

HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

PART ONE

LECTURE

ONE

THE ROLE OF

WOMEN

IN

THE RISE OF

EARLY

CHRISTIANITY

30 A.D. to 310 A.D.



DEDICATION

TO:

SUE COSTELLO

MARY SAMPSON

NANCY MOOREN

INTERESTING QUOTE - 1

What had always been left out of the story (of early Christianity), of course, was the vast majority of human beings, mostly women, obviously, but then too all those who could be counted among the socially inferior, the economically distressed, the politically marginalized, the educationally deprived, or the culturally unrefined.

(Richard Horsley – Christian Origins)

ADVISORY ON LECTURES -1

These lectures are on the historical role of women and the rise of early Christianity, not the theological role of women in any particular Christian denomination. Much of what will be presented is based on the historical deduction and research where there exist honest disagreement and diverse opinions among scholars and lay people.

ADVISORY ON LECTURES - 2

Those who study this subject too often are so passionately traditionalist or feminist in their approach that their personal interests and bias skew the interpretation of the data or they just show that portion of the material which favors their views on these matters.

ADVISORY ON LECTURES -3

My goal is to try to take a middle path, presenting a view that is held by many scholars but is rejected by some others. There is no claim that will be shown to be absolutely correct but it does present an alternative vision to what may have happened during those formative years lost long ago.

DEFINITION: CHRISTIANITY - 1

The term “CHRISTIANITY” will refer to all believers in Jesus of Nazareth during the timeframe (30 A.D. TO 310 A.D.). The new religion consisted of a wide range of sub-sects with varying belief systems and practices as well as different sacred texts.

DEFINITION: CHRISTIANITY - 2

For these lectures the members of all these subsects are to be considered generic Christians if Jesus of Nazareth was a key part of their belief system.

The LLI course on LOST CHRISTIANITIES will break down these sub-sects further.

**WOMEN AND
SOCIETY DURING
THE
1ST TO 3RD
CENTURIES**

WOMEN IN 1ST TO 3RD CENTURY CULTURES

In general, women of most cultures in the Roman Empire lived with the following:

- 1. No formal education.**
- 2. No formal legal/civic rights or means to go to court.**
- 3. Arranged marriages at a young age.**
- 4. Could be divorced for any reason.**
- 5. Expected to take care of the home.**

WOMEN IN 1ST TO 3RD CENTURY CULTURES

- 6. Bear and raise all children.**
- 7. Could not inherit except under certain strict terms.**
- 8. Subject to male guardianship.**
- 9. If widowed, at the mercy of her/his family for sustenance.**
- 10. Could work only with a male relative's permission.**

WOMEN IN 1ST TO 3RD CENTURY CULTURES

- 11. Did not travel except with a male relative or husband.**
- 12. Could not negotiate contracts.**
- 13. Could not read nor write (only 5% literacy among males).**
- 14. Could NOT bear witness in a legal court.**
- 15. Had no choice about raising an infant.**

IN THE BEGINNING:
WOMEN
AND
THE GENESIS
OF
CHRISTIANITY

WOMEN AND THE BEGINNING

There were three key parts to the role of women in the beginning:

- 1. The support of the mission.**
- 2. The actual witnesses of the crucifixion.**
- 3. The first and primary witnesses to the Resurrection.**

THE MISSION & MALE DISCIPLES

During the mission of Jesus of Nazareth the Male Disciples:

- 1. Were told what little faith they had.**
- 2. Argued among themselves who would have the higher position.**
- 3. Failed to understand the most basic teaching.**
- 4. Were skeptical of other's faith, especially women, non-group disciples and gentiles.**

WOMEN AND THE MISSION - 1

Remember the charge against Jesus of Nazareth that he was accompanied by sinners and prostitutes. Unless the women travelling with him were relatives and/or wives with their male disciples, that is what these women would have been thought of by the general populace.

WOMEN AND THE MISSION - 2

From the earliest accounts, these women played significant roles for many pivotal parts of the mission starting from the earliest stages of Jesus of Nazareth's ministry. Here is a basic fact as stated in the Gospel of Luke 8: 1 - 3.

WOMEN AND THE MISSION - 3

Soon afterwards he went through cities and villages... And the twelve were with him, and also some women...Mary, called Magdalene,...and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, **who provided for them out of their means.**

THE CRUCIFIXION - 1

**When Jesus of Nazareth was crucified,
his male disciples:**

- 1. BETRAYED HIM**
- 2. DENIED HIM**
- 3. ABANDONED HIM**
- 4. REFUSED TO BELIEVE HIM**

THE CRUCIFIXION - 2

Not one of Jesus' MALE Apostle followers performed any good acts during the events immediately prior to, during or after the crucifixion. All Gospels accounts agree on these points. And afterwards, there are no recordings of any Male Apostle asking to be forgiven for their actions.

THE CRUCIFIXION - 3

When Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, only his women disciples stood by him and witness his death.

NOTE: Mary Magdalene appears in all of the canonical Gospels as a witness.

THE CRUCIFIXION - 4

For those who point out that the beloved disciple stood at the foot of the cross, there are now two theories that say:

- 1. The Beloved Disciple was not one of the twelve “traditional” Apostles (young man or Lazarus).**
- 2. The Beloved Disciple was really a woman.**

THE GOSPELS OF MARY

Mary Magdalene is the only female to have a Gospel named for her and to appear in a significant number of other non-canonical Gospels. From these writings one can deduce that she is the “BELOVED DISCIPLE**”.**

THE CRUCIFIXION & THE GOSPEL OF MARK & MATTHEW

Mark: Some women were there watching from a distance- Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joses), Salome, and others.

Matthew: Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John (the sons of Zebedee.)

THE CRUCIFIXION & THE GOSPEL OF LUKE & JOHN

Luke: Meanwhile Jesus friends, including the women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and others) who had followed him down from Galilee stood in the distance watching.

John: Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, Mary, his aunt, the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene.

THE RESURRECTION - 1

WHEN THE RESURRECTION OCCURS THE MALE DISCIPLES:

- 1. Never saw the empty tomb (MK & MT).**
- 2. Did not believe it when told (LK).**
- 3. Refused to accept it (Thomas in JN).**
- 4. Failed to remember the predictions (All)**
- 5. Peter sees empty tomb and wonders what is going on (LK/JN).**

THE RESURRECTION - 2

The first witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus were not his male disciples. In all four Gospels, it was a group of women (or a single woman). And in each account, Mary Magdalene is one of these persons.

THE RESURRECTION & THE GOSPEL OF MARK & MATTHEW

Mark: The next evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene and Salome, and Mary the mother of James went out and purchased embalming spices. Early the following morning, just at sunrise, they carried them to the tomb.

Matthew: Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to the tomb.

THE RESURRECTION & THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke: The women that went to the tomb were Mary Magdalene and Johanna and Mary the Mother of James and several others.

John: Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone was rolled aside from the entrance.

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 1

It is worth observing that even in a male dominated, patriarchal society, the Evangelists still put in this information about women. That women could be valid witnesses in the eyes of the Evangelists is in itself **unprecedented.**

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 2

The editors and copiers across the centuries did not remove these passages which speaks to their respect of the sacred works. It also is evidence that these women did exist and did do what was described.

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 3

All the Evangelists state the women's names as if they understood that their audience in the early Christian communities knew who these women were and what they had done.

