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Tertius . . .

The theme of this, the 146th issue of *Priscilla Papers*, is “Old Testament Connections.” You’ll encounter a sermon and four articles that explain OT texts and go on to connect each to Christian life and ministry. Also included is another article, Joan Brown’s “Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage,” which stands apart from the issue’s theme but, nevertheless, is indeed perceptive and timely. I, together with the authors and other members of the *Priscilla Papers* team, hope and trust you will benefit from the insights and challenges in the following pages.



After nine years as editor of *Priscilla Papers*, I will no longer serve in that role after this spring 2023 issue. As a result, I’m taking more space than usual here in these opening pages to reflect on my time as editor and to introduce the incoming editor.

Looking Back

Much could be said, more than space allows, but I will limit myself to a few brief reflections:

- What a blessing to have read every article, sermon, and book review published in *Priscilla Papers* since I began as editor in 2014—moreover, to have read each of them numerous times. I can testify that there is no shortage of scholarship in support of CBE’s mission and that it comes from a growing variety of professions and academic disciplines. As I have said many times, my biggest challenge as editor has been having too much material to publish, and that has remained true to the end.
- What a blessing to have worked with such an array of authors. One of the stated purposes of *Priscilla Papers* is “to build a global team of egalitarian scholars.”¹ I can testify that this is happening, and that it is happening quickly. The

authors of this issue, for example, are from four continents. Not represented are—you guessed it—Antarctica, as well as Europe and Australia/Oceania, though we have had many authors from these two continents.

- What a blessing that CBE and *Priscilla Papers* enjoy balanced participation of women and men without resorting to tokenism. I can testify that about sixty percent of the 224 authors during my nine years as editor are women. And this didn’t start with me. In the year leading up to my editorship, for example, the percentage of female authors was about the same. It didn’t start with my predecessor, Bill Spencer, either. Women have been prominent in *Priscilla Papers* from the beginning. All the articles in the first issue, back in 1987, were authored by women (Sherri Aeschliman, Patricia Gundry, Catherine Kroeger, Kari Malcolm, and Alvera Mickelsen). The editor of that issue was Elizabeth “Betty” Kroeger Elliott, and it announced a conference featuring Elaine Storkey as the speaker.
- What a blessing to partner with others. I can testify that a large team of people contribute to the work of *Priscilla Papers*. I have always had a main contact person at CBE’s Minneapolis office—Tim Krueger, Katie McEachern, Sarabeth Ng, and most recently Amber Burgess. Each of them has been skilled and a pleasure to work with. I have also, of course, worked closely with CBE President Mimi Haddad. I am amazed at the amount of important work Mimi accomplishes, and I am consistently blessed by the gracious manner in which she does so. Please know that the journal’s layout and other aspects of its appearance depend, not primarily on me, but on the work of Amber Burgess and Margaret Lawrence in Minneapolis and, especially, of Theresa Garbe who lives

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near me in eastern Tennessee. I have told Theresa many times, and I am now telling our readership, that I could not have done this work without her. Over 250 times I have sent her work to do, this editorial being the final time, and she has always done it with excellence.

With this teamwork aspect of *Priscilla Papers* in mind, permit me to explain why my editorials begin “I Tertius . . .” and end “. . . greet you in the Lord.”

Near the end of Paul’s letter to the Christians of Rome, we gain a rare glimpse of a behind-the-scenes participant in Paul’s letter-writing ministry. Romans 16:22 says, “I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord” (NIV). Tertius was Paul’s amanuensis, the person who penned the letter that Paul spoke aloud. His job was to prepare Paul’s words to be read and heard. Tertius uncharacteristically and momentarily stepped from behind the curtain because he knew some of the letter’s recipients and wanted to add his voice to Paul’s greetings. Theresa and I identify with him, for unlike the authors of the articles we publish, our work is largely behind the scenes.

My appreciation for Tertius, though it is the reason I chose to use his name in my editorials, is not the end of the story. Over the years, I have also come to think of the many coworkers in Romans 16 as a metaphor for the large number of people involved with the journal as authors, proofreaders, graphic designers, peer reviewers, photographers, and other roles as well. I think, for example, of Liz Beyer and Mary Gonsior, whose extensive work at CBE overlaps with *Priscilla Papers*.

Looking Forward

One of my early experiences with CBE was about fifteen years ago when I attended CBE’s annual conference in Bangalore, India. It was hosted by the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS). I had many deeply meaningful experiences on that trip. Among them was a powerful lecture by Havilah Dharamraj, an OT instructor at SAIACS. Because of my memory of that lecture, Havilah was the first person I reached out to when I became editor about seven years later, in hopes that she would write for *Priscilla Papers*. Her charity toward me in that email exchange is still clear in my memory. Havilah remained at SAIACS through the intervening years, as a professor and administrator, and continues to work there in the Department of Biblical Studies today.

Since meeting her in India, I have gradually come to know Havilah personally. She has published in *Priscilla Papers*, and as editor I partnered with her in that process. She gave a memorable keynote address at CBE’s 2019 international conference in Houston, Texas, during which I was reminded of her calm, confident, commanding presence as a lecturer. She and I are both currently at work on CBE’s Bible translation project, and through that process I have interacted with her extensively.

I trust you can see where the above comments are leading: I am especially pleased to inform our readership that Dr. Havilah Dharamraj is the incoming editor of *Priscilla Papers*. She is already at work on the summer and autumn issues. For the reasons given above and more, I can testify that she is a committed egalitarian and a respected scholar. Like Phoebe of Romans 16, Havilah, our sister in Christ, has been a help to many, myself included. Like Priscilla in Acts 18, she teaches God’s Way with accuracy. The land called *Havilah* in Genesis 2 is associated with abundance; similarly, *Priscilla Papers* will flourish under her leadership.²

Several of Havilah’s credentials and accomplishments are listed below:

- Her degrees include an MS in biochemistry, an MA in Christian Studies from SAIACS, and the PhD from the University of Durham, UK.
- Havilah’s books
 - ◊ *A Prophet Like Moses?: A Narrative-Theological Reading of the Elijah Cycle* (2011).
 - ◊ *South Asia Bible Commentary* (2015), coeditor and contributor.
 - ◊ *Altogether Lovely: A Thematic and Intertextual Reading of the Song of Songs* (2018).
 - ◊ *Challenging Tradition: Innovation in Advanced Theological Education* (2018), coeditor and contributor.
 - ◊ *Ruth: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (2019).
 - ◊ *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* (2022), coeditor and contributor.
- Select examples of Havilah’s articles
 - ◊ “The Idea of the Idyll: Why it May Not Work for the Song of Songs,” *The Expository Times* 124/9 (June 2013) 417–24.
 - ◊ “How are Christians to Understand the Imagery of Israel as God’s Unfaithful Wife, and What is the Relevance of the Divine-human Marriage Metaphor in our Lives Today?,” *Mutuality* 20/2 (Summer 2013) 19.
 - ◊ “We Reap What We Sow: Engaging Curriculum and Context in Theological Education,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 38/4 (October 2014) 350–60.
 - ◊ “Green-Eyed Lovers: A Study of Jealousy in Song of Songs 8:5–7,” *Priscilla Papers* 32/1 (Winter 2018) 3–8.
 - ◊ “The Curious Case of Hagar: Biblical Studies and the Interdisciplinary Approach of Comparative Literature,” *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 23/2 (September 2019) 49–71.
- As mentioned above, Havilah is involved in CBE’s Bible translation project. She has also served on the Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version of the Bible.
- Havilah is president of the CBE India chapter.³

Havilah is married to Pandu Dharamraj; they have two married children and a grandson. Her email address is editor.priscillapapers@gmail.com, and all *Priscilla Papers* correspondence should be sent to her.

Notes

1. See https://cbeinternational.org/primary_page/priscilla-papers-writers-guidelines/.
2. Genesis 2:11–12, CEB: “The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. That land’s gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones.”
3. For more about CBE chapters, see https://cbeinternational.org/primary_page/find-or-start-local-chapter/.

. . . greet you in the Lord.

Together in the New Humanity

CRAIG S. KEENER

If Galatians 3:28 declares that unity in Christ has obliterated ethnic and gender barriers, what should we make of the household codes in Eph 5:21–6:9 and elsewhere? If Gal 3:28 is the universal principle, how is that lived out in the tension between the already/not yet in a fallen world?

This article elaborates the fundamental, transcultural message of Ephesians that puts its household code in context. Ephesians teaches about the one body of Christ, with explicit implications for ethnic and gender unity. But first, investigating the connections between Genesis and Gal 3:28 will provide a foundation for understanding Ephesians.

Galatians 3:28 and Its Genesis Allusion

When Gal 3:28 says there is neither Jew nor Gentile, it teaches equality without bulldozing cultural differences. This teaching has significant concrete implications. Peter, for example, should not have withdrawn from table fellowship with Gentiles in Gal 2. Eating together established a covenant relationship, and withdrawing from table fellowship was a declaration of enmity, treating Antioch's Gentile believers as second-class citizens or worse.¹

When Gal 3:28 declares there is neither slave nor free, it is not ignoring unjust power structures in society. It is announcing that in Christ, all believers are equal; thus, as in Gal 5:13,² we are *all* called to serve one another in love. That recognition concretely affects how we treat each other in the church and has implications for what the church should work for in society, as the abolitionists understood.³

The same is true for the third pair in Gal 3:28, except here Paul appeals to a principle even more fundamental than in his first two examples. In the first two examples, Paul said, “neither . . . nor”: “neither Jew nor Greek” and “neither slave nor free.” But for the third pair, Paul says, “neither . . . and,” although some translations obscure this difference. “Neither and” is somewhat unusual grammar, so it gets our attention for its allusion to earlier Scripture. Here Paul not only changes “nor” to “and,” but he avoids his usual Greek terms for “male” and “female.” Instead, he borrows the phrase from Gen 1:27, where God created humanity in his image, “male and female.”⁴ The exact Greek phrase Paul uses appears in the Greek translation of the OT only in Genesis, and applies there to people only in Gen 1:27 and 5:2, which say that God created humans, male and female, *in his image* and likeness. The phrase appears only two other times in the NT—when Jesus quotes Gen 1:27 (Matt 19:4, Mark 10:6).

In keeping with Jewish expectations of a restoration that echoes the beginning,⁵ Paul has in mind a sort of return to that original purpose for humanity, where man and woman together reflect God's image and rule over creation. It is only later, in Gen 3:16, as a result of the fall, that husbands rule their wives; that passage predicts and describes the prevalence of patriarchy in the world. But representatives of God's kingdom are not called to promote

the effects of the fall, such as pain in childbirth or men sweating (Gen 3:19; or, still less controversially, sinning and dying).

