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Much of Western society's values originate from the Judeo/Christian faith. For thousands of years, society has upheld outmoded, oppressive gender roles that are based on passages in the Bible. Two of the of the Bible that are most often used to justify the oppression of women are Genesis and I Corinthians. These two books contain the basis of four main ideas about women: the dominion of man over woman, the role of the male as breadwinner of the family, the value of women in relation to material wealth and value compared to others, and the importance of virginity. These four gender roles have permeated literature since their inception. If one looks closely during the period of the early 17th century to the early 21st century, one can see a definite evolution of these ideas. While society has advanced throughout the centuries, only when it eschews outmoded biblical notions can equality truly exist.

THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF GENDER ROLES IN MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY:
A MISINFORMED JUSTIFICATION FOR INEQUALITY

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PREFACE

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Each chapter constitutes a separate, yet interrelated, part of the discussion. In an effort to preserve continuity, each of the primary texts are organized chronologically in terms of the views of society they represent. The primary texts, in order of discussion are *The King James Bible*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*, and various late 20th to early 21st century peer reviewed articles.

Chapter One focuses the King James Bible, Chapter Two discusses and links The King James Bible and The Merchant of Venice. Chapter Three addresses discrepancies between the previous works discussed and The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate. Chapter Four discusses and links the previous works with The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate. Chapter Five looks at modern articles discussing the gender roles previously discussed in the thesis and delineates the current evolution.

The scope of this thesis runs from early 17th century to early 21st century and is limited in scope to the Judeo-Christian theology and select societies which hold said theology in high regard.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS

Gender roles have affected the power balance inherent in modern and ancient Western Judeo/Christian society. Often the oldest teachings of a society come from religious belief that informs acceptable gender roles and, by extent, the power hierarchy. The Holy text of the Judeo/Christian faith provides moral, ethical, and societal rules in order to create an ordered society. However, as society and human knowledge advance, the religious doctrine remains largely immutable. The malleability of Western society and human knowledge combined with the rigidity of religious doctrine creates cognitive dissonance. This dissonance creates a difficult situation in which one may try to live according to religious guidelines of morality, guidelines that are often at odds with modern societal values. Within Judeo/Christian guidelines, religious gender roles are also ubiquitous. Despite the immutable stance of the Judeo/Christian religions, the morals contained within their holy texts are adopted by Western society and the willingness of society to change invariably conflicts with the religions' refusal to accept change based on fallible human discoveries. A prime example of the conflict between the ability to accept change of society and the desire to maintain adherence to a perfect composition of morality and gender roles is the King James Bible of 1611. The King James Bible is particularly pertinent to this discussion because of its influence on Protestant English and colonial American society.

The Bible provides a plethora of laws and subtle undertones on hierarchical value based on gender. Due to this saturation of information, it is prudent to narrow the materials to fit the scope of this project. Among all books of the Bible, two provide numerous examples of subtle gender roles or laws pertaining to men and women: Genesis

and I Corinthians. Many of the teachings in the Bible are explicit, but others are implicit. In order for one to truly understand the gender roles perpetuated by the biblical stories, one must both look at the literal and metaphorical meanings associated with the stories. The gender roles prescribed by the above books are numerous but perhaps the most repeated and reinforced gender roles in Genesis are the dominion of man over woman, the role of the male as the breadwinner of the family, the value of women in relation to material wealth and value compared to others, and the importance of virginity. These four roles are perpetuated throughout the ages, particularly in patriarchal societies. While some explicit practices in the above have fallen to the wayside, the general ideas behind the gender roles have persisted and inform many opinions and practices that at least subliminally follow the outmoded practices of the biblical era.

The first and foremost idea that perpetuates the oppression of women through gender roles, particularly in patriarchal societies, is the idea that on a fundamental level, women are inferior to men. The most common justification of this belief occurs early in Genesis and is perpetuated throughout the rest of the book:

And God said, Let us make man in our Image, after our likenesse, and let them haue dominion ouer the fish of the sea, and ouer the foule of the aire, and ouer euery creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. So God created man in his owne Image in the Image of God created hee him; male and female created hee them (Gen. 26-27.1).

Upon first glance, the above verses are fairly innocuous. However, many people latch upon the word “man” and use it to justify the dominion of man over woman. Since the Bible specifically states that god created man in his own image, but not woman, man is

logically closer to God, who is perfect; therefore, man should have the power in society, while women are constrained to lesser roles. One issue that may arise with the above interpretation is verse twenty seven which immediately follows the verse used to justify women's lower status. Verse twenty seven relates that God created both man and woman. This verse appears at first to contradict the preceding verse as it is fairly vague as to the order of creation. However, the distinction that "in the Image of God created hee him" reinforces the previous verse; God created man and only man in his own image, even though he created woman as well.

To further reinforce the notion of the superiority of man, patriarchal proponents point to the detailed description of woman's creation:

And *the* LORD God caused a deepe sleepe to fall vpon Adam, and hee slept; and he tooke one of his ribs, and close vp the flesh in stead thereof. And the rib which the LORD God had taken from man, made hee a woman, & brought her vnto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man (Gen. 21-23.2).

While God did create woman, unlike man, God did not use dust, but part of man himself. This method of creation is often used to justify man's position of power and women's position of powerlessness. If God had truly intended for the sexes to be equal, then he logically would have created each sex in the same way. In fact, evidence exists in the Apocrypha of a woman who was created prior to Eve as a mate for Adam. Moses de Leon wrote of this mate in "The Book of Splendor" in the 13th century: "At the same time Jehovah created Adam, he created a woman, Lilith, who like Adam was taken from the

earth. She was given to Adam as his wife. But there was a dispute between them about a matter that when it came before the judges had to be discussed behind closed doors. She spoke the unspeakable name of Jehovah and vanished” (de Leon qtd. by Witcombe 1).

While much shorter than the events that surrounded Adam and Eve and Original Sin, and interesting parallel can be seen between this alternate creation story, one that was omitted from the King James Bible and relegated to the Apocrypha. Lilith is created in the same manner as Adam, and thus has more individuality and the ability to think for herself. Eve is not shown with this ability, but with a sort of naivety and innocence over which Adam could preside as the one with power in the relationship. Based on the summary of the Lilith story and its omission from the King James Bible, one can see the desire to show women of the Judeo-Christian faith how they should act. This sentiment is confirmed by Larry Peterson and Gregory Donnenwerth in their discussion of Berger’s plausibility structures: “Bergen argues that religious belief systems are socially constructed and must have a social base if they are to survive. At the level of an individual, this means that one’s continued acceptance of a belief system depends on participation in networks of individuals who share that belief system” (353). Essentially, values are reinforced through groups of people who share the same values. As such, one can look at biblically endorsed behaviors and assume that groups of people who adhere to said behaviors will reinforce the behaviors as necessary or natural. This is a probable cause for the exclusion of the Lilith story in the King James Bible. Whereas Eve presents a flawed, but submissive wife, Lilith presents a flawed wife whose individuality is equal to Adam’s. Had this story been included, it would have provided Judeo-Christian women an alternate role model who was truly equal to her husband. However, the story of Adam

and Eve was included and the fundamental difference was the method of creation. As woman was taken out of man, man existed first and was intended to be the perfect creation; woman was only created to be a helper to and appease man (Gen. 18.2.). The conception of all oppressive gender roles in modern society has its origin within these biblical references. Not only do these references provide the basis for modern gender roles, they also provide the basis and justification for many other gender roles espoused in the Bible. Perhaps the gender role that has dominated for the longest period of time and continues to dominate many societies today is the role of man versus woman in providing for the family.

The traditional role of men and women in the family unit has been largely standardized: the man works to provide money and food for the family, and the woman raises the children and takes care of domestic affairs. The origin of this division of labor comes, like many other gender roles, from biblical verse:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorowe and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children: and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and hee shall rule ouer thee. And vnto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened vnto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eate of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eate of it all the dayes of thy life (Gen. 16-17.3.).

As punishment for disobeying him, God fashions the division of power and labor more firmly. God sets man up to have dominion over woman to punish woman for tempting man to eat of the forbidden fruit. God punishes woman by taking away what little power

she had and directly stating that man is to rule over her. To man, the punishment is less severe: in order to provide for his family, he must farm and till the ground. However, the ground will not bear harvest easily. The man is punished with physical hardship while the woman is punished with the status of a possession of the man. Once more, the dominion of man set up early in Genesis is reinforced during the punishment for Original Sin and perpetuated throughout the remainder of Genesis. Each new gender role builds upon its predecessors: the belief that men are innately superior to women perpetuates the notion that men have unimpeachable authority over females, which in turn dictates that a value system should be put in place to judge a woman's value in relation to other material valuables. The framework of the family unit allows for this allocation. The woman is seen as a helper to man and, as such, has less intrinsic value than the man. Due to this, a woman's value must be measured separately than a man's. Instead of having value related to the divine, many passages in the Bible show women's value related to the mundane. The mundane value is often shown through arranged marriages and the amount of money that one could gain through marriage.

Ironically, many of the passages that show women's value also show the values of the family unit. In a conflated sense, a woman's only value is to remain a possession of the husband and see to the domestic duties with due obedience to the man. One of the first instances in which the value of women is shown occurs when Abram is traveling through Egypt with his wife, Sarah:

And it came to passe when he was come neere to enter Egypt, that he said vnto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou are a faire woman to looke vpon. Therefore it shall come to passe, when the Egyptians shall see

thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will saue thee aliue. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be wel with me, for thy sake; and my soule shall liue, because of thee (Gen. 11-13.12.).

