



THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCHES
RELATED TO THE ROLES OF FEMALE THEOLOGIANS IN THE
MALAGASY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the roles of women in the early churches in the New Testament. I deal with the letters of Paul and Acts as New Testament source texts since I have chosen the most prominent women Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe, and Junia who are the most privileged in the mission of Paul. I will draw inferences from them for the roles of women in the Malagasy Lutheran Church who study theology. Today, these women theologians in the FLM face some difficulties and since I am among them, I would like to find some suggestions to overcome the dilemmas. The denial of the ordination and the few positions of these women in the FLM are part of the big issues. The Scriptures are not the reasons of these anymore even though there are still some influences of the misunderstanding of the women being silent in the church for example, but there is still a consideration of the patriarchal cultures in the FLM. During the first conference between women theologians in the FLM last year, our challenges are to use our talents to preach the gospel and earn our own life in order to develop the church since we are the sources of power in the FLM or factor of the development of the church. This allows me to choose the three outstanding women in the FLM like Ralivao H  l  ne, Razivelo Mariette, and Toromare Mananato as models for all women theologians like the prominent women in the early churches who took important roles in the church and in their household and even in the community they live.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BDAG: A Greek-Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
- DPL: Dictionary of Paul and His Letters
- EDNT: Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
- ESV: English Standard Version
- FFPM: Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy (Union of Malagasy Protestant Churches)
- FLM: Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy (Malagasy Lutheran Church)
- ILOFAV: Ivon-toerana Loterana momba ny Fampandrosoana ny Vehivavy (Lutheran Center for the Development of Women)
- KJV: King James Version
- LUCCEA: Lutheran Communion in Central and East Africa
- LWF: Lutheran World Federation
- NA28: Neste Aland 28
- NAS: New American Standard
- NIV: New International Version
- NRSV: New Revised Standard Version
- SALT: Sekoly Ambony Loterana momba ny Teolojia (Lutheran Graduate School of Theology)
- SPAFI: Synodam-Paritany Fisakana
- SPAM: Synodam-Paritany Avaratr'i Mania
- SPATSIM: Synodam-Paritany Atsimon'i Mania
- SPFA: Synodam-Paritany Faradofay
- SPM: Synodam-Paritany Melaky
- SPMA: Synodam-Paritany Manakara
- STPL: Seminery Teolojikam-Paritany Loterana (Regional Theological Lutheran Seminary)
- v: verse
- vv: verses

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation

The Malagasy Lutheran Church or the Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy (FLM) allows women to study theology, but after their study many of them hardly get a position in the church or in any organization or institution in FLM. There are about 250 female theologians in the FLM and only 50 of them have a position and work as a professional theologian. This statistic was discovered during the first meeting of women theologians in the FLM held in Antananarivo from 2nd till 5th of March 2021. Some of them are married to pastors, others not. Those who are pastor's wives can help their husband in the parish where they work, but those who are not married to pastors are the most victims of not having such position in the church. There are many reasons why such a huge number of women theologians do not have positions in the FLM after their study of theology. Apart from the Malagasy culture and their consideration of women as a "fanaka malemy" or weak fortune, the system against ordination and the lack of academic training for women theologians are big issues in these matters. In the Malagasy culture, only men play a role and power in the family, but women do not have a value in the society. Women are considered weak, not only physically but also mentally (Mariette, 2004, p. 15). So, they can neither work nor study. There are still ideas of discrimination against women from the old tradition of the Malagasy way of thinking of women. But now, I think it is not a question of discrimination against women anymore that is the problem here because in modern times women have more chances in learning, and we can see women lawyers, policewomen, women doctors and even women pastors in the Reformed churches, but there may be a problem of the system in the FLM. From long time ago until now, FLM still does not accept women's ordination for many reasons even though FLM considers these women theologians as sources of power in the FLM. God-fearing wives and mothers are more than ever vital factors in the spiritual elevation of the nation (Lockyer, 1996, p. 15). All these situations which seem contradictory raise the questions if FLM should stop training women or give opportunities for women theologians to get positions or start thinking about the ordination or giving women theologians higher training. Since there are still discussions about these dilemmas in the FLM, my Master thesis gives me a chance to suggest some solutions for

these women theologians by using their talents given by God as a role to be played in the church, starting with the focus study on the roles of women in the early churches. Women were not only prominent in the activities of the Early Church but also ministered unto the apostles of their substance and came to hold official positions of spiritual influence in the church (Lockyer, 1996, p. 14). Long time ago women were far from freedom and joy, but from the 18th century on, women in civilized lands have experienced universal education and the right to vote, and through the impact of Christian faith they are equal with men in the great achievements of education, art, literature, social services, and in missionary activities. Christian women in particular present to the world morality, home happiness and piety, domestic honesty, and full devotion to Christ (Lockyer, 1996, p. 14-15).

I choose to focus on the roles of women since I see the talents of women in the FLM, especially those who are trained in theology, but they cannot use their know-how because they have not the opportunity to use it. I am interested in studying their roles as theologians in the FLM, but before that I would like to go in deep study of the roles of women in the early churches to make them aware of the importance and roles of women at that time and that these women in the Early Church are like models. I would like to convince women in the FLM to make them aware of their importance and place in the church. Added to this, since they are not ordained yet, they cannot really practice what they learned as theologians. Many are disappointed and do another job that does not correspond to their talents and cannot really develop the church. They should not give up as it is written in Rev 2:10b, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown." Added to this, these Malagasy women theologians have their motto, taken from Isaiah 43:1, "But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

1.2 Research Question

The questions raised in this study are: What roles were accessible for women in the early churches, and what inferences and consequences can be drawn from them for the roles of women in the FLM, especially of women who study theology? I am asking these questions because I discover that many are the roles of women in the early churches and so do the roles and talents of women theologians in the FLM. Many people in the FLM think that many women

theologians have no roles in the Church and some women theologians also think of themselves as nothing to do in the Church. We will see in this research that women theologians have many things to do in the Church and they have an important role in the FLM.

1.3 Method

For answering the research question, I will deliver an historical and exegetical study of selected texts and persons in the New Testament. Due to the scope and size of this Master's thesis, I must limit this study of roles accessible for women in the early churches to those parts of the history of the early church and of the New Testament books where I expect to find relevant information. Because we are particularly well informed about the mission of Paul and because he himself has left us more texts than any other New Testament author, my choice has fallen on women appearing in his mission and on passages in his letters where the apostle addresses the issue of women and roles of women. I will give a theory of the theme and I will analyse it. After that, I will relate it to the case of woman theologians in the FLM.

As a participant on the workshop of women theologians in the FLM on March 2021, I have interviewed some of my colleagues and asking them some basic questions about some difficulties faced by some women theologians in the FLM and I asked some of them concerning their talents in which I will discuss more in the fourth chapter. My ambition is not to do qualitative research, but as a woman theologian, I need to have some information about them and to hear from them about some ideas during the workshop to enrich my knowledge in this research.

1.4 Goal

The first aim is to know the roles of women in the early churches and to apply their tasks to women theologians in the FLM. The goal is to give tasks to women theologians in the FLM. It is not fair to let women study theology and do not give them the appropriate task for their study. In addition to that, God created not only men, but both men and women. So, if FLM does not use these women, FLM is like throwing Jokers away, affirms Razivelo Mariette, one of the first female theologians in the FLM. In another word, if FLM does not want to give tasks to female theologians, FLM does not want to use their talents which are powerful and typical for everyone and center of the development of the churches. Toromaro Mananato, a woman

theologian, member of the National Committee in the FLM added that a woman called Mama Volahavana Germaine or Nenilava has done more mission and prophecies than pastors have done. She has done a lot of missions. She is the result of the creation of many churches in the Church called Ambatovinaky, situated in the capital of Madagascar. The “Tonia” (general secretary) of the FLM, Pastor KOTOBESOA, also stressed that it is not mandatory for women to be ordained in order to accomplish their task as theologians, but they can use their talents. Like women in the early churches, women theologians in the FLM can be leaders. They can teach, they can practice diakonia, they can do pastoral counselling, they can preach the gospel. All in all, they can do mission. To do mission is not only to preach the gospel, but one should have something to do to earn his or her living. Women theologians should have income apart from their mission, because they need money as mothers. So, FLM should consider that position too, in order to develop their own lives and the life of the churches. As women theologians are considered sources of power in the FLM, according to “Tonia” of the FLM, so they should be given the tasks appropriated for them in order to preach and to develop the churches and the whole human being, holistically.

1.5 Outline

To deal with this research, I will give a historical description of the roles of women in the mission of Paul in Acts and Paul’s letters. And after that, I will use theological statements of Paul about women in which we will see Paul’s theology. Here, we will discuss texts like Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15. And last but not least, I will provide relevance for the current situation in FLM of Paul’s missionary practice and theology regarding women. These different aspects can be best be taken care of in separate chapters. Hence, the outline will be as follows:

In Chapter Two I will investigate the roles of some women involved in Paul’s mission. In Chapter Three, I will explain selected text passages about women in Paul’s letter in order to understand what Paul really means. In Chapter Four, I will have a look at how to relate the roles of women in the mission of Paul to the situation of women theologians in the FLM. Even the women in the early churches use their talents in the ministry of Jesus, why not the women theologians in the FLM? Then after that, I will, finally, in Chapter Five, relate Paul’s theological statements about the roles of women with the theology regarding women.

CHAPTER TWO: ROLES OF WOMEN IN PAUL'S MISSION

2.1 Introduction

When we talk about women in the early churches, we should not forget women such as Mary the Mother of John, Rhoda, her servant, Lydia, Chloe, Prisca, Phoebe, Junia and others, who played an important role in the mission of Paul. In this chapter, I will not look at all these women but I choose the four outstanding women Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia. This does not mean that the other women are not outstanding but they also are important in taking part in the mission of Paul.

Lydia is mentioned in Acts 16:14 as a worshipper of God, leader and businesswoman. Romans 16 lists a number of women in prominent positions of service in the church (Keener, 1992, p. 237). In Roman 16: 1-7, Paul greets Phoebe, Prisca, Junia, with mentioning their specific role, and the two men Aquila and Andronicus who worked very hard with him and who are famous and well-known also. Mary also is mentioned there but she is only presented as hard worker among the others. Of the three men he commends for their work, two are mentioned in commendations of their wives (Rom 16:3, 7) (Keener, 19992, p. 240). Verses 3-13 is really a connected whole ; but perhaps a minor transition can be discerned at verse 8, where Paul moves from greetings to people that he know well (vv.3-7) to greetings of people that he may know only casually or perhaps even only by reputation (vv.8-15) (Moo, 1996, p.918).

Luke portrays Mary as a widow but he sees her as financially well-to-do because many people gathered in her house and prayed there and she has also a servant named Rhoda. And this servant opened the door when Peter knocked at it. So, here, Luke may indicates that there is an equality effects of the Gospel because not only women, but even slaves were accepted as participating members of the new community (Witherington III, 1988, p.146-147). For Mary, even though she is a widow, sacrifices her time, effort and money to serve the Lord (Lockyer, 1996, p. 107). Rhoda used to stand in the door while believers gathered together (Toromare, 2004, p.122). Through her, the Christians who met there knew that Peter was knocking in the entrance of the door (Acts 12:12-13). So, they are also important women in the early churches.

Chloe was also well known to the Corinthians by her personal name meaning “green herb”, and it represents the first green shoot of plants in the Greek (Lockyer, 1996, p.38). Thanks to her hospitality, Paul received information of strife among leaders in the Early church (1 Cor 1:10, 11).

We cannot separate Paul from his co-workers, among whom there were some women, because they played an important role in the mission of Paul. The four remaining women listed at the beginning of this section, Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia, take outstanding positions in his mission, and I take them as my paradigmatic examples of women in the early churches. These women often have a key role in Paul’s work (Bock, 2007, p. 534). Not only was Paul a true defender of women’s fulfilment as wife and mother, but he also gives freedom to women (Williams, 1977, p. 11).

Before looking at the important roles played by these women in the early churches, we should know first who Paul is and what was his life before. I say so because all these may have an influence in his mission with these women and his theology as it is written in Stuhlmacher’s book entitled, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, “Paul’s mission theology cannot be separated from his own life and destiny” (Stuhlmacher, 2018, p. 253). Although there is a discussion about where Paul is from, most scholars agree that he is from Jerusalem. Even though there is an ambiguity between the upbringing of Paul in Tarsus or in Jerusalem, most scholars think that he probably grew up in Jerusalem (Porter, 2016, p. 14). Though his origin is not prior for Paul, we can say that his background can have an influence on what he writes. Paul did not mention his origin because for Paul, his most important citizenship was in heaven (Phil 3:20) (Porter, 2016, p. 15). Despite this consideration for Paul in such origin which is not very important, it is better to know where he really came from because this influenced his writings. Paul’s citizenship influenced the writing of his letters (Porter, 2016, p. 16). As a Roman citizen (Acts 16: 37-38), Roman readers would interpret Paul as a noble man. The fact of saying that he has Roman citizenship is to show that its Roman readers would see Paul as a noble figure worthy of their attention (Porter, 2016, p. 12).

