

Summer 2021

Mutuality

Men and women serving and leading as equals



Learning Lament, Building Empathy,
and Joining our Sisters at the
Intersection of Race and Gender

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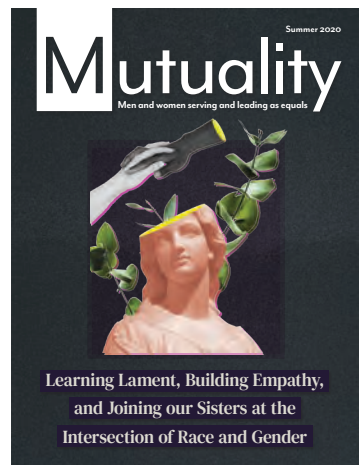
EDITORIAL STAFF

Guest Editor: Katie McEachern
Graphic Designer: Margaret Lawrence
Publisher/President: Mimi Haddad

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Galatians 3:28 and Confronting the Past

In the work CBE does to advocate for women's equality in the church, home, and in society, we often appeal to Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In fact, this verse is referenced in the very first paragraph on the "Mission and Values" page of our website. We believe Galatians 3:28 envisions a community where the ways society divides and stratifies us, makes us unequal, are destroyed by Christ. This is why we believe that women can lead alongside men with full authority.

But if you're like me, you may default to interpreting Galatians 3:28 as if it were dealing with three separate groups representing three separate societal divisions. Reading the verse this way, the vision Paul casts looks like three individual pillars, one representing discrimination based on ethnicity, one representing classism, and one representing sexism. This understanding may not be incorrect, but it misses some of the lived implications of this verse for women's equality in the church. I believe it also reflects my position of privilege.

Because our embodied experiences matter, I will offer my own as an example. I am a woman, but I am also a white, upper middle-class American. I have experienced sexism in the church and in society, but I haven't experienced obstacles because of my class nor my ethnicity/race. Because of my embodied experience, the main source of good news I identify with in this new vision is that the division between men and women has been broken. This is undoubtedly *utterly* good news. But as good as it is, because of my social location, I may run the risk of thinking that this good news is separate from the good news for the Gentile and the Jew, and the free and the enslaved.

But when we imagine the real people who heard Paul's words, we can see that the three groups are not separate at all; they never were. Galatians 3:28 offers a vision of a community that models intersectional mutuality in Christ, where an enslaved Gentile woman and a free Jewish man were considered one and shared full authority in the community of believers. These pillars make up one unit, one structure, which offers

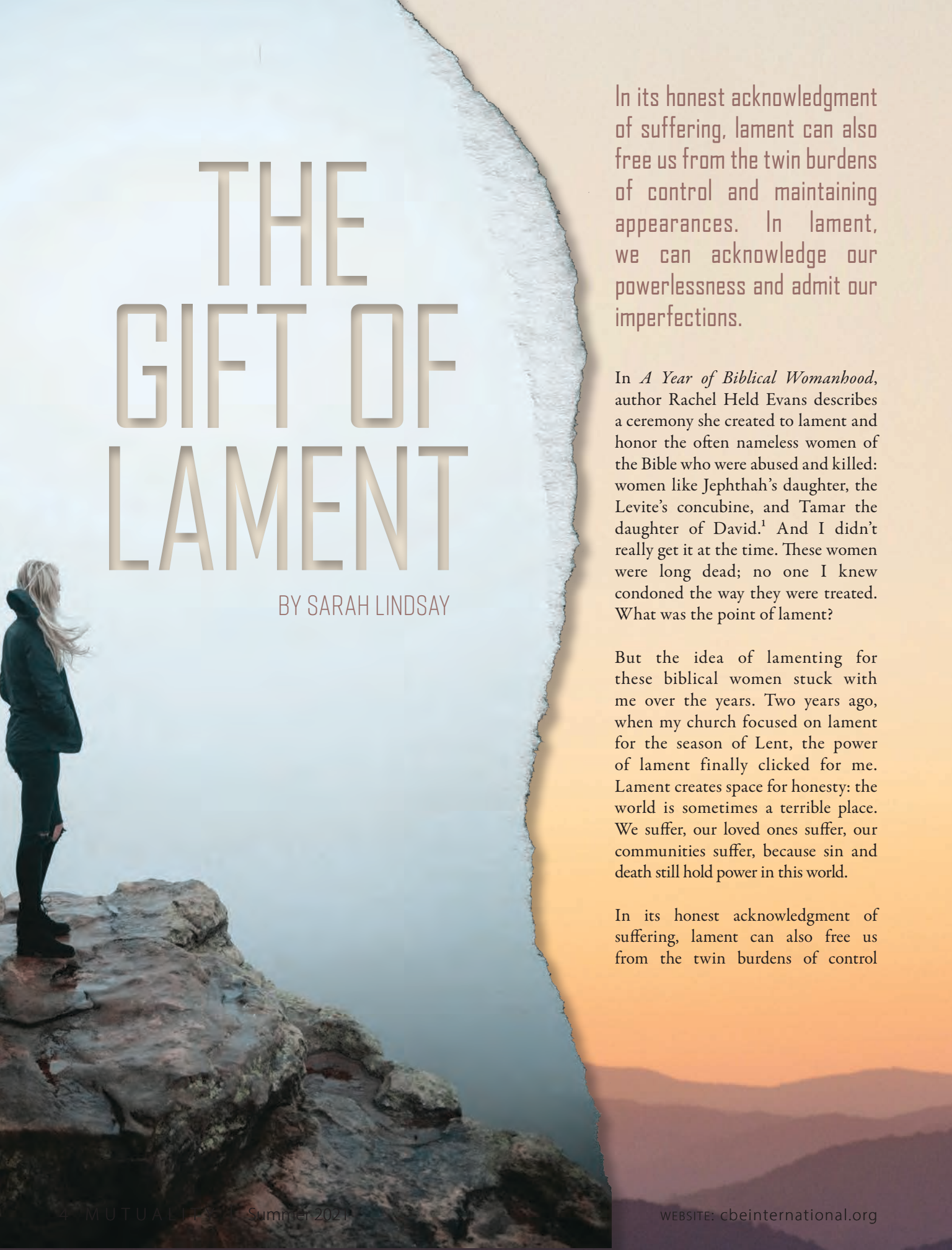
an equal place in the people of God for women and men of all ethnicities, races, and classes who exist in between, in the particularity of their experience. This is what the mutuality CBE advocates for means.

Due to the reality of systemic racism in places like the United States, movements for women's equality in the church, led by majority white people of European descent, can also run the risk of functioning as though Galatians 3:28 addresses three separate pillars. They may approach women's equality in the church as though it can somehow be separated from or immune to the consequences of ethnic/racial division. This pitfall is the motivation for this issue of *Mutuality* magazine.

CBE believes "God calls women and men of all cultures, races, and classes to share authority equally" because of verses like Galatians 3:28. But this doesn't mean we have acted this vision of mutuality out perfectly. CBE is majority white in its leadership. We are not immune to the pitfall mentioned above; it is important we face and name this fact. Because of this, we want to use this issue to begin to intentionally grapple with and lament the way the interlocking oppressions of racism and sexism have manifested in the movement for women's biblical equality—in our own movement, in the broader church, and throughout Christian history.

The authors who contributed to this issue are women from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. All are committed to CBE's mission to "eliminate the power imbalance between men and women resulting from theological patriarchy." Each article grapples with racial and ethnic inequality in the Christian egalitarian movement in its own way. Each offers us a path toward living out CBE's mission in its fullest, most complete expression. The knowledge, wisdom, and experiences of these authors are instructive, bringing us closer to modeling that intersectional mutuality in our own community.

This issue is not meant to be the end; it is not even the beginning. Instead, it is only one imperfect step toward living out *full* mutuality between women and men as envisioned by Galatians 3:28. We hope you will join us.



THE GIFT OF LAMENT

BY SARAH LINDSAY

In its honest acknowledgment of suffering, lament can also free us from the twin burdens of control and maintaining appearances. In lament, we can acknowledge our powerlessness and admit our imperfections.

