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Genesis 29:25 is one of the Bible's more startling verses: “When morning came, there was Leah!” (NIV). Have you ever wondered how Jacob could not know—for the better part of a day and all of a night—that he had married Leah instead of Rachel? Surely several factors were at work, and just as surely one factor was Leah's veiling. This unusual event prompts my thinking: Much like the literal veiling of Leah caused her to be obscured and overlooked, the figurative veiling of many other biblical women sometimes hides them from our view.

In some cases, a Bible woman is overlooked simply because she is a minor character (such as Zilpah in Genesis 29-46 and Rhoda in Acts 12). In other cases, a woman who is indeed a major character is veiled by minimizing her role in the text. Examples include viewing Deborah as weak without Barak or Priscilla as legitimized by Aquila.

As I ponder examples of the virtual veiling of Bible women, I recall the overlooked slave girl who gives wise counsel to the wife of Naaman regarding his “leprosy,” resulting in a healing encounter with the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:2–4). I think also of Acts 16. Here Lydia plays a prominent role and is therefore well known. In contrast, however, the women with Lydia (v. 13), Timothy’s mother (v. 1), and the slave woman of Philippi (vv. 16–19), all found elsewhere in Acts 16, are often overlooked.

This veiling is sometimes done by the author. For example, Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 4 mention Simon Peter's mother-in-law, but we learn neither her name nor the name of her daughter (Simon’s wife). Other times, such veiling is the fault of translators. The case of Junia, called an apostle in Romans 16:7, is familiar to most readers of Priscilla Papers and is a prime example. In various other texts, it may be preachers, teachers, or commentators who veil biblical women.

Many millions of Christians are only vaguely aware of the numerous women who occupy the pages of their Bibles. We must reverse this reality. We can all contribute to discovering and making known the women of the Bible story. Those of us who preach or teach, those of us who write, whether for publication, for a blog, or even on social media—we have an enhanced responsibility to unveil biblical women.

This issue of Priscilla Papers is intended to promote such unveiling. Thus David Malick has written about Simon Peter’s above-mentioned mother-in-law. Nicholas Quient has investigated Apphia, who is addressed alongside Philemon and Archippus in Paul’s brief yet liberating letter. Amy Smith Carman demonstrates that the continuation of God’s OT promises and plan includes Mary as a key character. Though Mary is not a minor NT character, she has nevertheless remained veiled in certain ways throughout the history of the Church. Moyra Dale addresses the important question of whether the presence of women in Luke-Acts is liberating (because of the large number of women) or restraining (because of the roles they fill).

(continued on facing page)
In addition to these four articles, three important books are reviewed and recommended to our readers—Katherine Bain’s *Women’s Socioeconomic Status and Religious Leadership in Asia Minor: In the First Two Centuries C.E.*; Cynthia Long Westfall’s *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, and *Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity*, by Stewart Hoover and Curtis Coats.

Of course, not every book is well suited for every reader. When reviewing a book, it is common to make brief mention of whom it is best suited for—scholars, students, pastors, etc. Over the years, CBE has reviewed and/or recommended a large number of resources through its various venues. On rare occasions, it is helpful to note that a particular book rises to the top. This is the case with Westfall’s *Paul and Gender*. Though the book presents in-depth scholarship, it is clearly written, well organized, and thus accessible to all readers of *Priscilla Papers*. I would like to add my high praise for this book to that given in the review, written by Nicholas Quient, which appears later in this issue. More important than my opinion, however, is the remarkable list of commendations on the back cover—by Michael Bird, Lynn Cohick, Craig Blomberg, Stanley Porter, and Craig Keener.

I am confident that Westfall’s *Paul and Gender* will long be recognized as one of the most important egalitarian resources of the present decade. Its appearance reminds us how long it has been since other publications of similar significance—thirty years since Alvera Mickelsen’s *Women, Authority, and the Bible* (1986), twenty-five years since Keener’s *Paul, Women, and Wives* (1992), and over twelve years since Ron Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis’s *Discovering Biblical Equality* (2005). Even Phil Payne’s *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (2009) is nearly a decade old.

Westfall’s book holds great promise as a resource for evangelical egalitarians who seek to unveil biblical women and biblical teaching about gender. Even more importantly, its combination of careful argumentation and gracious tone has the power to influence a significant number of complementarians. I believe it should be on the shelf of every English-speaking egalitarian. Please note that the book is currently available through CBE’s bookstore, online at cbebookstore.org.

May the several writings in this issue of *Priscilla Papers* help to unveil women who have been important in the unfolding of God’s plan.

... greet you in the Lord.

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Simon’s Mother-in-Law as a Minor Character in the Gospel of Mark: A Narrative Analysis

David E. Malick

Legend has it that Ernest Hemingway, known for his concise language, once won a wager that he could tell a story in just six words. He then wrote on a napkin: “For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn.” Whenever I share this story, invariably the audience fills in the gaps by positing a backstory which includes the baby’s death. One thing is clear—the story did not start at the beginning; it was told out of chronological order.

Narratives do not simply record what happened; they are selective arrangements of material. For instance, the call of Simon is presented differently in the Gospel of Mark than it is in the Gospel of Luke. In Mark the call is concise and precedes the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:16–18, cf. 1:29–31), while in Luke the call is more developed and follows the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law (cf. Luke 5:1–11 with 4:38–39). As Abraham Kuruvilla is fond of saying, an interpreter must ask: “What is the author doing with what he is saying?”

Narratives often have two aspects, or a two-storied architecture. Following French structuralists, Seymour Chatman categorizes the two tiers as “story” and “discourse.” “Story” consists of the what of the narrative, including events, plot, and existents (character and setting); “discourse” is the way of the narrative, or the “means through which the story is transmitted.” Russian formalists have a similar, dualist model distinguishing fabula (story/tale, the sequence of events referred to in a narrative in their causal, chronological order) from sjužet (discourse, the sequence of events in the order in which they appear in the narrative).

Within these categories, the analysis of character is often discussed under the category of “story.” However, because characterization looks at how characters are developed in a narrative, it seems more appropriate to identify characterization with “discourse” than with “story.” While character may be described, in the abstract, as a compilation of motifs, or a cluster of traits of someone in the narrative, and in that sense fall under the umbrella of “story,” characterization is built from how the account is told—the author’s presentation as found in the discourse of the work.

One means of developing character within the discourse is through comparisons and contrasts, providing the reader opportunities to fill in gaps by implication. This means of characterization causes traits to stand out: “Even if a characterization is implicit in the words or deeds of a character, it stands out more clearly if it is contrasted with its opposite, e.g. Nabal and Abigail, Esau and Jacob.” Often it is through comparison that the reader discovers the contrast. Furthermore, it is through comparison that a character is often developed throughout a narrative. Accordingly, characters are not so much individuals as “interindividuals” in that they are seen, compared, and contrasted, in relationship to others.

Various women are among the minor characters in the Gospel of Mark. This study will examine an especially minor character in Mark who is not named, not given significant space in the narrative, and rarely discussed in scholarship—Simon’s mother-in-law. When her narrative is read within the narrative structure and logic of Mark’s Gospel (the story’s discourse), it makes significant contributions to the message of Mark, and more broadly, to Mark’s biblical theology of discipleship.

The Healing of Simon’s Mother-in-Law (Mark 1:29–31)

Performance criticism (analysis based on an oral-aural presentation of the text) focuses on the progressive nature of the narrative as presented from beginning to end for the first-time reader or hearer, rather than on the final form of the narrative which is only discerned upon second, third, and other subsequent readings. The argument is that texts were originally heard in their progressive development and not with an understanding of the whole. Certainly, a first reading, or hearing, differs from a subsequent reading or hearing; however, it does not seem necessary to limit the interpretation of a text to only one approach. Those who originally presented the Gospel may have memorized it, or at least read it multiple times before performing it aloud. Therefore, the presenters had a sense of the whole, and their presentations may have emphasized significant themes for the first-time listener. Furthermore, a text may have been read aloud more than once to an audience. Accordingly, a strict dichotomy between first and subsequent readings may be overemphasis. Mark’s account of the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law occurs early in the narrative; therefore, we will examine it from both the perspective of a first-time reading and then from the perspective of a subsequent reading.

A First Reading of the Narrative

The Gospel of Mark opens with a prologue that foreshadows many themes developed in the book, including geographical themes (wilderness, Galilee, Jerusalem, the way); the centrality of Jesus through the multiple witnesses of Isaiah, John the Baptist, the Father, and the Spirit; the identity of Jesus as the Son of God; and a story that is characterized by an authoritative revelation of Jesus in the midst of an ambiguous human response. While it is true that many of these themes are only fully discerned upon a subsequent reading/hearing of the gospel, they still express themselves in the first exposure to the text. As the account continues, the listener will be able to identify the echoes of earlier voices.

The wilderness focus of the prologue (cf. “wilderness” [erémos] in 1:3, 4, 12) transitions to Jesus’ activity in Galilee. Each time Jesus calls disciples, he is reported to be near the Sea of Galilee. Four disciples are explicitly named in 1:16–20 (Simon, Andrew, James, and John). They will reappear by name in our brief narrative. Jesus then begins to demonstrate who he is through a sequence of cures, the last of which involves a conflict (1:21–2:12). These cures have an alternating pattern between the spiritual and the physical:

A (spiritual): casting out a demon (1:21–28)

B (physical): healing Simon’s mother-in-law (1:29–31)

B’/A´ (physical/spiritual): healing many with diseases & casting out many demons (1:32–39)
B´ (physical): healing man with leprosy (1:40–45)

A´/B´ (spiritual/physical): forgiveness of sins/healing the paralytic (2:1–12)

There is also an interchange between healing individuals (A, B, A´, B´), and healing the multitude (B´/A´). Simon's mother-in-law is the first individual physically healed in 1:29–31:

And immediately after going out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. And Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and immediately they spoke with him concerning her. And coming, he raised her up taking hold of her hand, and the fever left her, and she served them.22

Many interpret the "serving" response of Simon's mother-in-law merely as a verification of her healing.23 However, even in a first reading/hearing of the Gospel, the word describing her service (diakoneō) was already used in close proximity of angels who served, or ministered, to Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness (1:13).24 Therefore, whatever Simon's mother-in-law is doing in response to Jesus' healing is similar to what angels did for Jesus after his temptation. This similarity would not be lost on the reader or listener in Greek.

In addition, every miracle in this broader section of the narrative (1:21–2:12) includes a response, and the action of Simon's mother-in-law is the only positive response in the entire section:

A (spiritual): casting out a demon (1:21–28)

[An improper response of a demon (24–26)]


[An proper response of Simon's mother-in-law (31)]

B´/A´ (physical/spiritual): healing many with diseases & casting out many demons (1:32–39)

[An improper response of the disciples, corrected (35–39)]

B´ (physical): healing man with leprosy (1:40–45)

[An improper response of a healed man, magnified (44–45)]

A´/B´ (spiritual/physical): forgiveness of sins/healing the paralytic (2:1–12)

[An improper response of scribes, controversy (2:7)]25

The first-time reader/hearer would notice this responsive contrast in the progression of the narrative, once again magnifying the service of Simon's mother-in-law.26

Moreover, the use of names in the response to Jesus' healing of the multitude highlights a contrast between Simon and his mother-in-law. As set forth above, the names of all four of the disciples called in 1:16–20 are repeated in 1:29: "As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John" (NRSV). However, in the response to Jesus' healing of the multitude, Jesus goes away to a secluded place (erēmos topon) to pray.27 Only Simon is specifically identified among those searching for him: "and Simon and those with him hunted for him" (1:36).28 The diffusion of those with Simon, and the highlighting of Simon once again reminds the reader of the anonymous woman earlier identified as "Simōn's mother-in-law" (penthera Simōnos) in 1:29. This linking of names sets up an implied comparison between the woman and the disciple. In response to Jesus' personal healing, Simon's mother-in-law served them (diēkonei autois). However, in response to Jesus' healing of the multitude, Simon hunted, or tracked, Jesus down (kατεδαύξαν, third person singular). This term is used elsewhere to describe the pursuit of someone in a hostile sense.29 Then Simon and his companions say: "All are seeking you" (pantes zētousin se) 1:37. These words appear to be a rebuke, or correction, of Jesus for excluding himself.30 Then Jesus redirects their attention away from the multitudes to his purpose of proclaiming his message in other rural towns (kόμοpolis, 1:38). Jesus' correction of Simon's response is the first indication in the Gospel that these eager followers may not be perfectly aligned with what Jesus is doing. It is a flag for the initial reader who has identified with the followers, and places in stark relief the unique response of Simon's mother-in-law who alone offers to serve them.31

The first-time reader/hearer of Mark is given many contextual clues through the repetition of terms and the contrasting responses to Jesus' healing to suspect that the serving response of Simon's mother-in-law was not only uniquely proper, but as significant as the service of angels after Jesus' temptation. After subsequent readings of the Gospel, these heuristic guesses will be fully validated.

Subsequent Readings of the Narrative

Westerners tend to be more adept at interpreting visual media than written media. Upon a first-time viewing of the movie, The Sixth Sense, most audiences were stunned to realize at the end of the show that the child psychologist, Dr. Malcolm Crowe (played by Bruce Willis), was actually dead. And the reason the troubled boy, Cole Sear (played by Haley Joel Osment), was able to talk with Dr. Crowe was because he sees "dead people." Upon a re-viewing of the movie, the careful observer discovers clues throughout the show that pointed to Dr. Crowe being dead—his conversations with his wife and Cole's mother are one-sided; the color red prominently appears when the dead are near (red concrete, red clothes, a red door knob, red hats, red fingernails, a red balloon); Dr. Crowe mostly wears the same clothes he was wearing when he was shot; and rooms become cold whenever the dead are near. Then when Dr. Crowe's wife drops his wedding ring, he suddenly realizes he has not been wearing it, and the past and the present meet in an awareness that he is in fact dead. There are also parallels in the show—the former patient who shot Dr. Crowe also saw "dead people," so by helping Cole, who now sees ghosts, Dr. Crowe is able to correct a fatal flaw in his care for an earlier patient. These subsequent viewings make the movie even more fascinating for the viewer as the patterns, which were always there, become more transparent. Similar insights, depths, and delights are present for subsequent readers and hearers of the Gospel of Mark. Since earlier audiences were more familiar with the written/oral presentation of story, they may have made the connections sooner than modern Western readers.

As noted above, even though the four male disciples who were explicitly called to follow Jesus in 1:16–20 are named (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) in the unit describing the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (1:29), she is anonymous. Often in Mark's Gospel, the unnamed are exemplary followers of Christ who express faith: the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20); the woman with
the flow of blood (5:25–34); the Syrophoenician woman (7:24–30); the widow who gives at the temple (12:41–44); the woman who anoints Jesus for his death (14:3–9); and the many women who had come up with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem (15:41). Therefore, in the overarching pattern of the Gospel, Simon’s mother-in-law is the first of a group of faithful followers who are anonymous.