When we talk about early churches, Paul and his writings are worth considering. Paul has his value in the early churches. He is probably the earliest New Testament author even though some might put the book of James prior to Paul’s letters (Porter, 2016, p. 10). Paul is well known of being a follower of Jesus after becoming a Christian, that is to say, his turning

to believe in Jesus Christ. After his conversion, he is a theologian, writer, missionary, preacher, and church planter (Porter, 2016, p.10). Paul was famous as a great theologian. He was the first and perhaps the greatest Christian theologian and he has often been called the second founder of Christianity (Porter, 2016, p.10). The book of Acts is an important secondary source on the mission of Paul (Porter, 2016, p.11). Not only will I focus on the book of Acts, but also, I will have a look on letters of Paul because they give additional evidence, e.g. about Prisca, and we can see other important women such as Phoebe and Junia in the book of Romans for example and we can have some reflections on women in the book of Corinthians. Even though scholars debate on the authorship of Acts, there are references such as Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11 that show Luke, the physician, Paul's faithful companion as the writer of the book of Acts (BDAG, 2000; Porter, 2016, p.22).

Paul's missionary journeys are also worth considering in this introduction since he met his friends elsewhere in his journey. For instance, after Paul took Silas in Antioch and departed on his second missionary journey, he travelled through the region of Cilicia and then, went to Galatia, to Troas and to Philippi where a woman called Lydia was converted (Acts 16 : 1-15). After that, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) arrived to Thessalonica and went to Athens and to Corinth where he met Prisca and Aquila where he stayed for one year and half. When he left Prisca and Aquila's home, they went together to Ephesus, and while Prisca and Aquila stayed on in Ephesus, Paul continued to Jerusalem and he closed his second missionary journey to Antioch (Porter, 2016, p.36). For his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21 :17), Paul begun it just as he did the previous two (Porter, 2016, p. 56). Then, he passed through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), before reaching Ephesus (Porter, 2016, 56).

I will show how important are these women who are Paul's co-workers.

It is true that human beings have their limits, but I will mention the typical hindrances of the opportunities of the life of women in the ordinary Greco-Roman world before giving the roles of these four outstanding women. Women in the Greco-Roman world took part in the life of the community either it is at church or in the society. Women were active at all levels within their social and religious communities (Cohick, 2009, p. 23). This shows that women were dynamic participants in their environment (Cohick, 2009, p.25). Even though the system held by the Greco-Roman is the patronage system, women had a voice and influence within society through this patronage system (Cohick, 2009, p.31). This custom of patronage

is from the honor and shame culture in the Mediterranean world. For example, wives are to be silent, yet they have a voice in religious festivals; women should stay at home and spin wool, but many women were busy earning a living in the marketplace (Cohick, 2009, p.285). This leads us to see the role played by Prisca (referred to in Acts as Priscilla), whose name is mentioned before the name of her husband in two of the three cases in Acts.

Priscilla and Aquila are a peripatetic couple who were driven from their home in Rome and settled for a time in Corinth and then Ephesus (Cohick, 2009, p. 129). Some scholars suggest that Prisca had a higher social status than her husband, others suggests that Prisca had more wealth and so was treated with proper honor in noting her name before her husband's. The couple seemed to be rich and they used their wealth to have a house that could accommodate a modestized church gathering and to help Paul and this lifestyle may have been financed by Prisca (Cohick, 2009, p. 130).

Our next representative of women appearing in Paul's mission (see Acts 16:11-40), Lydia, had a prestige in the first century society. Not only was she a leader of the group who meet in her home in Philippi, but she also has an important position in the society. She is the leader of her household even though she is a widow and she is a home owner when she invites Paul and Silas to stay with her; she is also described by Luke as a God- fearer and Paul's benefactor, a very privileged position in the Hellenistic world and she is also wealthy because she deals in purple cloth which was very expensive (Cohick, 2009, p.189-190).

The third woman, Phoebe (see Rom 16:1-2), has a high social status in the society she lives in like the other women mentioned before. Apart from Apollos, Phoebe is included as a deacon on Paul's list which means to carry God's message and mediate God's word (1 Cor 3 :5) (Cohick, 2009, p. 304). Paul applauds her as a worthy client for the Roman church to take on (Cohick, 2009, p.306). Even though Phoebe is Paul's benefactor, Paul commends Phoebe's actions so that the Roman Church might act similarly towards her. So, the goal is reciprocity since for Paul, God is the ultimate Patron and all Christians are his clients (Cohick, 2009, p. 307).

Junia is the apostle commended by Paul in Romans 16:7, and for Paul she had a wonderful reputation among the apostles and presumably the churches as well (Cohick, 2009, p.315). Paul meant to say that Andronicus and Junia were outstanding among the apostles

(Jay Epp, 2005, p. 73). This means that Junia is a very important woman as she is an outstanding apostle.

I will give in detail the roles of these four women in Chapter Two as we see here that they are all such important women we should take into consideration from the early churches and even today.

2.2 Four Outstanding Women

2.2.1 Lydia

2.2.1.1 The Meaning of Lydia

Luke summarizes what concerns Lydia in this reference: “A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14).

It is obvious that every name has its meaning. Even though the name Lydia has raised numerous questions, it may be an ethnic nickname or even an ethnic slave name. So, her name indicates a former situation of slavery or represents a nickname (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). She may be a slave even though she is the owner of a purple cloth business and has her own household. It is possible that she is a slave or a freed woman who made and sold purple cloth for her owners since a slave could have a household of sorts (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). Even though her name is Lydia, she may be a wealthy person or a slave. In other words, both a rich and a poor person can be called Lydia. Lydia is elsewhere attested as a personal name for women of high status as well as for slaves or freedwomen (Bruce, 1990, p. 358). In addition, Lydia was not only a personal name but also the name of a region in the western part of the Roman province of Asia where the city of Thyatira was located (Newman; Nida, 1972). Lydia is a dealer in expensive *purple cloth*—from Thyatira, a city in the Lycus Valley in the province of Asia, listens to what Paul is saying (Larkin; Briscoe; Robinson, 1995):

2.2.1.2 Lydia as a Businesswoman

Lydia is a businesswoman. Klauck asserts that Lydia was “an independent businesswoman” (Reimer, 1995, p. 110). She worked as a *πορφυροπωλις* (Acts 16:14) which means a merchant dealing in purple cloth, (BDAG, 2000); “dealer in purple cloth” (Reimer, 1995, p.98).

Luke portrays Lydia as having come to Philippi from her native city of Thyatira, famous for its production of clothing goods with a distinctive and very popular royal purple dye (Witherington III, 1988, p. 148). Lydia is a wealthy merchant who sold purple cloth. She is wealthy because she deals in purple cloth and purple dye was a very expensive commodity (Cohick, 2009, p. 188). Perhaps Lydia employed people to do the dyeing and selling and she has a household which could include slaves and freed men and women (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). She was “well-to-do” or “of high standing” because this kind of job requires a capital since the material used are expensive (Reimer, 1995, p.99). She is then a rich woman. She made wool from the dye material and it is even said that the dyeing of wool was a Lydian invention (Reimer, 1995, p. 100). She is such a capable woman that she works with her own hands (Reimer, 1995, p. 100). This means that her production is original. She made cloths through it and the cloths are in good qualities. Those who wear these clothes are considered wealthy, too. In Luke 16:19, the wearing of purple can be a sign of wealth. This color, from animals or certain plants vary from 1 to 30 denarii according to their quality and among the plants used for the production of purple vegetable dye were “granis coccum”, “hyacinth” and “rubia” or “madder” (Reimer, 1995, p. 103). Scholarly discussion outside the New Testament field has assumed that the dyers in Thyatira extracted their purple dye from rubia and the theologians M. Clévenot and C.J. Hemer also asserts that the city of Thyatira was known for the madder root that grew in its fields, while sheep and goats provided the necessary material for the production of cloth and wool blankets (Reimer, 1995, p. 104). The dye was manufactured from the juice of the madder root, which, according to W.M.Ramsay (HGAM, p.123), was still produced in abundance in the Kara Tas district, 50 miles east of Thyatira, in the 1880s, for use of the dyeing of carpets (Bruce, 1990, p.359). All these observations emphasize that the origin of Lydia is Thyatira and that she is a very wealthy woman.

Lydia is considered as a businesswoman in a prosperous city in Thyatira. She is well-known seller of scarlet cloth product. Her ability, enthusiasm, singleness of purpose and mental acumen allows her to have an independent position in Asia Minor, and her business proves that she owned a spacious home and have servants to care for her (Lockyer, 1996, p. 84). Lydia herself was a wealthy person who wore purple goods which were luxury materials worn by the rich (Newman; Nida, 1972).

2.2.1.3 Lydia as a God-fearer

According to Acts 16:14, Luke described Lydia as a worshiper of God (σεβομένη τὸν θεόν). Such expressions appear in connection with the synagogue, and this directs our attention to the “god –fearers” who were Gentiles attracted to Judaism, but unconverted, not having been circumcised (Reimer, 1995, p.93). Lydia is a devout woman. Even though she is busy with her business, she still had time to worship according to the Jewish faith and she had also time for prayer. (Lockyer, 1996, p. 84). She is such a hospitable woman that she received Paul and Silas into her home after their discharge from prison (Lockyer, 1996, p. 85). Lydia is a pious woman. This phrase often describes former polytheists who become worshipers of the God of Israel, adopt monotheism, and attend the synagogue but do not keep the entire law (Bock, 2007, p. 534).

Paul went to different places to preach the Gospel, such as Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1a), Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16: 6a). The Spirit of Jesus would not allow Paul and his companions to go to Bithynia. So, they went down to Troas. From Troas to Samotrace and from Neapolis to Philippi, they stayed there for several days (Acts 16:11-12). On the Sabbath, they sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered in the city gate to the river where they expected to find a place of prayer (Acts 16:13). It is more likely that this place of prayer is a synagogue, as elsewhere the locale for prayer is always a synagogue when the term “place of prayer” is used though a synagogue for the Jews must require ten men (Bock, 2007, p. 533). There was a Lydia, listened to what Paul preached. She was a worshiper of God and the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message (Acts 16:14). She invited them to her house when she was convinced of the message, she and the members of her household were baptized (Acts 16: 15). After Paul preaches the gospel to them, a God-fearer, Lydia from Thyatira and her household are baptized (Cohick, 2009, p. 188). Luke intimates that God intended Lydia and her household to be the first converts in Macedonia so that the initial European church would have a good home. Just as Paul’s coming to Macedonia was due to revelation (God’s work), so, Lydia’s conversion is to be seen as God’s work (Witherington III, 1988, p. 148-149).

2.2.1.4 Lydia as a Leader

Even though Lydia is unmarried or a widow, she is able to lead her household. Lydia was evidently head of the house and even though it is not clear whether she was unmarried or a widow, her household would in any case include servants and dependents (Bruce, 1990, p. 359). Another curious detail is that no husband is mentioned and most conclude that she is a widow, as were many women were at this time (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). In addition to that, she is the leader of her household because she could convince and bring her household to be baptized. Luke presents her as master in the home, for she leads her household in baptism (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). Moreover, her invitation of Paul and Silas into her home shows that she is the one who can lead her household. She invites Paul and Silas into her home, again presenting a picture of one in charge of the household (Cohick, 2009, p. 189). Not only was she a leader of her household but also a leader of the group who gathered in her home. Lydia was probably the leader of the group that continued to meet in her home (Cohick, 2009, p. 190). She then become the leader of the church because these people who gather together are the members of the church and she is the owner of the house they met in. Presumably, Lydia followed the pattern found throughout the New Testament that the owner of the house in which the church met was also a church leader (Cohick, 2009, p. 190). And her status as Paul's benefactor would imply a leadership role in the church (Cohick, 2009, p.189). Being a benefactor is a honourable position in the Judaism and a social prestige in the first century. Lydia is portrayed as a benefactor, a very privileged position in the Hellenistic world (Cohick, 2009, p. 190).

2.2.2 Phoebe

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well (Rom 16 :1-2, NRSV).

2.2.2.1 The Meaning of Phoebe

Like every name that has meaning, the name Phoebe also has its meaning. Phoebe is a Greek name, from the Greek word Φοίβη, that means "bright", "radiant", or "pure" (Thayer's Greek

Lexicon, 2000; EDNT,1990). She is as bright and pure as her name appoints her. She is worth calling Phoebe because her character is a testimony of that. So, she was recommended by Paul thanks to her good character and her brightness.