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 4

Scholars (and others) today have come up with books filled with speculations about these women.

Yet we do NOT know anymore about them than what is explicitly stated in the Gospels and Epistles.

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 5

WOMEN were the primary or only witnesses for the **Most Sacred and Important Events** at the beginning of the Christian faith.

SUMMARY OF THE BEGINNING - 6

Without these WOMEN:

**How would the faith have been
shaped for today?**

**What would the faith be like
today?**

WHAT HAPPENED TO EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN?



EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN - 1

Some of the women mentioned in the canonical Gospels include:

- 1. Mary Magdalene**
- 2. Mary, Sister of Lazarus**
- 3. Martha, Sister of Lazarus**
- 4. Johanna, Wife of Chuza**

EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN - 2

- 5. Salome, sister of Jesus**
- 6. Mary, Mother of James & Joseph**
- 7. Suzanna**
- 8. Mary, Mother of Jesus**
- 9. And “many others”**
- 10. The wives of the Apostles**

EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN - 3

A couple of these women are mentioned in more than one Gospel. Yet as stated before, very little is included in the canonical writings about them. Why? What happened to these women? What parts did they take in aiding the growth of early Christianity?

THE WIVES OF THE APOSTLES - 1

From 1Corinthians9:5 - “Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?”

The verse by Paul states quite plainly that at least some of the Apostles as well as Jesus family members had wives. Yet some modern Christian denominations insists that ALL the Apostles were unmarried or widowers.

THE WIVES OF THE APOSTLES - 2

There is nothing in the Canonical writings beyond this statement about the wives of the Apostles. Later church writings contain almost as little as do the Non-canonical Gospels. Like most early Christian women, the wives and “others” have become a faceless group of people to the point that their existence is not recognized or is ignored or even lied about (for doctrinal reasons).

DEFINITION: MARGINALIZATION

For these women, the years after the beginnings of Christianity (100 A.D. going forward), the role and services these women provided were marginalized, i.e. **to relegate to the fringes, out of the mainstream; make seem unimportant: *various assumptions by those in power marginalize women.***

MARY MAGDALENE - 1

A good example for this process of marginalization is MARY MAGDALENE. She represents a key figure in early Christianity as the primary witness of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. And yet, what else do we really know of her?

FROM JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

JUDAS:

It seems to me a strange thing, mystifying.

**That a man like you would waste his time on
women of her kind.**

Its not that I object to her profession.

**But it doesn't fit in well with what you teach
and say. They only need a small excuse to
put us all away.**

CANONICAL SOURCES - 1

Here is a summary from the Gospels of what we know of Mary Magdalene:

- 1. Mary was cured of seven demons by Jesus of Nazareth.**
- 2. Mary was a Galilean woman of means.**
- 3. Mary was from the village of Magdala.**
- 4. Mary was a close and important Disciple of Jesus.**

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 0

There are a number of writings that have survived to the present that come from early Christian groups that for the most part disappeared in the centuries after the early years. (SEE LOST CHRISTIANITIES). Here follows a sampling of their information.

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 1

1. From the **DIALOGUE OF THE SAVIOR**, Mary is given the true knowledge that leads to salvation (along with Matthew and Judas Thomas).
2. From the **PISTIS SOPHIA**, Mary is portrayed as the one who is beyond the others (DISCIPLES) in her spiritual perception and progress.

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 2

- 3. From the **PISTIS SOPHIA, GOSPEL OF THOMAS, AND GOSPEL OF MARY**, the apostle Peter (and other Apostles) are shown to be quite jealous of Mary's preferred status with Jesus.**
- 4. From the **GOSPEL OF PHILIP**, Mary was the one who “always walked with the Lord”.**

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 3

- 5. From the **GOSPEL OF MARY**,
Mary was “The Beloved Disciple” of
Jesus.**
- 6. From the **GOSPEL OF PHILIP**,
Mary was kissed often by Jesus,
showing a close relationship.**
- 7. From the **GOSPEL OF MARY**,
Mary sent the Apostles forth to
preach to the world.**

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 4

8. From the **GOSPEL OF PETER**, Mary was the leader of the group of women who went to the tomb on Easter morning.
9. In verse 21 of the **GOSPEL OF THOMAS**, Mary conversed with Jesus on behalf of multiple (MALE) Disciples, who, in turn, showed their respect toward her.

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 5

- 10. From the **GOSPEL OF PHILIP**, the (Male) Disciples are incredulous that Jesus could love her more than them.**
- 11. From the **GOSPEL OF MARY**, Mary preaches to the male Apostles. She takes charge and instructs them in understanding what Jesus has taught them.**

NON-CANONICAL SOURCES - 6

12. From the **EPISTULA APOSTOLORUM**, Jesus sends Mary to tell the Disciples that he has risen. They refuse to believe Mary.
13. From the **PISTIS SOPHIA**, Peter's problem with Mary is that she is spiritually more advanced and that she is a woman.

MARY MAGDALENE - 2

The non-canonical sources showed clearly that Mary Magdalene was as important a Disciple and/or Apostle of Jesus as any of the other 12 Apostles. Yet none of that information was retained or put into the canonical writings or mentioned by the later church.

MARY MAGDALENE - 3

The proto-Orthodox and later Orthodox Christian Church instead allowed and purposely encouraged Mary Magdalene's role to be changed over time from what would have been a leadership role to that of a repentant sinner who must live down her "BAD" reputation.

MARY MAGDALENE – 4a

Here are three different references to a woman in the Canonical Gospels:

1. Mary Magdalene:

Luke8:2

Matthew28:1 – 8

Mark16: 9 -10

John20:18

MARY MAGDALENE – 4b

2. The woman caught in Adultery (John8:3).

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group.

MARY MAGDALENE – 4c

3. The woman who washes Jesus feet with her tears and hair (Luke 7:37).

And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume...

MARY MAGDALENE - 5

Over the years the later church allowed and even accepted that these three separate people were actually just one person, Mary Magdalene. Pope Gregory the Great (540–604 A.D.) did a famous homily in which he holds up Mary as a model of penitence. Popes are held to be infallible in matters of faith so this homily has never been contradicted.

MARY MAGDALENE - 6

Pope Gregory positively identified the unnamed anointer and the adulteress as Mary of Magdala. So thorough was this blending of characters that the term “MAGDALENE” means:

“A REFORMED PROSTITUTE”

Or

“A REPENTANT FEMALE”

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY

MARY MAGDALENE - 7

Consequently, Mary Magdalene is thought by most modern Christians as well as for over 1500 years historically as that reformed sinner, not as an important and admired disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. This re-characterization of her background is one technique of how to MARGINALIZE the role that women, in general, had in early Christianity.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY -1

An early Christian group was called the Johannine community. One assumption is that one of ITS FOUNDERS AND FIRST LEADERS was Mary Magdalene. From this community come the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John, and the Revelation of John, all canonical writings in the NT.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 2

The assumption is that Mary Magdalene was the primary source for the Gospel of John and was in fact the “BELOVED DISCIPLE”, so named to obscure the fact that the Gospel was based on information provided by a woman.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 3

In order to “GUARANTEE” its acceptance by the early church, certain verses were redacted (put in at a later time) into the Gospel to obscure the fact that Mary and the “BELOVED DISCIPLE” were one and the same person (JOHN20:2).