In addition, the service (diakoneō) of Simon’s mother-in-law adumbrates the major theme of “service” in Mark. In the central section of Mark, Jesus emphasizes the need for the disciples to serve:

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over [katarkurieousin] them, and their great ones are tyrants over [katexousiazousin] them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant [diakonos], 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave [doulos] of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served [diakonēthēnai], but to serve [diakonēsi], and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42–45 NRSV)

Some might object that the statement in 1:31 only says: “and the fever left her and she served them” (diēkonē autois); this clearly has the sense that she provided them “table service”33 and is not parallel to the service described in Mark 10:42–45. However, a similar discussion of “service” in the central section of the Gospel clarifies that the service Jesus has in view includes “table service”:

He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant [diakonos] of all.” 38 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

38 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” 39 But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. (Mark 9:35–41 NRSV, emphasis added)

In other words, serving children and serving water are the kind of activities for which disciples will be rewarded.

Finally, the only other place in the Gospel of Mark where the verb for service (diakoneō) is used for people in the company of Jesus is in the description of the women who provided for Jesus’ needs from Galilee to Jerusalem:

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 54 These used to follow him and provided for him [diēkonoun auto] when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. (Mark 15:40–41 NRSV)34

Here Mark describes women who have been a part of the story all along but have not been brought to the narrative’s foreground. Even though four women are explicitly named in v. 40, they have functioned in the story as the ultimate expression of the anonymous in that their presence was active but unknown to the reader. And the essence of their activity was serving, or ministering (diakoneō) to Jesus—whatever that entailed. In their service they have multiplied and magnified the initial response of Simon’s mother-in-law to her healing.

Service is the pattern of discipleship that Jesus is showing his followers, and the example he will give in Jerusalem—not by leading, per se, but by giving up his own life for them. The very first example of a person who follows in this pattern of service is Simon’s mother-in-law, whose response to being healed was to serve them—even if what she provided was “table service.”35 To separate “table service” from the service of discipleship is to make a distinction without a difference—especially from the perspective of subsequent readings of the Gospel of Mark.

Conclusion

The concept of service is hard for many of us—the educated, the academe, the professional. As “servant-leaders,” we more readily identify with “leadership” than with “servanthood.” As Henri Nouwen, Roman Catholic priest and former faculty member at Harvard and Yale, once said as he prepared to serve the mentally disabled at L’Arche in France:

I feel a deep resistance against this way. Somehow I have come to think about eating, drinking, washing, and dressing as so many necessary preconditions for reading, speaking, teaching, or writing. Somehow the pure word was the real thing for me. Time spent with “material” things was necessary but needed to be kept to a minimum. But at L’Arche, that is where all the attention goes. At L’Arche the body is the place where the word is met. It is in relationship to the wounded body of the handicapped person that I must learn to discover God.

This is very hard for me. I still find a long meal in the middle of the day a waste of time. I still think that I have more important things to do than to set the table, eat slowly, wash the dishes, and set the table again. I think, “Surely we must eat, but the work which comes after is what counts.” But L’Arche cannot be endured with this mind set.

I wonder when and how I will learn to fully live the Incarnation. I suppose that only the handicapped people themselves will be able to show me the way. I must trust that God will send me the teachers I need. 36

It is entirely possible that our “deep resistance against this way” of service is one reason why the response of Simon’s mother-in-law has historically been exegetically minimized. But for a careful first and subsequent reader/hearer of the Gospel of Mark, the service of Simon’s mother-in-law is a first sounding of a growing
chorus about the essence of following Jesus who came not to be served, but to serve. Like the disciples, we tend to focus on content, direction, opportunities, objectives, building, creating a movement—our activities. But like Simon’s mother-in-law, we are exhorted to focus on need, helping, providing, and restoring—the care of others. The response of Simon’s mother-in-law is the first explicit example of discipleship in the Gospel of Mark.

Notes

1. Tzvetan Todorov, “Primitive Narrative,” in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 55 (“there is no ‘primitive narrative.’ No narrative is natural; a choice and a construction will always preide over its appearance; narrative is a discourse, not a series of events.”)


4. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 9. This writer will use Chatman’s categories of “story” and “discourse” in this discussion.


7. As Moore wrote: “when we come to read or analyze a concrete narrative text, for example, *Mark*, everything in that text is encountered as discourse-rhetoric.” Stephen D. Moore, * Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 61. Rimmon-Kenan also observes that in the text, “the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout, and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective (‘focalizer’).”

8. Tomashevesky describes characterization as a function of discourse when he explains the distinction between direct and indirect characterization: “In *direct characterization* the author may characterize the figure directly by a straightforward report; he may have other characters discuss the person in question; or he may have the character tell about himself in, say, a confession of some sort. *Indirect characterization* also occurs frequently: the character in such a case betrays himself in his actions or conduct.” Tomashevesky, “Thematics,” 88. Both direct and indirect characterization look to how the author presents the character in the narrative. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*: “in the story character is a construct, put together by the reader from various indications dispersed throughout the text.” Marianne Meye Thompson argues that: “Rather than mining the text for the specific virtues and traits possessed by a particular character, they mine the text for its rhetorical and literary strategies in presenting characters. Thus the emphasis falls not so much on what a character is (e.g. honest, virtuous, brave, pious, etc.), but on how the character is constructed by the reader (i.e. through actions, speech, description, etc.) and how these elements of characterization are progressively coordinated by the reader.” Thompson, “‘God’s Voice You Have Never Heard, God’s Form You Have Never Seen’: The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John,” in *Characterization in Biblical Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Adele Berlin, *Semeia* 63 (1993), 180.

9. Berlin focuses on the term “contrast,” noting that characterization is developed through “three types of contrast: 1) contrast with another character, 2) contrast with an earlier action of the same character, and 3) contrast with the expected norm.” Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 40. Alice Bach provides a good example of comparing and contrasting an earlier presentation of Bathsheba as an object in 2 Sam 11–12 with the later transformation of Bathsheba as queen mother in 1 Kgs 1:2. Bach, “Signs of the Flesh: Observations on Characterization in the Bible,” in *Characterization in Biblical Literature*, 70–77. Laura Donaldson also provides a good example of comparison between Joseph and Potiphar’s wife to show that Potiphar’s wife “uses her sexuality as a weapon to prevent the household’s passing from man to man (from Potiphar to Joseph) rather than from man to woman (from Potiphar to Potiphar’s wife).” Donaldson, “Cybors, Ciphers, and Sexuality; Re-Theorizing Literary and Biblical Characters,” in *Characterization in Biblical Literature*, 90. See also Joel F. Williams,
Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel, JSNTSup 102 (Sheffield: ISOT, 1994), 65–66.


14. Some women in Mark are central to larger narrative sections, namely intercalations, that comprise more space in the narrative. See David E. Malick, “An Examination of Jesus’s View of Women through Three Intercalations in the Gospel of Mark,” Priscilla Papers 27, no. 3 (2013): 4–15.

15. See Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels, 84–88. See also Jouette M. Bassler, “The Parable of the Loaves,” JR 66, no. 2 (1986): 157–72; David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), Kindle location 177: “Recent New Testament research has recognized that first-century Mediterranean societies were predominantly oral/aural cultures in which probably no more than three to five percent of the people were able to read or write.” By contrast, see Robert Tannehill, The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Vol. 1: The Gospel According to Luke (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 6: “the discussion that follows is not simply an expanded reading; it is commentary. It represents part of what might be said after reading a second, third, or fourth time. It is not confined to what is happening when reading for the first time, with much of the text still unknown.”

16. “Ancient storytellers brought out the dynamics of the story in their telling, putting their stamp on the story, and shaping it to each particular audience. The performer used voice, volume, pace, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movement to express an interpretation of the story and to engender certain impacts on different audiences. The performance would stimulate the audience’s imagination and bring about the emotion, the humor, and the irony of the story.” Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, Mark as Story, Kindle location 191.


18. In a more modern sense, one might liken these foreshadows in the prologue to the overture of a musical. The first time one hears an overture, all of the music is unfamiliar. However, it sets up themes that are revisited in the show. Then, upon subsequent listening, the overture is filled with meaning from the fullness of the musical. Present-day audiences more easily comprehend literary theory expressed through the mediums of auditory and visual expression. The foreshadows of the prologue will resonate with the reader/hearer upon an initial reading, and then become explicitly meaningful upon subsequent readings.


20. The call of Simon and Andrew and James and John in 1:16–20 (“and going by the Sea of Galilee,” kai paragōn para tēn thalassan tēs Galilaias); the call of Levi in 2:13–14 (“and he went out again by the sea,” kai exēlthen palin para tēn thalassan); the call of the Twelve in 3:7–19 (“And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea,” Kai ho lēsous meta tōn mathethōn autou anechōresen pros tēn thalassan).

21. C. S. Mann, ed., Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB 27 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 80–81. The overall structure of this section is constructed differently by others who group the controversies as a unit in 2:1–3:6. See Wilfrid Harrington, Mark, New Testament Message 4 (Dublin: Veritas, 1979), 24–25; P. Mourlon Beernaert, “Jésus Controversie. Structure Et Théologie de Marc 2, 1–3, 6,” NRTh 95, no. 2 (1973): 129–49. Joanna Dewey groups the controversies as a unit. Dewey, Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1–3:6, SBLDS 48 (Society of Biblical Literature, 1980), 110. However, it seems to this writer that some of Dewey’s parallels are strained. For instance, Dewey combines the call of Levi with the pericope about Jesus eating with sinners in 2:13–17. This grouping enables her to see a pattern in 2:13–17 and 2:23–27 where the activity begins out of doors and then continues indoors (Dewey, Markan Public Debate, 113–14). However, this arrangement of the text appears to have overlooked the textual clues that structure the narrative around Jesus going by the sea to call the four disciples (1:16–20), Levi (2:13–14), and the Twelve (3:7–19). With these textual clues in view, it seems better to break the narrative into an alternating pattern:

A Call of four disciples (1:16–20)
B Jesus demonstrates who he is through a sequence of cures, the last involving a conflict (1:21–2:12)
A’ Call of Levi (2:13–14)
B’ Jesus demonstrates who he is through a sequence of conflicts, the last involving a cure (2:15–3:6)
A’’ Choice of the Twelve (3:7–10).

This is not to say that correlations do not exist between 2:1–12 and 3:1–6, but these correlations do not seem significant enough to move 2:1–3 from the narrative logic of the units that precede it in 1:21–45.

22. The author’s translation.

23. Kathleen E. Corley, Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition (Sheffield: Hendrickson, 1993), 88 (“Mark does nothing to emphasize her activity, and the woman does not join the men for their meal. In this context, the service of Peter’s mother-in-law merely verifies her healing.”); Williams, Other Followers of Jesus, 94 (“At this point in the narrative, the service of the woman seems to function simply as evidence that she is completely healed of her affliction.”); D. E. Nineham, Saint Mark (Penguin, 1973), 81 (“The words show both the completeness of the cure . . . and also its miraculous speed.”); William L. Lane, The Gospel according to Mark: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition, and Notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 78 (“The notice that the woman ‘ministered to them’ confirms the mercy and compassion extended toward her by Jesus and indicates that the figures in the background of the gospel narrative are affected by the power of this mysterious Galilean.”); R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 108 (“The completeness of the cure is emphasized by the clause kai diēkonei autois: no period of convalescence was needed. While diakoneō has a wide range of meaning, in this context its basic sense of domestic provision seems most likely; she fulfilled what would have been the expected role of the mother-in-law in the family home, by serving up refreshments.”). Some others interpret the woman’s activity as a...
proclamation that she is free from Sabbath restrictions. Augustine Stock, *The Method and the Message of Mark* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 80 (“She seems to have come to the conclusion that if Jesus was free to heal her on the Sabbath, then she was free from the Sabbath restrictions preventing her from serving and helping others.”); Bas M. van Iersel, *Mark* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 138–39 (“Here begins—for the reader, not for the characters—the conflict over the question of whether the sabbath regulations are still valid.”).

24. “And the angels served, or ministered, to him,” (kai hoi aggeloi diēkonoun autō). See also Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 137–38n20.

25. It may be argued that the onlookers appear to have a positive response to the healing of the lame man when the narrator states that “all were amazed and glorified God saying that we have never seen this” (existathai pantas kai doxazein ton theon legontas hoti houtōs oudepote eidomen). However, it is questionable whether the term for “amazed” (existēmi) is explicitly positive. It is used in the Septuagint for astonishment mingled with fear (Gen 43:33, Ruth 3:8, 1 Sam 14:15).

26. As Malbon has stated: “[N]ot only must attention to characterization be integrated with analysis of plot, settings, rhetoric, etc., but also all the characters—minor as well as ‘major’—must be observed in relation with each other if we are to be competent and sensitive readers of biblical narratives.” Malbon, *Major Importance*, 59.

27. Because there is not a “wilderness” per se in Galilee, the use of the term erēmos may echo the spiritual testing of the temptation (cf. Mark 1:12–13).

28. kai katediōxen auton Simōn kai hoi met’ autou

29. See the Septuagint of Psalms of Solomon 15:8, “for they will flee from the holy ones like those pursued in battle”; see also BDAG, s.v. katadiōkō.

30. The disciples are “craving for self-enhancement. They want to be known, respected, honored, obeyed, and generally held in high repute as the greatest and the first.” But Jesus strives to suppress his reputation. “Understanding the disciples’ desire for glory and renown as a foil to Jesus’ actions suggests a different construction for secrecy: Jesus’ commands for silence and his attempts to stay hidden define his steadfast rejection of personal renown and glory. Closely related to this rejection is his attempt to avoid drawing crowds. . . .” Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 226–27.

31. As Malbon observes: “Only minor characters, never major characters such as the disciples or the religious leaders, are healed by Jesus in the Markan narrative, and the minor characters whom he has healed exemplify faith in Jesus’ power and authority. Their stories of faith and healing are absolutely essential to Mark’s story of Jesus as the Christ. Their responses of exemplary faith extend the Markan response continuum: from enemies to fallible followers to exemplars.” Malbon, “Major Importance,” 65. Clearly Simon’s mother-in-law is being shown to be an “exemplar” in her service while Simon is showing himself to be a “fallible follower” early in the narrative as he attempts to redirect Jesus’ activity.

32. Tolbert identifies the anonymous followers as examples of the good soil who also align with Jesus. See *Sowing the Gospel*, 226–27 (“Not only is this drive [by the disciples for self-enhancement] the antithesis of that embodied by the anonymous, faithful ones who are healed, it also stands in stark contrast to the depiction of Jesus himself, who throughout Division One actively strives to suppress his reputation and keep his name from becoming known . . . Jesus’ commands for silence and his attempts to stay hidden define his steadfast rejection of personal renown and glory. Closely related to this rejection is his attempt to avoid drawing crowds.”).