Two values are given to women within the above passage. The first is beauty. Abram fears death at the hands of the Egyptians because of Sarah's beauty. He fears that because she is beautiful, the Egyptians will kill him in order to take Sarah as a concubine or wife. This is among the oldest evidence on the obsession of women's beauty. Modern society has unrealistic expectations of beauty for women; whereas, beauty for men is not nearly as important as the perceived ability to provide financially for the woman. Few roles are emphasized more so than the ability of the man to be a breadwinner for the family. Among the relatively few traits endorsed by the Bible as indicative of a good man is virility. The ability to impregnate a woman is seen to be essential to manhood. So much is this simple ability valued that God smites Onan for spilling his seed outside a woman's body (Gen. 9-10.38). However, women's actions are constrained within a slew of oppressive roles that stifle a woman's ability to grow.

The mention of beauty as indicative of a woman's value is sparse in the passage above, but it is an idea that is constantly perpetuated throughout the Bible. One such perpetuation is consistently seen through the dowry. One such instance in the Bible is Rebekah's marriage to Issac: "Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take *her*, and goe, and let her be thy masters sonnes wife, as the LORD hath spoken ... And the seruant brought fourth iewels of siluer, and iewels of gold, and raiment, and gaue *them* to Rebekah: he gaue also to her brother, and to her mother precious things" (Gen. 51,53.24). Rebekah is

not paid for her marriage in love, but in material wealth. So too are her brother and mother compensated for allowing her to marry. Marriage in this case, as well as many other biblical cases, is done not for love, but for material gain. Thus the woman is tantamount in value to silver, gold, and fine clothes. This apparent dehumanization of women by equating them with material wealth has helped to create and perpetuate stereotypes and oppressive gender roles throughout society's evolution. While man is valued by divine proximity, woman is valued by material gain. The effect of this system of values is stated by Kathryn Feltey and Margaret Poloma: "sex is more indicative of the level of religious intimacy, measured by perceived closeness to God" (181). In essence, because women descended from Eve and came from Adam's rib, women are more apt to be involved in religion because it helps them feel closer to God. This religious devotion is not expressed as strongly in males (Feltey and Poloma 181) likely because of the subliminal undertone that men are already in the ranks of the divine as man was created directly from the dirt by God. Many passages like the one above exist in the Bible and they serve only to justify women's status as property rather than people.

The second value espoused for women in chapter 12 of Genesis is their duty and demanded obedience to their husbands. Sarah is not given a voice, but is instead ordered to lie about her relation to Abram, not for her own sake, but for Abram's. Abram is imposing an order upon Sarah that it is her duty to save his life and because she saved his life, her own shall be saved. While at first glance this may seem logical, or indeed necessary, an issue arises with the subliminal reinforcement of the inherent value of men over women. Sarah is forced to save Abram's life by lying. In essence, his life is in her hands. Thus she has power over him. However, she must also obey her husband

according to the previously outlined gender roles; therefore what little power she gains is taken from her. Many of the previously outlined gender roles can be seen in the story of Lot.

The tale of Sodom and Gomorrah is one that is often cited for justification of numerous contentious issues. Within the story, Lot offers the people of Sodom an ultimatum, which provides intriguing insight into the value—or lack thereof—of women in the biblical era. During Lot's entertainment of two foreigners, a crowd gathers outside of his house and demands Lot turn over the strangers so that they may "know" them (Gen. 5.19). The controversy surrounding the verb "know" is well-established, but is mostly tangential to the argument proposed here—what is important is Lot's reaction to the demand of the group of people outside his door: "Behold now, I haue two daughters, which haue not knowen man; let mee, I pray you, bring them out vnto you, and doe ye to them as is good in your eyes: onely vnto these men do nothing: for therefore came they vnder the shadow of my rooffe" (Gen. 8.19). The value of Lot's daughters is clearly less than the value of his guests. This is likely due mainly to the sex of the guests. Both of the guests are male while Lot's daughters are not. Once again, the notion of male superiority is reinforced and the value of women is demurred. Lot is willing to offer his daughters to the crowd to avoid the crowd obtaining the guests. Thus the value of one's family is superseded by the value of one's guests, particularly if they are male. It is likely based on the fact that Lot's daughters "haue not knowen man" that the crowd would have raped them, yet Lot is still willing to trade his daughters' chastity for the protection of men who are not related to him at all. Once more, the women have no say in the decision, but are expected to abide by their father's wishes.

The above passage also contains a fairly common, but hitherto unaddressed grammatical idiosyncrasy: the pronoun “which” is used to refer to the daughters. This may seem pedantic, but the choice of which instead of who tells much about the value of women during the time period. Only the personal pronouns “who” or “whom” refer to people; “that” and “which” refer to inanimate objects. Therefore, the use of which shows the value of women in biblical terms. Women are not people; they are things, items through which one can obtain material wealth. While pertinent in modern Western society, this grammatical idiosyncrasy is of less import in the early seventeenth century. Objective pronouns were largely interchangeable with personal pronouns. As such, the implications in modern society do not necessarily translate in seventeenth century society. However, many people directly quote from the Bible to justify personal beliefs. This direct quotation does not take into account the context surrounding grammatical usage. Therefore, while it may be unintentional, within a modern context, those who directly quote biblical verses out of context are perpetuating the materialistic value hoisted upon women. Like many oppressive gender roles, this one is subliminal, but readily apparent. While women’s value biblically is tantamount to material wealth, what is valued in women is much the same in biblical stories as it is in current society. Quite a few facets of the actions or conditions that make women valuable have already been expressed. Obedient, domestic, and beautiful women are valued, but among all of the measures of a woman’s value, none are as omnipresent as virginity and fertility.

A small reference to the importance of virginity is present in the story of Lot’s guests and daughters. Lot makes sure to mention that his daughters whom he offers in place of the guest have not known men: they are virgins. Lot logically would not add this

information unless it somehow made the offer more valuable, thus one can gain an idea of the importance of virginity. However there are numerous other passages within Genesis that speak to the importance of virginity, and by extent the fertility of women as a valuable factor. Many times the importance of virginity is overlooked because the phrasings of the passages pass it off as an afterthought. However its importance is underscored by the fact that it is mentioned at all: "...Rebekah came out, ... with her pitcher on her shoulder. And the damsell was very faire to looke vpon, a virgine, neither had any man knowen her..." (Gen. 15-16.24.). This is the inception of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah. It is not only Rebekah's beauty that intrigues the servant to attempt to mate her with Isaac, but her virginity as well. Because it is mentioned that Rebekah is a virgin, this may have been apparent in some fashion to the servant. Even if the virginity was not obvious in some outward way, to mention that Rebekah was a virgin as well as beautiful is to equate the value beauty with the value of virginity. When taken together in context, the virginity of Rebekah and the virginity of Lot's daughters form a strong relationship between a woman's virginity and her value to biblical society. Commiserate to the importance of virginity is the ability of a woman to bear children, particularly male heirs.

The importance of fertility comes to light with the story of Jacob, Rachel and Leah. In order to marry Rachel, Jacob serves her father, Laban, for seven years but is given Leah instead because she is the oldest. Jacob then serves Laban for seven additional years to gain Rachel (Gen. 10-30.29). However, due to Jacob's reticence to marry Leah, God chooses to make Leah more attractive by way of fertility, thus perpetuating the notion that women are valued on a materialistic basis rather than a

divine: “And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, hee opened her wombe: but Rachel was barren” (Gen. 31.29). While the bulk of Jacob’s story focuses on Rachel’s beauty as the motivating factor for Jacob’s infatuation, the aspect of Leah’s fertility and Rachel’s infertility is used to balance or redirect Jacob’s love. One can see that fertility is near determinant of a woman’s value. Even though Rachel’s beauty is undeniable, her infertility lessens her value and raises Leah’s value. No amount of material wealth can make up for a woman’s inability to conceive children because fertility has a chance of producing a male heir whose value is measured by divinity rather than material wealth. The gender roles elucidated upon above form the basis of many other roles that are expected of both sexes in society. There are a few other roles that present problems when organized under the label of gender. These roles are biblically supported societal expectations rather than simple gender roles. Among these biblically imposed roles is a hierarchy of faith over human wisdom, rules for marriage, and women’s “rights” during mass.

Perhaps the most self-perpetuating instance of cyclical justification in the Bible is the idea that God knows more than man; therefore, any discrepancy between what God says and what man has discovered is determined in favor of God: “And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1Cor. 4-5.2.). While this is technically not a gender role, it establishes a justification method to perpetuate the biblical standard. Verses such as the one above allow for faith to be used as a justification tool for modes of thinking that are outdated and archaic. One simply has to argue that the Bible is God’s divinely inspired

word to justify anything that does not conform to modern standards. Or as Snow and Machalek note: “religious belief systems are often ‘self-validating’ ... Among the most self-validating beliefs are those that do not make precise claims about the empirical world and therefore are not falsifiable” (Snow and Machalek qtd. by Donnenwerth and Petersen 354). Many of the previously discussed gender roles fall under this “self-validating” category. None are able to be empirically disproved, only morally challenged. Through this system, the gender roles perpetuated by the Bible can be stoically upheld as true despite contemporary wisdom. This sort of cyclical argument impedes one’s ability to accept anything other than a literal reading of scripture.

Much like the overreaching assumption that women are intrinsically inferior to men which promotes oppressive gender roles, the above passage provides an avenue for justification of the public societal roles espoused by the Bible. Additionally, many of the societal roles have their origin within the previously discussed gender roles. Contrary to earlier passages where the superiority of man was maintained, a semblance of equality begins to erupt from the strict patriarchal heritage. However, the inability for women to choose for themselves is once again engendered throughout the discussion of appropriate behavior in marriage:

Neuerthelesse, *to auiod* fornication let euery man haue his owne wife, and let euery woman haue her owne husband. Let the husband render vnto the wife due beneuolence: and likewise also the wife vnto the husband. The wife hath not power of her owne body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his owne body, but the wife (1Cor. 2-4.7).

