's aspiration, God's craving is that the entire people who know that they are restored involve themselves in His missions with the gifts that He gave them. Each gift requires a ministry, and each ministry is a vocation. The distribution of the gifts is under God's control alone. He is the only one who knows everyone abilities, capacities, or aptitudes, and can choose the gifts that He wants to give. It is not human's role! Human's role is to accomplish, to perform, and to multiply the received spiritual gifts. The last days started since the time of the primary disciples, the entire Church should be involved in God's mission, not with a spirit of completion, not with a spirit of rejection, which is not from God. The mission should

be done with a spirit of harmony, with a spirit of unity, and a spirit of love, each individual accepting that everyone male and female can have the same ministry, and as well a different one.

God's desire is to live very soon with the total restored human race, but for that those who know about their restoration should be involved in the proclamation of this restoration. They should not be involved in fighting in order to know who will be the best in heaven, or who should have the best gift or the best ministry. It is a loss of time, a loss of energy, and a loss of souls. The human's role is to fulfill heartily the gift that God gives them, preach the restoration for others, and love one another. It is like that people will know who God's Children are! The same way that humanity exists with the association of a man and a woman to have children, to have fruits, the same way the humanity needs men and women in the different gifts that God gave to be fruitful and multiply in the mission. It is the association of both that creates fruits, because both are restored.

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