2.2.2.2 Phoebe as a Minister

Even though there are many translations of the word δίακονος, the basic meaning is the same that is servant. Here, the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New International Version, and the New American Standard Version all employ the word “servant” for δίακονος; for the same verse, other translations use other words: “leader” in the Contemporary English Version, “minister” in the New American Bible, “deaconsess” in the New Jerusalem Bible and “deacon” in the New Revised Standard Version (Campbell, 2009, p.48). Thus while “deacon” originally meant “table waiter” in Classical Greek, Paul views deacons as those who are responsible for the gospel, the ministers of the word of God (Williams, 1977, p. 42). I choose to use minister even though it is the word deacon which is used in the new versions nowadays. The term minister is more appropriate to understand more the role of Phoebe in the the assembly of Cenchreae. She is the minister “of a new covenant-not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3:6). Williams affirms that Phoebe is a minister in the church of Cenchreae (Williams, 1977, p. 42). Phoebe, though she is a woman, can serve as a minister. There is no reason to suppose that Phoebe does not hold a ministerial office. She undoubtedly performs ministerial functions which are equally shared by Paul and others. Thus, no sexual qualifications are made here for such ministry (Williams, 1977, p. 43).

In addition to that, in the New Testament, the word δίακονος denotes different meanings: preaching and teaching, acting humbly, and extending hospitality to strangers (Campbell, 2009, p.73). Phoebe is then an emissary, too. In many situations, the word “emissary” is the more appropriate translation for New Testament occurrences of δίακονος, and such is the case of Phoebe (Campbell, 2009, p. 74). She also preached the gospel in Ephesus. Besides, Paul is likely stressing her role as go-between for the Corinthian churches and the Roman congregation, as well as her specific duty to carry Paul’s letter, with his authority (Cohick, 2009, p. 305).

2.2.2.3 Phoebe as a Sister

When Paul designates Phoebe as τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, “our sister”, ἀδελφὴ indicates a close relationship of similar communities (BDAG, 2000). Phoebe is a member of the Christian community. She is a “family” member and thus has a special relationship with all other Christians (Cohick, 2009, p. 304). In other words, all Christians are like nuclear family with Jesus, they are close to one another. Paul speaks of all believers as ἀδελφοὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις (Gal. 1:2 NA28), members of God’s family (Gal 1:2, NRSV) and πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως (Gal 6:10 NA28), to the family of faith (Gal 6:10 NRSV), To those who are the family of faith (Gal 6 :10, ESV). So, Phoebe is the sister of Paul and the sister of all Christians, too. Paul’s reference to Phoebe as “our sister” is then an example of fictive kinship terminology, and kinship language can even extend to individuals who are not related by marriage or by blood (Campbell, 2009, p.26). As a sister in the household of God, Phoebe would be expected to use her resources to improve the lives of her brothers and sisters (Cohick, 2009, p. 304). In this perspective, Jesus, when he was upon the cross, said to his mother that her son is now the disciple whom Jesus loved, and to the disciple he loved that his mother is now Jesus’ mother (John 19:26-27). Besides, Jesus affirmed that “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Marc 3:35). Here, Jesus redefines what is meant to be family as those who do God’s will (Campbell, 2009, p.29). She is able to take care of her family in different ways, as she did not only take care of Paul. Her responsibilities to her family would include helping practically and financially as she is able (Cohick, 2009, p. 304). So, As Paul is a disciple of Jesus and Phoebe is his sister, then Phoebe is also a disciple of Jesus like him and every member of the Jesus group. Paul means that as a disciple of Jesus, Phoebe is one of them, their sister (Campbell, 2009, p.32). As a result, sisters and brothers deserve the same right and love, as is the case with biological siblings. She is a sister in the faith and holds an official function as “deaconess” or “minister” (Williams, 1977, p. 42). Phoebe, then, is to be received and honoured in the Lord and given hospitality and practical help for her ministry.

2.2.2.4 Phoebe as a Benefactor

As a προστάτις (Rom. 16:2 NA28), she is a benefactor. She works as intermediate between Paul and the believers. In fact, the προστάτις “serves as an intermediary in a transaction,

agent” (BDAG, 2000). For Paul, Phoebe is a benefactor since she has benefited both Paul and the saints. Phoebe’s help includes hospitality in the fullest sense, such as housing and running interference for any social or political trouble generated by the gospel message proclaimed by Paul (Cohick, 2009, p.305). She has been the “προστάτις πολλῶν” or the benefactor of many people, including Paul. She is commended for the way in which she has served others, including Paul himself (Williams, 1977, p. 42). She is really called by God. As having been a helper of many is a clear sign of God’s call and blessing upon her (Williams, 1977, p. 42).

One of the works of benefactor Phoebe does is that she is the bearer of the letter to the Romans. Phoebe is clearly the bearer of this important letter to the Romans since she is coming from Paul to them (Keener, 1992, p.237). Paul commences with the verb συνίστημι, which means “I introduce” or “I recommend” (Campbell, 2009, p.19). Letters introducing or commending certain people constituted a standard type of letter, the “letter of recommendation”, normally written by a person of higher or equal social status (a patron) to a peer, on behalf of someone of lower social status (a client) (Keener, 1992, p. 238). Phoebe received a recommendation letter from Paul to the Romans. Phoebe is commended by Paul to the church at Rome and this is an official recommendation and endorsement of her ministry (Williams, 1997, p.41). At that time, the recommendation was based on the character of the person. Not like today that is based on education or work habits. Such letters of recommendation were important in first-century collectivist Mediterranean societies (Campbell, 2009, p.19). Even nowadays, letters of recommendation are very important, mostly when studying or looking for a job. Paul knew her personally or by reputation. Paul applauds her as a worthy client for the Roman church to take on, for she acted in a praiseworthy manner in her own context of Cenchreae (Cohick, 2009, p.306). That is the reason why Paul introduces her to the Romans. Paul is telling the Romans that Phoebe is worthy of their attention because he can vouch for her character (Cohick, 2009, p. 306). Paul chose her as his agent. Paul was identifying Phoebe as his agent or intermediary carrying his gospel message, or most specifically, his letter to the Romans (Cohick, 2009, p. 304).

2.2.2.5 Phoebe as a Businesswoman

Like the other women who had preached the Gospel, Phoebe also had her occupation apart from her role as a minister. She might also have business in Rome on behalf of her community

in Cenchreae (Cohick, 2009, p. 305). Probably, she was the owner of the home in which the Cenchraean church met, and thus its host (Keener, 1992, p. 240). Paul just encouraged the Romans to welcome her and help her in her business. It is not clear that Paul is asking the Romans to offer her financial assistance. Paul may simply be requesting that they welcome her and facilitate her business in the city (Cohick, 2009, p. 306). This means that she has her own business, but Paul insists on helping her through the Romans.

2.2.3 Prisca

2.2.3.1 The names Prisca and Priscilla

Priscilla was a common name, but she could have been a freedwoman from the *gens* Prisca (Keener, 2014, p.2711). Paul uses the formal “Prisca” whereas Luke employs the more informal form “Priscilla” (Keener, 2014, p.2711). In fact, Priscilla is the diminutive of Prisca and that means “ancient or venerated woman” (Larkin; Briscoe; Robinson, 1995). In this thesis I employ “Prisca” as the name for this person.

2.2.3.2 Prisca as a Privileged Woman

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. In Corinth, he met a Jew, named Aquila and his wife Prisca. Aquila was a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy (Acts 18:1-2). As Paul was a tent-maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them (Acts 18:3). Prisca is always followed by her husband’s name Aquila. Prisca and Aquila are one of Paul’s friendship. They received a lot of affection from Paul and they have the same business as tent- makers, “As husband and wife, and humble tent-makers, Aquila and Prisca greatly enriched the ministries of Paul and Apollos whom God, in turn, used to establish churches” (Lockyer, 1996, p. 125). Prisca is named before Aquila as it is mentioned in 1Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3, 2Tim. 4:19 and Acts. 18:18, 26 (Reimer, 1995, p. 195). Paul once and Luke twice (out of three times) refers to Prisca before her husband (Keener, 2014, p. 2713). Normally the husband was named first unless the wife was of higher social status (Keener, 2014, p. 2713). It is a bit strange for many people to hear the name of a wife before her husband’s name because order is so important for us but here we see the opposite. What is the message to be conveyed if Prisca is written or called before her husband Aquilla? This is because Prisca may have an influence on her husband. Some scholars suggest that Prisca had a higher social status than her husband and perhaps

like Terencia (Cicero's former wife), she was *sui iuris* and could make business decisions with her own resources without the approval of any kin or tutor (Cohick, 2009, p. 130). Further, perhaps Prisca is also so rich that she has enough money to finance the church. Other scholars suggest that Prisca had more wealth and so was treated with proper honor in noting her name before her husband's and the couple seemed to have enough money that they were able to have a house that could accommodate a modest-sized church gathering in Ephesus and in Rome (Cohick, 2009, p. 130). Prisca is famous and well known and the whole civilized world gives thanks to her and her husband and praises them for their work. They were both known everywhere, or almost everywhere in the Christian world of the time (Reimer, 1995, p. 212).

2.2.3.3 Prisca as a Co-worker with Paul

In Rom 16:3, Paul begins his farewell greetings by singing out a couple who have played a major role in his ministry (Williams, 1977, p. 43). Paul greets Prisca, his co-worker in Jesus Christ. Paul titles both her and her husband as "fellow workers" or co-workers, a term of equality elsewhere used of Paul and Apollos (Williams, 1977, p. 43). Paul uses the same word *συνεργός*. In fact, according to Paul, he and Appolos are *συνεργοί*, co-workers (1 Cor 3:9), the same as the title he gives to Prisca and her husband here in Rom 16:3, *Πρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου*. Both of them are the Lord's assigned workers, preachers and church leaders, however, it is God only who has the right to cause to grow and increase their work. Adolf von Harnack counted them among the "most prominent" Christians in Rome and in his opinion, this prominence is evident from the fact that Paul places them at the head of the list of persons greeted in Romans 16 (Reimer, 1995, p. 205). She risked her life for Paul. Aquila and Prisca are husbands and wife but I mentioned only Prisca here since we talk about women here even though their names are inseparable, "As Prisca is always paired with her husband, Aquila, it is difficult to separate her and place her on a pedestal of her own" (Lockyer, 1996, p. 122). Some may think that Prisca is inferior to or under the authority of Aquilla in ministry, but contrary to that, she shares a title and a task of equality as a "fellow-worker" (Williams, 1977, p. 43). Prisca has the same occupation as Paul. Paul went to Prisca and Aquila, and being of the same trade, remained with them. They were all tentmakers by trade (Reimer, 1995, p. 198). John Chrisostom emphasizes that this is an artisanal work and for him, tentmakers means "leather worker" or "shoemaker" (Reimer, 1995, p. 199). Leather work would not

require the tanning and threatening of hides; rather, leather workers were a more acceptably “clean” profession, cutting leather with knives and then cutting it with knives and then sewing it with awls and various products could emerge from leather working, including shoes and awnings; soldiers, like peasants wore leather shoes and they also needed tents (Keener, 2014, p.2734). Even if Prisca was an independent artisan, she practiced the same trade as Paul (Reimer, 1995, p. 202-204). Not only have they the same work, but they also preach together.

2.2.3.4 Prisca and Aquila as Entrepreneurs

Paul was a tent-maker and so was Prisca. Although this kind of work seems to be low or shameful in the society, Paul was not ashamed of that. John Chrysostom also specifies that Paul was not ashamed to cut leather and sew tanned hides together as well as to preach (Reimer, 1995, p. 200). Not only have Paul and Prisca the same work, but Paul even works as an employee of Prisca. Gerd Theissen mentions the idea that “Paul possibly worked as an employee of Aquila and Prisca in one of the shops which have been excavated by the agora” (Reimer, 1995, p. 206). This makes us know that even though Prisca is thought to be an artisan, she was rich. Rudolf Pesch supposes that they were well-to-do because they had their own workshop: “Presumably they were well off, since they were able to open a new workshop immediately in Corinth” (Reimer, 1995, p. 206). Even though they were thought to be poor since they earned their living from the work of their hands as tent-makers, thanks to their “entrepreneurship”, they became rich. John Chrysostom and Mark the Deacon presumed that Prisca, Aquila, and Paul were poor, and this was the understanding of the entire ancient church tradition, but since Aquila and Prisca were entrepreneurs, they not only had a house in Corinth, but later on also in Ephesus and Rome, which is why they must have been very well to do (Reimer, 1995, p. 206). H.J. Klauck regards Aquila as an entrepreneur: “In Corinth, Aquila opened a business as tentmaker or leather worker” (Reimer, 1995, p. 206). Here, even though Aquila was the only one who was mentioned as an entrepreneur, this title can be used to Prisca as they work together and they are husband and wife.

