

Rules and Roles for Women: Vocation and Order in the Apostolic Fathers

JACOB J. PRAHLOW

Jacob J. Prahlow is Associate Pastor of Connections and Church-Planting at Rooftop Community Church, Saint Louis, Missouri. He earned a MTS in historical theology from St. Louis University and a MA in religion from Wake Forest University. Jacob and his wife, Hayley, have two children and numerous pets.

In the formative years between the time of the Apostles of Jesus and the Apologists of Christianity stand several texts which reflect the labor of early Church leaders as they attempted to outline acceptable ethics and what it meant to be the Christian Church. Long neglected, in recent decades scholars have turned to these writings—collectively called the Apostolic Fathers—with increased vigor and the recognition that these sources offer valuable insights into the post-New Testament era.¹ Many of the recent studies on the Apostolic Fathers address questions of church order and the construction of authority in these writings.² One realm which has received comparatively little attention, however, is the conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers. Studies of women in early Christianity have seen a tremendous growth since Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's publication of *In Memory of Her* in 1983.³ However, studies of women in the New Testament (NT), ordained women in early Christianity, and women in second through fifth century sources have received far more attention than conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers.⁴ The only substantial treatment of this topic comes in Christine Trevett's *Christian Women and the Time of the Apostolic Fathers*.⁵

Several factors contribute to this relative neglect. First, other areas of study

are intrinsically more interesting for those studying women or early Christianity, such as what the NT says about women. Second, the relative lack of source materials for this period necessarily limits studies of women in the Apostolic Fathers. As Trevett writes, “The process of writing this study of Christian women and the time of the Apostolic Fathers has involved collating and commenting on fragments of evidence from disparate sources.”⁶ Third, other areas of study contain more interesting materials for those seeking to understand the conceptions and roles of women in early Christianity. The greater attention paid to women in the “New Testament Apocrypha” may be easily explained, if only for the glaringly obvious reason that women play greater and more noteworthy roles in the various early Christian *Acta* than they do in the largely epistolary literature of the Apostolic Fathers.⁷ Unsurprisingly, the study of women in the Apostolic Fathers lags behind other areas of research.

This study begins to address this scholarly lacuna by examining several pericopes within the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers wherein these writings address women or employ female narrative characters. Although necessarily limited in scope (due to the length of this study) and implications (due to the disparate nature of the writings being examined) this project argues that for the Apostolic Fathers women possessed properly ordered roles which could include familial and visionary functions. The pericopes examined to support this thesis include instances where women are utilized as *paraenetic* examples for all Christians, models for the Church, possessing certain familial roles, serving local Church communities, and fulfilling visionary functions.

In order to properly understand conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers, one must consider not only the writings themselves but also the general context of the first and second centuries, including Greco-Roman and earlier Christian evidence.⁸ Of course, this attempt at contextualization becomes immediately problematized by the fact that, there was no “typical woman” or single female perspective in the ancient world, for a cacophony of social, political, economic, and religious factors defies the painting of a unified picture or situation of women.⁹ Speaking generally, however, some shards of evidence may be pieced together.

One starting point involves the *tutela impuberum*: a classical Roman law which placed orphaned under-aged children under a guardianship, a protection sometimes extended to unmarried daughters of majority.¹⁰ During the first century, this practice became increasingly rare, however, especially when

Claudius abolished the practice for women beyond puberty.¹¹ In its place arose the practice of *tutor*-ship, which was intended to protect the property rights of minors.¹² Of course, by no means may it be assumed that this practice was accepted everywhere, nor that it could be applied to poor families with little or no property. Nonetheless, Roman guardianships and tutors do suggest a general view of females that placed them under the care and authority of a male. Building on this, Kerstin Aspegren argues that even the terminology of “male” and “female” became embedded with assumptions of authority and ethics, with “woman” symbolizing imperfection and evil.¹³ How far beyond figurative literary portraits these ideas extended remains a matter for discussion elsewhere.

Early Christian conceptions of women are much debated. For some scholars, the Jesus Movement was a radically egalitarian golden age which was usurped and corrupted by the later establishment of church hierarchy.¹⁴ For others, the message of Christianity for women developed alongside the development of hierarchy and practice.¹⁵ For example, textual evidence suggests that some women held a form of church office (Rom 16:1, 7),¹⁶ rightly prophesied (Acts 21:8-9),¹⁷ read (possibly in a liturgical setting),¹⁸ and partook in the daily life of the Church, even suffering persecution.¹⁹ This complexity of factors and influences disallows the portrayal of a monolithic “situation of women” in the Greco-Roman and Christian worlds. What may be said, however, is that women occupied a place of tension in the ancient world, with prescriptive and lived realities rarely standing in unison. Women in Christianity held particularly “tense” positions, as ongoing development of church order, practice, and scriptural interpretation often stood at odds with the lived experiences and practices of Christian women. This complex situation forms the context for the writings of the Apostolic Fathers to which we now turn.

WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Introductions to the Apostolic Fathers

Before engaging pericopes from the Apostolic Fathers regarding women, let me first briefly introduce the writings from which this evidence comes. Given the length and scope of this paper, these introductions are necessarily brief (and insufficient for a comprehensive examination of the Apostolic Fathers), standing as starting points for contextualizing and engaging these writings.

By far the longest and most important epistolary contribution to the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers is the *First Letter of Clement to the Corinthian Church*, commonly known as *First Clement*. Extant in two Greek manuscripts and several translations, *First Clement* was likely written by Clement of Rome during his time as bishop of Rome between 94 and 98 AD.²⁰ The letter primarily addresses a division in the Corinthian church in which presbyters had been forcibly deposed from their ecclesial offices and replaced, with Clement admonishing the church to reinstate the presbyters for the sake of unity, concord, and order.²¹

Although long identified with *First Clement*, the homily bearing the title *Second Clement* was almost certainly not composed by the same author.²² While a number of theories have been posited as to where *Second Clement* was composed, arguments concerning Rome and Corinth are most convincing due to the letter's quick association with *First Clement*.²³ The dating of *Second Clement* remains uncertain, although most scholars place it somewhere in the mid-second century.²⁴ *Second Clement* addresses a situation where ethical behavior has been threatened (10.5) although the specific cause of this ethical laxity remains uncertain.

While many Apostolic Fathers remain shrouded by history, Ignatius of Antioch has long been viewed as a vibrant and important character of the early Church. Written on the road to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius's seven authentic *Epistles* were written to churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and to Smyrnaean bishop Polycarp.²⁵ The precise dating of Ignatius's writing remains a mystery, although many scholars suggest his composition and death to have occurred between 108 and 117 AD.²⁶ The specific purposes of these letters vary somewhat due to the fact that they are written to different churches. Spanning each of his letters, however, are Ignatius's calls Christians to eschew Gnostic logic and Jewish exegesis, and to combat heresy and disorder through church order and obedience to the bishop.²⁷

Although portrayed in tradition as a prolific writer, the only authentic writing of Polycarp of Smyrna to have survived the viscidities of time is his *Epistle to the Philippians*.²⁸ Written from Smyrna, this letter's combination of *paraenesis*, advice, and admonishment was penned in response to a query (or set of queries) from the Philippian church.²⁹ Likely written shortly after the death of Ignatius, Polycarp's letter remains extant in a

number of manuscripts.³⁰ In all, Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* remains an immanently practical and pastoral letter, intent on providing answers to the Philippians' questions and showing the Smyrnaean bishop to be deeply involved in the central issues and challenges of his day.