Genesis 3 shows humanity's fall from God's original plan in Gen 1–2, but the prophets tell of a day when God will restore his people. Joel 2:28–29⁶ reveals the promised restoration of God's original plan: God pours out his Spirit on male and female, young and old, slave and free, and ultimately *all* flesh, including Jew and Gentile.⁷ In fact, Paul in Gal 3:28 may echo Joel 2 (cf. the echo in Rom 5:5⁸), just as Peter does in describing the new way of Christ in Acts 2:17–18, depicting the present, eschatological prophetic empowerment on both genders, all ages, and all flesh.

Relevance of the Principle for Ephesians

Against the principle of Gal 3:28, however, many of our complementarian brothers and sisters cite the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians. They suggest that beyond fundamental principles, when it comes to what is concrete, Paul supports hierarchy.⁹ But while Paul adopts the conventional form of household codes, he adapts them in a Joel 2 sort of way. The philosopher Aristotle instructed a male householder how to rule his wife, children, and slaves,¹⁰ but Joel speaks of God empowering women, young people, and slaves. And rather than telling householders how to rule their households, Paul does something no other ancient household code I know of does: in Eph 5–6, he actually *frames* his household code with a call to *mutual* submission, beginning in 5:21 and concluding in 6:9.¹¹

It should be emphasized that my references to Genesis are theological, not intended to enter current scientific debates. The point is that all of us are from a line of sinners, that all of us are from the same *human* line, and that all of us must come to God the same way. In the 1800s, Unitarian Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz insisted on the special creation of different races. Often cited by contemporary slaveholders, Agassiz insisted that Blacks and Whites were separate species, making interracial marriage a travesty of nature. By contrast, Harvard biologist Asa Gray argued for the common descent of all humanity. Gray's evangelical faith encouraged abolitionism, because it taught him the worth of all humans made in God's image.¹²

In Ephesians, Paul again draws on Gen 1 and 2. He has precedent for this from Jesus himself. When teaching against wrongful divorce, Jesus combined quotations from Gen 1:27 and 2:24 (Mark 10:6–8). Putting these two verses together, Jesus argued that God created humans as male and female in the beginning (Gen 1:27), and then in *marriage* he joins male and female back *together* (Gen 2:24)—one of each. Although exceptions are assumed for abuse, infidelity, and so on (cf. Matt 5:32, 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15),¹³ ideally, Jesus argues, people should not put asunder what God joined together.

Paul quotes Gen 2:24 in Eph 5:31. Paul is using Jesus's verse about God putting male and female back together in marriage: a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,

and the two shall become one flesh. In Eph 5, Paul appeals to this principle for his underlying point about marriage: male and female can become one, as in the beginning. Paul also applies it not only to the one-flesh union of husband and wife, but to the one-body union of Christ and his church (Eph 5:32). And this same picture of one body in Christ stands behind Paul's exhortation for *ethnic* unity in Ephesians (Eph 2:14–16). All people share a common humanity in Adam. That unity was ripped apart as Genesis progressed (Gen 11:8–9), but in the new Adam, in Christ (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45), we are restored to a common bond of unity.

The New Humanity in the New Adam

Even in Genesis, God was working toward restoring humanity from the fall. Between Adam and Noah, Genesis lists ten generations ending in three sons (Gen 5:3–32). When Noah was born, his father named him “Noah,” meaning “rest” or “comfort,” because Noah was supposed to give rest from the ground cursed on account of the fall (5:29). After the flood, God repeats to Noah's family what he said to the first couple: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (9:1, 7; cf. 1:28). The world was supposed to start over again with Noah's family, but before Gen 9 ends, the fall repeats itself. Then, between Noah and Abraham, Genesis again lists ten generations ending in three sons (11:10–27). This list culminates in Abram and God's next step to restore his plan. God blesses Abram (12:2) as he had blessed the first couple (1:28) and Noah's family (9:1). It is another step toward a renewed creation.

Jewish people in the time of Jesus and Paul spoke often about the coming new creation.¹⁴ They spoke of the eternal destiny of the righteous as the garden of Eden, a restored paradise.¹⁵ Revelation 22:1–3 also speaks of a new Eden, with a tree of life and no more curse. Paul's letters emphasize that we have already begun to experience a foretaste of that new creation in Christ now, by the Spirit (e.g., Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 2:9–10; 2 Cor 5:5, 5:16–17; Gal 5:5, 6:15).

Paul speaks explicitly of Christ as the new Adam in Rom 5:12–21 and 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45. He also addresses the new creation in the new Adam in Ephesians and Colossians. Just as Genesis speaks of humanity created in God's image, Col 3:10 speaks of believers as new persons created in God's image. Likewise, Eph 4:24 speaks of this newly created self. In Greek, Eph 4:24 speaks of a “new person” or “new humanity” (*ton kainon anthrōpon*). This “new person” contrasts with the “old person” who we were in Adam, which Paul mentions in Rom 6:6 shortly after contrasting the old Adam and Christ (5:12–21).

One New Humanity and Ethnicity in Ephesians

In Ephesians, Paul applies this idea of a new humanity to ethnic division. In Eph 1:3–14, Paul applies eleven OT terms or phrases for Israel to the church, which includes both Jewish believers and Gentile believers grafted into Israel's faith. In Eph 2:11–22, Paul speaks of Gentile believers becoming fellow citizens and part of a new spiritual temple in Christ. The Dead Sea Scrolls also spoke of their community as a spiritual temple,¹⁶ but

their end-time temple explicitly excluded Gentiles.¹⁷ Paul, by contrast, explicitly includes Gentiles in this new temple. In Eph 3:6–8 Paul emphasizes his mission to fulfill the OT prophetic promise of the end-time ingathering of Gentiles (e.g., Isa 11:10, 19:22–25, 66:18; Zech 2:11). In Eph 4 he emphasizes how we are all one body, whose many different members need to work together (Eph 4:4, 4:11–16).

In Eph 3:1, Paul notes that he is a prisoner of Christ on behalf of the Gentiles. Congregations in and around Ephesus¹⁸ would have understood how this had happened. Paul was in Roman custody because adversaries from the region of Ephesus had accused him of having brought an Ephesian Gentile past the barricade in the first century AD Jerusalem temple that kept Gentiles from going any farther (Acts 21:27–29).¹⁹ (There was also another wall inside that one that prevented Jewish women from going any farther.) Signs posted in the temple warned that any Gentile who went beyond the outer wall would be killed. Paul had responded to the accusation by preaching about Jesus, and Jerusalemites stopped and listened—until he spoke about God's care for Gentiles, which precipitated the riot's resumption and his arrest (22:1–24). Paul would not compromise the Gentile part of the message, because for Paul, if you *really* love Jesus, you must love your brothers and sisters whatever their ethnicity.²⁰ You become part of one body with them in Christ.

Christians in the area around Ephesus would have known why Paul was in Roman custody. Paul's accusers were from this area. The Gentile that Paul was wrongly accused of having taken into the temple was from Ephesus. For Paul, and for Christians near Ephesus, there could be no greater symbol of this division between Jew and Gentile than this dividing wall in the Temple. But in Eph 2:14, Paul declares that Christ shattered this dividing wall, and a few verses later goes on to speak of how the Spirit is building a new temple of both Jews and Gentiles (2:20–22).

How did Christ break down this wall? Ephesians 2:14–16 explains that Jesus did it by nullifying in his own flesh the barrier of ethnic-exclusive rules. He reconciled both groups in the same way by his one body on the cross, so *making the two into one new person, one new humanity* (2:15) in the body of Christ (2:16). If the cross has smashed a barrier once established by God himself—the division between Israelites and Gentiles—how much more has he nullified every other ethnic barrier, established merely by human convention or, worse yet, human sin?

In this one new humanity, in Christ's body, we remain individuals, distinct from one another and from Christ, the body's head (4:16). But we belong together just like the parts of an ideally whole body belong together (4:12, 16). Believers' unity with Christ was probably something that Paul understood right from the beginning of his experience with Christ; when Jesus confronted Saul on the Damascus Road, he demanded, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?” (Acts 9:4).²¹ Jesus had already told his disciples that whatever their hearers did to them, they did to Jesus (Matt 10:40; 25:40, 45; Luke 10:16). If we mistreat fellow believers or look down on them, we are doing the very same to Christ.

One New Humanity and Gender in Ephesians

In Eph 5:21–6:9, Paul includes household codes. From the time of Aristotle, nearly four centuries earlier, these codes instructed a male householder how to rule his wife, children, and slaves. Paul has cultural reasons for using these codes,²² but they cannot negate his wider principles of our unity in the new humanity. Remember that Gal 3:28 addresses not just ethnicity but also slavery and gender. Remember that the promised restoration in Joel 2:28–29 crosses those barriers and the age barrier. In light of Paul’s faith, he *modifies* these culturally expected codes.

As Paul is addressing marriage in Eph 5, he elaborates at special length on how husbands should *love* their wives (5:25–31), well over twice as long as he addresses wives. He instructs husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, just as Christ loves his own body, the church (5:25, 29). *This* is when he specifically quotes Gen 2:24, about a man becoming one flesh with his wife (Eph 5:31), and remarks that he speaks especially about Christ and the church (5:32). Connecting unity in marriage and our unity in Christ is not unique to Ephesians; elsewhere Paul applies the same Genesis passage to believers becoming one spirit with Christ (1 Cor 6:16–17) and to our bodies belonging to his body (1 Cor 6:15, 19).

By applying Gen 2:24 to both marriage and to the body of Christ, Paul shows that he is still thinking of the one new humanity in Christ. He is still thinking of the restoration of the way God meant things to be in the beginning. His emphasis is not on what the culture emphasized: husbands, rule your wives. His emphasis, justified from Scripture, is on unity in Christ, in marriage as in the wider body of Christ.

Conclusion

In Ephesians, Paul’s essential principle in Gal 3:28 holds. In the new creation, we are a new humanity, one body in Christ. Just as slaves are their slaveholders’ equals in the new creation, and just as Jewish and Gentile believers share the same Lord, so male and female are equal members in Christ’s body. Paul lacked the worldly status and power to transform all the social structures of his day, but the body of Christ is an alternative community, where slaves could become elders, Gentiles could become evangelists, and Junia could be an apostle. As a foretaste of the coming world, we must model for the world around us what the restoration of Eden looks like.

Notes

This article is a revised version of a lecture presented at CBE’s 2022 International Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The lecture was given jointly by Craig Keener and Médine Moussounga Keener and can be accessed at cbeinternational.org.