In *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, author Rachel Held Evans describes a ceremony she created to lament and honor the often nameless women of the Bible who were abused and killed: women like Jephthah's daughter, the Levite's concubine, and Tamar the daughter of David.¹ And I didn't really get it at the time. These women were long dead; no one I knew condoned the way they were treated. What was the point of lament?

But the idea of lamenting for these biblical women stuck with me over the years. Two years ago, when my church focused on lament for the season of Lent, the power of lament finally clicked for me. Lament creates space for honesty: the world is sometimes a terrible place. We suffer, our loved ones suffer, our communities suffer, because sin and death still hold power in this world.

In its honest acknowledgment of suffering, lament can also free us from the twin burdens of control

and maintaining appearances. In lament, we can acknowledge our powerlessness and admit our imperfections. American culture encourages us to present narratives of improvement, of triumph over illness, of the restoration of things lost. And the American church all too often baptizes this cultural pressure by adding the idea that we lack faith if we cannot maintain the narratives of healing and success.

Learning to Lament

Lament stands in opposition to the tendency to hide or deny the parts of life that are difficult, painful, or messy. In his recent book *Prophetic Lament*, Dr. Soong-Chan Rah writes:

Lament recognizes our frailty as created beings and the need to acknowledge this shortcoming before God. Lament demands that we are willing to dwell in the space of our humanity without quickly resorting to our triumphalistic narrative to justify our worth.²

The practice of lament, then, invites us to identify the brokenness and evil in the world around us. Sometimes this is personal: we lament chronic illness, damaged relationships, the losses we've experienced in the last year. We see examples of this type of lament in the Psalms—see, for example, Psalm 13, 42, or 69. We also see in the Psalms laments for the evils we see around us, whether or not we experience them personally, as in Psalm 10:10–11:

[The evil man's] victims are crushed, they collapse;
they fall under his strength.
He says to himself, "God will never notice;
he covers his face and never sees."

And so, when Rachel Held Evans created a liturgy of lament for abused women in the Bible, she participated in an ancient biblical practice: an acknowledgement of the sin in the world, of the people who use their power to harm the vulnerable, of the pain and suffering that these women

endured. We may not be able to change what happened in the past, but this isn't what lament leads us to do.

Instead, lament calls us to name painful realities and to sit with them, without attempting to escape them or jump to quick fixes. Lament does not deny the presence of God in the midst of suffering; it is not an expression of hopelessness. But it does create a space where we can hold the tension of the already-but-not-yet kingdom of God: Jesus has conquered sin and death and evil, but we are still longing for their full defeat, for the full reconciliation of all things in Christ.

I've spent time exploring the concept of lament in general because it is still a practice neglected by much of the American church (although several recent books on lament, such as *Prophetic Lament* by Soong-Chan Rah and *The Louder Song* by Aubrey Sampson, point to a growing interest). But in the remainder of this article, I want to specifically invite my egalitarian sisters and brothers into lament for the ways in which the sin of racism has hindered our support of women in the church.

Why Should We Lament?

Sometimes, as Christians who support the full equality of women and men in the church, it's easy to assume that we must be above or beyond the sin of racism. But since the nineteenth century, the fight for women's rights has been plagued by the idea that rights are a zero-sum game: women can have them, or Americans of color can have them, but not both at the same time. We are more than a century removed from activists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who made this point explicitly.³ But womanist, *mujerista*, and other BIPOC thinkers have long pointed out that feminism, including feminist and egalitarian theology, all too often excludes women of color.⁴

My own experience in majority-white churches confirms this tendency to separate issues of gender from issues of race. My current

church, where I serve on staff, is actively egalitarian. Church leadership seeks out and supports women using their gifts in every area of the church, even when that stance comes at a cost. But only in the last year have we begun to talk seriously as a church about racial justice. I suspect that, despite the best intentions of all involved, our lack of attention to race and racism would have hindered our support of a woman of color and might have even caused harm.

Acknowledging complicity in racism is difficult. I've certainly experienced the urge to avoid this truth. All too often I distance myself instead, thinking that this simply isn't my problem. My ancestors didn't own slaves. I've never used a racial slur. It all happened so long ago. It's too big of a problem for me to fix. Dwelling on past wrongs doesn't do anyone any good.

But we have inherited this history in our cities and neighborhoods and churches, even our egalitarian churches. Racism is real, and if we white egalitarian Christians cannot fully acknowledge that it exists, that it causes significant suffering, and that it hinders our support of all women in the church, how can we begin to address this sin? How can we be fully egalitarian?

This is where we come back to the practice of lament. As we take up the posture of lament, we learn about the impact of racism in our communities. We listen to the stories of those harmed by racism. We practice releasing our defense mechanisms and the desire to swoop in and fix what we perceive to be the problem. We open ourselves to the struggles and pain of others.

In lament, we allow ourselves to sit with our sisters in the reality of sin, the destructive presence

of racism and sexism in our communities, churches, even our hearts. And we mourn because God also mourns over the suffering in the world.

Practicing Lament

I want to do something a bit unconventional for this type of article: I invite you to spend a few minutes in lament. This may feel uncomfortable or awkward. You may feel defensiveness or guilt as you spend time acknowledging the pain and suffering caused by white supremacy. (You may already feel these emotions at the mention of white supremacy.) I encourage you to see those feelings and then let them go as you allow yourself to weep with those who have wept because of the compounding impact of racism and sexism on their lives.

You might begin by reading a psalm of lament, like Psalm 10, as a model for how to bring our sorrow over the state of the world to God. I've written a few laments below, but I encourage you to add your own:

We lament for the ways that women of color have been overlooked and harmed in our churches.

We lament the impoverishment of our theology and worship by the exclusion of women's voices, especially the voices of women of color.

We who are white Christians lament that our unconscious biases too often make our brothers and sisters of color feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in churches and ministries.

Lament is not the only thing that Christians can do in order to rectify the past and ongoing damage caused

In lament, we allow ourselves to sit with our sisters in the reality of sin, the destructive presence of racism and sexism in our communities, churches, even our hearts. And we mourn because God also mourns over the suffering in the world.

by racism and sexism. But lament does ground us in the reality that the suffering experienced by women of color is not good, is not what God desires for God's beloved children. Racism, like sexism, is a sin that arises from our human frailty and brokenness. Lament can lead us, especially as white Christians, to recognize the pain caused by both and the ways that we have been complicit in this sin and suffering.

Ultimately, lament turns us toward the heart of God, who hears the cries of those who suffer and who promises to be with them. White egalitarians have heard and stood

alongside women who suffer under patriarchal and sexist practices in churches; we have the tools to hear and stand alongside our sisters of color in their specific experience. As those striving to become like Christ, how can we do any less than this?



Sarah Lindsay is the pastor of adult formation at Church of the Savior in Wheaton, IL, where she lives with her family. Sarah has a PhD in English from the University of North Carolina, and if she's not reading she's probably baking. Find her on Twitter @drlindsay or her website,

sarah-lindsay.com.

1. Rachel Held Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 64–66.
2. Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 139.
3. There are many resources on Elizabeth Cady Stanton; here I list three articles overviewing her advocacy of women's rights over the rights of Black Americans: Marion Taylor, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Taking a Stand against Slavery and against Racial Equality," Wycliffe College, Feb. 16 2021; "For Stanton, All Women Were Not Created Equal," NPR.org, July 13 2011; and Brent Staples, "How the Suffrage Movement Betrayed Black Women," *New York Times*, July 28 2018.
4. For a brief overview of the development of womanist thought and its critiques of feminism, see chapter 1 of Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, (New York: Rutledge, 2009), 3–23. For the way that theologians and Christian leaders overlook the voices of women of color even in discussion of racial reconciliation, see Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *I Bring the Voices of My People*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019). And to read about what it is like to experience majority-white church spaces as a black woman, see Austin Channing Brown, *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, (New York: Convergent Books, 2018).

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LAMENTO Y LIBERACION LAMENT AND LIBERATION

By Inés Velásquez-McBryde

We carry our stories, *nuestras historias*, in our bodies and different bodies carry different burdens. We need to tell our stories, remember our bodies. We need to also cross the borders of historical hostilities, like the persistent Canaanite mother in Matthew 15:21–28, if we are to seek an honest and robust paradigm of reconciliation and *justicia*.