2.2.3.5 Prisca as a missionary

Even though Prisca is an artisan or also an entrepreneur, she was very important in the work of mission. It is most interesting to note that in exegetical treatments Prisca is more likely to

be recognized as active in preaching than an artisan (Reimer, 1995, p. 208). The New Testament evidence indicates that the reasons for their itinerant life were political, missionary, and work related in nature (Reimer, 1995, p. 212). Prisca is an outstanding missionary. We know Prisca and her husband as outstanding missionaries and probably it was for that very reason that they were expelled from Rome. Because of their missionary activity, they were counted among those who stirred up other people (Reimer, 1995, p. 214). They are hardworking and courageous. Even though Paul was absent, they continue to work independently. In Rom 16:4, Paul even says of them that they had risked their own necks for his life, which means they do not seek to avoid dangers such as life-threatening (Reimer, 1995, p. 215).

2.2.3.6 Prisca as a Teacher

Prisca and Aquila followed Paul when he left Corinth to go to Syria (Acts 18:18). Paul left them when he arrived in Ephesus (Acts 18:19). And a Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus. He had a deep knowledge of the Scriptures (Acts 18:24). When Prisca and Aquila remain behind in Ephesus after Paul has left them, they come into contact with Apollos, who had been instructed “the way of the Lord,” and taught in the synagogue accurately “the things concerning Jesus,” but knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-27), by which Luke means a baptism that lacks the transforming power of the spirit (Acts 19:1-7). When Prisca and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and “explained the Way of God to him more accurately” (Reimer, 1995, p. 210). They probably shared the early baptismal tradition, you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ ...there is no male and female,” (Wire 1995, p. 50). So, they seem like teaching a teacher. Prisca is presented as a teacher, and not just a teacher of other women or some nameless converts, but as someone adept enough to give instruction to Apollos, a leading male evangelist (Acts. 18: 24-28). So, Luke reveals the new roles for women in the Christian community. He shows how the gospel liberates and creates new possibilities for women (Witherrington III, 1988, p.156). Not only did Prisca play the role as a mother, a wife, a co-worker of Paul, but she was also a teacher of Apollos. She is to be recalled again and again to memory in the fullness of her womanhood: as wife, tentmaker, highly valued co-worker of Paul and acquaintance of Apollos (Reimer, 1995, p. 217).

2.2.4. Junia

ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἳ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ. (Rom 16:7 NA28)

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. (Rom 16:7 NRSV)

2.2.4.1 The Name “Junia”

Junia is the English translation of Ἰουνίαν, which is a noun accusative feminine singular proper from the word Ἰουνία. Although the name as it occurs here could be a contraction for the masculine Junianus, there is no evidence for this in extant Roman inscriptions, and the most natural way to read the name is “Junia”, a common enough woman’s name (Keener, 1992, p. 242). Junia was a common Roman name for either noble members of *the gens Junia* (the clan of Junia) or for freed slaves of *the gens* (or their descendents)- with the freed slaves more numerous than the nobles (Epp, 2005, p.23). In both of the cases, Junia is a name of free person.

Though there are still scholars who try to explain that Junia is a masculine name, other members of the second edition of the Bruce Metzger’s *Textual Commentary* to UBS (1994) stressed that is a feminine name. Others were impressed by the facts that the female Latin name Junia occurs more than 250 times in Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone, whereas the male name Junias is unattested anywhere, and when Greek manuscripts began to be accented, scribes wrote the feminine *Iounian* (Ἰουνίαν (Rom. 16:7 NA28) translated into Junia (Epp, 2005, p.54). So, *Iounias* is the masculine name whereas *Iounian* is the feminine name. Junia would still be the most natural and compelling translation of *Iounian*, accusative singular in Rom 16:7 (Epp, 2005, p. 27). And it is also obvious that Junia is a woman since in Rom 16:7, Paul sends his greetings to a couple Andronicus and Junia at the end of his letter (EDNT). Paul could be referring to a woman here, quite probably a husband-wife team. This would mean that she is a “kinsman”, that is, a Jewess (Williams, 1977, p.44).

2.2.4.2 Junia as the First Woman Apostle

ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἳ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ (Rom 16:7 NA28).

First, an important element leading to the understanding of the apostleship of Junia is the analysis of the phrase ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. Even though the ESV translates the preposition ἐν into to; many other versions like NRSV, KJV, NIV choose among. The ESV translates the whole phrase into “well-known to the apostles”. In this way, Andronicus and Junia are not considered as apostles but only important persons before the apostles. However, many other versions choose among for the translation of ἐν. And then the phrase is translated into “of note among the apostles (Rom. 16:7 KJV)” “outstanding among the apostles (Rom. 16:7 NIV)” “prominent among the apostles (Rom. 16:7 NRSV)”. Paul’s declaration in Gal 1:14 on his Jewish identity, ἐν τῷ γένει μου translated by the NRSV into “among my people” (BDAG, 2000) should be understood clearly as he is one of the Jewish people. So do here, claiming that Andronicus and Junia are among the apostles is to affirm that they are also apostles. Thus, Junia’s apostleship is valid.

Second, many commentators render the proper name as the masculine Junias rather than Junia which is feminine when understanding that Junia is an apostle (Williams, 1977, p.44). Yet, the church father Chrysostom writes that to be an apostle at all is a great thing, however, Junia is worthy to be called an apostle. How great is the devotion of this woman that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle (Williams, 1977, p.45). In fact, these numerous commentators recognize that Junia is an apostle according to what they grammatically see in the Greek text. Among them, there is Barnett who admits that Andronicus and Junia are named in the writing of Paul as apostles (DPL, 1993). For Epp, Junia is presented as the first and only woman to be called “apostle” in the canonical writings of the New Testament (Epp, 2005, p.22). Further, she is a prominent or a well-known apostle.

2.2.4.3 Junia as Paul’s Fellow Prisoner

She, with her husband Andronicus is Paul’s fellow prisoner. Junia is a “συναιχμάλωτος” (Rom 16:7). This word, which also is used in Philemon 23, has the meaning of fellow prisoner in Jesus Christ. Paul’s fellow prisoner are those who share hardship with him in the fellowship in Christ

(ANLEX, 2000). In addition, when speaking of himself as a prisoner, Paul usually uses the Greek word δέσμιος for prisoner like in Eph 3:1. Moreover, Paul calls his helpers “fellow-prisoners,” probably not in a literal sense but in the sense of being similarly subject to Christ (EDNT, 1990). Consequently, Junia as Paul’s fellow-prisoner does not mean that she was imprisoned with him but she was subjected to Christ like him. In other words, they are in fellowship of the Lord even in the hardest situation to face.

2.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, the roles of the four outstanding women, which are Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia was developed. These women had important roles both at church and in the society in large. First, Lydia (Acts 16:14) was an efficient businesswomen working in the industry of purple cloth commerce. She also was a devout woman, a God fearer who has been always worshipping God. She was a resourceful leader in her house as it was the community.

The other three exceptional women are all presented in Rom 16:1-7. First in the list, the second resourceful woman, there is Phoebe. She has been working as the minister of the assembly of Cenchreae. Paul called her “her sister” and the sister of all believers in the whole Christian family. As benefactor, she was rendering service to Paul and many people. She had also her specific business as owner of the house in which Cenchreae’s assembly gathered.

The third woman was Prisca. The sentence, in which Paul conveys greetings to Prisca and Aquila, is the longest in the list since after ministering with Paul for some time in Corinth. I chose to use the name Prisca rather than Priscilla which is a diminutive form. Prisca was a privileged woman who had higher social status and well-known to the civilized world of her time. She, with her husband, also were co-workers, fellow workers of Paul. They were assigned by God as preachers like Paul; and were also entrepreneurs I tent making so as Paul was. Further, Prisca was a teacher, too. She taught both the believers in general and instructed people like Apollos.

The fourth woman is Junia. Even if there are not many references concerning her in the New Testament, she only was the single woman who was called as apostle. Despite many discussions explaining that Junia should be a masculine name, evidences shows that it is a feminine name. There is vague agreement in her apostleship, according the Paul’s writing. She

was even an apostle before Paul was. Further, she and her husband were prominent among the apostles. She also was a fellow prisoner of Paul in Christ's fellowship.

CHAPTER THREE: STATEMENTS ABOUT ROLES OF WOMEN IN PAUL'S LETTERS

3.1 Introduction

Jesus called not only men but also women to be among His disciples (see, e.g., Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42), and these women are even among the witnesses of His resurrection which is a very important role mostly for women in the early churches. In fact, Women listened to Jesus' teaching (Luke 10:39). Some women are always with Jesus and his twelve disciples (Luke 8:1-3). Evangelists and eyes-witnesses wrote about the fact that Jesus chooses women to be among the witnesses of his resurrection (Matt 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:10-18).

There are some statements written by Paul which allow women to teach, to minister and to do the act of prophesy like in Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16 but there are also other passages which scholars make a discussion whether they were written by Paul or not since these passages seem like prohibiting women to take the roles of teaching, ministering and prophesying. These statements are seen in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15. As far as 1 Cor 14:34-35 is concerned, some scholars like Gordon Fee affirm that this passage is not from Paul (Keener, 1992, p. 86). Before answering this discussion, it is better to deal with the theological meaning of these statements.

I will present first the explanation of the statements that are for the women roles in the early churches and then after that the statements that seem to be against these roles. I will start with Gal 3:28 which is within the textual unit in Gal 3:23-29. This is about the re-proclamation of the true gospel by Paul. There is a need of re-proclamation of the true gospel since some missionaries came to Galatia and preached what Paul qualifies as a different gospel which does not exist at all since there is only one gospel (1:6), and this is a perversion of the true gospel (1:7). This false gospel is concerned with the fact that "gentile believers must be circumcised and adhere to the Law of Moses in order to be fully included in God's covenant people" (Karen Witt, 2017). In fact, those missionaries stated that there is another step for new believers to receive full salvation. Consequently, Paul re-proclaims the true gospel, the union among diversity in Christ (Gal 3:23-29). Mainly, in verse 28 this gospel is explicitly developed for there is a race or ethnical segregation, there is no social status discrimination, there is no gender exclusion, as far as the true gospel is concerned. That is the reason why it

is important to develop this Gal 3:28 in order to think deeply about the place of women in the early church.

Clothing styles make a woman different from a man. Women in Corinth covered their heads, and men should not, to identify their differences (Keener, 1992, p. 45). Next, I will give explanation about the statement in 1Cor 11:2-16. In this passage, Paul lets us know that women can be a prophet, but Paul instructs those women to cover their head so that they may show the glory of their husband and the glory of God. How could women as “men’s glory” distract men from the worship of God during church services? (Keener, 1992, p. 37). Paul is not strict on the kind of clothes women wear but what he emphasizes is that women should dress the appropriate clothes for worshipping God. Paul emphasizes that it is the women’s right to choose what she will wear (1Cor 11:10) ; yet he is asking her to use her right to dress how she will to honour rather than shame her husband (Keener, 1992, p. 38). In addition to that women are too beautiful and will distract the eyes of undisciplined men during the worship services and that may have been part of the problem in Corinth (Keener, 1992, p. 37). In this passage also, Paul stresses on the fact that there is men and women cannot separate from each other since they are from God.

The third statement is about the women to be silent in church in 1 Cor 14:34-35. In these verses, the role of women has a limit. Here they are not allowed to speak at the church. During the time of Paul, the church as a building did not exist yet but the meeting is done at the house. This does not mean that women are not allowed to speak at the church. Added to this, Paul always highlights women mostly during his ministry, so it is strange to admit that Paul does not allow women to speak at the church. Fiorenza stresses that Paul addresses to the single women here (Toromare, 2004, p.127). In this perspective, Garland affirmed that Paul does not contradict what he says in 11:5 but imposes silence on wives in matters other than praying and prophesying (Garland, 2003, p. 669). Thus, these verses do not speak about a general rule prohibiting women to speak at church.

The last one is the statement in 1 Tim 2:11-15. This is among the passages in the entire Bible explicitly forbidding or limiting women’s role (Keener, 1992, p. 18). This is problematic since Paul elsewhere commends fellow ministers who were women (Keener, 1992, p. 18). The authorship of this passage is also debated by scholars, but Keener stands among the minority of scholars who claims that 1 Timothy is Pauline (Keener, 1992, p. 101). There is still a problem

in interpreting 1 Timothy 2:11-15 since it forbids women from teaching in the church and raises the question if Paul commended women for the role of teaching. Even if some writers deny that Paul wrote 1 Timothy, whoever wrote it should have known that Paul's genuine letters commended women as ministers of God's word (Keener, 1992, p. 237).

3.2 Theological Statement in Gal 3:28

οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. (Gal 3:28 NA28)

²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28 NRSV).

According to Gal 3:27, the baptism into Christ is the foundation of the unity in him as it is stated in 3:28. In other words, all believers are one in Christ because they all are baptized into him. As a result, they are equal in the eyes of the Lord.