Perhaps the most peculiar writing in the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers, the *Shepherd of Hermas* was highly popular among early Christians.³¹ Composed of five visions, twelve mandates, and ten similitudes, the author of this treatise remains unknown apart from their visionary character and likely location in Rome.³² Extant in numerous copies—a testament to its popularity—the dating of *Hermas* remains uncertain, with Osiek's judgment the most sound: "The best assignment of date is an expanded duration of time beginning perhaps from the very last years of the first century, but stretching through most of the first half of the second century."³³ Many commentators have viewed *Hermas* as something of an apocalyptic writing, with *Hermas's* visionary character, attendant responses to crisis, and strategic reshaping of the church supporting this view.³⁴ Perhaps most interesting is *Hermas's* use of female characters as revelatory agents, women who speak with, guide, encourage, and admonish Hermas.³⁵

These literary historical introductions to *First Clement*, *Second Clement*, the *Epistles* of Ignatius, Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* in hand, this study now turns to consideration of references in these works to women and the conceptions therein.³⁶

Paraenetic Women in First Clement

Women's voices are not directly heard in *First Clement*, although several women do appear as characters in Clement's exhortations to the Corinthian church. While Trevett argues that Clement singled out the "uppity women" of Corinth, this seems unlikely for a couple of reasons.³⁷ First, Clement was highly familiar with Paul's writings, especially those to Rome and Corinth.³⁸ Yet nowhere does he invoke the authority of Paul concerning ordered and submissive women in the church, instead generally discussing the order of all.³⁹ Second, Clement felt free to utilize biblical women as models for concord and order among the entire community, not just among women. These *paraenetic* women include Lot's Wife, Rahab, Judith, and Esther.

*1 Clement 11.2*⁴⁰

“Lot’s wife was made a sign of this: for when she left with him but then changed her mind and fell out of harmony, she was turned into a pillar of salt until this day—so that everyone may know that those who are of two minds and who doubt the power of God enter into judgment and become a visible sign for all generations.”

Lot’s Wife is cited as a negative example of one who lives “double-mindedly,” someone who did not live in harmony with herself, her husband, or Yahweh. As a result, she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26) as a reminder to all of the perils of double mindedness. Trevett views this as a specific warning to those “uppity women” of Corinth, though it seems better understood as a warning to all who live out of harmony with themselves, their families, and God Almighty.⁴¹ Additionally, Lot’s Wife seems to be contrasted with Rahab (whose story follows immediately) as one who was not hospitable. This indicates that, for Clement, a lack of harmony and single mindedness will eventually result in a lack of hospitality, thus signaling to the exterior world the internal discord at work in the Corinthian church.

*1 Clement 12.1-8*⁴²

“Because of her faith and hospitality Rahab (φιλοξενίαν Ῥαᾶβ) the prostitute was saved from danger. . . . 3. And so, the hospitable Rahab brought them inside and hid them in the upper room under a pile of thatching straw. . . . 7. And they proceeded to give her a sign, that she should hang a piece of scarlet from her house--making it clear that it is through the blood of the Lord that redemption will come to all who believe and hope in God. 8. You see, loved ones, not only was faith found in the woman, but prophecy as well.”

Clement next regales his readers with the story of Rahab from Joshua 2. The φιλόξενος Ῥαᾶβ is named not only for her faith, but also for her hospitality, which following on the heels of Lot’s Wife’s inhospitable actions. This forms a stark contrast to Rahab’s own hospitable concord, not only with the spies, but also within herself and toward Yahweh. Clement’s source for Rahab’s faith—possibly James 2:25 or Hebrews 11:31—is not a direct concern here.⁴³ What is important here is how Rahab’s “sign” not only points to her faith, but also to her prophetic spirit. That is, Rahab’s

faith and hospitality not only commend in her own time, but stand as examples worthy of emulation throughout time due to her faithful witness.

*1 Clement 55.3-6*⁴⁴

“3. Many women were empowered by the gracious gift of God to perform numerous “manly” deeds (ἀνδρεία). 4. The blessed (ἡ μακαρία) Judith, when her city lay under siege, asked the elders for permission to go out to the foreigners’ camp. 5. And so she handed herself over to danger, going out because she loved her homeland and the people under siege. And the Lord handed Holofernes over to the hand of a female. 6. No less did Esther, a woman perfect in faith (τελεία κατὰ πίστιν), put herself in danger to rescue the twelve tribes of Israel who were about to perish. For through her fasting and humility she petitioned the all-seeing Master, the God of eternity, who saw the humbleness of her soul and rescued the people for whom she put herself in danger.”

Judith and Esther appear at the end of lengthy section of cultural and biblical models for right action before God.⁴⁵ These women’s ἀνδρεία, their “manly” deeds, are what Clement highlights.⁴⁶ Judith receives the title ἡ μακαρία, an appellation applied to the saints, because of the love of her homeland and people. Similarly, Esther, a woman τελεία κατὰ πίστιν, is held up as an example right action, which she completes with humility of soul and at the expense of her own danger. For both of these women, “manly” deeds and right action stand at the heart of their *paranetic* example, actions spurred on by love (of people and land) and faith in God.

In the end, Clement utilized biblical examples of women as exemplars for the Corinthians. In the instances of Lot’s Wife and Rahab, Clement exhorted the Corinthians toward interior and exterior harmony and the good fruits thereof, rather than the double-mindedness and discord which was plaguing that church. In the examples of Judith and Esther, Clement encourages the Corinthian community toward right action which is motivated by love and faith in God. For Clement, these women demonstrated proper disposition and order, making them worthy examples not only for Corinthian women, but for Corinthian men as well.

Christ and the Church in Second Clement

The section of *Second Clement* which most clearly references women has been called “undoubtedly the most complex part of the whole of the text

of 2 *Clement*.⁴⁸ Not only is the text itself not entirely certain at points, but the author's argument proves rather hard to follow.

2 *Clement* 14.2⁴⁹

"But I cannot imagine that you do not realize that the living church is the body of Christ. For the Scripture says, "God made the human male and female." The male is Christ, the female the church. And, as you know, the [books] and the apostles indicate that the church has not come into being just now, but has existed from the beginning. For it existed spiritually, as did our Jesus; but he became manifest here in the final days so that he might save us."