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 4

When the Johannine community split into a PROTO-ORTHODOX and Gnostic subgroups during the early 2ND century, Mary Magdalene's role was expanded in later Gnostic writings while her role was diminished in the later canonical New Testament.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 5

MARY MAGDALENE plays key roles in the events of the Passion of Jesus; however, her image is often diminished in one way or another by each respective canonical text's author(s). These diminishments clearly represent the early views of the Proto-Orthodox church, i.e. that women are not as suitable to lead religiously as men are. In the non-canonical texts, Mary is clearly seen as an important disciple of Jesus.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 6

If the defining moment of Christianity is the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, then Mary Magdalene can be thought of as the **FIRST CHRISTIAN AND CREATOR OF CHRISTIANITY because she is the first person to proclaim the living Jesus at the tomb.**

ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF MARY - 7

MARY MAGDALENE represents that receiving the Holy Spirit and Redeemer's grace, coming to faith and handing on by proclaiming and instructing as well as performing the related community functions, cannot be limited to men.

(Biblical Scholar Susan Heine)

COMPANION VS. WIFE - 1

In the Gospel of Philip, Mary Magdalene is mentioned in verse 32 as follows:

“and Magdalene, the one who was called his companion.”

COMPANION VS. WIFE - 2

The Gospel of Philip is written in COPTIC which had been translated from KOINE or the Greek used during this time period. The Greek word for “companion” is commonly used of friends and associates and does not mean spouse. Various modern authors and writers take liberty with the English word and its connotations for their own purposes.

COMPANION VS. WIFE - 3

From one female Biblical Scholar:

“As a result of the recent work of a number of scholars, Mary Magdalene’s apostolic role in early Christianity is getting a new hearing. In my view, this is more important than viewing her as Jesus’ wife.”

Q & A SESSION

LECTURE

TWO

THE GROWTH OF A NEW RELIGION

INTERESTING QUOTE - 2

It is tempting to say that Christianity succeeded because God was in it; but a complete answer to the question also needs to examine conditions and causation on the human plane... On the level of the individual, what was the appeal of the Christian message? What needs did it meet? What problems did it solve? Some may find this line of inquiry disturbing...

(Moyer Hubbard- Christianity in the Greco-Roman World)

INTERESTING QUOTE - 3

The story begins in the first century of our era, in Galilee- a remote, impoverished provincial backwater of the Roman Empire. Local peasants, descendants of ancient Israelites, found themselves immersed in a profound and deepening multidimensional crisis. Perhaps in near desperation, small numbers turned to the memory of a martyred teacher, Jesus of Nazareth.

(Denis Jenz – Christian Origins)

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 1

Christianity started with about 30 to 50 initial members in 31 A.D. Numbers taken literally from biblical sources tend to be much too high. The assumption here is based on the ACTS and Paul's writings.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 2

The next assumption is that this number grew to around 5 to 7 million by 310 A. D. when the Emperor Constantine began his rule. This is a growth rate of 3.42% per year or 40% per decade.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 3

Such a growth rate points to a steady but continuous rise in the number of Christians around the Roman Empire. It does not assume a sudden or dramatic increase.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 4

YEAR	# OF CHRISTIANS	%
40 C.E.	1000	0.0017
100	7530	0.0126
150	40,496	0.07
200	217,795	0.36
250	1,171,356	1.90
300	6,299,832	10.50

Based on an estimated population of 60 million.

The Shifting Frequency of Pagan and Christian Inscriptions on Gravestones: 100-650

Years	Location					
	Carthage		North Africa		Spain	
	Pagan	Christian	Pagan	Christian	Pagan	Christian
100-150	273	0	121	0	139	0
150-200	306	0	189	0	181	0
200-250	183	0	196	0	121	0
250-300	70	0	92	3	52	1
300-350	0	0	1	14	9	10
350-400	0	54	0	23	0	23
400-450	0	75	0	20	0	42
450-500	0	97	1	24	0	58
500-550	0	42	0	75	0	86
550-600	0	115	0	147	0	59
600-650	0	77	0	59	—	—

SOURCE: Galvao-Sobrinho, 1995; actual frequencies provided to the author by Professor Galvao-Sobrinho.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 5

How was this growth accomplished from such a small band of illiterate people in a backwater province of a huge empire?

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 6a

It is important to understand that in these times:

- 1. There was no instant communications of any type.**
- 2. Travel time was measured in days, weeks, & months between communities.**

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 6b

- 3. There was no “New Testament” for several centuries.**
- 4. There was no central authority, no organized hierarchy.**
- 5. Meeting places were often in houses or public gathering spots.**

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 6c

However, because of the Pax Romana of the first two centuries A.D.:

- 1. Water shipping lanes were free of pirates. Merchant shipping was widespread.**
- 2. The Roman legions had built a vast network of roadways, fairly free of brigands and thieves.**

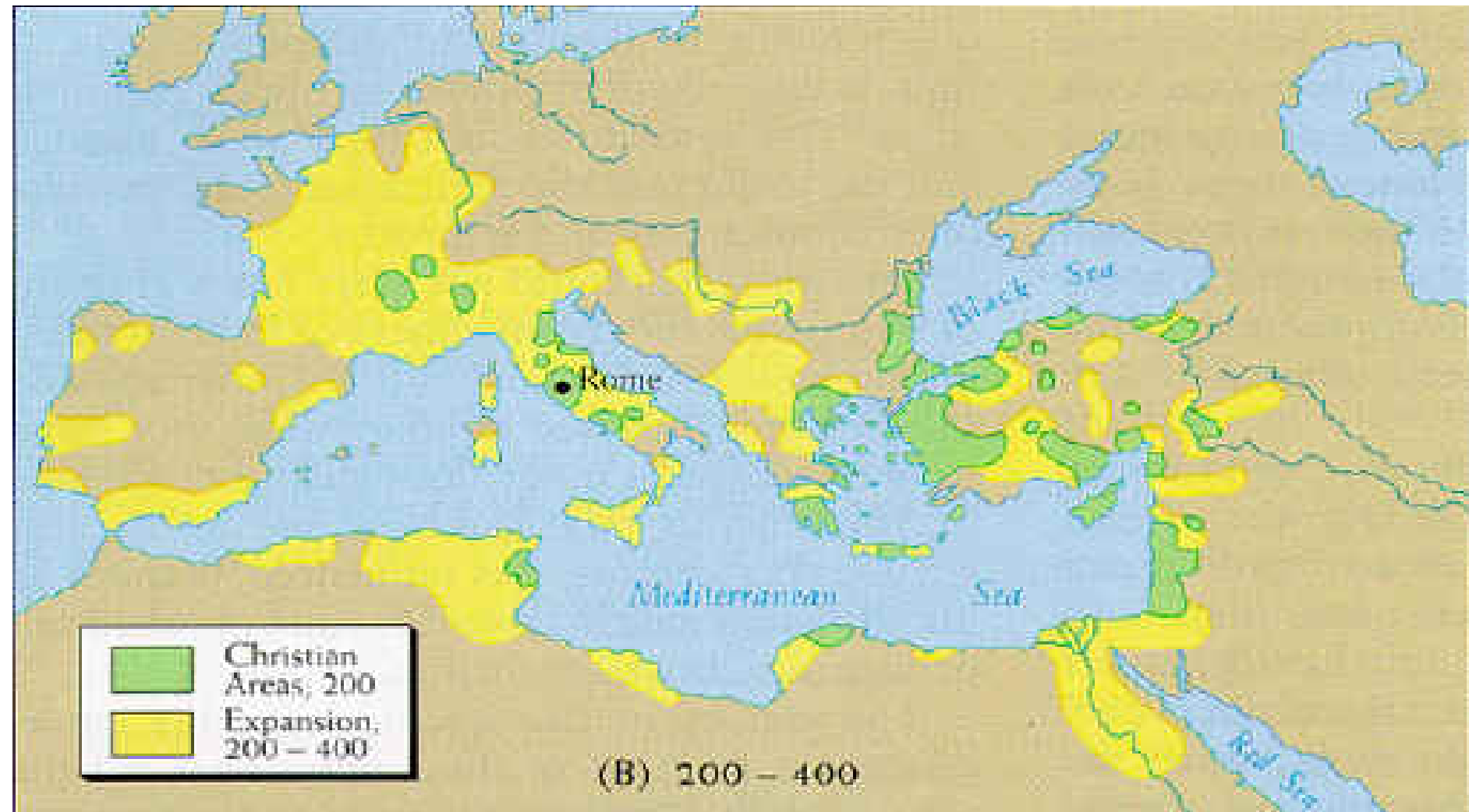
LOCATION OF CHRISTIANITY – 112 C.E.