1. See fuller discussion in Craig S. Keener, *Galatians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge University Press, 2018) 92; Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2019) 157–58.

2. “You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don’t let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love” (Gal 5:13 CEB).

3. Some also applied the principle to gender equality; see Julia Foote in Lisa M. Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance, and Transformation* (Eerdmans, 2020) 170, 172, 185.

4. With, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Zondervan, 1990) 157; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, SP 9 (Liturgical, 1992) 142–43; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (Doubleday, 1997) 376, 380; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (Baker Academic, 2013) 254; Wayne Litke, “Beyond Creation: Galatians 3:28, Genesis and the Hermaphrodite Myth,” *SR* 24/2 (1995) 173–78.

5. See, e.g., 4 Ezra 8:52–54; *Sipra Behuq.* 1.261.1.6; Mathias Rissi, *Time and History: A Study on the Revelation*, trans. Gordon C. Winsor (John Knox, 1966) 4; French L. Arrington, *Paul’s Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians* (University Press of America, 1978) 77–81, 157; James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, LEC 3 (Westminster, 1986) 46–47.

6. Joel 2:28–29 is 3:1–2 in the Hebrew text and the LXX.

7. See discussion in Keener, *Galatians* (2019) 306.

8. “This hope doesn’t put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5 CEB).

9. I write this on the assumption of Pauline authorship of Ephesians (with, e.g., Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, NICNT [Eerdmans, 2020]), but most scholars who attribute it only to a later disciple of Paul acknowledge that it often reflects Pauline thought.

10. See Arist. Pol. 1.2.1, 1253b; David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament*, ed. David Aune (Scholars, 1988) 27.

11. See discussion in Craig Keener, “Mutual Submission Frames the Household Codes,” *Priscilla Papers* 35/3 (Summer 2021) 10–14; earlier, cf. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage & Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Baker Academic, 2004), 184–88, 204–11.

12. David N. Livingstone, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter Between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 58–64; cf. Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin’ Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (John Knox, 1979) 108.

13. Cf. the argument in Craig Keener, . . . *And Marries Another: Divorce & Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 1991).

14. See, e.g., 1 En. 72:1; 91:16; Jub. 1:29; 4:26; Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal? The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 307 (Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, SNTSMS 119 (Cambridge University Press, 2002) 11–53.

15. See, e.g., 1QHa 14.17–19; 16.21; 4 Ezra 7:36; 8:52; 2 Bar. 4:3, 6; 51:11; 2 En. 8:1–3; 42:3; 71:28; T. Levi 18:10; T. Dan 5:12; m. Abot 5:20; Sifra Behuq. pq. 3.263.1.5; y. Sanh. 10:1, §2; y. Qid. 1:7, §6; Pesiq. Rab Kah. 9:1.

16. Cf. e.g., 1QS 8.5; 9.6; Bertril Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament* (Cambridge University Press, 1965) 16–46; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63 BCE–66 CE (SCM; Trinity Press International, 1992) 376–77; David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Magnes, 1988) 37–39.

17. 4Q174 f1–2.1.3–4; Gerald J. Blidstein, “4QFlorilegium and Rabbinic Sources on Bastard and Proselyte,” *RevQ* 8/3 (1974) 431–35; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (InterVarsity, 2004) 113. This was a minority approach (Lawrence H. Schiffman,

“The Importance of the Temple for Ancient Jews,” 75–93 in *Jesus and Temple: Textual and Archaeological Explorations*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [Fortress, 2014] 93), but so was treating the community as a temple (despite Ps 114:2).

18. The textual variant at Eph 1:1 (“in Ephesus” is missing in the very early p46 $\aleph^*$ B*) suggests that the letter functioned as an encyclical, but the presence of “Ephesus” in so many manuscripts suggests that Ephesus was recognized early on as a primary destination, with the message perhaps circulated from there to Roman Asia and beyond.

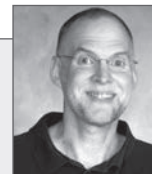
19. In contrast to some scholars, I regard Acts as a useful historical source; see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Baker Academic, 2012–15); Keener, *Acts*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

20. See fuller discussion in Craig Keener, “Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation,” *EvQ* 75/3 (July 2003) 195–213; Craig Keener, “One New Temple in Christ (Eph 2:11–22; Acts 21:27–29; Mk 11:17; Jn 4:20–24),” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12/1 (Jan 2009) 75–92; Craig Keener and Médine Moussounga Keener, “One New Temple in Christ,” 95–112 in *Moral Pedagogies for Africa: From Ethnic Enmity to Responsible Cohabitation*, ed. Theodoros A. Teklu (Routledge [Taylor and Francis Group], 2022); Craig Keener, “Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation: John 4:42; Luke 10:29–37; Romans; Ephesians 2:11–22,” 207–30 in *Forgiveness, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation*, ed. David K. Ngariya and Rodney

L. Reed (Africa Society of Evangelical Theology, Langham Global Library, 2020).

21. For the impact of Paul’s experience on his theology, see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (J. C. B. Mohr, 1981).

22. See again Keener, “Mutual Submission Frames the Household Codes.”



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Absalom, David, and Tamar: God's Heart Through Loss, Not Misogyny

KATE DANAHY

Christian interpretations of David typically stem from and return to the idea that David is “a man after God’s own heart.” Scripture itself says so, in both testaments (1 Sam 13:14, Acts 13:22). What does that *mean* exactly?

If you ask someone this question, they may tell you, “David trusted God enough to slay a giant. David trusted God to make him king. Yes, there are actions of David that were not godly, but through repentance he provides us with an inspirational example of forgiveness.” Seldom heard from pulpits, however, is David’s cry of “Oh Absalom, Absalom, my son!” as a chief example of his heart being aligned with God’s (2 Sam 19:4; cf. 2 Sam 18:33). When David’s lament is discussed, it is too often a brief addendum that David was being ungrateful and foolish in weeping for Absalom.

Reading the stories of David with the assumption that his victories, as opposed to his grief, reveal God’s heart is a triumphalist view. It surely has its appeal, for it is easy to believe God wants us to defeat giants. It is less easy to accept that God wants us to spare our enemies even when their continued lives would be a threat to our own power, perhaps even our lives.

The ultimate son of David, Jesus, subverted messianic expectations by not being a heroic revolutionary overthrowing Roman oppression. He was instead a non-violent teacher who spoke about leaving the flock to seek the one sheep who was lost (Luke 15:3–7). Jesus’s invitation to his followers was not to conquer, but to take up our crosses, to weep with those who weep, and to welcome home the son who wished us dead (see Luke 15:12).

The story of David and Absalom is as skilled in its use of tragic irony as any Shakespearean tragedy. Even when read in translation, every detail weaves into the rich tapestry of the chapters that convey the literary climax of David’s life as told in the books of 1–2 Samuel and 1 Kings. If readers understand this story as a climactic moment for David, portraying the refined message of what it means to be a person after God’s own heart, we find hope in a story that, at the outset, appears to be one of the ugliest and most tragic in Scripture.

Encountering the Story

This article takes a literary approach to the story itself and ultimately prioritizes Christology, taking Christ’s life, death, and resurrection as the interpretive lens. Reading stories as literature presents a paradoxical mirror that is both timeless and also a window into its own time. It offers readers the chance to learn about themselves and about the values of the past. In appreciating the complexity of David, Absalom, and Joab, Christians can see themselves and draw closer to God.

Father of Peace

Absalom’s name means “father of peace” or “my father is peace(ful).” It is certainly an ironic name, for the story of his life is not peaceful. Furthermore, David himself is not a peaceful king.

Prior to Amnon’s rape of Absalom’s sister Tamar (who was also Amnon’s half-sister), we have little insight into David as a parent other than that he loves his children deeply (evidenced, for example, by his fasting over the terminal illness of his first son by Bathsheba in 2 Sam 12:15–20). However, what the Amnon and Tamar story depicts is a father who cares enough to visit his son when the son feigns a grievous illness, but a father so distant he does not recognize Amnon’s pining for Tamar or even that Amnon’s request that she feed him by hand is absurd behavior for a sibling. Amnon uses David’s indulgence and authority to put Tamar in a position vulnerable to Amnon’s assault. Even so, afterwards, David takes no responsibility for his being deceived. He shows no willingness to punish his child.

Why would he take responsibility? Learning from mistakes is key to emotional and spiritual growth. As if to reinforce to the reader that David has learned nothing, David then repeats the same mistakes. Absalom follows Amnon’s example when plotting to kill Amnon: as Amnon had used David to set up Tamar, Absalom uses David to set up Amnon.

And Absalom came to the king and said, “Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his attendants please join me?”

“No, my son,” the king replied. “All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you.” Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go but gave him his blessing.

Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us.”

The king asked him, “Why should he go with you?” But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king’s sons. (2 Sam 13:24–27 TNIV)

This scheming could be indicative of Machiavellian cunning on Absalom’s part, or simply of messy, complex humanity. Is Absalom flattering David by inviting him when he could not come? Quite possibly. Given David and his absentee indulgent parenting, however, it is equally possible (and not necessarily contradictory) that Absalom’s first desire is truly to try to speak to his father alone, to spend time with him. After all, it is likely Absalom has lobbied David for justice for years after Tamar’s assault, but David’s answer has always been the same: it would be a burden for Amnon.

After killing Amnon, Absalom flees to Geshur, where his mother’s father is king.¹ Absalom, despite seeing his father’s indulgence toward Amnon raping their sister, does not count on David indulging him with the same leniency. Thus, we see a fracturing of trust in the father-son relationship.

However, David does “long . . . to go out to Absalom” despite his grief for Amnon (2 Sam 13:39 TNIV). Yet David does not go, even when Joab convinces David to bring Absalom back after three years. In fact, David does not actually meet with Absalom for two more years.

Absalom attempts to see David numerous times during these two years and even expresses that he wishes he had died in Geshur rather than be kept from his father's presence. Manipulation? Perhaps. There is also genuine pain in this: a son who deeply wants his father yet is denied again and again. Every time we have seen Absalom reaching out to David thus far, he has been rebuffed. This is the case even *before* Absalom kills his brother.

Only when Absalom does something violent does his father acknowledge him. Absalom burns Joab's fields, and David capitulates. If David had responded earlier, in a fatherly manner, could he have avoided the coming rebellion?

David receives Absalom, but in public. Again, David puts kingship above fatherhood. He also prioritizes the image of kingship over enacting justice in his own household. It is precisely this attitude—prioritizing the image of a powerful, strong, masculine king who responds to violence—that endangers both his rule and his family.