In this passage the author of *Second Clement* argues (perhaps against Gnostics⁵⁰) that the flesh and spirit do not stand in total opposition to one another, for "this flesh is able to receive such a great and incorruptible life when the Holy Spirit clings to it" (2 *Clem.* 14.5).⁵¹ The natures of Christ and the Church both possess a dual nature of flesh and spirit, which for this author reinforces the importance of "fleshly" ethical behavior among Christians.⁵² Male and female are brought into the discussion as an image of the "body of Christ," Christ's relationship with the Church. After citing Genesis 1:17, *Second Clement* seems to take Paul's language in Ephesians 5:23-32 and interpret it quite broadly.⁵³ For not only is Christ preexistent, but his bride (the Church) is as well.⁵⁴ Not only are Christ (male) and the Church (female) fleshly but they are entirely spiritual as well. Therefore, women, just like men, reside within the jointly flesh-and-spirit Church as Christ's preexistent bride. Of course, to get to that specific conception of women *Second Clement's* readers would have needed to look past the rest of this confusing passage. While the conception of women at work here ultimately seems positive, it resides behind too many mixed images and too much muddled elaboration for much meaning to have seeped through. Ultimately, however, this passage's affirmation of fleshly bodies and the female Church positively reinforces the idea that women constitute an important part of the Church body.

Familial Expectations in Ignatius and Polycarp

While the Apostolic Fathers by-and-large eschew the household codes which are so prevalent in Pauline and post-Pauline literature, Ignatius's

Epistle to Polycarp and Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* each contain a section reminiscent of Greco-Roman household duties.

*Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 4.1*⁵⁵

“Do not allow the widows (χήραι) to be neglected. After the Lord, it is you who must be mindful of them. Let nothing be done apart from your consent, and do nothing apart from God. You are already acting in this way. Be imperturbable.”

Having completed his admonitions to Polycarp regarding more urgent matters, Ignatius touches on several areas of church life. First he mentions care of the χήραι, for which Ignatius had considerable precedent (Acts 6:1; 9:39, 41; Jas 1:27; 1 Tim 5:9-16), although this passage has sometimes been viewed as Ignatius's corruption of the egalitarian nature of the Jesus Movement and the beginnings of the gradual patriarchy of the church.⁵⁶ Esther Yue has sufficiently problematized this conception of Ignatius and suggested that these remarks should be read in a context of admonishment against heresy, not the development of patriarchy.⁵⁷ Ignatius's concern for the widows here seems to be two-fold. Initially, as Grant notes, the bishop seems to be fulfilling some semi-legal role.⁵⁸ This may be a reference to the Roman practice of *tutor*-ship or (more likely) the invocation of apostolic command. Additionally, Ignatius's reminder to “let nothing be done apart from your consent, and do nothing apart from God. You are already acting in this way” . . . seems to indicate that in some locales there may have been some groups behaving contrary to their bishops.⁵⁹ Who, where, and whence this might be remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that Ignatius deems the widows (as with all other Christians) to owe obedience to the bishop as Christ's representative on earth.

*Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 4.3*⁶⁰

“Do not be arrogant towards male and female slaves, but neither let them become haughty; rather, let them serve even more as slaves for the glory of God, that they may receive a greater freedom from God. And they should not long to be set free through the common fund, lest they be found slaves of passion (δοῦλοι ἐπιθυμίας).”

The second issue that Ignatius discusses involves slavery, where he avoids encouraging manumission, instead calling slaves to “serve even

more as slaves for the glory of God.” Ignatius values freedom in God, rather than social and physical freedom, and suggests that Polycarp admonish the slaves—presumably both male and female—accordingly. The connection between slaves yearning for freedom and the potential for them to become *δοῦλοι ἐπιθυμίας* is not immediately clear. At stake could be the desire of money (since such persons would likely only receive their freedom from the common fund of the church, as Ignatius notes) or desire itself. Given Ignatius’s general approach to desire and celibacy, it seems more likely that love of money was the greater issue at stake here, although this position should be held tentatively.

*Ignatius’s Epistle to Polycarp 5.1*⁶¹

“Instruct my sisters to love the Lord and to be satisfied (*ἀρκεῖσθαι*) with their husbands in flesh and spirit. So too enjoin my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the church.”

Next Ignatius instructs Polycarp on how to encourage wives and husbands in their marriages. The guiding principle for the sisters seems to be satisfaction (*ἀρκεῖσθαι*) both in terms of flesh and spirit.⁶² Husbands are given the command from Ephesians 5:25, 29, to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church. While Schoedel suggests that these commands are given primarily as a means of communal definition and boundary marking, it seems just as likely that Ignatius’s thought—so formed by Pauline precedents—found it natural to speak about the relationship between husbands and wives after having discussed other social issues.⁶³ As is his custom, Ignatius concludes his remarks by admonishing Polycarp to make marriage the concern of the bishop, thereby ensuring that proper interaction and order persist in Smyrna.

*Ignatius’s Epistle to Polycarp 5.2*⁶⁴

“If anyone is able to honor the flesh of the Lord by maintaining a state of purity, let him do so without boasting. If he boasts, he has been destroyed, and if it becomes known to anyone beyond the bishop, he is ruined. But it is right for men and women who marry to make their union with the consent of the bishop, that their marriage may be for the Lord and not for passion. Let all things be done for the honor of God.”

Finally, Ignatius mentions those who “honor the flesh of the Lord by maintaining a state of purity.” These seem to be celibates—likely distinct from widows—who viewed Christ’s celibacy as paradigmatic for their lives.⁶⁵ Ignatius does not seem directly opposed to these ascetics, although he clearly demarcates acceptable speech concerning their celibacy, namely, that anything other than informing the bishop of this practice makes it worthless. It would seem Ignatius’s anti-docetic tendencies—especially his view that the union of flesh and spirit mark the true Church (*IgnEph.* 8.2)—stand in contrast to later Christian celebrations of asceticism, virginity, and monasticism.⁶⁶ In the end Ignatius advocates two guards against improper (a)sexual relationships: the authority and blessing of the bishop and the honor of God.

It is noteworthy that Ignatius’s commands concerning households come in his letter to a fellow bishop. In coordination with the messages of his other letters, this suggests that his conception of a “top-down” church hierarchy was pervasive: the bishop had the right, indeed the duty, to oversee all social activities of the Christian community, whether those involved were widows, married, or celibate. Marriage, in particular, finds an emphasis here that—despite the brevity of his remarks—suggests Ignatius viewed it as an important characteristic of the Smyrnaean community. Indeed, central to the purposes of this entire “household code” is the formation of a Christian communal ethic built around mutuality among persons under the authority of the bishop.

If Ignatius’s remarks on household order are brief, then Polycarp’s are nearly non-existent, both in terms of length and the treatment given to them by existing scholarship.

*Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians 5.3*⁶⁷

“So too let the young men be blameless in all things, concerned above all else for their purity, keeping themselves in check with respect to all evil. For it is good to be cut off from the passions of the world, since every passion wages war against the spirit (πνεύματος), and neither the sexually immoral, nor the effeminate, nor male prostitutes will inherit the kingdom of God; nor will those who engage in aberrant behavior. Therefore we must abstain from all these things, and be subject to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ. And the virgins must walk in a blameless and pure conscience (συνειδήσει).”

Polycarp appears to have been far more concerned with the purity of young men than he was with the purity of young women, the latter appearing only as an afterthought in this citation.⁶⁸ The 1904 Oxford Committee concluded that Paul's language in 1 Corinthians stands behind this passage, which seems likely, although this does not account for the emphasis on male purity.⁶⁹ Paul Hartog suggests that the passage's intended audience was young men;⁷⁰ whether this was because of a particular problem among the men in Philippi, the assumption of the importance of virginal purity, or something else cannot be said with any degree of certainty. Polycarp goes somewhat further than Ignatius in his address, as he admonishes the young men to cut off all worldly passions. For Polycarp, not only outward action, but inward thought—*πνεύματος* and *συνειδήσει*—are the battleground of the passions. The solution to immorality and impure passions is both abstinence and the subjection of the self to the presbyters and deacons. While Ignatius's ever-present bishop has been replaced by lower church orders, the implications are basically the same: for Polycarp, purity of body and spirit among men and women alike should be done in fellowship with church hierarchy and order.

In the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp an emphasis on church order and hierarchy informs the presentation of household codes and reflections on purity. Whether the members of a Christian community are widows, slaves, married, celibate, young men, or (female) virgins, all of their actions should be orderly and honorably undertaken under the auspices of God and His regents on earth. For Ignatius, the bishop should be involved in the care, support, and affirmation of proper interpersonal interactions. For Polycarp, it is the presbyters and deacons who are to guard the purity of male and female body and spirit. For both, purity only exists through coordination, among individuals, spouses, and the authority of God invested in the Church.

Greetings in Ignatius and Polycarp

Although characteristically brief, epistolary greetings provide further insights into the contexts and conceptions of Ignatius and Polycarp regarding Christian women.⁷¹

*Ignatius's Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 13.1-2*⁷²

"I greet the households of my brothers, along with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows (τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας). I wish you farewell in the power of the Father. Philo, who is with me, greets you. 2. I greet the household of Tavia, whom I pray will be firm in faith and in a love that pertains to both flesh and spirit. I greet Alce, a name dear to me, and the incomparable Daphnus and Eutecnus, and all by name. Farewell in the gracious gift of God."

Ignatius's greetings are aimed primarily at two social groups within the community: the householders, along with their wives and children, and "the virgins who are called widows" (τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας). Grant suggests that this later group consisted of numerous actual widows along with some older women who had never actually been married, enrolled among the widows because of a shortage of widows to whom the church gave care.⁷³ More convincing is the possibility that virgins formed a distinct (and relatively large) subgroup in Smyrna by this early date and were entrusted with special responsibilities, much like groups of widows had been elsewhere.⁷⁴ In this view, Ignatius had likely received some special care from these virgins during his time in Smyrna, and this greeting was his way of offering special thanks to these virgins for their service. The names which follow are likely particular people whom Ignatius singled out for their particular faith and service in the Smyrnaean community. Tavia, which is otherwise unattested in the ancient world, may be a feminine form of the Latin Tavius.⁷⁵ Alce may be the same person mentioned in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.2, which would make her a person of some standing. Whoever these women were, Ignatius honored them in his letter and in his prayers. *Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp* 8.2-3⁷⁶

"I greet all by name, and the wife of Epitropus, along with the entire household of her and her children. I greet Attalus, my beloved. I greet the one who is about to be deemed worthy to go to Syria. God's grace will be with him constantly, and with Polycarp who sends him. 3. I bid you constant farewell in our God Jesus Christ. May you remain in him, in the unity and care that comes from God. I greet Alce, a name dear to me. Farewell in the Lord."

Ignatius's letter to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, may provide information which coordinates with the greetings from his letter to the general Smyrnaean congregation. Certainly Alce is mentioned again, reinforcing the possibility of her social standing, Ignatius's friendship with her, or both. Grant suggests that the wife of Epitropus serves as the head of her household and may be separated from her husband.⁷⁷ Given Ignatius's apparent closeness with the Smyrnaean community and propensity to use proper names, this designation is indeed curious. It could be that this woman is the aforementioned Tavia, which would accord with *Smyrnaeans*, although still leave unanswered the question of why Ignatius does not refer to her by name here. Regardless, this letter confirms what was seen in *Smyrnaeans*, that women held a place of importance and honor in the church of Smyrna. *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians 14.1*⁷⁸

"I am writing these things to you through Crescens, whom I commended to you recently [Or: when I was with you] and now commend again. For he has conducted himself blamelessly among us; and I believe that he will do the same among you. And his sister will be commended to you when she comes to you. Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, with all who are yours. Amen."

Little can be said about this passage with certainty, other than the fact that Crescens, who bears this letter to Philippi and his unnamed sister, are commended to the church there.⁷⁹ It could be that Crescens and his sister were from Philippi and were returning home, that they were joint-messengers from Smyrna, that she will bring a second message to Philippi, or something else entirely. Given that she is unnamed and of secondary importance in this greeting, it may be that her purposes in travelling to Philippi were not directly concerned with the contents of this letter.

The letters of Ignatius and Polycarp were written employing fairly standard Greco-Roman epistolary conventions. Even more so, however, they were influenced by Pauline-modes of letter writing and communication, employing even Pauline sounding formulae and ways of talking about particular persons. In terms of what may be said about these letters' insights into the role and conception of women among the Apostolic Fathers, it may safely be said that certain women held positions of some standing (in at least Smyrna), including a group of "virgins called widows", households

apparently run by women, and individual women, perhaps of some social standing. Polycarp offers less information than that, simply confirming the fact that women travelled in the ancient world (Acts 18) and could serve as messengers (Rom. 16:1-2).

Some Visionary Women in Hermas

Perhaps no other piece of early Christian literature gives women such prominent and significant roles as does the *Shepherd of Hermas*.⁸⁰ Of course, the visionary character of *Hermas* allows commentators to conclude little about the meanings of the visions and even less about the lives of real Roman women. Nonetheless, an investigation of some women in *Hermas* reveals the revelatory authority that females could have for some early Christians. *Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 1.1.1-5*⁸¹

“The one who raised me sold me to a certain woman named Rhoda, in Rome. After many years, I regained her acquaintance and began to love her as a sister. 2. When some time had passed, I saw her bathing in the Tiber river; and I gave her my hand to help her out of the river. When I observed her beauty I began reasoning in my heart, “I would be fortunate to have a wife of such beauty and character.” This is all I had in mind, nothing else.... 4. While I was praying the sky opened up and I saw the woman I had desired, addressing me from heaven: “Hermas, greetings!” I looked at her and said, “Lady, what are you doing here?” 5. She replied to me, “I have been taken up to accuse you of your sins before the Lord.””