In this controversial gospel story, the kingdom of heaven is depicted as an immigrant mother who crosses the border seeking mercy for her demonized daughter. She is a dreamer. She dreams of a future for her daughter without demons. A faithful reader must reckon with the complex socio-political tensions between Israel and Canaan. If Jesus heals her daughter of this demon, can he heal hostilities among enemies? If Jesus heals this heir, can he heal inherited hate? Has the blood of Jesus lost its power to heal us?

We must lament the wound before we can be liberated from the effects of the wound. We must first reveal the wound in order to heal the wound.

Racism and sexism are intersectional and interlocking systems that are self-perpetuating, self-protecting, and not self-correcting. Therefore, they must be spiritually, socially, and prophetically named and disrupted. Collective lamentation leads to collective liberation.

RACISM AND SEXISM INTERTWINED

Sexism is as old as dirt. All oppressive systems that abuse power have been built on the backs of women by those who see the curse of Genesis 3 as a blessing. Systems that subjugate, suppress, and silence women often justify this marginalization by claiming male supremacy over women by order of creation and order of temptation.

The demons of systemic racism only compound the trouble of systemic patriarchy. Hierarchical systems thrive on power dynamics. Therefore, the more factors that divide, the more complex the oppression, with women of color always landing at the bottom of the ladder.

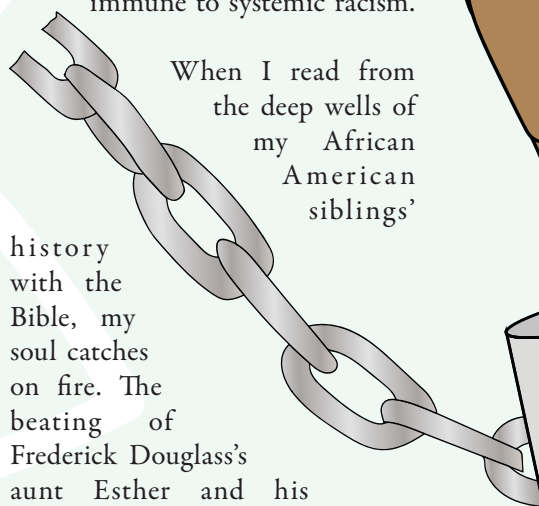
To illustrate this complex system, we only need to do a quick search on the women's suffrage movement and the nineteenth amendment and do a comparative analysis on which years women from certain ethnic groups were able to vote. Caucasian women were first able to vote in 1919, Asian immigrant women in 1952, Native American women in 1962, African American women in 1965, and Latina women in 1975.¹

In my intersectional and embodied reality as a Latina, a *pastora*, and an immigrant, I can't address the inequity of my gender without addressing the shackles of the social construct of my ethnicity/race.

Intersectionality is critical, to ignore it is inadequate in egalitarianism. The degree of oppression and degree of opportunity a woman experiences are directly affected by her race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity.²

WHERE IS THE PROPHETIC VOICE OF THE EGALITARIAN CHURCH?

Sadly, the church has not always been a credible witness to the reconciling power of Christ and the liberating power of the cross. In fact, the church has been historically complicit in muting the evidence of systemic racism because racism is self-perpetuating, self-protecting, and not self-correcting; it must be prophetically disrupted. Even the egalitarian movement, in its advocacy of women, has not been immune to systemic racism.



When I read from the deep wells of my African American siblings'

history with the Bible, my soul catches on fire. The beating of Frederick Douglass's aunt Esther and his altercation with a slave-breaker offers a gut-wrenching, eye-witness account of the excessive force where black, formerly enslaved women were castigated by a church-going master, no less.³

I see the historical, blatant inconsistency that professed faith in Christ does not always lead to the liberating actions of Christ. That a slave-owner could beat a woman an inch away from death on

a Saturday, awake to attend church himself on a Sunday, and return to his rage against enslaved people on a Monday is a strong departure from Christ's actions, to say the least.



There is likewise inconsistency in the history of the Christian egalitarian movement. In a chapter titled “The Battle over Female Preaching,” Catherine Brekus researches the Methodist Church’s empowerment of women in the 1830s and 1840s.⁴ Revivals led by women were popular and highly attended. However, black female preachers like Zilpha Elaw faced greater hostility than white women. Elaw once preached in front of a group of angry white men “with their hands full of stones.”⁵ Furthermore, some of these female preachers wanted to be separated from and distinct from female preachers who were also preaching abolition of slavery. They wanted freedom and equality for themselves to preach Christ, but they did not fight for liberation for their black sisters from enslavement to preach the same.

This inequity is a historical rhythm that can be excavated in many more systems if one is adept at following the rhyme of the oppression. We have not all been set free at the same time.

Racism has joined with sexism to dismember women of color at a cost to our heads, hearts, bodies, and souls. It has also dismembered women from women and women from men. We must repent, restore, and re-member back the places long devastated and rebuild the broken bride of Christ. We are either fighting against the demonic, social, and spiritual systemic powers of racism and sexism or we’re complicit, actively or passively, in these systems.

Christian egalitarians ought to be the first at the reckoning and repentance because we know the God who healed the Canaanite woman. We ought to be the first to identify and lament racism because

we serve a border-crossing God, a bondage-breaking Jesus, and a boundary-breaking Spirit.

ENTERING THE LIMINAL PLACE OF RACISM AND SEXISM

Confession and repentance do not happen in isolation, and neither do communion and restoration. We must tell where we have come from and where we are going. We must tell our stories from living in the liminal place as women of color.

Sang Hyun Lee is an Asian American theologian who has studied the Galilean identity of Jesus as a marginalized one. His status is on display when someone asked, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth [of Galilee]?*” (John 1:46). Jesus was socially marginalized because of his Galilean ethnic status, and in this way, he is able to identify with “ethnic” women. Galilean women were mestiza women, *mujerista* women, womanist theologians, immigrant women, liminal women, in-between and intersectional women. Lee explains that to be liminal, to be in-between, is to have “psychological uncertainty between two or more social worlds.”⁶

In the same way that Jesus crosses boundaries as a marginalized person, he crosses the boundaries of ethno-racial identity and gender, as Loida Martell-Otero argues further. The dominance of whiteness is a weightiness that distorts both identity and belonging. Martell-Otero argues in *Latina Evangelicas* that:

We recognize the social symptoms of being invited to places...where we must dress in white in order to survive as a people of color

who speak and dance in different rhythms and see life from different perspectives. We have learned to survive amid a dominant group who prefers to captivate and dominate, rather than partner and form communal relations in order to become *familia* to each other.⁷

The demon of domination that resulted from the curse in the garden predisposes the subjugation of women, especially women of color like the Canaanite mother. Jesus in his marginalized identity, his welcoming of female disciples, and his victory on the cross, defeats that demon and sets an exemplar of a new imagination across gender and ethno-racial barriers. Any supremacy that sets itself up against the supremacy of Christ runs counter to the cross.

To live into the hostility of the garden is easy, but Jesus the first abolitionist came to abolish the enmity between Jew and Gentile, enslaved and free, male and female, to create a new humanity (Eph. 2:15–16, Gal. 3:28). Jesus was the first to lay down privilege, depicted beautifully in the Christ hymn of Philippians 2. Jesus did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped but made himself a servant. What does it look like to heal the hostility, resisting the urge to dominate, and instead to liberate and collaborate?

LAMENTATION MUST LEAD TO LIBERATION

The church that follows the Galilean Jesus who walked under the Middle Eastern sky, has the opportunity to embody prophetic lamentation which leads to historical and prophetic liberation. The first step must be repentance and confession of our complicity

with the cosmic power of sin manifested in racism and sexism. Yet, the blood of Christ, our Liberator, has not lost its power to heal us from the violent structures between us. For if we confess our sins of racism and sexism, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, to heal the hostility among us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

May our collective lamentation lead us to communal liberation by the power of God's Holy Spirit. If our lament is honest and deep, intersectional and incarnational, how much more will our liberation be? I pray that our storytelling will also be liberating. We carry our stories, and we must tell our stories as women of color. The constellation of voices is necessary for the fuller melody of liberation. This is part of doing *teología en conjunto* (communal theology).

