



Character Sketches

- 3** CBE's Tribute to Gretchen Gaebelein Hull
Mimi Haddad
- 4** Philippians 4:2-3: An Alternative View of the Euodia-Syntychē Debate
Tyler Allred
- 8** The Poor Widow Who Gave at the Temple: Narrative Logic in Mark 12:41-44
David E. Malick
- 13** Unveiling Old Testament Women with Accurate Translation
Elizabeth Ann R. Willett
- 18** Covenant Partners: An Egalitarian Reading of Genesis 17:15-16
Josiah M. Callaghan
- 22** Jael's Story as Initial Fulfillment of Genesis 3:15
Julie Walsh
- 28** BOOK REVIEW
Vindicating the Vixens
Edited by Sandra L. Glahn
Reviewed by Jeff Miller
- 30** BOOK REVIEW
Consider the Women
By Debbie Blue
Reviewed by Jeff Miller



Tertius . . .

The theme of this issue of *Priscilla Papers* is Character Sketches. Each article gives insight into one or more Bible characters.

Tyler Allred shares with us his careful and insightful reading of Philippians 4:2–3, which begins, “I plead with Euodia and

I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” (NIV). Tyler argues that Euodia and Syntyche are church leaders whom Paul addresses, “not because of an existing quarrel, but because the unity mindset is so important to the continued advancement of the mission of God” in Philippi.

Next, David Malick writes about the poor widow who gave two small coins in the temple, as recorded in Mark 12:41–44. David analyzes this account as artful storytelling and shows that “this unnamed woman—whom Jesus witnesses giving an offering in the temple—encapsulates the self-giving life of Christ and foreshadows the lives of all Christians who follow Jesus well.”

Elizabeth Willett explains the ability of the Hebrew language, unlike the English language, to express certain words as grammatically feminine. She gives various examples where retaining feminine expressions in English and other languages is important in the crafting of a vivid and precise Bible translation. While most of the character sketches throughout this issue of *Priscilla Papers*, including some in this article, are of real historical women, Elizabeth also helps us better understand symbolic women, such as Daughter Zion and Woman Wisdom.

Josiah Callaghan sketches Sarah, focusing on Genesis 17:15–16, where her name is changed. Here, God’s covenant is expressed in a way that focuses as much on Sarah as on Abraham. Josiah concludes that this story “invades our worldview and reminds us that God sought out covenant partners—both male and female—to bring blessings to all the nations.”

In the final article, Julie Walsh fills in our understanding of Jael and her story in Judges 4–5. Julie draws connections from Jael backwards to the promise of Genesis 3:15 and also forward from Jael to the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection.

This issue includes a review of the book *Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible*, edited by Sandra Glahn (Kregel Academic, 2017). This book, a welcome addition to any evangelical egalitarian’s shelf, is itself a collection of character sketches.

When I chose the theme, Character Sketches, for this issue, I was only thinking of the word “character” in its literary sense—a person in a story. But of course, the word can also sum up someone’s exemplary personality—to have character is to have noble character. The cover of this issue pictures a woman of high character: Gretchen Gaebelein Hull. As you move from this editorial to the facing page, you will read a tribute to Gretchen, who passed to the presence of the Lord earlier this year. In hindsight, therefore, the theme *Character Sketches* is especially appropriate.

. . . greet you in the Lord.

DISCLAIMER: Final selection of all material published by CBE International in *Priscilla Papers* is entirely up to the discretion of the publisher, editor, and peer reviewers. Please note that each author is solely legally responsible for the content and the accuracy of facts, citations, references, and quotations rendered and properly attributed in the article appearing under his or her name. Neither CBE, nor the editor, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any content or any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author’s once an article appears in print in *Priscilla Papers*.

Editor: Jeff Miller

Associate Editor / Graphic Designer: Theresa Garbe

President / Publisher: Mimi Haddad

President Emerita: Catherine Clark Kroeger†

Consulting Editor: William David Spencer

Peer Review Team: Joshua Barron, Lynn H. Cohick, Havilah Dharamraj, Tim Foster, Susan Howell, Jamin Hübner, Loretta Hunnicutt, Adam Omelianchuk, Chuck Pitts, Marion Taylor, Karen Strand Winslow

On the Cover: Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, used by permission

Priscilla Papers is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® (ATLA RDB®), <http://www.atla.com>, in the Christian Periodical Index (CPI), in New Testament Abstracts (NTA), and in Religious and Theological Abstracts (R&TA), as well as by CBE itself. *Priscilla Papers* is licensed with EBSCO’s full-text informational library products. Full-text collections of *Priscilla Papers* are available through EBSCO Host’s Religion and Philosophy Collection, Galaxie Software’s Theological Journals collection, and Logos Bible Software. *Priscilla Papers* is a member publication of the American Association of Publishers.



Priscilla Papers (issn 0898–753x) is published quarterly by

CBE International

122 W Franklin Avenue, Suite 218, Minneapolis, MN 55404–2451
www.cbeinternational.org | 612–872–6898

© CBE International, 2019.



CBE's Tribute to Gretchen Gaebelein Hull (1930–2019)

MIMI HADDAD

President, CBE International

Gretchen G. Hull was instrumental in the founding of CBE. A woman with few equals, she was a gifted mathematician, pianist, author, editor, philosopher, and church leader. One of CBE's founders, as well as a board member and early pioneering editor of *Priscilla Papers*, Gretchen was brilliant, gutsy, and never afraid to speak out. It was in her Manhattan, New York, home that CBE's *Statement on Men, Women, and Biblical Equality* (see <https://cbeinternational.org/content/statement-men-women-and-biblical-equality>) was drafted, later to be published in the April 1990 issue of *Christianity Today*. It garnered nearly 3,000 CBE members within a few months. Thus launched Gretchen's work as a theological advocate for women's equal service.

Traveling the world to expound Scripture's support for women's shared leadership, Gretchen's book, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men Working Together Revealing the Gospel* (Baker, 1998) quickly rose to the top of CBE's Best Sellers list. She also contributed articles to various Bible commentaries and Christian publications, including theological books such as *The Global God* (Baker, 1998) and *Applying the Scriptures* (Academie, 1987). For decades, Gretchen was a prominent speaker at churches, evangelical seminaries, colleges, and parachurch organizations.

The daughter of Frank E. Gaebelein—an early co-editor of *Christianity Today* and the first headmaster of The Stony Brook School, Stony Brook, New York—Gretchen grew up on the North Shore of Long Island. She attended Branksome Hall in Toronto and graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1950. She then pursued graduate studies in philosophy at Columbia University, where she met her future husband, Philip G. Hull, a law student at Columbia.

The last time I saw Gretchen was five years ago. We spent the better part of the day engrossed, as we often were, in a rich exchange of ideas, from history, to philosophy, theology, and current events. Yet, by far, my favorite memory of Gretchen was an afternoon we enjoyed together in Saint Davids, Pennsylvania. While waiting for her to arrive, I was playing the second movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." Hearing the doorbell, I dashed to open the door. Gretchen smiled, said "Hello" quickly, and walked to the piano. She sat down and finished the piece exactly where I had left off. I was delighted with her skilled "performance" and her love of all things classical.

Gretchen often regaled me with stories of her devoted Christian parents. She told me once that her parents taught her and her siblings to discern and develop their God-given gifts in service to a hurting world. What mattered most was not whether you were male or female but that you fanned into flame your giftedness and passion where the world needed you most. Yet, by the time Gretchen's children left home, vocation for Christians was aligned *not* with giftedness, but according to gender. Saddened by the church's concern for women's roles rather than women's capacity and calling, Gretchen searched for kindred spirits. Turning to her best friend from college—Catherine Clark Kroeger—she, Catherine, and others determined that an organization was needed

to recover the biblical basis for gender and vocation. Alongside a formidable team of movers and shakers, they launched Christians for Biblical Equality in 1988.

According to Gretchen:

By God's grace, I grew up in a home that emphasized truth and integrity and social concern and where our family's desire was to be guided by God's Word and not by legalism or role playing. Having placed my own trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I accepted His Word as the only trustworthy guide for my life. For me, Scripture was—and is—God's utterly reliable revelation of His plan for humanity, and I believe that the Bible is the ultimate authority for all people.

However, as I myself became active in church work, I became aware of the expedient use of women and also of the insensitivity of many Christian men toward women's personhood. The fact that these loveless actions and attitudes created increasing tensions and hurts both inside and outside the Christian community made it imperative to seek a biblical perspective on their underlying causes.

Gretchen devoted her life to serving the church. She was a Ruling Elder of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. She was a board member of Presbyterians for Renewal, the Latin American Mission, and Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA). According to Dr. Ron Sider, founder, chairman, and past president of ESA, "Gretchen was a wonderful friend, wise counsellor and faithful board member of Evangelicals for Social Action. She served on our board for many years, helping us keep and strengthen biblical feminism as a central part of our larger commitment to social justice. Her strong commitment to a broad range of justice issues including economic justice was always clear. Gretchen Gaebelein Hull was a wonderful gift to me personally and to the entire church and world. I treasure her memory and give thanks to God for her life."

One of her obituaries celebrated her faithful devotion to Christ—the most important element of her life—followed by her dedication to her husband, children, and family. Throughout her life, she enjoyed an enduring love of music, reading, and animals, especially her treasured pets. She relished playing two-piano classical works with her husband, who was also a gifted musician.

She died at 89 and was predeceased by her husband of 61 years, Philip G. Hull, and her sister, Dorothy L. Hampton. She is survived by her brother, Donn M. Gaebelein, her two sons, Jeffrey R. Hull and Sanford D. Hull, her daughter, Meredyth (Hull) Smith, as well as eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Through her work with CBE and other organizations, Gretchen opened countless doors for women *and* an enormous biblical sky over the church. Fearless, but also measured, logical, and honest, she was above all devoted to Scripture. Gretchen was a force for Christ, and her wisdom a prophetic call to us all.

Philippians 4:2–3: An Alternative View of the Euodia-Syntyche Debate

TYLER ALLRED

Philippians 4:2–3: “I encourage Euodia, and I encourage Syntyche to [pursue] the same mindset in [the] Lord.³ Yes, I also ask you, true comrade, to come alongside and help these women, who labored alongside me in the [work of] the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-laborers, whose names are in [the] Book of Life.”¹

In Phil 4:2–3, Paul exhorts two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to “pursue the same mindset in the Lord.” Unfortunately, he does not offer enough detail to confirm the exact nature of this request. An overview of interpretations shows a range of opinions. Davorin Peterlin takes an extreme view that the entire letter is focused on disunity and quarrelling in Philippi. From Phil 1:1 on, Paul is directly addressing a church “immersed in inter-church squabbles.”² Peterlin fails to take seriously the tone of joy and friendship found throughout.³ John Reumann calls Peterlin’s approach “overkill,”⁴ and instead offers the more cautious interpretation that there was some sort of dispute, but that interpretations should not make “‘The Euodia-Syntyche affair’ the issue toward which the entire letter is leading.”⁵ Moisés Silva calls 4:2 an “express and unquestionable rebuke” and believes this is a quarrel between two leading women that threatens the entire community.⁶ Another view is that the quarrel is instead between Paul and these two women, and Paul is urging them to come to his side.⁷

This article offers an alternative interpretation, contending that Euodia and Syntyche, leaders of the church in Philippi, are being encouraged to pursue the vision of unity that Paul expounds throughout the letter and an unnamed “true comrade” (4:3) is asked to aid these leaders toward that end. Paul addresses them, not because of an existing quarrel, but because the unity mindset is so important to the continued advancement of the mission of God; the Philippians are facing external opposition to which having “the same mind” will be their greatest defense.

Euodia and Syntyche

Many interpreters understand these women to have played an important role in the Philippian church. Carolyn Osiek identifies them with the overseers or supervisors (*episkopoi*) of Phil 1:1. Others identify them among the deacons (*diakonoi*) of 1:1.⁸ John Chrysostom (AD 347–407), in his homily on Philippians, says of these women, “Seest thou how great a testimony [Paul] beareth to their virtue? . . . These women seem to me to be the chief [*kephalaion*]⁹ of the Church which was there.”¹⁰ Paul counts these women as his fellow-laborers (*sunergōn*);¹¹ this is “a title he sometimes gives to fellow itinerant missionaries (e.g., [Phil] 2:25; 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thess. 3:2) but also to resident leaders, as here (cf. Rom 16:3; Phlm 1; 3 John 8).”¹² The title “fellow-laborer,” and Chrysostom identifying them as “chief” (or “head”) of the church, constitute good evidence that they may in fact be *episkopoi* in Philippi. At the very least they must have exercised

some significant leadership in the church, for it does not make sense for Paul to single them out if their actions would not impact the rest of the community.¹³

That Paul singles out Euodia and Syntyche at all is important. One view of this importance is that “Paul does here what he seldom does elsewhere in ‘conflict’ settings—he names names. . . . That he names them at all is evidence of friendship, since one of the marks of ‘enmity’ in polemical letters is that the enemies are left unnamed, thus denigrated by anonymity.”¹⁴ This could be a sign of their deep friendship,¹⁵ which could show how serious this division truly was.¹⁶ But it seems to fit better if, rather than breaking with his standard practice of keeping opponents anonymous, Paul is instead encouraging two public leaders, who are on the right track, to keep up the good work.

“I Encourage,” *parakaleō*

The word *parakaleō* means “to urge strongly, appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage.”¹⁷ This word has a wide range of use and meaning. Wolfgang Schenk argues that it, “does not have the sense of admonition, but rather the character of friendly enlivening stimulation.”¹⁸ Terrence Mullins, in his work on ancient Greek letter writing, notes that in public and private petitions four main words of urging are used: *aksioun*, *deisthai*, *erōtan*, and *parakalein* [= *parakaleō*]. In the order listed they take on an “increasing degree of personal concern.”¹⁹ Therefore, *erōtan* and *parakalein* in 4:3 and 4:2 are “personal and familiar,” adding to a tone of equality and friendship between Paul and those addressed.²⁰ Jeffery Reed, in his *Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, discusses various possibilities for interpreting this petition and offers the following as one option: “a commendation of two of Paul’s travelling missionaries whom he encourages to continue working together for the sake of the gospel, without reading discord into the text.”²¹

Paul is urging them into something, but not commanding.²² The repetition of *parakaleō* puts both women on equal footing²³ and serves to strengthen the exhortation.²⁴ This would be true whether Paul was settling a dispute or encouraging two leaders toward a common goal.

The NT often uses this verb to comfort people about God’s present and future saving help, and of people turning to Jesus for help.²⁵ Three parallel uses that help illuminate Phil 4:2 can be found in Rom 12:1, 1 Cor 1:10, and 2 Cor 13:11.²⁶ In Rom 12:1–2, Paul urges (*parakaleō*) the brothers and sisters in Rome to present themselves as living sacrifices; to not be conformed to the present age, but to “be transformed by the renewing of the mind.” Such language, while not identical, is parallel to the sort of encouragement found in Phil 4:2. Paul does not seem to be addressing a concern over specific disagreement or disobedience but is imploring the Roman church to hold true to the gospel vision and not be conformed to the patterns around them. This

is the call of the church in every situation, not only when there exists an internal division.

Parakaleō occurs in both 1 Cor 1:10 and 2 Cor 13:11, which refer also to having “the same mind.” In 1 Cor 1:10b Paul writes, “that you might be made complete in the same mind and in the same purpose.” Second Corinthians 13:11 is almost verbatim with Phil 4:2—“be comforted,” “have the same mind.” In both Corinthian verses, Paul is addressing clear, internal problems in Corinth. In the first, Paul is dealing with division and quarrels among the members who are claiming to be “of Paul,” “of Apollos,” etc. In the second, Paul warns the community in harsh language to examine their lives to see if they are still living in the faith; Paul is coming soon and wants them to be found on the right side. Even though Paul utilizes similar wording, the tone in these two passages is vastly different than that found in Phil 4:2. In 1 and 2 Corinthians he explicitly names the division and warns the Corinthians to change. Euodia and Syntyche are urged to the same mindset, with no explicit mention of anything wrong. Paul’s use of *parakaleō* in Phil 4:2 sounds more like Rom 12:1–2 where Paul is encouraging continued action without the need to correct anything specific.

“Pursue the Same Mindset,” *to auto phronein*

Attempts to pull out the meaning behind this phrase have created much of the confusion. To get at the idea that Paul is exhorting these women toward a common vision, I have rendered it, “pursue the same mindset.” David Allen argues that 4:2 is more focused on unity than an actual dispute. He writes, “maybe Paul really is giving apostolic ‘advice’, and the ‘advice’ is to be of the same mind in the Lord. The dispute itself is not addressed because it is secondary to the unity that he is seeking.”²⁷ Reumann says that *to auto phronein* has become a Philippian “slogan” by the time Paul writes his letter, which would make this a sort of “vision statement” for the church to pursue.²⁸ Daniel Wallace places this verse in the category of a “general precept that has gnomic implications,” explaining that such exhortations do not have a “right now, but not later” sense. His designation of “gnomic” instead refers to a timeless or general truth and here strengthens the view that this is a broader vision Paul is calling them to at all times.²⁹

Paul uses *phroneō/phronein* ten times in Philippians.³⁰ In 2:2, 2:5, and 4:2 this is a call, “to seek the same goal with a like mind.”³¹ In the NT, *to auto phronein* is found in Rom 12:16, 15:5, 2 Cor 13:11, and Phil 4:2. Stephen Fowl writes that in these passages, “the phrase refers to the unity that is achieved by coming to hold the same perspective, by seeing things the same way.” He goes on to state that while this begins with an “intellectual component,” the like-mindedness that Paul is promoting should result in the pursuit of a “common course of action.”³² For Paul, right-thinking should result in right-living.

Philippians 3:19 uses *phroneō* in a similar way, but states that the “enemies of the cross” are those whose minds are set, not on the “one thing” from 2:2, but on “earthly things.” Another interesting use comes in Phil 4:10 where twice Paul speaks of their *concern* (*phronein*) for him, referencing their financial support. Fowl translates *phronein* here with the phrase, “disposition of care and concern,” to highlight the connection with the rest of the letter,

where the believers are to have a “disposition toward a Christ-focused pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.”³³ In 4:2 Paul is not necessarily pointing out a deficiency in their disposition, especially since in a few verses he is praising them for reviving it. Bringing 4:2 together with 4:10, it is as if Paul is saying, “keep pursuing the same mind . . . and indeed I have received the proof that you already are!”