Hermas opens with the author’s recollection of Rhoda, a former owner and enchantress. Carolyn Osiek suggests that Hermas’s loving her “as a sister” indicates affection rather than eroticism (likely as a fellow Christian), although the bathing scene suggests erotic imagery.⁸² Sometime later, the earthly Rhoda was transformed into a heavenly messenger who appeared to Hermas in order to accuse him of sinfulness. While Hermas focused on his external actions, Rhoda emphasized the desires of the heart, encouraging Hermas’s contemplation and recognition of personal and communal sin.⁸³ Rhoda thus appeared to Hermas bringing a message of conviction, but most importantly, she also set the stage for his subsequent experiences with visionary women, forming the “bridge” between a woman revelator whom Hermas knew and the later revealers with whom he had no prior personal experience.

*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 1.2.2-4.1*⁸⁴

“1.2 While I was mulling these things over in my heart and trying to reach a decision, I saw across from me a large white chair, made of wool, white as snow. And an elderly woman (γυνή πρεσβύτις) came, dressed in radiant clothes and holding a book in her hands. She sat down, alone, and addressed me, “Greetings, Hermas.” And I said, still upset and weeping, “Greetings Lady.” . . . 3.3 When she finished these words, she said to me, “Do you want to hear me read?” I replied to her, “Yes, Lady, I do.” She said to me, “Be a hearer and hear the glories of God.” I heard great and amazing matters that I could not remember. For all the words were terrifying, more than a person can bear. . . . 4.1 Then, when she finished reading and rose up from the chair, four young men came and took the chair and went away to the east.”

Hermas’s next vision introduced him to the character who served as his central guide until the end of *Vision 4*, an “elderly woman” (γυνή πρεσβύτις) bearing a book—the coming revelation. The true revelatory message for Hermas began when she reads this scroll.⁸⁵ The parallels with other apocalyptic revelatory material are difficult to miss here, especially *4 Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of John*. This elderly woman—dressed in radiant clothes, on a white woolen throne, and clearly acting on behalf of the divine—brings her message on a scroll and reads its judgments.⁸⁶ Later, *Hermas* records that this woman appeared a year later, reading another “little book” (βιβλαρίδιον).⁸⁷ This γυνή πρεσβύτις becomes the regular revealer of Hermas’s visions before he learns her identity.

*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 2.4.1-3*⁸⁸

“While I was sleeping, brothers, I received a revelation from a very beautiful young man, who said to me: “The elderly woman from whom you received the little book—who do you think she is?” “The Sibyl,” I replied. “You are wrong,” he said; “it is not she.” “Who then is it?” I asked. “The church,” he said. I said to him, “Why then is she elderly?” “Because,” he said, “she was created first, before anything else. That is why she is elderly, and for her sake the world was created.” 2. And afterward I saw a vision in my house. The elderly woman came and asked if I had already given the book to the presbyters. I said that I had not. “You have done well,” she said. “For I have some words to add. Then, when I complete all the words, they will be made known through you to all those who are chosen. 3. And so, you will write two little books, sending one

to Clement and the other to Grapte. Clement will send his to the foreign cities, for that is his commission. But Grapte will admonish the widows and orphans. And you will read yours in this city, with the presbyters who lead the church.”

Finally a young man (likely an angelic messenger) reveals to Hermas who the elderly woman was: the church, who appears elderly because she was created before the earth.⁸⁹ *Herimas* thus reveals that the Lady Church—simultaneously ancient and rejuvenated—bears God’s messages to the world. The process for this revelation seems to be God’s inspiration of the Church, whose prophets and visionaries record messages which are then given to qualified men (Clement) and women (Grapte) for dispersal among the cities and churches of the world. Grapte stands as an otherwise unknown figure, who is tasked with delivering Hermas’s message to orphans and widows, suggesting that she held a teaching role of some sort.⁹⁰ If she does indeed hold an office (perhaps that of deaconess) this reference stands as one of the earliest to a woman holding a church office.⁹¹ It would seem that the “manly” role of instruction was not only reserved for men, but that *Herimas* felt it appropriate to task a real woman with teaching at least certain portions of the Christian community.

The conception of women revealed in these portions of the *Shepherd of Herimas* suggests a careful negotiation of complex social and theological factors. Hermas’s experience with Rhoda and her correction of his sin prepared him for later visionary experiences, only the first portion of which have been touched upon here. Hermas’s interactions with the elderly woman clearly cast her as revealer of God’s divine messages, and her identification as the Church only further reinforces the authority of her revelations. For Hermas, visionary women were fully capable of speaking truth on behalf of God. Not only this, but his identification of the Church as an elderly woman suggests that, in some sense, all Christians were to hear and obey the corrections, admonition, and instruction of a “woman.” As for Grapte, Hermas indicates that she could, and was actually expected to, teach the widows and orphans, thereby fulfilling a teaching office of the church. While it seems doubtful that this office would have been extended to the instruction of males, *Herimas* nonetheless reveals a relatively high conception of women and female figures as, at least in the proper contexts, those who may speak for God and instruct others.

Conclusions

Through consideration of several pericopes from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, this study has argued that these authors conceived of women as having properly ordered roles in the Christian Church, roles which could include familial and visionary functions. In *First Clement*, biblical women were employed as examples for the congregation at Corinth. *Second Clement* reinforced the Pauline idea that the relationship between Christ and the Church was akin to that of husband and wife, both of whom contain fleshly and spiritual components. The epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp reveal an emphasis on church order and ecclesiastical hierarchy which affects how all Christians—both women and men—should live their lives. These epistles also demonstrate that women held positions of some standing in certain Christian communities, including groups of “virgins called widows,” house-holding women, traveling (diaconal?) women, and individually outstanding women. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, women serve as revelers of God’s truths, images of the Church herself, and teachers of women and children.

As noted above, the cumulative conclusions to be drawn from this study are necessarily limited by the disparate origins and purposes of these writings. Yet the overarching theme of ordered roles does seem to account for the particularities of how these writings conceive of women. Such roles could vary depending on *who* the woman in question might be: young virgins, celibates, married women, widows, householders, messengers, owners, fellow sisters, deaconesses, and visionary women all functioned somewhat differently and diversely fit into the social and theological *ordo* envisioned by these early Christian leaders. Women could also serve *paraenetic* purposes: in the same way that the great male figures of the past could be viewed as worthy of emulation, so also biblical women could serve as encouragements and examples for Christian women and men. Perhaps most striking, the personification of the Church as woman in *2 Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* suggests that, at least in some sense, all Christians were to submit to the correction and instruction of a “woman.” At the heart of all of these ways of talking about women are concerns with order in the church.