Son of War

The narrative takes a downward turn: from this moment, Absalom starts gathering support to become king. People come to him with their complaints, and he arbitrates for them. Certainly, Absalom's words are manipulative, but there is a deeper layer to them as well: "your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you" (2 Sam 15:3 TNIV).

Absalom's words are his own logical conclusion. Consider not only his father's distance but David's refusal to enact justice for Tamar. Of course, Absalom empathizes with people who do not feel heard by their king. For that matter, what reason is there for Absalom to believe David cares about justice? David fails not only to be a father to Absalom and Tamar; he fails to be a *king* for Tamar. If he does not act like a king, why should Absalom treat him like one?

This desire for justice is *expressly* stated to be at the root of Absalom's appeal to the public. Second Samuel 15–16 describes Absalom not treating the people of Israel as if they are beneath him, and it is precisely this that wins them to his side:

Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the people of Israel. (2 Sam 15:5–6 TNIV)

Surely the writer of 2 Samuel intends the reader to see manipulation. However, most manipulators are not self-aware. Could it be that Absalom genuinely thinks he would be a better king? Could it be that Absalom genuinely seeks justice for those who cry out for it?²

While some interpreters assume Scripture says nothing about Absalom's devotion to the Lord, implying he has none, this conclusion is uncertain. The context, in fact, suggests Absalom might have been deeply religious.

The only time Absalom directly mentions the Lord is when he requests to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow to the Lord (2 Sam

15:7–9). The narrator notes that Absalom goes through with this vow, including offering sacrifices (2 Sam 15:12).

This could be merely a performance, a way of winning the religious to Absalom's side. But considering the repeated tenet of Scripture that religion involves caring for the vulnerable, could it be that Absalom believes himself justified in the sight of the Lord, albeit deceiving himself?

Further evidence that Absalom may have been devout is his long hair. The customs described in Absalom's vow are akin to those of Nazirite vows. While 2 Samuel never directly calls Absalom a Nazirite, scholars throughout history, including Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi many centuries ago (AD 137–217) and Gregory Spinner in recent years, have concluded that he was.³

David and Bathsheba, Amnon and Tamar

Let us examine the origin of Absalom's grudge against Amnon and how it pertains to David.

David's misogyny is a recurrent sin that no one, not even the writers of 1 and 2 Samuel, would deny. In particular, David's treatment of victims of sexual assault, including his own daughter and concubines, is abhorrent.⁴

Despite inaccurate condemnations of Bathsheba as a temptress bathing on the roof, Bathsheba is innocent in David's taking of her. David had sexually violated Bathsheba, first as a voyeur as she performed her post-menstruation ritual, and then by "taking" her. The word translated "take" or "get" in 2 Sam 11:4 ("David sent messengers to get her" TNIV) is the Hebrew verb *laqakh*, which God had used to warn the Israelites through Samuel of what will come should they have a king: "He will take your sons. . . . He will take your daughters. . . . Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take" (1 Sam 8:11–16 TNIV). Indeed, Scripture never once places any blame on Bathsheba.⁵

It is worth noting that, according to the Torah, a man who rapes a woman is expected to marry her. As morally repulsive as that seems today, Deut 22:28–29 states:

If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives. (TNIV)

This law serves the purpose of providing for a woman in a patriarchal society, as is argued by Jessica Stefick, Sara Milstein, and Robert Heibert.⁶ In such a society, an unmarried woman who has lost her virginity would likely remain unmarried. She would then become a burden to her parents and, upon their deaths, have great difficulty supporting herself. This law specifically pertains to unmarried women, and David fulfills it by marrying Bathsheba—who by the time he repents is, tragically and ironically, a widow.

Furthermore, 2 Samuel shows us exactly what can happen to a woman whose rapist does not take responsibility and marry her. After Tamar's attack, she insists Amnon marry her, their half-sibling relationship notwithstanding. However, Amnon commands his servants to turn her out, an act Tamar herself

claims is worse than assault: “Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me” (2 Sam 13:16 TNIV).

David is furious, but he does not punish Amnon. Punishment is not the only action David should have performed, however. Another dereliction of duty is that David does not force Amnon to marry Tamar, according to the standards of the day. Despite how antithetical it seems to our moral code, this is expressly stated to be *what Tamar wants* (2 Sam 13:16).

In contrast to David’s concession to the culture’s apathy for women survivors of rape, Absalom’s words stand as somewhat countercultural: “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Do not take this thing to heart” (2 Sam 13:20 TNIV). He assures his sister that the assault does not affect her value, a perspective his society, his father, and his half-brother clearly do not share.

However, society is a powerful force. Tamar remains “desolate” in Absalom’s household (2 Sam 13:20 TNIV). No one marries her, presumably because she has been raped. David does not intervene, though he could—if not to Amnon, then he surely could use his power to marry her to *someone*.

In response, Absalom again moves against the misogynistic culture. He names his own daughter after Tamar, thereby ensuring that even if Tamar has no children, her name will continue through his daughter (2 Sam 14:27).⁷

David’s responsibility is to enact justice. Quite possibly, as many speculate, David feels too guilty over his own similar sin to impose a strict punishment on Amnon. But David at least had married Bathsheba and provided for her; Tamar is abandoned.

After two years of waiting for justice, after two years of David not doing his job as king and father, Absalom kills Amnon. Much like when David had killed Uriah, Absalom has others do the actual murder for him; however, Absalom tells his servants that *he* is responsible for the crime and that they will not be punished.

This is murder, not justice. But that, perhaps, is the point: true justice cannot exist without mercy, and justice demands atoning for a crime as much as is humanly possible. While Absalom cannot be excused, what he does is, in our human hearts with our longing for justice in response to assault, more understandable than David’s murder of Uriah.

David and Michal, Absalom and the Ten Concubines

Absalom undergoes a tragic fall. Absalom will become like Amnon, but ten times over. He orchestrates a bloody civil war and rapes—in public—ten of his father’s concubines.

To understand how Absalom has come to this point, let us look at other key players. David’s former advisor, Ahithophel, gives advice considered equivalent to the word of God in the eyes of both David and Absalom (2 Sam 16:23). Why, then, does Ahithophel turn on David? Second Samuel 11:3 states Bathsheba is the daughter of Eliam, whom 2 Sam 23:34 names as Ahithophel’s son. Even though David has married Bathsheba and had more children with her, in her grandfather Ahithophel’s eyes, that does not erase what has happened.

There is no justice for murder, and there is no way to un-rape someone. The fact that Ahithophel joins with Absalom strongly indicates what is at the root of this rebellion: neither Ahithophel nor Absalom trusts David as king because of his mistreatment of women close to their hearts.

Ahithophel’s motive in advising Absalom to rape ten women is to erase any possibility of reconciliation with David. Ahithophel states that it would make Absalom “a stench,” “odious,” or “abhorrent” to his father (2 Sam 16:21, ESV, KJV, NRSV, respectively). No doubt it is also revenge on Ahithophel’s part: as he has had to endure his granddaughter being assaulted and married to her rapist, he afflicts David with the knowledge that his concubines are raped in public. What is done in private will be shouted from the rooftops, which is also an ironic indictment of David’s performatory reception of Absalom.

However, this revenge is a blasphemous mockery of the concept of justice.⁸ It only harms more people, and it transforms Ahithophel and Absalom into exactly what they condemn. Additionally, this proves Ahithophel has not understood God’s heart or David’s: David does *not* find Absalom “odious” or “abhorrent,” even if his deeds were.

There is another reason for Ahithophel’s abhorrent, odious advice: Claiming a previous king’s harem or daughters was a way to legitimize rule.

Because a king’s chief wives and secondary wives [concubines] were such a symbol of his political connections and authority, a usurper could manifest his displacing of a reigning king by sleeping with members of the king’s harem. . . . To claim a king’s harem was tantamount to claiming his throne.⁹

In fact, David himself has used a woman to legitimize his claim to kingship: he demands his first wife, Michal, be returned after he ascends the throne (2 Sam 3:13–14). David has several wives by this time. Does he bring Michal back because he loves her? More likely, David demands Michal back because it is a matter of pride and of culture: pride, in that the woman who loved him had been married off, and culture, in that marrying the daughter of a former king legitimizes his claim to the throne.

David and Michal had been apart for years. David’s lack of affection for Michal is clear, particularly when contrasted with David’s treatment of Ahinoam and Abigail: “The narrative . . . recounts how David’s second two wives were taken captive and how David risked a serious battle to recover them. Yet David appeared to do nothing when Michal was given to another man.”¹⁰ Saul giving Michal to Palti, her second husband, is intended to wrong David, and quite possibly Michal as well, but evidently Palti adores Michal and follows them weeping when Michal is returned to David. As Palti weeps, humiliating himself because he loves someone, so David will later weep in a manner deemed unseemly by Joab and be urged to “man up” for the sake of the kingdom.

Some commentators are quick to condemn Michal’s scolding of David for dancing (2 Sam 6:20).¹¹ While the scolding itself is surely not framed as righteous, three key points must also be considered. First, while the author is silent on Michal’s feelings

towards Palti, Michal does not appear pleased with her forced return to David. Second, her father and brothers had been killed, and grief leaves few in good humor. Third, she likely resents her return because she knows the implications for her future.¹² What implications? While Michal may well have been barren physically (as her marriage to Palti is not noted to have produced children), the likely subtext of Michal's lack of children with David (that it follows an argument with David) is not that of a divine punishment, but instead that David does not have intercourse with Michal ever again. He wants her back in his harem as a political token. It is a sad fate that she has no descendants and no intimacy ahead of her.¹³

David's dealing with the ten concubines after Absalom's assault shows a lack of change in how he views women. The concubines' fates are even worse than Michal's: they are separated from the others in the harem and "kept in confinement" until their death (2 Sam 20:3). While David provides for these women, he still views them as tainted for a sexual assault that was not their fault.

We should also consider why David leaves ten concubines to care for the palace. What Absalom does is preventable. Wartime sexual violence has been around as long as war. Either David truly believes Absalom would not allow something like this to happen, meaning this is *exceedingly* out of character for Absalom, or David has sacrificed these ten women.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Absalom's rape of these women is his decision. He does not have to listen to Ahithophel. He does not have to take any bait David may have left. He makes this choice, and in doing so becomes, much like Ahithophel, a parody of the desire for the justice for which he started the rebellion. Somewhere in looking for justice and falling into revenge, Absalom forgets to look in the mirror and see that the eyes staring back at him are not just his father's, but Amnon's. This is possible because of the tragic flaws of pride and self-righteousness.¹⁵ What is the antidote to self-righteousness? Awareness and repentance. We do not see this from Absalom—not explicitly. Consider Ahithophel's next piece of advice:

I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all people will be unharmed. (2 Sam 17:1–3 TNIV)

Absalom is not sold on this plan. Instead, he takes the advice of Hushai, a spy of his father's. David had prayed: "LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness" (2 Sam 15:31 TNIV). David then takes steps to subvert Ahithophel's advice by sending Hushai. Rather than God simply putting blinders on Absalom's eyes, it is more likely that Absalom's already-established character traits are responsible for him trusting Hushai.