The Nature of the Request in Verse 3, *nai erō tō kai se*

In v. 3, Paul utilizes another familiar and personal request to “ask” (*erōtō*) a “true comrade” to help these women.³⁴ The identity of the “legitimate, true” (*gnēsie*)³⁵ “comrade, companion, fellow-soldier, or (more literally) yolk-fellow” (*suzuge*)³⁶ in 4:3 is impossible to determine with certainty. Paul’s wife, or Lydia from Acts 16 have been proposed. The second-third century authors Clement of Alexandria and Origen both assume this reference to be a woman.³⁷ Silva takes the reference as a general call for the entire community to act as “loyal partners.”³⁸ Fee presents a compelling argument for Luke, taking Acts seriously as a source.³⁹ Reumann, as well as offering a summary of many other interpretations, argues compellingly for Epaphroditus.⁴⁰ For this article, it is not necessary to definitively answer who this *gnēsie suzuge* is. Notably, there is a linguistic connection among four words that have *su(n)* (“with, together”) as a prefix in this verse: *suzuge*, *sullambanou*, *sunēthlēsan*, and *sunergōn*, which, in the translation above have been rendered, respectively, as, “comrade,” “come alongside and help,” “labored alongside,” and “fellow-laborers.” “True-comrade” is chosen for the way it fits in the context of actively struggling, or laboring alongside Paul in the work of the gospel, taking on either military or athletic connotations. The name Paul uses connects this person as an active partner, who labors for the gospel, and can come alongside these women as they pursue Paul’s exhortation.

This true-comrade is asked to *sullambanou* these women. This word is a synonym of *katalambanō* (“grasp”), which Paul uses in Phil 3:12: “Not that I already received, or have already been perfected (resurrected), but I pursue it, if also I *might grasp it*, for which I *have been grasped* by Christ Jesus.” According to the Greek-English lexicon by Louw and Nida, as synonyms, *katalambanō* means “to seize and take control of” and *sullambanō* means “to seize and to take along with.”⁴¹ In Phil 4:3 *sullambanō* is used more in the sense of, “to help by joining in an activity or effort.”⁴² Even so, it seems to retain some of the flavor of Phil 3:12.⁴³ Paul knows that these women cannot be left alone in their task, and they need someone to come alongside, to “grab hold of them,” and help them accomplish the goal.

Euodia and Syntyche are then described as “laboring alongside”⁴⁴ (*sunēthlēsan*) Paul as fellow-laborers (*sunergōn*)⁴⁵ in company with Clement and the rest. The role of these others warrants a short discussion. J. B. Lightfoot argues that “along with” ought to connect with “come alongside and help these women” (*sullambanou autais*) rather than with “labored alongside me” (*sunēthlēsan moi*).⁴⁶ This would mean that Clement and the others are also being asked to aid the women. Together with the word order, the fact that *sullambanou* is second person, singular, with “comrade” (*suzuge*) as its subject, makes

Lightfoot's view unlikely.⁴⁷ Silva likewise argues that the sentence places the emphasis on Clement and the others as being among those who "labored alongside" Paul; however, Silva does believe that the wider meaning is that the entire church is going to be called to help in the effort.⁴⁸ We probably do not need to accept Lightfoot's translation, but it does seem that Paul is highlighting the rest of the community intentionally; at some level they will all be a part of the pursuit of unity, even if grammatically Paul is not singling them out in his request.

Finally, Paul describes them as having their names in the "Book of Life." Hansen points out the many allusions to this in Jewish Literature as well as noting that, "The reference to the book of life sounds an eschatological note consonant with the reminder of *citizenship in heaven* (3:20). . . . The anticipation of the Lord's appearance from heaven is the primary motivation for unity."⁴⁹ Euodia and Syntyche are citizens of heaven, unlike the enemies of the cross from 3:18; their names are in the Book of Life and there is no indication or fear that they might lose that status. This is a far cry from passages like 2 Cor 13:5 where Paul warns the Corinthians that they might not "pass the test."

Purpose of the Letter

For the above argument to hold, it is important to determine why Paul would have written this letter, if not to quell a dispute. Paul is writing to thank his partners in ministry, to update them on his situation, and to counsel and encourage them in the face of external opposition. The theme of thanksgiving and joy can be traced through Paul's use of the Greek root which gives us the cognates "rejoice" (*chairō*, 1:18 twice; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 twice, 10), "grace" (*charis*, 1:2, 7; 4:23), "give thanks" (*eucharisteō*, 1:3), "thanksgiving" (*eucharistia*, 4:6), "joy" (*chara*, 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1), and "give graciously" (*charizomai*, 1:29; 2:9). Paul thanks the Philippians for their partnership in 1:3ff. and praises God for their financial partnership in 4:10ff.; throughout, he rejoices in the Lord and implores the church to do the same. He also seeks to encourage them with news of his situation, as well as hoping to be encouraged by further updates from them.⁵⁰

Several times Paul exhorts the church in the way they are to think and act; this is not something they accomplish on their own, since God is the one at work in them.⁵¹ Peterlin believes that the many exhortations toward unity and right-living are directly connected to the disunity that Paul will make explicit in 4:2.⁵² But his synopsis fails to account for the ways that those exhortations are always given in the immediate context of external opposition and suffering, rather than internal issues needing to be resolved.

In 1:9-11 Paul's prayer is that they would grow in knowledge and discernment, in order to "approve what is more valuable," being "filled with the fruit of righteousness." And in 1:12-14 he does not go on to point out any flaws, but instead begins talking about his imprisonment for Christ. In 1:27-30 Paul exhorts them to live lives worthy of the gospel and stand firm,⁵³ laboring alongside⁵⁴ one another in one mind. Again, he does not describe any internal issues they might be having with this sort of united front. Rather, the Philippians must proactively pursue unity so that they are "not intimidated in anything by

the opposition, which is to them proof of destruction, but [is] your salvation" (1:28).

The rest of the letter follows the same pattern. 2:1-5 is a central exhortation, which would be true whether the church was quarreling or not, and which stretches through the Christ Hymn and into 2:12-18. "Therefore" (*hōste*) in 2:12 and "in order that" (*hina*) in 2:15 create an important conclusion to the previous eleven verses. "Therefore . . . work out your salvation (2:12) . . . in order that you may be blameless in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation" (2:15). Paul is more focused on what their mindset and actions mean in the face of enemies and persecution, and does not emphasize any internal problems. Finally, in ch. 3 Paul highlights the correct mindset through his story (3:4-11) and calls the church to imitate him (3:15-17) precisely because of people like the "dogs" of 3:2 and the "enemies of the cross" in 3:18.

Euodia and Syntyche become Paul's application of 3:17-21. There are enemies of the cross who "set their minds on earthly things" (3:19). The community is called to join in imitating Paul (3:17) in light of those enemies (3:18) and behave as citizens of heaven (3:20). In 4:1 Paul tells the whole community to "stand firm in (the) Lord." In 4:2 Paul urges the leaders of this church to pursue, with even more urgency, the unity of mind that can only be found in Christ. Just as Paul seems to say in places like 1:28 and 2:15, the best offensive against the church's enemy is a united community in Christ.

Conclusion and Application for Today's Church

The alternative narrative that has been proposed works as follows: Euodia and Syntyche were leaders at the church in Philippi, quite possibly the overseers (*episkopoi*) of the house churches in that city. Paul knows that the church is facing external opposition and is having the same struggle he faces (Phil 1:30). He has written throughout the letter about why remaining steadfast and united in the Lord is so important when facing opposition, and now he turns directly to the leaders of this community. Paul is encouraging these leaders to pursue a common vision of unity, which like 1:28, is their "proof" against their opponents and for their salvation. He then calls upon a true comrade, and perhaps indirectly the rest of the community, to come alongside and help these leaders, because pursuing unity is not a burden that only the leaders carry.

There are at least two practical applications for churches today that could come out of this reading. First, while many commentators promote the idea of Euodia and Syntyche being prominent figures in the church, this interpretation could help take it further and set them up as the leaders of churches in Philippi. It is as if Paul is telling the equivalent of today's lead pastors to stay strong and pursue this unifying vision. Second, this could renew an emphasis on the need for unity among the churches. At all times our common mindset in the Lord must be pursued; this takes the vigilance and perseverance of leaders and members alike. If churches become complacent, waiting until tangible division is present, they have already failed. While this pursuit of a common mindset would continue to apply equally well to situations of real division and quarreling, Paul's words to

Euodia and Syntyche could now be used to galvanize churches toward a united mindset that transcends those acute situations. At all times, and in every season, we should be pursuing the mindset that we have in Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. All translations in this article are the author's.
2. Davorin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (Brill, 1995) 24.
3. Extensive resources on the nature of Philippians as a "friendship letter" shed more light on the overall tone. Cf. John Reumann, "Philippians, Especially Chapter 4, as a 'Letter of Friendship': Observations on a Checkered History of Scholarship," in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Brill, 1996); John T. Fitzgerald, "Philippians in the Light of Some Ancient Discussions of Friendship," in Fitzgerald, ed., *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness*.
4. John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (Yale University Press, 2008) 628.
5. Reumann, *Philippians*, 632.
6. Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Baker Academic, 2005) 192.
7. Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, ANTC (Abingdon, 2000) 113. For more views see Reumann, *Philippians*, 628.
8. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, 111. See the summary of views in Lynn Cohick, *Philippians*, Story of God Commentary 11 (Zondervan 2013) 209–11.
9. LSJ 945: "metaph., of persons, *the head or chief*."
10. John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Philippians," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, NPNF 1, 244.
11. A textual variant of the phrase *tōn loipōn sunergōn mou* at the end of v. 3 would leave Clement and the women out of the classification of "fellow-laborer." Most commentaries reject the secondary reading (Fee, *Philippians*, 385n4). Though Silva discusses it as a possibility, he does not argue for it in his primary translation (Silva, *Philippians*, 198).
12. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, 111.
13. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, 112.
14. Fee, *Philippians*, 389–90. Fee then lists the following examples for anonymity: 1 Cor 4:18, 5:1–13, 6:1–11, 14:37; cf. Gal 5:10, 6:12; Rom 16:17.
15. Cf. Silva, *Philippians*, 192.
16. Cf. David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *NovT* 27/2 (1985) 172. About naming opponents, Garland states, "This happens nowhere else in his letters."
17. BDAG definition 2, 765.
18. Wolfgang Schenk, "Der Philipperbrief oder die Philipperbriefe des Paulus? Eine Antwort an V. Koperski," *ETL* 70 (1994) 271. Quoted in G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Eerdmans, 2009) 282.
19. Terence Y Mullins, "Petition as a Literary Form," *NovT* 5/1 (1962) 47.
20. Mullins, "Petition," 48.
21. Jeffery T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSupp 136 (Sheffield Academic, 1997) 414n25. For more on Phil 4:2–3 as a "commendation letter" see Chan-Hie Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation*, SBLDS 4 (SBL, 1972) 128–33.
22. Silva, *Philippians*, 198. Silva interestingly notes this softer tone in Phil 4:2 yet still claims that what Paul is saying to these women is an "unquestionable rebuke" (192).
23. Hansen, *Philippians*, 282.
24. Silva, *Philippians*, 198.
25. Otto Schmitz, "Παρακαλέω, Παράκλησις," *TDNT* 799.
26. Of 109 occurrences in the NT, notable occurrences in relation to Phil 4:2 are: for use in dissuading wrong action see 1 Cor 16:13–15; 2 Cor 2:8, 9:5, 10:1; possibly also 2 Cor 5:20; 2 Thess 3:12; 1 Tim 5:1; Titus 2:6; Phlm 9–10; for encouragement/exhortation see 2 Tim 4:2; Heb 3:13, 10:25, 13:19, 13:22; 1 Pet 2:11, 5:1.
27. David M. Allen, "Philippians 4:2–3: 'to agree or not to agree? Unity is the question,'" *ExpTim* 121/11 (2010) 535.
28. Reumann, *Philippians*, 631.
29. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1996) 525 and 525–26n30 (italics original). Cf. Douglas Mangum, *The Lexham Glossary of Theology* (Lexham, 2014).
30. 1:7, 2:2 (twice), 2:5, 3:15 (twice), 3:19, 4:2, 4:10 (twice).
31. Georg Bertram, "Φρῆν, Ἄφρων, Ἀφροσύνη, Φρονέω, Φρόνημα, Φρόνησις, Φρόνιμος," *TDNT* 233.
32. Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Eerdmans, 2005) 82.
33. Fowl, *Philippians*, 189, 193.
34. See again Mullins, *Petition*, 48.
35. BDAG 202.
36. BDAG 954.
37. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, 114.
38. Silva, *Philippians*, 193.
39. Fee, *Philippians*, 394.
40. Reumann, *Philippians*, 628–30; see also the summary in Cohick, *Philippians*, 213–14.
41. L&N 1:484.
42. L&N 1:457–58.
43. Cf. Luke 5:7, 9, where Luke uses both nuances of "help" (v. 7) and "take" (v. 9) side by side.
44. See L&N 1:514.
45. See discussion about fellow-laborers above.
46. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (Zondervan, 1956) 159.
47. Fee, *Philippians*, 396n56, notes that grammatically Lightfoot's suggestion could work, though he rejects it as unnecessary.
48. Silva, *Philippians*, 192–93, gets around this by proposing that *gnēsie suzuge* refers to the entire community.
49. Hansen, *Philippians*, 286, referencing Exod 32:32, Ps 69:28, Ezek 13:9, Dan 12:1, 1QM 12:3, italics original.
50. Phil 1:12, 19ff., 2:19, 25.
51. Phil 1:6, 2:13.
52. Peterlin, *Paul's Letter*, 61.
53. *stēkete*, also in 4:1; see Cohick, *Philippians*, 207.
54. *sunathlountes*, also in 4:3.



TYLER ALLRED is a student at Fuller Theological Seminary. He worked for ten years as a campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Tyler currently ministers at Morgan Hill Bible Church in central California.

The Poor Widow Who Gave at the Temple: Narrative Logic in Mark 12:41-44

DAVID E. MALICK

In Mark 12:41-44, a woman shows the readers the way to follow Christ as she foreshadows the suffering that lies ahead for Messiah and for the disciples by giving her “whole life” to God. Thus, she should not be overlooked in the Bible’s long list of exemplary women. Through Mark’s artful storytelling, this unnamed woman—whom Jesus witnesses giving an offering in the temple—encapsulates the self-giving life of Christ and foreshadows the lives of all Christians who follow Jesus well.

Reading in Context

We have all heard how a simple word can have several meanings depending on its context: “Trunk,” for example, can mean the back of a car, the “nose” of an elephant, the stem of a tree, a storage unit, the core of a person. What is true for individual words is also true for phrases, sentences, and even larger units of text. For example, Jesus’ proclamation to Nathaniel in John 1:51, that “you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (NRSV), only has clarity when it is read with awareness of the context of Jacob’s encounter with God at “Bethel” in Gen 28:10-19. As an integrated part of the canon of Scripture, Genesis allows the reader to understand that Jesus is proclaiming himself to be the new “Bethel,” which means “house of God.” Likewise, the account of the poor widow who gave at the temple (hereafter “the Widow”) in Mark 12:41-44 is clarified by giving close attention to its immediate and broader contexts.

Mark’s Geographic Structure

Starting at a broad level, we should recognize Mark’s attention to geography and location. The account of the Widow falls in and around Jerusalem. Literarily, locations help Mark structure his Gospel as in the following diagram:¹

- A The Wilderness (1:1-15)
- B Galilee (1:16-8:21)
- C The Way (8:22-11:11)
- B’ Jerusalem (11:12-15:41)
- A’ The Tomb (15:42-16:8)

The wilderness and the tomb, locations of Mark’s opening and closing, have many similarities, including being uninhabited places, places of the dead, places Jesus enters and exits, and places where a herald’s voice pronounces good news. One significant similarity of the tomb with the wilderness is that this place of death and new life becomes another starting point for the Gospel.

Moving inward to the second and fourth rows of the above diagram, Galilee and Jerusalem are contrasting lands. In Galilee, Jesus calls and sends disciples, performs many miracles, and is received by many. In Jerusalem, there are fewer miracles, no calling or sending of disciples, and it is a place where the religious leaders reject and kill him. The central section, 8:22-11:11, not

only marks the geographic “way” to Jerusalem from Galilee, but also unfolds suffering as the “way” to follow Jesus to glory.

The following discussion will narrow to a focus on the macro and micro contexts of the Jerusalem passages leading to and following from the unit involving the Widow in order to show Mark’s positive portrayal of the Widow in the architecture of his narrative.

The Contexts of the Passage

The Beginning of the Jerusalem Section

The structure of the central section, 8:22-11:11, is as follows:

The blind see; Who is Jesus (8:22-30)

1. Prediction, misunderstanding by Peter, instruction through Elijah (8:31-9:29)
2. Prediction, misunderstanding by the Twelve, instruction through Moses (9:30-10:31)
3. Prediction, misunderstanding by James and John, instruction through Jesus (10:32-45)

The blind see; Who is Jesus (10:46-11:10/11)²

Just as the first healing of a blind man (8:22-26) is followed by a revelation that Jesus is Messiah through Peter’s confession (8:27-30),³ so too is the last healing of blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52) followed by a public revelation that Jesus is Messiah through his procession into Jerusalem (11:1-10).⁴ However, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is not triumphal, but anticlimactic by both Jewish⁵ and Roman⁶ standards. Jesus enters the temple as the messianic descendant of David (“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!” 11:10a NRSV), but instead of setting up his rule, he looks and leaves (11:11), foreshadowing difficulties with the temple that follow in the next portion of the Gospel.⁷

Development of the Jerusalem Section (11:12-13:37)

Mary Ann Tolbert offers a linear, logical, rhetorically-focused layout of the units in chs. 11-16. Tolbert’s structure recognizes 11:12-25 as introducing the larger discussions in and around the temple, geographically and conceptually.⁸ A key interpretive contribution of Tolbert is that ch. 12’s parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants is a “plot synopsis to aid the audience’s understanding”⁹ of upcoming events. She positions the unit involving the Widow as a positive, individual response at the end of the teachings section.¹⁰

The Immediate Context of the Passage

The more immediate context to the passage involving the Widow features three controversies designed to trap Jesus, followed by three teachings by Jesus himself.¹¹ Jesus turns the first two controversies on his opponents (12:13-17, 18-27).¹² The tone of the third controversy, initiated by one of the scribes, is much

more positive (12:28–34) and sets the scene for the scribe to ask Jesus a sincere question about which commandment is the most important.¹³ After Jesus identifies the first commandment as loving God and the second as loving your neighbor (12:29–31), the scribe once again approves of Jesus’ answer with the word “well” (12:32, cf. v. 28). The scribe also agrees that loving God and one’s neighbor are greater than religious, ritual activities such as whole-burnt offerings and sacrifices (12:33). As a result, Jesus proclaims that the scribe is not far from the kingdom of God (12:34).

The key word “whole” connects the passage involving the scribe with the passage involving the Widow.¹⁴ Jesus presses upon the scribe the necessity of loving God with one’s *whole* heart, *whole* soul/life/self, *whole* mind, and *whole* strength (12:30). The scribe agrees with Jesus on the importance of loving God, but conspicuously retreats from Jesus’ inclusion of “whole soul/life/self” (12:33). Then, in the subsequent account of the Widow, Jesus proclaims that the Widow gave her *whole* life (12:44). In other words, the Widow exemplifies the whole-hearted response that people are to give to God by giving her *whole* life in the temple.