LOCATION OF CHRISTIANITY 112 C.E. to 250 C.E.



LOCATION OF CHRISTIANITY 200 C.E. to 400 C.E.



GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 7

The growth of Christianity was not done by mass conversions such as huge tent revivals or large groups joining after hearing an inspiring and uplifting speech.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 8

After Peter's sermon, "three thousand souls" supposedly came forward and were baptized. The result would not have been 3000 new converts, but only 3000 wet Jews, Greeks, Romans, and pagans.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 9

One sermon, no matter how dynamic, does not prompt the fundamental shift of identity essential to total religious conversion. It would have at most prompted maybe an interest, that would have been fleeting.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY – 10

There was no institution or infrastructure to support and maintain any type of conversion.

When the people returned to their homes, they would have gone back to their original beliefs, routines, and family relationships.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 11

The hypothesis is that the conversions were done **one person or one family at a time, moving slowly but steadily across the empire, especially those parts located close to the Mediterranean Sea and the large urban areas.**

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 12

The primary source of converts would have been the large cities that existed during the Pax Romana. These cities were overcrowded, bleak, and brutal places to live, filled with people seeking something spiritually and physically better. Consider the table on the next slide.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 13

Population densities (people/acre):

Ancient Cities

Rome 300

Jerusalem 188

Antioch 117

Ostia 158

Modern Cities

New York 41

Chicago 20

Los Angeles 12

Cairo 73

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 14

The vast majority of the population during Roman times (estimated at 70% to 90%) survived at or below the subsistence level. Most inhabitants of urban areas lived in atrocious and cramped conditions marked by noise, filth, squalor, garbage, human excrement, animals, disease, fire risk, crime, social and ethnic conflicts, malnutrition, natural disasters (both floods

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 15

and earthquakes), and unstable dwellings. Life expectancy was short (25 to 40 years). This fact was the grim reality of ancient life. There was no safety net or services for the majority of people. Urban unrest and mob violence tended to be commonplace. Outside the family, no one cared for you.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 16

The cramped living facilities that most people were jammed into were so dirty and unhealthy that during daytime, people spent their leisure (non-work) time outdoors, making access to the common folk easy. It is in these places that Early Christianity took root and grew. It was an urban based religion.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY - 17

**From the book, THE TRIUMPH OF
CHRISTIANITY by Professor Bart
Ehrman:**

**“Whoever became a Christian was
lost to paganism.”**

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WOMEN - 1

The assumption of this lecture is that the means of this growth was mostly the result of the efforts, influence, dedication, and work of women in these cities, the majority of whom we would consider common mothers and housewives.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WOMEN - 2

The vast majority of early Christians were not martyrs or ascetics (monks and/or nuns). They lived quiet lives of virtue and vice. As always with the silent majority (in this case, primarily women), their stories go mostly untold. (From Carolyn Osiek- “Family Matters”)

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WOMEN - 3

It has been often stated by some religious institutions that early women members were Virgins and/or Martyrs. If this was true, there would NOT have been a Christian religion.

The Greek Word for Martyr is ‘martyrikos’ which literally means an eye or ear witness.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WOMEN - 4

The concept of martyr in the early days of Christianity was not to shed one's blood for Jesus of Nazareth but to bear witness to his message and teachings.

This was accomplished through the daily lives of those who took to heart these concepts. It appears dull and mundane but it proved to be very effective.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WOMEN - 5

There are two questions that these lectures are going to try to answer:

- 1. Why did pagan women during the years 30 A.D. to 310 A.D. become Christian?**
- 2. How did women become the motive force behind the spectacular growth in Christianity during that time?**

Q & A SESSION

**WHY DID
PAGAN WOMEN
BECOME
CHRISTIANS?**



INTERESTING QUOTE - 4

When the circumstances of PAGAN and CHRISTIAN women are compared, the wonder is that all the women in the Roman Empire didn't flock into the early Christian church.

(RODNEY STARK- THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY)

WOMEN AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 1

The ancient sources and modern historians agree that the primary conversion to Christianity was far more prevalent among female pagans than among male pagans. Why was that the case?

WOMEN AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 2

**Consider this data from 303 A.D.
when the following items were
confiscated from a Christian church:
16 men's tunics, 38 female veils, 82
women's tunics, 47 pairs of female
slippers.**

WOMEN AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 3

There are a number of reasons behind this hypothesis:

- 1. Status in the religion.**
- 2. Greater equality now and in the afterlife.**
- 3. Sanctity of marriage.**
- 4. Older age for marriage.**

WOMEN AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 4

6. Choice.

**7. Protection and care of widows
and orphans.**

STATUS

MATTHEW 27:55 - 1

There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him...

MATTHEW 27:55 - 2

The words “to minster” are translated from the Greek verb “diakonein” which means to serve or minister. It is the root word for “DEACON”. The word had often been translated to mean that the women did just traditional female work.