Further, other theological battles early Christians were waging shaped their views of male and female. In likely opposition to docetic and Gnostic interlocutors, *Second Clement* and Ignatius reveal a relatively high view of

flesh as a necessary component of the human body and the created order. The body was not without its dangers, of course, but for the Apostolic Fathers it does not yet exist primarily as the basis for ascetic struggle. This could be because they were concerned with more pressing issues, because the Christian communities assumed a common moral or bounded character, or simply because these sources only reflect a select subset of the writings originally from this period. It is noteworthy, however, that the Apostolic Fathers (and their neutral/high views of the body) appear between two sub-collections of writings (the Pastorals/late New Testament literature and the *Acta*/apocryphal gospel/gnostic literature) which are more explicitly concerned with bodies, gender roles, and the place of women in the church.

Before concluding, a word ought to be said about potential future projects in the stream of what has been done here. Expanded study of women in the *Shepherd of Hermas* would appear to be a fruitful avenue forward, as would a comparison of women in the Apostolic Fathers and late New Testament literature. Another project could involve conceptions and portrayals of women in other second century literature, such as the *Ad Autolycum* of Theophilus of Antioch, the writings of Justin Martyr, and the *Odes of Solomon*. These projects may not be the most exciting or groundbreaking studies; however, they do appear to be worthy pursuits for those seeking to “fill in” the historical and theological gaps regarding women in early Christianity.

Christine Trevett concludes that the writings of the Apostolic Fathers bear “witness to struggle *for* sites of power and *against* Roman *imperium* and the gods of the cities ... the writers’ concerns were with order, control, survival in a context of Christian caring and mutuality, opposition to error, and with a view to seeing God’s people triumphant.”⁹² For these early Christian writers, women were expected to follow the proper way of performing and living faith in the Risen Jesus, ways which still varied depending on their station and position in the Christian community.

¹ The designation “Apostolic Fathers” originated with Jean-Baptiste Cotelier in 1672 and William Wake in 1693. Though an artificial marker, the name finds extensive use throughout existing literature, making it pragmatically unreasonable to separate this study from its use. In this study the term “Apostolic Fathers” indicates the collection of nine writings generally categorized under this designation in modern scholarship, including *First Clement*, *Second Clement*, *the Epistles of Ignatius*, *the Didache*, *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians*, *the Epistle of Barnabas*, *the Shepherd of Hermas*, *the Epistle to Diognetus*, and *Fragments of Papias*. See Jean-Baptiste Cotelier, SS.

- Patrum qui temporibus apostolicis fl oruerunt: Barnabae, Clementis, Hermae, Ignatii, Polycarpi* (Paris, 1672). William Wake, *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, S. Barnabas, S. Clement, S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp, The Shepherd of Hermas, and the Martyrdoms of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp* (London, 1693). H. J. de Jonge, "On the Origin of the Term 'Apostolic Fathers,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978): 503-505. Helmut Koester, "The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity," *The Expository Times* 117, 4 (2006): 133.
- ² Jefford, 59-66. Helmut Koester, "The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity" in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 7.
- ³ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
- ⁴ Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1998). C. L. Meyers, T. Craven, and R. S. Kraemer. *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000). Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). This comprehensive resource of all textual evidence in the Greek and Roman worlds regarding women's ordained roles in the early church reveals only two possible references during this era of the Apostolic Fathers, one of which comes from Pliny. See 1-2, 26-27. Cx. Pliny, *Epistolae* 96. Patricia Cox Miller, *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).
- ⁵ Christine Trevett, *Christian Women and the Time of the Apostolic Fathers (AD c.80-160): Corinth, Rome, and Asia Minor* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁷ A helpful selection of introductory essays on this topic is *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha* (eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins; Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).
- ⁸ Carolyn Osiek and Jennifer Pouya, "Construction of Gender Roles in the Roman Imperial World," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (eds. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris; London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 44-56. Trevett, 3.
- ⁹ Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 18. Trevett, 12.
- ¹⁰ Esther Yue, "Mirror Reading and Guardians of Women in the Early Roman Empire," *JTS* 59, 2 (2008): 681. On the general social and public place of women in the Greco-Roman world, see Susan Treggiari, "Jobs for Women," *American Journal of Ancient History* 1, 1 (1976): 76-104. Ramsey MacMullen, "Women in Public in the Roman Empire," *History* 29, 1 (1980): 208-18.
- ¹¹ Yue, 682-3.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 683. On women claiming exemption from this practice later in the Imperial period, see Yue, 685-91.
- ¹³ Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 11-4.
- ¹⁴ Koester, 11. Gal. 3:28.
- ¹⁵ Matthijs den Dulk, "I Permit No Woman to Teach Except for Thecla: The Curious Case of the Pastoral Epistles and the Acts of Paul Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentum* 54 (2012): 176-203. See also Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 11.
- ¹⁶ *Acts of Thecla*. Eisen, 47-55.
- ¹⁷ *Didache* 11-13. *Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate* 11. Eisen, 70. Eisen notes that Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen do not raise any fundamental objections to women prophesying, only how particular movements were abusing prophecy or teaching false doctrine. See also Eusebius H.E. 5.16-17.
- ¹⁸ *Shepherd of Hermas, Vision* 1.2.2; 1.3.3; 2.1.3. Trevett, 19.
- ¹⁹ Trevett, 11.
- ²⁰ 1 Clement remains extant through *Codex Alexandrinus* (missing 57.7-63.4) and *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, two Coptic manuscripts, a complete 11th century Latin manuscript (with possible 2nd/3rd c. exemplar), and 12th c. Syriac manuscript, where *First* and *Second Clement* appear after Acts and the Catholic Epistles but before the Epistles of Paul. Andrew F. Gregory, "1 Clement: An Introduction," *Expository Times* 117, 6 (2006): 223-224. Origen argues that the letter's author was the man mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3 (*Commentary on John* 6.36). Eusebius identifies him as companion of Paul and third bishop of Rome (H.E. 3.4.8-9; 3.15.1; 3.34.1). According to Tertullian, Clement succeeded Peter directly as Bishop of Rome (*Prescription* 32). Whatever one makes of these arguments, the contents of the letter make clear that Clement resided in Rome, could fluently compose letters in Greek, held a position of authority within the Roman