This passage is a prime example of the potential to misconstrue the intended message due to the archaic language. At first glance, the Apostle Paul seems to indicate that the husband has authority over his wife's body and the wife over the husband's body, thus creating a semblance of equality of power if only in the field of marriage. However his meaning is slightly different. As Marion Soards states in her explanation of the entirety of 1 Corinthians:

At issue are so called conjugal rights... Paul assumes that sexual relations are a standard, natural, even necessary part of marriage;... Some persons in the church in Corinth may contend that partners in marriage are above or freed from sexual relations... Paul is not concerned with ownership or property rights but with relationship and relatedness (138-139).

Rather than equate women with material wealth, Paul establishes a genuine equality: wives should have sexual relations with only their husbands and husbands should have sexual relations only with their wives. In previous instances, the woman had absolutely no say in their life; they were at the mercy of the whim of their male caretakers. However, through Soards' elucidation of Paul's writing, one can see that marriage is—biblically at least—a path to power. However, even as Paul adopts a modicum of equality between men and women, the fundamentals of the patriarchy persist and often undermine the message with oppression due to cyclical logic and justification.

One of the most revealing episodes of cyclical justification comes when Paul delineates the hierarchy of creation. Paul once again establishes the equality of man and woman, but his efforts are undermined by the persistent pathogen of oppressive gender roles. "Neither was the man created for the woman: but the woman for the man ...

Neuerthelesse, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man: euen so is the man also by the woman; but all things in God” (1Cor. 9;11-12.11). In the passage, Paul provides notions of the equality and interdependence of man and woman. However, he also maintains that neither man nor woman can “supersede their sexuality in this life and showy attempts to rise above the God-given conditions of creation...are inappropriate” (Soards 226). Paul’s intention is to maintain that both men and women are equal, but the misconstrued will of God complicates matters. While most gender roles have a basis in Scripture, it is human fallibility, not God’s words, that is often used to justify oppression. The Bible may well be the divinely inspired word of God, but his word was strained through an imperfect medium. This medium produced and perpetuated ideas and logic inconsistent with the intention of the stories of the Bible. Paul’s language and style present impediments to understanding partially because of the archaic nature of his semantics, but also because of the filter of translation. This filter is readily obvious when one reads perhaps the most famous lines of Paul’s letters.

Contrary to Paul’s previous passages, his advice to the Corinthians on women’s speech during mass is problematic not only in the sense that it flies against his prior instances of male and female equivalency, but in the numerous attempts to explain the passage in such a way that Paul does not sound like a misogynist: “Let your women keepe silence in the Churches, for it is not permitted vnto them to speake; but *they are commanded* to bee vnder obedience: as also saith the Law. And if they will learne any thing let them aske their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speake in the Church” (1Cor. 34-35.14). Many interpretations have been presented that attempt to stifle

the seemingly rampant sexism advocated by Paul in this passage; some maintain that Paul was referring to chatter during the service, others claim that the admonition refers only to wives, but as Soards states: “One finally cannot decide from the evidence available which of the several suggestions for interpretation is absolutely correct” (306-307). It is probable that Paul meant what he wrote. In short, women are not allowed to speak or proselytize in the Church. This may be related to the establishment of the Apostles as the heads of the Christian Church, taking up the mantle that Jesus left when he died. Or, as the annotation in the King James Bible suggests, Paul could be reinforcing the mastery of the man over the women as stated in Genesis 3:16 in this particular instance. If this is Paul’s intention, then an interesting comparison can be drawn between past society and current society in Paul’s time. Taken in context with many of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, women have gained a modicum of equality in matters such as marriage status and spousal loyalty that were originally denied them. However the equality ends with matters of faith; men are still superior to women in said aspect. While these lines from Paul show a malleability of the expected societal roles over time, they also reinforce the stereotypes and oppressive gender roles that originated the inequality. This line of thought supports the idea that faith should be mutable and change with societal and human knowledge rather than remain ensconced in the outmoded paragons of time.

Despite perceived biblical insistence on maintaining the status quo and adhering to gender roles that oppress women, society remains mutable. The mutability of society and incongruous immutability of biblically inspired gender roles creates a dissonance between society and religion in the case of the Bible. As society evolves, so too must religion; otherwise the power of religion is liable to be usurped by the evolution of

society. An interesting study by Donnenwerth and Petersen lends credence to the dissonance between society and religion. From 1972 to 1993, it was noted that a decline in belief that premarital sex was wrong was present. However, conservative Protestants maintained the belief in greater numbers than other Christians (Donnenwerth and Petersen 355). This shows the relative ability of a society to change compared to the relative inability of a religious group to change. The scope of this document precludes a detailed exploration of society's evolution contrasted with the apparent fixed beliefs engendered by the Bible. Instead, stories that, while fictional, are representative of the evolution of society and adherence to religious norms in Elizabethan England and turn of the twentieth century will be explored. Fiction almost always takes inspiration from society. Many authors throughout history have noted failings in society and written literature that addresses said faults. Among the most prolific of said authors was William Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote his plays not only to entertain the masses, but to provide social commentary. *The Merchant of Venice* is one his plays that is the most representative of the social condition of the time period. *Merchant* also incorporates religious dogma and stereotypes into the social commentary. The religious reasoning throughout the play lends itself to the current discussion. As *The Merchant of Venice* can be seen as representative of Elizabethan society, it provides a wealth of information about how the gender roles in biblical times evolved in seventeenth century England. *Merchant* also provides insight into which biblically dictated gender roles held prominence in Elizabethan society and which had fallen out of favor.

This exploration of the evolution of gender roles aids one in delineating modern causes of social injustice. "One who does not know history is doomed to repeat it" is a

common trope. The issue with much of the inequality that pervades modern, western society is inextricably tied to biblically prescribed norms of behavior. In order to combat inequality, the populace needs to be informed about the basis of the oppressive rules, and not simply blindly follow the status quo. By exploring the origins, early evolution, mid evolution, and current evolution of gender roles, one can understand how some beliefs came into existence.

CHAPTER 2: LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY EVOLUTION

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* provides insight not only into the societal gender roles of the late sixteenth century, but the evolution of gender roles from their origins in the Bible. It also provides an interesting contrast between the two major religions that look to parts of the Bible as their Holy Text: Christians and Jews.

Interestingly, much of the play centers around what one should look for in a woman and why Jews are very unlikely to have any traits that a woman should possess. While there is little direct mention or reference in the play to the progenitor of all biblically inspired gender roles, the function and value of women in society comes across strongly. The earliest reference to an earlier described societally prescribed gender role is woman's speech.

While Paul advocated for women's silence during mass, a slightly different prescription can be seen in Shakespeare's play: "... for silence is only commendable/ In neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible" (MV 1.1.111-12). Gratiano reinforces that silence in a woman who is unable to marry is commendable as is silence in an ox. By providing a parallelism between a woman and a beast of burden, one could maintain that both are of equal value. This one line provides subtle instances and proof of the evolution

of the idea that women have less intrinsic value than men to the societally imposed gender roles that reinforce said belief. Equating a woman who is unable to be married off to an ox shows that the true purpose of women in Shakespeare's time was to provide material wealth to their family through marriage. This is an idea also perpetuated by the Bible; a woman's value is material; whereas, a man's is divine. One could also make a connection between the specific type of female and the need for silence. The support for silence from a woman who is not able to be married but not from a married or marriageable woman may provide insight on the reading of Paul's dictum for women to be silent in church during Shakespeare's time. It is quite possible that only wives were allowed to talk in church and the single women were not. The above dissection of a seemingly innocuous line also provides credence to the idea that marriage was one of the few ways that women could gain a semblance of power. It is interesting to note that, according to Ania Loomba, the separation of gender roles from other matters is a distinctly modern idea: "discourses of gender, race, and nation were inextricably linked in the early modern mind: for instance 'racial difference was imagined in terms of an inversion of distortion of "normal" gender roles and sexual behavior'" (Loomba qtd. by Hirsch 122). This revelation is important because it shows an apparent lack of evolution of society. In the late sixteenth century, "gender, race, and nation" were inseparable. The Bible presents a similar idea by perpetuating notions that were indicative of everyone to whom they were attributed. Across borders of nation, males were still valued over females, and the dominant race was the one to which the believers belonged. This idiosyncrasy of the conflation of nation, race, and gender is readily apparent throughout

The Merchant of Venice: Just as Shylock distrusts Antonio and his cohorts mainly because they are Christians, Antonio distrusts Shylock mainly because he is a Jew.

In Shakespeare's time there was rampant anti-Semitism. *The Merchant of Venice* clearly shows this attitude; however, because the play's audience would be widely Christian, the hypocrisy of the portrayal of the Jews is glossed over and credibility is given to the stereotypes that Brett Hirsch maintains "should be interpreted 'as rooted far less in notion of inherited dispositions' and 'far more in the idea of the Moor and the Jew as infidels, unbelieved whose physical differences are signs (but not causes or effects) of their unbelief'" (Kwame qtd. by Hirsch 121-122). Ironically, both Shylock and Antonio adhere to stereotypes of each other:

I hate him for he is a Christian;
But more, for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him (MV 1.3.42-47).

Shylock admits to hating Antonio because Antonio is a Christian and he has lowered the rate of usury in Venice. Shakespeare's audience would have readily accepted Shylock as hating Christians just for being Christian, as would they have accepted that Shylock's primary motivating factor is acquiring wealth. However, the audience would likely have not made the subtle connection between Shylock's desire to acquire wealth and Christians' acquisition of wealth by strategically marrying off their daughters and sisters. The motivating factor of marrying a woman for both Judaism and Christianity was the

acquisition of wealth. It is therefore hypocritical to despise a Jew for desiring to obtain wealth when the acquisition of wealth is a universal desire among both Jews and Christians. The ubiquitous nature of this desire can be traced, once again to biblical precedence that created the connection between women and material wealth. While each religious belief shares a common core, the conflation of gender, race, and nation provides an avenue for hatred. Despite the hypocrisy of defaming Shylock while pursuing wealth themselves, the most intriguing development of gender roles comes from the subplot of Portia's marriage difficulties. Rather than adhere to asinine gender roles gleaned from selective reading of biblical passages, Portia's father creates an interesting challenge for Portia's suitors. Rather than perpetuate a vicious cycle of materialization of women, Portia's father endorses only men who believe in the divine worth of women rather than the worldly, materialistic worth.