34. Iersel, *Mark*, 117 (“After the cure the woman may seem to drop out of the picture. That she does not is something that the reader does not discover until the last page of the book, where the narrator mentions a number of women who ministered to Jesus when he was in Galilee (5:40–41). As it is, this information is anticipated in the first part of the book by the mention of at least one woman who ministered to Jesus and his companions in Galilee (1:34). These are the only two places in Mark where the verb diakoneō (‘minister to’) is used for people in Jesus’ company.”).

35. Others have reservedly correlated the response of Simon’s mother-in-law to discipleship. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 78n128 (“Yet in Chs. 9:33–37 and 10:43–45 the essence of discipleship is described in terms of service, and this may be anticipated in the present narrative.”); Joanna Dewey, “Women in the Gospel of Mark,” *WW* 26, no. 1 (2006): 22–23 (“Service becomes an important Markan theme describing ideal discipleship, which in retrospect may apply in this passage. Peter’s mother-in-law is ministering to the disciples.”); Malbon, “Fallible Followers,” 34–35 (“[I]t is not clear at this early point in the narrative whether her service, her ministry, shares—and foreshadows—the theological connotations that the ministry of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome manifests later (diēkonoun, 15:41);” see also Iersel, *Mark*, 117, 138n33 (quoted above). More recently, Kuruvilla has positively asserted: “It is no doubt significant that there are only two instance of diakoneō . . . with humans as subjects in Mark’s Gospel (1:31 and 15:41), and both times the subjects are women. A subtle jab! The narrator is pointing an appreciative finger at the example of this mother-in-law, a woman who does the male disciples one better! She is already doing what Jesus himself will later model for his disciples. The same verb diakoneō is found in the statement on the essence of Jesus’ mission: The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve (10:45). The narrator is implying that this woman is a true disciple, serving after the fashion of her Lord. Simon’s mother-in-law is thus a foil to both crowds and disciples, indeed, to all who might follow Jesus for the wrong reasons.”). Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 38–39.


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Was Apphia an Early Christian Leader? An Investigation and Proposal Regarding the Identity of the Woman in Philemon 1:2

NICHOLAS RUDOLPH QUENT

The epistle to Philemon begins, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker" (NRSV). Paul and Timothy then also address "Apphia the sister" (Ἀππῆια τὴ ἀδελφὴ). Throughout the multitude of commentaries on Philemon, one struggles to find a helpful description of this mysterious woman. The standard volumes concerning the evangelical gender debate rarely mention Apphia, and both hierarchical and egalitarian perspectives have done little to explore her identity. Specifically, the lack of detailed research regarding Apphia's status may be due to the fact that, unlike other women in the NT, she is not given a now-controversial title (cf. "deacon" in Rom 16:1–2 or "apostle" in Rom 16:7). Also potentially at play is the tendency of readers to miss something they are not looking for: because Apphia is not contested ground in the evangelical gender debate, it makes sense that a work exploring her identity has been missing. In contrast, most of the detailed work on Paul's relationship with Apphia is not by evangelical scholars.

In Phlm 1:2 we catch a glimpse into the dynamics of the ancient Christian household into which Paul is writing: "to Apphia our sister," to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your [sg.] house" (NRSV). The intent of this article is threefold: first, to explore Apphia's status within the ancient household; second, to investigate her relationship to the various parties mentioned; and third—most importantly—to determine the potential implications for women in the church today.

**Apphia: Wife, Slave, or More?**

What did the early church make of Apphia, in those rare cases where she is discussed at all? Is she a wife, a friend, a slave, a Pauline co-worker?

The leading view is found, for example, in the writings of John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), who believed Apphia was Philemon's wife: "It seems to me that she was his partner in life. Observe the humility of Paul. He both joins Timothy with him in his request and asks not only the husband but the wife also, to whom Paul may be a friend as well." Pelagius (c. 360–418) is less certain when he writes, "Apphia is believed [my emphasis] to be Philemon's sister or spouse." F. F. Bruce contends that Apphia is "probably" Onesimus's wife, and other modern commentators have followed suit, including Murray J. Harris, Ralph Martin, Ben Witherington, Bruce Malina and John Pilch, Douglas Moo, and James D. G. Dunn. Karl Barth asserts this same sentiment.

However, as Robert Wilson correctly observes: "Apphia is frequently thought to be Philemon's wife, and Archippus his son, but while it is very natural to think of a family this is not expressly stated in the text." Sara Winter is far more blunt: "The assumption that Apphia was the wife of Philemon can be attributed to androcentric gender bias." Rather, Apphia is prominent enough to be named among men without being socially confined as a wife. Indeed, as Eduard Lohse points out: Their names [Apphia and Archippus] are mentioned because the matter that the Apostle is dealing with is not just a personal affair that concerns Philemon alone. Rather the decision that must be arrived at is a concern of the entire community.

Since Apphia's potential status as wife carries historical weight, we will explore this option first. It is not obvious that Apphia is either the wife of Philemon or Archippus, and this uncertainty is due to Paul's use of "sister" (ἡ ἀδελφή) instead of "woman, wife" (γυνὴ). Paul has married couples within his social sphere (e.g., Priscilla and Aquila in Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19 and 2 Tim 4:19), and he is perfectly capable of referring to Apphia as someone's wife—but he does not. These facts leave open the interpretation that Apphia is an unmarried woman within the household, an interpretation which I prefer.

If Paul wanted to indicate that Apphia was in a socially subordinate position—either that of a wife or a slave—Paul could have used doulos ("slave, "servant") to describe her ranking, but he does not. Language of subordination in Philemon is only self-applied by Paul: "prisoner" (δεσμίος) in Phlm 1:1, 9. Paul does write to slaves in several of his epistles (e.g., 1 Cor 7:21–22, Eph 6:5–9, Col 3:22–4:1, 1 Tim 6:1–2, Titus 2:9–10), but it does not seem that any slave is actually addressed by name, Apphia, if she is a slave, would be the sole exception. In antiquity, the direct addressees of a letter are named first (after the name of the sender), which is a position of honor or preeminence. The epistle to Philemon is directly addressed first to three individuals (Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, vv. 1–2), and second to the broader church (v. 3). The inclusion of Apphia before Archippus may signify that she held a status higher than his. Thus, any notion of Apphia's status being presented by Paul as subordinate can and should be judged as incongruous. Indeed, Theodore of Mopsuestia, a contemporary of Chrysostom and Pelagius, rules out any notion of Apphia's subordination: "Paul makes a point of greeting Philemon and Apphia equally. He wishes to indicate thereby that in no way is there a difference of faith or strength of faith between men and women."

**Apphia in the Congregation**

Because Apphia is probably not a wife or a subordinate within the household, the question arises concerning her actual status. The primary recipients (Philemon, Apphia, Archippus) are mentioned first, then "and to the church in your house" (καὶ τῇ εἰκκλησίᾳ). The use of the second person singular genitive "your" (sou) demands some explanation: is this a collective singular, addressing the three individuals as one, or is this referring to Philemon, as has been traditionally assumed? Since three people are directly addressed and spoken highly of in the direct address, one cannot limit the address to a singular individual. Had Paul only intended to communicate with
Philemon, for instance, he would have made it clear in only naming Philemon.

The options are multiple: Apphia could have been the (or “a”) homeowner,44 a manager within the household, a well-respected member of the house church, or some combination thereof. Her being called “the sister” (tē adelphē) can now be more fully explored in the next section, and these interpretive options leave open a host of opportunities regarding the identity of Apphia—including the position of leader.

Sister Apphia the Leader? Explorations and Parallels

Paul’s use of tē adelphē is appositional, describing Apphia as “the sister.” The standard lexicon for NT Greek lists two glosses for adelphē: a literal, “a female who comes from the same womb as the reference, sister” and a metaphorical, “a person or thing viewed as a sister in relation to another entity, sister.” 18 The word itself does not mean “leader” or any of the other disputed terms for leadership in the evangelical gender debate; that, of course, does not mean Apphia was not a leader within the household. Paul does not need to describe women with terms of leadership in order for women to be leaders.

Paul has already used familial language in v. 1 in his reference to his co-author Timothy as “brother” (ho adelphos). The apostle’s consistent use of familial language throughout all his epistles is stark: he uses adelphoi (“brothers,” “siblings”) regarding mixed congregations (Rom 1:13, 7:1, 8:12, 1 Cor 1:11, 3:1, 12:1, 14:20, Gal 1:2, etc.)20 and does not seem interested in being gender-exclusive. For example, the NT does have women who were prominent in the early church. In Rom 16:1, Paul commends “our sister (tē adelphēn hēmōn) Phoebe, deacon21 of the church at Cenchreae.” Paul’s use of the articular hē adelphē for Phoebe and Apphia specifies a precise designation, and does not likely refer to either woman as simply a fellow Christian.

The accusative feminine noun adelphēn applied to Phoebe is singular and articular, and it follows a near-identical syntactical pattern as Phlm 1:2: personal name + article + appositional noun:

Rom 16:1: Phoibēn tēn adelphēn hēmōn (“Phoebe the sister of us”)

Phlm 1:2: Apphia tē adelphē (“Apphia the sister”)

Philemon 1:2 is written to Apphia, as the dative form Apphia tē adelphē indicates: “to Apphia the sister,” putting her as a direct recipient. Since tē adelphē is articular, it could be a title: “Apphia the Sister.” Instead of being the recipient of the epistle, Phoebe receives commendation in Rom 16:1–2, hence the accusative case of “sister” in this context. Craig Keener notes that, “probably [Phoebe] was the owner of the home in which the Cenchrean church met, and thus its host.”23 Similarly, in Rom 16:15 Paul specifically mentions the sister (tēn adelphēn) of Nereus—though he does not name her. This unnamed sister was included within a specific group, illustrating her status in Christ along with her brother and the others. All this evidence shows that, in the work of the early church, “sisters” were heavily involved in missionary activity, and being a “sister” does not indiscriminately remove one’s ability to serve as a leader. Apphia, therefore, by virtue of Paul’s chosen terminology and by being mentioned in the address, is an esteemed member of the house church and thus shares an equal status with Philemon and Archippus. Michael Bird suggests that Apphia “may also have held some formal office in the house church that met in her house.”24

Apphia the Leader: A Response to Objections

There are some stated objections to this reading, and key commentators who argue against it are Joseph Fitzmyer and Andrew Perriman.25 These scholars come from differing perspectives,26 but both concur that Apphia was not a leader in the church. Fitzmyer, in response to the work of Winter writes, “there is not a hint here that adelphē means that Apphia was ‘also a church leader’; such a meaning of adelphē is nowhere attested.”27 Perriman comes to a similar conclusion when he writes, “the fact that the term [adelphē] is also applied to Phoebe . . . certainly does not mean that these two women held similar positions or wielded similar influence.”28 Fitzmyer’s dismissal of Winter’s argument illustrates a lack of serious engagement. In both of her articles, Winter contends that Apphia is a “church leader”29 or “church worker.”30 Her arguments for Apphia being a church leader spring from Apphia’s inclusion in the address31 and the fact that this is a public document to the house church.32 Fitzmyer’s contentment that, “There is not a hint here that adelphē means that Apphia was ‘also a church leader’” misses the mark, and it must be reassessed for the following five reasons: (1) Fitzmyer does not take into consideration the rhetorical placement of Apphia, which would include her status as “the sister” (2) He excludes the authority women had in some homes in the ancient world.33 (3) He ignores Phoebe and the possible placement of Apphia, which would include her status as “the sister.” (4) He does not explain the other women named by Paul, who illustrate that Paul had no issue with women leaders in the church.34 (5) He relies too much on the semantic domain of adelphē35 and ignores contextual, perspectival, and rhetorical factors that undermine his dismissal—especially given Apphia’s placement in the introduction—and because of this he assumes a surface level reading of a rhetorically sensitive and dialogically sophisticated introduction.36 In short, Fitzmyer never asks the important questions about Apphia, and thus we should find his objection lacking sufficient force or nuance.38

Supplemental Reasons for Naming Apphia: The Liberation of Onesimus

Interpretive difficulties arise almost instantly regarding the social context of Onesimus: was he a runaway slave, as has been traditionally believed? Options abound39 but based on our conclusions we must ask the question of the consequences of Apphia’s status in this public epistle. Perriman notes, “The fact that the term [adelphē] is also applied to Phoebe . . . certainly does not mean that these two women [Apphia and Phoebe] held similar positions or wielded similar influence.”40 This is a remarkable case of question begging. Perriman, like Fitzmyer, never asks the question about Apphia’s placement and her function within the epistle, and thus his comment lacks coherence.

Paul sent Onesimus back and the question naturally arises, “for what reason?” Whether for acceptance or reconciliation or manumission, what can be plausibly inferred is that Apphia’s presence gives her the potential for vital input in the treatment of
Onesimus. Paul is, in effect, giving her a voice and treating her as a distinct and natural moral agent in the house church.41 Marianne Meye Thompson notes, “If Onesimus was a household slave, then his departure from the household will also have affected her [Apphia].”42 Whether the purpose of the epistle is manumission or some other option,43 Onesimus’s status is inextricably tied up with the three people mentioned in the introduction (Philemon, Apphia, Archippus) and within the larger Christian assembly. Paul’s ingenious inclusion of multiple people almost assures the necessary social pressure that would have resulted in Onesimus’s freedom. I conclude with J. Albert Harrill, who notes:

Paul addresses the letter to several people, including the church in Philemon’s house (Phlm 2), to raise the honor-shame stakes to that of a public hearing, in the agnostic code of face-to-face rhetorical encounters. Paul pressures Philemon44 by making a public plea, before the entire house church, to strengthen his hypothetical language.45

Depending on the thorny issue regarding Pauline chronology, and if one believes Paul wrote Colossians (as I do), then we have a potential answer regarding Apphia’s influence. In Col 4:7–9, Tychoic is mentioned as “coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother” (v. 9). Strikingly, Onesimus there is not called a “fellow-slave” (sundoulos), as Tychoic is (Col 4:7). Rather, Onesimus is a beloved brother, a member of Paul’s missionary entourage, and bears a certain privilege as one who is faithful. If Colossians is post-Philemon, then we have a possible answer to the question of manumission, and we have the canonized proof of Apphia’s influence upon the congregation and—subsequently—upon the contentious debates regarding slavery in the NT. Apphia is, therefore, a vital and challenging persona who transcends societal constructs in favor of Onesimus who is defined as “no longer a slave” (Phlm 15–16).46

Conclusion and Implications of Apphia for Women Today

Far from being a throwaway epistle, Philemon is fertile ground for theological ethics. As the only woman mentioned in the introduction of a Pauline epistle, Apphia deserves pride of place within the Pauline corpus as a unique individual, a sister with a significant say in the household of God, and as a potential leader who may have had considerable positive influence upon the life and ministry of Onesimus who, once freed, used his freedom to boldly live and proclaim the gospel as a faithful brother, no longer as a slave. Paul’s inclusion of Apphia illustrates that he does not discriminate on the basis of gender and pays respect to each leader as an equal in Christ, as a sister, as a leader, and perhaps as an advocate for Onesimus’s manumission.