The friendly scribe and the Widow are an unlikely pair. Nevertheless, with the scribe, Jesus proposes a new standard that goes beyond temple norms, and the scribe embraces the standard and explicates the new norm—“You are right, teacher . . . ‘he is one . . .’ and ‘to love him with all the heart, and all the understanding, and all the strength’ . . . is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (12:32–33 NRSV). Likewise, the Widow’s “complete offering acts out the *Shema* [Deut 6:4] which is the basis of Jesus’ singular creed. . . . The positive attentiveness of the scribe and the positive action of the Widow surround the negative, rapacious actions of the scribal class.”¹⁵

Therefore, the units involving the scribe and the Widow are not only connected in their placement within the narrative structure of Mark 12:13–44 as third, positive narratives that contrast corrective controversies/teachings, but are also connected by sympathetically resonating the common theme of whole-hearted love for God.

The unit immediately preceding the passage involving the Widow contains Jesus’ denunciation of the scribes (12:38–40). Scholars have argued persuasively that, when Jesus addresses the scribes, he is specifically commenting on their role as lawyers appointed to be guardians or administrators of the estate of a widow.¹⁶ A guardian was either appointed by the owner of an estate, by a parent prior to death, or by the courts.¹⁷ The administrator received a percentage of the value of the estate. The administrator would sometimes exploit the estate. This was commonly described as “eating or drinking” or “clothing or covering himself.”¹⁸ Indeed, in Mark 12:40, the scribes are figuratively described as “eating up” widows’ houses.¹⁹

No one would appoint an administrator who did not have a reputation for piety. Therefore, the administrator would show himself worthy of appointment by publicly promoting himself—for example, “walking in robes,” receiving “greetings in the marketplace,” having “seats of honor in the synagogues,” having “places of honor at feasts,” and “making long prayers” (12:38–

41).²⁰ Once the administrator was appointed and in charge of the deceased’s estate, he would “consume” or “eat away” the estate through exorbitant fees and costs (12:40a). To these corrupt lawyers, Jesus says that there will be greater judgment than having themselves removed as an administrator (12:40b).

The Widow in 12:41–44 may, or may not, have been taken advantage of by the scribes. Geoffrey Smith concludes that, “even if she were not an actual, literal victim, she is representative of victims of scribal exploitation by virtue of her severe poverty as well as of Mark’s placement of this account in this context.”²¹ What is clear is that, as Jesus and his disciples are passing through the temple, Jesus instructs them not to be like the scribes who devour widows’ houses, but to be like the Widow who gives all that she has.

The Passage Involving the Widow

The scene with the Widow opens with Jesus still in the temple, sitting opposite the treasury. The location appears to be the Court of the Women since that was as far into the temple as a woman was permitted to enter.²² While the term for treasury (*gazophylakion*) may be used for rooms or places for storing valuables,²³ it was also used for contribution boxes or receptacles.²⁴

Jesus observes a large number of people placing or casting (*eballon*²⁵) metal money into the treasury chests (12:41). He then focuses on two distinct groups—comparing the rich and the poor; the many and the one; the much and the little; the act from those with abundance, surplus, or overflow and the act of one from her lack, want, or poverty.

The many rich are throwing much money into the treasury chests, possibly making a loud noise as the metal coins touch the horned-shaped receptacles. Then the narrator describes an individual, poor Widow who comes and casts two of the smallest coins (two *lepta*, the smallest Palestinian coins, which together amount to a *kodrantēs*, the smallest Roman coin²⁶) into the treasury chest (12:42).

Jesus’ words are introduced with somber phrases. First the narrator states that Jesus called his disciples (12:43). The term for calling (*proskaleō*) has the sense of summoning or inviting in a legal or official sense.²⁷ In Mark, this same term describes Jesus summoning the Twelve (3:13), summoning the religious leaders to instruct them through a parable (3:23), summoning the Twelve to send them out on mission (6:7), summoning the multitude to teach a parable (7:14), and Pilate summoning the centurion to determine if Jesus was dead (15:44). Therefore, in Mark’s narrative, the term describes an official gathering for instruction or information. Second, Jesus prefaces his words with a solemn statement that, in Mark, is only used by Jesus before a significant, surprising, and sometimes difficult teaching: “Truly I say to you” (*amēn legō hūmin*, 12:43).²⁸ This manner of introducing Jesus’ comment alerts the reader that the disciples have been summoned for an important, significant, and perhaps surprising or difficult teaching by Jesus (12:43).

The content of Jesus’ statement uses much of the same language that the narrator used in introducing the passage, but Jesus turns the language around: “this poor widow has put in more than

all those who are contributing to the treasury” (12:43b NRSV). The Widow was introduced as an individual (“one widow, a widow,” *mia chēra*), and now Jesus emphasizes her individuality: “The Widow, this *one*, the poor *one*.” Furthermore, the contrasting group was described as “many rich ones were casting much” (12:41), but here it is not the many, but this poor Widow who “cast more than all who were casting into the treasury” (12:43). The several of them cast much, but she cast more. Jesus then provides the reason for this paradoxical reversal with another contrast: “For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; *but she* out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on [‘her whole life’]” (12:44 NRSV, italics added). The subjects on each side of this compound sentence are emphasized by contrasting conjunction/pronoun units at the beginning of each sentence: “for all,” “but she.” Then each pronoun is modified by a prepositional phrase beginning with “out of” (*ek*): “For all, out of their surplus”;²⁹ “but she, out of her lack.”³⁰ They both “cast” their offering. However, the symmetry is broken when Jesus makes a double reference to what the Widow gave—“all as much as she had, her whole life.”³¹ The piling up of descriptors of the content of the Widow’s gift weights the comparison in her favor:

The significant, surprising, and difficult teaching that Jesus summoned his disciples to hear is that it was not the rich who gave out of their excess who pleased God, but this poor Widow who gave out of her need. In accordance with Deut 27 and 28, the disciples may have assumed that riches were an indication of God’s pleasure, but Jesus instructs them on the more significant gift of the poor Widow who gave out of her need, in contrast to the rich who gave out of their surplus. When Jesus earlier discussed the role of riches “on the way” with his disciples, they were “amazed at his words” (10:23–24). Now he shows them the lesson in the temple by comparing the gifts of the rich with the gift of the poor Widow. Contextually, the Widow may be a foil to the lawyers who gain their wealth by eating up widows’ estates. However, she also foreshadows those who are to be willing to risk their life out of devotion to God as Jesus will instruct the disciples in the next chapter (13:9–20).

Once again, Mark has portrayed a woman as an example of faithfulness. She *shows* what Jesus requires of disciples in the central section of Mark:

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. (8:35 NRSV)

You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. (10:21 NRSV)

But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first. (10:31 NRSV)

She may also foreshadow Jesus’ upcoming crucifixion. The Widow *gave her whole life* (12:44); likewise, Jesus will give *his life* as a sacrifice for humankind: “For the Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many” (10:45 NRSV).

Conclusion

The broad structure of the narrative, the parallelism of the individual scribe and the individual Widow, the use of the key word “whole,” and the weighing of descriptors between the “many” and the “one” show that the Widow’s narrative is to be understood as positive—indeed, as exemplary. Once again, Mark has a woman show

his readers the way to follow Christ as she willingly foreshadows the suffering ahead for Messiah and the disciples by giving her “whole life” to God.

Notes

This article is a highly abbreviated version of ch. 3 of the author’s dissertation, “Biblical Gender Studies and Literary Analysis: Contributing Different Perspective on Women in the Gospel of Mark” (University of South Africa, forthcoming).

1. Many acknowledge the chiasmic structure of Mark around broad, geographical references. For a fuller diagram, see Bastiaan Martinus Franciscus van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*, JSNT 164 (Sheffield Academic, 1998) 84:

Title (1:1)
 prologue, the wilderness (1:2–13)
 prospective hinge (1:14–15)
Galilee (1:16–8:21)
 frame, blind → seeing (8:22–26)
the way (8:27–10:45)
 frame, blind → seeing (10:46–52)
Jerusalem (11:1–15:39)
 retrospective hinge (15:40–41)
 epilogue, the tomb (15:42–16:8)

See also Abraham Kuruvilla, *Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Cascade, 2012) 5; Augustine Stock, *The Method and the Message of Mark* (Michael Glazier, 1989) 25–30; Stock, “The Structure of Mark: A Five-Fold Concentric Framework,” *TBT* (1985) 291–96; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Eerdmans, 2002) 11–15; James W. Voelz, *Mark*, Concordia Commentary (Concordia, 2013) 49.

Even many who do not identify an overall chiasmic structure of Mark see a basic two-fold structure around Galilee and Jerusalem, placing the unit with the Widow in the Jerusalem section: C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (Doubleday, 1986) 177–79; Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Fortress, 1989) 113–21; C. E. B. Cranfield, ed., *The Gospel According to St Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 1974); William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Eerdmans, 1974) 29–32; Joel F. Williams, “Does Mark's Gospel Have an Outline?,” *JETS* 49/3 (2006) 510, 512, 524–25; Bastiaan Martinus Franciscus van Iersel, “Concentric Structures in Mark 1:14–3:35 (4:1): With Some Observations on Method,” *BibInt* 3/1 (1995) 75.

2. See Mann, *Mark*, 183–84.

3. Herbert W. Bateman IV, “Defining the Titles ‘Christ’ and ‘Son of God’ in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus,” *JETS* 50/3 (2007) 541–42.

4. Bateman, “Defining the Titles,” 541–45.

5. See Zech 9:9; Gen 49:10–12; see also 1 Sam 8:10–11, 17; 2 Kgs 9:13; Ps 118:26.

6. David R. Catchpole, “The ‘Triumphal’ Entry,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) 319–21, sets out parallel examples of entrances into Jerusalem including that of Alexander, Apollonius, Simon Maccabeus, Marcus Agrippa, Archelaus; Paul Brooks Duff, “The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem,” *JBL* 111/1 (1992) 59–64; Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 244–45.

7. Kuruvilla writes: “Jesus comes into the temple, and then leaves both temple and city. His Jerusalem entry II (11:15) and Jerusalem entry III (11:27; see above) are equally jejune; no one in his ‘capital’ or his ‘palace’ appears to pay him any attention. The altercation in 11:27–33 appears to originate *after* Jesus has already entered the temple. In other words, Jesus' entries are the essence of Irony! His rejection has begun: rather than being appropriately received, he is completely ignored.” Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 244–45.

8. “As many commentators have pointed out, the insertion of the temple-cleaning episode between the two parts of the fig tree story serves to associate the barrenness of the fig tree with the corruption of the temple, introducing a series of explicit and implicit attacks on the temple that form an anti-temple polemic throughout the final chapters of the Gospels.” Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 193.

9. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 233, understands the parable of the Tenants to function similarly to the parable of the Sower—as a plot synopsis for the major sections of the gospels: “Each of these parables, then, appears to reflect the basic actions of Jesus and the other characters in its respective division” (122).

10. As Tolbert explains: “Indeed, the Gospel often seems to describe good actions or good responses as *individual* actions, whereas groups are portrayed neutrally or negatively. Those healed are single individuals emerging from the crowds; the true offering of the *one* poor widow is contrasted to the abundance of the *many* rich people (12:41–42); the one wise scribe stands apart from the typical beliefs and actions of scribes in general.” Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 256; see also Williams, “Does Mark's Gospel Have an Outline?,” 520, 524–25.

11. Williams describes this two-fold structure as “Jesus' Authority to Meet Challenges” and “Jesus' Authority to Challenge,” Williams, “Does Mark's Gospel Have an Outline?,” 524–25.

12. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 250–54.

13. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*, 174; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 476. This question was not uncommon: As Kuruvilla notes, “The attempt to locate the foremost commandment of the 613 in the Torah was not unique to the dialogue: Rabbi Hillel's ‘silver’ rule, the negative of Jesus' ‘golden’ rule (Matt 7:12), stated: ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereof?’” (*b. Sabb* 31a; also *Tob* 4:15); *b. Mak.* 24a reduced the law to the eleven principles of Ps 15, the six of Isa 33:15–16, the three of Mic 6:8, the two of Isa 56:1; and the one in Amos 5:4 (and Hab 2:4); *b. ber.* 63a asserted that the basis for all the essential principles of the Torah was found in Prov 3:6, etc.” Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 274n12; see also Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Baker Academic, 2008) 560; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 477n62.

14. See Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*, 176–77.

15. Kozar, “The Owl and the Pussycat,” 49.

16. E.g., J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Eating up the Houses of Widows: Jesus's Comment on Lawyers?,” *NovT* 14/1 (1972) 1–9. The word for “guardian” or “administrator” is Greek *epitropos*, transliterated into Mishnaic post-NT Hebrew as *apatropos*.

17. M. Gittin 5.4 states: “Orphans who boarded with a householder, or for whom their **father appointed a guardian**—he [who provides for their keep] is liable to separate tithe from the produce. **A guardian whom a father of orphans has appointed** is to be subjected to an oath. **[If] a court appointed him**, he is not subjected to an oath. Abba Saul says, ‘Matters are reversed.’” Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, reprint ed. (Yale University Press, 1991) 474–75 (emphasis added).

18. See, for example, *B. Tal. Gittin* 52b, in Derrett, “Eating up the Houses of Widows,” 6.

19. BDAG 532, s.v. *κατεσθίω/κατέσθω*. In a literal sense the word is used to describe devouring something completely as in the birds eating up the seed that is sown in Matt. 13:4; here it is a figurative extension of “eating” or “consuming” so as to take over by dishonest means the property of someone else. L&N 585, s.v. *κατεσθίω*.

20. Derrett, “Eating up the Houses of Widows,” 4–5.

21. Geoffrey Smith, “A Closer Look at the Widow's Offering: Mark 12:41–44,” *JETS* 40/1 (1997) 30n12.

22. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, V:190–200.

23. Esth 3:8 (king's treasuries); Neh 12:44; 13:5; 2 Macc 3:6 (temple treasuries); Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, VI:282.

24. See, e.g., *m. Sheqalim* 6:6 for a discussion of temple “*shofar* chests” and the various offerings they contained. Neusner, *The Mishnah*, 261; BDAG, 186. See also *m. Sheqalim* 2:1 “Just as there were *shofar* chests [for receiving the *sheqel* tax] in the Temple, so there were *shofar* chests in the provinces.” Neusner, *The Mishnah*, 253. See also *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Baker, 1977) 108, s.v. *γαζοφυλάκιον*; L&N 71.

25. The imperfect, *eballon*, is used in 12:41 to show the scene in progress: “the rich were casting much.” Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Zondervan, 1997) 502–3; Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1992) 21, 29 (“The present and imperfect tense-forms occur in contexts where the user of Greek wishes to depict the action as in progress”).

26. The *leptos* was the Greek term for “the smallest coin” in the Palestinian (*pruta-shamin*) system. The *kodrantēs* was the smallest unit

of currency (coin) in the Roman monetary system. See Daniel Sperber, “Mark 12:42 and Its Metrological Background: A Study in Ancient Syriac Versions,” *NovT* 9/3 (1967) 178–90; BDAG, s.v. λεπτός (1/128 of a denarius), s.v. κοδράντης (1/64 of a denarius). A *dēnariion* was a Roman silver coin, a “worker’s average daily wage.” BDAG 223, s.v. δηνάριον; L&N 63, §6. 79, s.v. λεπτόν.

27. BDAG 881, s.v. προσκαλέω; see also Acts 5:40; Matt 18:32.

28. BDAG 53, s.v. ἀμῆν; see also: Mark 3:28; 8:12; 9:21, 41; 10:15, 29–30; 11:23; 13:30; 14:18, 25.

29. The verb *perisseuō* here is a present, active, substantive participle. It could be translated as “surplus” or “abundance” but also has the sense of “overflow” as in 2 Cor 9:12. It is to “exceed a fixed number or measure; to be over and above a certain number or measure.” *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*, 505, s.v. περισσεύω. The noun describes what is left over in Mark 8:8, “They ate and they were satisfied, and they took up the leftover (*perisseumata*) fragments, seven baskets.” Likewise, the parallel word describing the source of the widow’s gift, *husterēsis*, could have the sense of poverty, but also describes the source of poverty, i.e., her lack or need of what is essential. See Phil 4:11, “Not that I speak from want (*kath’ husterēsin*); L&N 562, §57.37 (“lacking in what is essential or needed”). Accordingly, the many gave out of their excess, but the poor widow gave out of her want.

30. The preposition “ἐκ is more restricted, perhaps best translated in its basic sense as ‘out of’, as opposed to ἀπό meaning ‘from’ or ‘away from’ in a more general sense.” Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 154; see also Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 371.

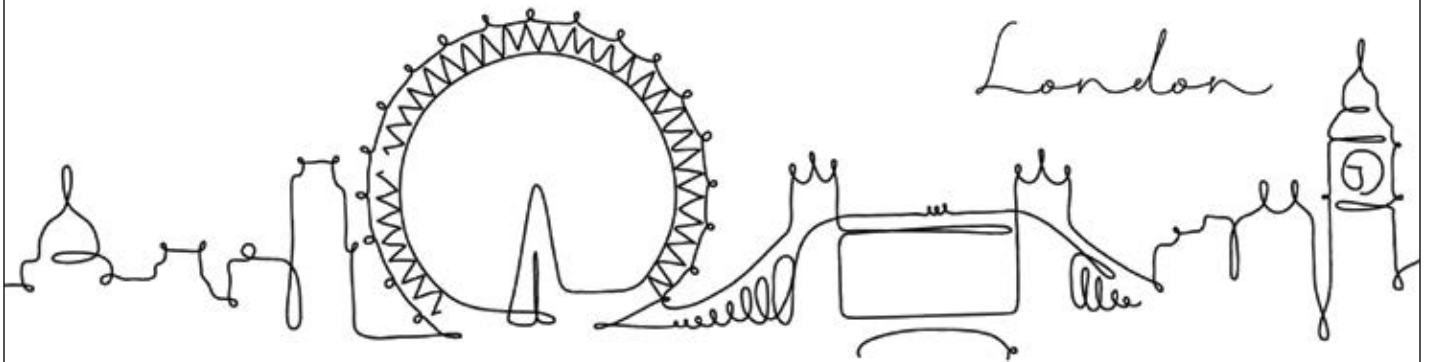
31. The phrase, “her whole life” (*holon ton bion autēs*) may have the sense of all her wealth, riches, or living. See the textual variant in Luke 8:43, “And spending with physicians her whole life (*holon ton bion*); Song 8:7, “If a man were to give all his life (*holon ton bion*) for love, it would be utterly despised.”



DAVID E. MALICK has a ThM and has completed PhD coursework at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). He was an assistant professor at DTS and Southeastern Bible College. He does doctoral work at the University of South Africa, practices law, and continues to teach the Scriptures at his church in Birmingham, Alabama.