Here is a bit of mine as I see it from my corner in the vast sky:

I AM FROM...

BY INÉS VELÁSQUEZ-MCBRYDE

I am from climbing mango trees in the back patio.

I am from hot tropical Nicaraguan sun browning my skin.

I am from black beans lazily boiling over a gas stove.

I am from Spanish paella with *vino* Rioja,

I am also from Nicaraguan *nacatamales* wrapped in plantain leaves around my mestiza soul.

I am from in between oceans, in between Spanish *flamenco* and wooden marimbas.

I am from in between Hail Marys and protestant *coritos*.

I am from rocking chairs in the arms of my mother singing sweet lullabies.

I am from *abuelitas* raising orphaned grandchildren.

I am from sad yellow sunsets and her empty rocking chair no longer singing my soul.

I am birthed from *abuela's* prayers and rice recipes.

I am from cooked *cantos de liberación*.

I am from the motherland and the conquered land,

I have colonizer blood and colonized blood coursing through my veins.

I am from “*pórtate bien, hazle caso a tu abuelita, cuida a tu hermanito porque eres la mayor.*”

I am from courageous love with the Spanish accent and indigenous dirt.



Inés Velásquez-McBryde is currently a chaplain at Fuller Seminary and co-lead pastor of The Church We Hope For, a multiethnic church in southern

California. She is originally from Nicaragua and earned her MDiv at Fuller. She is passionate about racial reconciliation, justice, and the full inclusion of women in pastoral leadership. Inés has been married to Rob for sixteen years and loves being a soccer mom to their son, Nash.

FOR IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS OF RACISM AND SEXISM, GOD IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OF OUR SINS...(1 JOHN 1:9).

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How Harriet Jacobs Reclaimed the Broken Body: Black Suffering, Black Redemption

By CL Nash

There is something about “brokenness” which allows us to open our eyes and see God’s express revelation differently. Though we frequently herald historical women and men as exceptional, it is their brokenness which really allows us to relate to them.

Such is the case with Linda Brent. Born Harriet Jacobs in Edenton, North Carolina, on February 11, 1813, she lived until 1897. She is, perhaps, best known for her 300-page autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In telling her own story, she gave herself the name “Linda Brent,” and identifies the importance of self-naming for people of African descent.¹ Most scholars, however, simply identify this name as a pseudonym created to protect her identity as a “runaway slave.”

Jacobs’s narrative helps us understand both the social and religious brokenness which typified Black female existence in nineteenth century America. The moral apathy of Christians who allowed the violence of enslavement to go unchecked, and the active participation in this institution by others, reminds us that we still need to take up the mantle of accountability.

In her autobiography, Jacobs analyzes both the internal and external brokenness of Black Christian women through the lens of three key observations: “religion at the South,” sexual violation, and a failed faith that prohibited everyone from functioning within their true humanity due to their complicity with slavery. Yet, it is through facing that sense of shame that reconciliation can truly occur.

Broken Through Religion of the South

In the nineteenth century, American Christianity evaluated women, in large part, based on their piety, purity, submission, and domesticity. Though enslaved

Black women were held to these standards alongside White women, they were not provided the same legal protections as White women. Free Black women were also often viewed through this Victorian era lens but, like enslaved women, they were afforded little protection or economic power to demonstrate Christian domesticity through piety, purity, and submission.

In her autobiography Jacobs named this Christianity, laden with double standards, “religion at the South....” This false Christianity allowed church deacons to accept payment to severely beat their enslaved “sisters and brothers” until the floorboards held pools of their dripped blood. “Religion at the South” allowed men to rape or sexually coerce enslaved women with full impunity. It allowed White slave mistresses, who often presented themselves as “delicate,” to engage “with nerves of steel” in the torture of Black women and men.²

Jacobs knew that this religion failed to live up to the Christian Bible’s standards. She observed this religion accommodating the torture of enslaved people, allowing enslaved women to be raped by White male church leaders, and supporting a racial hierarchy through slavery instead of embracing the liberatory practice of Jesus. In this way, Jacobs identified the failures of this religious system.

By identifying this contradiction, Jacobs walked a careful tight rope between being both the theologian and practitioner of the faith. Black Christian women in Jacobs’s time desired sexual purity, but most were acutely aware that their bodies could be violated with full impunity by any White man. In this environment, Jacobs advocated for herself as a Christian woman while simultaneously critiquing a Christian culture that forced her to give

up the sexual purity she desired and fight for an agency she believed necessary. Jacobs's experience contradicted Victorian era Christian womanhood as it was for most White women, whose bodies would never be touched except by their husband.

Nevertheless, Jacobs came to recognize that expressing her own agency and reclaiming her own scarred body helped her reclaim a relationship with God by seeing herself as part of the *imago Dei*, made in the image of God.

Broken Through Sexual Violation

Through her writing, Harriet Jacobs also critiqued the "religion at the South" for its failure to condemn the brokenness of the Black female body through sexual violation by White men.

For centuries, Black women have endured violation through American slavocracy and its aftermath, and these atrocities have encouraged many to hate their own bodies. In her book *Beloved*, Toni Morrison's fictional character Baby Suggs reminds us that our bodies hold special significance. Though we may have been abused, our bodies are still precious. "Yonder," says Baby Suggs, "they do not love your flesh...You got to love it,

you!"³ Theologian Shawn Copeland summarizes this passage saying that "Baby Suggs prophesies deliverance of body and soul...through passionate love."⁴

In telling her story, Jacobs presented her body as part of the very text that White Christian women would read and evaluate, judge and possibly dismiss as a text of shame. But for Jacobs herself, her body moved beyond being a symbol of shame to a symbol of grace.

Jacobs also revealed to her readers the repeated sexual advances of the man who enslaved her as an adult, who she called Dr. Flint. When she refused him, he threatened to bring her children, who lived on a different plantation, to his plantation to be "broken in" to force her compliance to his advances. But instead of giving in, she escaped and hid in her grandmother's attic for seven years. During that time, she bargained with their White father to ensure he would purchase their children and send them to the North as free citizens.⁵

Rather than submit to her slave holder, she escaped. In this way, Jacobs showed love to her body by creating a bodily autonomy that was rare for nineteenth century American women. Just like Baby Suggs, who spoke through a liturgy encouraging violated and

For centuries, Black women have endured violation through American slavocracy and its aftermath, and these atrocities have encouraged many to hate their own bodies.



Virgina school taught by Harriet Jacobs and her daughter in 1864

...her response was to protect
her body and claim possession
of her own body...

traumatized persons of African descent not to look upon their bodies as shameful, Jacobs also learned to value and love her own body, and she acted on its behalf. Love is the antidote to shame.

Jacobs did not choose an “either/or” approach to her faith and her agency but a “both/and.” She accepted the Christian mandate for sexual purity when she told her readers “I know I did wrong” by taking a White male lover. Yet she criticized the double standards and purity codes of her time and stood outside of their prescripts with her rebuke that “the slave woman ought not be judged by the same standards” as free White women.⁶

Broken Through Failed Faith

For theologians, theodicy asks, “How could an all-powerful and good God allow unmerited suffering and evil to exist?” Perhaps no other episode of human history represents suffering and evil more acutely than American slavocracy. While proclaiming themselves Christian, enslavers failed to be transformed by the compassion and love of the Christian gospel. For Jacobs, this represents both a bodily and spiritual brokenness, what she called a “failure in faith” of those complicit within the system of slavery.

This failure of faith manifested itself in the complex social system of Jacobs’s time. The gender hierarchy of the nineteenth century created inequity for White women, but the temptation of shared power between White women and men over Black women and men also created a situation where White women often perceived Black women as their enemies and not their allies in the struggle against inequity. This implicated some of the White women in Harriet’s life within the failure of faith she identifies.