Paul’s inclusion of Apphia illustrates that he does not discriminate on the basis of gender and pays respect to each leader as an equal in Christ, as a sister, as a leader, and perhaps as an advocate for Onesimus’s manumission.

Notes

1. I accept the traditional view that Paul and Timothy are co-authors of Philemon. See E. Randolph Richards, Paul and First-century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 32–36.
5. In v. 2, some manuscripts read agapētē (“beloved”) instead of adelphē. However, adelphē is the preferred reading. See Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 588.
11. Paul’s practice of naming prominent women before or among men is not without precedent. Cf. “Priscas and Aquilas” in Rom 16:3 and 2 Tim 4:19. Paul also mentions a certain Chloe and her people (tōn Chloēs) in 1 Cor 1:11. See also Rom 16:1–16 where women are named among men without discrimination.
13. Wilson, Colossians and Philemon, 334, mentions the work of Lightfoot and Lohse regarding Phrygian inscriptions that include the name “Apphia,” signifying that her name was common, “doubtless of native origin.”
14. Paul could have appealed to Apphia’s status as a slave if she were indeed one, since the letter is about the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon/the church. However, this is a rhetorical ploy Paul does not utilize.
16. Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon (Waco: Word, 1982), 273, notes that the use of “your” in the singular “makes it clear Philemon is the real recipient of the letter.” Winter agrees, “Philemon and the Patriarchal Paul,” 127. I maintain that this interpretive option is highly unlikely. From v. 4 onward Paul does speak in the singular, but the collective nature of the introduction seems to rule out that Paul has in mind a single person. The recipients would likely not make the distinction Winter and O’Brien make: they are being addressed, yet are not included after that? Philemon is not exclusively addressed after v. 1, so it is likely that this is a collective singular, including all three people at once. It is also worth noting that Paul speaks in the singular in v. 2 and this personal pronoun appears throughout the epistle. To restrict these as referring exclusively to Philemon misses the character of the introduction.
18. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, A Woman’s Place (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 144–63, esp. 163.
19. BDAG 18.
20. Others include Phil 1:12, 3:1, 5:13, 1 Thess 1:4.
21. It is highly improbable that Phoebe is a slave or servant. There are sufficient Greek words to communicate this, and Paul does not utilize such vocabulary. Rather, Phoebe would have been a deacon in Cenchreae, and thus associated with an established city church. See Payne, Man and Woman, 61–63.
22. Most translations see the article functioning as a pronoun. However, there is some reason to doubt this. The subsequent and antecedent names have pronouns modifying them, but Apphia does not. The lack of a specific pronoun being applied to Apphia may cast some doubt upon the belief that the article is functioning as a possessive pronoun for her. The parallel with Phoebe includes a pronoun, but Apphia lacks one. The lack of a pronoun for Apphia may indicate that the article is intended to raise her status, thus functioning in a “well-known” sense as Daniel Wallace puts it. I offer this for the reader’s consideration only as a possibility and no more. See Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 225.
26. Perriman is an egalitarian when it comes to the ordination of women. See http://www.postost.net/2016/06/craig-keener-fallacy-mutual-submission. The perspective of Fitzmyer (who passed away on Dec 24, 2016) on the ordination of women is less certain.
27. Fitzmyer, Philemon, 87–88.
28. Perriman, Speaking of Women, 72n37.
33. For instance, Paul (or a Pauline writer) uses the infinitive “to rule a household” (oikodespotein) in 1 Tim 5:14, which may suggest that women had greater household authority. See also 1 Cor 7.
34. Rom 16:1–16, Phil 4:2–3. See also 1 Cor 11:2–16.
35. The contention is not exclusively that adelphē means “leader.” Rather, contextual and rhetorical factors contribute to the fact that her inclusion in the introduction indicates she is a leader within the household. The use of adelphē is supplemental.
36. He also seems to assume that the arguments in favor of Apphia’s leadership are primarily lexical, which falsely attributes a lexical fallacy to his interlocutors.
37. Perriman’s objection will be dealt with below.
38. Fitzmyer, in addition to offering his own plausible explanation of Apphia, would need to incorporate all of the offered objections into a coherent scenario—something he does not do.
40. Perriman, Speaking of Women, 72n37.
41. I owe this specific insight regarding women and moral agency to Dr. Love Sechrest and her course on Ephesians at Fuller Theological Seminary.
42. Marianne Meye Thompson, Colossians & Philemon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 208.
44. This is not certain, as has been argued above. See also Winter, “Letter to Philemon,” 1–2.
46. Also of note is the language of kinship (adelphos in v. 1, adelphē in v. 2, vocative adelphē in v. 7, adelphōn agapeōn in v. 16, etc.) that permeates the epistle, illustrating the asserted unity of Eph 2:11–22, where there is no dividing wall of hostility between people groups (cf. Gal 2:11–3:29).
47. I am grateful to Drs. Ron Pierce and Scot McKnight for their encouragement and insights, as well as to my wife, Allison M. Quient, for her support and constructive critiques.

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Luke 1:46–55 is both a beautiful hymn sung to glorify God and an interpretive puzzle. This text, widely known as the Magnificat, is one of several songs Luke uses at a crucial moment in the birth narratives in order for characters to explain the amazing ways in which God is moving. Luke includes it in his narrative to foreshadow the ministry of reversal Jesus will bring, first to Israel and eventually to all people. It is a praise hymn made up of a combination of OT allusions—more specifically, allusions to the Greek translation of the OT commonly referred as the Septuagint and abbreviated LXX.1 What follows is a study of the LXX allusions that combine to make up this praise hymn—allusions which have the cumulative effect of presenting Mary as a key character in the continuation of God’s OT promises and plan.

Narrative Setting
In the narrative surrounding the Magnificat, Luke weaves the birth stories of John and Jesus into a tapestry of joyful songs and hope for the oppressed. When Gabriel announces the pregnancy to Mary, she shows obedience by hurrying to Elizabeth’s house (Luke 1:39). When Mary first speaks to Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaps; Elizabeth is able to interpret her baby’s movement like Rebekah does in Gen 25:21 (Luke 1:41, 44). Elizabeth and Mary are the first to realize the significance of the child Mary is carrying (Luke 1:41–45). Elizabeth is then filled with the Holy Spirit and blesses Mary. Though John’s birth is significant enough to merit an angelic announcement, Elizabeth acknowledges Mary’s superiority in the situation (Luke 1:42–45).2 Elizabeth’s words prompt from Mary a ballad praising God for blessing her and for bringing about the hopes of Israel. Luke’s narration halts the movement of the story when Mary meets with Elizabeth. This deliberate slowing highlights the angel’s proclamation and ensures that the audience understands its significance to Mary and the blessing pronounced by Elizabeth—and that meaning is rooted in the covenantal purpose of God.

The Magnificat functions as a foretaste of the major themes of Luke–Acts. As Richard Hays notes, it is also the key to viewing how Luke understands the OT and who Jesus is; Luke narrates “the story of Jesus in a way that joins seamlessly to Israel’s story.”3 Mary’s hymn, a prophecy of Jesus’s significance, emphasizes women, the poor, the reversal of fortunes, and the fulfillment of God’s promises.4 Mary’s song juxtaposes the mighty and rich against the lowly and hungry; the former are put down while the latter are exalted. This is the core of Luke’s gospel: Jesus is good news to all, but especially to those who have none. Luke places a special emphasis on those who are on the periphery. Characters who oppose Jesus desire honor and exclude the less fortunate and socially unacceptable. The Magnificat is more than simply a joyous scene of praise; it is an integral part of the introduction to what the good news means, and it is the lens through which to read Luke–Acts.5 The poor and the lowly have cause to lift their voices and join Mary in song.

Allusions and Echoes
Mary’s Song is a collage of biblical allusions.6 Although there is disagreement about the full range of Septuagintal allusions, the hymns of praise by women in the OT are particularly formative.7 Of particular interest are other hymns of praise sung in response to God’s gracious and powerful intercession, such as Miriam, Deborah, Judith, and most importantly, Hannah.8

The sentiments of reversal language are familiar from the OT, but it is difficult to isolate specific allusions. Rather, Luke’s use of motifs and language “evokes more generally the whole thought world of OT faith and declares its eschatological fulfillment … in God’s present activity with Mary.”9 The Magnificat’s closest parallel is Hannah’s song of thanksgiving for her son. Hays notes that it is rare for Luke to explicitly quote a text; rather “he subliminally evokes it, so that the reader who knows 1 Samuel will hear Mary singing a harmonious descant to Hannah’s song of praise.”10 Mary’s song expresses gratitude for a miraculous pregnancy, as does Hannah’s. Each song also focuses on the notion of reversal; both allude to the exalting of the humble, the lowering of the elevated and filling the hungry.11 Furthermore, Hannah’s song is alluded to in Ps 113, which is deeply intertwined with the Passover. Hays argues,

If the hearers of Luke’s Gospel understood this link between Hannah’s hymn of deliverance and the Passover, they might well have understood that Mary’s song, too, should be heard in the same tradition, as a song celebrating the impending deliverance of Israel, this time through Mary’s own offspring.12

Judith’s celebratory hymn after saving Israel has many of the same characteristics. She also thanks Yahweh for working a miracle through her (Judith 16:6–7). She sings of the Lord’s greatness, how God brings down those who brag of their own strength, and how wonderful God’s mercy is towards those who fear God (16:2, 5, 13, 15–16).

The Singer of the Magnificat (v. 46a)
A few Latin manuscripts record Elizabeth instead of Mary as the singer of the Magnificat.13 It is unclear why a scribe would alter the singer from the mother of Jesus to Elizabeth. Hypothetically, some early texts could have contained neither woman’s name and later scribes added the name of the woman they felt it befitted most appropriately.14 Since Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and pronounces a blessing on Mary, some scribes may have seen it fitting that she continue by praising God with a song. Additionally, Elizabeth’s story reflects the text most closely associated with the Magnificat—Hannah’s song; both women are barren and Elizabeth’s yearning for a child resembles her predecessor’s prayers closely (1:24–25). Furthermore, God blesses them in their old ages and they bear children who are important characters in Israel’s history. Nonetheless, in the
larger narrative, the hope this child will bring to Israel is found in Jesus, not John. Despite John’s importance, Elizabeth defers to Mary throughout the narrative surrounding the Magnificat. In the end, overwhelming manuscript evidence affirms Mary as the singer of the Magnificat.

**Mary’s Joy and Thanksgiving (vv. 46b–50)**

Mary responds to the miraculous event with spontaneous song. She expresses the depth of her gratitude and thankfulness; this song radiates from the very core of her being. The verb “bless(ed)” (makarizō) is common in the Psalms as well as in Luke–Acts. The term operates in the Septuagint in connection with praising God and, in the NT, with praising Jesus as well (e.g., Luke 10:21). Mary’s innermost self is thanking and revering the Lord through the words of her song.

Verse 47 is parallel to v. 46b. While she magnified the Lord in the previous verse, here she rejoices because God is her Savior. The term “rejoice, exult” (agalliaō) is a natural synonym of “magnify” (megalunō), and the use of synonyms for designations of God in parallel statements (“the Lord” and “God”) is frequent in the Psalms (e.g., 62:11–12, 70:1). Mary treasures God's miraculous action in her life and her role of bearing the child of Israel’s hopes. She recognizes here the intercession of God as savior, in particular her savior. However, she has not yet elaborated upon that from which he has saved her.

Mary then expresses her reasons for praise. God has looked on her with favor despite her lowly status. However, she does not clearly elaborate on what makes her so lowly. The term “humble state” (tapeinōsis) is often used in the LXX to describe the humiliation of barren women (e.g., Gen 16:11, 29:32, 1 Sam 1:11). Kindalee DeLong, however, contends that the only hint of Mary’s humble status in the narrative thus far is her pregnancy in a culture that values a woman’s virginity until marriage; thus her lowly state is a side-effect of God’s blessing. The reasons for Mary’s lowly state become more evident in the second half of her song. She is part of a nation that is currently oppressed and groaning for God’s deliverance. The first strophe highlights Mary’s unique and singular experience; the second highlights God’s salvation of Israel. The use of the adjective “humble” (tapeinos) in both v. 48 and v. 52 suggests a connection between Mary and Israel. Her experience is unique but, simultaneously, she is the first to experience the salvation that is for all Israel. However, though she shares in her nation’s burdens, Mary’s lowliness is not solely representative of Israel. The term Luke uses belongs to the semantic domain of “the poor” in Luke–Acts, a domain associated with those who lack honor. This lack of honor clearly was the case with Mary. Her privileged position is exclusively because of God’s grace.

Mary understands that from this moment onward all generations will call her blessed. Elizabeth is the first of this generation to recognize Mary’s position. The verb “bless(ed)” (makarizō) is not characteristic of Luke–Acts but is Septuagintal. The unique feature of the term in the NT is the distinctive joy that comes through participation in the divine kingdom. However, the following generations’ blessings do not lift Mary out of her lowly status. Rather, the antithesis is provided by the “great things” (megala, v. 49a) God provides.

Mary recognizes that she will be called blessed because of the great things God has done for her. The title “the Mighty One” (ho dunatos) occurs nowhere else in the NT with reference to God; in the LXX, it is found only in Zeph 3:17. The title may also echo Isa 42:13 and further give her song a Messianic and forward-looking tone. This title may imply one who is truly powerful, as opposed to the earthly rulers mentioned in v. 52, who are arrogant about their abilities but all their strength comes to naught when faced with God. In this context, it “is to be understood as his mightiness and is taken up in v. 51 in terms of the strength shown by God’s arm, which scatters the proud but also brings help to Israel (v. 54).” Mary then calls the Lord by another title, “Holy One.” Again, v. 49a and v. 49b are parallel as Mary calls the Lord by various titles. Luke does not mention the holiness of God again in Luke–Acts. God’s mercy is also an aspect of his holiness. The term “great, great things” (megala) is a stereotyped reflection of LXX language used alongside God’s saving intervention, especially in relation to the Exodus.