*We’re drafting plans for CBE’s 2020
international conference in London!*

JULY 30–AUGUST 1, 2020. SAVE THE DATE!



Unveiling Old Testament Women with Accurate Translation

ELIZABETH ANN R. WILLETT

Hebrew nouns have grammatical gender, either feminine or masculine. Hebrew verbs distinguish masculine and feminine plurals as well as masculine and feminine singulars. English translations generally mirror the gender of such verbs in narrative and usually, but not always, when the female metaphor is inescapably gendered—for example, childbirth. However, if the image is out of the ordinary for female roles in the translator’s cultural context, or if the metaphor seems to obscure the word it stands for, feminine verb marking, as well as feminine nouns, are often ignored. Cleansing the Bible of counter-cultural female roles not only masculinizes history, it also deprives women of a broader picture of how God has and might use women and their gifts in church, home, and society.

An Army of Women Messengers

For example, Ps 68:11 (v. 12 in Hebrew) reports that a large army of women messengers announce God’s word of victory. Literally, “the ones spreading the good news [are] a large army,” in which “the ones spreading the good news” is a feminine plural participle. The KJV, followed by many modern English language translations, ignores the participle’s feminine ending:

KJV: The Lord gave the word: **great [was] the company** of those that published [it].

Shortly before the KJV, Mary Sidney (1561–1621) published free translations of the Psalms as Renaissance lyric poetry. She highlights women’s roles often glossed over by men and translates Ps 68:11–12, both poetically and more accurately, as follows:¹

There taught by thee in this triumphant song
A **virgin army** did their voices try:
“Fled are these kings, fled are these armies strong;
We share the spoils that weak in house did lie.”

Later, in v. 25, Sidney refers to them as battle maids:

In vanguard marched who did with voices sing;
The rearward loud on instruments did play
The **battle maids** and did with timbrels ring.
And all in sweet consort did jointly say:

Franz Delitzsch, in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, says: “The deliverance of Israel from the army of Pharaoh, the deliverance out of the hand of Jabin by the defeat of Sisera, the victory of Jephthah over the Ammonites, and the victorious single combat of David with Goliath were celebrated by singing women. God’s decisive word shall also go forth this time, and of the evangelists, like Miriam (Mirjam) and Deborah, there shall be a great host.”² Verse 12 relates what the women announced:

Kings of armies they flee they flee,
she that abides at home divides the plunder.³

The NET Bible indicates women in both verses:⁴

NET: The Lord speaks;
many, many women spread the good news.
Kings leading armies run away—they run away!
The lovely lady of the house divides up the loot.

The NLT has “a great army,” giving the clear impression that it was a male army, although it includes a footnote, “Or a host of women”:

NLT: The Lord gives the word,
and **a great army*** brings the good news.
Enemy kings and their armies flee,
while **the women of Israel** divide the plunder.
*Or a host of women

However, the NIV removes women from both verses:

The Lord announced the word,
and **great was the company of those** who proclaimed it:
“Kings and armies flee in haste;
in the camps men divide the plunder.

The NIV translates “men divide the plunder,” though the verb “she divides” is marked feminine. The NVI (*Nueva Versión Internacional*—the NIV in Spanish) departs from the English NIV and mentions women in both verses: *millares de mensajeras* (“thousands of female messengers”) in v. 11 and *las mujeres* (“the women”) in v. 12.⁵ *La Palabra de Dios para Todos* (PDT) says “many are the women” in v. 11, with *mujer* (“woman”) in its translation of v. 12.⁶

Lines of women singing and dancing with tambourines to announce victory in battle is a prominent motif in the OT, as is women proclaiming God’s word. It is important to preserve this history and convey those women’s activities through accurate translation.

Daughter Zion

Whereas Ps 68’s “great army” of women most likely is figurative, in the sense that the women were a large group proclaiming God’s word though not as actual soldiers, Daughter Zion in Mic 4:13 is indeed warrior-like. In various translations, “Daughter Zion,” whose iron horns and bronze hooves crush many peoples, translates only as “Zion” or “Jerusalem,” although she—Daughter Zion—was suffering in childbirth earlier in the chapter.

The NET Bible translates:

NET: “Get up and thresh, **Daughter Zion!**
For I will give you iron horns;
I will give you bronze hooves,
and you will crush many nations.”
You will devote to the LORD the spoils you take from
them,
and dedicate their wealth to the sovereign Ruler of the
whole earth.

Micah 4:6–5:1 describes God’s plan to redeem the Judean people from their Babylonian exile and reestablish them as a strong nation he himself will rule. In this context, God personifies his people as a woman who has been shamed, but whom he will rescue as she fights her way back to recall her rightful honor and the people’s respect. God addresses her several times as Daughter Zion (4:8, 10, 13), as well as Daughter Jerusalem (4:8), then finally, Daughter of Troops (5:1 [4:14 in the Hebrew text]). These expressions are examples of Hebrew “construct” forms, which often are translated into English as “X of Y” in which X has the characteristic of Y. “Troop” refers to a marauding or raiding band, an army division, or to the foray or raid itself.⁷ Thus, it seems that God is commanding her to marshal her troops like a military leader.

“Daughter Zion” refers to the city of Jerusalem. The Hebrew word “city” is grammatically feminine, which allows the personification that occurs in many of the prophetic books (e.g., Isa 10:32, 16:1, 37:22, 52:2; Zech 2:10). In some cases the phrase is expanded to Virgin Daughter of Jerusalem (Isa 37:22; Zeph 3:14).

In Isa 37:22, Zion, that is Jerusalem, is pictured as a “young, vulnerable daughter whose purity is being threatened by the would-be Assyrian rapist. The personification hints at the reality which the young girls of the city would face if the Assyrians conquered it.”⁸ This had in fact happened already to Judean women in Lachish, an eventuality that would be repeated in Jerusalem. Assyrian pictorial reliefs in the palace of Nineveh show Israelite women and children marched off from Lachish with bundles on their backs.⁹

The Bible reports examples of this common ancient Near Eastern practice of stealing women and children as war trophies: David pursued the Amalekites who had stolen his and his followers’ wives (1 Sam 30:2); a captive Israelite girl served Naaman’s wife (2 Kgs 5:2); and the Israelites obtained wives for the defeated Benjamites by raiding Jabesh Gilead (Judg 21:10–12).

The young woman of Mic 4:13 has been brutalized. As a result, she is lame (4:6–7), in grief (4:6), driven away (4:6), and hurting as though in childbirth (4:9–10). Her enemies rape her, taunting: “Let her be defiled. Let our eyes gloat over Zion” (4:11).

But Micah says that the nations do not understand God’s plan (4:11). He will gather those who took advantage of his daughter “like sheaves to the threshing floor,” and she is told to trample them underfoot. Ancient Egyptian tomb paintings show oxen and donkeys pulling a sled weighted with pieces of flint and metal over the grain; there is also evidence of metal shoes being attached to the feet of these animals to more efficiently cut the stalks of grain, bringing to mind the bronze hooves of Mic 4:13.¹⁰

Horns in the OT symbolize power, strength, and pride.¹¹ The woman of Mic 4:13 is promised iron horns. Iron and bronze were the strongest metals available in biblical times. In Daniel’s vision of four beasts, for example, the last one terrified with its “large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. . . . it had ten horns” (Dan 7:7 NIV). The prophet Micah does not hesitate to quote God telling a metaphorical woman to act like this.

The ancient Near East revered military women; Canaanite and Mesopotamian national goddesses often rode into battle on war horses or lions. The OT prophet Deborah, who judged Israel and led them into battle, is the prime biblical example (Judg 4–5) of one who led Israel into battle. But there are others whom God inspired to destroy Israel’s enemies during military conflicts—Jael killed Sisera with a tent peg (Judg 4:17–23); an unnamed woman saved Thebez by dropping a millstone on Abimelek from the top of a tower (Judg 9:50–54), and another wise woman negotiated the beheading of David’s enemy Sheba (2 Sam 20:14–22). Judith, a Jewish conquerer of the apocryphal/deuterocanonical book named for her, saved Israel from the attacking Assyrians by ingratiating herself to the general Holofernes in order to decapitate him. A woman with iron horns and bronze feet perhaps challenges evangelical culture and other traditional perspectives on women.

The ESV is one of the few translations that retain “Daughter of Troops” in Mic 5:1; it explains in a note, “That is, city”:

ESV: Now muster your troops, **O daughter* of troops;**
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel
on the cheek.
*That is, city

Some versions, such as the NIV, retain “Daughter Zion,” but avoid “Daughter of Troops” as too literal:

NIV: “Rise and thresh, **Daughter Zion,**
for I will give you horns of iron;
I will give you hooves of bronze
and you will break to pieces many nations.”
You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the LORD,
their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.
Marshal your troops, **city of troops,**
for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel’s ruler
on the cheek with a rod.

Others, including the NLT, omit the metaphor of an iron-clad young woman threshing, relegating the Hebrew phrase to a footnote:

NLT: “Rise up and crush the nations, **O Jerusalem!**”^{*}
says the LORD.
“For I will give you iron horns and bronze hooves,
so you can trample many nations to pieces.
You will present their stolen riches to the LORD,
their wealth to the LORD of all the earth.”
Mobilize! **Marshal your troops!**
The enemy is laying siege to Jerusalem.
They will strike Israel’s leader
in the face with a rod.
*Hebrew “Rise up and thresh, O Daughter of Zion.”

The *Palabra de Dios para Todos* is a good example for Spanish. It begins 4:13 with *Hija de Sion* (“Daughter of Zion”) and has *hija de guerreros* (“daughter of warriors”) in 5:1.¹²

The United Bible Societies' translator's handbook on Isaiah recommends that it might be more useful to give the meaning explicitly and refer to either Zion or Jerusalem directly as "The town of Zion/Jerusalem" without the "daughter of" idiom.¹³ On the other hand, the NET Bible notes: "Daughter" may seem extraneous in English but consciously joins the various epithets and metaphors of Israel and Jerusalem as a woman, a device used to evoke sympathy from the reader. This individualizing of Zion as a daughter draws attention to the corporate nature of the covenant community and also to the tenderness with which the Lord regards his chosen people.¹⁴ There may be alternate phrasing in the receptor language to indicate endearment. For example, in Zech 2:10, NET translates "Zion my daughter" and NLT "O beautiful Jerusalem." Spanish *mi hija* ("my daughter") would be appropriate.

"Daughter Zion" is a more direct as well as a more understandable translation, because God is addressing the whole community as his daughter, whereas "Daughter of Jerusalem" may sound as though God is speaking to one particular young woman who lives in the city. Note these two NIV translations of Zeph 3:14:

NIV 1984: Sing, O **daughter of Zion**; shout aloud,
O Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O **daughter of Jerusalem!**

NIV 2011: Sing, **Daughter Zion**; shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, **Daughter Jerusalem!**

There are good reasons to maintain the daughter imagery: it reflects the historical context, allowing the listener to picture how women felt, acted, and were acted upon in war-time and by extension, what the entire populace experienced, as well as God's fatherly passion for their well-being. The poetry evokes sympathy in general that one would feel toward a young woman in trouble, but even more so, it provides empathy and hope for abused women who identify with the need to trust God's power for deliverance. The imagery empowers women to act, to be used by God, rather than simply waiting to be rescued.

Woman Wisdom

Proverbs presents two contrasting portraits of women. The "Woman Wisdom" is positive, a metaphorical wise teacher, but the "Strange Woman" is negative, a foolish, seductive stranger. Both are illustrated elsewhere in the lives of other biblical women. Wise women appear in the stories of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, as do strange foreign women like Delilah and Jezebel. Proverbs 8 personifies wisdom as a woman linked with God as a source of truth, righteousness, instruction, and knowledge. The grammatically feminine Hebrew word for "wisdom" may have inspired the metaphor, but it does not explain its development. Both the "strange woman" and the "wise woman" are most likely symbolic personifications based in Israelite sociological history.

Proverbs reflects the household struggle for survival in the difficult hill country of the family-clan period as well as concerns with Jewish identity that climaxed in post-exilic times.

Israelite households were independent cultural and economic centers which formed the basis for a tribally-organized society. Lemuel's mother, who gave advice to her royal son in Prov 31:1-9, exemplifies a wise teacher and illustrates the woman's primary role in socialization and literacy. The acrostic poem that follows in Prov 31:10-31 values the successful matriarch, not in terms of her sexuality but on the basis of her business acumen and industriousness for the benefit of her household. This sociological function of women as educators and household managers explains the use of the Woman Wisdom metaphor in Proverbs.

In Proverbs, Woman Wisdom and her alter ego the Strange/Foreign/Foolish Woman together outline the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable social connections for Israelite young men. Although opposite figures, they are both embraced by the men they meet and invite home for food (e.g., Prov 9:5, 17). Even women who were indeed Israelite but "belonged to" another man were "other" and off limits. Both women speak persuasively, demonstrating the crucial importance of rhetorical language in society, especially in the wisdom tradition, and also the dangers of its abuse. The Strange Woman's words reflect a moral ambiguity that is harmful but often part of human experience.

Even if these personified feminine images were removed from Proverbs, there would still remain direct warnings to young men about the kinds of women they should not associate with coupled with direction regarding what they should value in women, but much of the impact would be lost. Further, emphasis on women's power implicit in the feminine language of the text would be lost as well. The woman represented as a source of power contrasts with the traditional impression of patriarchal social and theological order in the Bible. In Proverbs, the Wise Woman is the source of life to her community, not as childbearer, but as an important participant in various aspects of Israelite society and religion. Some English versions make this clear by translating feminine pronouns as "she" and "her":

NET: **Wisdom** calls out in the street,
she shouts loudly in the plazas;
at the head of the noisy streets **she calls**,
in the entrances of the gates in the city **she utters her words**:

NIV: **Wisdom** calls aloud in the street,
she raises her voice in the public squares;
at the head of the noisy streets **she cries out**,
in the gateways of the city **she makes her speech**:

TEV, however, omits feminine references in Prov 1:20ff:

TEV: Listen! **Wisdom** is calling out in the streets and marketplaces,
calling loudly at the city gates and wherever people come together:

In Spanish, as in Hebrew, "wisdom" (Spanish *sabiduría*) is a feminine noun. The possessive pronoun *su*, however, is the same for both "his" and "her," and there is no distinguishing masculine or feminine third person verb marking, so it is not

certain that Spanish-speaking readers or listeners would picture a woman speaking in Prov 1:20ff. or in chs. 8 or 9. In addition, Spanish versions other than the *Reina-Valera* 1995 do not capitalize *sabiduría* as a person's name. But, in 9:13 when the figure shifts to the foolish woman, Spanish versions *emphasize* the female imagery by adding the word *mujer* ("woman"), giving an unbalanced view of woman's nature, even suggesting that men are wise and women foolish.¹⁵

In Huichol, an indigenous language of Mexico, "Woman Wisdom" is translated "A wise person," perhaps partly due to the lack of clarity of the Spanish base translation, but mostly because a wise woman in their community would not stand and speak in public. However, after consultation, the translators found a natural way to include women. At first, Prov 1:20a, when translated back from Huichol to English, read: "In the streets they shout so that people would be wise." After the consultant-check it reads: "Wisdom shouts in the streets like a woman." Proverbs 8:1, after consultant-check, says: "Wisdom is like a woman who speaks to us." The Prov 9:1 draft read: "The wise man built the house," but after consultant-check it now says: "Wisdom like a woman built her house."

It is important for minority-language speakers of indigenous cultures to know that in biblical cultures, women appeared and spoke publicly not only in harmful ways, but in wise, powerful, and helpful ways and that God and the biblical writers approved and encouraged that.

An Ammonite Woman and A Moabite Woman

Not all foreign women in the Hebrew Bible were blameworthy. Women like Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are remembered in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus as people of faith. Certainly, the women mentioned in 2 Chr 24:26 were also people of faith since their sons conspired against King Joash to avenge the stoning of Zechariah—the High Priest Jehoiada's son. The text names the conspirators' mothers, specifying that one was Ammonite and the other was Moabite. The Hebrew descriptions "the Ammonite" and "the Moabite" are feminine forms, clearly indicating that Shimeath and Shimrith were the names of their mothers, not their fathers. A translation like "Shimeath the Ammonite . . . Shimrith the Moabite," as in NRSV, ESV, and NJB, leads readers to assume that these two women were in fact men.¹⁶ A more accurate rendering would be "Shimeath an Ammonite woman . . . Shimrith a Moabite woman" (REB, NET, NIV), or "an Ammonite woman named Shimeath . . . a Moabite woman named Shomer" (NLT), or "Shimeath, a woman from the land of Ammon . . . Shimrith, a woman from the land of Moab," as in the Brazilian common language version, *Nova Tradução na Linguagem de Hoje* (NTLH).¹⁷

While many English translations preserve these references to the non-Israelite mothers, most Spanish versions translate them with the masculine: "Simat, un amonita [Shimeath, an Ammonite] . . . Simrit, un moabita [Shimrith, a Moabite]" (VP) or "Simat el amonita [Shimeath the Ammonite] . . . Simrit el moabita [Shimrith the Moabite]" (*Reina-Valera*, NVI, PDT). Happily, some retain the feminine: "Simeat la amonita . . . Simrit

la moabita" (La Biblia de las Américas) and "una mujer amonita llamada Simeat . . . una mujer moabita llamada Somer" (NTV).

Preserving even minor feminine references like these is important. This particular verse (2 Chr 24:26) shows that these women, though outside Israel, exerted a positive influence on their families and on Israel as a whole. Further, more accurate translation would challenge the impression that the Bible is a male creation that deprecates women.

Prophetess

On the other hand, preserving grammatical feminine marking on nouns can have the opposite effect, leading readers to believe, for example, that a female prophet had a different, lesser function than a prophet, as has become true for "deacon" and "deaconess" in some fellowships. Five Israelite women are called *nebiah*, the feminine form of the Hebrew word for "prophet" (*nabi*): Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22), Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3). Prophets, both male and female, held respected spiritual leadership positions. Under the monarchy, they had free access to the kings, whom they frequently reprimanded. Women prophets had the same back-and-forth communication with military and political leaders, and they exercised the same public ministry as their male counterparts. Miriam led the Israelite women in a victory chorus, and many commentators believe she actually composed and led the entirety of Exod 15. Micah 6:4 identifies her, along with Moses and Aaron, as a leader God sent to the Israelite people. Deborah led the Israelites publicly as both a religious and a civil authority.

When King Josiah sent his cabinet officials to speak to the Lord and ask about the law that had been discovered in the temple, they consulted with the prophet Huldah. Her negative pronouncement resulted in one of the most sweeping religious reforms in Judah. Noadiah, whose name means "YHWH has met" or "YHWH has become manifest,"¹⁸ was a post-exilic prophet. Noadiah, along with other high-placed opponents like Tobiah and Sanballat, tried to intimidate Nehemiah. Since she was named specifically, she was likely the leader of the unnamed male prophets Nehemiah mentions.