Despite the focus on women's roles that the Bible provides, it occasionally relates how a man should act as well. Men's perception of women is the focus of Portia's subplot, and it entails more than just the proper actions a man should follow; it also gives insight to the mindset that a man should have when courting a woman. Portia's late father's cryptic riddle upon who could marry his daughter is used not only to show the value of cleverness in a man, but the necessity of the man to make sure that the woman whom the father is marrying off is well cared for. Early in Act II, Portia explains her predicament in finding a husband:

In terms of choice I am not soly led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes;
Besides, the lott'ry of my destiny

Bars me the right of voluntary choosing.
But if my father had not scanted me,
And hedg'd me by his wit to yield myself
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself renowned Prince, then stood as fair
As any comer I have look'd on yet
For my affection ...
You must take your chance,
And either not attempt to choose at all,
Or swear before you choose if you choose wrong
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage; therefore be advis'd (MV 2.1.13-22; 38-42).

Portia is not allowed to freely choose her own husband due to her late father's edict. To be worthy of Portia a man must correctly choose in a lottery or never seek to marry again. At first glance this dictum appears harsh and unnecessary; however, it would be seen as fine parenting and a model for other fathers to follow in Shakespeare's time for as Portia states earlier in the play: "I may neither choose who I would nor/ refuse who I dislike; so is the will of the living daughter/ curb'd by the will of the dead father. Is it not hard,/ Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?" (MV 1.2. 23-26). Elizabethan society would not have only accepted Portia's father's edict, but thought it representative of a good man to continue to provide for his daughter after his death because "Portia is her father's property: even from the grave he has a legal and moral right to decide the inmost concerns of her life" (Oldrieve 88). The edict relies on the progenitor of all gender roles

in the Bible. Women's value is material rather than divine; therefore, they are unable to make choices themselves and must rely on someone closer to the divine to make the correct choices. The societal perception of a woman's inability to choose for herself is seemingly endorsed by Portia's father; however, like many progenitors of change, Portia's father used an aspect of the oppressive system to fight the other aspects of the oppressive system. Or, as Karen Newman elucidates: "Portia's father's will, through the mottoes, criticizes rather than endorses commercial values" (19). This criticism is mostly subliminal; while Elizabethan society would praise Portia's father for providing for his daughter, the subtle undertone of critique would be apt to go unnoticed.

Despite the fallacious notion upon which this precept of society was based, the intention behind Portia's father's edict is not malicious, but rather loving. The inscriptions on and in the boxes that each suitor is presented with reveal the intention of Portia's father was to ensure her marriage to a man who was worthy of her:

This is the first, of gold, who this inscription bears,

"Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire"

The second, silver, which this promise carries,

"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves";

This third, dull lead, with warning as blunt

"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath." (MV 2.7.4-9).

The language the Prince of Morocco uses to describe the boxes and their inscriptions steadily declines throughout the speech. Thus one can see the values of each of the metals present. However, the value is only outward, and therein lies the wit of Portia's father. Logically, one who gives credence to only to outward appearance is base and therefore

unfit for his daughter. To Portia's father, it is someone's true nature, his character, that counts, not the riches or status he may provide. This revelation causes significant cognitive dissonance when one takes into account the origin of the father deciding who his daughter can marry. Portia's father surreptitiously used an ancient ideal to overcome its own failings and perpetuate an atypical ideal for the time period: women should marry not to increase their family's material wealth, but for love or, at least, mutual regard. As society advanced since the inception of the scriptures, people's attitudes toward a few gender roles had obviously changed. Rather than continue to see his daughter as a bargaining chip to increase his familial wealth, Portia's father chose to make sure that she was wed to someone who did not see her value as material, but divine. This action is evidence of Newman's assertion: "the 'traffic in women' is neither a universal law on which culture depends ... [but] a strategy for insuring hierarchical gender relations" (23). Portia's father largely eschews this tradition by insisting his daughter marry for something more than financial gain. In essence, he is undermining the gender system as a commercial transaction (Newman 23). While the inscriptions on the outside of each box are clever, one cannot see their true genius without knowledge of their contents.

The quality of one's character is more important than one's outward appearance. Similarly, the contents of each of the chests Portia's suitors have to choose from are more important than their outward appearance. The note within the gold box clearly espouses the relatively new idea that a woman's worth is not tied to her appearance or propensity to make her family more materially wealth, but her character:

"All that glistens is not gold,
Often have you heard that told;

Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold.
Gilded [tombs] do worms infold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgement old,
Your answer had not been in scroll'd
Fare you well, your suit is cold" (MV 2.7.65-73).

The golden casket makes clear to the suitor and to the audience that material wealth should not be one's goal in life. Just as Shylock is stereotyped and degraded as a money-grabbing Jew, Portia's father looks down upon those obsessed with material wealth and the acquisition thereof. The note speaks of a truth that oftentimes a pleasant outward experience belies corruption within. Just as the golden box hides something dark and unwanted, so do many people who are deemed beautiful by society hide a dark, malicious character. Appropriately, the suitor who chose the golden box is sent away with nothing. Many men desire nothing material, which, according to Elizabethan society, women were. The importance of the immaterial over the material is a hierarchy hitherto hidden when one looks at the biblical origins of the gender roles. Just as the golden casket's contents called for one to look past experiences, the silver casket's contents deride the chooser as a fool:

What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot,
Presenting me a schedule...
"The fire seven times tried this
Seven times tried that judgment is,

That never did choose amiss.
Some there be that shadows kiss,
Such have but a shadow's bliss
There be fools alive, iwis,
Sliver'd o'er, and so was this.
Take what wife you will to bed,
I will ever be your head.
So be gone, you are sped" (MV 2.8.54-55;62-72).

The degradation of the suitor's choice is much more strongly iterated by the note of the silver box. Inside is not just a portrait of a fool, but a note. In one sense, the Prince of Arragon came closer to the correct choice than did the Prince of Morocco, but he is still labeled a fool. As a reward for getting closer, the suitor is given a portrait, but of a fool instead of Portia. Just as fools hide their character through lavish raiment and outward appearance, so too does the silver box hide the malicious message within. Once again the biblical emphasis on material gain without notice of character deficiencies is overthrown and another suitor who desires wealth is turned away with nothing more than a blow to his pride. However loudly the gold and silver caskets spoke to the mistakes of men, the leaden cask that Bassiano chooses, loudly proclaims the efficacy of marrying not for material wealth, but for love.

Portia's father made sure that Portia would be betrothed to a man who desired her not for material, but divine gain. The biblical standard that assumes women are less valuable than men is usurped as, in order to gain Portia, one must give of himself completely: "Therefore shall a man leaue his father and mother, and shall cleaue vnto his

wife, and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2.24). It is prudent to note that the gender role of women as inferior to men is overruled by the consummation of marriage; one sex cannot be inferior to the other if they are of one flesh. By framing Portia’s betrothal within this context, Shakespeare surreptitiously supported the evolution of the perceived value of women as divine rather than material by equating woman’s value and man’s value as interdependent through marriage rather than separate. Thus is Bassiano rewarded in choosing the leaden casket:

“You that chose not by the view,
Chance as fair, and choose as true:
Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content, and seek no new.
If you be well pleas’d with this,
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is,
And claim her with a loving kiss” (MV 3.2.131-138).

This is the only message within the three boxes that mentions love and is mute about the covering. The messages within each box speak to items that those who would choose them can understand. The man who chooses the gold box values material gain so the message speaks to the immateriality of wealth. The man who chooses the silver pretends to be wise, but is nothing but a thinly gilded fool, as such the message speaks to the pretentiousness of fools. However the leaden box speaks of love, a concept that only he who would choose the leaden box could understand. Because one’s actions can predict one’s character Portia’s father chose to give his daughter to one who could truly

appreciate the value of her character rather than the value of her inheritance or dowry. As evidenced by Portia's father's edict and the inscriptions and contents of each box: "Far from simply exemplifying the Elizabethan sex/gender system of exchange, the *Merchant* short-circuits the exchange, mocking its authorized social structure and hierarchical gender relations" (Newman 28). Even though Shakespeare set up his play to show then-modern evolution of biblical gender roles, said roles are still entrenched in and adherent to their progenitors. Regardless of the fact that a man and a woman make one flesh and thus there is ideally no power struggle between the two, it is apparent that the idea that women are intrinsically of lower value than men still carries weight in the society.

Despite his devotion to Portia, Bassiano still maintains the status quo when he believes his wife is not looking. In fact, Bassiano expresses his opinion that no matter his matrimonial status, Antonio's life and plight is more valuable than his wife's life and plight:

Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is dear to me as life itself,
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
Here to this devil to deliver you (MV 4.1.282-87).