Verses 49b–50 function as a transition from the first stanza to the second by beginning to widen those affected by Mary’s pregnancy. She remarks on the holiness of God’s name and his mercy for all generations that fear him. Verse 49b echoes Ps 111:9–10, which remarks that the fear of the Lord is the origin of all wisdom, a trope also found in Mary’s song. The final verse of the stanza is modeled upon Ps 103:17. What God is accomplishing through Mary is not for her alone, but will be felt forever by those who fear him. The term “fear” (phobeomai), when referring to God, mixes fright and profound respect. God’s mercy includes how he has remained faithful to Israel and the promises he made to Abraham, despite Israel’s repeated breaking of their own promise. Hays raises the possibility that “Luke’s reference to the Abrahamic promise also adumbrates the extension of the blessing to ‘all the nations of the earth’ (Gen 22:18; cf. Gen 12:1–3).” God is now demonstrating his mercy with Mary’s miraculous pregnancy. Her baby will forever affect all those who fear God.

**God Fulfills His Promises to Israel (vv. 51–55)**

Mary now expands her praise from her individual experience to what God is accomplishing for all Israel. The corporate implications of God’s activity now come into full view. This progression divides the song in half, with vv. 46–50 dealing with God’s graciousness to Mary herself and vv. 51–55 concerned with God’s mercy to Israel. These two portions of Mary’s song contain repeated terms and images:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Israel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 48</td>
<td>The notion of “his servant”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vv. 48, 50</td>
<td>The object of favor and mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 48</td>
<td>The term “lowly” (tapeinosis, tapeinos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 50</td>
<td>The timelessness of God’s mercy</td>
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These repetitions serve to tie the two parts together as well as to identify Mary as the first of the great reversal. The two strophes'
similarities link Mary with Israel. Mary is the first to receive this glorious gift, but Israel will not be far behind.

Mary’s pregnancy is so pivotal in Israel’s history that Mary speaks of God showing “strength with his arm.” In the LXX, this expression is used specifically with regard to the Exodus and signifies a fundamental shift in history. While Mary uses language from the distant past, she is referring to the current miracle God is performing—the sending of the long-awaited Messiah to save Israel. The second stanza is a fresh description of the miracle in v. 49. In fact, Mary’s pregnancy is in the same vein as one of the most significant events in all of Israel’s history—the Exodus. Luke’s consistent grammar conveys that Mary is referring to the same event and not suddenly speaking about a distant event in Israel’s history (although God’s continual faithfulness is part of the backdrop). Thus, Mary’s praise responds to her own experience of transformation in which she recognizes the dawn of God’s restoration of Israel.

With his mighty arm, God scatters his enemies and humbles the proud. In anticipation of Luke’s major themes, God begins to work against forces in opposition to his purpose. The proud do not fear God and are neither hungry nor distressed. The clause, “He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts,” identifies the pride of those scattered as a “deeply rooted orientation of the person.” The thoughts of their hearts (dianoia kardias) appears twice in the LXX. The Magnificat outlines a number of ways that enemy has attacked—oppression of the poor, pride, claims of power, and amassing wealth—and it is against such opposing forces that God has come to declare war.

The sentiment of God casting down rulers is a common trope in the OT. The rulers should be identified with the arrogant of v. 51b and those who have become rich in v. 53, while those of humble estate are equivalent to the hungry of v. 53a and the needy of Israel in v. 54a. The needy fear God while the powerful do not. The linguistic connections with the OT are closer in v. 51 than in v. 52, but once again, one need not identify a specific allusion because the theme is so prolific. These images of God’s salvific work are concrete and this-worldly. When they are set within a larger context of foreign occupation and oppression, it is clear that Mary’s vision of redemption is concerned with the social realities of daily existence. In fact, this concern for the poor and marginalized comprises the fabric of Luke’s entire narrative. Joel Green, however, points out that God’s purpose is not to obliterate the powerful so that the lowly can achieve the positions of honor and privilege to which they previously had no access. Rather, God is at work in individual lives and in the social order to subvert the very structure of society that supports and perpetuates such distinctions and oppression. God is creating a new world order, not simply swapping the poor with the rich.

The final two verses of Mary’s song explain why God is taking such interest in Mary and Israel—Israel is his servant and he will mercifully keep his promises to Abraham and his progeny forever. In the LXX, the noun “Israel” and the verb “help” (antilambanō) come together in Isa 41:8–9. The term “servant” (pais) is a description for the nation addressed in exile and assured of God’s help, the restoration of their fortunes, and of their role as an instrument of his purposes. To speak of God remembering is typical, especially in the Psalms. Mary celebrates God’s remembrance of his servant Israel. The phrase “to remember mercy” (mnēsthēnai eleous, v. 54) is a Semitism that further defines God’s activity as a remembering of mercy. Linked to the clauses following in v. 55, the term “mercy” may be part of an allusion to 2 Sam 22:51 and Mic 7:20. The helping of Israel (v. 54a) stands in antithesis to the scattering of the proud in v. 52b. Both the helping and scattering, together with their expansion in vv. 52–53, elaborate the strength exhibited by God’s arm (vv. 51a–54a), which in v. 52b is said to be in remembrance of God’s mercy. God’s reversal is rooted deeply in his covenantal relationship with his people. All of the operative words in vv. 54–55 (servant, remember, mercy, promise, ancestors, and Abraham) point to God’s history with Israel, to their election, and to their covenantal relationship. The God Mary praises is the covenant-making God, the one who acts out of his own self-giving nature to embrace men and women in relationship.

That God should stoop to recall his pledge to Abraham is the theme of many OT passages. That the Mighty One should recall Israel and help them in their time of need is a source of constant amazement. These examples show that Mary recognizes in her pregnancy the coming restoration of Israel, in keeping with the promise made to Abraham. The song ends with reference to the power and the eternal dimensions of God’s blessing, which Mary is now celebrating.

Conclusion

The overarching observation of this article is that Mary’s Magnificat is saturated with OT allusions (primarily gleaned from the LXX in light of its common language with Luke’s Gospel). This saturation enhances the connection between the Magnificat and the history and faith of Israel—indeed between Mary herself and Israel. Mary thus fills a role much like the various OT prophets who not only spoke to Israel but represented Israel in their words and actions. Hays declares, “Luke’s hermeneutical strategy, then is to renarrate the story of Israel in such a way that the story of Jesus and the church can be confidently recognized as the fulfillment of the divine plan for salvation, for Israel and for the whole world.” Mary’s song plays an important role in the “renarration” of Israel’s story. Thus, Mary not only follows in the tradition of OT prophets but becomes one of the first NT prophets.

Furthermore, two motifs are sustained throughout the song. The first is the portrayal of God as the divine warrior who accomplishes deliverance at both the personal and corporate level. God is the Mighty One who accomplishes great things, who shows strength by scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful from their thrones, and sending the rich away empty. Mary sings of the Holy One who will do these things for her as well as for Israel. She is one of the lowly who will benefit from this rearrangement of the world. God engages in battle on behalf of God’s people but, at the same time, is the merciful God of the covenant. He lifts up the lowly, extends mercy to those who fear him, fills the hungry, and helps Israel. These two images of
God merge in the theme of reordering the world. God’s dynamic acts are for the sake of those who fear him. At this point in the narrative, it is only hinted that this reordering will do more than help those who are a part of the traditional Israel. Furthermore, the gender of the singer also hints at Luke’s focus on the uplifting of women in Jesus’s ministry. The child Mary bears will become an event larger than anything God has yet done for Israel. It will change the entire world, not merely a nation. In light of Luke’s major themes in Luke–Acts, these descendants mentioned in the Magnificat’s final verse will include Gentiles as well as the Jews.49

God is in the process of turning the world upside down, and he has announced this through the voice of Mary. We are right, therefore, to join with Luke and with the angel Gabriel in saying, “Hail, favored one,” and to join with Christians across the ages in saying, Ave Maria.

Notes
1. Note that the LXX includes books commonly designated Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical. Thus this article will sometimes refer, for example, to books such as Judith or Baruch. Note also that the versification of the LXX sometimes differs from the Hebrew text of the OT. Thus, for example, Ps 23 [24]:5 means vv. 5 of Ps 23, which is Ps 24 in the Hebrew Bible. The edition used in this study is Albert Rahlfis, Septuaginta, editio altera, ed. Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

2. This is replayed in a similar fashion when John and Jesus meet as adults; the former acknowledges the greatness of the latter (Luke 3:15–17, 21–22).


5. Similarly, Jesus proclaims his purpose in coming in 4:14–37. Many view this pericope as the inaugural address of Jesus’s ministry, but Luke establishes these themes while Christ is still in the womb through Mary’s song.

6. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, 193, argues that Luke, more than the other gospel authors, relies on the “literary device of allusion and echo” to “lure us into the work of close, retrospectively alert reading, seeking to discern and interpret the intertextual clues woven into the fabric of the story.”

7. See Richard Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14–33, for a solid introduction to allusions, echoes, and quotations to Scripture. See also Hays, Echoes of Scripture, 1–14, for the “imagination” required to see scripture through the evangelists’ viewpoint. Additionally, see Carl Holloway “Luke’s Use of the LXX in Acts,” in Die Septuaginta und das frühe Christentum, ed. S. Thomas Caulley and Hermann Lichtenberger (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 233–95, for a history of previous scholarship as well as a sampling of how one can find allusions and echoes from the LXX.

8. Exod 15:19–21, Judg 5:1–31, Judith 16:1–17, 1 Sam 2:1–16, respectively.


10. There is enough non-Lukan vocabulary, style, and Semitisms to make a complete Lukan composition implausible; nonetheless, there is enough Lukan diction to suggest that he had some role in the final editing of the form. Nolland, Luke, 63.


14. Contra Brown, Mary, 109, who contends that the argument that the song better describes one woman rather than the other is inconclusive and the manuscript evidence should be the deciding factor.


18. The similarity between pneuma and psuchē is Hebraic and is reflected in the LXX (Ps 77:2–3, Job 12:10, Isa 26:9, Wis 15:11). Nolland, Luke, 69.

19. “God my savior” follows the LXX and is also a Hebrew idiom (e.g., 1 Chr 16:35, Pss 23 [24]:5, 24 [25]:5, 26 [27]:3, Hab 3:18). Nolland, Luke, 69.

20. It is found only in Ps 38 [39]:16 and both words are also used in relation to God.

21. Luke’s audience lived in a society in which virginity was highly valued. If Mary were pregnant, it would be assumed that she lost her virginity before her marriage. From this perspective, an ancient reader might easily consider a virgin and a barren woman to be in parallel situations. See DeLong, Surprised by God, 168.

22. Scholars debate the exact meaning of Mary’s humble state. Nolland argues, “Though her language is personal (“my savior”) as in v 48a, the salvation she has in view is that for which the nation had longed (just as her tapeinōsis, “afflicted state” in v 48a is the common state of God’s people and no predicament specific to Mary).” For God’s people it is the lack of that child who is to be the messianic deliverer that causes them to suffer (Isa 9:6). Nolland, Luke, 69. Green agrees that term is used with reference to the oppressed people of God. This places Mary’s affirmation of God’s saving act squarely in the context of the lowliness experience by Israel under foreign domination and at the time of her pregnancy in Luke’s narrative world (19). Mary’s lowly estate, then, should be taken as representative of her people’s. Green, Luke, 103.


26. The notion is that of Ps 103 [102]:17, but the exact language deviates from the LXX. The exact phrase in Luke 1:50 is not found anywhere in the LXX; however, the phrase does occur in the T. Levi 18:8. Nolland, Luke, 71.


31. Luke uses the verbs in the aorist tense in both stanzas. Johnson, however, argues that Mary is speaking about the Exodus itself. He
contends that v. 51 marks a transition from what God has done with Mary to what he has done in Israel's past. The use of the aorist is "less a problem than endless scholarly discussions of it might suggest: as God did in the past, he continues—age after age." Johnson, Luke, 42. Additionally, praise is closely associated with past narrative, for when people acknowledge God in praise they do so by retelling and memorializing historical events as the actions of God. DeLong, Surprised by God, 44.

32. See DeLong, Surprised by God, 161–62, for a detailed analysis on how the aorist functions in this hymn. DeLong conducts a narrative analysis that concludes that Mary's song is referring solely to events that have taken place thus far in the narrative.

33. References to God scattering his enemies can be found in Num 10:35, Ps 67 [68]:1 and 88 [89]:10. The theme of humbling the proud is a common motif in the Hebrew Bible: Ps 17 [18]:27, 118 [119]:21, 78, Prov 3:24, Isa 1:25, 13:11.

37. Nolland, Luke, 71. For "lift up" (hupsoō) see Ezek 21:31; for "humble" (tapeinos) see Job 5:11, 11:21 [LXX]; Ps 33 [34]:18, Ps 87 [88]:35, 101 [102]:17, Prov 3:24.

38. Nolland qualifies this interpretation, stating, "The socio-political language of vv. 52–53 should not be spiritualized away, but justice is only done to it when it is seen in relation to the matrix that is established in the poem by the juxtaposition of the ethical and religious (vv. 50, 51), the socio-economic (vv. 52–53), and the national (vv. 54–55; 50, 21). Each must be allowed to interpret the other; values from none of the spheres can be allowed to stand alone." Nolland, Luke, 72.

39. Luke is concerned with the coming of salvation in the present (cf., 4:21; 23:43), even if the consummation of God's work remains future.

Therefore, the upheaval embodied in Mary's song is a vision for the present, not the distant future. Green, Luke, 100.

42. E.g., Gen 19:29, Exod 32:13, 2 Chr 6:42, Ps 73 [74]:2, 104 [105]:8, 118 [119]:49, Hab 3:2.
43. Nolland, Luke, 73. See the construction in Ps 110 [111]:6.
44. Nolland, Luke, 73.
45. E.g., Exod 21:24, 32:23, Deut 9:27, and Ps 104 [105]:8–11, 42.
47. It has been understood by some as a dative of advantage (the promise is “in favor of Abraham”), and by others as modifying (after a parenthetic clause) the “mercy” of v. 54b. Nolland, Luke, 73–74.

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—Paul Chilcote, Ashland Seminary
The Question

Without question, women are more prominent in Luke's writings than in any of the other three Gospel writers. The interpretation of their presence, however, is contested. In recent years, significant attention has been given to the role the women play in the narratives of Luke and Acts. The silence of their voices after the first few chapters of Luke makes one commentator label it, "an extremely dangerous text, perhaps the most dangerous in the Bible." Can we read Luke as promoting the participation of women in the newly inaugurated Christian community? Or are women present but, after the Gospel prologue, relegated increasingly to silent supportive roles through the rest of Luke's Gospel and Acts? While Mary sings solo, must Priscilla and others be drowned out by a male choir?

Luke's Gospel bursts into action with God-obedient, Spirit-filled women, exuberantly prophesying the coming of God's Anointed One. With the other Gospel writers, he records those women who come to Jesus, and the presence of women around Jesus during the passion narrative, and as crucial (even if not credited) witnesses to the resurrection. In Luke and Acts, women continue to receive considerable space in the text. One prominent occupier of this space is Luke's male-female pairs.