Women also served as prophets in Mesopotamia. The Mari texts from Syria in the early second millennium BC give evidence of both male and female prophets. Women also spoke out as prophets during the seventh-century BC reign of Esarhaddon of Assyria. The females appeared to have served in the same function as the male prophets.¹⁹

Since these women functioned in the same roles as male prophets, it makes sense to use the same key word for both. For languages that do not mark gender on nouns or verbs, the word "woman" should be added to specify that the prophet was female, since the default is usually understood as male. In this way, it becomes clear that both women and men fulfilled the prophetic function. Languages that do distinguish noun gender will make the prophet's sex obvious, but should add a footnote to the effect that women prophets did not have a different or lesser role in Israelite society.

In 2 Kgs 22:14a, NIV 1984 called Huldah a prophetess, but in NIV 2011 she is a prophet. NLT also calls her a prophet, but NET has “prophetess”:

NIV 1984: Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah. . . .

NIV 2011: Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah. . . .

NLT: So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to . . . consult with the prophet Huldah.

NET: So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess. . . .

Isaiah’s wife is called “the *nebiah*.” Some commentators say this was a polite way of referring to her since she was not reported as proclaiming God’s word herself, similar to the wife of a king being called the queen.²⁰ Others insist that there is no reason to assume that the wife of a prophet was called a “prophetess.”²¹ In fact, the “queen” in the ancient Near East was not usually the king’s wife, so the name for her position was not normally the feminine form of *melek* (“king”) but rather “great lady” (*gebirah*)²² or “queen mother” (1 Kgs 11:19, 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16; Jer 13:18, 29:2), who, in the OT, fulfilled a specific position of power as adviser to the king. Since the case of Isaiah’s wife is a matter of opinion, the term could be translated “his wife” with a footnote such as, “Hebrew: woman prophet,” or, if the translation committee believed the term indicated her ministry, “his prophet wife” or the “woman prophet who was his wife” would be appropriate translations.

Conclusion

If we translate consistently key terms such as “prophet,” maintain female metaphors such as Daughter Zion and Woman Wisdom, and indicate the gender of feminine actors who exercise various gifts, readers and listeners will gain a grander understanding of how God worked through women and girls in biblical times, and how he wants to work through all his people today.

Notes

1. Hannibal Hamlin, Michael G. Brennan, Margaret P. Hannay, and Noel J. Kinnamon, eds., *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney* (Oxford, 2009) 124–5.

2. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Clark, 1884) 2.253.

3. Another possible translation is, “and the beautiful woman of the house.” The NET Bible, for example, explains in a v. 12 note that the Hebrew form appears to be the construct of “pasture” but the phrase “pasture of the house” makes no sense, so this alternate translation assumes that the form is an alternative or corruption of “beautiful woman” (*nswih*), adding that a reference to a woman would be appropriate in light of v. 11b.

4. Scripture and/or notes quoted by permission. Quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible copyright 1996–2016 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.

5. NVI: El Señor ha emitido la palabra, y millares de mensajeras la proclaman: «Van huyendo los reyes y sus tropas; en las casas, las mujeres se reparten el botín.

6. PDT: El Señor dio la orden y muchas son las mujeres que fueron a contar las buenas noticias: «¡Los ejércitos de los reyes poderosos se han ido lejos de aquí! La mujer que se quedó en casa reparte todo el botín.

7. BDB, s.v. *gedud*.

8. NET Bible note 34 on Isa 37:22.

9. http://www.lmlk.com/research/lmlk_reliefs.htm, plates 9, 10a, and 10b.

10. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (InterVarsity, 2000) Electronic edition.

11. R. Laird Harris, Editor, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, assoc. eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody, 1980) Electronic edition. 2072a (*qeren*).

12. PDT: Hija de Sion, levántate y aplástalos. Convertiré tus cuernos en hierro y tus cascos en bronce. Tú destruirás a muchos y le entregarás al SEÑOR todas las ganancias de ellos. Le entregarás todas sus riquezas al Señor de toda la tierra. Ahora, hija de guerreros, reúne a tus soldados. Estamos siendo asediados; ellos con su vara golpean en la mejilla al juez de Israel.

13. Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk, *A Handbook on Isaiah* (United Bible Societies, 2011) Electronic edition. Note on Isa 37:22.

14. NET Bible note 13 on Zech 2:10.

15. PDT: La sabiduría construyó su casa y puso siete columnas en ella. . . . La mujer insensata es escandalosa, estúpida e ignorante. *Dios Habla Hoy* (VP): La sabiduría construyó su casa, la adornó con siete columnas. . . . La necedad es como una mujer chismosa, tonta e ignorante. NVI: La sabiduría construyó su casa y labró sus siete pilares. . . . La mujer necia es escandalosa, frívola y desvergonzada.

16. Roger L. Omanson and John E. Ellington, *Handbook on 1–2 Chronicles*, 2 vols. (United Bible Societies, 2014) Electronic edition. Note on 2 Chr 24:26.

17. NTLH: Dois homens planejaram a morte dele: Zabade, filho de Simeate, uma mulher da terra de Amom, e Jeozabate, filho de Sinrite, uma mulher da terra de Moabe.

18. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, “Noadiah,” in Carol Meyers, gen. ed., Toni Craven and Ross S. Kraemer, assoc. eds., *Women in Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2000) 132.

19. Walton, et al., *IVP Bible Background Commentary* on 2 Chr 34:22.

20. Susan Ackerman, “Prophetess (Wife of Isaiah)” in *Women in Scripture*, 317.

21. Katharine C. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women* (1921) par. 716. https://godswordtowomen.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/gods_word_to_women1.pdf

22. TWOT, 1199b (*malkah*).



ELIZABETH “LIBBY” WILLETT serves as a Senior Translation Consultant for SIL International. She trains and consults for mother-tongue Bible translators in Latin America. She coordinates the Huichol Old Testament Project for The Seed Co., a Wycliffe Bible Translators affiliate. Earlier, she and her husband, Tom, facilitated translation in the Southeastern Tepehuan language of Mexico. Libby has an MA in linguistics from the University of North Dakota and a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Arizona.

Covenant Partners: An Egalitarian Reading of Genesis 17:15–16

JOSIAH M. CALLAGHAN

Personhood is deeply intertwined with the names we are given. In the biblical narrative, names of characters brim with meaning. Such meaning is enhanced in those instances in which a person takes or is given a new name.¹ A rare example of a woman undergoing a name change is Sarai, who takes on the new identity of “Sarah” in Gen 17. This transpires within the various iterations of God’s covenant with Abraham (the Abrahamic covenant) found in Gen 12–17. What makes Gen 17:15–16 of particular interest is not only Sarai’s name change, but her inclusion in the promise of blessings. The primacy of Abraham correlates with the patriarchal ordering of society in the ancient Near East, and God’s covenantal interactions with Abraham reflect this social reality. When God does speak regarding Sarah, Abraham functions as the intermediary.² However, this does not imply that Sarah is any less of a covenant partner or inheritor than Abraham.

This article begins with careful consideration of both the covenant and the narrative elements within Gen 15–18 that undergird a sense of movement toward egalitarianism. The resulting interpretation of Gen 15–18 will place Gen 17:15–16 as its thematic center. Lastly, implications of the egalitarian progression in Gen 17 will be applied in family and church contexts.

Tracing the Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant has a triad of iterations in Gen 12–17. The covenants detailed in chs. 12 and 15 include God’s promise to give Abram and Sarai both territory and progeny. Genesis 17 reiterates these promises, but they now become contingent upon adherence to the covenantal sign of circumcision (introduced in 17:9–14).

Terence Fretheim notes the parallels between chs. 15 and 17, but adds that there are “elements of freshness,” which include name changes not only for Abram and Sarai, but even for God, who is called *El Shaddai* for the first time in 17:1.³ Fretheim proposes that the promises of ch. 17 “are a renewal of the covenant established by God in Gen 15, only now in a somewhat different time and place. . . .”⁴ Of particular importance in this covenant renewal is Sarah’s express inclusion in the promise and covenant.⁵

Many scholars believe these narratives took their final shape during the Babylonian exile (hence the sixth century BC), and this context helps us understand the importance of the promises made to the patriarchs and matriarchs. Given that the Babylonian exile unsettled Israelite theology, it makes sense to “look back to the promises made to Abraham” in search of hope for the present predicament of God’s chosen people.⁶ Thus the promises made to Abraham and Sarah in Gen 17 play a role in fostering hope for those in exile. The words of God in 17:16b, “I will bless her [Sarah], and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her” (NRSV), would have provided anticipation for the restoration of the Israelite monarchy even after the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Likewise, the promise of children in spite of barrenness becomes not only a story of how God blessed this particular matriarch and her family, but of how God brought about restoration and made

something possible even when it seemed impossible. In short, it demonstrates both the faithfulness and the *power* of Israel’s God, which takes on a profound significance in the exilic context where the Babylonian deity Marduk reigned supreme. This is an example of how the polemical nature of Genesis emphasizes the contrast between Israel’s God and Marduk, claiming that the God of Israel is the only true God.⁷

Genesis 17 within Narrative Arcs and Themes of the Pentateuch

Placing Gen 17:15–16 within the larger story of Abraham and Sarah’s family, several specific narrative themes become apparent. First, there is Abraham and Sarah’s strained relationship. Aspects of this unbalanced relationship are highlighted in two remarkably similar stories in Genesis (chs 12 and 20). In both instances, the fear of death leads Abraham to lie about his relationship with Sarah in order to save his own life.⁸ Abraham is keenly aware of the danger posed to his life in a culture where women desired by powerful men are simply taken. Thus, Abraham seeks to save his own life by stating that Sarah is his sister. But God warns both Pharaoh (through plagues, Gen 12:17) and Abimelech (in a dream, Gen 20:6–7); therefore Sarah remains Abraham’s wife.⁹ Why does God intervene in such a dramatic manner? Was it to preserve Abraham and Sarah’s marriage in some way? The answer seems to be that, had God not intervened, the blessings of God would not have come to life through Abraham and Sarah. In order for the covenant to be fulfilled, Abraham would then have needed another wife. But in light of Gen 17, we know that God clearly intends for Sarah to be the woman through whom the covenant promises flow.¹⁰ As such, God chooses to protect the marriage. As expected for an ancient patriarchal society, Abraham here treats Sarah as property rather than as a partner. Pharaoh and Abimelech also treat Sarah as property to be attained.¹¹ Yet, in spite of such culturally-based mistreatment, God shows concern for Sarah and affirms her importance in the salvation narrative—thus revealing an egalitarian aspect of the text and of God’s character.

The issue of Sarah’s infertility becomes one of the central conflicts in this story. This chronic plight creates a great deal of distress and uncertainty for both Abraham and Sarah. Ultimately, the two of them fail to trust in God’s ability to fulfill the promise of progeny. As a result, they decide to take things into their own hands. In ch. 16, Sarah plans to have Abraham impregnate her servant, Hagar (compare Abraham’s similar plan in ch. 15). Although Hagar does bear a son, Ishmael, God reveals that the covenant promise will come through a son born to Sarah herself (Gen 17:15–16). This story indicates that Sarah has a degree of autonomy, but this autonomy is overshadowed by the tension and conflict that both Abraham and Sarah’s actions create within the family unit. More importantly, this story illustrates the failure on both Abraham and Sarah’s part to trust in God and to believe “that the ultimate authority of the family leader (or any other leader) has its source in God.”¹² Furthermore, God’s insistence on

the covenant promises coming to fruition through Sarah displays again her role as an equally vital covenant partner.

Continued Egalitarian Progression in Genesis 17:15–16

Genesis 17:15–16 further confirms that Sarah is essential to the realization of God's covenant promises:

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." (Gen 17:15–16 NRSV)

Sarah's designation as "a mother of nations" highlights just how universal these blessings are. Sarah's inclusion in these blessings indeed demonstrates that God's care is not limited to Abraham despite the initial absence of Sarah from the covenant iterations in Gen 12 and 15.

The final element of significance to the egalitarian progression of Gen 17 is the modification of Sarai's name to Sarah. The change is just as subtle—a change of one letter—in English as in biblical Hebrew. Paul Keim offers etymological insight on the shift in names:

These "new" names actually represent regional or dialectical variations of the same names. . . . The renaming here is a form of word play called paronomasia. Ancient literature, including the Bible, is full of such popular etymologies whereby a poetic bond is formed between memory and identity. In this case, a promise of progeny has been made all the more confounding in the face of chronic barrenness.¹³

The bond that melds "memory and identity" is an important aspect of the name change. In designating this change, God has ingrained the covenant promises in the minds of Abraham and Sarah. Whenever their new names are spoken, the "poetic bond . . . between memory and identity" is renewed. This renewal presents itself not only in terms of memory but also in terms of ongoing relationship. As Fretheim states, "The new names signal a re-characterization of their relationship with God."¹⁴ This sense of regeneration influences the relationship between Sarah and Abraham, as well as their relationship with God. It indicates to both of them that God has given them not only new identities but also new roles. Sandra Richter expands on this:

With these changes of name God repeats and expands his promises of fertility and territory. . . . In Abraham and Sarah's world, when a person was raised to a new position—a princeling to a throne, or a servant to an office—it was common for the patron to change that person's name in order to signify the new role. Thus, when Yahweh changes his clients' names, he formalizes their new roles as the parents of a new line of chosen people. Basically, what we have here is the designation of a new Adam and Eve.¹⁵

Abraham and Sarah have taken on the role of God's image-bearers. Through both of them, God's promises will flow out into the world. God will use the fruit of their relationship, in spite

of all their flaws, to bless the nations. Sarah's crucial role in the accomplishment of God's purposes cannot be over-emphasized.

Egalitarian Progression and Interpretation of Scripture

The interpretation of Scripture is an ongoing task for the church. We all enter the reading of Scripture with biases, worldviews, and assumptions about the overarching narrative of the Bible. Patriarchal cultures have undoubtedly influenced the process of translation and interpretation. The Bible was composed, passed down, and then translated within male-dominated cultures, many of which reinforced deep assumptions about the "masculinity" of God as well as the rule of Adam over Eve. Certain long-standing modes of translating also have built-in biases toward male dominance that may not have been as present in the writer's mind, and certainly not in God's.

Consider, for example, that many people, when they read "God," assume it refers to a male deity. However, the Christian view is that "God" is a united community of three persons. The Genesis creation narrative itself reveals that "God" is neither male nor female, and that both "male and female" humans are in "his" image (Gen 1:27). The use of "his" in reference to God is merely grammatical, and also practical since the repeated use of "God" in every instance would be cumbersome. Partnership rather than patriarchy was the creational design for men and women.

Genesis 17 indicates that Sarah and Abraham both function (in some sense) as a new Eve and a new Adam. With this in mind, it becomes important for the church to reflect on elements of Adam and Eve's relationship in the creation account. An egalitarian interpretation, such as that outlined above for Gen 17, flows from how the church understands the relationship between man and woman from the onset of creation. Church tradition has often upheld assumptions about women and the supposed roles they should or should not undertake. These prohibitions range from the exclusion of women from leadership in church settings to the subordination of women in marriage relationships. Both OT and NT texts, when read incorrectly, can contribute to this line of interpretation. We will examine several additional OT examples in an attempt to further showcase the egalitarian movement of Scripture that we have seen in the Abrahamic covenant.

In Gen 2, for example, the seeming primacy of Adam in the created order often leads to inferences about the superiority of the male sex. However, while it seems clear to the modern English reader that the first human created, *adam*, is a man, a close reading of the Hebrew actually suggests that this individual is not initially gendered.¹⁶ Genesis 2:21–22 describes the separation/creation of Eve from Adam, which could be understood as the differentiation of an androgynous being into gendered male and female beings. What is even more relevant to the case for interpreting the creation account in an egalitarian manner is that Eve is taken/created from Adam's side. Numerous commentators have argued that this implies Eve is not subservient or supplementary to Adam, but essential to Adam's existence—in short, his equal.¹⁷

Two other texts in Genesis merit comment. Genesis 2:20 says there was no "helper" suitable for Adam. As a result, God forms a woman from one of Adam's ribs. Most translations render *ezer* here as "helper." The seemingly unavoidable implication then is

that this helper is subordinate (or even inferior) to Adam, someone who serves and meets Adam's needs. However, the word *ezer* is often used in the OT to describe God as Israel's *ezer*. It would be absurd to view God as a subordinate or assistant when clearly the term is a positive one. In fact, some have noted that "helper" is not nearly a strong enough term to communicate the meaning of *ezer*. In fact, in other places *ezer* typically "connotes active intervention on behalf of someone, especially in military contexts, as often in Psalms."¹⁸ As Phipps notes, "an examination of the . . . other usages of *ezer* in [the] Hebrew Scriptures displays that it never connotes someone in a servile role. It often refers to a superior person and occasionally is associated with divine assistance."¹⁹ It is also critical to pair *ezer* with the subsequent Hebrew word *kenegedo*, which essentially means a corresponding "counterpart."²⁰

Another Genesis text that is often misappropriated is Gen 3:16, in which God describes the consequences for Adam and Eve's disobedience. When speaking to Eve, God says, "yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16b NRSV). The ESV promotes a *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* reading of this passage: "Your desire *shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you*" (italics added). In other words, God's curse determines the way things will be as a result of the fall. The ESV proposes that the rulership of man over woman is normative. However, a descriptive reading of this passage means that it is not God who demands this state of relationship. Rather, Gen 3:16 is detailing the inevitable outcome of the fall. What the ESV does not take into account is that, "In every fashion, Eve is presented as Adam's equal in Genesis 1."²¹ By the time we reach Gen 3:16, something has changed. That change is sin. As Richter puts it, "with the Fall, this mutuality is shattered."²² Unfortunately, the ESV propagates the idea that this lack of mutuality is God's will. In fact, it suggests there was never mutuality in the first place! Fretheim offers sharp insight that should refute the prescriptive interpretation of 3:16:

Most would say that 3:14–19 is descriptive (of what happens in the wake of sin) rather than prescriptive (divinely established orders for the future). . . . [Adam and Eve] reap the consequences of their own deeds. . . . Every aspect of creaturely life is touched . . . [including] marriage and sexuality. . . . It is especially remarkable that the "rule" of the man over the woman is seen as a consequence of sin; hence it stands against God's creational intention. . . . this state of affairs has not been put in place for all time to come. [Rather,] as with any consequence of sin, or divine judgments, every effort should be made to relieve the toil, pain, patriarchy, and negative effects on nature. Such endeavors harmonize with God's intentions in creation, though continuing sinfulness impedes the effort.²³

Ecclesial and Relational Applications of Genesis 17:15–16

Relating Gen 17:15–16 to a twenty-first century church context may seem difficult at first glance, and in some respects it certainly is. We live in an increasingly polarized society where many of the vestiges of our patriarchal past are being cast aside. In an environment hostile to anything deemed outdated, the

Bible often finds itself at the center of questions regarding the ongoing relevance of biblical texts or ideas that seem to promote oppression and inequality. The criticism the church faces today is often linked to various texts within the Bible and the way these passages have been applied throughout history. The criticism of such application is largely justified.