Jacobs’s childhood mistress, for example, had verbally promised Jacobs her freedom upon her death. However, when the mistress died, Jacobs was not freed as promised. Jacobs reacted to this cruelty saying,

But I was her slave, and I suppose she did not recognize me as her neighbor. I would give much to blot out from my memory that one great wrong. As a child, I loved my mistress; and, looking back on the happy days I spent with her, I try to think with less bitterness of this act of injustice.⁷

It was this inability to see the Black people around them as neighbors in Christ that, in Jacobs’s mind, allowed her slave mistress and others to perpetuate the system of chattel slavery, demonstrating failed faith.

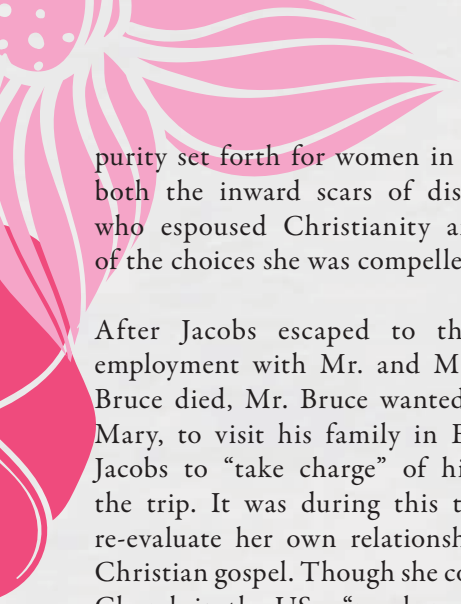
In addition, Jacobs considered Dr. Flint’s wife to be a person who also participated in the brokenness of Black women’s bodies, even though she was a woman with limited autonomy herself. Jacobs carefully juxtaposed how Flint’s wife presented herself as a “delicate lady” against how she ordered mutilating punishments for the enslaved people under her without flinching.

In another instance, Jacobs told a story of a White slave mistress who had a Black girl, who was raped at age ten, hoisted up and severely beaten for her “transgression” over a period of several days. She would not budge when many enslaved people came to beg for mercy on behalf of the girl.

It was a failed faith which enabled Dr. Flint to sexually pursue Jacobs, a youth forty years his junior. It was failed faith which gave Mrs. Flint no regard for those being tortured. Failed faith allowed Jacobs’s childhood mistress to ignore her promise to grant her freedom. These failings point to a religion which privileged racial hierarchy over integrity, false promises of stolen labor over the power of a transformative gospel. But Jacobs doesn’t describe her own brokenness in isolation. Rather, she demonstrated how each person who participated in slavery was burdened by its vices—both Black and White, male and female.

Healing in Christ

When writing her narrative, Jacobs spoke at length about God’s forgiveness for her own sense of transgression, not adhering to the purity codes of her time. Though her response was to protect her body and claim possession of her own body and reproductive organs, she also realized her attempts were not in keeping with the standards of Christian



purity set forth for women in her time. Yet she bore both the inward scars of disappointment in those who espoused Christianity and the outward scars of the choices she was compelled to make.

After Jacobs escaped to the North, she found employment with Mr. and Mrs. Bruce. When Mrs. Bruce died, Mr. Bruce wanted to take his daughter, Mary, to visit his family in England. He employed Jacobs to “take charge” of his young daughter for the trip. It was during this trip that she began to re-evaluate her own relationship with God and the Christian gospel. Though she considered the Episcopal Church in the US a “mockery and a sham” due to its participation in slavery, her experience in England was quite different. She stated,

But my home in Steventon was in the family of a clergyman, who was a true disciple of Jesus. The beauty of his daily life inspired me with faith and genuineness of Christian professions. Grace entered my heart, and I knelt at the communion table, I trust, in true humility of soul.⁸

Yet, the truth of being a
Christian woman...was being
able to seek healing in the true
message of Jesus as shared by
those whose lives emulated Him.

It was this “humility of soul” that Jacobs used to describe her ability to experience the presence of Christ. This was despite the “religion at the South” that participated in the cruel system of slavery, despite the violation, despite the failure of faith. Much like Malcolm X whose trip to Mecca gave him a perspective that allowed him to alter his own lens about the possibility of racial reconciliation, Jacobs had a religious experience abroad through witnessing this “true disciple of Jesus.” She accepted Jesus as Lord. In this way, her experience is instructive.

Jacobs endured genuine violations which provided a brokenness to both her body and spirit. She did not deserve the pain that she bore. In her autobiography, she appealed to an audience of northern, White Christian women who would never have understood the peculiarities of slavery that she endured. Yet, the truth of being a Christian woman, for this historical Black woman, was being able to seek healing in the true message of Jesus as shared by those whose lives emulated him. In living abroad, Jacobs glimpsed God’s divine love in her new and true Christian friends—and she celebrated it in herself.

It is in Harriet Jacobs’s brokenness that we see Christ anew.

Dr. Nash is a graduate of the School of Theology at Virginia Union University and holds a PhD from Edinburgh and Gloucestershire Universities. She has spoken at over thirty-five international conferences and has taught theology and history in the US, the UK, and East Africa. Currently, she is a visiting research fellow at Leeds University. Her research network is located at: <https://misogynoir2mishpat.com/>.

1. Linda Brent, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. L Maria Child (Boston, 1861), accessed 6/25/2021: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>, 6. Jacobs describes her understanding of naming her own child. When her baby was to be christened, she was advised of the surname she must give the baby. “I added the surname of my father, who had himself not legal right to it; for my grandfather on the paternal side was a White gentleman. What tangled skeins are the genealogies of slavery! I loved my father; but it mortified me to be obliged to bestow his name on my children” (121).
2. Linda Brent, *Incidents*, 115.
3. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, (New York: Random House, 1987), 88.
4. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 52.
5. Brent, *Incidents*, 85.
6. Brent, *Incidents*, 86.
7. Brent, *Incidents*, 16.
8. Brent, *Incidents*, 278.



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A White Woman's Prayer of Confession

By Elizabeth Ross

Holy One, I come to you with shaking knees and a heavy heart.
I am not a stranger to suffering, but I do not know the depths of pain caused by racism.
To protect my own comfort, I have been complicit in patterns of exclusion,
where the presence of my sisters is minimized, discredited, and hyper-sexualized.

I confess, I have sinned against your beloved.

I have responded to my sisters' cries in fear and ignorance.
I have rushed to defensiveness instead of lament, and pride instead of humility.
My words, my actions, my beliefs have built a wall of performative egalitarianism,
centered on my own needs and costing others a place at the table.

I confess, I have sinned against your beloved.

God Who Sees, I come to you seeking a different way.
Forgive me for where I have turned a blind eye to the suffering of others.
Forgive me for I have not pursued your kin-dom. I have not sought shalom.

I confess, I have sinned against your beloved.

Take the scales from my eyes and lead me according to your truth.
Do not allow me to separate or elevate myself from other Daughters of Eve.
May I grieve with my sisters who grieve and celebrate with those who celebrate.
Body and soul, we are created in your image, a single source with eternal creativity.

I confess, I have sinned against you.

Lord Christ, forgive me.
Show me the path forward into your justice and mercy.
With each breath, cleanse my mouth, mind, and heart from apathy.
Stoke a fire in my heart to engage in the work you have set before me with prophetic humility,
so that all women may know your healing.

Amen.



Elizabeth Ross is a writer and spiritual director who enjoys learning to quilt. She holds a master of arts degree in religion from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and lives on the East Coast with her husband. Instagram: @elzross

God's Surprising *Hesed*: Reading Ruth as a Palestinian Woman

By Grace Al-Zoughbi

A Palestinian Woman

I was born and raised in Bethlehem, Palestine, and have lived there all my life. I am an Arab Palestinian Christian. Over the centuries due to political, social, and economic factors, the number of Arab Christians in the Middle Eastern community has significantly declined from 12.7 percent in 1900 to only 4 percent in 2020, with currently less than 1 percent of Christians in Palestine.¹ Subsequently, a lot of the Christian Middle East's natural talent has left, its scholarly intellect has dwindled, its spiritual status has weakened, and the cultural basis of the community is getting thinner.