But what role do the women play in Luke's narrative? After the first chapter, as the kingdom of God is inaugurated and unfolds through the pages of the Gospel and Acts, are the women confined to traditional roles of prayer and service? Do the male-female pairs disappear in Acts, where the central place is taken by male preachers and apostles while women's voices are silenced? Does Luke show women in the early Jesus community involved in roles that stand in contrast to the surrounding society? Or does Luke's account suppress leadership roles of women to those commonly assumed by women within Roman Empire norms? What are the implications for women and men in different cultural contexts, even as Luke and Acts are read today?

A Woman's Place

Paul's declaration in Gal 3:28 ("There is no longer Jew or Greek, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" [NRSV]) may have been a rejoinder to the daily morning prayer of Jewish men, "Blessed art thou, O God, for not making me a Gentile, slave, or woman." The prayer affirmed the privileged place of free Jewish maleness. As the community gathered before God's presence during NT times, Jewish women could enter no farther than the Court of Women in the temple. At the time of the annual feasts, those who were not required to appear before the Lord at the temple included children, slaves, women, and those who were sick or disabled. Judith Baskin's comment that, while a Gentile could be circumcised and a slave freed, a woman "was condemned by the essential qualities and characteristics of her gender to permanent restriction from fully sharing the privileges and responsibilities of male-defined covenantal Judaism, particularly the highly valued communal pursuits of worship, study, and governance," typifies temple practices of the time, even while more recent studies show wider involvement in religious practices elsewhere.

The temple was a visual spatial representation of centralized sacred hierarchy at the time of Jesus: Gentiles, then Jewish women, Jewish men, priests, chief priests—a hierarchy leading inward toward the heavy curtain separating humanity from divine presence. How do we read Luke's writings in this context of sacred-social ordering?

Rites of Passage

The early chapters of Luke's Gospel are shaped around rites of passage, times when women traditionally occupy a more central place in cultures around the world. While men are custodians of the Law in official religious spaces, women take a more central role in crucial life transitions, managing family harmony and wellbeing.

The Gospel of Luke begins where we would expect to hear news of God's actions—in the official temple space, in fact right in the Holy Place, at the time of prayer, with the congregation praying outside (1:8–10). We can imagine the priests waiting outside the Holy Place, then the Court of Israel full of men praying, farther out the Court of Women, and beyond that the Court of Gentiles. Holy time, holy place, God sends his messenger; and God's message is met by the official religious functionary, Zechariah, with disbelief.

Then the scene shifts away from the religious center of Jerusalem to Nazareth in rural territory, as well as up into the hill country of Judah—to peripheral places, and into women's spaces, and activities. In rapid succession over the first three chapters, Luke conducts us through rites of passage: conception (1:24, 31, 35), two pregnant women greeting each other (1:30ff.), the birth of John (1:57–58), his circumcision and naming (1:59ff.), the birth of Jesus (2:1ff.), his purification (2:22), the offering for Jesus as Mary's firstborn (2:23, 27). Then we hear of Jesus at puberty, a twelve-year-old, the year of preparation for entry to adulthood for Jewish youths. Finally, the adult John calls his community to a rite of renewal in baptism, and thus begins the work of Jesus at about thirty years of age, the normal age of marriage for Jewish men.

At the end of the Gospel, the passion narrative takes us back into rites of passage—the death of Jesus, where women are weeping at the crucifixion (23:27), embodying community grief. They are there to see where Jesus is buried, and to bring spices and ointments for the corpse (23:56).

Because women are present at and vitally involved in these rites of passage, at times and places which simultaneously...
are not official religious activity but do nonetheless link with religious rites and spaces, women receive a unique and privileged opportunity to observe God’s new initiative and thus bear witness to it. God’s activity does not always occur at, nor is it always recognized at traditional centers of religious activity and power; sometimes it is more peripherally positioned and results in those who are socially marginalized (e.g., the shepherds of 2:8ff.) recognizing God’s action, the new in-breaking of God’s kingdom. Women are the sole witnesses to the resurrection at a time when a woman’s testimony was viewed with skepticism; her reliability was suspect since (like slaves and children) she was subject to someone else. In Luke’s writings, we see God’s actions taking place within existing socio-cultural patterns even as the Gospel challenges or reformulates these.13

Male-Female Pairs

The use of male-female pairs is present throughout Luke’s Gospel.14 Consider, for example, the following list:

- Zechariah (1:5–23, 67–79) and Mary (1:26–38, 46–56), their responses and their songs.
- Simeon (2:25–35) and Anna (2:36–38).15
- The widow of Zarephath (4:25–26) and Naaman the Syrian (4:27) as exemplars.
- The healings of Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38–89) and the possessed man (4:33–35).
- The centurion (7:1–10) and the widow of Nain (7:11–17).
- The widow of Nain’s son (7:11–17) and Jairus’s daughter (8:40–42a, 49–56).
- The sinful woman (7:36–50) and Simon the Pharisee (7:36–50).
- Jesus’s followers (6:12–16 and 8:1–3).
- Women in the crowd (11:27) and a blind man and woman both call out to Jesus from the crowd (18:35–43).
- Ananias and Sapphira seek to deceive the leadership and community (5:1–11).
- Both men and women are added to the disciples (5:14).
- Saul persecutes both men and women (8:3; 9:2, 22:4).
- Both men and women are baptized (8:12).
- Aeneas (9:32–35) and Tabitha (9:36–43) are healed.
- Devout women of high standing and leading men of the city oppose Paul (13:50).
- Lydia (16:1–15)18 and the Philippian jailor (16:23–34) are baptized, together with their households.
- Women and men at Thessalonica join Paul and Silas (17:4).
- Damaris and Dionysius follow Paul at Athens (17:34).
- Priscilla and Aquila (18:1–3, 26).
- Men, women, and children at Tyre (21:5).
- Philip’s daughters and Agabus prophesy (21:9–10).
- Felix and Drusilla (24:24).
- Agrippa and Bernice (25:13, 23; 26:30).
- Beyond these pairs, the stories of other women are also described, including Hellenistic Jewish widows (6:1), Pharaoh’s daughter bringing up Moses (7:21), Mary the mother of John Mark (whose house was a place gathering and hospitality), with Rhoda her maid (12:12–15), and the slave-girl whose spirit of divination was exorcised (16:16–18).19 Ben Witherington III describes five vignettes in Acts of women in various roles within the new community as Luke indicating “how things ought to be” (9:36–42; 12:12–17; 16:12–15, 40; 18:1–3, 24–6; 21:9).20

Jew-Gentile Pairs

- The use of generic male-female duplets in Acts alerts us to another deliberate pattern of pairing particularly present in Acts, which has received less attention: Jews with Gentiles.
- The Gentiles and the people of Israel conspire with the leaders against Jesus (4:27).
- Jews and Gentiles in Iconium believe (14:1).
- Jews and Gentiles also oppose the Gospel in Iconium, and plot with their leaders against the apostles (14:2, 5).
- Paul teaches both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue in Corinth (18:4).
- Jews and Greeks in Asia hear the Word of the Lord (19:10).
- Jews and Greeks are filled with fear at the Name of the Lord (19:17).
• Paul has declared the Good News to Jews and Greeks in Ephesus (20:21).
• The Lord promises to rescue Paul from his own people and from the Gentiles (26:17).
• Paul has preached to the Jewish people and to Gentiles (26:20).
• Christ proclaims light to his own people and to Gentiles (26:23).

A fundamental premise of Luke–Acts is radical inclusiveness offered in the new Christ-community. The male-female references in Acts are matched by its Jew-Gentile references. Luke’s Gospel has emphasized this ontological equality for women and men in the newly-inaugurated kingdom; in Acts the boundaries between Jew and Gentile are also exploded. Just as priesthood is no longer restricted to the members of one tribe, but in Christ all become priests of God, so too as the temple veil separating God from humanity is torn apart (Luke 23:45), the light of the risen Christ bursts out through the rent curtain to all who are invited to become part of the new priesthood—not just to Jewish men, but also through the temple courts beyond, to women, and to Gentiles. In short, in Luke–Acts we see the socio-sacred hierarchy progressively dismantled.

The Jerusalem Council

The Acts 15 account of the Jerusalem Council debate is central, both in its textual positioning in the middle of the book of Acts and also thematically. The decision of the council deconstructs socio-sacred ranking. Gentiles are not required to be circumcised (a marker of Jewish identity), but can become full participants in the kingdom, full followers of Christ, as Gentiles. This is the crucial question of the Council. At the same time, belonging to the community is not to be defined by a male rite of entry, but only by baptism, offered equally to women and men (Acts 16:15, 33). Community inclusiveness is retained on all fronts. Full membership and participation in the new covenant is conferred through baptism into Christ; it is not dependent on anatomy or ethnic origins.

Where Do We Go Now?

I suggest four implications from our reading:

First, while we affirm the objective truth of God’s revelation, we also receive it subjectively in our own sin-soaked consciousness and contexts. So it is wise for us to apply the feminists’ call for a “hermeneutics of suspicion” to our own reading of the relevant texts. Recognizing that issues of power are implicit in every situation, in our own reading and our writing, we can ask whose voices are represented and whose voices are silenced. More positively, we can pay attention to the view from the margins and ask what is happening there. How does the world, and God’s activity, look from that perspective? Going further, Richard Bauckham suggests that Luke’s bracketing of Jesus’s ministry with mention of the women among his followers (Luke 8:1–3, 24:10) invites us (and those with whom we read/tell the Gospel narrative) to a gynocentric reading of this Gospel, and therefore also of other texts.

Second, Luke describes faithful disciples as those who hear the words of Jesus and respond, both women and men, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. Thus Christians are defined in relationship first of all to Jesus, the Anointed One whom we follow. Christian women and men should not be designated primarily by family or by parental or marital relationships. Unlike the surrounding literary culture, Luke’s writings mention a significant number of women by name. In many societies, even today, women are known not by their own names, but by the name of their eldest son. In the Middle East, for example, I lived next door to Umm (“mother of”) Muhammad for three years. I saw her almost daily, but in that time never learned her own name. In the Qur’an, only one woman (Mary the mother of Jesus) is mentioned by name. Such a society confers significance on women through their male kin. In Jesus we receive our own identity, not one that is mediated through the names and identities of others, whether male kin or sexual partners, and we are known by our own names.

Third, while Rabbi Eliezer’s dictum, “Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman . . . Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity,” was a minority position, access to scholarship for women, though present in particular communities such as the Therapeutrides, was often limited by status, wealth, and daily duties. Despite the social practices and prejudices of his time, Luke repeatedly demonstrates that obedience to Jesus is marked primarily by attentiveness to his Word, for women and for men. Examples include Mary’s (the mother of Jesus) diligent discerning of the meaning of God’s words and actions, and Mary’s (the sister of Martha) deliberate neglect of domestic duties in order to listen to Jesus’s teaching. In countries with low (and gendered) levels of literacy, success in literacy programs is often correlated with people desiring to read God’s Word for themselves. Faithful discipleship calls for making both education and God’s Word available to all people, women and men, in their own language, and for ensuring equal access and encouragement to theological education for all.

Fourth, Luke shows that women (as well as men) are models of and for the Christian community. Women respond to Christ’s call, to be and do, to prayer and service to one another. Even as bakers and sweepers, women image God’s initiative among people (13:20–21, 15:8–10). Imitation requires identification. In those texts where discipleship and the divine nature are communicated with male descriptors and models, women’s propensity for identifying with and following biblical teaching may be constrained. Such constraints can be minimized in by including female and gender-inclusive language, images, and illustrations in preaching and teaching.

Present But Silent?

The question still remains: though Luke and Acts include numerous examples of women holding positions of leadership, why do they speak so rarely? How should we understand the apparent silencing of women in Acts? Is their full participation in the new community reduced simply to presence? Bauckham suggests two possibilities for women in the Jesus movement:
that they should “step outside their accepted social roles” or that they should “discover new possibilities within the socially accepted framework of their lives.”

However, as Luke’s writings unfold, the new possibilities offered to women fall far short of the preaching, teaching, healing, and exercising roles of the male Jewish leaders. While they are demonstrably exercising ministries of the Word and of leadership, they are given no active voice in Luke’s writings, after the first few chapters. Are Priscilla and other women then circumscribed by their “accepted social role”? The central event of Acts, the Jerusalem Council, and what follows it, may offer us an interpretive key.

After tense debate in the Council of apostles and elders, the issue is resolved and circumcision is not imposed on the Gentiles (Acts 15). But then following right after the Council decision (Acts 16:3–4), Paul encounters Timothy and has him circumcised, and then travels with the still-sore youth “from town to town,” delivering to the churches for observance the decision that circumcision was not required. Timothy’s thoughts about the matter are not mentioned.

The proximity of the passages emphasizes the contradiction in word and action. Is Luke then recording for us an example of Paul in what seems to be monumen tal inconsistency? How do we interpret this narrative sequence? Perhaps what we see at work is a high missionary principle. Christians may choose to live under traditions (not gospel requirements) in order to reach people within those traditions. The apparent contradiction is between Christ’s unconditional salvation, and what it might mean for the messenger to incarnate that Good News in a particular community (1 Cor 9:1–23). Similarly, Paul would later put himself under a vow and the legal requirements for purification according to the Law (Acts 18:18, 21:24). There is freedom to serve in the new community without regard to gender, ethnicity or physical attributes. Nevertheless, obedience to the gospel regulates our freedom, allowing us to become all things to all people, so that by all means we should reach some.

As I wrote this section, I was sitting in Kabul airport, Afghanistan, garbed in flowing black with only face, hands and feet showing, according to local expectations of modesty. Gospel requirements of modesty are read through local perceptions, and gospel freedom is used in the service of those outside the kingdom, for we are slaves to the Good News just as Paul was a slave for the sake of Christ. We read Luke’s affirmation of equal leadership of male and female, Jew and Gentile, for the gospel and its mission in the world, and at the same time Luke’s high regard for the requirements of that ministry as we engage in it, for the sake of others. Luke’s radical inclusion of women and consequent restricted description of their role, analogous to Timothy’s hasty procedure, suggests that preaching the Good News can be facilitated by (but never restricted to) adherence to cultural and traditional norms.

Living Eschatologically—In Pregnant Expectation Of What Is To Come

F. Scott Spencer reminds us of the eschatological context of Jesus’s story of the widow pleading for justice (Luke 18:7–9). With feisty pugnaciousness the widow confronts the family, legal, and cultural factors which constrain her. She is the model for Jesus-followers to engage with their cultural context through prayer and practical action until justice comes and God’s kingdom breaks in.

In Luke’s writings, we can emulate the widow, refusing to be circumscribed by our situation, but living and acting expectantly to see God’s action in all domains of life. This includes recognizing and naming sinful structures and their impact in the lives of women and men, and naming women’s and men’s own sinful actions and attitudes. In naming and confronting sin, we begin to live toward the future of grace.