- church, and was likely a Hellenistic Jew prior to his conversation. Gregory, "Introduction", 225. David I. Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2006), 26. For arguments against Clement's authorship, see Gregory, "Introduction", 223. The chief factor in favor of this view is the lack of a named author. Michael Stover, *The Dating of 1 Clement* (Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), ix-x. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 142. Odd Magne Bakke, *Concord and Peace: A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Sedition and Unity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 11. Commonly mounted evidence for this range includes the letter's language about the deaths of Peter and Paul, which suggests a not-forgotten-but-not-yesterday-event, and the interpretation of *1 Clement* 1:1 as referencing the persecution of the church under Domitian. Of additional interest may be John A. T. Robinson's argument for an early date of composition. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 329-330.
- ²¹ Rankin, 33. See also Harry O. Maier, "The Charismatic Authority of Ignatius of Antioch: A Sociological Analysis," *Studies in Religion: Sciences Religieuses* 18, 2 (1989): 117-22.
- ²² Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 157-8. Christopher Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-6, 14. Paul Parvis, "2 Clement and the Meaning of the Christian Homily," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 34. 2 Clement follows *1 Clement* in all extant manuscripts, including *Codex Alexandrinus*, *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, and the Syriac MSS 1700. On 2 Clement as *paranetic*—but not homiletic—sermon, see Tuckett, 25-6. Concerning the identity of the author, Tuckett concludes that, "the author was not a Jew before becoming a Christian. But that is about as far as the text allows us to go. For the rest, the author must remain anonymous, a reflection perhaps of his somewhat self-effacing modesty." Tuckett, 17.
- ²³ Provenance suggestions have included Rome, Corinth, Syria, and Egypt. The athletic analogy in chapter 7 has often been taken as an allusion to the Isthmian Games near Corinth, further reinforcing arguments for a Corinthian-Roman origin. Tuckett, 58-62. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 158. Parvis, 37.
- ²⁴ The edges of its composition are the reception of *1 Clement* and Harnack's suggestion of Soter (c. 166-174 AD) as author. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 159-60. Tuckett, 62-4. Parvis, 36-7.
- ²⁵ Milton Perry Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius: A Study of Linguistic Criteria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), xi. Christine Trevett, "A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia" (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 10-5. William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ed. Helmut Koester, Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 5. Contemporary considerations of Ignatius typically view his letters in their totality, the notable exception being Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2004), 11. See also H.E. 3.36. On Ignatius' spurious letters, see Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers: With English Translations: Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912). Of interest to readers of this paper may be the reference to women of Holy Orders in *Letter to the Inhabitants of Antioch* 12:2-3. See *Patres Apostolici: Volume II*, ed. Franz Diekamp and F. X. von Funk (Tubingen: Henrici Lauppe, 1913), 222.
- ²⁶ Rankin, 82. Robinson, 4, 182.
- ²⁷ Norris, 32-4. Importantly, Thomas A. Robinson notes that "the evidence from Ignatius's letters suggests that he does not think in terms of several neatly distinguishable groups of opponents. There is one church and there is one opposition. The opposition is not defined as much by precise aspects of their distinctive beliefs as by their independence of, or separation from, the bishop." Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 126.
- ²⁸ Michael Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 109-10. See Holmes' discussion of Irenaeus' possible reliance on his mentor, either through oral teaching and/or the catalog of heresies.
- ²⁹ PolyPhil. 3.1; 13.1. Holmes, 111. Paul A. Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23, 45. The differences between chapters 9 and 13 concerning Ignatius have led to several theories regarding this letter's literary unity, which in the end does seem to be a single, unified letter interrupted by news of Ignatius' death. See Hartog's discussion, 27-40. Holmes, 120-3. See also P. N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), esp. 140, 151-2.
- ³⁰ On the dating of the letter, see Holmes, 123-4. Hartog rightly notes that "internal evidence might

- seem to push the date of Pol. *Phil.* into the 120s or beyond." Hartog, 43-4. This leads him to posit a range of dates anywhere between 110 and 140. There are numerous extant manuscripts of *PolyPhil.*, including *Vaticanus* gr. 859; *Neapolitanus* Bibl. Naz. Borbonicus II.A.17; *Florentinus Laurentianus* plut. 7.21; *Vaticanus Reginensis* gr. Pii II.11; *Romanus Bibl. Casanatensis* G.V.14; *Vaticanus Ottobonianus* gr. 348; *Parisinus Bibl. Nat. gr.* 937; and *Andros Hagias* 64. Unfortunately, none of these Greek manuscripts are earlier than the 11th century or are complete. There are also numerous Latin translations, as well as some Syriac and Armenian fragments. See Hartog, 26-7. Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, "Zur Handschriftlichen Überlieferung des Polykarp- und des Barnabasbriefes. Zwei nicht beachtete Deszendenten des Cod. Vat. Gr. 859", *Vigilae Christianae* 48, 1 (1994), 48-64, esp. 61n22.
- ³¹ Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 1. Joseph Verheyden, "The Shepherd of Hermas," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 63.
- ³² Osiek, *Hermas*, 18. Cx. *Vis.* 1.1-2; 4.1.2; *Sim.* 2. In response to theories of *Hermas* as autobiography, Snyder correctly writes that, "it is impossible to distinguish history from fiction in the apocalyptic or visionary form." Graydon F. Snyder, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 6: The Shepherd of Hermas* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 29.
- ³³ Osiek, *Hermas*, 20. *Hermas* remains only partially extant in *Codex Athous* (15th c.), *Codex Sinaiticus* (4th c.), Michigan Papyrus 129 (c. 250 AD), Bodmer Papyrus 39 (late 4th/early 5th c.) and 21 later Greek fragments. Two complete Latin manuscripts exist, as well as Ethiopic, Akhmimic and Sahidic Coptic, Middle Persian, and Georgian fragments. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 169-72. Osiek, *Hermas*, 1-3. On the dating of *Hermas*, three factors are particularly relevant: the mention of *Hermas* in Rom. 16.14, the reference to Clement in *Vis.* 2.4.3, and the *Muratorian Fragment's* assignment of authorship to the brother of Pius, in the fourth decade of the second century. For more discussion of these issues, see Osiek, *Hermas*, 18 and Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers II*, 165-9.
- ³⁴ Osiek, *Hermas*, 10-2. Compare *Hermas* with the SBL's definition of Apocalypse: 'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." John J. Collins, "Apocalypse: An Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume One* (Online: Gale Virtual Reference Library, 2005), 409.
- ³⁵ *Vis.* 2.2.6, 4.3; 3.8.11; 4.3.6. Cx. 4 *Ezra* 9.38-10.57. Osiek notes that, "This female guide has no true precedent in Western literature." Osiek, *Hermas*, 16.
- ³⁶ These pericopes are selective and this study does not intend to consider the entirety of how the Apostolic Fathers conceived of and portrayed women. Other notable interactions which are not examined here include 2 *Clement* 2.1-7 (Interpretation of "Rejoice Oh Barren Woman"); *IgnEph* 19.1, *IgnTral* 9.1, and *IgnSmyr* 1.1 on the Blessed Virgin Mary; *Hermas*, M 9.10-16; *Hermas* V 3.1-2; and *Hermas* V 4.1-3.
- ³⁷ Trevett, 45-7, 69-70, 81-6. "Clement never directly addressed the 'sisters' but only made clear the Roman church's wish to see Corinthian women compliant and quiet, with men rightfully supreme. In Corinth, I suggest, that unassailable truth had been assailed. Women who did not deign to be 'little' were not, in Rome's view, good wives. I suggest that, as the Romans saw matters, shameless female partisanship had contributed to the all-too-public scandal in Corinth." Trevett, 45.
- ³⁸ 1 *Clement* 1.3-2.8. Andreas Lindemann, "Paul's Influence on 'Clement' and Ignatius," in *Trajectories Through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, ed. C. M. Tuckett and Andrew F. Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-16. Jacob J. Prahlow, *Discerning Witnesses: First and Second Century Textual Studies in Christian Authority* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 2014), 53-6.
- ³⁹ It is always somewhat dangerous to argue from silence. But here the silence is especially palpable, given Clement's strong knowledge of 1 Corinthians, his upholding the authority of Paul throughout this letter, and the purpose of his letter. If there were women causing trouble in Corinth, Clement had ready access to the materials necessary to "put them in their place." Yet nowhere does he utilize this arsenal. Cx. 1 *Clem.* 37. See also Lindemann, 11-12, 14-15.
- ⁴⁰ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 54-5.
- ⁴¹ Trevett, 55.
- ⁴² Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 54-7.
- ⁴³ Given Clement's knowledge of Hebrews, it would not be surprising to see him building from the "Hall of Faith." Donald A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 181-94. See also Clement's christological interpretation of the cord, which is taken up by Justin, *Dialogue* 111.4.