Absalom is likely persuaded by his own vanity to join the attack: "He counselled that which he knew would gratify Absalom's proud vain-glorious humour."¹⁶ However, keep in mind that 2

Sam 11:1 indicates David did not always go out to war with his army, so this may have been another way of Absalom asserting that he is *not like his father*. In reality, of course, Absalom has become just like his father in all the wrong ways, and not in the right ones.

Siding with Joab?

It is curious that many interpreters side with Joab. Politically, Joab's rebuke might be appropriate, but the gospel is often countercultural, resistant to falling in line with political narratives. Perhaps that is what God means when he warns about what would happen should Israel receive a king: even the chosen king, a man after his own heart, would find it impossible to mix justice and mercy in a world so opposed to both.

The books of Samuel and Kings never indicate piety in Joab; indeed, there is more implicit evidence for Absalom's piety than for Joab's. The text rarely even indicates love or respect for David on Joab's behalf; while commentators cite loyalty, Joab outright tells David he will leave David's side and rebel if David keeps crying over his son.

Joab's actions and advice are not what Scripture challenges Christians to do in the light of Christ, the ultimate revelation of who God is. Christians are to love enemies and to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:38–45, Luke 6:27–29). Joab is never afraid to profane what is precious to God—not the king's son, not the altar (1 Kgs 2:28).¹⁷

Power and Control

Joab, in modern terms, is the embodiment of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is cultural pressure on men to behave in certain ways, at the expense of how women are treated and at the expense of the toll that repressing emotions and glorifying violence takes on men. Joab is a good warrior, decisive and strong. Men often desire to be like powerful male characters in fantasy stories, who are ultimately in *control* of the narrative even when they make mistakes: they slay a giant, they rule as king, sometimes they even repent, which is their personal choice.

When interpreters praise David, it is usually when he is in line with Joab or the military or political wisdom of the day, not when he is in line with Jesus. It tends to be when David is the male power fantasy, subservient to the cultural pressures of how a man behaves: sexually satisfied with multiple women, a warrior, even a man overcoming his own worst sins and maintaining his power throughout. Yet the moment where David's control is thwarted, where Joab chooses to take control through violence, commentators from Matthew Henry in the eighteenth century to Paul Borgman in the twenty-first tend to side with Joab.¹⁸

The narrator, too, likely sides with Joab, as Borgman notes. However, the narrator would also represent this ancient Near Eastern culture that often viewed rape as a financial crime against a woman's male relatives rather than a crime against a person created in the image of the Divine. We can acknowledge this framing and still wonder how this portrayal of what seems like classic, even stereotypical ("men don't cry") toxic masculinity fits

with Jesus, a man who was not afraid to weep even when he knew he would raise Lazarus from the dead (see John 11).

The question of why the “after God’s own heart” epithet is applied to military success, but not to a father devastated precisely because of said military success, needs to be asked. Grief fundamentally involves a loss of control, a humbling reminder that we are all subject to the limits of mortality on this side of eternity. When David does not get what he wants, even the church turns on him and sides with Joab—a character who is never once framed positively.

Again, we *can* acknowledge the political realism of Joab’s rebuke and also see the cruelty. Secular political and cultural wisdom do not always fit with God’s heart. Interestingly, David immediately decides to replace Joab—with Absalom’s men, such as Amasa. Yet Joab will go on to murder Amasa.

Death on a Tree: Absalom and Jesus

David commands his men not to harm Absalom, and we see how much his men respect David in that Joab offers ten shekels of silver and a warrior’s belt to do so, yet they refuse. Joab murders Absalom and, much like David with Uriah via Joab and also Absalom with Amnon via his servants, Joab uses ten armor-bearers to kill him after Joab makes the first move.

Absalom dies hanging from a tree, which for Christian readers may bring Jesus’s crucifixion to mind. Absalom was a rapist and murderer who led a military rebellion; Jesus is none of these things and is a friend to women. But does this not remind us why Jesus died: to conquer sin and death, to take revolting crimes upon himself?

David then weeps over his son. There is no political or military wisdom in leaving Absalom alive. Yet David’s heart yearns for his son. Perhaps David sees all he has done playing out in Absalom, sees that he could have prevented this tragedy, and knows justice will never come fully in this world.

In David’s cry, “Oh Absalom, Absalom, my son,” can we not hear God’s cry for his own Son as he hangs upon a cross, as he dies a common criminal’s torturous death, as he is stripped and mocked and tortured? Instead of seeing David as weak here, this cry highlights a barrier between aligning with God’s own heart and the intricate realities of ruling a fallen world this side of eternity.

The death of Absalom recalls another link to Christ: Jesus’s own recounting of a rebellious, prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32. Absalom also journeys to a far land and then returns, but David does not act like the father in this story until it is too late. David spends two years refusing to see his face; it is unlikely this is anger entirely, but more likely a result of exactly the mindset Joab espouses after Absalom’s death: politics and image above fatherly love. In David’s coldness towards his son, bitterness and rebellion grow. When it is too late, when he is unable to do anything himself, David realizes how wrong he has been.

Beyond David and Absalom

If Absalom had lived, had been imprisoned, would David have visited him? Would he have embraced him with tears? We will never know, because Joab kills him in a wise political move that

was morally wrong and personally cruel. The limits of political and even personal wisdom are a theme more fully explored in the life of David’s successor, Solomon (along with continued misogyny).

David never forgets Absalom. Even on his deathbed, he promises his kingdom to Solomon and, in the presence of Bathsheba, orders Solomon to beware of Joab. It is clear David does not forget Joab’s transgressions, including those against his son. Of course, this saga then ends with the death of David’s fourth son, Adonijah, for wanting to be king instead of Solomon and requesting his father’s concubine, Abishag (despite David never consummating this, 1 Kgs 1:4) as wife. Violence cannot stop a cycle of violence, and a new way, a subversive way of love for enemies, is needed.

However, Adonijah’s death occurs after David passes away. In the story of David’s waning days, we can see that David has grown as a person and as a father. He is much more aligned with God’s heart at this time than on the battlefield: David *listens* to the plea of a woman whom he has wronged, and as a result finally steps up as a father by saying *no* to a son.¹⁹ He grants Bathsheba her request and stops Adonijah’s coup in favor of Solomon (1 Kgs 1).

Absalom may not have had a son to carry on his name (it is possible he erected the monument mentioned in 2 Sam 18 before the births of his three sons, or it is possible they died early). However, he has a daughter who bears the name of a sister he had loved, a sister violated but not forgotten.

It is through Tamar, daughter of Absalom, that the ultimate Son of David comes: this Tamar either has a second name, Maacah (the same name as Absalom’s mother) along with Absalom having a second name of Uriel, or, as Josephus reports, Tamar herself marries a man named Uriel and has a daughter also named Maacah.²⁰ This Maacah, the daughter or granddaughter of Absalom, is noted in 2 Chron 11:21 to be the favorite wife of King Rehoboam, Solomon’s son and successor, and the mother of King Abijah and grandmother of King Asa. According to Matthew, the ancestry of Jesus the Messiah, and thus the story of redemption, includes Abijah and Asa, and therefore Maacah and Tamar as well.

Notes

1. One stream of rabbinic interpretation records that Absalom’s mother, Maacah, was a captive whom David took during war in accordance with the practices laid out in Deut 21:10–14. David is criticized for marrying a foreign woman, and blame for Absalom’s subsequent rebellion is placed on his mother’s ethnicity more than on character flaws. It further says, “Whenever anyone marries a ‘woman of pretty form,’ there results from it a defiant and rebellious son. Thus we find it so in the case of David, because (as suggested by II Sam. 3:3) he had desired Maacah bat Talmai king of Geshur, while he had gone to war; so Absalom came out of him” (Midrash Tanchuma, *Ki Teitzei* 1, https://sefaria.org/Midrash_Tanchuma%2C_Ki_Teitzei.1.1?lang=bi).

2. Erin Fleming, “The Politics of Sexuality in the Story of King David” (PhD Diss., John Hopkins University, 2013) 218.

3. Gregory Spinner, “Absalom Gloried in His Hair: On the Midrashic Transvaluation of Nazirites” (paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, Nov 2007).

4. It may not be fair to judge David by twenty-first century standards. However, the narrative itself criticizes David for his treatment of women.

In addition, we can acknowledge that David is both acting in an expected way for his day and acting in a way that is rightly repulsive to our modern sensibilities. Comparing David to Christ's treatment of women is also helpful for Christians, and critiquing David's misogyny is not saying there is nothing godly or good about him.

5. The debate over whether David raped Bathsheba has exploded in recent years. See Richard M. Davidson, "Did David Rape Bathsheba?," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17/2 (Autumn 2006) 81–95; Amanda Pence, "Vindicating Bathsheba," *Priscilla Papers* 36/4 (Autumn 2022) 3–7, and the editorial in the same issue of *Priscilla Papers* (p. 2). According to most modern understandings, David was guilty of rape. Ancient understandings, however, are harder to assess. This is another example of how we can acknowledge the nuance in the previous note: our repulsion exists for good reason—Bathsheba was in no position to refuse, and has been unfairly maligned throughout history for bathing in accordance with Jewish customs—yet we recognize that the narrative may assess David's and Amnon's actions differently. For more on "take" connecting Samuel's words in 1 Sam 8 with David's actions in 2 Sam 11, see <https://cbeinternational.org/resource/he-will-take-david-and-bathsheba/>.

6. Jessica Stefick, "The Case of Virgin Rape: Deuteronomy 22," *Priscilla Papers* 34/1 (Winter 2020) 3–6, reprint 37/1 (Winter 2023) 10–13; Sara J. Milstein, "Separating the Wheat from the Chaff: The Independent Logic of Deuteronomy 22:25–27," *JBL* 137/3 (Fall 2018) 625–43; Robert J. V. Heibert, "Deuteronomy 22:28–29 and its Premishnaic Interpretations," *CBQ* 56/2 (April 1994) 203–20.