3.2.1 Equal Chance between Jews and Gentiles

Even though previously or in the Old Testament time, Gentiles were excluded from God's covenant concern, God calls not only Jews, but also Gentiles since for Paul Gentiles are being included in God's true spiritual people because they are experiencing the positive kind of righteousness that is now available to anyone who believes whereas most Jews are finding themselves outside this true people of God because they are wrongly preoccupied with the other false kind of righteousness (Moo, 1996, p. 619). Due to social constraints, Gentiles were not among the apostles. Are Gentiles then forbidden to minister the world? Of course, Jesus did not forbid Gentiles to minister the world, the gospel was proclaimed to the Gentiles after his resurrection (Keener, 1992, p. 248). Did Jesus call only the Jews? Of course not, Jesus calls not only the Jews but also the Gentiles, "Whereas the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek for wisdom, we ourselves preach Christ crucified, to the Jews an offense, to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Cor1:22-24).

Jews and Gentiles have the same chance in Christ. οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, there is no longer Jew or Greek. Ἕλληνας refers to Greek people as well as to all other gentile nations. Both Jews and Gentiles have the equal chance to become one in Christ. Related to the verse

(3:27), both of them are baptized into Christ. And once in Christ, ethnicity has nothing to say, to act. In the ‘no longer Jews or Gentiles’ there is a change of consideration of the foundation of the people of God. “No longer Jew or Gentile” means that at the basis of the people of God, there is no longer the heredity and the obedience to the Torah but the union in Christ (DPL, 1993). In addition, Paul states that “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13)”. The baptism into Christ then makes all Christians equals.

3.2.2 Equal Chance between Slaves and Free

οὐκ ἔστι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος , there is no longer slave or free. In Christ, social status of humans is not the most important but the fact of being baptized into Him. Baptism makes all people equal before God. Jesus calls both slaves and free and Paul make us known that we should remain who we are when called but not reverse it as he states in 1 Cor 7:24. The most important thing is that we are baptized by Jesus no matter who we are whether we are slaves or free. Jerome affirmed that “slaves and free men are distinguished by faith and not by social standing, for the slave is able to be superior to the free man, and the latter is able to surpass the former in the quality of his faith” (Jerome, 2010, p. 152).

3.2.3 Unity in Christ and Equal Chance between Men and Women

All of the believers are one in Christ. The εἷς in πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3:28d) signifies one as denoting “a single entity with focus on uniformity or quality” (BDAG, 2000). In this sense, all those who are ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, in Christ Jesus, are in the same level of quality of being Christian and full members of the same entity. Yet, women do not become men and men do not become women, but both are the same Christians in Christ.

The reason of this unity in Christ is precisely described in the previous verse as εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε (Gal. 3:27 NA28). First, to be baptized into Christ is to be united in Christ in his death and resurrection. According to Ro 6:3, to be baptized εἰς Χριστὸν is, for Paul, an involvement in Christ’s death and its implications for the believer εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν vs. 3b (BDAG, 2000). Therefore, those who were baptized into Christ should take the characteristics, virtues and intentions of Christ for themselves (BDAG, 2000). They should live in a Christian way, as one in Christ. Whether they are men or women is of no value,

there is no question of social status position and role in Christ. The most important thing is thus, to be really Christians.

Second, those who are baptized in Christ are “Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε” (Gal. 3:27 NA28), they have covered themselves with Christ. This involves, according to v. 28, both incorporation into the σῶμα Χριστοῦ and the presence of the new creation (EDNT, 1993). Distinction by gender has no importance to those who are baptized in Christ for they are united into the body of Christ and become part of the new creation. The connection with baptism is maintained in Col 3:10 and Eph 4:24 with the phrase ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον (Eph. 4:24 BGT) which is about clothing oneself with “the new person” or “new self” (EDNT, 1993). In other words, this baptism into Christ concerns in the realization of the new (Christ-) person created in baptism (EDNT, 1993). Both men and women are new persons in Christ. Consequently, either men or women can accomplish every kind of work at church. Thus, oneness in Christ implies the possibility of both women and men to work the work of the Lord in it wholeness.

Third, in baptism, men and women are created in the same image of God, “created according to the likeness of God (Eph. 4:24 NRSV)”. Since men and women are created in the same image of God, they should be considered as the same human being. All Christians must affirm the equal humanity of men and women, that they are both made in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27) (Keener, 1992, p. 9). As far as the role in the church is concerned, men and women should be considered the same in all circumstances because they are able to do the same thing. Women are as capable of filling the roles of men in the church as men are (Keener, 1992, p. 10). Even in the society nowadays, there is no difference between men and women in their roles in the community, so there ought to be no reason for the church to make them unequal. Today, no one opposes women attending college or voting, so Christians should acknowledge the intellectual as well as spiritual equality of women and men (Keener, 1992, p. 9).

3.3 Theological Statement in 1 Cor 11:2-16

² Ἐπαινῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς ὅτι πάντα μου μέμνησθε καί, καθὼς παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, τὰς παραδόσεις κατέχετε. ³ Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναί ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστίν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός. ⁴ πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων

κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ. ⁵ πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτω τῇ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς· ἐν γὰρ ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐξυρημένῃ. ⁶ εἰ γὰρ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται γυνή, καὶ κειράσθω· εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν γυναικὶ τὸ κείρασθαι ἢ ξυρᾶσθαι, κατακαλυπτέσθω. ⁷ Ἄνῆρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰκῶν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων· ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστίν. ⁸ οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ ἐκ γυναικὸς ἀλλὰ γυνὴ ἐξ ἀνδρός· ⁹ καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἐκτίσθη ἀνὴρ διὰ τὴν γυναῖκα ἀλλὰ γυνὴ διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα. ¹⁰ διὰ τοῦτο ὀφείλει ἡ γυνὴ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους. ¹¹ πλὴν οὔτε γυνὴ χωρὶς ἀνδρός οὔτε ἀνὴρ χωρὶς γυναικὸς ἐν κυρίῳ· ¹² ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς γυναικός· τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. ¹³ Ἐν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς κρίνατε· πρέπον ἐστὶν γυναῖκα ἀκατακάλυπτον τῷ θεῷ προσεύχεσθαι; ¹⁴ οὐδὲ ἡ φύσις αὐτῆ διδάσκει ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἀνὴρ μὲν ἐὰν κομᾷ ἀτιμία αὐτῷ ἐστίν, ¹⁵ γυνὴ δὲ ἐὰν κομᾷ δόξα αὐτῇ ἐστίν; ὅτι ἡ κόμη ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται [αὐτῇ]. ¹⁶ Εἰ δὲ τις δοκεῖ φιλόνεικος εἶναι, ἡμεῖς τοιαύτην συνήθειαν οὐκ ἔχομεν οὐδὲ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ. (NA28).

² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. ³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴ Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, ⁵ but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head-- it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. ⁷ For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. ⁸ Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. ¹⁰ For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. ¹² For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled?

¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶ But

if anyone is disposed to be contentious-- we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.
(1 Cor 11:2-16, NRSV)

3.3.1 Women Prophets

It is unusual to hear about women prophets since they were not so many as men in the New Testament, and some scholars try to stress only on men being prophets, but Paul plainly allowed women prophetesses (see v. 5), and almost certainly commends a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7). Some writers have inferred from the fact that most apostles in the New Testament were men and most prophets in the Old Testament were men that it is normative for men to lead, but this position has serious weaknesses (Keener, 1992, p. 246).

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 allows women to minister in the congregation, but calls them to cover their heads lest they detract from God's glory by distracting men from the worship of God (Keener, 1992, p. 17). Women's adorned hair would distract men from the worship of God (Keener, 1992, p. 46).

For Paul, the role of prophets is higher than the role of teaching. Paul expressly ranks prophets higher than teachers in the one list where he explicitly ranks some of the gifts (1 Cor 12:29). Paul encourages the Corinthians that prophecy is the most useful gift for them and includes among its functions that those who hear it may learn (Keener, 1992, p. 244).

Being a prophetess is a high position and to be a judge is higher than that, but we are happy to hear that there was a woman, who was not only a prophet but also a judge. Her name is Deborah and one writer who opposes women's ordination points out that people came to Deborah for judgment (Judge 4:5), which makes her prophecy less authoritative than it would have been if she had gone to them but the meaning of the text is quite the opposite since Deborah was not only a prophetess, but a judge of Israel (Judge 4:4) – so, she held the highest position of authority in her time (Keener, 1992, p. 244).

3.3.2 Man and Woman Are Dependent on Each Other

For Paul, man is the source of woman, in another word, woman is derived from man, so they are interdependent, "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman" (v. 11). In fact, according to the creation history in Gen 2, we can see in verses 22-23 that the "the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a

woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." Here, there is a clear statement that the woman came from the man. In other words, man was created first and then woman. Thus, in this perspective women are not in the same level of creation as men for they were taken from the men. However, according to Paul, the hierarchy between men and women is relativized in Christ. Paul describes the mutual, and that without any hierarchy, relationship between husband and wife in 1Cor 7:3-4, and 1Cor 7:15.

3.3.3 Everything Comes from God

Paul affirms that women and men are mutually dependent in the Lord, they are derived from the other in some sense, and the ultimate source or head of both is God (Keener, 1992, p. 38). Woman and man are together said to represent God's image (Gen 1:27). God has created both a man and a woman in his image and commanded both of them to rule over all other creatures (Gen 1:27-28). So, they are from God, "For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God" (v. 12).

3.4 Theological Statement in 1 Cor 14:34-35

³⁴αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλ' ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. ³⁵εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (1Cor 14:34-35, NA28)

³⁴ women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1Cor14:34-35, NRSV)

3.4.1 Historical Information

1 Cor 14:34-35 uses strong statement to silence women in worship. Accordingly, this passage is treated in different way by scholars.

On the one hand, some scholars think about it as interpolation, a section inserted later by and editor. At the first sight, 1 Cor 14:34-35 seems to be an interruption of the idea developed by Paul in this chapter, and even in all this letter. The NIV version put vv.33b-35 in parenthesis for the reason that this part is uncertain. Further, Conzelmann stated clearly that

this part of the text is an interpolation since, for him, “it interrupts the theme of prophecy and spoils the flow of thought”; it enters in contradictions to 11:2ff; and v 37 does not link up with v 36 but v 33a (Conzelmann, 1975, p 246). Consequently, he did not comment this part at all.

On the other hand, others classified it as original part of the text. Almost, if not all, of the scholars agreeing from the starting point that this passage is original to the text of letter, argue from the fact that it is present in all manuscripts. In fact, that should not be rejected whether how difficult should take its understanding and interpretation. Some scholars within this perspective render it as a Corinthian quotation that Paul rebukes. As a response to the third reason of Conzelmann, Talbert affirms that verse 36, addressed to “you” in plural, should not be a response to verses 26-33 where “you” in singular is addressed (Talbert, 2002, p. 116). In addition to that, Talbert considers verses 34-35 as a second Corinthian assertion, like verses 21-22 which constitute the first Corinthian assertion. If the first assertion is rebuked in verses 23-25, the second one is answered by Paul in the verse 36 (Talbert, 2002, pp. 111-118). For that reason also, Conzelmann is criticized by him.

Other scholars argue that it is not among the Corinthian quotations but treated a specific husband and wives relations. For them, like Garland, verses 34-35 constitute a “concern of husband and wife relationship” (Garland, 2003, p. 667). This passage is husband and wife relationship since Paul obviously states that if a woman has something to ask, she has to ask her husband at their home (v 35). Scholars present strong and various arguments for this point.

Keener presents the following arguments. First, perhaps in traditional hellenistic areas like Egypt, women would have been less educated, except well-to-do Jewish women in places like Sardis would have been more educated (Keener, 1992, p. 84). So, due to the fact that women were less trained in the Scriptures, it is obvious that they may ask irrelevant questions (Keener, 1992, p. 84). And, it was “shameful” or “disgraceful” for a woman to interrupt the service with her questions and it is the same for a woman to have her head uncovered or hair cropped short (Keener, 1992, p. 86).

Second, this passage is written only to the Corinthians but not addressed to the universal church as resolution to an universal problem. Since Paul wrote this directive specifically to the Corinthians, we may assume that the problem was specific to Corinth (Keener, 1992, p. 73). Women must have heard some Torah teaching regularly in the

synagogue (Acts 17:4) and probably often learned some Bible teaching from their parents, but the rabbis did not normally feel that women needed Torah as much as men did (Keener, 1992, p. 83).

All of these reasons led me to follow them in claiming that this passage is among the original text, and it is rather dealing with a specific matter between husband and wife than a Corinthian quotation.

3.4.2 Women Silent in Churches

The passage in 1Cor 14:34-35 states that women shall be silent in all churches. This appears as a contradiction to the passage in 1Cor 11:2-16 where women are praying and prophesying (Keener, 1992, p. 17). Garland also added that all (*παντες*) are able to prophesy (Garland, 2003, p.665). Further, even in 1 Cor 14:31, Paul states that “all can prophecy in turn”. So it is just strange to think about the statement in 14:34-35 to be a general rule for all churches. However, women should keep silent in a specific context in order not to bring disorder but peace at church; “for God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (14:33).