Serene Jones suggests, “To live in the space of justification—to be a woman absolved and opened to relation—is not to be freed from the constraints of culture and history. It is to live in Christ forever poised on the edge of a promised land: she smells the milk and honey of the new world to come but remembers that the ground beneath her feet remains dry and in need of tilling.”

Reading gender, and Gentiles, in Luke’s writings affirms for us the Good News in Christ—that how we live is shaped by what is now, but it is determined by what is to come.

Notes


2. The appearance and announcement of the angel to Zechariah suggests Judg 13, where the angel appears to Manoah’s wife, the mother of Samson, as well as Gen 16:7–14, with Hagar’s encounter with an angel. Mary’s song (Luke 1:46–55) closely parallels Hannah’s song (1 Sam 2:1–10) and also echoes other songs of thanksgiving for God’s mercy to the singer and to all his people (Miriam in Exod 15:21, Deborah in Judg 5, Judith in Judith 16:1–17). Bauckham notes that (except for Miriam), the woman singing is also the agent through whom God brings salvation. He comments: “What happens in the domestic and familial sphere of the woman transcends that sphere, achieving in God’s purpose, national and even worldwide significance and effect. The combination, in each song in its context, of the individual and the general, the personal and the political, the domestic and the public, is precisely the point of the song.” Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 54, 63.

3. Luke notes twice that the women were not believed by the men (24:11, 22ff.).


5. Judith Reesa Baskin, Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature (London: University Press of New England, 2002), 77. Temple restrictions were more stringent during women’s monthly purification, and also for forty days after the birth of a son, and eighty days after the birth of a daughter (Luke 2:22, Lev 12:2–4); during such times women were not even allowed into the Court of the Gentiles. In light of Baskin’s comment, see Wilson’s helpful discussion of how Luke problematizes gender distinctions, along with outside/insider and able/disabled differentiation. Brittany E. Wilson, Unmanly Men: Reconfigurations of Masculinity in Luke—Acts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 261.
6. See chs. 6 and 9 of Lynn H. Cohick, Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), which describe Jewish women in some communities involved in study and roles of authority in synagogues.

7. See Wilson, Unmanly Men, ch. 3, for a discussion of how Luke’s description of Zechariah’s silencing is part of reformulating ideals of masculinity in the new community.

8. See the description in Kenneth E. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 52.

9. Bauckham, Gospel Women, 49, uses narrative perspective to show this encounter as the central point of the ring / chiasmic structure of Luke 1:5–80. At this climactic moment in history and eternity, the presence of the Omnipotent Creator God incarnate in created human form is first announced to the cosmos—through a conversation between two gravid women.

10. See Lev 12. It is the mother who should be ritually cleansed. Hence Luke’s “their purification” is curious: commentators are divided as to whether the inclusion of Joseph or of Jesus is implied. Luke seems to refer to the sacrifice at the conclusion of blood purification (33 days). However, the description of that ritual in Lev 12 is preceded by the circumcision (for which “purification” is a synonym) of the male child at the conclusion of the mother’s ceremonial uncleanness (7 days), which suggests that Jesus may be in focus with Mary here.


13. Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, argues that patriarchy is not rejected; rather, women are asked to reformulate traditional roles in the light of their primary calling as disciples, while at the same time new possibilities for women in social value and roles of service are open. See also Wilson, Unmanly Men, 256–63.

14. Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 63, 87, noting male-female paradigms in the other Gospels (and 1 Cor 7), suggests it may derive from Jesus himself using such male-female pairings.


18. Note the contrast here also with the Jewish synagogue (as well as temple): a group of women could not make a forum for a synagogue gathering, but Paul can begin a church gathering with this group of women (Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 215).

19. The juxtaposition of Lydia, wealthy trader, with the slave girl, shows that neither slave nor free are outside the kingdom—the second element in the Jewish morning prayer of thanksgiving.


21. Anticipatory notes of Gentile access appear in Luke’s Gospel also. 4:16–30 is a message against ethnocentrism. In 11:29–32 the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South are a sign to the Jews. And in 17:18, only the Samaritan shows the proper response of thanksgiving to Jesus’s act of healing.

22. For an interesting comparison, see Jaschok and Shui’s discussion about how the activity of female Muslim imams (ahong) in China may bring into question “the immutability of a ‘celestial patriarchy,’” and its “subtext of a more worldly gender hierarchy.” Maria Jaschok and Jingjun Shui, The History of Women’s Mosques in Chinese Islam (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 236.

23. “Where Do We Go Now?” is the title of Nadine Labaki’s evocative film, set in a Lebanese village where the women conspire to stop their (Muslim and Christian) husbands and sons from fighting each other. Their efforts take them into unexpected dimensions of standing in the other person’s shoes, confronting their menfolk with questions of identity and allegiance.

24. F. Scott Spencer, Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), ch. 2. Helpful questions might include asking for each example of women in Luke’s writings:

• What are the cultural expectations of, and possibilities for, her as a woman in that situation?
• How much agency does she exercise? Or is she a passive recipient of circumstances?
• Why does Luke include this woman? What point is he making?


26. Named women include Mary (1:27–56, 2:25–34), Anna (2:36–38), Mary Magdalene (8:2, 24:10), Joanna (8:3, 24:10), Susanna (8:3), Martha and Mary (10:38–42), and Mary mother of James (24:10). Simon’s mother-in-law (4:38–39) and Jairus’s daughter (8:40–42, 49–56) are identified according to male kin; although it may be argued that this is according to order of character appearance in the text. Some other women are left unnamed.


28. A philosophical sect which flourished in Alexandria, Egypt, as described in Philo, On the Contemplative Life. See Cohick, Women in the World of the Earliest Christians, ch. 6, for a discussion of this group and of women’s presence in the Essene community and other Jewish contexts.

29. Worldwide, women’s literacy is about two-thirds that of men, and this percentage is frequently applicable at individual country levels. See http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Pages/data-release-map-2013.aspx.


32. Gentiles also present in Acts, invited into the Christ-community, are likewise limited in voice and leadership.


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In the often-heated evangelical debate concerning the ordination of women, one struggles to find a coherent and exhaustive work that covers more than the relevant Pauline texts. For example, the respected works by Philip Payne and Craig Keener provide concentrated exegesis on the significant Pauline texts. Cynthia Long Westfall’s recent book offers a larger interpretive framework for the evangelical gender debate, a framework that is lucid, compelling, and profoundly refreshing, and one which does not miss the theological forest for the exegetical trees.

Westfall begins with Greco-Roman views of gender in ch. 1, which includes patronage, honor and shame, and the domestic spheres of women in the ancient world, concluding with an extended exploration of “head” (kephalē) and the “veil” in 1 Cor 11:2-16. Regarding the veil, she posits that it was not a symbol of submission; rather, “Paul’s direction for all women to veil was countercultural and favorable toward women” (43). Contrary to some recent arguments, Westfall concludes that Paul is referencing a veil as opposed to hair, although she does not see the two as mutually exclusive. She concludes that Paul’s multifaceted and contested use of “head” in 1 Cor 11 ought to be understood as “source” in 11:3, in relation to kinship, “where it will refer to a parent or ancestor/progenitor” (40), as it does in Philo’s On the Preliminary Studies. This understanding fits well with the broader context of 1 Cor 11, for the reciprocal nature of the source metaphor comes to fruition as both genders are taken from one another (vv. 7-9, 11-12).

Chapter 2 concerns gender stereotypes and the depth of Paul’s use of metaphors which apply to all believers, such as describing Christians as spiritual warriors, athletes, or the bride of Christ. Paul’s general disregard for social conventions is significant in his use of metaphors, especially when applying feminine metaphors to men. For instance, a man’s depiction as “Christ’s bride” (58-59) in Eph 5 “reverses the shame that was directly connected with the female’s sexual function in the Greco-Roman culture” (59).

Chapter 3 delves into the creation narratives, and Westfall pays special attention to how “image” functions in Pauline perspective. She challenges complementarian scholars, such as Thomas Schreiner, when she writes, “there should be no a priori assumptions that any Pauline command, prohibition, or instruction supported by the creation account is a ‘transcendent norm’ (or a universal conclusion) as opposed to an occasional or culturally bound application” (62). Though Paul sometimes mentions the temporal priority of Adam (1 Cor 11:7, 1 Tim 2:13-14), one cannot immediately codify temporal priority with “normative or universal conclusions” (62-63). Westfall convincingly demonstrates that 1 Cor 11:7 and 1 Tim 2:13 are focused on the fact that “the creation of woman from man evens out the balance” (72-73). She also argues—contra Schreiner and others—that Paul’s statements about temporal priority are not propositional, but are narrative summaries (77). She includes a sophisticated exploration of “head” (79-84) in relation to creation and “source,” concluding: “One way that kephalē occurs distinctively is in language used for family, paternity, and ancestry” (82). When kephalē is coupled with “body” (sōma), the likelihood that Paul is using “head” to mean “source” becomes quite probable, especially in relation to the head/body metaphors in Colossians and Ephesians.

Chapter 4 focuses on Paul’s interpretation of the fall and how it impacts gender relationships. Westfall rightly points out that “deception” is not limited to a specific gender and argues, “Even though Eve was a woman, according to Paul the possibility of being tempted or deceived by Satan or sin is a universal experience” (111).

Chapter 5 is dedicated to Pauline eschatology and is, in my opinion, the most rewarding chapter in the volume. Westfall observes, “Probably most Christians have not considered how eschatology plays a crucial role in an attempt to construct a coherent Pauline theology of gender” (143). Paul’s vision for the future is fixated on the fact that “resurrected males and females equally share Christ’s destiny” (149). The “household” is not immune from the effects of Christ’s resurrection: it changes the social dynamics, for example, between Onesimus and Philemon (164-65) and among the three divided groups of Gal 3:28. What is most compelling is Westfall’s keen observation that the husband is shown doing “women’s work” in relation to household duties in Eph 5:25-27 (165), thus devastating the so-called “doctrine of separate spheres.”

The sixth chapter is centered on the Pauline concept of “calling.” Rather than beginning with 1 Cor 12-14, Westfall instead offers an extended exegesis of Rom 12:1-8 (though other texts are covered). Referencing John Piper’s discernment that he should become a pastor, Westfall forcefully responds: “When a man negotiates his call to ministry, he utilizes emotions and experience in accordance with his faith and the grace that he is given. . . . A woman is often told that it is invalid for her to utilize experience and emotions in discovering her call, since she may come up with the ‘wrong’ conclusion” (214). This chapter concludes with an extended and contextually-aware exegesis of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Following Payne and Gordon Fee, she views the theory that these verses were inserted by a scribe long after Paul composed the letter as “convincingly argued” (228 n. 63), though she also subjects the passage to an analysis that includes these two contested verses. She believes
that the context of 1 Cor 14 (and the entire epistle) is not about “public worship” in the modern sense, but takes place “within the woman’s sphere of influence and responsibility” (250)—namely, the house church. Westfall concludes that, if original, vv. 34-35 focus not on an absolute ban on women speaking, but rather being “quiet and self-controlled” (241). Westfall has offered those who affirm the originality of vv. 34-35 a way to interpret this difficult text that does not exclude women from answering their God-given call to ministerial service.

The seventh chapter focuses on authority and includes a helpful survey of Greco-Roman cultural views of authority—specifically, the variety of ways women functioned in the domestic sphere and how they wielded power. Westfall does not limit herself to how women used authority, for she notes how menbrandished authority as well.

The final chapter is an in-depth exegesis of 1 Tim 2:1-15, often noted as the key proof text that excludes women from teaching or assuming authority over men. Several of her arguments stand out. First, Westfall sees 1 Tim 2:8-15 as concerned with the household or domestic sphere rather than a public setting (311). Second, she believes the use of “wife/woman” (γυνὴ) throughout vv. 8-15 adds further evidence that Paul has a wife and husband in view rather than men and women in general, and thus he is putting a stop to an abusive relationship (cf. the marital mutuality of 1 Cor 7:3-4). Third, Westfall notes, "Paul uses the word authenteō ["assume/usurp authority"] to criticize the behavior of wives toward their husbands in a case of role reversal, where the woman would assume an authority that may be comparable to a paterfamilias and behave in an abusive or controlling manner" (293). She also performatively highlights the role of the false teachers in Ephesus, which helps to clarify and contextualize Paul’s temporary prohibition (296-97). She finally concludes that, “Rather than prohibiting women from participating as leaders in the church, Paul addresses the . . . [lack of] discipleship that is holding the Ephesian women believers back from maturity and sound teaching” (311-12).

There is much to commend in Westfall’s book. She has offered a comprehensive, thematic, and coherent reading of Paul that is far from limited to a relatively small number of highly contested verses. Westfall’s capacity to interpret scripture with sophistication is on display, especially in Rom 12:1-8. Her arguments based on the necessity of “experience” and “emotions” cannot be dismissed, especially when placed in the light of male preachers who highlight these same factors in discerning their calling to ministry. Her reading of 1 Cor 14:26-40, including her analysis which includes the contested verses, is especially helpful. Her exegesis of Gal 3:28 in context firmly rebuts the complementarian reading that the verse is restricted to an affirmation of who can be saved, and her work on Paul’s use of the creation narratives helpfully contextualizes a lingering question some egalitarians may have. Throughout the work, Westfall is spirited, scholarly, and deeply charitable to those who might disagree—even if she rightly leaves them little room for disagreement!

While there are no discernable shortcomings to Westfall’s book, there are some lingering questions. While the notion of “authority over” is likely not present in Eph 5 ("the husband is the head of the wife . . .") one can see the idea of “preeminence” at play concerning that vexatious word “head” (κεφαλή). Would Westfall see the notion of “preeminence” as a further continuation of role reversal and mutual submission, insofar as the husband has more to sacrifice as the preeminent one? Does the husband retain the titular concept of “preeminent” in a social context, but forsake the rights that come with such a title? A second possible question arises from 1 Tim 2:15 and its mention of “the childbirth” (τεκνογονία): the view that this refers to the birth of Christ is largely ignored. In the Pastoral Epistles, where Christ is said to be a mediator (1 Tim 2:5) and also called God (Titus 2:13), one wonders how the question of Paul’s Christology could enhance Westfall’s analysis of 1 Tim 2:15. The narrative of Christ as a “ransom” (1 Tim 2:6) might offer additional support for this Christological interpretation of 2:15. A chapter dedicated to Pauline Christology and perhaps the relationship between Christ, Adam, and gender would have been additionally welcome. Nevertheless, Westfall’s analysis does not falter because of these questions. Rather, we are encouraged to further explore the complex realities of our beloved Apostle.

In summation, Westfall’s book does not offer the church merely an egalitarian reading of a few isolated texts. Instead, she paints a broad and coherent mosaic that will force complementarians to grapple not only with her judicious exegesis of the relevant texts, but also with the reality that the totality of Paul’s theology supports women in ministry. Paul, as Westfall has amply established, is more than the sum of a few verses; indeed, Paul is the apostle not just to men, but also to women.