7. The Israelite royal families seem to rarely, if ever, reuse names. It is possible this was a custom from Geshur.

8. Parts of the Torah are based on the "eye for an eye" version of retributive justice. However, Jesus called his followers to "turn the other cheek" (Matt 5:38–39; Luke 6:29), indicating a far more restorative justice.

9. Jo Ann Hackett, "1 and 2 Samuel," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol Newsom, Sharon Ringe, and Jacqueline Lapsley (Westminster John Knox, 2012) 161.

10. Scott Monsma, "(Re)telling the Fragmented Story of Michal," *Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society* 3/2 (Fall 2013) 22.

11. Matthew Henry, in 1706, said of Michal: "To have abused any man thus for his pious zeal would have been very profane, but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to have revered, and one whose prudence and virtue were above the reach of malice itself to disparage, one who had shown such affection for her that he would not accept a crown unless he might have her restored to him (ch. 3:13), was a most base and wicked thing, and showed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her than of David's wife or Jonathan's sister."

12. One need not think Michal was in the right to acknowledge pity for her situation. Even without their argument, it was likely David would never have "go into" her again, given how women are treated in the narrative and the culture. She may have wanted a final verbal slap. Who among us cannot relate?

13. Monsma, "(Re)telling the Fragmented Story of Michal"; Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Bloomsbury, 2015).

14. See Andrew E. Hill, "On David's 'Taking' and 'Leaving' Concubines (2 Samuel 5:13; 15:16)," *JBL* 125/1 (Spring 2006) 129–39. Hill's reasoning for David leaving the concubines behind lies in the argument that these women were Jebusites, original inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were given to David for political reasons after he conquered Jerusalem. They would then be considered, to an extent, property of Jerusalem. Perhaps David thought they would be protected because of their families, or perhaps

leaving these women behind would have been deliberate, a way of handing power over to Absalom.

15. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses hubris, or pride, which is a tragic flaw that ensnares a tragic hero. Hubris involves an outrageous act that inflicts shame upon someone else. It was also a legal term for acts of desecration and sexual assault. According to these definitions, David, Absalom, and Joab are all guilty of hubris. Greek playwrights and poets such as Aeschylus and Sophocles often craft tragic heroes with hubris as a spiritual offense, shaming a god by purporting to be above them. Recall the serpent's words in the Garden of Eden: "You will be like God" (Gen 3:5). Hubris is believing the world should work how we want it to. It is believing you are the ultimate moral authority. It is judging others instead of cleaning planks out of your own eye. It is overconfidence in self-justification. It can be rooted in a righteous desire for justice that can lose sight of actual justice.

16. Matthew Henry, *Samuel*, Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (1706).

17. Alastair Roberts notes parallels between Joab's interactions with David and those of the snake with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Roberts describes Joab's ploy to get David to welcome Absalom back, during which Joab lies to the king, as parallel to the fall in the garden: "Employing deception, the serpent Joab used a woman to get to David, the new Adam. The woman's account of her two sons closely paralleled the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 and the woman was implicitly aligning herself with Eve. Significantly, just as she springs the trap of the parable, she speaks of the discerning of good and evil, recalling the tree in the garden (14:17). David hearkened to the voice of the woman and to the voice of the snake behind her." Roberts, "The Reopened Wounds of Jacob" (March 19, 2019), <https://theopolisinstitute.com/the-reopened-wounds-of-jacob/>.

18. Henry, *Samuel*; Paul Borgman, *David, Saul, and God: Rediscovering an Ancient Story* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

19. Borgman notes, "David has finally said no to a son, heeding the news from Nathan and Bathsheba of his son's malfeasance. The great twist in the pattern tells the important tale. David the king rises above David the indulgent father. . . . David's communally dispiriting cry on hearing news of son Absalom's death is seen as a turning point, an immediate prelude to the king's about-face with son Adonijah." I agree with Borgman that David's turning point is the death of Absalom, but I would argue that David the father is prevailing here as much as David the king. To separate the two creates a troubling dichotomy. Of further note: Borgman argues that the chiasmic arrangement of David's fatherly responses pivots on Absalom's death: his helplessness in the face of his unnamed son with Bathsheba parallels the conclusion of this arc, which is Bathsheba's son Solomon on the throne. His subsequent chosen helplessness with Amnon contrasts with his intervention to stop Adonijah from killing Solomon, and his grief at Absalom is at the center of the chiasm and therefore what provokes change.

20. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.1.



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Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage

JOAN G. BROWN

In 1976 Donald Dayton wrote a book entitled *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, largely focusing on the leading role that evangelicalism played in nineteenth-century reform movements. He covers a wide range of personalities and institutions (Protestant denominations, colleges, seminaries) that led the way in the abolition of slavery and the advancement of women's rights. Evangelicalism articulated the philosophical framework for these reforms—all people, women and men, Black and White, are created in the image of God and equally loved by a God who redeems and empowers all believers to do kingdom work. This message reached the masses through the revivals that spread across the English-speaking world during the early nineteenth century. That vitality was then lost in the twentieth century, largely due to what some scholars call “the great reversal.”¹ Evangelical social reform was eclipsed by the devastation of the Civil War and World War I, by theological issues such as the fundamentalist/modernist split and the rise of pre-millennialism, as well as by social developments such as the arrival of thousands of new immigrants from non-Protestant backgrounds.²

In the mid-twentieth century, when evangelicalism in the United States re-emerged into the public square, it was decidedly reactionary, especially on the issue of women's roles in the church and family. This was indeed a great reversal of the trajectory established in the nineteenth century. Consequently, today, some people within the church and most nonbelievers are convinced that evangelicalism (and Christianity in general) is and always has been essentially misogynistic. For many Americans today, the best way to deal with Christianity is either to marginalize it or to remake it into a more socially progressive institution. Jesus followers today, however, need to rediscover their evangelical heritage. The historical record could actually be a powerful apologetic for our faith. What if Christianity was/is the fundamental source of Western notions of equality under the law, social justice, and equity? What if Christianity is the primary reason women in the West enjoy the freedoms and opportunities we have today? As we work for biblical equality, we need to know that we are carrying a torch that has a long, inspiring (and sometimes successful) history. We need to ask whether it is egalitarians or hierarchists who are out of sync with early evangelicalism.

Not only do we need to know our own history better, but we also need to debunk contemporary mythologies about the origin of woman's elevated status in the West. Those mythologies abound in every direction. They appear in books (especially textbooks and novels), articles, movies, and casual conversations. As an example, I would like to consider the recent book, *Prey: Immigration, Islam, and the Erosion of Women's Rights* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born feminist. As a young woman, she fled Africa and then the Middle East to find asylum

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in the Netherlands, where she went on to serve in the Dutch Parliament. Today Hirsi Ali resides in the United States. This book is a well-researched and shocking account of the crimes against women that have accompanied the large influx into Europe of asylum-seeking young men from Muslim countries in recent years. Although she acknowledges that harassment and abuse certainly existed in Europe prior to this influx, her book chronicles the significant increase in crimes against women associated with these asylum-seeking young men. Harassment, rape, and even gang rape are driving European women away from some public spaces and may be slowly eroding the freedoms and legal protections that women in Europe have enjoyed. Hirsi Ali accuses law enforcement and the courts of being complicit in this as they retreat from prosecuting Muslim criminals, fearing accusations of bigotry. Not only are women's rights being slowly eroded, but the rule of law is also under fire, as some European countries are allowing Muslim-dominated communities to operate under Sharia law, even when it is in conflict with Western legal traditions.³

As an example, Hirsi Ali cites the now notorious *Silvesternacht* in Cologne, Germany on December 31, 2015.

Around fifteen hundred men, mostly newly arrived asylum seekers of Arab and North African backgrounds, converged in the area between Cologne Central Station and the city's famed Gothic cathedral to see in the new year. . . . The men were drunk, unruly, and—as soon became clear—beyond the control of the city's police. They mobbed together to entrap women in the square, sexually harassing and assaulting any they could get their hands on, often stealing their wallets and mobile phones in the process. In the following months, 661 women reported being victims of sexual attacks that night.⁴

As of spring 2019, only three men had been found guilty of sex crimes in connection with this event.⁵ Hirsi Ali builds a strong case for her central thesis, that European authorities are unwilling or unable to prevent Muslim men from attacking women in public places.

However, despite copious amounts of research and attention to detail, Hirsi Ali falls short in one area. She falls short when trying to explain the sources of the elevated status of women in the West. She acknowledges that “the very concept of women being equal to men is a relatively new one. It emerged only in the West and despite its advancements—from the right to vote to protection from discrimination in the workplace—has yet to achieve the complete equality to which feminists aspire.”⁶

At no point does she identify Christianity as a source of female emancipation in the West. In fact, at every turn she sees

Christianity as a negative. Like all other major world religions, it is/was a source of misogynistic oppression. The last chapter in her book is entitled “Conclusion: The Road to Gilead.” In that summary chapter, she draws together two misogynistic religious traditions as follows: “Margaret Atwood published *The Handmaid’s Tale* in 1985 to warn that American evangelical Christians might one day succeed in establishing a patriarchal regime in the United States—or at least part of it, as ‘Gilead’ is supposed to be in New England. Most of her readers appear to have missed the fact that something very like this had already happened in the Muslim world. . . .”⁷ Christianity, especially evangelical Christianity, will establish a “patriarchal regime” if given the opportunity.

Fortunately, in Hirsi Ali’s eyes, other countervailing forces have triumphed in the West. The rest of this article will be an examination of those countervailing forces because her historical position represents widely held beliefs in popular culture and, to some extent, in academia.

Monogamy

Her first pillar of Western exceptionalism is monogamous marriage. She rightly observes that polygamy gives rise to less prosperous and more violent societies. In polygamous societies, “women marry young and men marry old, fertility rates are high, women are sequestered like commodities. . . .”⁸ In the West, Hirsi Ali credits the Greeks and the Romans with establishing monogamy as the norm. “Today, the vast majority of places where polygamy is legal are Muslim-majority countries situated in Africa and Asia. By contrast, ever since ancient Greece and Rome went down the very different route to monogamy, the West has prohibited both polygyny and polyandry.”⁹ The problem with this argument is that both Greece and Rome were monogamous in name only. In both societies, men took concubines (and used prostitutes like the Athenian *hetaerae*) with impunity. In ancient Athens, men usually married when they were about thirty years old. They would choose a bride who was around sixteen, sometimes younger. Since they had almost nothing in common with their wives, they spent very little time with them. Married women were kept like prisoners in their own homes. They could not leave their homes except for religious services, or maybe a trip to the marketplace with a chaperone.¹⁰ Roman women had a little more freedom but were still under the complete, life-and-death authority of their fathers or husbands for their entire lives. Female infanticide was widely practiced in both societies. The double standard was rampant.