MATTHEW 27:55 - 3

Some scholars suggest that a truer translation is to minister as a disciple as well. They suggest that most or all the female travelling companions of Jesus had this important function. In this society who else could have preached to other women? Not males.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 1

These are some of the “offices” that women could hold in the early Christianity:

- 1. Apostle**
- 2. Prophetess**
- 3. Pastor**
- 4. Presbyter or Priest**

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 2

5. Deaconess

6. Elderess

7. Widow

8. Bishop

**9. Financier or Prostasis or
Patroness**

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 3

The house church was the training ground for Christian leaders. Such a situation favored the emergence of the hostess as the most important member of the group. Traditionally in Roman and Jewish households, women were in charge of affairs.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 4

Early Christian “services” were almost always conducted in the houses of members. It should be no surprise that the women would be expected to assume a “leadership” role in their own homes. In several of Paul’s Epistles, he sends greetings to the households of “his fellow workers” who are female. He addresses them as the leaders.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 5

Paul fondly mentions many women in his letters:

1. Apphia ([Phm 1:2](#))
2. Claudia ([2 Tim 4:21](#)),
3. [Chloe \(1 Cor 1:11\)](#)
4. Euodia ([Php 4:2](#))
5. Julia ([Rom 16:15](#))
6. [Junia \(Rom 16:7\)](#)
7. Lois and Eunice ([2 Tim 1:5](#))
8. Mary ([Rom 16:6](#))

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 6

9. Nereus' sister ([Rom 16:15](#))
10. Nympha ([Col 4:15](#))
11. Persis ([Rom 16:12](#))
12. [Phoebe](#) ([Rom 16:1-2](#))
13. [Priscilla](#) ([Rom 16:3-5](#))
14. Rufus' mother ([Rom 16:13](#))
15. Syntyche ([Php 4:2](#))
16. Tryphena ([Rom 16:12](#)).
17. Tryphosa ([Rom 16:12](#))

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 7

These women were actively involved in significant ministry, some as leaders. Paul specifically refers to Phoebe with three appellations: sister, “diakonos”, and “prostasis”. The word “deacon” has contextual issues as this role is understood by different denominations. Paul seems to have used it in reference to a minister of the Gospel.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 8

The word “prostasis” literally means “a woman set over others”, i.e. a leader or a patroness. The term implies that this person will care for the affairs of her charges and aid them with her material resources as well as her spiritual ones. Some scholars argue that it implies that she performs the duties of a bishop.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 9

Another prominent role in the early Christian church was that of a person given to prophecy which represented a charismatic model of leadership and authority, usually by women. From Paul's Corinthians Epistle, many if not most of the prophets in the assembly are women.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 10

**Another well known example from
ROMANS 16:7 -**

**“Then there are ANDRONICUS and
JUNIA... They are outstanding
among the Apostles.”**

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 11

The example of Junia has caused a firestorm for two millennia among scholars from many different schools and church institutions.

A Woman Apostle???

Evidently, Paul thought so.

(Of course that depends on the translation and the translator.)

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 12

When doing an internet search on the subject “JUNIA THE APOSTLE”, 830,700 separate websites came up.

Some are adamant that she was an Apostle.

Some are just as adamant that she was not or the person was really a male.

STATUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH - 11

One rather sarcastic observation that was made:

“Why is it that the debate is all about Junia being an Apostle but not one comment or question about Andronicus status as an Apostle?”

A WOMEN PRIEST - 0

Epiphanius, an early church historian, (around 320 A.D.) stated rather critically and caustically:

“Women among them (in certain Christian communities) are bishops, presbyters, and the rest, as if there was no difference of nature.”

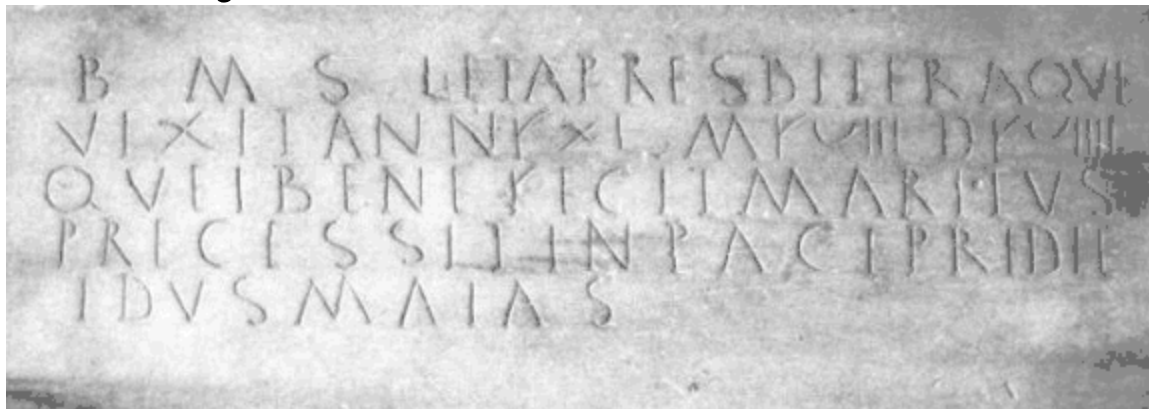
A WOMEN PRIEST - 1

**TRANSLATION from a 4th century
headstone :Guilia Runa, woman
priest**



A WOMEN PRIEST - 2

**TRANSLATION from a 5th century headstone:
Sacred to her good memory. Leta the
Presbyter lived 40 years, 8 months, 9 days, for
whom her husband set up this tomb. She
preceded him in peace on the day before the
Ides of May.**



A WOMEN PRIEST - 3

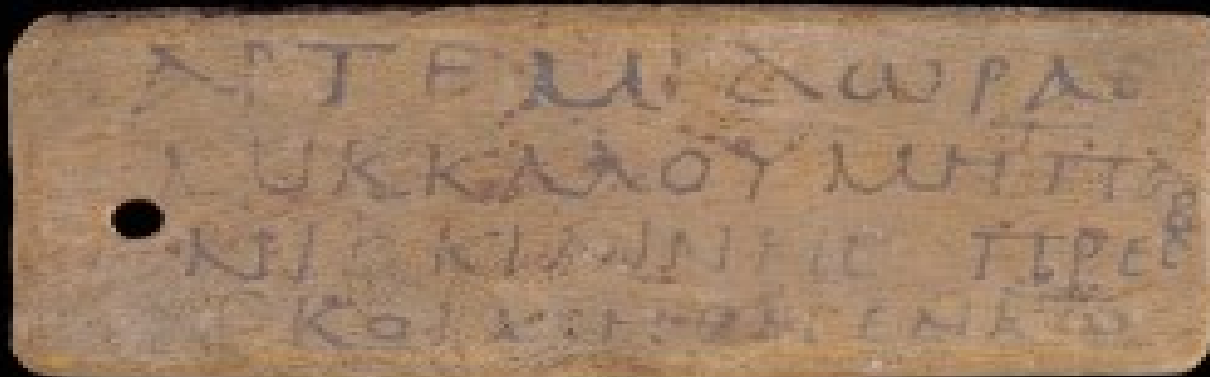
From Catacombs of Priscilla, 200 A.D. to 400 A.D.

The claim: This is a figure of a woman priest.



A WOMEN PRIEST - 4

The mummy tag of an Egyptian woman, Artemidora, a Christian living between 250 - 350 AD. The tag describes her as a “presbyter,” i.e. priest. This tag is owned by the Louvre.



EQUALITY

EQUALITY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 1

Women played a major role in the spread of Christianity because Christian doctrine “promoted liberating social relations between the sexes and within the family” giving them higher status than in Roman and Jewish society.

EQUALITY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 2

The teachings of Jesus of Nazareth intimates the equality of male and female in regard to both God's blessings and banes, and to their ability to be included in or excluded from the Kingdom. Many of his parables have women as their primary subjects.

EQUALITY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 3

Following up on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth is this famous (or infamous) quote by Paul:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is **neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

EQUALITY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY - 4

In Paul's teachings, he treats wives, equally with husbands, as responsible human beings who deserve to be addressed, exhorted, and encouraged as full members of the Christian community. These sentiments became embedded as beliefs in the early Christian religion.