Scripture undeniably reflects each era in which it was written, and many of these ideas and worldviews are no longer acceptable. Broadly speaking, the church should acknowledge this. At the same time, the church should be cautious about allowing others to misread and misrepresent the Bible as a whole. It is, unfortunately, easy to read twenty-first century expectations and ideals into Scripture. Reading the Bible in this manner only conforms the text into our own image. This defeats the purpose of reading it in the first place. Scripture is a living text and should speak to us as we read, question, and interpret it. Scripture does engage modern questions and concerns. Still, the contextual nature of Scripture requires us to read it carefully. Imposing worldviews upon the text that were foreign to its authors and audience inevitably leads to poor interpretation and application.

The beauty of Scripture is that, when we actually read it on its own terms, we discover that much of it does in fact reflect a God who desires the prosperity of humanity, both male *and* female. When we read Scripture on its own terms, we often find that the authors do not easily fit our categories of proper thinking and anthropology. More than anything, this shows the human side of the Bible. It reminds us that the characters of the Bible, and even its writers as well, though moved through divine inspiration, were sinful humans. To the degree that the Bible reflects the sin of humanity, it also reflects prejudice and bias. But this is not cause for the rejection of the Bible. If anything, God uses the imperfections of the biblical characters to highlight our own imperfections. God uses the failings of Abraham and Sarah to show what happens when people take God's plans into their own hands. God uses the story of Sarah and Abraham to teach us how we can be different, treating each other with dignity by placing trust and authority in God and not in ourselves.

Conclusion

Like many other biblical texts, Gen 17:15–16 invades our worldview and reminds us that God sought out covenant partners—both male and female—to bring blessings to all the nations. The promises for Sarah are promises that extend to all nations and to every woman grafted into the God's missional purposes. This implication means that the church is a place where God's blessings are extended not only to men but to women, because since the beginning of creation, God has partnered with women, from Eve to Sarah and from Mary to the sons *and* daughters of the living God.

Notes

1. Other well-known examples apart from Abram and Sarai include Jacob/Israel (Gen 32:28, 35:10) and Simon/Peter (John 1:42).
2. The theory of divine accommodation is pertinent here and functions as an important interpretive principle, particularly in light of NT passages such as Gal 3:28. On one hand, we have to account for the appearance of differing theologies in both testaments with regard to the equality of women. God speaks directly to Abraham and not to Sarah, which reflects

the patriarchal reality of that time. In speaking to Abraham and not Sarah, God accommodated (or allowed the authors to construe it as such) to the cultural norms of the time. Yet this accommodation is countered by the inclusion of Sarah in the covenant. Therefore, this progression towards egalitarianism reflects God's desire to move people in a new direction in spite of allowing less than ideal situations to persist. On the theory of divine accommodation, see Gregory A. Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross, Volume 2: The Cruciform Thesis* (Fortress, 2017) 701–63.

3. Terence E. Fretheim, "Commentary on Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16," *Revised Common Lectionary, First Reading*, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=257.

4. Fretheim, "Commentary on Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16," First Reading.

5. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2014) 34.

6. Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible*, 34.

7. Mark A. Throntveit, "Law and Narrative" (lecture notes, Luther Seminary, fall 2018).

8. Gen 12 describes an encounter with the Egyptian Pharaoh, while the parallel account in Gen 20 describes a similar encounter with King Abimelech of Gerar, albeit with more details.

9. See Gen 20:3–7.

10. There are clear similarities between Gen 12 and Gen 20. Various scholars have proposed that Gen 12 is characteristic of one source (J) while Gen 20 is attributed to another (E).

11. The wording in biblical Hebrew used to describe what we call "marriage" is indicative of hierarchy and "implies inequality." ". . . the most common expression used [for marriage] instead says that a certain man 'takes' a certain woman 'as/for a [his] woman' (Heb., *laqah le ishah*)." Describing marriage this way, the language presents "the man as the subject of the verb and the woman as the object," which "conveys the notion that he owns her." See Karla G. Bohmbach, Sandra L. Gravett, F. V. Greifenhagen, and Donald C. Polaski, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach* (Westminster John Knox, 2008) 103.

12. Lea Danihelova and Jasmine Fraser, "Family Leadership: Legacies from the Abraham Family," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 6 (Fall 2012) 58.

13. Paul A. Keim, "The Legacy of Sarah and Abraham: A Sermon on Genesis 17 and Romans 4," *Vision* 13/2 (Fall 2012) 29. The eleventh-century Jewish commentator Rashi offers a different view, noting that Sarai in Hebrew is "suffixed by the letter Yud," and since the name Sarai means "princess," the possessive suffix implies that "she is a princess for Abraham, but not for others." However, the "absence of any suffix [on 'Sarah'] indicates that she will be a princess for all mankind." See Chaim Miller, ed., *Chumash: The Gutnick Edition (The Five Books of the Torah): With Rashi's Commentary, Targum Onkelos and Haftoras with a Commentary Anthologized from Classic Rabbinic Texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe* (Kol Menachem, 2006) 91.

14. Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trial of Family and Faith* (University of South Carolina Press, 2007) 41.

15. Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (InterVarsity, 2008) 163.

16. See J. M. Callaghan, "The Genesis of Gender" (Bethel University, MN: March 2017), https://academia.edu/36789075/THE_GENESIS_OF_GENDER, where I explore this further.

17. Christine Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible* (Yale University Press, 2012) 36; see also William E. Phipps, "Adam's Rib: Bone of Contention," *ThTo* 33/3 (Oct 1976) 263–73.

18. See Robert Alter, *Five Books of Moses* (Norton, 2004) 22.

19. Phipps, "Adam's Rib," 271.

20. Phipps, "Adam's Rib," 271.

21. Richter, *Epic of Eden*, 109.

22. Richter, *Epic of Eden*, 109.

23. Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Abingdon, 2005) 75–76.

JOSIAH CALLAGHAN received a BA in biblical and theological studies from Bethel University and is currently an MA student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is a committed member of an Anabaptist house church network.



Tax-Wise Giving

Giving from your wallet is a great way to support CBE and we thank you! But there may be more cost-effective and tax-wise ways to give:

- Appreciated stock you've owned for at least a year
- Real estate that has increased in value and you no longer need
- Distributions from your IRA

To learn more about how you can support CBE in smart and powerful ways, give us a call at 612-872-6898 or contact CBE's planned giving partner, Barnabas Foundation, at 888-448-3040.



Jael's Story as Initial Fulfillment of Genesis 3:15

JULIE WALSH

“So the LORD God said to the serpent. . . . I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Gen 3:14–15 NIV)

The promise of Gen 3:15, quoted above, is a “seed—a small promise that will eventually grow into the full-blown tree of God’s good news, the storyline of Scripture.”¹ This promise—the greatest promise of all, known for centuries as the *protoevangelium* (“first gospel,” meaning “first [glimpse of the] gospel”)—runs through the OT as a beacon of hope.

It is clear that the Gospels’ crucifixion and resurrection accounts record the fulfillment of God’s promise in Gen 3:15. This article further argues that Jael’s story in Judg 4–5 provides a glimpse—that is, an initial symbolic fulfillment—of Gen 3:15’s “first gospel” promise. To begin making this argument, the context of the two OT narratives (Gen 3 and Judg 4–5) will first be discussed before looking more fully at the common elements between these narratives and the NT crucifixion and resurrection accounts.

Background of Genesis 3:15 and the Jael Story

Genesis 3:15

Translations of Gen 3:15 have been problematic. For example, is it “he” that will bruise or crush the Serpent’s head as the ancient Greek Septuagint has it, or “she” as the Latin Vulgate translates it, or “it” as in the King James Bible, or even “they” as in the Jewish Publication Society’s translation?² As another example, instead of using a word that means “crushed” or “bruised,” the Greek Septuagint translates the Hebrew text with “keep” or “guard.”³

The fourth-fifth century north-African theologian Augustine asks about Gen 3:15, “Enmities are not set between the serpent and the man but between the serpent and the woman. . . . Hence, why does Scripture put it this way?”⁴ His question is apt since Gen 3:15 refers to God setting a hostile distance between the serpent-figure and a *female* follower of Yahweh. Katharine Bushnell, a nineteenth-twentieth century medical missionary and biblical scholar, believed this verse to be saying that *woman* is not only the progenitor of the coming destroyer of Satan but also is, in her own person, Satan’s enemy.⁵ She explains with a quotation from British minister and theologian John Monro Gibson (1838–1921): “So here, it is not only *I will put enmity*; but I am putting, and will put enmity between thee and the woman. The work is begun. . . . She is the first type and representative of all the separated ones who constitute the Church of God.”⁶

The woman’s seed, then, are those who are separated, or holy, unto God. However, it can be further clarifying to realize that the “offspring” of the serpent-figure—as will be shown in the NT—represent those exhibiting the ordinary state of all people who are not among the “separated ones” of the seed of the woman. *People* are not being demonized; rather, recognition is made that there is a spiritual force of evil in the world. Additionally, it is the woman’s spiritual offspring—a male or female follower of Yahweh—who crushes the *source* or *fountainhead*⁷ of evil,

represented by the serpent-figure. Ben Witherington notes, “even in [God’s judgment in Gen 3] there is mercy, because the seed of the woman will crush the head of evil and its source. This is poetic language and conjures up the image of evil snapping at our heels.”⁸ God promises to destroy the source or fountainhead of sin and death that hinders our relationship with God and prophesies of a coming rescuer who will restore humanity to God. Jesus’s action begins this new covenantal relationship between God and the separated ones of the seed of the woman, if they receive Jesus’s action for them through faith. The rescuer destroys what keeps us from God—sin, death, and the devil—and in the *new* covenant proves God’s renewal of his faithful love for humanity.

Deborah and Barak

In the Hebrew structuring of the biblical canon, the book of Judges is among the Prophets. Thus, Deborah’s prophecy in Judg 4:10 that, “the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman,” and her prophetic song in Judg 5 exhibit several of the same features as the other prophets of the Lord. Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum see seven features of the prophets, of which the following three are most pertinent to Deborah’s ministry: “The prophets are God’s authorized spokesmen [sic],” “the prophets speak in the context of the Law-covenant, which prescribed blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience,” and “the prophets share the same message of judgment and salvation . . . [but] each prophetic voice is like a different ride in an amusement park, with its own turns and twists, scenes and surprises.”⁹

In Judg 4 and 5, Israel is experiencing immense oppression and a widespread lack of safety. Daniel Block recognizes, as one example of economic oppression, that “Israelite caravaneers have ceased to travel on their normal trade routes for fear of attack and/or extortionary tolls demanded at crossroads by the Canaanite oppressors.”¹⁰ This situation gives rise to their cry for God’s help.

As for the Song of Deborah in Judg 5, Trent Butler notes that some see it as being widely distributed and possibly used liturgically.¹¹ According to Arthur Cundall and Leon Morris, “In all probability it was included in one of the anthologies of poetry which existed in ancient Israel.”¹² They go on to note, “The unit of Hebrew poetry is normally not the single line but the couplet. . . . the association is one of thought not of sound, as in traditional English poetry; a mental picture is produced which is answered by another supplementary word-picture.”¹³ Since imagery was the important foundation within the structure of poetry itself, the similarity of imagery in Deborah’s Song and Gen 3 is key.

Block summarizes by stating that, “Most obviously, the ideal Israel is portrayed as the people of Yahweh, engaged in his service, committed to him in covenant love, and called upon to bless and praise him (vv. 2–3).”¹⁴ This hymn was clearly crucial to Israel’s identity and it can be supposed that it was therefore still well-known throughout NT times.

Regarding Barak, many scholars find him spineless; however, the NT has a different opinion: he is among those listed in Heb 11 as having great faith in God. Butler notes, “Deborah and Barak sing together in that day, though the feminine singular verb form gives precedence to Deborah but gives no indication of a parody on General Barak.”¹⁵ Though often slandered as if he was too timid, it should instead be realized that Barak recognizes the Lord’s presence with Deborah when he says, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go” (Judg 4:8 NIV). This is similar to the statements Moses makes to God: “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. . . . If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here” (Exod 33:12, 15 NIV). As Block accurately notes, “The request to be accompanied by the prophet is a plea for the presence of God.”¹⁶ Ron Pierce goes further, saying, “Barak acts as a man of faith who is willing to obey God’s messenger, even if his personal glory is not part of the reward.”¹⁷

Jael’s Story

If Jael is the ultimate human deliverer in the book of Judges, “Israel is now identified through the actions and attitudes of their fringe members, not their core constituency,” says Butler.¹⁸ But who is Jael?

If Jael is married to Heber the Kenite (Judg 4:17),¹⁹ then she—like Abigail in 1 Sam 25—works against her husband, who has foolishly aligned himself with King Jabin. Furthermore, Jael’s motivation to kill Sisera is not given. Jael herself is a non-Israelite woman who has chosen Israel’s side and become their unexpected heroine, like Ruth and Rahab. According to K. Lawson Younger, “Jael would not typically be expected to get involved. Not only is she unrelated to the warring parties, but normally would be about her pacific feminine, tent-dwelling duties. But she has risked everything to execute the enemy of God and to aid God’s people.”²⁰ He goes on to state, “The poem paints Jael in terms of the head-smashing, victorious monarch. Consequently, her praiseworthy deed can be described in terms of the victorious conquering leader. . . .”²¹ Jael as a “victorious monarch” would align well with Jesus embodying her story by fulfilling the Gen 3:15 promise and victoriously crushing the fountainhead of the Serpent.

Lastly, Zech 10:4 may allude to Jael’s victory: “Out of them shall come the cornerstone, out of them *the tent peg*, out of them the battle bow, out of them every commander” (NRSV, italics added). The tent peg imagery from this verse may not appear clearly in the NT, but there are many NT allusions to Jesus as the *cornerstone*.²² N. T. Wright, in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, contends that Zechariah, particularly chs. 9–14, had a great influence on Jesus: “Israel are like sheep without a shepherd (10:2); they have shepherds but they are not doing their job, and will be punished (10:3) as part of the divine plan for the return from exile (10:6–12).”²³ Thus, it is not unlikely that Jesus also saw himself as God’s “tent peg” from Zech 10:4.

Common Elements of Genesis 3 and the Jael Story

“She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple.” (Judg 5:26b NIV)

There are many similarities between Gen 3 and the Jael story. At least six types of connection between Gen 3 and the Jael story can be identified: a common formal structure, common motifs, doublets, variant accounts, comments that explain a previous text, and indirect allusions.²⁴ Therefore, Judg 5 may be an initial fulfillment and expansion upon the *protoevangelium* (“first gospel”), either its written form in Gen 3 or the oral tradition preceding it. The Gen 3 narrative, the Jael story, and allusions to both of them in the Gospels share many obvious common elements: a poetry format, a serpent-figure, deception, mothers, seed/offspring of a woman, seed/offspring of a Serpent, striking/crushing a head, a skull, enmity between the Serpent and its spiritual children and a woman and her spiritual children, and a curse and blessing. These correspondences will be discussed in three groupings below.

A Mother—as “Woman”—and Her Spiritual Children

Genesis 3:15, the Jael story, and the Gospels all comment on female characters being specifically a “woman.” Pierce builds on this fact:

Deborah is introduced dramatically as the story’s main character with a string of seven consecutive, grammatically feminine words: her proper name followed by three paired terms. She is “Deborah,” (1) a “woman, a prophet” (fem. nouns), (2) “a woman of light/fire” (fem. nouns), and (3) “she herself, she is judging” (fem. pronoun, fem. participle).²⁵

The Judges author is clearly being emphatic about Deborah being a woman. Jael’s blessing in Judg 5:24 similarly includes two references to her as a woman, as does the dialogue of chauvinistic Abimelech’s desire to not be killed by “a woman” in Judg 9. Correspondingly, concerning Jesus calling his mother “woman,” the editors of *Mary in the New Testament* state, “There is no precedent in Hebrew or, to the best of our knowledge, in Greek, for a son to address his mother thus; and so most scholars have detected a special significance in the term.”²⁶ They go on to propose that the two scenes in the Gospel of John “in which Mary is addressed as ‘Woman’ may be seen as a reenactment of the Eve motif with a happier ending.”²⁷ Moreover, since Jesus addresses the Samaritan woman (John 4:21) and Mary Magdalene (John 20:13) in the same way, it can also be argued that Jesus alludes to the Jael story and his Gen 3:15 mission to deliver the world from evil throughout his ministry, as will be further developed below.²⁸

Genesis 3:15, Judg 5:24, and Luke 1:42b (“blessed are you [Mary] among women”)—each foreshadowing for Luke his story of the atonement—also have much in common.²⁹ Younger recognizes Luke’s link to Jael’s story, saying, “The unrestrained praise of Jael is analogous to that given to Mary in Luke 1:42.”³⁰ J. Clinton McCann claims:

That Jael, like the later monarchs, is portrayed as *an embodiment of God’s will for justice and righteousness* explains why she is called “most blessed of women” (v. 24). This designation anticipates Elizabeth’s proclamation to Mary—who has been told that she

will bear a royal child (“Son of God” in Luke 1:35 is a royal title; see Ps. 2:7)—“Blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:42). Not coincidentally, Mary proceeds immediately to sing a song, the Magnificat, which, like the Song of Deborah and Barak, celebrates God’s defeat of oppressors [italics added].³¹

This blessing then causes McCann to liken Jael to Mary, for they are both chosen by God to defeat God’s enemy, establishing justice and righteousness. Secondly, like Deborah, Elizabeth can also be seen as a type of “mother in Israel” (Judg 5:7) since she was in the lineage of Aaron and the wife of the priest Zechariah, as well as being the mother of John the Baptist. Deborah and Mary both echo the spiritual mother of the offspring of Gen 3:15. Thirdly, like Deborah, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, also prophesies about Mary and the “mother of my Lord.” In addition, the Luke 1:42b allusion to Judg 5:24 and Gen 3:15 functions to identify Jesus’s lineage with the Woman’s line over the Serpent’s line and foreshadows that the Gen 3:15 promise will be fulfilled and that the offspring of *this woman* shall be the one to strike the head of the enemy. R. K. McGregor Wright goes further and states, “The whole point of the virginal conception and birth was that Christ was the ‘seed’ of both God and Mary (Gen 3:15; Is 53:10).”³² Lastly, John Goldingay also observes that both Deborah and Jael act as independent women,³³ which can also be said of Elizabeth in her prophesying and Mary in her conception, given that neither consulted with men beforehand.