On a personal note, I suggested this book to a pastor friend whose church is debating whether to ordain women as pastors. While the debate in that church has continued unabated, my friend has since become convinced by Westfall’s work. It seems he has “found a reason to believe,” and to that end, Westfall’s splendid work has already been life changing indeed.

**Notes**

Book Review

Women’s Socioeconomic Status and Religious Leadership in Asia Minor in the First Two Centuries C.E.

By Katherine Bain (Fortress, 2014)

Reviewed by Jeff Miller

This book is a PhD dissertation, published in Fortress Press’s selective “Emerging Scholars” series. Indeed, it reads like a dissertation, and only specialists will resist the urge to skim through the survey of scholarship and explanation of method in the introduction and first chapter. (That is not to say these sections are of no value.)

Bain’s approach builds on the “kyriarchy” of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bain’s main doctoral professor at Harvard University. Borrowing its first syllable from a Greek word for “master” (kyrios), kyriarchy is “a model of the comprehensive structure of domination and stratification in the Roman Empire” (14). One principle of a kyriarchal approach is that literary sources tend to adhere to stereotypes more than inscriptions (such as tombstones) do. Bain thus argues that “the view from below in kyriarchal analysis highlights subordinated persons who remain invisible in other models of socioeconomic status” (171). Simply put, inscriptions give a clearer picture of marginalized people than literary texts do.

In short, Bain’s study demonstrates first that studying women in the Hellenistic cultures of the first two centuries AD is more complex than has typically been recognized. Gender is not an isolated indicator of status. Rather, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status are interwoven. An understanding of women’s religious leadership therefore rests on integrated knowledge of these and other factors. Second, Bain makes a compelling case that the number of women who functioned as heads of households, possessors of wealth, and leaders in civic and religious arenas is greater than is often supposed.

Chapter 2 concerns “Wealthy Women and Household Status.” Here Bain surveys images and inscriptions that describe women as heads of households, citizens, professionals, and as women with civic status and legal liability. She goes on to add similar insights from the Socratic dialogue Oikonomikos, written by Xenophon of Athens (c. 430–354 BC) and from two letters sent to the Christians of Smyrna by Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 50–110). In the latter, Bain sees Ignatius promoting a kyriarchal understanding of marriage and household.

This same chapter affirms other scholarship, notably that of Charlotte Methuen and Anne Hanson, that “widow” (Greek chēra) typically “connotes a woman who did not live with a man” (69) rather than a woman whose husband has died. Other points of interest for egalitarian biblical studies include that Judean wives could in fact divorce their husbands (69), Greco-Roman city neighborhoods tended to have workplaces and residences for both rich and poor clustered together (83–84), and not all wealthy Greco-Roman wives held the title “matron” (85–86).

Chapter 3 describes a handful of women patrons, utilizing both inscriptions and literature. Most prominent among these patrons are Tryphaena from the second-century Acts of Paul and Thecla and Phoebe from Rom 16. Bain’s section on Phoebe is especially interesting. Some of her conclusions follow:

As a wealthy widow, she expected to engage in patronage and demonstrate leadership. Phoebe . . . served as more than host and financial supporter. . . . Wealthy widows’ patronal religious leadership could have included reading and preaching in assemblies, evangelizing, occupying a prominent seat, wearing distinctive clothing, hosting travelers, reading and writing letters of recommendation, and making organizational decisions. (132-33)

Chapter 4 asks whether and to what extent slave and freed women participated in patronage and leadership. Bain’s answer is affirmative, and she gives examples of slave and freed women performing numerous occupations and gaining wealth sufficient for such participation. These occupations sometimes involved managing businesses, land, or slaves. One surprise (both to me and to Bain) is a burial inscription mentioning a slave who herself also owned a slave (149–50). Bain goes on to examine Jewish manumission inscriptions and Ignatius’s Letter to Polycarp, in which Ignatius advises that Christian slaves, male and female, “should not long to be set free through the common fund, lest they be found slaves of passion” (164; Ignatius to Polycarp 4.3). Bain argues that Ignatius “sought to strengthen kyriarchal structures in the ekklesia [church] by urging slaves to accept a religious status that spiritualized slavery while reinforcing the socioeconomic status quo” (166).

Though not lengthy (176 pages), the book is highly technical and aimed at specialists. It should be in all seminary libraries but on precious few living-room bookshelves. It is an especially helpful resource for those who, though already informed about the subject matter, are in need of updated and nuanced information.

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Book Review

*Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity*

By Stewart M. Hoover and Curtis D. Coats (New York University Press, 2015)

Reviewed by Alice Guinther

*Does God Make the Man?* is a fascinating look at how evangelical and ecumenical men process the messages they hear about masculinity from religion and media. The authors organized focus groups and recorded hundreds of hours of conversations to see if religion is vital to developing masculine identity. They conclude that, although evangelical men may claim to learn gender roles from the Bible, the actual sources of this knowledge are media and culture. As a result, both groups still believe there are male prerogatives of protection, provision and purpose, yet they are looking for a larger purpose for their lives.

Hoover and Coats argue that there are no gender-specific biblical ideas (unlike typical complementarian teachings regarding masculine identity); how gender is expressed is learned from culture. Scripture instructs both women and men in being Christ followers.

When interviewers asked these men to describe what the church teaches about “how to be a man,” there was difficulty from both the evangelical and ecumenical men in recalling any sort of church teaching. One evangelical responded this way:

“I’m trying to think of it exactly, I mean real specific teaching? I don’t know. Maybe I missed it. I mean generally I think they would take a biblical approach toward the sexes. This past week they were talking about nominating people for elders . . . And they specifically said a man . . . probably five years ago, that wouldn’t have struck me as odd . . . But I think in this day and age where things are progressing toward equality of the sexes . . . that’s probably a distinction he had to make.” (36)

The interviewee notes that the church needed to be explicit that the elder had to be male, which shows an awareness that women now have a greater presence in leadership.

I was encouraged to see the authors report on the impact of feminism on the uncertain ground of the evangelical idea of “headship.” One respondent, who has a commitment to male-only leadership, when asked to describe women’s roles in relation to “headship,” offered a somewhat egalitarian description.

Most people stop at “woman be submissive to your husband . . .” and that’s what they quote. But the next line is, men be submissive to your wife as you are submissive to . . . I think in that role, it’s respect, but it’s equal respect, equal love. It’s pretty much equal everything. It’s not like, women don’t speak in the church. . . . But my wife can have her opinion, but she knows—she just wants me to listen to her—but I still have the final say.” (38)

The same man, when asked about “gender beyond church and home,” gave a rather convoluted response:

You mean as far as women CEOs? I actually think it’s pretty cool. The thing a lot of people need to realize when they talk about that there shouldn’t be female presidents [is that] they have to answer to a board. So, and not that the boards [don’t have] females, but if there was a Chairman of the Board that was a female, I don’t know of any. So, I still think you could put—I think they are great in that role, but a President of our country? I don’t think so [laughs] . . . I guess I’d have to think about why because I can’t just tell you . . . you know I think if you look at the biblical principles, that would be why.” (38–39)

Hoover and Coats explain that their main research interests are traditional involvement in religion and how it intersects with media, and investigating “neo-traditionalist” claims of a “crisis of masculinity” where societal ills are thought to be the result of fatherless families and of “toxic masculinity” learned from media. Neo-traditionalists believe that strong male leadership will fix the various problems of both family and culture.

The authors began this study thinking they would find, at least within the ranks of evangelicalism, men who would clearly define what it means to “be a man.” While they found that Christianity is central to the lives of all the men in their study, their personal religious training has done little to shape their ideas of masculinity. Nor has it instilled a drive towards civic involvement; in fact, it seems to have prompted a focus on home and childrearing. The authors write:

Christianity is central to the identities and life experiences of the men in this study, but it does not simply instill positive gender identity or encourage public involvement. Further, media are as central as religion in the narratives of these devoted Christian men. This centrality of media does not create the toxic masculinity feared by conservative critics. Rather, media often reinforce Christian masculinity in ways that religion does not seem to. The men in this book do not engage media, Christianity, or the general “crisis of masculinity” discourse in the ways suggested by conservative critics. (5)

Their research finds that, rather than engage problems in their communities or society at large, these men put a premium on raising their children and being identified as good fathers; any other commitments would take them away from time with their families.

Hoover and Coats also look at the influence by the fathers of these men. Most respondents mentioned their fathers, but they qualified the fathers’ influence. They write, “Particularly telling to our project, most men don’t attribute a great repertoire of specific ideas to their fathers. Instead, while most seem to have learned what they consider positive things from fathers, many do not want to emulate some key things about their fathers’ practices . . . ‘My dad was a great dad, but . . .’” (72).
The participants could not talk about masculinity without talking about media. “Conversely, biblical characters rarely came up at all” (105–6). It seems these men look to media as the main sources of examples, including iconic television and movies. Ecumenical men chose examples like Bill Cosby; Tom Hanks as Captain John Miller in Saving Private Ryan; Russell Crowe in Gladiator and Cinderella Man; Mister Rogers; Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird; Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey in It’s a Wonderful Life; Dev Patel as Jamal in Slumdog Millionaire; Clint Eastwood as a director; and Presidents Barack Obama and Jimmy Carter. For evangelical men, the list included Bill Cosby; Mel Gibson in Braveheart and The Patriot; Mathew Fox as Jack in Lost; and Michael Landon as Charles Ingalls in Little House on the Prairie (103).

Evangelical and ecumenical men chose many of the same characters as representative of a masculine ideal. While they both identify with Hanks’s character in Saving Private Ryan, or discussed Gibson’s version of William Wallace in Braveheart, they brought their own spin to the characters. Where evangelicals might find a Christ-like sacrifice in Braveheart, ecumenical men might resonate with the reluctant revolutionary, only joining the cause after his “family” was destroyed.

Interviewees brought presuppositions to the media they cited to give meaning to their own beliefs. The authors write,

Respondents who were the most committed to the goals of the conservative critics, for example, engaged secular mainstream media in their daily lives in ways that actually reinforced neo-masculinist ideas about men, fathers, and families rather than contradict them. The same could be said for our more progressive or egalitarian men. They were also in the thrall of fairly traditional ideas about masculinity, expressed to some extent in their media diets. (107)

The book reinforces that what and how we learn about gender is influenced most by culture. Once those beliefs are solidified we tend to see and hear information that supports our belief systems.

An interesting change from “tradition” is that the men in both groups consider being a good father as a primary goal. That these men have invested their time in the unpaid work of childcare in the home is an interesting influence of feminism. The authors note that these men are looking to be “more nurturing husbands and fathers” (158).

Does God Make the Man? is primarily written for those studying the intersection of media and religion. There is an assumption that the reader will be somewhat familiar with feminist theory, including a basic understanding of gender constructivism. Overall, this book is approachable for the interested reader wanting to understand more about the influences of media on communication and meaning-making in society.

This book will not tell you how to be a better Christian, but it will show how media influences society through the example of two groups of men who explore what it means to be a Christian man. This book shows how certain men make sense of Christianity at home and at work, and how they see their roles as men. What they report also represents new perceptions of fatherhood in the face of patriarchy—a tradition which most evangelical and ecumenical men want to discard. Both groups place a premium on equality and shared responsibility in the domestic realm, which may give egalitarians room for hope.

In the end, this book shows how complicated the influences are at the crossroads of media and religion. It is encouraging to see reports of the greater influence of feminism on conservative Christians, yet at the same time discouraging that the media influences that capture these men’s attention still show a patriarchal, gender-essentialist message.

Notes


2. “Readers should keep in mind that the interviews on which this book is based took place before the widely reported allegations of sexual coercion against Bill Cosby surfaced” (198).

3. The authors and I find it interesting that Mel Gibson’s Passion of the Christ was not considered an iconic role for men.

4. I thank Stewart Hoover for taking the time to answer my questions, and I am grateful to Paul Voakes for critiquing my draft in the midst of a busy semester.

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Christians for Biblical Equality

Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28.

Mission Statement

CBE exists to promote biblical justice and community by educating Christians that the Bible calls women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world.

Statement of Faith

- We believe in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons equal in power and glory.
- We believe in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- We believe the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We believe that women and men are equally created in God's image and given equal authority and stewardship of God's creation.
- We believe that men and women are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.
- We believe in the unrestricted use of women's gifts as integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel in the world.

Envisioned Future

CBE envisions a future where all believers are freed to exercise their gifts for God's glory and purposes, with the full support of their Christian communities.

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To celebrate 30 years of ministry, CBE is pleased to make available, for free, every Priscilla Papers article ever published. In addition, find the full archive of CBE's magazine, Mutuality, and hundreds of book reviews and recordings of lectures given by world-renowned scholars like N.T. Wright, Gordon Fee, and more!

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Core Values

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from females what God has given them: their dignity, and freedom, their leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy in human relationships.
- Christ’s redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.
- God’s design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a man and a woman, celibate singleness and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women’s gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel in the world.
- Followers of Christ are to oppose injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that marginalize and abuse females and males.

CBE Board of Reference

Featured Resources from CBE

**Paul and Gender**
*Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*
Cynthia Long Westfall

In this volume, respected New Testament scholar Cynthia Long Westfall offers a coherent Pauline theology of gender. Her inclusion of the entire Pauline canon enables her to address the issues effectively, and she reads the texts in light of their own claims of authorship, recipient, and circumstances. It will be of use to New Testament scholars, professors and students in courses on Paul, and pastors and church leaders.

**Women and Leadership Around the World**
Susan R. Madsen, Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, Karen A. Longman, Cynthia Cherney, editors

The third volume in the Women and Leadership: Research, Theory, and Practice series, the purpose of this volume is to explore areas of women’s leadership in four regions around the world: the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Asia Pacific. It is rare to find a book with such a diverse array of topics and countries, making this a timely contribution to the literature on women and leadership.

**Theorizing Women and Leadership**
*New Insights and Contributions from Multiple Perspectives*
Julia Storber-Walker, Paige Haber-Curran, editors

Scholars, activists, leaders, and exemplars from a variety of disciplines reflect on the question: How have women responded to a religious context that has depended upon their gifts while, at the same time, limited their voices and perspectives? This volume offers missing and/or silent voices, an important corrective, and a way forward to shape gender-focused discussions.

**Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy**
*Fresh Insights from Ephesiana*
Gary G. Hoag

In this volume, Hoag introduces *Ephesiana* and employs a socio-rhetorical methodology to explore it alongside other ancient evidence and five passages in 1 Timothy (2:9-15; 3:1-13; 6:1-2a; 6:2b-10; and 6:17-19). Because *Ephesiana* contains some rare terms and themes that are found in 1 Timothy, this groundbreaking research offers fresh insight for biblical reading and interpretation.