MARRIAGE SANCTITY & AGE

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE - 1

Roman men held marriage in low regard and when they married produced few children. And most of them were male. The Pagan culture permitted infanticide and abortion; the male's right to divorce at will; have multiple wives; and it tolerated male promiscuity.

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE – 1a

Sexual liaisons by a married man with slaves courtesans, younger boys, or women of lower social orders were legally permissible and involved little, if any, social stigma. ... a husband's peccadilloes and paramours should be viewed as honoring the wife...

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE – 1b

Moreover, while a husband could bring a charge against his wife as an adulteress, Roman law did not afford the same right to women. ...the picture that emerges is one where marriage vows were often exchanged and then forgotten (by the husband).

(Moyer Hubbard – Christianity in the Greco-Roman World)

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE - 2

**The early Christian religion condemned
and forbade:**

- 1. DIVORCE**
- 2. INCEST**
- 3. MARITAL INFIDELITY**
- 4. POLYGAMY**

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE - 3

The early Christian religion, unlike the pagan and even Jewish religions expected males as well as females to abide by these rules. There was no double standard in the early Christian church.

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE - 4

These rules provided Christian women more security in that a woman entering into a marriage understood that there was going to be a longer term commitment with a more faithful partner. It must be remembered that men could leave or divorce their wives for any reason without explanation.

AGE OF MARRIAGE - 1

Based on inscriptions and certain writings, the early Christian women married at a substantially (in a relatively comparative manner for the time period) older age than their pagan counterparts.

AGE OF MARRIAGE - 2

Plutarch reported:

Romans gave their girls in marriage when they were 12 years old or even younger.

Dio Crassus stated:

Girls are considered to have reached marriageable age on completion of their 12TH year.

UWGB Professor Aldrete :History of the Ancient World

AGE OF MARRIAGE - 3

The qualitative data on the following table are based on inscriptions, most of them funerary (tombstones), for which the age of marriage can be calculated.

Although many pagan women did marry after age 14, almost half were younger.

Note no one is under the age of 12 years for the Christians.

RELIGION AND AGE OF MARRIAGE OF ROMAN FEMALES - 4

AGE	PAGAN	CHRISTIAN
< 12 yrs.	10%	----
12 - 13 yrs.	9%	7%
13 – 14 yrs.	24%	13%
15 – 17 yrs.	19%	32%
> 18 yrs.	37%	48%

By Hopkins & based on Roman Inscriptions.

CHOICE

PRO-CHOICE - 1

The early Christians (as well as the Jewish people from whom these practices were derived) condemned:

- 1. ABORTION**
- 2. BIRTH CONTROL**
- 3. INFANTICIDE**

LETTER FROM JUNE 1, 1 B.C.E.

Hilarion to Alis his sister, heartiest greetings, and to my dear Berous and Apollonarion. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all the others return I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech of you to take care of the little child, and as soon as we receive wages I will send them to you. If -good luck to you! - **you bear offspring, if it is a male, let it live; if it is a female, expose it.** You told Aphrodisias, 'Do not forget me.' How can I forget you? I beg you therefore not to worry.

The 29th year of Caesar, Pauni 23.

PRO-CHOICE - 2

The exposure of unwanted female infants and deformed male infants was LEGAL, MORALLY ACCEPTED, and WIDELY PRACTICED by all social classes in the Roman Empire and elsewhere. This fact is historically established.

PRO-CHOICE - 3

The early Christian religion adopted from the JEWISH faith the same doctrine that absolutely prohibited infanticide. This rule allowed mothers especially THE CHOICE to keep their female infants which would have dramatic effects on the growth of later Christianity.

PRO-CHOICE - 4

By condemning birth control and abortion, early Christian women avoided the painful and often fatal application of the primitive techniques available with ancient medicines. Nor would they be forced by husbands to undergo such risky procedures. Child birth itself was dangerous enough.

SAFETY NET

WIDOWS - 1

Under Roman law, a woman had to remarry within a short period of time (Caesar Augustus dictated two years). When they remarried, any property or inheritance that she had would automatically go to the new husband.

WIDOWS - 2

Christian Widows did not have to remarry which meant that the woman could hold onto her property. If they were poor, the faithful were required to care for the widows. In modern terms, the Christians provided a “SOCIAL SAFETY NET”.

WIDOWS - 3

A note written by Bishop Fabius of Antioch in 251 A.D. shows the general obligations that Christians had toward Widows.

“...There were more than 1500 WIDOWS and distressed persons in the care of local congregations...”

The total membership of the congregations at that time was around 30,000.

Q & A SESSION

LECTURE

THREE

**HOW DID
WOMEN
AFFECT THE
GROWTH OF
EARLY
CHRISTIANITY?**

INTERESTING QUOTE - 5

Most New Testament historians no longer believe that the early Christians were a motley crew of male slaves and male downtrodden. Had that been the case, the rise of Christianity would most certainly have required miracles.

(RODNEY STARK- THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY)

HOW DID WOMEN AFFECT THE GROWTH - 1

There are a number of reasons that are to be looked into such as the following:

- 1. Nursing of the sick.**
- 2. Higher Birthrates.**
- 3. More daughters and these living to child bearing ages.**
- 4. Raising children as Christians.**

HOW DID WOMEN AFFECT THE GROWTH - 2

- 5. Secondary conversions by marriage and nursing.**
- 6. Longer life expectancy.**
- 7. Performing ministerial duties.**

NURSING

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 1

The responsibility for caring and nurturing the ill and sick traditionally fell to the female members of a household. During major epidemics, this duty was done mostly by Christian women.

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL – 1a

**Two major Pandemics in early
Christian History:**

- 1. The Antonine Plague 165 A.D.
to 172 A.D. 7.5 million perished**
- 2. The Cyprian Plague 249 A.D. to
262 A.D. Estimated 10 million
perished.**

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 2

The pagan response can be summed up in general by a note written in 260 A.D. by Dionysius:

“The heathen behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads.”

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 3

- 1. For one Roman city, before an epidemic, one author estimated that the ratio of Christian to pagan was 1 Christian to 249 pagans.**
- 2. The mortality rate of the epidemic was 30% without any nursing of the ill person.**

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 4

- 3. For Christians the mortality rate was only 10% because of the nursing provided the afflicted.**
- 4. After the epidemic, because a higher percentage of Christians survived, the ratio would be reduced to 1 to 197.**

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 5

- 5. In addition, it was not unusual for Christians to nurse pagan friends, neighbors, and relatives who, in turn, would convert out of gratitude or respect (or even self-interest).**
- 6. Major epidemics could happen once every decade and last for several seasons.**

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 6

Suggested survival rates:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Christian – Christian: | 0.81 |
| 2. Christian – Pagan: | 0.63 |
| 3. Pagan – Pagan: | 0.49 |
| 4. Pagan (flees) – Pagan: | 0.25 |

The conclusion is **NURSING made a big difference.**

NURSING THE SICK AND ILL - 7

“In the later second century, there are on the order of 200,000 Christians. By 300 A.D. there had been a staggering change...

The mass mortality showed up the inefficacy of the ancestral gods and put on exhibit the virtues of the Christian faith. However stylized the tale may be, it preserves a kind of historical recollection about the plague's role in the religious transformation of the community.”