A Serpent-figure and His Spiritual Children

Regarding Gen 3:15, Bushnell writes, “Not only is it prophesied that her seed should be at enmity with Satan, but *woman herself* shall wage war with Satan.”³⁴ This hostility between the serpent-figure and women can be specifically seen in the hostility between Sisera and Jael and between chauvinistic Abimelech and women. Sisera, analogously, is a spiritual “offspring” of King Jabin, who had cruelly oppressed Israel, a region Deborah was leading, for twenty years (Judg 4:3). One distinct conclusion of Judg 9 is that offspring of the Serpent think less of women than they do of men. Abimelech has a sexist attitude, in contrast to Israel, which was blessed with women leaders in their society as judges and in their religion as prophets. This revelation can be similarly correlated in the Gospels with the male priesthood of Israel and their antagonism with Jesus.

Jesus also frequently identifies the Serpent’s offspring when he refers to Pharisees, Sadducees, crowds, or others as a “brood of vipers”—“offspring of serpents” in other words—or something similar, like “from your father the devil” (see Matt 3:7, 12:34, 13:37–39, 23:33; Luke 3:7; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; and 1 John 3:8–10; cf. with *his seed* in Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19; Rom 3:13). Moreover, as Michael Green makes clear, Jesus saw his whole life as fighting against Satan. “He saw the whole of his ministry as a conflict with Satan. He saw his death as the supreme battle with the evil one.”³⁵ Jesus realized that he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness and that Satan not only snatched away the good news from those listening but also sowed tares in God’s field and usurped God’s place of leadership in the world. Jesus also taught

his disciples to pray for deliverance from the evil one and saw himself as the one who needed to bind the strong man (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27). Green notes, “rather than compromise with the subtle and evil force, Jesus knows that he must oppose him to the bitter end. Hence the way of the cross.”³⁶ This was the only way Satan could finally be defeated.

James Hamilton finds an allusion to Gen 3:15 in Luke 10:19, which he translates, “Behold, I have given to you the authority to tread upon snakes and scorpions, and upon all the power of the one who is at enmity.”³⁷ Here in Luke 10, Jesus’s spiritual offspring, the seventy whom he sent out, have authority over the Serpent, who is at enmity with them. In this Gospel story, Jesus is alluding to more than Gen 3:15. Jesus states, “I saw *Satan fall* like lightning from heaven,” in reference to the ministry of his seventy (Luke 10:18 NIV, italics added). Therefore, Luke 10:18’s reference to Satan’s falling may intentionally echo the serpent-figure Sisera falling at the feet of Jael: “At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead” (Judg 5:27 NIV). Thus Luke 10:18, in addition to the Luke 1:42b allusion explained above, may provide an additional connection between Jael’s story and Christ’s saving work. Luke 10 also correlates the work of Jesus’s followers (the seventy) with the work of Jesus himself.

McCann claims that the defeat of King Jabin and Sisera in Judg 4 and 5 is similar to the exodus, which brought renewal of creation:

The episode is not merely a local action against Jabin and Sisera; rather, it is part of a larger trajectory that begins with creation, includes the exodus, and later will include *God’s defeat of Israel itself* when its kings turn out to be oppressors like Pharaoh, Jabin, and Sisera. The shape and movement of the Book of Judges, along with the larger canonical context, reveal that God shows no partiality to Israel as such. Rather, God is partial to justice and righteousness, which means that God opposes oppressors.³⁸

Oppression is at odds with the new creation God desires. Similarly, when the Scribes and Pharisees bring oppression, God stands against them and brings liberation.

A Curse on the Enemy and Blessing on One who Crushes the Enemy of the Lord

Phyllis Trible recognizes in Gen 3, “When he was enticing the couple to disobey, the serpent spoke specifically to the woman but, through the use of plural pronouns, included the man also. Accordingly, the curse upon this animal continues with an explicit reference to the woman that also involves the man (3:15).” Trible sees that the Serpent, “having spoken to the woman as the representative of the human couple . . . now lives in hostility with the woman and her offspring.”³⁹ In other words, the Serpent dealt with the woman as the representative of both humans, and God took the same approach when he cursed the Serpent: his people had “the woman” as their representative.

This curse and blessing theme from Gen 3 continues in Judg 5:23–24. The town of Meroz, which has not come to help Yahweh, is cursed, while Jael, who did help Yahweh, is blessed. According

to Younger, “The repetition of the imperative ‘curse’ and the reintroduction of the divine name, Yahweh, disclose the poet’s point of view clearly: Every soldier, battalion, or community that commits himself/itself to warfare is helping Yahweh; all are needed.”⁴⁰ Butler adds, “Meroz is central to the repeated theme of blessing on freewill volunteering, battle participation, and personal initiative to defeat the enemy contrasted to cursing on those who do not participate and thus show love for Yahweh.”⁴¹ Volunteerism is key to the blessing, even if it comes from non-Israelite women such as Jael.

Therefore, intertextual connections between Gen 3:14–15 and Judg 5:23–24 can be observed. There is a curse upon Meroz, as there is the curse upon the Serpent in Gen 3:14. There is also a blessing upon Jael, who is an unstated *spiritual offspring* of Deborah, as there is an implied blessing upon the woman’s offspring in Gen 3:15 in the promise to crush the Serpent’s head. A repetition of this curse and blessing in Judg 5:31 can also be seen as another allusion to Gen 3:15. God’s enemies are like Meroz, and God’s friends are like Jael.

Within the curse and blessing of Judg 5:23–24, John Ronning also perceives a type of reverse fall narrative in Judg 4, stating:

As predicted in the curse, we see the introduction of enmity between the seed of the woman (here also a woman) and the seed of the serpent, Sisera. Deborah calls Jael . . . “blessed among women” (Judg 5:24), which in the immediate context is a contrast to the cursed inhabitants of Meroz who would not join the battle (Judg 5:23), but also recalls (in contrast) the beginning of the curse on the serpent . . . “cursed . . . above all beasts” (Gen 3:14). The contrast between Jael and the inhabitants of Meroz suggests that Jael acted from spiritual motives, thus as a true seed of the woman. In Genesis 3 the serpent deceived the woman to bring about her downfall; here the woman deceives the serpent’s seed to bring about his downfall.⁴²

Jael *does* succeed where Eve failed; she disregards the serpent-figure’s instructions and kills him instead. In Deborah’s Song, Jael is the godly hero. She was not deceived. Younger declares, “With intensity equal to that of the curse of Meroz, blessing is proclaimed for Jael. In fact, she is made the receiving end of blessing, which is given to only one other character in the poem, God himself!”⁴³ Therefore, it can be argued that Jael receives a blessing because she fulfills the Gen 1:28 joint vocation to properly steward creation: Jael exercised her dominion over the Serpent in contrast to Eve (and Adam), who did not.

Implications

The implications of this study on missions are sweeping. Paradoxically, Green notes, “doubt about the existence of a malign focus of evil is to be found, by and large, only in Christian lands.”⁴⁴ Animism, Islam, and Hinduism acknowledge a great enemy. The conclusions of this study then could have immense influence upon mission to those in non-Western cultures by clearly showing how Jesus has defeated this evil force at the Cross.

For cultures and religions that are patriarchal, this study’s elevation of gender equality could also have far-reaching effects. God’s action at the Cross brings humanity back into the Edenic blessing and joint-vocation of Gen 1:28, where women and men are allies. The OT’s male and female storylines—threads of prefigured redemption—are brought together at the Cross into Christ, the Great Reconciliation. The Kenite Jael, a non-Israelite, being the hero shows that neither racism nor sexism belong in either God’s house or society in general. One’s gender or ethnicity neither privileges nor precludes a person from serving in any way in the family of God—a new day has begun in Christ.

Within the Jael story, too, there is a recognition that in every conflict of war, women are at enhanced risk of being brutalized, raped, and trafficked. Women, as the Serpent’s great adversary, have suffered a disproportionate amount of the world’s injustice. And Jesus gave his life standing against this evil. Yet he does not view women as victims; he sees and encourages their agency. Women are essential to God’s plan of redemption, as Deborah sings, “until I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel” (Judg 5:7). Oppression reigned *until* she arose. As Bushnell recognizes, there are some problems in the world that only Christ’s women can solve.⁴⁵ In her biography of Bushnell, Kristin Kobes Du Mez states, “Despite the disappointments [Bushnell] had encountered, however, she remained certain that Christ was ‘the great emancipator of women,’ and that ‘if women were given their God-ordained place in the church, Christendom would expand in breadth and height of influence.’”⁴⁶ Proving this, God uses Deborah to bring his justice and righteousness. Thereby God puts his endorsement and affirmation upon the New Creation’s religious leadership that includes Deborahs and Jaels, Elizabeths and Marys.

So why has the church tended to disregard the stories of women such as Deborah and Jael in Scripture? Goldingay believes:

It is not merely that the Church has tended to prefer men’s stories in Scripture, though that is so. It is that the violence of stories such as [Deborah’s and Jael’s], or Ehud’s and Shamgar’s, makes us feel uncomfortable. It places us with the fact of violence within ourselves, which we prefer to avoid. But it also seems at tension with the sense expressed elsewhere in Scripture that the solution to violence issues from letting it be done to oneself, not doing it.⁴⁷

The implications of this study also show that a virtuous woman looks like the strong, resourceful, and courageous Jael. Compassion, action for another’s plight and the courage to live out of one’s comfort zone are at the core of the Jael story. Jael did not need to become involved with Israel’s struggle with King Jabin, for her tribe had a covenant with him. Like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, she risked her neck to heal a problem not her own. “The Bible, from its opening chapters, pictures woman as allied with God, in the eventual salvation of the world,” states Bushnell.⁴⁸ Jael’s actions are a window into heaven, through which one can see what perfect life and worship are like there. Jael represents the people of God; those who love God and God’s ways.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the Gen 3:15 Edenic covenant began in the Garden with the woman. It was then initially fulfilled with Deborah and Jael in Judg 4 and 5. Indeed, the Jael story *actualizes* the Gen 3:15 promise.

There are God-designs for humanity within Jael's story that link with the *protoevangelium* ("first gospel") of Gen 3:15 and illuminate Christ to us. God enacted the Good News in the story of Jael so that we would recognize it when it came to us in the Gospel accounts.

The hero here is the Kenite Jael, a foreigner. She is not known as a mother, or even as a wife; it is not her relationship status that is emphasized—only her singular action. She stands up for God's interests and God's glory. Likewise, the blessing of the gospel has a universal scope and is offered to all ethnicities. And God's blessings come upon cultures with women as leaders.

Jael and other women and men like her love God and courageously govern creation as God's image-bearers, especially subduing the evil emanating from "the sliest of all the wild beasts that Yahweh God had made" (Gen 3:1).⁴⁹ They reflect God's rule and thus exercise their mandate to govern together—a joint-vocation of male and female to steward the earth as God's representatives. They are the agents of the New Creation. As the third-century biblical scholar Origen of Alexandria saw it, God uses the Cross as the tent peg by which God's people destroy his enemy.⁵⁰ They crush the fountainhead of evil, especially witnessed in oppression and lack of safety. Salvation comes through rescue and brings a renewal of creation. In this they are following Jesus, their representative head and offspring of the woman. Christ spent his life defeating evil and bringing rescue. We, too, can be God's tent peg as we live in him.

Notes

This article is a truncated version of ch. 2 of the author's 2018 book, *The Cross and the Tent Peg: How Jesus Retraced Jael's Story*, which shows twelve ways in which the Gospels' crucifixion and resurrection narratives closely follow the narrative sequence of events of Jael's story.

1. Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Zondervan, 2018) 95.
2. Jewish Publication Society, *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (1917) and *The Jewish Bible: Tanakh* (1985).
3. LXX: *autos sou tērēsei kephalēn kai su tērēseis autou pternan*.
4. *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichaeans* 2.18.28.
5. Katharine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Church and Home* (CBE International, 2003) 43.
6. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 36, quoting Gibson's *The Age Before Moses* (Randolph, 1879) 122.
7. Gilbert Bilezikian, referencing 1 Cor 11:3, says, "head has a meaning other than 'authority' in this passage, and it is a meaning that applies to a man and not to woman. The use of *head* as 'fountainhead' or 'supplier of life' resolves this difficulty, since Christ can be said to be the source of man's life, as man is the source of woman's life." Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 3rd ed. (Baker Academic, 2006) 227.

8. Ben Witherington III, *Torah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Fortress, 2018) 51.
9. Hunter and Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End*, 173–75.
10. Daniel Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC 7 (Broadman & Holman, 1999) 225.
11. Trent Butler, *Judges* (Zondervan, 2009) 116n1.a; Emanuel Tov, "The Textual History of the Song of Deborah in the a Text of the LXX," *VT* 28/2 (1978) 225.
12. A. E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity, 1968) 91.
13. Cundall, *Judges and Ruth*, 92.
14. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 216.
15. Butler, *Judges*, 136.
16. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 199.
17. Ronald W. Pierce, "Deborah: Troublesome Woman or Woman of Valor?," *Priscilla Papers* 32/2 (Spring 2018) 4.
18. Butler, *Judges*, 154.
19. Her marital status is disputed. See John Goldingay, "Motherhood, Machismo, and the Purpose of Yahweh in Judges 4–5," *Anvil* 12/1 (1995) 29. Ron Pierce also notes the understanding of *heber* as a common collective noun by A. Malmat, J. A. Soggin, and Johanna W. H. Bos: Pierce, "Deborah," 7n23.
20. K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Judges and Ruth* (Zondervan, 2002) 154.
21. Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 155.
22. Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4, 6. That the LXX, unlike the Hebrew text, omits "the tent peg" from Zech 10:4 is likely why the several NT references to "the cornerstone" do not also refer to "the tent peg."
23. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Fortress, 1996) 586. Cf. John 19:37/Zech 12:10 and John 12:15/Zech 9:9.
24. Cynthia Edenburg recognizes seven literary features that signify possible intertextuality: a common formal structure, common motifs, doublets, variant accounts, comments that explain or actualize a previous text, indirect allusions, and direct quotations. The intertextuality between Gen 3 and the Jael story exhibits all of these literary features except direct quotations. Edenburg, "How (Not) to Murder a King: Variations on a Theme in 1 Sam 24; 26," *SJOT* 12/1 (1998) 64–71.
25. Pierce, "Deborah," 3.
26. Raymond E. Brown, et al., eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Paulist, 1978) 188.
27. Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 190.
28. See Matt 15:28, 11:11; Luke 7:28, 13:12; 22:57; John 2:4, 4:21, 8:10, 19:26, 20:13.
29. "BHS [*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*] says 'the wife of Heber the Kenite' is an addition from 4:17," which would make the resemblance to Judg 5:24 in Luke 1:42 even stronger (Butler, *Judges*, 121n24.a). Note also that, in the deuterocanonical novelette Judith, Uzziah the high priest declares Judith "blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies" (Judith 13:18 NRSV).
30. Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 154.
31. J. Clinton McCann, *Judges* (Westminster John Knox, 2011) 58.
32. R. K. McGregor Wright, "God, Metaphor and Gender," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed., ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (IVP Academic, 2005) 297.
33. Goldingay, "Motherhood, Machismo," 29.

34. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 350.
35. Michael Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall*, 3rd ed. (Hodder and Stoughton, 1995) 28.
36. Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall*, 26.
37. James M. Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3: 15," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10/2 (2006) 42.
38. McCann, *Judges*, 60.
39. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Fortress, 1978) 124–25.
40. Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 153.
41. Butler, *Judges*, 154.
42. John Ronning, "The Curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997) 294.
43. Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 154.
44. Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall*, 17.
45. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 6.
46. Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *A New Gospel for Women: Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism* (Oxford University Press, 2015) 180.
47. Goldingay, "Motherhood, Machismo," 23, 29.

48. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 33.

49. This is Phyllis Trible's translation. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 106.

50. Origen, *Homilies on Judges*, 5.5.1: "[Jael] killed [Sisera] with a stake, then, which is to say that she overthrew him by the power and cunning of the wood of the cross." See J. R. Franke, ed., *Old Testament IV: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel* (InterVarsity, 2005) 117.



JULIE WALSH is a PhD student at Regent University focusing on egalitarian theology. She holds a ThM from Regent University and an MA in ministry from Nashotah House Theological Seminary. She enjoys writing, and her latest book is *The Cross and the Tent Peg: How Jesus Retraced Jael's Story*. Julie lives in the Washington D.C. area and is currently establishing an activist organization to advocate on women's issues. You can find her on Twitter @EgalChurch.

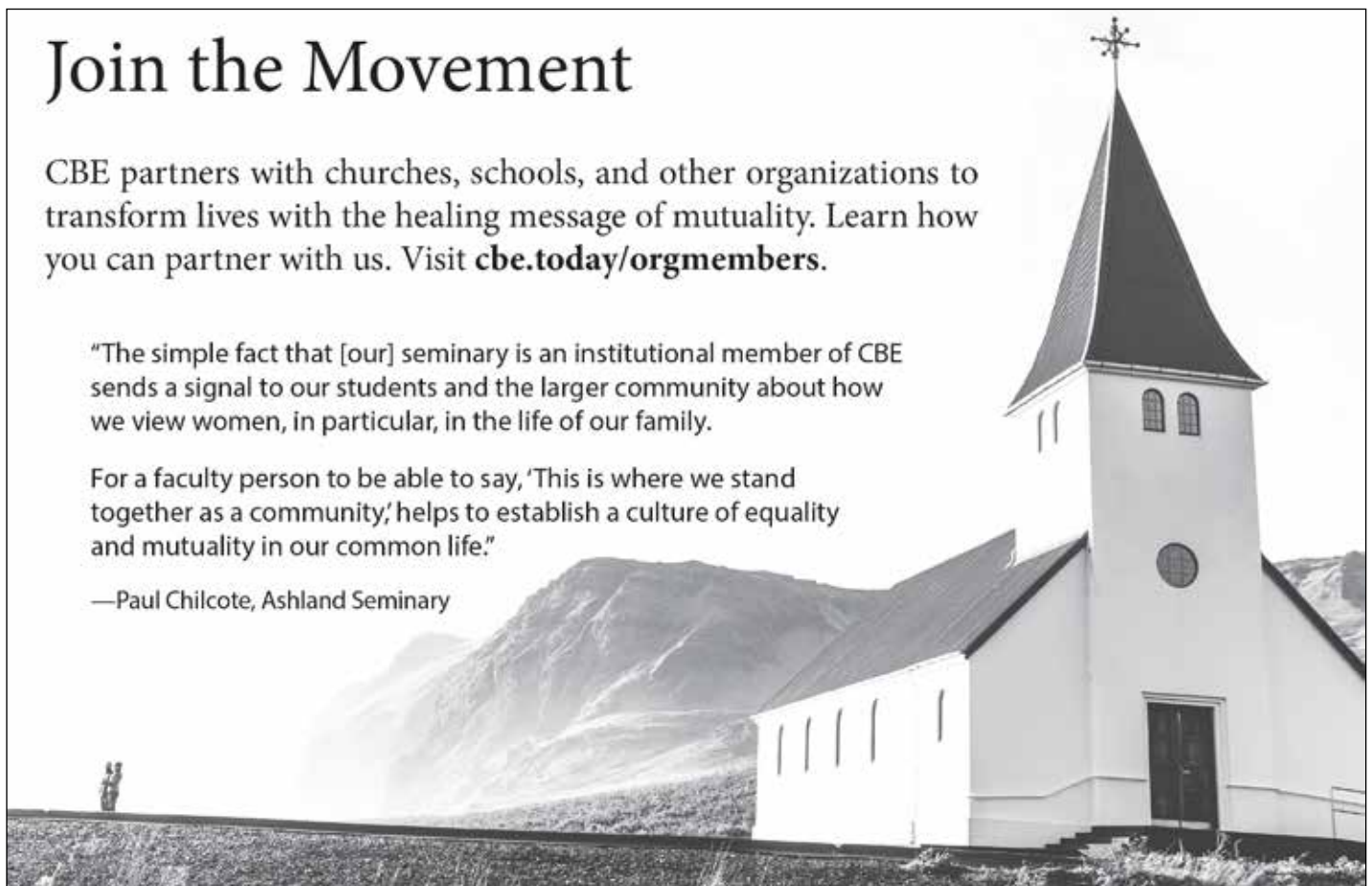
Join the Movement

CBE partners with churches, schools, and other organizations to transform lives with the healing message of mutuality. Learn how you can partner with us. Visit cbe.today/orgmembers.