Regardless of the novel ideas on woman's value that Portia's father espouses and Bassiano's success in proving he is worthy of Portia, the concept of the material value of a woman and the divine value of a man is so strongly engrained in the populous through years of instruction in biblical matters that Bassiano, despite having previously proven

his more modern ideals, returns to the outmoded and base central gender role of the Bible. Portia, while in disguise, speaks to this conflict between the engrained value of women and the value that Bassiano has proven previously that he can see: “Your wife would give you little thanks for that/ If she were here by to hear you make the offer” (MV 4.1.288-89). While it is clear that Bassiano cares for Portia, he is willing to sacrifice himself and all that is his to help Antonio. His inclusion of Portia within the list of his possessions reveals that despite his ability to see past the societal impression of women’s materialistic value and focus on the divine value of women, he still adheres to the conceptions of gender roles that the Bible endorses in public. In the private life, he can show his true nature as one who is willing to usurp the traditional social values, but because the punishment for one who eschews the teachings of the Church is treatment similar to Shylock’s, or perhaps even death for heresy, Bassiano chooses to conform to protect what he values. Bassiano’s malleability in his private life can also be attributed to his desire to remain true to Portia in order to save his public reputation. As Susan Oldrieve notes: “Her [Portia’s] husband must depend upon her chastity to maintain his reputation, his line of descent, and his control over his estate after his death. Only as long as her children are his children will Bassiano’s public influence endure” (100). In order for Bassiano to maintain his reputation, he must please his wife. In this way, Portia actually gains power that the patriarchy constantly strove to deny her. Just as Portia’s father was a visionary who worked against the system within the system, so too is Portia able to gain power that she was not intended to have. One could also make an argument that his reaction is out of concern for his friend and that he spoke before he thought; however, it is more likely that Bassiano is cognizant of society’s values and while he is

perfectly willing to eschew them in private with his wife, in order to survive in the time period, he must conform, lest he and his wife be ostracized. To publically value love over material wealth would likely be stigmatized as feminine in Shakespeare's time or at least be seen as a distortion of the normal gender roles in Elizabethan England. It is this overreaching nature of gender roles that allows them to become oppressive. When what is considered "normal" constrains one unnecessarily, the norm becomes oppressive and divine naturalness is conflated with a fallible human notion of naturalness. The fragility of the foundation of gender roles that Elizabethan society stood was full of cracks; the same flawed patriarchal cracks are also present in the late 1800s and modern day. Gender roles are created by humans, and, as such, they are not above impeachment. However, despite the (slow) evolution of society, the biblical ideals that formed the basis of most gender roles resist change due to belief in the divine, infallible word of God. Attempts to affect change, however, are not easily ignored. In just 300 years after the production of *The Merchant of Venice* more subtle changes occurred: some gender roles that were in prominence in the 1500s became less enforced while others that were eschewed in Elizabethan England found prominence at the turn of the 20th century.

CHAPTER 3: BRIDGING THE GULF

While the Bible and *The Merchant of Venice* are representative of the society of their respective time periods, a similar correlation is not as apparent with *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. There are many discrepancies between the two texts previously covered and *Calpurnia Tate*. Among these incongruities are the time period, the nationality and gender of the authors, the genres of the literature, and the intended audience.

While both the Bible and *Merchant* are representative of their respective time periods' beliefs on gender roles, the same cannot be said of *Calpurnia Tate*. *Calpurnia Tate* was written in the 21st Century and presents the author's perception of what society valued and what life was like for women in the later 1800s. This gulf is problematic when addressing the issue of gender roles and their effects on society of the turn of the 21st century. Despite the apparent disconnect between the sources, the premise of religious influence on gender roles is not flawed. As Gregory Levine states: "Religion is deeply personalized yet inter-subjective inspection of ultimately intimate and important questions and it is an institutionalized force which both legitimizes and challenges social relations in society" (431). In short, no matter the society or time period, religion plays an integral role in determining a society's values. Therefore, while Kelly's story is fictionalized, many aspects pertaining to the current discussion are not. As Levin states, "religion reflects social morality and reaffirms society" (432). Religion is ubiquitous in society; both are interrelated. The perception of a twenty first century author may be far removed from her historical context of late 1800s society, but the premise behind her society, including its fictional aspects, remains valid.

Kelly admits to fictionalizing certain elements of her story, but she does not mention the society she creates in her list of fictionalized elements: "I have, for the sake of fiction, taken some small liberties with Texas history ... [and] the blooming season of certain plants and the taxonomy of the *Vicia* genus" (339). Her liberties with Texas histories do not extend to the society of Texas, but rather to the introduction of the telephone. The spread of the access to the telephone throughout Texas mainly occurred during the late 1880s rather than 1899 (Kleiner and Whitten 1-2). It is therefore

acceptable to proceed to evaluate *Calpurnia Tate* as at least as representative of late 1800s gender roles as *Merchant* is of the gender roles of Elizabethan England.

Despite the veracity of Kelly's society, there is a discrepancy between her writing style and Shakespeare's. This discrepancy's fulcrum is an amalgamation of both the society that the authors lived in and the genre of the literature itself. *The Merchant of Venice* was a play intended for an adult Elizabethan audience that spoke to social more in a humorous way. Kelly's *Calpurnia Tate* is a work of historical fiction that is geared to 21st century young adult readers. As such, each of the works has different aspects that are emphasized.

While Shakespeare largely focused on societal "correctness," which informs the importance of gender roles, Kelly's focus is on the invalidity of the gender roles in late 1800s America. Shakespeare advocates the material value of women and how a functioning society needs women to play a certain part: bargaining chip. While he subtly undermines the solely material value of women and puts focus on their divine value through Portia's father's edict, Shakespeare still shows the effect of a breakdown in societal function when Jessica disobeys Shylock. Kelly's focus achieves much the same, but is slightly different in its construction.

Rather than focus on how society in the late 1800s needs to continue to operate as it always has, Kelly subtly shows through the relationship between Callie and her grandfather that society's oppression of women limits the extent to which society could develop. Were Callie to blindly follow society's "choice" of roles she could fill, society would lose an inquisitive mind that has the potential to bear copious amounts of fruit for society. Both authors subtly worked against an oppressive system, but since Kelly is

largely removed from the system she is portraying, she had the ability to be more blatant about the oppressive gender roles society advocated. Kelly is able to create Calpurnia who mulls over decisions forced upon her. While Shakespeare created similar situations through soliloquies, he still walked a fine line between advocating social change with his characters and angering the aristocracy who practiced the beliefs being challenged. Shakespeare was at the mercy of the public and crown's opinion, but Kelly could write exactly what and how she wanted in order to reveal the oppression that Calpurnia faced. Just as the presence in or removal from the society in question affects how an author chooses to write, so too does the audience for whom he or she writes.

Shakespeare's intended audience consisted of adults of every spectrum of socio-economic status. Therefore, his play had to include lessons that pertained to not only the poor people, but the wealthy as well. Much of the lessons Shakespeare put forth in *The Merchant of Venice* revolve around the "correct" actions of a certain individual commiserate to the place on the social ladder. Women were expected to be obedient to their father's and husband's wishes, and the men were expected to take care of the women in their charge. This hierarchical set up reinforces how an ordered society is supposed to work and what happens to an individual if s/he are unable to play his/her part effectively. Shakespeare wrote in an attempt to maintain the status quo while subtly offering insights to outmoded roles that were not necessarily conducive to an ordered society. Kelly's audience required a different touch.

Rather than advocate "correct" behavior fitting one's station like Shakespeare does, Kelly advocates finding one's own path and following it regardless of the oppressive societal expectations. *Calpurnia Tate* is a call to eschew oppressive,

nonsensical gender roles and make an impact on society, a notion that is widely accepted by 21st century youth. Kelly, writing to an audience who are not as constrained as Shakespeare's, is able to take more liberties with what she advocates. Both Shakespeare and Kelly advocated similar ideas and held the assumption that women are not as helpless as many oppressive gender roles dictate they are, but while Shakespeare had to present these thoughts subtly to avoid persecution himself, Kelly is relatively free of harsh, negative repercussions.

While there is a gulf separating the previous two primary sources discussed and the upcoming discussion, none of the discrepancies impede justification of Jacqueline Kelly's *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* being used as representative of many of the oppressive gender roles that were ubiquitous in the late 1800s. The length of time separating *Merchant* from *Calpurnia Tate* is not indicative of a lack of literature pertaining to the subject discussed, but rather an indication of applicability to the scope of this particular project.

The engaged reader may ask why one would choose such disparate sources for inclusion in this project. On the surface, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* are certainly far-removed from each other in time, place, audience, and face-value veracity to this discussion. However, *Calpurnia Tate* provides a bridge in time between Elizabethan England and modern day society. As the story is set at the turn of the 20th century, an appreciable amount of time has passed, allowing for the evolution of the gender roles in question. It is this facet that largely dictated the choice to include *Calpurnia Tate*; Kelly provides commentary on gender roles of the early 20th century, a time frame that provides a relative middle ground between Shakespeare's society and

current society. However, upon further analysis, not only does *Calpurnia Tate* provide a middle ground in history, it uses a similar narrative device to *Merchant*: the medium by which oppressive gender roles are fought against.

Just as the main focus of the discussion of *Merchant* was the relationship between Portia's wishes and her father's edicts, which subliminally undermined the then-current gender roles by working within them, so too does *Calpurnia Tate* provide a similar mechanism for resistance. The main focus of the discussion on *Calpurnia Tate* focuses on the relationship between Calpurnia and her grandfather. Just as Portia's father used his status to provide Portia a good husband who was largely unfettered by misogynistic notions, Calpurnia's grandfather uses his station as the patriarch of the Tate family to teach Calpurnia about science and physics, subjects that were deemed inappropriate for young girls during that time period. This similar plot device provides commentary on the oppressive gender roles of the turn of the twentieth century in the same fashion that Portia's father's edicts provides commentary of the oppressive gender roles of Elizabethan England. This commentary, combined with the notion that while Kelly's narrative was removed in time from the society in question, is still a valid representation, provides logical justification of *Calpurnia Tate* as the midpoint discussion of this project. This project was conceived with a historical timeframe of early seventeenth to the twenty-first century. As such, the discussions of the evolution of gender roles would logically follow a beginning, middle, and end scheme. *The Merchant of Venice* provides the beginning, *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* provides the middle time, 300 years later and peer reviewed articles from late twentieth to early twenty-first century forms the end of the schema. While the Bible's inception falls outside this time frame, The King James

Bible was first introduced in 1611. Therefore its tenants reflect not only the biblical era gender roles, but early seventeenth century justification for oppressive gender roles. The origins of Biblically inspired gender roles evolved steadily from the early 1600s to the turn of the twenty-first century. *Calpurnia Tate* examines the common gender roles of the latter time period, providing a commentary on how far society had progressed and how far it still needed to go.