It was Christianity that introduced the concept of faithful, lifelong monogamy. It was ensconced in canon law. During the medieval period, marriage was promoted primarily as a remedy for lust and for purposes of procreation. After the Reformation, however, the emphasis shifted to companionship. Over time, Christianity transformed marriage into an institution that promoted equality between the sexes, especially in the English-speaking world. The

most noteworthy innovations in law and custom were probably those made by the New England Puritans. For instance, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, women and men were treated equally under divorce law and court rulings in Colonial New England.¹¹ This did not happen in England until the 1850s, two centuries later. Many historians identify the Puritans as the creators of the modern, companionate marriage.¹² Hirsi Ali, like many Americans, is clearly not versed in the history of marriage in the Western world.

Separation of Church and State

A second pillar of western exceptionalism is the separation of church and state. Hirsi Ali sees Islamic theocracy as the great source of misogyny in certain Islamic countries. If Christianity were allowed to rule, it too would be a great oppressor, but fortunately that has not happened in the West. “A number of conservative Jewish communities and Christian denominations have comparable views of the innate inferiority of women to men. But because Islam fuses instead of separates politics and religion, the inferiority of women is enshrined in holy law in the Muslim world.”¹³ There is no doubt that the West has benefitted from the fact that there have always been at least two voices (often more) in the marketplace of ideas. This two-kingdom idea dates back to Augustine—and Jesus. However, there were many kings who would be pope and popes who would be king. It was the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation (Anabaptists) and seventeenth-century Puritanism (Baptists, Quakers) that first articulated a rationale for the religious toleration and complete separation of the two kingdoms that became widely accepted in the West.¹⁴ These ideas were rationalized and secularized by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. So, in the West, the separation of church and state that Hirsi Ali admires was originally a Christian innovation. And this brings us to Hirsi Ali’s final pillar of western exceptionalism.

The Enlightenment

Although, in recent years, the Enlightenment has come under greater criticism, many still refer to it as the great emancipator of women. Hirsi Ali is in this camp. In commenting on John Stuart Mill’s book, *The Subjugation of Women* (1869), she says, “beginning before Mill in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and continuing into our own time, liberalism produced the language, legal systems, and tools that would improve the position of women in the Western countries.”¹⁵ She repeatedly lauds Enlightenment liberalism as the foundation of Western traditions of the rule of law, individual rights, and equality. The problem is that historians who have looked closely at the eighteenth-century Enlightenment have found very little connection between the Enlightenment and the early women’s rights movement.

A recently published tome on the Enlightenment, entitled *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680–1790*, by Ritchie Robertson, devotes an entire section to explaining how

Over time, Christianity transformed marriage into an institution that promoted equality between the sexes.

the Enlightenment had a negligible impact on the emancipation of women. Robertson finds it remarkable how many prominent male Enlighteners enjoyed the company of intelligent women yet declined to advocate for granting them a larger public role. “Voltaire maintains that there have been learned women, warrior women, but no female inventors. Diderot likewise thinks that biology is destiny: women’s possession of a womb predisposes them to hysteria and explains the larger number of female visionaries.”¹⁶ There were some lively discussions that challenged the status quo, but in the end, Robertson concludes that those discussions produced little institutional change. During the French Revolution, Olympe de Gouges attempted to extend the “Declaration of the Rights of Man” to include woman. Her plea was ignored. In the end, the revolutionaries sided with their favorite *philosophe*, Rousseau: “The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive.”¹⁷

American Enlightenment figures differed little from their European counterparts. The liberal and enlightened Benjamin Rush (signer of the Declaration of Independence) wrote to a young friend on the eve of her wedding: “You will be well received in all companies only in proportion as you are inoffensive, polite, and agreeable to everybody. . . . Don’t be offended when I add that from the day you marry you must have no will of your own.”¹⁸ Although the eighteenth-century Enlightenment adopted many of the political and social principles which were unleashed during the religious turmoil of the seventeenth century, they were grounded in reason and natural law, not revelation. Consequently, “biology is destiny” replaced “in souls there is no sex.” Moralism replaced a passionate, personal piety, and that did not elevate the status of women. So, what did?

An Evangelical Heritage

Two streams of Protestantism converged to give women a voice. The left wing of Puritanism combined with evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to lay the foundation for actual institutional change. These were the sources of the early women’s rights movement. One sect of radical Puritanism was the Levellers. They collapsed the spiritual and civil kingdoms into one (their version of theocracy), applying basic Protestant beliefs to the civil kingdom and consequently supporting projects like religious toleration, universal human rights, constitutional reform, and democratic elections. In 1648/49, the Leveller women presented a petition to Parliament pleading for an equal interest with men in the liberties protected by the Petition of Right. (The original Leveller women’s petition had ten thousand signatures.) Their petition begins, “Since we are assured of our creation in the image of God, of an interest in Christ equal to men, as also of a proportionate share in the freedoms of the Commonwealth . . .”¹⁹ Created in the image of God, empowered by Jesus Christ to be agents of his kingdom in

Created in the image of God, empowered by Jesus Christ to be agents of his kingdom in the here and now—these were the powerful ideas that propelled women into the public square.

the here and now—these were the powerful ideas that propelled women into the public square. The Levellers were too radical for their time and disappeared after the English Civil War. However, the spiritual equality of men and women was clearly expressed in the church polity of certain denominations that

emerged during this period, one of the most prominent being the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Among the Quakers, women could be spiritual leaders—preachers and teachers. It is no coincidence that Quakers produced a disproportionately large number of early women’s rights advocates—Lucretia Mott, the Grimke sisters, Susan B. Anthony, and

Alice Paul, to name a few.

Evangelical revivalism also gave women a voice, sometimes reluctantly. But examples of women in the pulpit in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would eventually empower other women to step out of the shadows and make an impact on the communities and nations in which they lived. For example, evangelist Harriet Livermore preached to large crowds in the U.S. Hall of Representatives four times, about one hundred years before women could serve there as congresswomen.²⁰ Within evangelical revivalism, including Methodism, there was something often referred to as “gospel liberty.” (The idea can also be found in Calvin’s *Institutes* and Luther’s writings.) This gospel liberty gave women the right to speak publicly in church and religious gatherings as preachers and exhorters, a right they did not enjoy in the broader culture.²¹ In the English-speaking world, spiritual equality preceded social, civil, and legal equality. The Enlightenment had nothing to do with it.

What was unique about the nineteenth century was that women began to step out of religious meetings and spaces and speak to the public at large. In her book entitled *Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Ante-Bellum Reform Movement*, Lillian O’Connor identifies twenty-seven women as the first female public speakers in the United States. O’Connor describes them as follows: they all spoke on behalf of the rights of other groups, their primary text was the Bible (especially among the earliest public speakers), and most spoke in what O’Connor calls “pulpit style.”²² This was, of course, because the pulpit was where they first learned to speak. Because these women were advocates of reform, usually abolition or temperance, many perceived them as persons of high moral character in spite of addressing “promiscuous assemblies” (men and women together). These women soon discovered, however, that to do the work God had called them into, they needed rights and opportunities not normally accorded to women. This is how first wave feminism was born, a deeply biblical movement.

The nineteenth century then exploded with challenges to the economic, social, educational, and political barriers faced by women. Dayton catalogues evangelical involvement in many of the subsequent changes. For instance, Oberlin College, the first coeducational college in the world, was founded to

perpetuate the revivalism and social justice commitments of evangelist Charles G. Finney.²³ Jonathan Blanchard, important in the early history of Wheaton College, B. T. Roberts, founder of the Free Methodist Church, and A. J. Gordon, a major figure behind Gordon College and later, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, all shared convictions that women should exercise greater leadership in the church. Individual women, like Catherine Booth (1829–1890) of the Salvation Army, Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911) of the British Keswick Conventions, Frances Willard (1839–1898) of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, worldwide evangelist and temperance worker Amanda Berry Smith (1837–1915), Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) of the Holiness movement, evangelist Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861–1927), and abolitionists such as Sojourner Truth (ca. 1797–1883) and Harriet Tubman (1822–1913) made outstanding contributions to social reform (including women’s suffrage) and kingdom work in the nineteenth century.²⁴ This is just to name a few.

Conclusion

Hirsi Ali describes the nineteenth century as a time when women had “a more circumscribed existence” largely because of the constraints of religion.²⁵ This is at odds with the evangelical heritage that we have just rediscovered. It was quite the opposite. Christianity laid the foundations for the nineteenth-century women’s rights movement and is the true reason for the elevated status of women in the West.

Notes

1. See David Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelicalism vs. Social Concern* (J. B. Lippincott, 1972).
2. Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Harper & Row, 1976) 121–26.
3. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Prey: Immigration, Islam, and the Erosion of Women’s Rights* (HarperCollins, 2021) 232–33.
4. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 64–65.
5. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 81.
6. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 273.
7. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 270.
8. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 147–48.
9. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 147.
10. C. John Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (Vintage, 1990) 30–31.
11. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Harper & Row, 1966) 35–37.
12. James T. Johnson, “English Puritan Thought on the Ends of Marriage,” *Church History* 38 (December 1969) 429–35.
13. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 146.
14. For a full treatment of this subject see Robert Louis Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God: The Christian Origins of Religious Freedom* (Yale University Press, 2019) and James T. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
15. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 227–28.
16. Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680–1790* (HarperCollins, 2021) 381.

17. Robertson, quoting Rousseau, *Enlightenment*, 383–85.

18. Page Smith, quoting Benjamin Rush, *Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History* (Little, Brown and Co., 1970) 60.

19. http://wikireedia.net/wikireedia/index.php?title=Petition_of_the_Leveller-Women.

20. Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 1, 12.

21. Brekus, *Strangers*, 49–50, 135.

22. Lillian O’Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Antebellum Reform Movement* (Columbia University Press, 1954) 43–47, 55, 64, 115–16.

23. Dayton, *Discovering*, 88.

24. Dayton, *Discovering*, 92–96.

25. Hirsi Ali, *Prey*, 273.

JOAN BROWN’s journey with biblical equality began years ago when she helped found the Albany, New York, chapter of the Evangelical Women’s Caucus and then later followed Catherine Kroeger into Christians for Biblical Equality. Professionally, Joan taught history on the high school and college levels until retiring in 2011. She now teaches English to refugees from all over the world who are making St. Louis, Missouri, their new home.