"The simple fact that [our] seminary is an institutional member of CBE sends a signal to our students and the larger community about how we view women, in particular, in the life of our family.

For a faculty person to be able to say, 'This is where we stand together as a community,' helps to establish a culture of equality and mutuality in our common life."

—Paul Chilcote, Ashland Seminary



Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible

Edited by Sandra L. Glahn (Kregel Academic, 2017)

Reviewed by JEFF MILLER

“We must revisit what the Scriptures say about some Bible women we have sexualized, vilified and/or marginalized. Because, above all, we must tell the truth about what the text says” (16). So writes editor Sandra Glahn in the preface to this volume. Glahn teaches media arts and worship at Dallas Theological Seminary. She holds a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary and a PhD from the University of Texas at Dallas. She is author or co-author of more than twenty books, including several volumes in The Coffee Cup Bible Study Series. She contributes to Engage, Bible.org’s blog for women in Christian leadership. Glahn’s articles in the journal *Bibliotheca Sacra* will be of particular interest to readers of *Priscilla Papers*.¹

Vindicating the Vixens is a collection of fourteen essays. It is divided into three sections and introduced by a brief explanation of the interpretive approaches to be expected in the collection. The contributors, all evangelical, include ten women and six men, bringing together perspectives that include experiences in Australia, Eastern Europe, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, and Scotland, as well as across the United States. Eleven of the sixteen teach at and/or graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary.

The first section gathers essays on the five women in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. Carolyn Custis James writes on Tamar (building on her book, *Lost Women of the Bible* [Zondervan, 2008]). James presents Tamar as a victim of abuse who rises above, successfully restoring family honor by endangering herself. A highlight of this chapter is its summary of the destructive nature of patriarchy and primogeniture, including their negative impact on many men. This lead essay gives broad consideration to literary and canonical connections and contexts. The second essay, by Eva Bleeker on Rahab, reads almost like a sermon and thus demonstrates a claim Glahn makes in the preface, that the several contributions vary in tone and style (17). Marnie Legaspi’s chapter on Ruth has an even more informal tone. A strength of her chapter is its assessment of Ruth’s actions in the threshing floor scene as virtuous obedience rather than a sexual advance. Sarah Bowler’s chapter on Bathsheba is, for my own preferences and needs, the section’s most helpful essay. It leans heavily on narrative criticism and is strong on both ends of the interpretive spectrum—scholarly foundations and practical application. In contrast, I consider the chapter on Mary the mother of Jesus to be the section’s least helpful. It doubles as a defense of Matthew as the first Gospel to be written (going against the dominant view that Mark was written first) and argues that Mary is best understood by taking texts about her in chronological order (Paul, Matthew, Luke-Acts, Mark, John). But there is insufficient space in this

chapter on Mary either to make a compelling argument in the complicated question of the order of the Gospels or to apply that Gospel ordering to the study of Mary in a helpful way.

The book’s second section investigates six OT women. The chapter on Eve presents a helpful interpretation of early Genesis and also touches on the NT texts that mention Eve. Author Glenn Kreider’s main point is that, though Eve was deceived, she did not in turn become a deceiver. His explanation of the significance of Adam naming Eve is especially valuable, with its focus on this naming as a post-fall action. Eugene Merrill’s chapter on Sarah makes good use of ancient Near Eastern sources, utilizing them more than the book’s other contributors do. In my view, however, his chapter suffers from a problematic assessment of certain episodes. Consider, for example, Merrill’s mention of “Sarah’s apparent cooperation with Abraham in deceiving first Pharaoh and then Abimelech of Gerar as to their husband-wife relationship” (157). Again, “Sarah entered submissively, and perhaps even at times willingly, into these relationships” (159). Though Merrill recognizes the overpowering influence of patriarchy in some of Sarah’s actions and words (or lack thereof), he nevertheless views her as complicit in these accounts in which Abraham selfishly endangers her. His apparent change of perspective on p. 168, though appreciated, creates inconsistency in the chapter.

The book’s subtitle mentions vilified women of the Bible. Hagar has, perhaps, been the most vilified of the book’s fourteen women. It follows, then, that the vindicating task of author Tony Maalouf is among the most difficult and important. Happily, Maalouf rises to the occasion and demonstrates that the biblical text presents Hagar, and therefore Ishmael, as blessed rather than cursed by the God who sees (*El Roi*, Gen 16:13) and hears (*Ishmael*, Gen 16:11) those who are oppressed. Ronald Pierce adeptly handles the Hebrew text of Judg 4–5 and shows Deborah to be an honored judge and prophetess, not an anomaly as some interpreters have argued.² Commentators have often levied the same accusation against Huldah, and Christa McKirland shows that such interpretations arise from bias rather than from the text. More than the other chapter authors, McKirland includes a survey of Christian and Jewish interpretations. The chapter on Vashti, by Sharifa Stevens, returns to the informal and sermon style seen earlier, in the treatments of Rahab and Ruth, thus further demonstrating the variety of styles in the volume.

The book’s final section treats three NT women. Lynn Cohick’s brief essay on the Woman at the Well is a reprint of a 2015 *Christianity Today* article. Cohick brings her expertise on NT backgrounds to bear on a focused question and concludes

“that John’s Gospel does not condemn her as an immoral sinner, but highlights her as a seeker of truth” (252). Karla Zazueta demonstrates that Mary Magdalene has been sexualized and is “worthy of a new portrait,” one that paints her as a committed disciple, a patron of Jesus’s ministry, and as “apostle to the apostles,” as various early Christian writers called her. The volume ends with an exploration of Rom 16:7 and Junia. Here Amy Peeler diligently addresses what have become the standard questions, concluding that there is essentially no doubt that Junia was a woman and also that she was an exemplary apostle, as opposed to “noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles” (CSB, cf. ESV). For the latter question, Peeler weighs the evidence and ultimately sides with early Christian authors. Though the title of her chapter uses the double name “Junia/Joanna,” Peeler views Richard Bauckham’s theory that these are two names for the same woman as “only a possibility” (279).³ A strength of the chapter is its attention to those aspects of Rom 16:7 which have not become hot topics, such as the imprisonment of Andronicus and Junia. The volume has no epilogue and thus ends at the close of this chapter as follows, “[Junia] is a bold ‘herald,’ and all Christian women and men, indebted to her work, bear the responsibility to carry out the same gospel mission still” (285).

Vindicating the Vixens is an important collection that takes a major step toward the goal expressed in its title. Its several essays vary in style, including a wide spectrum from academic to sermonic. The volume does not set out to defend evangelical

egalitarian doctrine. Rather it illuminates certain biblical women and their stories, especially those women who have been misrepresented—“sexualized, vilified and/or marginalized”—over the centuries.

Notes

1. “Weaker Vessels and Calling Husbands ‘Lord’: Was Peter Insulting Wives?,” *BSac* 174/693 (Jan-Mar 2017) 60-76, “The Identity of Artemis in First-century Ephesus,” *BSac* 172/687 (Jul-Sep 2015) 316-34, and “The First-century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity,” *BSac* 172/688 (Oct-Dec 2015) 450-69. See <https://dts.edu/resources/bibliotheca-sacra/>.

2. Note that the endnotes of Ron Pierce’s article, “Deborah: Troublesome Woman or Woman of Valor?,” *Priscilla Papers* 32/2 (Spring 2018) 6, begin, “A longer version of this essay, written for a more general audience, is a chapter titled, ‘Deborah: Only When a Good Man is Hard to Find?’ in Sandra Glahn, ed., *Vindicating the Vixens*. . . .”

3. See Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Eerdmans, 2002) ch. 5.

JEFF MILLER is editor of *Priscilla Papers* and teaches Bible at Milligan College in eastern Tennessee.

GIVING TUESDAY

Advance CBE’s outreach on December 3

Put More Women in the Pulpit

CBE affirms that women are empowered to lead, teach, and preach, but we know that answering God’s call isn’t easy. CBE has awarded \$30,000 in scholarships to five women pursuing post-graduate degrees in ministry.

CBE would love to award three more scholarships in 2020. Please help put more women in the pulpit!

Invest in Girls

Girls around the world face cultural and economic barriers to education. And the church often perpetuates patriarchal beliefs that prevent girls from going to school.

CBE’s African ministry partners are breaking down those barriers by challenging pervasive gender norms. Help girls stay in school and achieve their dreams.

Reclaim Gender Accuracy

To address the passages most often mistranslated to demean females, CBE is working on a Bible project that will provide exegetically-sound translations of over 300 verses.

CBE reallocated \$58,000 to support this project, and this year it’s funded. Even so, we still need help in other areas. Will you join our vision for a better translation and help close the gap?

Donate at cbe.today/givingtuesday

Consider the Women: A Provocative Guide to Three Matriarchs of the Bible

By Debbie Blue (Eerdmans, 2019)

Reviewed by JEFF MILLER

Making my way into this book, I increasingly felt I could not write a review without knowing at least a bit about its author. Debbie Blue is co-founding minister of House of Mercy, a Christian congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her earlier books affirm the Incarnation (*Sensual Orthodoxy*, 2004), decry bibliolatry (*From Stone to Living Word: Letting the Bible Live Again*, 2008), and explore the symbolism of birds in the Bible (*Consider the Birds: A Provocative Guide to Birds of the Bible*, 2013). Her bio at houseofmercy.org says she “approaches scripture . . . carefully but not delicately, thoroughly but not exactly cautiously.” This statement gave helpful context for reading *Consider the Women*.

The book has four sections: “Abrahamic Faith,” “Hagar,” “Esther,” and “Mary.” The opening chapter establishes the book’s feel, which I would describe as sermoniac with more dependence on the big picture of the biblical story (and beyond) than on interpretation of specific biblical texts. Consider a quotation from p. 16: “What does it mean to claim the blessings of Abrahamic faith? It means be unsettled. Abandon safe structures. Suspend what you know in order to discover what you don’t know yet. Get lost. Have some vast and hungry questions you don’t already know the answers to.” Chapter 2 maintains a loose grip on monotheism while unveiling its “dangers.” Blue says, “The ‘mono-’ in *monotheism* isn’t entirely helpful. That syllable gets us thinking in terms of monolith, monoculture, monopoly. . . . A monolith is massive, solid, uniform. . . . You get where I’m going” (23). The reader is asked to accept certain statements without explanation, defense, or footnote. An example is the statement, “Monotheism had hardly been established—had barely taken hold—before the exile” (20).

Section 2 consists of four chapters on Hagar. Chapter 3 argues that Hagar, not Sarah, is a matriarch parallel to Abraham. As such, her story tempers the patriarchy of Abraham’s dominant story. As a key example, her encounter with God at the near-death of her son provides a preferable alternative to Abraham’s more famous near-sacrifice of Isaac. Chapters 4-6 describe how the Genesis account of Hagar is enriched by her story as presented in the Koran and other Islamic sources. “I can relate to [certain aspects of Hagar’s story] better than the image of the father being willing to kill his son for his god” (72).

As I read, the word “provocative” in its subtitle resonated primarily in two ways. First, many sentences begin with lead-ins such as “What if,” “Perhaps,” or “Maybe,” and then proceed as if true. This way of provoking thought will strike some readers as enriching and others as frustrating. The second way I sensed Blue being provocative is in her view of God. For example, the lowercase “g” on “god” in the quotation at the end of the previous paragraph is not a typographical error. Because she does not “relate to” God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, the God of this story becomes a god—more specifically, “his god.” Similarly, Blue believes “monotheism” should have welcomed certain views of God that the OT considers idolatrous, especially goddess worship (20, 116, 131, 149, 154).

Section 3 is about Esther. Reading this section helped me understand and appreciate the book better. While section 2 focused primarily on Hagar in Islamic texts, section 3 focuses on Esther in rabbinic writings. Toward the end of the section, Blue says, “I hope someday to learn to read with the imagination that the spirit of rabbinic inquiry embodies” (123). Rabbinic interpretation asks questions of the text, questions which may not be answered. The writings of ancient rabbis often give a handful of interpretations without specifying which is best or true. Indeed, this is Blue’s method as well.

Chapter 7 rehearses Esther’s story while offering interpretive and provocative comments. Blue expresses high hopes that Esther can remind us of “a God more seductive than militaristic, more beautiful than violent” (99). The book of Esther contains much of both—beauty and violence—and Blue’s following chapters focus on the Jewish festival, Purim, as a means of grappling with this dangerous irony. Much of chs. 8-9 is the story of Blue’s experiences with Purim, and here I should note that my earlier description of the book’s feel as “sermonic” includes extensive storytelling.

I was especially surprised that, in ch. 9, in a discussion of antisemitism and the Holocaust, Blue likens Jesus’s words against the scribes and Pharisees (more specifically, Matthew’s version of Jesus’s words) to Martin Luther’s appalling treatise, “On the Jews and Their Lies” (118ff.). Blue believes that not only Luther, but also Jesus himself, should have thought about the consequences of his words: “Surely, if Jesus knew this sort of thing would lead to murderous prejudice, he would have been more graceful” (120).

Section 4 is about Mary the mother of Jesus. Blue finds Matthew’s birth narrative “a little off-putting” because it is “as much about men as possible” (134). She much prefers Luke’s account, especially the Magnificat and Mary’s interaction with Elizabeth. This chapter includes comments on the common artistic image, the Pieta. Noting that the NT does not picture Jesus’s body in Mary’s arms, Blue nevertheless gleans for us the wisdom that, “In all the many ways Mary would manifest to people in the ages to come, she will be seen most powerfully as someone who knows suffering” (143).

Chapter 11 then surveys these “many ways Mary would manifest to people in the ages to come.” Stories and images from a wide variety of post-biblical sources contribute to Blue’s belief that Mary provides a counter-narrative to patriarchal Christianity. Most striking, she compares Mary to the Egyptian goddess, Isis, based on certain similarities such as images of Isis holding her son, Horus, which look similar to Mary holding Jesus. Blue calmly states, “this parallel does not seem threatening” (154)—many readers of *Priscilla Papers* will disagree.

The book lives up to its subtitle, *A Provocative Guide*. . . . Though it has some value, I do not recommend it without reservation, given her methods of interpretation noted above.

CBE International

CBE International (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.

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.

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.

CBE Membership

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!

Find it all at www.cbeinternational.org.

CBE Board of Reference

Miriam Adeney, Myron S. Augsburger, Raymond J. Bakke, Michael Bird, Esme Bowers, Paul Chilcote, Havilah Dharamraj, Gordon D. Fee, J. Lee Grady, Joel B. Green, David Joel Hamilton, Fatuma Hashi, Roberta Hestenes, Richard Howell, Craig S. Keener, Tara B. Leach, Gricel Medina, Joy Moore, LaDonna Osborn, Jane Overstreet, Philip B. Payne, John E. Phelan Jr., Ron Pierce, Kay F. Rader, Paul A. Rader, Ronald J. Sider, Aida Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, John Stackhouse, Todd Still, Ruth A. Tucker, Cynthia Long Westfall, Cecilia Yau.

CBE International
122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 218
Minneapolis, MN 55404-2451

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Jefferson City, MO
Permit No. 210

Priscilla Papers

ISSN 0898-753X



cbeBookstore

providing quality resources on biblical gender equality

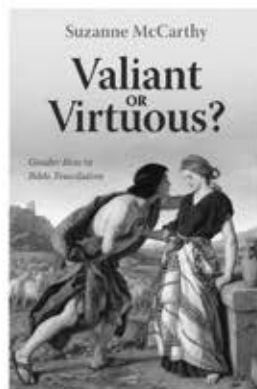
Visit CBE Bookstore at cbe.today/bookstore.

Recommended Resources from CBE



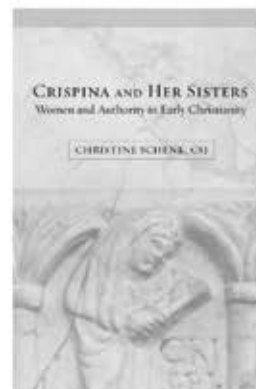
Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women
Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts
Lucy Peppiatt

Does God call women to serve as equal partners in marriage and as leaders in the church? With careful exegetical work, Peppiatt considers relevant passages in Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, and 1 Corinthians. There she finds a story of God releasing women alongside men into all forms of ministry, leadership, work, and service on the basis of character and gifting, rather than biological sex.



Valiant or Virtuous?
Gender Bias in Bible Translation
Suzanne McCarthy

"...McCarthy demonstrates how the very way the original text is translated can be used to support views on the difference of men and women that the text never intended...A combination of rich scholarship and fluid prose, this book provides an accessible and challenging argument for anyone interested in why and how translation matters in our reading of Scripture."—A. Sue Russell, Asbury Theological Seminary



Crispina and Her Sisters
Women and Authority in Early Christianity
Christine Schenk

This book explores visual imagery found on burial artifacts of prominent early Christian women. An in-depth review of women's history in the first four centuries of Christianity provides important context. A fascinating picture emerges of women's authority in the early church, a picture either not available or sadly distorted in the written history.



Gender and Development
A History of Women's Education in Kenya
Emily Awino Onyango

Dr. Onyango provides an African history of mission, education development, and women's roles in Kenya. The result is not only a challenge to the traditional understanding of history, but also a counternarrative to the common view that to be liberated African women must disregard Christianity. This research is a vital contribution to women's history and the history of Christianity in Africa.