Palestinian Christians, because we are a very small minority, know what it is like to be on the margins. Palestinian Christian women are even more marginalized because we are women in a patriarchal, marginalized community. My passion and calling to pursue a career in theology is not very common or popular in the Middle East. In fact, very few Palestinian Christian women are able to pursue postgraduate theological education because of patriarchal cultural and religious assumptions that impact our participation.



Married to an Egyptian Christian, who is also a minority in the Middle East, I have often reflected on racism and sexism not only within Christian circles but also within the wider context. I have often found that because I am a minority, I have not had the same privileges or rights as the majority of the population.

As I was musing and writing this piece, I remembered an incident in the church from when I was a child. When I was seven years old, I was selected to play the lead in a Sunday school play on Ruth. However, the lead role of Ruth was later taken from me because I did not have “blond hair or blue eyes” (which I don’t think Ruth had either!). Don’t get me wrong, I do love my Mediterranean, olive complexion, but this experience now reminds me how we are often excluded from being chosen for certain positions because of certain assumptions that are not necessarily right.

One may appeal to Ruth for confirmation of a male dominant social system—after all, it is in an all-male forum that personal fates are decided.

Having lived on the margins in Christianity, my faith also marginalized me in the wider Palestinian community. When I was seventeen, I completed high school with outstanding results and was one of the top ten graduates in the country. Still, I was denied a government scholarship because I chose to study *Christian theology*. I would have obtained a scholarship had I chosen to study any other field.

A further complication in my context is that because of my Palestinian identity there are certain restrictions placed on me in terms of physical freedom, movement from one place to another within my country or even outside my country. These restrictions have severely limited my ability to travel freely, to access theological resources, for example, as I was pursuing my career.

Following God’s call was never easy but as a Palestinian Christian I live this costly reality daily.

At the same time, I have also often found that because I am a woman, I have had to work doubly hard to prove that I am able, sincere, and competent, whereas some of my male counterparts got away with being less diligent or efficient, simply because they are male. Why is it that we women find ourselves often in this disadvantaged position?

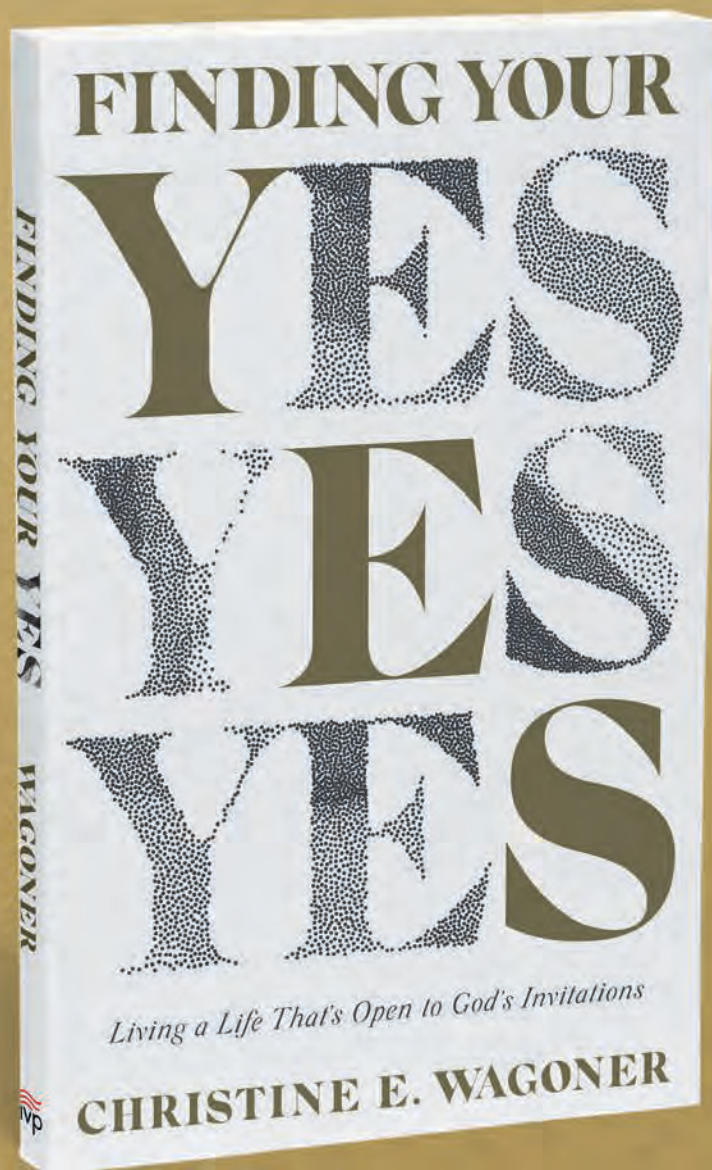
With all of the complexities of my lived experience, I find the story of Ruth a particular encouragement because Ruth knew a similarly complex experience. She was an outsider, a foreigner to the people of Israel. She was a woman. She was a widow. At a time when the people of God were determined to keep an exclusively Jewish identity, God made a way for Ruth to become part of the community, gently yet powerfully.

Because of her commitment to God and people, particularly to her mother-in-law and later to her husband Boaz, Ruth exemplified sacrificial love that turned her circumstances around in an exceptional way as we will see below.

A Moabite Woman

To understand what is extraordinary about Ruth’s story, we must understand her context. Most commentators of the book of Ruth draw attention to the significance of its patriarchal setting.² One scholar comments that “reading the book...requires the reader to set the narrative of the women’s actions within the patriarchal frame in which female interests are subordinated to those of men.”³ Another notes that “one may appeal to Ruth for confirmation of a male dominant social system—after all, it is in an all-male forum that personal fates are decided.”⁴

In this context, the remarkable feature of the book of Ruth is that it recounts the actions of two women, forced to live without their husbands, making radical decisions in the midst of a man’s world,⁵ guided solely by the principle of “redemption.”⁶ Ruth has been described as a “transformer,” empowered by her faith in God “to replace marginality and insecurity by wealth and a more stable status.”⁷



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CHRISTINE E. WAGONER is an associate regional director with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, where she directed their national women’s leadership development program.



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Ruth's compassion for and empathy toward those who suffer demonstrates the relevance of emotion to a balanced ethical life. Ruth also believes that damaged lives can be changed for the better when the safety net of good community based on *hesed* (loving-kindness) is there to catch them.

The trials faced by Ruth throughout her story are not the product of men and their evil ways, but of the unfortunate and harsh circumstances of life: famine and illness. Women, especially in contexts like Ruth's, can be left totally helpless and defenceless when such misfortunes strike them. In the case of Ruth, she had to fight first for survival and second to secure an heir, which defines a woman in a male-dominated community.

Since Ruth had to accept the governing patriarchal norms of society, she is not a typical "feminist" heroine, and there is the danger that Ruth's behavior could encourage women to follow cultural expectations to sacrifice themselves to serve others at the expense

of their own needs. However, it is more correct to say that Ruth takes appropriate care of Naomi, rather than makes an unthinking self-sacrifice.

Ruth makes her own choice to reject Naomi's advice and follow her to Bethlehem. Ruth does not change the basic norms of her male-dominated society. Even so, she is revolutionary because she dares to trust (and also to test the reliability of) key moral values such as loyalty, kindness, reliability, trust, and inclusion. These are values that make any society a viable and humane one, providing a framework that enables human beings to flourish in community.

Ruth's compassion for and empathy toward those who suffer demonstrates the relevance of emotion to a balanced ethical life. Ruth also believes that damaged lives can be changed for the better when the safety net of good community based on *hesed* (loving-kindness) is there to catch them. This covenant society is designed to give help and refuge to those who are most in need, thus showing it is not a racist society.

The historical context of Ruth, the time when the judges ruled (Ruth 1:1), presents the stark contrast between violence and injustice and the peace and *hesed* of Ruth. In Judges, concerns over maintaining the male line led to massacres and the kidnapping of women, as in Judges 19:1–21. In Ruth, needs are resolved by moral choices and women taking on roles traditionally assumed by men. In the story, the legal structures of Israel work as they should to help the vulnerable within society, but they only work because they are made to do so by Ruth's decisions.