CHAPTER 4: TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY EVOLUTION

Similar to *The Merchant of Venice* providing insight into the gender roles that were prevalent in the late 1500s, Jacqueline Kelly's *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* provides documentation of the perceived status of gender roles at the turn of the 20th century by a 21st century author despite the book's fictional narrative. Interestingly, while the eras portrayed in each work are three centuries removed, the gender roles evinced by each are astonishingly similar, if differently organized. Rather than an overreaching emphasis on the value of women as in Shakespeare's play, *Calpurnia Tate* focuses mainly on the difference between what defines proper work and actions for a man and a woman. Once again, much of what society considers appropriate is biblically based, but the oppression has turned from a dialogue of a woman's inherently diminished value to a notion that on the surface seems to empower women instead pigeonholes them into "woman's work". This closed arena appears to provide the woman power over the domestic realm, but by constraining women to domestic affairs, women's skills and intellect becomes stifled to a point where the inequality becomes accepted as part of a status quo that is not only natural, but completely acceptable.

Similar to Portia's father in *The Merchant of Venice*, Calpurnia's grandfather serves as the catalyst by which a traditional gender role is usurped and shown to be utterly ridiculous. The instances indicating prevalent gender roles are plentiful throughout the book; however, they are subtle. The main focus of *Calpurnia Tate* is the relationship between Calpurnia and her grandfather, a relationship that dismisses the ideals of the era and accepts and celebrates a woman's ability to transcend societally and biblically imposed limitations. Despite the jaded empowerment of women, focus on a gilded outside is just as prevalent in 1899 culture as it was in the late 1500s: "The heat was a misery for us all in Fentress, but it was the women who suffered the most in their corsets and petticoats (I was still a few years too young for this uniquely feminine form of torture)" (Kelly 1-2). Despite the oppressive heat, women were still expected to wear customary clothing that produced an ideal feminine look. Men, however, were mostly unregulated in what they could wear at home. Rather than an emphasis on comfort for women, the emphasis is upon what is considered proper. This insistence on propriety is perpetuated multiple times throughout *Calpurnia Tate*, however, while the women are constrained to domestic duties and playing the obedient housewife as dictated biblically, men had a range of acceptable activities.

A small part of the range of activities available for men to pursue is shown through Calpurnia's mother and father's disparate ideal routes through life for the oldest male child in the Tate family:

Mother didn't want to hear it. She wanted seventeen-year-old Harry, her oldest, to become a gentleman. She had plans to send him off to the university in Austin fifty miles away when he turned eighteen. According

to the newspaper, there were five hundred students at the university, seventeen of them well-chaperoned young ladies in the school of Liberal Arts (with a choice of music, English, or Latin). Father's plan was different; he wanted Harry to be a businessman and one day take over the cotton gin and the pecan orchards and join the Freemasons as he had (Kerry 6).

While Harry had a plethora of available options open to him, especially in the university, women are shown to have limited freedom, even at the university. While Harry's choices of classes are unlimited, women can only take classes in the Liberal Arts because it would not be proper otherwise. Also, because women are intrinsically weaker than men, they cannot resist temptation as well as men can. Therefore, the women in the university are chaperoned lest they be tempted down an inappropriate path that does not conform to the biblically inspired status quo. Harry is also able to take over the family business and follow in his father's footsteps. The authority of the father passes to the son for no other reasons than blood relation and gender. The discrimination of women from the sciences likely pertains to the perception of decreased mental acuity of women, and Kelly examines this discrimination throughout her book. Just as Portia's father was progressive in the values he deemed worthy of his daughter, Calpurnia's grandfather fosters the natural inquisitiveness and breaks down the patriarchal barrier blocking Calpurnia from scientific inquiry.

Turn of the twentieth century society adhered to the ideal of eliminating women from scientific inquiry largely because of the effects of the core gender role and the cyclical justification found in the Bible. As they were created from man by God and not

from dust by God, women were considered to be the weaker sex. This weakness was not limited to physical exertions, but mental acuity as well. This belief is likely the reason that the Lilith story was omitted from the King James Bible. Rather than show a woman who had the equal stature as a man due to the exact same method of creation, the Eve story shows a woman who is weaker than the man due to the method of creation. Because some knowledge, like scientific knowledge, may appear to explain what can only be explained by the God according to the Bible, women may be more susceptible to trickery. The machinations and advancement of humans would easily corrupt a woman into the trap of believing what man has discovered rather than what God knows. Therefore, according to the biblically inspired gender roles, a woman must always have a man with her to keep her on God's path and answer any questions that she has. This reductionist stereotype of women informed the education they were able to obtain. Due to male superiority based on the method of creation, only men could logically understand facts of the world revealed by science.

Indoctrination and stifling of inquisitive creativity is more effective when done early in life. This biblically informed indoctrination is apparent in Calpurnia's discussion of her studies with her grandfather. The discussion also shows the similarity of Calpurnia's grandfather to Portia's father:

“What are you studying in school? You do go to school don't you?”

“Of course I do. We're studying Reading, Spelling, Arithmetic, and Penmanship. Oh, and Deportment. I got an 'acceptable' for Posture but an 'unsatisfactory' for Use of a Hankie and Thimble. Mother was kind of unhappy about that.”

“Good God,” he said. “It’s worse than I thought” (Kelly 29).

While many of the subjects that Calpurnia relates are standard subjects for an eleven year old, the one that will likely seem the most inane to the modern reader is Department. It is not just the fact that the subject of how to act properly was taught in school that is outmoded in current society, it is the emphasis that is placed on the subject. Department is the only subject in which the audience is given insight into how Calpurnia is performing and others’ reactions to her performance. The fact that Calpurnia’s mother was unhappy about Calpurnia receiving an unsatisfactory in the proper usage of a hankie and a thimble is at least laughable and at most pathetic to a twenty-first century audience. The above passage provides evidence for the oppression and stifling of women’s abilities at the turn of the century. Rather than teach women about something that may provoke questions pertaining to or on the veracity of the Bible, society instead attempts to only allow men to pursue such subjects because of a male’s increased ability to follow God’s path due to his stronger affinity to the divine. The grandfather’s reaction is intriguing. Through his reaction one can see that he does not adhere to society’s biblically inspired mandate against allowing women to pursue the sciences. His query as to whether Calpurnia is taught science or physics and his sarcastic assumption that an institution so inept would probably still teach that the earth is flat are also hallmarks of his belief in the sciences and how important they are (Kelly 29). Just as Portia’s father set out to assure that his daughter was betrothed to a man she deserved who would love her character rather than her body or wealth, Calpurnia’s grandfather takes it upon himself to teach Calpurnia about science and physics, subjects that a biased society would have robbed her of otherwise. However, despite her grandfather’s assistance in overcoming the

situation of her sex and the gender roles contained therein, it is apparent that society does not change easily, especially when erroneous notions are so often repeated that they become customary and their veracity unimpeachable.

While still apparent for many public events in modern society, at the turn of the twentieth century, appearance dictated most everything in relation to public opinion. The story of Calpurnia's piano recital and the preparation that led up to it are relevant to the discussion particularly of beauty and proper behavior. Clothes for public were made for the beauty and not the comfort: "For the great occasion, Mother made me a new white broderie-anglaise dress with many layers of stiff, scratchy petticoats. This... definitely ranked as a form of torture" (Kelly 65). Rather than focus on the character of the woman like Portia's father desired, society at the turn of the twentieth century focused on how women looked. Calpurnia was clearly uncomfortable and throughout the book it is clear that she would never wear something like the dress through her own volition. The obsession with appearance hearkens back to women's value based on beauty; a woman who is not beautiful would likely not be able to be wed and, therefore, would not be able to provide material wealth for her family. The hours spent on Calpurnia's hair are indicative of this obsession with beauty (Kelly 65). In an effort to prevent tarnishing the family honor and societal status, Calpurnia is transformed through clothes into the semblance of a perfect lady, a semblance that belies her true, independent, and inquisitive nature. However, looks are not enough to satisfy the society of the late 1800s; one must play the part: Deportment was just as important as looks.

Miss Brown's—Calpurnia's piano instructor—admonition of "Chins *up*. Chests *out*" (Kelly 70) is but the beginning of a play to satisfy society's need to see young

women adhering to inane gender roles that have served as oppressors for hundreds of years. Miss Brown's speech before the recital is indicative of just how easily the oppression of women is justified in society: "She gave a small speech about this splendid occasion, about Culture making inroads in Caldwell County, oh yes, and how young minds and fingers benefitted from exposure to the Great Composers, and how she hoped the parents there would appreciate her hard work in molding their children to value the Finer Things in Life..." (Kelly 71). Miss Brown had done what society demanded of her; she had taught children about music and the value of "the Finer Things in Life." In short, she perpetuated the idea that women could only handle such things as art and music because of the inadequacy of their physical and mental constitution as a result of their separation from divine creation. Very few people in today's society would claim that music is a waste of time; however, Miss Brown has fallen into a hypocritical role enforced by society. While the Fine Arts are important, the sciences are equally important. A society that denies some of its members access to certain parts of its knowledge based solely on sex or gender roles prescribed by its dominant religious belief is corrupting itself by limiting the scope of education unnaturally. To selectively preclude certain groups of people from opportunities afforded to others is to indoctrinate society at large to accept oppression. Fortunately, Calpurnia is somewhat shielded from this indoctrination by her grandfather.