(Fate of Rome-Kyle Harper)

BIRTHRATE

HIGHER BIRTHRATE - 1

Early Christian women:

- 1. Did not use the dangerous birth control herbs (such as Queen's Anne Lace).**
- 2. Did not receive the primitive (and ghastly) abortions.**
- 3. Married at later ages.**
- 4. Had more secure, faithful husbands.**

HIGHER BIRTHRATE - 2

**Tertullian (Christian Historian)
noted:**

**“Burdens (having children) must
be sought by us (CHRISTIANS)
for ourselves which are avoided by
the gentiles (PAGANS)...who are
decimated by abortions.”**

HIGHER BIRTHRATE - 3

The best estimate is that the life expectancy of a Roman person was between 20 to 30 years at their birth. There is no definitive way to break this down between Pagan and Christian but an average age of **25 YEARS for each should suffice.**

HIGHER BIRTHRATE - 4

Because of the points stated earlier Christian women had longer lifespans. Consequently, more of them made it to the 25 year figure which meant that they would be able to bear more children, resulting in higher birthrates and fertility.

DAUGHTERS

MORE DAUGHTERS & HIGHER SEX RATIO-1
As many as 50% of the children born during the first centuries did not reach their teenage years due to poor healthcare, bad nutrition, and the other general hazards of life in early times. There is no reason to assume that the death rates of infants or young children were different from Pagan and Christians.

MORE DAUGHTERS & HIGHER SEX RATIO-2

About the year 200 A.D., Dio Crassus, an ancient Roman Historian, attributed the declining population in the Roman Empire to the extreme shortages of females.

MORE DAUGHTERS & HIGHER SEX RATIO-3

A study done of inscriptions at the temple of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi made it possible to reconstruct the membership of 600 Pagan families. Only **SIX of these families raised more than **ONE** Daughter.**

MORE DAUGHTERS & HIGHER SEX RATIO-4

The ratio of males to females at this time in Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa was around 140 Males to 100 Females.

WHERE WERE THE PAGAN YOUNG MEN TO FIND THEIR FUTURE WIVES?

MORE DAUGHTERS & HIGHER SEX RATIO-5

The Christian community is estimated to have been 60% female. This was due to the influx of female conversions and that female children were allowed to live at birth. Consequently, there was a surplus of Christian females to available males.

CHILDREN

RAISING CHILDREN AS CHRISTIANS - 1

The natural outcome of this disparity in the number of females in the Christian community and the number of the males in the Pagan community was the higher number of mixed marriages between Pagan males and Christian females.

RAISING CHILDREN AS CHRISTIANS - 2

Mothers held the traditional role of raising children. And the religion or faith those children traditionally assumed was that of their mother. Thus more and “NEW” members of the empire were raised Christians.

SECONDARY CONVERSIONS - 1

In many cases, it is assumed that the wives of Pagan husbands converted many of their spouses which in turn may have led to more secondary conversions of their relatives, slaves, and friends. Also included must be those secondary conversions of Pagans who were nursed to health during epidemics or who responded positively to the compassion of Christians to their neighbors.

SECONDARY CONVERSIONS - 2

This sets up a **VIRTUOUS CYCLE of positive feedback. The more females means more intermarriages which means more secondary conversions which adds a larger base of females to continue the process.**

LIFE EXPECTANCY

LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY - 1

Another part of this positive feedback in the **VIRTUOUS CYCLE is that Christian females had a longer life expectancy than their Pagan counterparts.**

(SEE HIGHER BIRTHRATES)

LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY - 2

Christian women had more time to bear children, raise them, and teach the Christian faith to them. In addition, they had more opportunities to nurse the sick and ill among the Pagans. And, finally, their longer life span gave them the opportunity to provide leadership in their growing community.

LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY - 3

More knowledge and experience carried over more thoroughly from one generation to the next generation (20 year time frames due to lower life expectancies). Many of these women would become widows who held special status in the early Christian church.

LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY - 4

From the earliest years of the Christian community and organization there had been a special place for widows. They were recipients of charity in return for their responsibility of prayer and fasting for the Church, hospitality, and instruction of younger women.

(From ancient historian Epiphanius)

**PERFORMING
MINISTERIAL
DUTIES**

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 0

Prior to Constantine, Christians conceived themselves explicitly as an alternative family or household. This meant that the church functioned as a private institution.

Christians confined their worship for the most part to meeting in homes where women in leadership was not an issue. Even though this changed, women functions endured.

WOMEN MINISTER DUTIES - 1

There were a number of documented duties done by women in the early church that are listed and criticized for being allowed. The documents are:

- 1. DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM, a manual on church organization that was written during the 2ND century A.D.**
- 2. STATUTES OF THE APOSTLES**

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 2

3. OCTATEUCH OF CLEMENT

4. THE TESTAMENT OF THE LORD

These list ministerial duties being done by women that should be restricted. But the fact is that these duties are being done by women.

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 3

The duties include:

- 1. Evangelization.**
- 2. Disciplining believers.**
- 3. Hearing confessions**
- 4. Performing baptisms, especially on males.**
- 5. Presiding over the Eucharist.**

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 4

Even with the early various male leaders and “Fathers of the church” questioning these roles of Deaconess, Widows, and other positions, the following roles were fairly widespread and undisputedly beneficial to the spread and maintenance of Christianity among FEMALE pagan converts.

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 5

- 1. The visiting and nursing of sick women at their homes. Males could not do this easily under social mores of the times.**
- 2. Supervision of women in the assembly outside houses (when they were seated separately from the men).**
- 3. Religious instruction of pagan women and children.**

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 6

- 4. Assistance at the unclothing of women required for baptism by immersion.**
- 5. The sponsorship of a woman at baptism had to be done by another woman (later formalized at the Council of Nicea).**
- 6. Preaching to housewives during missionary work.**

WOMEN MINISTERIAL DUTIES - 7

So even before 310 A.D., the role of women in the ministry was starting to be restricted, by having women only minister to other women. Of course, as has been pointed out earlier, women conversion was the key element to the growth of Christianity in its early centuries. Men in power at that time may have noticed that as well.

SUMMARY OF THE HOW

From the biography of St. Gorgonia:

She married and had three children. She dedicated her life to the study of scripture. She was ordained a deacon and developed a ministry to the needy by opening her house to the poor to feed them and provide shelter. She lived from 330 A.D. to 369 A.D. in Bithynia.

Q & A SESSION

THE END

OF

THE BEGINNING

FROM 1 TIMOTHY 2:11 - 12

The author of the Letter of 1 Timothy (written by a disciple of Paul) stated:

“Women should listen and learn quietly and humbly. I never let women teach men or lord it over the men. Let them be silent in your church meetings.”

FROM TITUS 2:3

The author of the Letter of Titus (written by a disciple of Paul) stated:

“Teach older women to be quiet and respectful in everything that they do”

The marginalization of women started early. These letters were written around 100 A.D. by disciples of Paul to early church congregations.

PROTO-ORTHODOX QUOTE - 1

Tertullian (155 A.D. TO 220 A.D.) was an early Christian theologian. He said in his treatise “On The Veiling of Virgins”:

“It is not permitted for a woman to speak in church, nor to teach, baptize, offer [eucharist], nor to take upon herself any male function, least of all the priestly office.”