If Paul wanted women to be silent in all churches and in every kind of situation, then many of his text should be deleted. In 1 Cor 14:34-35, Paul does not contradict himself with, at least, what he said in Gal 3:27-28 on the unity and equality of all Christ’s believers and in 1 Cor 11:5 on women prophetesses. For Jervis Paul does not deal with the treatment of women in general but in the worship in the church of Corinth. It concerns only the disruption of prophetic utterance by some women during the worship service. In fact, The reference to ‘their men’ at home (v 35b) refers to conjugal relation between husbands and wives at home but not to “other types of speech such as prophecy, the interpretation of prophecy, tongues, teaching and so on” (Jervis, 1995).

Another point to be noticed is the subordination of women according to v 34 (women should be subordinate). Here Paul’s intention is not to speak on the subordination of women to men as a general rule. Jervis expresses that the chief concern of Paul was “the peaceful exercise of prophecy rather than the subordination of women” (Jervis, 1995).

“The word used here for ‘silence’ normally refers to respectful attention or a quiet demeanor” (Keener, 1992, p. 108). There is a proverb saying “silence is gold”. Sometimes, it connotes wisdom. Silence was an appropriate way to learn, and some teachers purportedly

even required long periods of silence from their pupils, probably as a form of moral discipline (Keener, 1992, p. 107). When Paul admonished the women to be silent in 1Cor 14:34, he means they were to learn, but not by disrupting the whole assembly with unlearned questions. “An admonition to learn in silence could also be an admonition to stop talking and pay attention to what was being said (cf. Acts 15:12; 21:40; 22:2) and need not mean that the person was forever to remain quiet (1Cor 14:28; cf. 14:30)” (Keener, 1992, p.108).

Paul could be making a general statement like this, “Your women should be silent because they are making too much noise” (Keener, 1992, p. 80). We should also take into account that the reason why women ask questions is that in general they were less educated than men. For example, most Jewish women knew the law less than most Jewish men and most Greek women were less accustomed to public lectures than were their husbands (Keener, 1992, p. 83). Even though some Greek and Roman women studied philosophy, they were not many and among those who could afford it, philosophy or rhetoric older students were normally men (Keener, 1992, p. 83).

Paul’s problem is appropriate to a specific cultural context, thus, we cannot apply it to the situation today (Keener, 1992, p. 73). So, when Paul said in verse 35, “If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home,” Paul wants wives to learn only from their husbands at home, rather than being allowed to learn anything in the church services (Keener, 1992, p. 72). In addition to that, “silence” relates to keeping the church service orderly mostly to preserve order in the congregation (see v. 33) (Keener, 1992, p.72).

3.4.3 No Reason for Women to be Silent in Churches

1 Cor 14:34-35 should be studied with the verses before it. Verses 26-33 are about the safeguarding of peaceful environment in the church of God. Yet, all can prophesy one by one or by turn (v. 31). But in verses 34-35 it is claimed that women should be silent during the worship. Garland speaks of 1 Cor 14:26-40 as the regulations of worship (Garland, 2003, p. 655). Within that, he says that Christian worship is to reflect the character of God according to v.33. There were disorders in Corinth; and these are not the work of Holy Spirit. Among them are women who interrupt the worship service and make disorders in the worship. That is the reason why Paul told the women to be silent at church during the worship.

As Paul's principle has to do with church order, people should not interrupt worship services anywhere. When Paul say so, it does not mean that all women should always be silent in all churches, but he does not want them to interrupt the Scripture exposition with irrelevant questions anymore (Keener, 1992, p. 81). This may create disturbance to the service. It was rude even to whisper to one another during a lecture, so asking questions to a speaker by interrupting him or her is disrespectful (Keener, 1992, p. 82).

When Paul suggests that husbands should teach their wives at home, this does not mean that women cannot learn but contrary to that, his point is to let the husband know his wife's intellectual capability and therefore make himself responsible for her education, so they can discuss intellectual issues together (Keener, 1992, p. 84).

3.5 Theological Statement in 1 Tim 2:11-15

11 Γυνή ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ· 12 διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρος, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. 13 Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὐα. 14 καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν· 15 σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιασμῶ μετὰ σωφροσύνης (1 Tim 2:11-15, NA28)

11 Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. ¹² I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

3.5.1. The Context: Γνώσις and Gnostic

This passage is about the role of women at church. And it is related to the gnostic teaching which is already on place during this period of time. According to 1 Tim 6:20-21, the author warned Timothy because there were “τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, (1 Tim 6:20 NA28)” or “profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20 NRSV). Further, there were some who have professed it and consequently deviated from faith (v 21).

It is important to talk first about these two words before developing the text of 1 Tim 2:11-15 since they are closely related to its understanding. Γνῶσις is presented in 1 Tim 6:20-21, as false and profane chatter. The word ‘Gnostic’ comes from the Greek word γνῶσις, ‘knowledge’. The Greeks, however, differentiated between two types of knowing: one was an intellectual knowing, where knowledge is garnered from sources outside oneself (Martin, 2006, p. 15). With this kind of knowledge one could say that he or she knows something or someone without encountering it or that person directly. The second type is “of a direct, personal, intuitive kind (Martin, 2006, p. 15), through which one could say ‘I know this thing or this person’ since I have encountered it or him/her directly. “It is this second type of knowing that is the hallmark of Gnosticism” (Martin, 2006, p. 15). Martin added that “The term ‘Gnostic’ has traditionally referred to the various groups which flourished in the early centuries of the Common Era and which stressed the importance of gnosis – direct inner knowledge of God – above dogma” (Martin, 2006, 15). In fact, the gnostic admit in the fact that people can know God by encountering him directly. In this regard, faith has nothing to do with the knowledge of God and here Paul warned Timothy to stand on faith by rejecting the gnostic (v 21). In fact, Paul is cautioning Timothy against this way of thinking and living. 1 Tim 6:20 is “an explicit warning against the Gnostic heresy (EDNT, 1993).

3.5.2 Women with no Authority Over Men

First of all, women have to learn quietly and in a submissive way. The Greek word ἡσυχία is translated quietly (NAS) or in silence (NRSV, KJV). The request for quietness in worship (1 Tim 2:11, 12) does not forbid questioning or speaking in general, but rather speaking that creates a disturbance (EDNT, 1993). In addition to that, ‘order and peace are considered a condition worth striving for’ (1 Cor 14:33; 1 Tim 2:2). And, in this word ἡσυχία, which is always used with people, the concern is to have and to keep the peace (EDNT, 1993). Thus, if women are asked to learn in silence, it does not mean to deprive them the right to learn but to keep peace reigning during the worship. Also, the emphasis is not upon absolute silence as some would suggest but rather a quiet spirit that is “in quietness” (Moss, 1994). Paul is arguing against women being ‘up front,’ talking foolishness, which cause disorder (Fee, 1988, p.72).

Concerning the word ὑποταγή (submission or obedience), women have to learn in obedience to men. In relation to 1 Cor 14:35, they have to learn from their husbands at home. However, 2 Cor 9:13 uses ὑποταγή in reference to obedience that proves itself in the

acknowledgment of the apostolic proclamation of Christ (EDNT, 1993). Here, we can say that women should learn from men at home for the obedience to the gospel, for peaceful worship at church.

Further, it is worth to notice that the reason Paul asked women to be silent here is the development of Gnosticism. Apart from their view concerning the knowledge of God, gnostics also have another hallmark, they are “anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical, with some, such as the Valentinians, taking it in turns to officiate during services” (Martin, 2006, 21). As a result, they welcomed women, the outcast and the poor in their localities of worship. They “regarded women as the equal of men and had female priests” so that women are drawn to Gnosticism in order to have a genuine chance to participate (Martin, 2006, p. 21). Some privileged women are tempted by the gnostic idea and thought they can do whatever they want, and within the manner how they ought to do, everything at church. Speaking in such a manner causes problem at church where a clear organization is already instituted. So, women should be silent and obedient in order to avoid all kind of troubles in this determined context.

Second, Paul said “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent” (1 Tim 2:12).

There is also a misunderstanding of what Paul means by men who have authority over women. If Paul says, “The woman does not have authority over her own body, but the husband has it” (1 Cor 7:4), this does not mean that women does not have authority over men but they should have authority over one another. So, this verse signifies like this: the woman does not have authority over her own body, neither does the man have authority over his own body but it is the husband who has authority over the wife’s body and the wife has authority over husband’s body as well. Parallel to that, it means, “Let the man give to his wife what he owes her, and likewise the wife to her husband (Wire, 1995, p. 82).

3.5.2 Statement against the Ordination of Women

Some interpreters who are against the ordination of women use some passages in the Scriptures to support their ideas. The common passages are mostly those which they thought that connote negative interpretations of women. We have already seen the passages like 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15. As we see the theological meaning of these passages, I can say that there should be no reason why women should not be ordained as far as Scriptures is

concerned. But there are still some conservative teachers who do not accept women to be ordained. Everyone who opposes women teachers is considered at least “conservative”, and to be conservative in some evangelical circles is to oppose women’s ordination (Keener, 1992, p. 3). As the interpretation of the Bible may change from time to time, researchers should take into account the recent and accurate meaning of what the Scriptures really mean. Even though many regard the apostolic tradition as normative, they should also take into consideration what the writers of the Bible really teach. Certain passages in the Bible might appear as though women are excluded from teaching the Bible (from teaching Sunday School as well as from explaining Scripture from the pulpit), but those who have such a restrictive view on women teaching must read the passages in the Bible about women who taught or prophesied as exceptions (Keener, 1992, p. 3).

If an opponent of women’s ordination concedes that a woman may hold a position of authority but argues that it is nonetheless wrong for her to teach the Bible (as opposed to secular matters), this person should be clear about what he or she is saying: it is not a woman’s role of authority that bothers the objector, but her handling the Scriptures. It is thus her intellectual and spiritual reliability, not her position of authority that is in question.

3.5.3 Creation Order

Paul’s creation order is based on the creation of Eve from Adam in Genesis 2 since it carries on the idea of headship and the wife’s relationship to her husband (Keener, 1992, p. 36). If Paul is making arguments for why these women should not teach, he refers to the creation order. Eve was created second and she was deceived when she transgressed (Keener, 1992, p.116). In this case, the passage may mean, “Eve was deceived, so all women are more easily deceived than all men” (Keener, 1992, p. 116). The order in which Eve was created second does not mean that Eve is inferior to Adam, they are equal. The Hebrew word נָגִידָה; (neged) translated into “suitable may mean ‘corresponding to’ or ‘equal to’” (BDB, 1907). Thus, men and women are created in the same level of importance in the eyes of God. It is clear that Paul does not regard Eve as a standard symbol for women (Keener, 1992, p. 117). Eph 5:31 also appeals to the creation order.

3.6 Conclusion

To conclude, Chapter Three explains about four important statements in Paul's letters about the roles of women. The two first statements take into account the roles played by women as a teacher, a minister, a prophet whereas the two last statements seem like not giving women the authority to do these tasks.

Even though there were many discussions about women teaching or women to be silent in churches or women's submission by scholars, it is obvious that women took some important roles in the ministry of Jesus Christ and of Paul as the Scriptures point out. When there is some opposition on the roles taken by these women, it is because there may be some misunderstanding of what the Scripture really means or maybe because of the culture and context in that period.

In Gal 3:28 Paul wants to show that everyone is on the same level in terms of ethnicity, social status and gender, and he insists on the rights women should have. It appears that Paul is aware of the prejudice against women's contributions in his society, and therefore works all the harder to make sure that the praiseworthy among them receive their due. All members of church are baptized into Christ, and they are one in Christ, to be Jews or Gentiles, to be masters or slaves and to be men or women are not the things, to be baptized into Christ and becoming one in Him.

In 1 Cor 11:2-16 Paul tries to give favor to women as prophets which is a high position in the early church or even in the Old Testament time. Then he is able to give women the authority to pray and in the church but he warns them to wear the appropriate clothes to show both the glory of their husbands and the glory of God. For, Paul hierarchy in the creation of men and women is relativized in Christ. Both men and women came from God. They are all created in the image of God.

1 Cor 14:34-35 is a strong statement claiming that women should be silent at church. It is not a general rule concerning women but applied to a specific situation in Corinth where some women speak interrupting the worship and create disorder. The prophetic utterance at church should not be disturbed by their questions. It is better for wives to be silent at church and to ask their husbands at home in order not to interrupt the worship.

The theological statement in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is about the same matter of silencing women. It also is question of authority between men and women. At the first glance it seems

to put women as subordinated to men, but it concerns a specific context, the Gnosticism. Gnosticism advance that God is knowable through a direct encounter with Him. They also is non-hierachical structure of the church, allowing women to do everything in church. Paul told women to be silent for peace in church. Concerning the order of creation, Paul put neither value nor level differences between women and men, but between God the Creator and human beings as created.