- ⁴⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 132-3.
- ⁴⁵ Robert M. Grant and Holt H. Graham, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 2: First and Second Clement* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 87-8. Into a woman's hand" comes from Judith 13:15 or 16:6 (LXX) and Esther's petition of God cannot be from the Hebrew, as YHWH does not appear there.
- ⁴⁶ While ἀνδρεία and its cognates are most often applied to men, the term was applied to women. Prov 11:16 LXX.
- ⁴⁷ Judith is later called a saint by Tertullian in *On Marrying*. 17.1. Cx. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.35.4.
- ⁴⁸ Tuckett, 259. Rudolf Knopf, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel, Die zwei Clemensbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920), 175. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 2.248.
- ⁴⁹ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 186-9.
- ⁵⁰ Tuckett, 247.
- ⁵¹ Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 188-9.
- ⁵² 2 Clem. 14.3 ἡ ἐκκλησία δὲ πνευματικὴ οὐσα ἐφανερώθη ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ Χριστοῦ, δηλοῦσα ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐάν τις ἡμῶν τῆρῃσιν αὐτῆν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ καὶ μὴ φθεῖρη, ἀπολήσεται αὐτῆν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ· ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ αὐτῆ ἀντίτυπος ἐστὶν τοῦ πνεύματος.
- ⁵³ Parvis, 39. On this, Grant and Graham note, "It is not difficult to suppose that most of this is exegesis of Ephesians 5:23-32, where Christ's Church is referred to as his body (5:23) or his flesh (5:29), and the story of Adam and Eve is referred to Christ and his Church (5:31-32)." Grant and Graham, 126.
- ⁵⁴ On the idea of the pre-existent church, see Eph 1.4; Ps 71.5, 17 LXX; *Hermas*, Vis. 2.4.1.
- ⁵⁵ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-5.
- ⁵⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, 313-5. Trevett, 220-1. Schüssler Fiorenza reconstructs this group as widows living together in a household who were accustomed to holding Eucharist. Ignatius's commands thus encroach on the freedoms of these women, starting a gradual decent into patriarchy.
- ⁵⁷ Yue, 693-5. "No matter what interpretation we take, and if the consent of the bishop still had to do with the widows, then Ignatius was probably urging Polycarp to be a conscientious guardian or administrator such that the poor widows would not be defrauded by his neglect of them. On the other hand, the fact that Ignatius went on to urge Polycarp not to do anything without God's consent would ensure that the guardianship was carried out honourably and ethically." Yue, 695.
- ⁵⁸ Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 4: Ignatius of Antioch* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 132.
- ⁵⁹ *IgnPoly* 4.1 μὴ δὲν ἄνευ γνώμης σου γινέσθω, μὴ δὲ σὺ ἄνευ θεοῦ τι πράσσει, ὅπερ οὐδὲ πράσσεις. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 269. The widows being under the authority of the bishop is alluded to or repeated elsewhere, including *IgnSmyr*. 6:2; *PolyPhil*. 4:3; *Hermas*, Sim. 9, 27, 2; and Justin, *First Apology* 1.67.6. Ignatius's mention of widows here and in his *IgnSmyr*. could serve as an indication that an issue existed in Smyrna's not too distant past.
- ⁶⁰ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-5.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 314-5.
- ⁶² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. A similar perspective exists in Josephus, *Jewish War*. 2.116; Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 104.8; and *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.4.
- ⁶³ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. Grant, *Volume 4*, 133-4. Lightfoot, 348.
- ⁶⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-7.
- ⁶⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 273. Cx 1 Cor. 6:12-20; Tertullian, *On Marrying* 5.6; Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 3. Ideas that physical union adulterates relationships with God or that virgins are wedded to Christ may be at play here.
- ⁶⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. Grant, *Volume 4*, 134.
- ⁶⁷ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 340-1.
- ⁶⁸ Hartog, 122. Cx. 1 Clem. 1.3. 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2. Gal. 5:17. 1 Pet. 2:11.
- ⁶⁹ Oxford Society, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 85.
- ⁷⁰ Hartog, 121.
- ⁷¹ Lindemann, 16-24.
- ⁷² Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 308-9.
- ⁷³ Grant, *Volume 4*, 125.
- ⁷⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 252.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 252-3.

⁷⁶ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 320-1.

⁷⁷ Grant, *Volume 4*, 137.

⁷⁸ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 350-3.

⁷⁹ Hartog, 160.

⁸⁰ Trevett, 111-6.

⁸¹ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 174-9.

⁸² Osiek, *Hermas*, 42-3. Cx. 2 Sam. 11:2; Daniel 13:5-33 LXX. Consider also Juvenal, *Satire VI*, 419-25.

Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.32-3. Osiek further notes that the “general assumption that Hermas’ desire for Rhoda is only sexual may not be complete: such a liaison would mean status elevation for a freed-man. In view of the fact that the desire for wealth and status is to be the central focus for sin (see 1.8 below), it must also be implied here.” Osiek, *Hermas*, 42.

⁸³ Osiek, *Hermas*, 44.

⁸⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 178-85.

⁸⁵ Osiek, *Hermas*, 49.

⁸⁶ 4 *Ezra* 9:38-10:57; Rev. 1:13-5; 5:1-5. Snyder, 31. Verheyden also notes that this woman inhabits portions of the biblical Wisdom tradition. Verheyden, 67.

⁸⁷ *Hermas*, Vis. 2.1.3. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers II*, 184-7.

⁸⁸ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 190-3.

⁸⁹ Osiek, *Hermas*, 58. Snyder, 38-9.

⁹⁰ Trevett, 155-7. Trevett suggests that Grapte, like Clement, was a true person of first or second century Rome.

⁹¹ Madigan and Osiek, 26. Batovici, 305-7. Synder, 40.

⁹² Trevett, 271.