Not only does Calpurnia's study of science under her grandfather provide opportunities that would be otherwise denied to her, her studies also provide arguments against the biblically inspired oppressive gender roles of her time: "Granddaddy had told me about the wasp that could opt to be male or female while in a larval stage. An

interesting thought. I wondered why human children weren't given that option in their grub stage, say up through age five. With everything I had seen about the lives of boys and girls, I would definitely choose to be a boy grub" (Kelly 115). Within one lesson, Calpurnia had come to the realization that society and perhaps the authors of the Bible did not want women to understand: expectations of men and women are completely different and skewed to favor males. Granted, proponents of the Bible could rely on the concept of the divinely inspired word of God or cyclical justification that the knowledge of God is superior to the knowledge of man. Therefore, even if the discrimination against women does not make sense to a person, on some level it makes sense to God and since God's word is infallible, then humanity simply is unable to understand the divine truth that God can. While Calpurnia's desire to be a male due to their mass freedom in society in relation to females may seem a deathblow to the biblically engendered oppressive gender roles, it is easily explained away for someone who has the escape of God's word and knowledge overrides all objections. Harry, for instance, had the option of going to college, creating his own business, taking over the family business, or marrying into money while Calpurnia only had the option of marrying and becoming a housewife. However "natural" the gender roles of the Bible appear to be, much of nature itself—a creation that preceded man in the Bible—follows a much different route.

As Calpurnia continues with her scientific instruction, more inconsistencies emerge about the way women are viewed and treated in her society. Additionally, these revelations are much harder to explain away using cyclical justification or the infallible word of God.

“It’s funny,” I said, “that girls have to be pretty. It’s the boys that have to be pretty in Nature. Look at the cardinal. Look at the peacock. Why is it so different with us?”

“Because in nature it is generally the female who chooses,” he said, “so the male must clothe himself in his finest feathers to attract her attention. Whereas your brother gets to choose from the young ladies, so they have to do their best to catch his eye” (Kelly 295).

The instance above provides an interesting parallel between man and nature. Nature was created directly by God just like man was; it was not removed from the divine like the creation of woman was. However, in nature, the females have the freedom of choice rather than the males. On a general scale, many of the gender roles that humans use are reversed in nature. The females often hold the power, and the male is just alive to procreate. If man and nature both came from God, how can the actions of one be so different than the other? The obvious answer to one who adheres to biblical practices is the concept of free will. However, if God created nature and gave woman the power and humanity completely turns the roles around giving males the power over females, is not that a corruption of the all-important plan God has for everyone? To oppress women by adhering to outmoded gender roles by insisting that God desires a certain situation is asinine. Society however, has been slow to change because of the entrenched options for justification of biblical gender roles. There have been pockets of people throughout the evolution of society that have endorsed increasing egalitarian gender roles that eschew the basis of biblically supported oppression in the form of the inherent weakness of the female sex. Some of these pockets were based in the same Protestant beliefs that

informed the misogyny of the dominant religious orders. Quakerism is a prime example. While based on the same belief system as Protestantism, many prominent Quakers were abolitionists and early feminists. Society has evolved significantly since the inception of the Bible. However since many in power desire to conserve their power, society has a long way to go in terms of equality. Many women are subconsciously fighting against the oppressive power system arrayed against the others are overtly opposing the oppression of women. Regardless of the method of opposition, long held notions of patriarchal power are presently being undermined to make way for notions of equal status among men and women. Compared to the evolution of society in the late 1500s and 1800s, the evolution in twenty-first century society has advanced to a point where many roles that seemed interminable have been completely disregarded, except by those who still believe the erroneous notions of misogynists of centuries past.

CHAPTER 5: EVOLUTION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The four main gender roles discussed in the above pages have evolved throughout the centuries. At times, the focus on women's beauty and their inherent materialistic value has dominated. Other times a woman's virginity has been the dominant discourse. However, despite any waning or waxing of the oppressive gender roles perpetuated by the Bible, the belief that man is superior to woman because of the method and order of creation has served as at least an undertone and at most a driving, motivating factor in the treatment and perception of women in Western society. Because the lesser value of a woman informs the other roles, it is difficult to create an egalitarian society without first overthrowing the misconception of men's greater value. Through the examples of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*, one could see that the outer

growth of that previously prevalent ideal were slowly being chipped away as society evolved and left the immutable dictates of the Bible to wither away. However, the core of oppression remained wholly untouched as the erroneous belief that a woman was worth less than a man flourished. Only recently has this core of misogyny been slowly dying. Much of the outmoded gender roles have undergone a transformation if not been completely usurped by the passage of time and the evolution of society.

Despite the influence of religious texts such as the Bible, society at large determines what is considered a “correct” or “incorrect” gender practice. The main difference between the late 1500s and 1800s and twenty first century society is the emphasis on the Bible as the model for how society should develop. Strict biblical influence over society has waned throughout the centuries. Due to this decreased influence on what is acceptable in society, the prevalence of biblically imposed gender roles has decreased. Instead of the never changing perception of gender, modern society has proven that “gender is dynamic and ... what is considered appropriate gendered behavior changes over time” (Thorne qtd. by Deutsch 107). This general statement was likely true in the late 1500s and 1800s as well, but the seemingly ubiquitous focus on the Bible during the literature of the corresponding time periods impedes the process for sweeping change. The Bible has been and remains today a static work that does not evolve its precepts. Much of what was once deemed acceptable according to the Bible has been eschewed; however, the oppressive gender roles have not so much died out in some instances as have been replaced by tangentially related gender roles. It is unlikely that gender roles will ever be wholly extinct because they perpetuate inequality, which is an innate, if malicious desire for many people: “particular differences may vary from

culture to culture or within a society over time, ... the omnipresence of gender as a created system of difference will always bolster a system of inequality” (Fenstermaker, West, and Zimmerman qtd. by Duetsch 109). This system of inequality persists today, and while the gender roles explained throughout this discussion may have fallen in importance, they still exist in some fashion in modern society.

The biblical import given to a woman’s appearance was originally used to determine her worthiness to enter into marriage. The biblical use is not an overtly prevalent in the twenty-first century as it was in the past, but a different notion has taken its place, a notion that like its predecessor is mired in a “system of difference.” Francine Deutsch relates a study that elucidates on the modern facet of this biblically inspired gender role: sports.

The women had to manage building up their bodies to ensure the strength needed for soccer while at the same time avoiding the development of too much muscle. Subtle and not so subtle messages from coaches, parents, teammates, and men communicated that they should look feminine. Male soccer players, in contrast, could work out with impunity because soccer training only enhances their masculinity (111).

Rather than focusing on beauty as a means for marriage, society now focuses on the concept of femininity and masculinity. Each sex is allowed to play soccer, but women are advised to limit the amount of workouts they can do because society values women who look “feminine”—women who are petite with a small amount of muscle mass. This emphasis on conformity to the appropriate rules of society occurs early in life. In fact, “gender schema theories suggest that children’s attention and behaviors are guided by an

internal motivation to conform to gender based, sociocultural standards and stereotypes” (Carter and Levy 444). Society determines appropriateness and enforces those opinions on children at a young age. This indoctrination can be seen clearly in *Calpurnia Tate*: Calpurnia is opening presents for Christmas and, in the process of opening one, comes across the word *science* in the title, she immediately relishes the fact that her parents have finally understood that she longs for scientific knowledge rather than preening to become a housewife. However, when she unveils the entire title—*The Science of Housewifery*—she is summarily disappointed (Kelly 304). Her parents are deadest on their mission to indoctrinate Calpurnia so that she will grow up to be a proper lady as determined by society which was based on outmoded gender roles portrayed in the Bible. This process has not changed for hundreds of years; only the emphasis on what is considered appropriate has changed. Because this indoctrination occurs early in life, a child’s ability to attribute certain stereotypical tasks to either male or female genders is astonishingly accurate (Carter and Levy 447-448). This segregation of certain tasks to certain genders as such an early age is likely a cause of the current difference in personality pertaining to defensive actions against oppression.

Female resistance to male oppression is not a new concept, though it has gained traction since the 1960s. Much of the time, female resistance comes in the form of accessing power wherever women can and using that power to hold over the societally-empowered males. However, psychoanalytic theory posits certain personality quirks that may serve not only to undermine women’s resistance, but perpetuate the core stereotype that women are weaker than men. A study by David Levit tests Sigmund Freud’s posit that “women find it more difficult than men to express aggression outwardly and

therefore are more likely to turn aggression on the self” (992) This is largely seen to be a sex role rather than a gender role. While a gender role is socially constructed, a sex role is an innate feature of a person’s biology. Therefore, since women are more passive than men, the men are able to dominate, which in turn, gives rise to oppressive gender roles that preclude a woman overcoming both the “weakness” of her sex and her gender. The results of Levit’s study supported the psychoanalytic theories that women use internalizing defenses in greater amounts and men use externalizing defenses in greater amounts (996). This may be a reason why the patriarchy has survived as an oppressive regime on gender roles for as long as it has; when one is more apt to turn the focus of one’s ire on oneself rather than the source of the oppression, change is slow-coming. However, many women are affecting change in the biblically-supported oppressive patriarchy. Portia, her father and Calpurnia and her grandfather are literary examples of people who have fought against the gender roles prescribed by the Bible. Portia is able to act the submissive wife and daughter that she was expected to be because of her father’s insurance that the man she married would value her in reference to the divine rather than the material. Similarly, Calpurnia is able to learn about subjects deemed inappropriate because of her grandfather. Because of his position as the patriarch of the Tate family, no one in the family is willing to question his decisions. Calpurnia’s mother is unable to because of the sex and age difference and Calpurnia’s father is unable to because of the fifth commandment—Honor thy father and mother.