PROTO-ORTHODOX QUOTE - 2

Origen (185 A.D. TO 254 A.D.) was another early Christian theologian. He said in his “Commentary on Corinthians”:

“For men should not sit and listen to women, as if men capable of being responsible for the Word of God were entirely lacking.... A woman speaking publicly is a shameful situation which reflects judgment on the whole Church.”

PROTO-ORTHODOX QUOTE - 3

Epiphanius (310 A.D.. TO 403 A.D.) was another major early Christian theologian. He said in “*Didascalia Apostolorum*”:

“If Christ had wished that women baptize, then surely he would have been baptized by his mother instead of by John, and he would have named women among those commissioned to spread the gospel.”

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

In 312 C.E. the emperor issued the Edict of Milan which for all practical purposes ended the overt persecution of Christians (and all other religious sects and cults). His personal preference and his belief was that Christianity could be an unifying force for the empire.

INTERESTING QUOTE - 6

Constantine was the empire's patron in chief, and his favoritism rippled outward in expanding circles of influence. For Christianity, Constantine's uncanny choice was **THE watershed, the moment of irreversible acceleration.**

(Kyle Harper – THE FATE OF ROME)

THE GENESIS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION - 1

In order to use Christianity as a stabilizing force throughout the empire, Constantine started the process that caused the transition of Christianity into a major institutional structure, beginning with the Council of Nicaea that he ordered to come together, actually sending soldiers to bring recalcitrant Bishops to the site.

THE GENESIS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION - 2

The changes to Christianity that he started included:

- 1. The standardization of beliefs.**
- 2. A formulized male hierarchy based on the Roman Imperial system.**
- 3. The politicization of the male clergy.**

THE GENESIS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION - 3

- 4. Secular authority for Bishops and other male leaders.**
- 5. Imperial prestige and wealth.**
- 6. Physical churches and other landed properties.**
- 7. Formal membership.**
- 8. Repression of Paganism.**

THE GENESIS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION - 4

- 9. Common prayers and rituals.**
- 10. A centralized leadership structure which evolved into the modern Papacy.**
- 11. The reduction of female leaders in the new Orthodox church.**

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 1

With Christianity now the favored (and soon to be official) religion of the empire, large numbers of Pagan males converted. They brought with them their Greco-Roman patrimonial culture and the disdain for women that permeated that culture. (Why did Pagan women join Christianity!!!!)

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 2

A natural consequence of a more, male, secular, Greco-Roman influenced and less Spirit-led church was the widespread consensus among the newer converts that women ecclesiastical leaders were absolutely unacceptable. This event inevitably led to a diminishing role for women.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 3

Also, in the later antiquities, the rise of asceticism led to celibacy becoming a pre-eminence grounded in salvation history. This led directly to a devaluation of sexuality and indirectly to a devaluation of women who were increasingly defined in a one-sided biological way as sexual beings.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 4

The church orders from the middle of the 3rd century and the following centuries also make clear that these ministries on the part of women generated conflict—conflict that resulted from a sense that such activity was inappropriate for women when measured by the standards of Greco-Roman society.

FROM DR. KAREN J. TORJESEN

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 5

With the formalization of sacraments, rituals, and doctrines, the “Laying of Hands” or the ordination to any ministerial position became subject to the approval of the institutional leadership which gradually became completely male dominated in most Christian sects.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 6

Christian worship moved out of homes into buildings that were devoted exclusively to the needs of the worshipping community. The common meal was dropped. Rituals became more elaborate. In the sphere of the household, there were little limitations on the role of women. In the public sphere of Greco-Roman society, that role could not continue.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 7

Many Christian communities of the first four centuries allowed extended leadership roles to women, including the **ordained ministry in many cases. These groups for the most part represented strains of early Christianity which did not become contributors to the formation of the “Orthodox” Christian tradition which we have inherited.**

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 8

These sub-sects were considered and branded “heretical” by the proto-orthodox” tradition which eventually became the only legitimate Christianity after Constantine. These groups are known to modern times as Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, as well as other sub-groups within the proto-orthodox itself.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 9

Whatever the theological factors that were involved in the distinction of these early groups of Christians, the role of female Christians were more restrictive in the proto-orthodox than in these sects.

This topic will be covered in much more detail in the ‘LOST CHRISTIANITIES’ course.

INTERESTING QUOTE -7

John Chrysostom (344 C.E. TO 407 C.E.) was another major early Christian theologian. He said in “Concerning the Priesthood Book 2”:

“The task of the priesthood goes beyond the powers of the whole female sex.”

THE COUNCIL OF LAODICEA IN 360 C.E.

CANON XI:

PRESBYTIDES, as they are called, or female presidents, are not to be appointed in the Church.

CANON XLIV:

Women may not go to the altar.

DECLINE OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN - 9

These changes happened over the next several centuries. With these changes came the marginalization of the woman's role in the new church and the eventual loss to the mists of time their crucial part in THE GROWTH OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

EPILOGUE

QUOTE ON THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN

In 360 C.E. the Emperor Julian the Apostate noted bitterly in a letter to Pagan Priests the important role played by Christian women.

“Each of you allows his wife to carry out everything from his house to the Galileans. The wives feed the poor at your expense and the Galileans get the credit.”

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY – THE END

**From 6th century headstone in
Cappadocia:**

**“Here lies Maria the deacon of pious and
blessed memory who, according to the
saying of the Apostle, raised children,
exercised hospitality, washed the feet of the
saints, and distributed her bread to the
needy. Remember her, Lord, when she
enters into your kingdom.”**

INTERESTING QUOTE - 8

Many traditional assumptions about Christianity's past will have to be abandoned. When the Christian masses are the leading protagonists of the story, we begin to glimpse a plot with new contours. In fact a rewriting of this history is now getting underway...

(Denis Jenz – CHRISTIAN ORIGINS)

Q & A SESSION

NEXT CLASS

**PART 12 OF THE HISTORY OF
EARLY CHRISTIANITY:**

**THE 12 APOSTLES: FACTS VS.
MYTHS**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

**WOMEN AND THE GENESIS OF
CHRISTIANITY**

BY BEN WITHERINGTON III

**THE RISE OF EARLY
CHRISTIANITY**

BY RODNEY STARK

SESSION LECTURES

- 1. WOMEN AND SOCIETY
DURING THE 1ST TO 3RD
CENTURIES.**
- 2. IN THE BEGINNING –
WOMEN AND THE GENESIS
OF CHRISTIANITY.**
- 3. WHAT HAPPENED TO EARLY
CHRISTIAN WOMEN.**

SESSION LECTURES

- 4. THE GROWTH OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY.**
- 5. WHY DID PAGAN WOMEN JOIN CHRISTIANITY.**
- 6. HOW DID WOMEN AID THE SPECTACULAR GROWTH OF THIS NEW RELIGION.**
- 7. THE END OF THE BEGINNING.**

ASSIGNMENT FOR GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

**HOW MANY MINISTERS,
PRIESTS, OR LECTURERS
MENTION OR RECOGNISE THE
ROLE OF WOMEN AS STATED
IN THE GOSPELS?????**

NEXT CLASS

**PART 2 OF THE HISTORY OF
EARLY CHRISTIANITY:**

**LOST CHRISTIANITIES:
HERESY VS. ORTHODOXY -
APRIL 2015**