Today, we also ought to make decisions that make a difference in our communities and churches and allow us to be more inclusive and welcoming of outsiders, regardless of their background and race, for they, like Ruth, can make a difference in our societies.

Ruth's Story Today

The story of Ruth is particularly special for me because it took place in my hometown, Bethlehem. Bethlehem means "the house of bread," and it is a beautiful reminder that despite hardships, the Lord always fulfills our needs like he did for Ruth.

First, he fulfilled her need for sustenance (Ruth 2) and then for a husband, with whom she had a child who was also an heir for Naomi (Ruth 4:17). In a patriarchal society, the fates of Ruth and Naomi were intertwined. Second, through her humility and integrity, Ruth won the respect and admiration of the people of Bethlehem and specifically Boaz, who told her, "I know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers" (Ruth 2:11, NLT). Her beautiful demeanor exemplifies the words of Christ, "those who humble themselves shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11, NLT).

Finally this story reminds me that Ruth, although a Moabite woman, was included in the lineage of Christ along with Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Josh. 2:11), Bathsheba (Matt. 1:6), and Mary (Matt. 1: 16). She was not excluded simply because she was a Moabite. On the contrary, she enjoyed the same status as Jewish women in the lineage of Jesus. One cannot help but think of Ruth when reading Paul's profound words: "So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family" (Eph. 2:19, NLT).



The story of Ruth leaves no room in our faith for racism or sexism and acknowledges that God's precious *hesed* surprises us every time. He is bigger than all the restrictions, limitations, and assumptions that may be levelled against us. We may have experienced such discrimination, whether racial, or because of our gender, or both. But in God's economy, value is calculated differently. His acceptance, love, and graciousness are not based on the color of our eyes or hair. On the contrary, our relationship with him is embedded in his everlasting *hesed* to us.

Finally, the story of Ruth paves a way forward for the loving inclusion of marginalized women in the church, society, and academy. These spheres and circles where women are able to wisely influence and competently make an impact beyond themselves should not be exclusive only to women of certain color or race. Every woman should be offered an opportunity to rise and to make a difference without having to feel that they are alien, excluded, precluded, or unwanted.

In God's economy, value is calculated differently. His acceptance, love, and graciousness are not based on the color of our eyes or hair. On the contrary, our relationship with him is embedded in his everlasting *hesed* to us.

A Better Way Forward

Issues of sexism and racism are not new to society or the church. Sadly, they have a long history. Giving ourselves the space to repent and to lament is not only crucial but also timely. Racism and sexism can be multifaceted, but contemplating the story of Ruth provides a better way forward, considering God's surprising ways:

She was a foreigner; she became part of the house of the Lord...

She was a stranger; she became part of God's family...

She was excluded; she became included...

She was widowed; she became married to Boaz...

She was childless; she became the mother of Obed, who became the father of Jesse, the father of David who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

What a great heritage to draw on.

When we commit our lives to our faithful God, he will use the abilities and skills he has given us and make something beautiful out of our lives. In a time when Christians are struggling to survive in the Middle East, the story of Ruth reminds me that I have an indispensable part to play in the work of the kingdom of God. I boast that Ruth is my ancestor and that God's promises manifested in her life also apply to me—but

The life of Ruth reminds us that God does not forget our sorrows but instead he understands the difficulties that we go through on a daily basis. As we deeply meditate on the example of Ruth, may we never lose sight of a faithful God whose *hesed* often surprises us.

to an even greater extent through Jesus Christ!

The life of Ruth reminds us that God does not forget our sorrows but instead he understands the difficulties that we go through on a daily basis. As we deeply meditate on the example of Ruth, may we never lose sight of a faithful God whose *hesed* often surprises us.



Grace Al-Zoughbi Arteen is a Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem. She holds a BA in biblical studies and an MA in theology. Grace served as a lecturer and head of biblical studies at Bethlehem Bible College until 2018 and is now a PhD candidate at the London School of Theology. Her focus is on the theological education of Arab women in the Middle East.

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Women have long been a significant force.



They have labored in fields, they have fought for justice, and taken a stand in the face of adversity. They have leaned into the uniqueness God placed within them and they made history. You may not know them by name, but generations have been forever changed by their being who they are. Their stories are powerful. Their stories are timeless. And their stories have contributed to the flourishing of their communities.



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CBE is Adopting a Podcast!

The *Mutuality Matters* podcast will soon be added to CBE's online library of free resources! *Mutuality Matters* was established by Rev. Dr. Erin Moniz (an award-winning CBE writer) and Blake Dean as "gender theology for the gospel empowerment of men and women" that offered episodes on dating, marriage, gender roles, and more

Re-branded as **CBE International's *Mutuality Matters***, our vision is to invite new hosts to join the team and offer weekly conversations with scholars, pastors, experts, humanitarians, and activists on women, men, mutuality, and the Bible:



Intersectionality: Where Sexism, Racism, and Religion Collide

Rev. Dr. Angela Ravin-Anderson and her guests explore the ways our understanding of God is

informed by gender, race, and religion.

Angela founded the Streams in the Wasteland Leadership Institute that offers leadership development training programs to nonprofit, parachurch, and church organizations.



Global Impact: Egalitarian Activism and Human Flourishing

Dr. Mimi Haddad invites guests to consider the impact of egalitarian activism around the world.

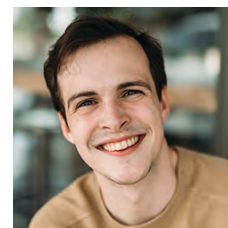
Mimi is president and CEO of CBE International and holds a PhD in historical theology from the University of Durham, England. She is an adjunct associate professor of historical theology at Fuller.



Women and Men Leading Together: Stories from the Field

Dr. Rob Dixon and Layla Van Gerpen share real stories of women and men who work and lead together.

Rob serves in ministry with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and as faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary and Fresno Pacific University. Layla also serves with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship reaching students with the gospel and equipping them for mission.



New Voices: The Latest Conversation on an Age-Old Struggle

Rev. Dr. Erin Moniz and Blake Dean introduce new authors, books, events, and ideas in egalitarian theology.

Erin serves as the Assistant Chaplain for Berry College and received her DMin at Trinity School for Ministry. Blake is the community outreach and communications manager for The Davies Shelters in Rome, GA.

Erin and Blake's pre-CBE episodes are available on Spotify and Apple Podcast and many will soon be available at cbeinternational.org.

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Giving Opportunities

Building a Strong Online Voice for Mutuality

As the largest portal of egalitarian resources, it is vital that CBE has a strong online presence. We need to use the newest technologies to educate and deliver the message of God's call for women's biblical equality in more relevant ways.

Over the past eighteen months, CBE has been creating powerful virtual resources for education and advocacy.

We are excited to share our latest endeavors—continuing education online courses and a CBE podcast!

E-Learning Courses

Our team is working toward launching e-learning courses. We are currently at work on topics such as Gender Essentialism, Biblical Equality 101, World Changing Women in the Early Church, and much more. Whether readers are new to CBE conversations or have been long acquainted with each topic, our courses will be designed to serve as both an introduction and a starting point for more in-depth learning. Accessible through desktop or smart phone, they will be focused lessons completable in under an hour with a minimal fee.

Costs include supporting our team's ongoing writing, research, and a subscription to Articulate 360—an online platform that will help us create each e-learning course. The cost is \$13,250 per year.

Podcast (Mutuality Matters)



Our podcast, *Mutuality Matters*, will soon be added to CBE's online library of free resources. Weekly episodes will explore egalitarian theology and its impact. Several hosts are lined up to take a deep dive into key topics such as the global impact of egalitarian activism, real stories of women and men who lead together, and the intersection of sexism and racism. These conversations are imperative in our current climate. Through *Mutuality Matters*, our wholehearted desire at CBE is for Scripture's message of mutuality between men and women to shine bright in a beleaguered world.