Perhaps the biblical stereotype that has undergone the most change and yet ironically remained the most steadfast is the idea of women as the homemaker and men as the breadwinner. Research suggests that women will have greater agency in the area of

the breadwinner, but men will not take greater agency in the role of homemaker, thus the gender role will evolve in the future, but it will not completely throw off its origins (Rudman and Phelan 192). This is a prime example of the evolution of biblically purported gender roles. There is less resistance to women supporting a family monetarily, but still an emphasis on the nurturing aspect of women as indicative of the idea that they should be responsible for domestic duties as well. Like many other stereotypical gender roles, this one is created by society and indoctrinated into people throughout their lives: “priming women with stereotypic television ads exacerbated their implicit female stereotypes... on a lexical decision task, which accounted for their reduced enthusiasm for a leadership role” (Davies, Spenser, and Steele qtd. by Rudman and Phelan 193). Society looked to the Bible to justify and reinforce its gender roles in the past. Now, while the Bible has informed many of the gender roles currently in use today, different methods such as propaganda and infant indoctrination are used to reinforce the unnatural as natural.

The more one is immersed in stereotypical gender roles, the more ingrained the correctness of the roles becomes. However, while there appears to be a positive correlation between indoctrination of women in stereotypical gender roles and women’s acceptance of said roles, observation of certain women who operated outside “normal” gender roles appeared to reinforce within the women in Phelan and Rudman’s study that they were unsuited for such positions (198). This self-deprecation may be indicative of women’s tendency to blame themselves for their own failings rather than aspire to overcome their failures and occupy a similar position. Instead, some women seek to excel in a position that they already occupy to gain acceptance. This desire to remain in one’s

comfort zone may help to explain why many women embrace the source of the oppressive gender roles rampant throughout the history of society. Once again, Feltey and Poloma's views on plausibility structures led credence to women embracing their own oppression to gain a modicum of power. Since religious devotion is seen as a measure of closeness to God (181), many women will embrace religion in order to gain stature and power in at least one element of their lives.

The Bible forms the basis of many of the current gender roles in today's Western society. While these have changed over time, at the core, they remain the same. It is therefore not surprising that according to two surveys, the American Election Survey of 2004 and the Baylor Religion Survey of 2005, "somewhere between 20 and 37 percent of adults in the United States say that the Bible should be taken literally, word for word" (Hoffman and Bartkowski 1246). This statistic also provides insight on the longevity of biblical gender roles. When almost a third of a population uses a group of writings thousands of years old to strictly determine their beliefs, society as a whole stagnates. A prime example of this stagnation can be seen in Calpurnia's grandfather's reactions to Calpurnia's education. The grandfather is disgusted by his ignorance as to why Calpurnia has to come to him in order to satiate her need for science: "Please forgive my ignorance, Calpurnia. You have made me well enough acquainted with the primitive state of your public education..." (Kelly 257). Obviously, by the use of the word "primitive", Calpurnia's grandfather harbors nothing but disdain for the choices of the public school system. This is one of the dangers of direct adherence to biblical precepts: those who can help society advance are often misunderstood or ostracized because they failed to adhere to the expected norms. In fact, the biggest problem with adhering literally to the Bible as

the standard for what society should aspire to be is that the notions of gender roles are “supported” and “justified” by selecting small passages and proclaiming that “they reflect the will of an infallible, omniscient and omnipotent God” (Hoffman and Bartkowski 1248). One cannot truly understand the meaning of a piece of writing if one insists on using only parts of the whole to represent the whole. If the Bible is indeed the infallible word of God, picking certain passages in a piecemeal fashion to address societal concerns is just as bad as ignoring the document completely. One cannot truly understand another’s message without context, thus eliminating context from the biblical stories and quoting piecemeal is an improper use of the Bible. However, this strategy is used by some women in order to gain respect and the power that comes from respect in a system that would otherwise deny them that possibility. Hoffman and Bartkowski call this action a “*compensatory effect*” because it anticipates that conservative Protestant women will compensate for their lack of access to institutional resources in the form of congregational and denominational authority by bolstering their commitment to the key schema of their faith: biblical literalism” (1251). When one is denied power or opportunity, one will logically seek to obtain that which he or she lack. This action, then, is understandable. Women seek to be recognized within a community that will not recognize them because of the strictures to which they adhere. Therefore the women chose the pinnacle of devotion in said group and cleave to it wholeheartedly in order to gain the recognition of their community. It would seem that this strategy of using the oppressive system to gain freedom from oppression is not constrained simply to gender roles.

In the survey conducted by Hoffman and Bartkowski, one data set is particularly intriguing: 66.3% of Black Protestants named themselves adherents to biblical literalism (1256). Those who are in a minority position to begin with appear to be more apt to work within the system to overcome oppression. The majority of Black Protestants attesting to biblical literalism is intriguing because it not only shows an attempt to gain power within a religious community, but within society as well. If a black member of a church can ascend to the same level of apparent devoutness that a white member possesses, they have not only transcended a boundary of gender, but a boundary of race as well.

Calpurnia Tate also speaks to this idiosyncrasy. When Calpurnia's mother makes her New Year's resolution to make sure that her children attend mass at least twice a week (Kelly 331), it can be argued that she is trying to provide all of her children with a chance to ascend the social ladder. As society placed significant import on religious devotion at the time, the mother's resolution can be seen on one hand not to be malicious, but nurturing. It is clear that her devotion to religious doctrine aided her in gaining power so she wants that availability for her own children, particularly Calpurnia. As Hoffman and Bartkowski state: "In faith traditions that are patriarchally structured, this ideological stance [biblical literalism] serves as a cultural compensator for women, who otherwise are relatively deprived of leadership and authoritative roles in their religious communities" (1259). Similar to Hoffman and Bartkowski's study on biblical literalism and its effect on the transcendence of power gaps within church, hierarchy and a method by which women can obtain power through a system that would otherwise deny them power, Susanne Scholz provides an interesting insight on reasons why, at the core, little has changed in terms of gender roles in today's society.

Just as religion dominates society in general, religious beliefs often influence politics and as politics are a determinant of a society's customs and laws, it is prudent to understand the interrelation between the "Christian Right" and the difficulty of eschewing oppressive gender roles in today's society. The foremost obstacle to egalitarian gender roles comes, once again from the insistence of the infallibility of the Bible: "the Bible supersedes contemporary convictions and customs, because, as Jack Cottrel claims, the Bible is 'the inspired and inerrant Word of God and... the final authority on all matters'" (Scholz 87). This allergy to change as though change is a virulent form of Satanism provides the driving force of inequality in modern society. The Bible is believed by many to be the divinely inspired word of God. Because God is omniscient, his decrees do not decay in validity with time. Suggesting that some of God's laws are outdated is likely to sound blasphemous to those who advocate or believe in biblical literalism. Many conservative Christians wholeheartedly believe every precept of the Bible and when confronted with accusations of inherent inequality between men and women, they once again use the cyclical justification the Bible provides to shore up their flaccid arguments: "women and men are created equally before God but with different social and ecclesiastical roles" (Scholz 88). This idea of "equal but different" is not so different from the "separate but equal" justification of colored and white schools during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. As it was then, the ruling in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* of separate is inherently unequal applies to the discussion of gender roles. If one is only allowed to do certain things according to God, then that person is not equal before God. Therefore, conservative Christians are not fighting for equality as engendered by the Bible, but inequality as engendered by the Bible. Almost

every justification of those who rely on the Bible to support their espousal of biblically mandated gender roles reads as a patriarchal misogynistic decree: “Before the Fall, there was ‘sinless man, full of love, in his tender, strong leadership in relation to woman; and sinless woman, full of love, in her joyful, responsive support for man’s leadership” (Strauch qtd. by Scholz 88). How can both be equal if one is created to lead and the other to follow? In fact, all the justifications of conservative Christians do is “affirm the patriarchal status quo” in an effort to maintain their power thinly veiled as devotion to a religion that was not created by God, but by man. Once more, *Calpurnia Tate* provides evidence of the justifications in question. Much of Calpurnia’s grandfather’s consternation with her education is the exclusion of the sciences from her studies. The likely justification for exclusion is impropriety. However, what is appropriate is once again based on the Bible. Therefore, the lack of education on sciences only serves to artificially widen the gulf separating the sexes, a widening created by man, not God.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Many of the gender roles that are commonplace in today’s society have their origins in the Bible. While the Bible provides immutable basis of many gender roles, society continually evolves and has, many times, clashed with biblical standards on appropriate behavior for men and women. Gender roles are dynamic and change as society does, however, those who strictly adhere to biblical mandates and have influence in society often stagnate the evolution of gender roles in order to perpetuate the biblical norm. *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* evince the gender roles of the late 1500s and 1800s respectively. Each of the above stories shows a contrast between a society caught in the grip of ancient stereotypes and a few individuals who

seek to modernize the ideas about gender roles in the contemporary era. As the two books above provide a glimpse into the evolution of gender roles in their respective eras, scholarly literature serves a similar function in today's society. While modern society has eschewed some biblical ideas, there is still a sect of society enthralled to the past. A sect that seeks to reinstate biblical standards in an attempt to recapture some of what was lost in the Fall—paradise and God's favor. The Bible and those who adhere to its precepts literally have stifled the growth of culture and equality for thousands of years. If anything, the Bible is a creation myth, a story told to explain where a certain group of people came from. The overall message is being distorted and tarnished by those claiming to adhere to it the most strictly. If equality is to exist between men and women in the future, society needs to eschew religion, particularly radical religion, as a model of how society should function. Religion is seen by many to instill values within its adherents that are essential to a functioning society. However, religion is not the only thing that can instill values. Religion does not have an unimpeachable grip on morality. Empathy is perhaps even stronger than religious influence. If one cannot see an ethical right and an ethical wrong, then perhaps they lack empathy and not religion.

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