CHAPTER FOUR: PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE THEOLOGY REGARDING WOMEN IN THE MALAGASY LUTHERAN CHURCH

4.1 Introduction

In the Malagasy Lutheran Church, the Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy (FLM), there are some prominent female theologians to be imitated such as Ralivao Hélène, a famous woman theologian in the FLM, and Razivelo Mariette, the first and only woman theologian who has a PhD in Theology in the FLM, and Toromare Mananato, the first and only woman theologian who is a member of the head committee of the FLM. Even though everyone has his or her own specificity, it is a good idea if women theologians learn not only from the prominent women in the early church but also from these prominent women in the FLM. Although Ralivao Hélène has passed away, I would like to deal with her because she took different roles in her life as a theologian and as a mother also. I would like to talk about her story since she left good lessons for all women theologians. These lessons to be learnt were presented by Toromare Mananato during the conference of women theologians in Antananarivo on March 2021. She is really a good model to be followed.

Before we go into detail about this, I would like to mention the most important event in the history of women theologians in the FLM which has not existed before. This is nothing else but a meeting between all women theologians in the FLM held in Antananarivo from the 2nd till the 5th of March 2021, and the objective of that meeting was to comfort each other. Most of the information given in this chapter is taken from that meeting. I have done interviews on some of them since almost all the Regional Synods in the FLM have at least one representative of women theologians from each of the 25 Regional Synods. There was some discussion about the life of women theologians during the meeting. Discussion on why such many women theologians do not have positions in their respective Regional synods; discussion about ordaining women theologians to work as a Pastor; discussion on how should men and women work together in church and in the society for the development of human beings.

In this last chapter, I will present first who are these women theologians in the FLM I am talking about in this thesis. After that, I give some information about the situation of women theologians in the FLM today. Next, I will have a look on the roles of women

theologians in the FLM. And last of all, I will make some comparison between the roles of women in the early church and the role of women theologians in the FLM.

4.2 Presentation of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.2.1 Generalities About Women Theologians

4.2.1.1 Who are the Women Theologians?

What we call women theologians in the FLM are women who studied theology and graduated from the Lutheran seminary school of theology or “Seminery Teolojikam-Paritany Loterana” (STPL) or the Lutheran Graduate School of Theology or “Sekoly Ambony Loterana momba ny Teolojia” (SALT) (Kotobesoa, 2021). Before they entered the Seminary, they must have received a letter of authorization from the Regional Synod they are from. Today, there are about two hundred and fifty women theologians in the FLM, according to the statistic number received during the first conference of all women theologians in the FLM last March 2021 in Antananarivo.



Women Theologian in Conference (03th March 2021)

4.2.1.2 Committee Members

Even though women theologians in the FLM are not yet neither an association nor an organization, they already have their own constitution and members like every association has. . Women Theologians are included in the Women Lutheran Branch (FBL) branch in the FLM. And now, they plan to be like an association of women theologians in the FLM.

They have their head committee members like the Vice-General Secretary and the Central Office: the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, and the Secretary. In addition to that, there is an administrating Committee in each Regional Synod of the FLM.



The Head Committee of Women Theologians in the FLM, 5th March 2021

4.2.1.3 Activities

Women theologians have also their own activities. In March 2021, they organized a conference between the women theologians in the FLM. This was the first National Meeting of the Malagasy Lutheran Church's Women Theologians in Madagascar, which was held in Antananarivo during four days (2-5 March 2021). There were about two hundred members who attended the meeting. Almost all the women theologians have their representative in

each Synod. The main objective of that meeting is to recomfort each other because some theologians would like to give up because they do not receive position in the church after their study. Rev 2:8-11,

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life: I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death"(NRSV).

All members in each Regional Synod have their own activities but in general, these activities are always related to evangelization or teaching and training.



Workshop during the Conference, Group Discussion, 04th March 2021

4.2.2 History of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.2.2.1 History of the First Women Theologians

There are four women who studied Theology for the first time at the Lutheran Seminary called “Seminery Teolojia Loterana” (STL). Among these women are the two prominent theologians I will choose to talk about in this last chapter. Their names are Ralivao Hélène and Razivelo Mariette. We are used to call them “Mama” before their names because they are like a mother for us. They were the first women who studied Theology in the FLM. The discussion about the ordination of women theologians started at that time, in 1976. It was from 1976 that this discussion had started and this still continues until now (Kotobesoa, 2021).

4.2.2.2 History of Ralivao Hélène

Mama Ralivao studied in America and she married a pastor. She has five children and eight grand-children. Even though she died last year, in 2021 in a terrible way (she was raped and killed by bandits), she is still worth considering since she left many lessons to be learned. She was famous in fighting against the violence to women and had written some books about that. She is an active and dynamic woman. She is also a skilful and resourceful woman. She has taken important roles in the FLM mostly in women domains.

4.2.2.3 History of Razivelo Mariette

As for Mama Razivelo, she is unmarried, she studied both in America and in Norway. Even though she has already retired, she is still able to supervise students at the Lutheran Graduate School of Theology or Sekoly Ambony Loterana momba ny Teolojia (SALT). She is also the head of the committee of the association of women theologians in the FLM. Even though she is single, she is like a mother and has a good character

4.2.3 Identity of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.2.3.1 Identity

Like everyone in this world, women theologians have their own personality and identity. Many of women theologians are well-educated. Some of them have skills in Language, Business Communication, Informatics, Leadership, Management; others are entrepreneur, Leader,

Doctor. Women theologians have their personality, too. In general, most of them are proud of being theologian and despite their situation in the FLM- no ordination, no position, they remain in their calling from God.

4.2.3.2 Vision

Like the FLM, women theologians have their vision. The first vision is to preach the gospel, the second one is to be a testimony and do good works and the last but not least is to develop the life of all individuals. To reach this vision all members do their best in order to make the kingdom of God flourished.

4.2.3.3 Motto

They have also their motto in Isaiah 43:1b "I have called you by name, you are mine" (NRSV). Some women theologians want to give up because they do not have tasks or positions in the FLM. This verse is used to comfort those who are disappointed. They still hope that God is always with them and comforts them. To comfort each other also was the main objective of the meeting of all theologians in Antananarivo on March 2021.

4.3 Situation of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.3.1 Overview

4.3.1.1 General Situation

Among the two hundred and fifty women theologians around Madagascar, there is only fifty of them who have a position in the FLM. These are the positions which exist in the FLM: teachers at the Pastoral Seminary or Bible Schools, Evangelists, Librarians, Receptionists, Secretaries. Some Synods are able to give positions to women theologians but others cannot. The Regional Synod of Antananarivo (SPAnta) is for example able to give positions to some women theologians whereas The Regional Synod of Fisakana (SPAFI° hardly find difficulties to give positions to women theologians in their Synod. Some women theologians are pastor's wife and it is not a big problem for them if they do not have a position since they can take the role of being pastor's wife and can help the pastor in his work but those who are not married to a pastor are the most victims of not having such position in the church.

4.3.1.2 Particular Situation

Some women theologians face some difficulties in the church. Even those who have position may encounter some problem as far as salary is concerned. The treatment of a pastor and a woman theologian is not the same. When the salary of a pastor in town is about one million ariary, that of the woman theologian is about two hundred thousand ariary only, said a woman theologian in the Synod of Antananarivo (SPAnta) (Lovatiana, 2021). This woman has experienced such mistreatment. In addition to that, she is not married to a pastor. Mostly, those who are not pastor's wife are the most victims. She added that when a pastor moves to visit other church, this pastor receive indemnity but when she did so, she does not receive the same indemnity but she get only the ticket for transportation; even though she live in that condition, she still does not want to give up, she still works heartfully as a theologian (Lovatiana, 2021). Another women theologian in the same synod confirms that even though, she has got a position in the church, this cannot help in feeding the family even though she is a pastor's wife but she must find another thing else parallel to that and use her talent to earn their living in a better condition; she works as a secretary and uses her "Maîtrise" in management, but even though she worked as a secretary, she is still proud of being theologian (Harifidy, 2021).

4.3.1.3 Some Suggestion

Apart from the issue concerning the women theologians in the FLM, there are some positions that do not fit to many of these women because they do not have the capacity to reach the criteria needed. So, they still need to follow some professional training like Language, Management, Informatics, Communication, Marketing, Law, Leadership, Agriculture, Handcrafts, Decoration, Esthetics, etc...

4.3.2 Strengths

4.3.2.1 Women Theologians as Sources of Power of the FLM

Women theologians are among the sources of power of the FLM. This is written in the little book called: "Fitsipika Manankery", section four, chapter one, verse 19. Women theologians are included in the sources of power of the FLM. So, they are very important in the FLM. If

women theologians are so important in the FLM, why does FLM still not accept them to be ordained? This is still a long discussion until now.

4.3.2.2 Women Theologians as Having Talents

If they are not yet ordained, they can use their talents. For Lovatiako, general secretary of the program “Nehemia” in the association of the Reformed and Lutheran church or “Firaisan’ny Fiangonana Protestanta eto Madagasikara” (FFPM), a talent is a provision given by God and it is special for each individual (Lovatiako, 2021). Talent is also a know-how from God or a gift from God. It is difficult to discover one’s talent but after knowing what really the talent is, some women theologians can answer my interview of what talent they have to improve their life and the life of the church. Talent is part of the strength women theologians have in order to preach and to live their life and the life of the church in a good condition. I will give some talents these women theologians have after interviewing them.

As for Pelagie Marie Razafindrabe Agnès, from the Regional Synod of Manakara (SPMA), she said, she has a talent in chicken rearing and agriculture; she also knows how to sew and is active in selling things, but all these cannot prevent her of her calling to be a theologian (Agnès, 2021).

For Tolotra Herilalaina, from the Regional Synod of Atsimon’i Mania (SPATSIM), she said that she does not have a talent in teaching but since as a theologian, she is supposed to know how to teach, so, she must be able to do so and apart from that, she uses the crops she has to empower herself because for her, if you can manage to develop yourself, it will be easy for you to develop your church (Tolotra, 2021).

For Baotodisoa Meline Robert Gabrielle, from the Regional Synod of Faradofay (SPFA), she has a talent in communicating with people and singing and she knows how to sew, she uses her talents in preaching (Baotodisoa, 2021).

For Vololona Andrianaivoniaina, from the Regional Synod of Fisakana (SPAFI), she has a talent in teaching adults and cooking and health care; she is also an animatrice (Vololona, 2021).

For Julia Elvine Manirisoa, from the Regional Synod of Menabe (SPM), she has a talent in using plants to cure disease and she transforms fruits into jams and as a theologian, she likes to share her talents through teaching other people her know-how (Julia, 2021).

For Rindra Finoana, from the Regional Synod of Avaratr'i Mania (SPAM), she has a talent in singing and she even able to compose theater; she is also an animatrice and very active in selling things (Rindra, 2021).

Women theologians have different talents, and they already use their talents, but they do not know how to improve their activities (handcrafts, broderie, intensive farms ...). They need supports in the development of their own business. So, women theologians ask for help or some "parteraires" to work with them within different projects in diakonia and preaching as well.

Another strength for women theologians is their intelligence. Most of the time, women are the best among the students at the seminary. Some of them are even the major in one promotion. Added to this, the existence of women theologians in the FLM shows that FLM really exists. If FLM still stands until now, there is a woman in there, said the General Secretary of the Dorcasse of the Reformed Church during her speech in the conference of women theologians. So, women are really very important in the life of the church in the FLM.

Like everything, there are some difficulties faced by women theologians as a mother, as a theologian in the household, in the church and in the society as well.

4.3.3 Weaknesses

4.3.3.1 Difficulties as a Mother

Women take only the responsibility in the household whereas some men do not care of it at all. This is due to the culture that considers women as the same as the children or that highlights the fact that men are higher than women. But Jesus has destroyed that way of thinking as we see in Gal 3:28. For God, women and men are on the same level. This bad consideration of women is maybe due to the lack of training of the couple in the church. Most of the time, women cannot manage the time because sometimes they spend their time in talking with their friends or neighbours instead of doing many important things. As a result, there is imbalance between being a mother and a theologian. Another big issue of women theologians as a mother is that they spend time in studying theology, but they do not find a work that fits in their long study. They lack moments to be with their husband and children and they even lack affection from women. Here, they cannot earn money to feed their family as a theologian. So they are like wasting their time studying but do not benefit from it.

4.3.3.2 Difficulties as a Theologian

The big issue faced by women theologians is the Malagasy culture. The Malagasy women are considered weak and not very important. Many regions still hold this view and even some people in the church are also influenced by this idea of less consideration of women. As a result, some churches do not give position or even values to women theologians. They cannot accept women theologians as leaders.