The project has been mostly funded for one year, but CBE would like to see this ministry go forward for decades! Costs include equipment, technology, professional support, and staff to coordinate this large project. The cost is \$26,910 per year.

Film Script on Katharine Bushnell

In collaboration with an award-winning film writer and producer, CBE's team is praying and preparing for a feature film on the life of Katherine Bushnell—an early evangelical medical missionary, Bible translator, and egalitarian activist. The cost for the film script is \$20,000.

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Expanding the ways CBE delivers the message of mutuality on our website will help us engage more effectively and communicate with new audiences. The next generation and communities worldwide will be empowered to advocate for women's biblical equality!

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Praise

- We thank God for our faithful donors and foundations standing with CBE as we grow in our capacity to provide resources like scholarships for women preparing for ministry and supporting our African partnerships.
- We have two interns this summer, Katie and Bethany, who will be working with staff on various projects. We are thankful God has brought them to CBE!
- CBE's resources were influential in the recent shift Portland mega church Imago Dei made to welcome women in all levels of pastoral leadership. Join us in rejoicing over Imago Dei's new mutualist position!

Prayer

- We have had to cancel the 2021 "Men, Women, and God: Theology & Its Impact" conference in London on August 11–14 and request continued prayer for wisdom, discernment, and enormous attendance as we shift to creating an engaging online conference on September 10–11.
- Please join us in praying over CBE's board as they wrap up the strategic planning process on race and gender. This has been a three-year process and we would like to conclude the process with clarity and clear vision.

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Dominance: Patriarchy's Logic

Journalist Adele Stan wrote, "It's difficult to imagine a system more patriarchal than the one on which the U.S. economy was founded...slavery. Plantation owners raped the women they enslaved, then enslaved any children resulting from those assaults.... This is our legacy, the part we don't talk about. It courses silently through the veins of the body politic."¹ Patriarchy's logic breeds male dominance and grows in brutality against women marginalized by race, tribe, or ethnicity. Seeking *ultimate* dominance, patriarchy's toxic ideas and deadly consequences share a common root—the dehumanizing of women based on their flesh—their gender and race. Sexism and racism form the two-headed monster of dominance and Christ confronted both.

The gospel writers describe Christ's attentiveness to women demeaned because of their gender and ethnicity, as eyewitnesses to these events. Consider the Samaritan woman. Despised because of her tribe and alienated through multiple husbands, Jesus waits for her by a well at noon. Only the disenfranchised fetch water alone in the heat of the day. As a Jew asking a Samaritan for a drink, Christ exposes her tribe's marginalization. Asking for her husband, Jesus reveals her exploitation by numerous men. Aware of her suffering, Jesus gives himself to her as Savior—as the "I am." She becomes the beloved, patriarchy's logic is upended, and the disciples are enraged. Despised by the Jews and abused by men, a Samaritan woman becomes the first great evangelist, bringing the good news of her people's inclusion in Christ (John 4:6–30).

Like the Samaritan woman, the Syrophoenician woman meets Jesus outside Jewish territory. Gentile and female, the Jews viewed her people as "dogs"—undeserving of God's gifts. Considered "unclean," Jesus—a Jewish rabbi—approached her and the disciples try to shoo her away (Matt. 15:23). Persistently, she begs Christ to deliver her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus says he's come to feed *first* Israel's children not the Syrophoenician "dogs." Defying patriarchy's logic, she will not be excluded by prejudice. She says even the "dogs" are satisfied by crumbs off the children's table. Her faith exceeds that of the

"children"—the Jews, and especially the disciples who doubt Christ could feed a multitude with a few fish and loaves (Mark 6:35–36). Not this Gentile woman! A few crumbs are enough. She too is God's beloved "child," and Jesus healed her daughter (Matt. 15:28).

Through these stories and others, Scripture shows how women demeaned by gender and race were called and used by God. Outsiders like Ruth the Moabite and Rahab the Amorite become insiders, and both are cited in Christ's lineage. Confronting patriarchy's dominance (Gen. 3:16) made brutal through tribal and ethnic disparities, Jesus made clear what patriarchy's dominance had obscured. Women and especially those degraded by race are equally created in God's image as co-workers with men (Gen. 1:26–29). They too are equally recreated in the image of Christ as leaders in the church (2 Cor. 3:18). This is the work of Christ who absorbed, in his own flesh, sin's ultimate dominance on Calvary.

Christ's victory, summarized in Galatians 3:28, *surpasses* the logic of dominance. It compels those with ethnic, socio-economic, and gender privilege to serve as Jesus did—with empathy always void of dominance. Tragically, the church has too often aligned with and fortified powers and principalities (slavery in the US, Apartheid in South Africa, The Third Reich in Germany, etc.). Here lament plays a critical role. It acknowledges our complicity and brokenness. Lament prioritizes empathy and removes obstacles to redemption by resisting quick fixes to deep wounds. Lament opens necessary space to sit with our pain, to depend on God's transforming power, and to seek wisdom of leaders at the margins, who know best the logic of patriarchy. Without collective lament we speak "peace when there is none" (Jer. 6:14).

As we follow Jesus, let us also expose and challenge the logic of patriarchy. May we lament the church's complicity with dominance, and may we pursue authentic peace, humbly and persistently as Christ did.

1. Adele M. Stan, "This is What Patriarchy Looks Like," *The American Prospect*, November 22, 2017, <https://prospect.org/power/patriarchy-looks-like/>

CBE INTERNATIONAL (Christians for Biblical Equality)

MISSION STATEMENT

CBE exists to promote the biblical message that God calls women and men of all cultures, races, and classes to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world. CBE's mission is to eliminate the power imbalance between men and women resulting from theological patriarchy.

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.

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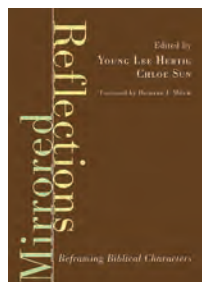
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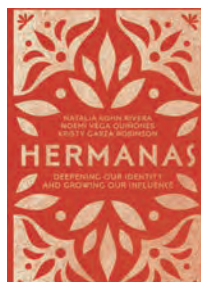
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***Mirrored Reflections:
Reframing Biblical
Characters***

**Rev. Young Lee Hertig
Ph.D and Chloe T. Sun**

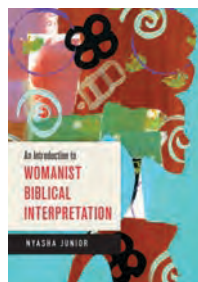
Mirrored Reflections arose from the alienating experiences of a group of Asian American evangelical Christian women leaders. In it, contributors reflect on how the stories of select biblical characters mirror their own stories, reframing these biblical stories to envision fresh, powerful leadership principles.



***Hermanas: Deepening
Our Identity and
Growing Our Influence***

**Natalia Kohn Rivera,
Noemi Vega Quiñones,
Kristy Garza Robinson**

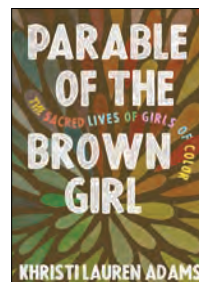
God calls Latinas to lives of influence, they need more mentors and role models. The authors share their own journeys as Latinas and leaders. They find mentorship in twelve inspirational women of the Bible who navigated challenges of brokenness and suffering, being bicultural, and crossing borders.



***An Introduction to
Womanist Biblical
Interpretation***

Nyasha Junior

Nyasha Junior provides a much-needed introduction to womanist approaches to biblical interpretation. It argues that womanist biblical interpretation is not simply a byproduct of feminist biblical interpretation but part of a distinctive tradition of African American women's engagement with biblical texts. This volume highlights the importance of both the Bible and race in the development of feminism and the emergence of womanism.



***Parable of the Brown
Girl: The Sacred Lives
of Girls of Color***

Kristi Lauren Adams

The stories of girls of color are often overlooked, unseen, and ignored rather than valued and heard. Adams introduces readers to the resilience, struggle, and hope held within these stories. Thought-provoking and inspirational, *Parable of the Brown Girl* is a powerful example of how God uses the narratives we most often ignore to teach us the most important lessons in life.

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