As everyone has weaknesses, one of the big problems as a theologian is some of women's bad characters. Sometimes women are not serious but change ideas many times, sometimes women find difficulties in taking decisions. Many women theologians have a complex of inferiority as well. They do not dare to take responsibility in public either at church or in the society. Some of them cannot risk their life in such occasions like preaching or having the floor in the celebration of the International day for women on 8th of March for example. Another problem of women is also their bad behaviour like their way of dressing that may lead to adultery.

We should not forget that one of the big issues of women being a theologian is the decision of the church itself. One of the reasons why such number of women theologians are jobless is the decision of the FLM that does not allow the ordination of women theologians from long time ago until now. Due to that position, there is no place for women theologians in the church. As the General Secretary of the FLM had explained the reason why FLM does not ordain women during the conference, he said that FLM spreads in the countryside and the countryside holds and respects the Malagasy culture. Since the organization of FLM depends on the decision of the majority, it is still difficult to make decisions about the ordination of women. But there is still a discussion on that Malagasy culture as a barrier of the ordination of women since there are police women, women doctors, women leaders in the society. In addition to that, there are women shepherds in the FLM who can put their hands on the head of an old man and pronounce peace and the forgiveness of sins to him which is the same or even higher than the male pastor does. There is still a long discussion about this ordination of women in the FLM until now.

Another problem worth considering is that even though these women theologians try to find something to do in the society if the church does not give them such responsibilities, many of them cannot since they are not qualified to the existent positions in the society.

4.4 Roles of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.4.1 In the Church

The major role of women theologians is to preach the gospel to the whole person and to all individuals. This is the vision of women theologians, but this is not successful in the FLM now because many of them still do not practice their tasks as a theologian. Even though these women do not have responsibilities in the FLM, some of them have different roles in the FLM. I will take for example the roles played by Ralivao Hélène who was a model and special among all women theologians in the FLM.

First of all, Ralivao Hélène was a well-educated woman, she was independent, her assets were her knowledge in Theology and her being as a pastor's wife. She had skills on entrepreneurship, communication, negotiation, leadership, management (Toromare, 2021). She had already been the coordinator of the Lutheran Communion in Central and East Africa (LUCCEA), a sub-regional expression of the Lutheran Church members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition (LUCCEA, 2014). Not only was she the president of the Women Lutheran Branch or "sampana Fikambanam-behivavy Loterana" (FBL) in the FLM but also the coordinator of the Lutheran center of the development of women or the "Ivon-toerana Loterana momba ny Fampandrosoana ny Vehivavy" (ILOFAV) in the FLM).

4.4.2 In the Household, Family and Society

I will still take the role of Ralivao Hélène in her household as an example here since she was still a woman of noble character. She had the role of a wife and a mother at the same time. She knew how to take care of her household. She was a good friend, and it was wonderful to work together with her. She was good in cooking, sewing, and selling things. She helped the orphans. She was a good leader and could influence people to follow Jesus. She was really a woman of noble character as the Scriptures say in Ruth 3:11, "And now, my daughter, do not be afraid; I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you

are a worthy woman” (Ruth 3:11 NRSV). Besides, she had charism and knew how to take decisions. She was famous in protecting women from the violence against them. As we see here, she had a lot of knowledge and different talents. Her roles of a theologian and a mother are so important that she is worth considering as a good model for all women theologians, not only in the FLM but also in the world. ‘

4.5 Roles of Women in the Early Church in Connection with the Roles of Women Theologians in the FLM

4.5.1 Similarities

4.5.1.1 Woman Theologians as a God-fearer and Benefactor

These prominent women theologians have a character of humbling themselves. They are able to preach the gospel, and we see in their behaviour and way of speaking that they are really a God-fearer like the four women in the early church I mentioned in the three first chapters. These women theologians are such a devout woman that they always do their best to pray and preach like the women in the early church. Women theologians also are like Phoebe who was a benefactor since they also like to help people in their life. She is considered as a sister in the household of God and she would be expected to use her resources to improve the lives of her brothers and sisters (Cohick, 2009, p.304).

4.5.1.2 Woman Theologians as a Pastor and a Prophetess

What makes them similar also is that the two prominent women Ralivao Héléne and Razivelo Mariette also were called to be a minister like these women in the early church, but nowadays we call them priest or pastor. Razivelo Mariette had a testimony of being called a pastor when she visited Mama Volahavana Germaine, one day. Mama Volahavana Germaine or Nenilava was a prophetess from the village called Ankaramalaza. She studied theology in heaven. She was dead for three days, and after that, she was alive again (Razivelo, 2021). Nowadays, though she is already dead, she is still famous because she was very special since as a woman prophetess she did not only study theology, but she was also even higher than a pastor. Toromare stressed that by saying that Nenilava has done a greater ministry than the pastor has done because she was able to create a new church (Toromare, 2021). When Razivelo came to visit her, even though Nenilava did not know her, since she was like a prophetess,

Nenilava welcomed her by calling her pastor. Nenilava said to her, “come, pastor”. And Razivelo was amazed at that time, but she recognized from then on that she was really called to be a pastor.

Women theologians also have the role of a minister or pastor or Shepherd like the women in the early church. It is the women who take an important role in the pastoral work. There is a Malagasy saying from many pastors that says, “What makes a pastor is-his wife”. That is to say, the pastor’s wife is a pastor before him. This saying is taken from the Malagasy movie entitled, *Mandresy Andriamanitra*, by the pastor Tahilo Gilbert, which says, “The pastor’s wife is the pastor of her husband who is a pastor”. If a pastor’s wife takes an important role in the pastoral work, we can imagine how important is the role of women theologians who had the same education as the pastor. It is the women theologians who really take the role of a shepherd because they are the ones who wear the alb which has the rope which is the symbol of the real shepherd like the king David. Even the Malagasy pastor did not have this robe called alb.

4.5.1.3 Women Theologians as a Teacher

Like Prisca as a teacher, many women theologians are teachers, too. The same as Prisca who taught Apollos, there are also women theologians who can even teach pastors like Razivelo Mariette who teaches many pastors at SALT. Almost the common role of women theologians in the FLM is to teach the Scriptures and some of them have talents to teach in State Schools.

4.5.2 Differences

4.5.2.1 Role as a Pastor

The tasks of women theologians in the FLM are limited not like those women in the early church since FLM does not allow these women to be ordained. They can preach the Word of God and Word about God but they cannot share the Sacraments. They cannot baptize people and they cannot share the body and blood of Christ either.

4.5.2.2 Role as both a Theologian and a Mother

In the early church, the church, though Paul gave the prominent women like Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia positions in his mission, they are also able to preach the gospel and can

manage to earn their living at the same time. For example, Phoebe's responsibilities to her family would include helping practically and financially as she is able (Cohick, 2009, p.304). For the women theologians in the FLM, only the prominent women theologians like Ralivao, Razivelo, Toromare are able to preach the gospel and earn their living but the others need money and salary as a mother to feed their household. This is still a challenge for all women theologians today because it is difficult to imitate what really these women have done. But women theologians in the FLM also have their talents to be used to fulfil their duty as a theologian and as a mother, too.

4.5.2.3 Role as a Businesswoman

Women theologians in the FLM have not thought to be a businesswoman because they think that it was not a good job. Only few of them accept to be called a business woman. This makes them shameful, and they do not even dare to do such kind of work. For me, it is a good idea to be a businesswoman like Phoebe, Lydia and Phoebe since this helps them a lot in their life and the life of the church they served. Apart from Ralivao Hélène who is described as a businesswoman, I am also convinced that women theologians in the FLM who have talents on it should be a businesswoman, too in order to have something to do in their life. It is the same as the entrepreneurship. Those who have this charisma and knowledge should practice it like Prisca.

4.6 Conclusion

The three women Ralivao Hélène, Razivelo Mariette and Toromare Mananato are the most prominent women in the FLM who have such important roles not only in their families but also in the church and even in the community of Malagasy people. Ralivao Hélène had different talents and know-how to be learned. These women like their role as a theologian and even though they are old enough and should stop working, they still spend their time in preaching.

There are still many women theologians who do not have positions in the church and in the society. Economically, they have problems because they do not have enough money to earn their living and still depend on their husband.

There are some roles that the women in the early church and the women theologians have in common such as to be able to preach and earn their living at the same time, but there are also some roles that make them different like the need of position and money for women theologians in the FLM today.

But despite the weaknesses and difficulties these women theologians face, many of them still hold their name as a theologian. Even though they do not receive advantages in their position, they are still proud of being a theologian.

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL CONCLUSION

The story of the four prominent women, Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia, featured in the New Testament is really worth considering today. They are such considerable women because they were involved in prominent positions in the mission of Paul. They were devout and resourceful women in the early churches that women theologians in the FLM should imitate to get rid of all kinds of dilemmas they face today – no ordination, no position in the church, sometimes, no consideration in the community. Since God calls these women theologians to preach the gospel, no one can prohibit them to do ministry. Even though they are not allowed to do some tasks as pastors in the FLM do, they can use their talents given from God to preach the gospel and to develop their own life and the life of the church. I chose to deal with the roles of these women in the early churches as a model to be followed because they are very active and famous not only in the church but also in the community they lived. Their influence and reputation became a good example for all women theologians in the FLM in order to succeed in preaching and developing the life of the human being holistically. As sources of power in the FLM, women theologians are factors of the development of the church. So they should be worth considering if FLM really would like to develop. As we see in Chapter Two, I have mentioned the roles of these women in the early churches so that we can see how important they were at that time.

Lydia is a businesswoman, a god-fearer and a Leader. She is described as a woman selling purple cloth. She has a heart that fears God. She shared the faith she found in Christ with her world. Even though she is a single woman, she managed to lead her family and took the responsibility to spread the gospel. She is even able to transform her family from a house church into a mission center. Her influence and reputation is an encouragement example of how our lives can be and we should take Lydia as an example today mostly for women theologians in the FLM.

Phoebe is also a businesswoman, a minister, a benefactor, and a sister. The church in Chencreae helped her in her business. Even though she is a woman, she can be a minister. This should be considered now for women theologians in the FLM. She is a benefactor of Paul and other friends. She is such a hospitable woman that she is able to host many people and Paul as well. As a sister, she managed to help many people as much as she could.

As for Prisca, even though she is always mentioned with her husband Aquila, she is privileged thanks to the roles they work together. They are co-workers with Paul and have the same occupation as Paul who is a tent-maker. They took other roles as entrepreneurs, and teachers. They even teach Apollos. Apart from her role as a mother she is also a missionary. She is active in preaching. This is a good model for the women theologians in the FLM because many of them find difficulties to preach and to take care of their household at the same time.

The last and most important woman is Junia, the first woman apostle in the early churches. To be an apostle is a tremendous role in preaching the gospel and generally, men are called to be an apostle. That is the reason why there are many discussions about Junia as an apostle, but she is really the first woman apostle. Today, FLM should be aware that there had been a woman apostle in the early churches, so they should also give value and position to the women theologians.

All these four outstanding women are Paul's friends and played an important role in the mission of Paul. Each of them has her own specificity, but they have taken some roles that make them similar such as their being as a God-fearer, a benefactor, a teacher, a minister, a leader, a businesswoman, a sister, and even an apostle. That is the reason why I chose them as a model of the women theologians in the FLM.

Even though these women have their reputation, there are also some views of negative sides on women. This negative view of women leads some scholars to interpret the Scriptures in different ways in the New Testament. In Chapter Three, I have explained four theological statements in Paul's letters that created discussion from long time until now about women. In these statements I made it clear that there is no reason for Paul to be against the role of women as a minister, teacher, prophetess or apostle. There is no reason for women to be silent in Churches. In contrast, Paul favors women to minister in the church whereas FLM still does not allow women theologians to minister in the church. This issue allows me to emphasize the talents of these women theologians in the FLM in order to solve the difficulties faced by them and in order to preach freely according to their calling from God.

Like the four talented women in the early churches, women theologians in the FLM are very active that they can take part in the development of the church. Most of them have knowledge in Language, Business Communication, Informatics, Leadership, Management; others are entrepreneur, Leader, Doctor. There are also some women theologians who have

a talent in farming, cooking, sewing, selling things, decoration, esthetics and many other things related to the activities of women but the problem is that many of them they do not know how to use these talents and some even do not discover what are the talents they have. So, they become jobless and due to the problem of not having position in the church, many of them are disappointed because they are like wasting time for studying theology. This is the reason of the conference with a workshop of all members of women theologians in the FLM on 2nd-5th of March 2021. Since I was involved in that meeting as a woman theologian, I provided some of the information discussed there as an evident source of some ideas I developed in Chapter Four.

Like the prominent women Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe and Junia, I have chosen some of the prominent women theologians in the FLM as an example to be followed. I have mentioned three of them, Ralivao Hélène (already passed away), Razivelo Mariette and Toromare Mananato.

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