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For Whom Will the Church Be Safe?

a sermon preached on July 3, 2022

RUTH BARRON

The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

³ Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵ For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

Psalms 27:1–5 (NIV)

Fight or Flight

Years ago, I sat in church in Nairobi, Kenya, listening to the pastor talk about our need to do more for Christ. I had given up my home in my own country. I had learned a new language. I had worked to serve God in every way from my teens to that very day, yet I was still drowning in a sense of disappointing God. In fact, I had recently prayed and confessed to God that I was not serving as a missionary because I loved God. I admitted that I was serving God because I was afraid of hell.

Oh, I don't mean that I didn't have any other reasons for serving as a missionary. When I was a college student, freshmen were required to write a research paper on a career we were considering. I wrote my paper on missions because missions was the career which best fit my fascination with understanding cultures and languages and my heart for ministering to people.

What I mean is that, as people, we all have complex motivations for everything we do, and of all my motivations, fear was still my strongest motivation as a missionary. When I prayed and confessed that I feared God more than I loved God, I remembered that the greatest commandment was to love God with all my heart and all my mind and all my strength and all my soul. Something was not right. As I sat, quietly listening after my prayer, I felt God inviting me to learn to know God more deeply and to truly learn to love God.

Not long after that invitation from God, however, I sat in church in Nairobi nauseous and longing to run away. I was being triggered.

Asthma, for example, has its triggers. There is a certain week of the year when the most deaths from asthma occur; ragweed pollen fills the air and the fallen leaves begin to decompose and feed mold. Ragweed and mold are high asthma triggers. Other examples are celiac and Crohn's disease; they have their triggers too. Celiacs cannot eat gluten. Those with Crohn's often have multiple triggers. There is no sin in a person with asthma having a flare-up because they were exposed to pollen. There is no sin in a celiac or Crohn's flare-up.

By the same token, *trauma has its triggers* that produce consistent, specific flares of flashbacks, emotional flooding, fear, anxiety, and dissociation. Most of us are at least somewhat aware of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and its impact on those who experience a severe threat to their lives, such as combat veterans. There is a second type of PTSD known as complex PTSD or C-PTSD. Complex PTSD has another name which reveals its primary trigger: shame-based trauma. "Shame" here refers to the shame associated with the initial traumatic event(s). Acts of abuse are inherently shameful, but the shame which rightly belongs to the abusers becomes transferred to the victims of abuse. This shame becomes entangled with the victim's sense of identity. Abusers and observers alike reinforce this through victim-blaming and various shame messages (e.g., "You're not good enough." "You deserve this.").

Those with C-PTSD are triggered—not by pollen or gluten—but by shame messages. I sat in church that morning and felt my anxiety rising. I felt nauseous and had an overwhelming urge to run away. In short, my brain recognized a message which, throughout my childhood, was regularly followed by severe abuse, so it diverted energy from my digestive system and the logical portion of my brain and instead sent that energy to the God-designed flight or fight portion of my brain to help me escape abuse.

Always before, I had forced myself to sit and override my body's God-designed system of protection. PTSD is caused by that very override. A person's body produces energy to rescue them from danger, and it sends that energy to the flight or fight system, but because that person is trapped and unable to use that energy for its purpose, that energy itself becomes trapped in their body, trying to complete the task of rescue it was sent to do. And so, the traumatized person continually relives the trauma as an ever-present event that their body feels they could still prevent if they could just find a different way. Researchers have noticed that trauma memories are unique, compared to other memories, in being present experiences rather than past remembrances.

That Sunday, I could not override my body's fight or flight system. Instead, I leaned over to my husband and said, "I need to leave." He told me to go, and I fled to the courtyard. There I found a number of women sitting in the courtyard outside of church, and there was a common trait among us: we were all abuse victims. That was a pivotal experience for me. Why were so many of the most vulnerable members of our culture finding it safer to sit outside the church rather than inside the church? That question has only become stronger over time as I have seen that scenario play out repeatedly. Jesus said he came *for the most vulnerable*.

Awareness?

This past Monday, June 27, was National PTSD Awareness Day in several nations. Three years ago on June 27, I posted on social media that "One thing I would love to see is churches talking about this in sermons and Sunday schools, explaining the unseen injuries that are there in PTSD. We need to listen to those with PTSD to learn what is going on, rather than shaming them for the brain changes caused by PTSD. We need to learn how to ease their burdens rather than add to them." I was already working on this sermon last Monday, as I read that three-year-old memory. I believe the need for sermons like this has grown more desperate in those three years.

In May 2022, *Guidepost* released the Southern Baptist Convention task force's "Report of the Independent Investigation."¹ The report reveals that, for years, the SBC had lists of reports of alleged sexual abuse, including the names of hundreds of pastors, and that these lists were not public and were known to very few people.² Keeping the lists of alleged abusers confidential, however, was likely a factor in pastors being repeat offenders, sometimes in more than one congregation.³

Over and over in the past several years, church after church and ministry after ministry has been exposed for covering up abuse rather than addressing it. The rollcall of such situations is long and continues to grow. It includes well-known names and obscure names alike.

God of the Present

Recently, my husband and I were asked what we think of America being called a post-Christian nation. My answer was that the Bible tells us we are to pay attention to the signs of the times. Too often we are looking for signs of the future: is Jesus coming soon? But our God is not only God of the Future. God's name is not I WILL BE. Our God is God of the Present: I AM. That is not to say that God has nothing to do with the future, but it means that we are to seek and find God in the present: "the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17:21b NIV).

I answered that, instead of looking for Christ's future second coming, we must look for where God is at work right now, in our midst, and we must join that work. Christ told us, "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13a NIV). Where truth is being brought into the light, that is the Spirit of Truth at work among us. The signs of the times tell us that now is the time when God is at work in

the midst of the church revealing truth regarding the church's failure to address abuse.

Jesus said in John 5:19, "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (NIV). Today, we see God at work addressing abuse within the church. We need to be doing what we see the Father doing. But how do we do the work the Father is doing? How do we minister to the abused so that they feel safe to come into our churches rather than gathering in church courtyards? Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous [or "the just"] run to it and are safe" (NIV). How do we make our churches places where the abused can run and be safe, where they can say with Ps 27:10, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me" (NIV)? Where they can say, "The church will receive me"?

No Space for Injustice

There are many suggestions I could make, but I want to focus on three today. First, be sure the church is not a safe or comfortable space for the unjust, the unrighteous. When there are predators in the sheepfold, the sheep are not safe. I mentioned the *Guidepost* report on alleged clergy sexual abuse in the SBC. The SBC's Executive Committee initially opposed doing an investigation. The report came, primarily, because the representatives of the individual churches who attended the 2021 Annual Meeting overrode the Executive Committee and voted for an investigation to be done. Men and women who sit in the pews every Sunday said, "We want our churches to be safe."

Unlike the SBC, not all congregations or groups of congregations have an Annual Meeting or General Assembly. Not all have a denominational hierarchy. What can independent and autonomous congregations do? Well, for years the SBC claimed *it* could not address abuse because their churches are technically autonomous,⁴ yet, during those years, they already were maintaining such a system.

Throughout history, humanity has demonstrated the *imago Dei*, the image-of-God within us, by refusing to be limited to the already and instead pushing toward the not-yet. We can indeed move past the status quo, "the already," and do new things in anticipation of "the not yet."

As an example, my own movement, the Restoration Movement or Stone-Campbell Movement, was only formed a little over 200 years ago. We were once a "new creation." As a movement, we have two yearly conventions, the ICOM (International Conference on Missions) and the Spire Conference. In November 2021, ICOM focused on abuse. One of the lead speakers, who himself had been mentored by Ravi Zacharias, told attendees, "Those of us in leadership who are on the wrong path are depending on the fact that you don't want to know about it. Any organization in this day and age that does not create systems of accountability will eventually come to ruin." It is our responsibility to act in response to comments such as this, to push for systems of accountability, to stand for justice.

Let us learn from others' mistakes. At the 2021 ICOM, certain organizations offered themselves as mentors to other organizations facing allegations. Yet, as *Christianity Today* reported, the woman who helped Ravi Zacharias International Ministries as a conciliator during its 2017 investigation into the sexual abuse allegations against Zacharias had serious allegations of abuse against herself, and she used her role to silence the victim and support the abuser.⁵ So we must push for any organization or individual who takes leadership regarding abuse to *first* submit to investigation of their own ministries.

We must also work together—whether as a denomination, the Christians of a city, the congregations of a region—to hold our churches and organizations accountable. Let's encourage each other to report allegations to the authorities. Let's develop systems so that those who are hiring new pastors know whether there are allegations against the applicants. Let's tell the stories of those who were not reported and who went on to assume other positions of authority. Let's talk openly about abuse rather than remaining silent. The Maasai Community Christian Churches in Kenya and Tanzania, among whom I live and minister, are leading the way in this. Rather than maintaining strict individual autonomy, neighboring churches work together as communities to hold church leaders accountable. It can be difficult for a church with abusive leaders to hold those leaders accountable, but other community church leaders can intercede.

Space for Lament

Second, we must make space for lament in our churches. I remember a moment in 2019 when I sat in the worship service of our congregation in Kenya, sobbing while everyone around me danced and sang, "If God be for me, who can stand against?" All I could think was, "Does that mean God is not for me, because my abusers have stood against me, and the church has protected them?" I wrote a poem, titled "Songs of Sorrow," about that experience. It begins:

I stand weeping alone
'Midst their rejoicing songs.
Shouts of praise surround me,
Calling "Come and worship."
But my heart will not lie,
Will not give empty words.
How can I sing of joy
From a heart of sorrow?

Those who are listening to the words of my poem may hear another poem echoing within it. Psalm 137 says:

There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

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—Paul Chilcote, Ashland Seminary



How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land? (Ps 137:2–4 NIV)

The songbook of the Bible is filled with lament and even anger, yet our Sunday morning worship services rarely include lament. Even in God's throne room, in John's vision known as Revelation, John saw souls under the altar crying out in lament, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev 6:10 NIV). Paul tells us in Rom 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (NIV). If God has space in heaven itself for lament, then shouldn't we make space in our own worship for lament?

Space for Stories

Third, we also need to make space to hear the stories of victims of abuse. As an example, an automobile mechanic relies heavily on the sounds cars make when determining where the problem is. I still remember my dad listening to "Car Talk" and hearing Click and Clack make car sounds. Similarly, doctors would find it difficult to make a correct diagnosis without hearing the complaints of their patients. We cannot minister well to the abused without truly listening to their voices. Yet when victims speak about abuse, too often we are silenced.

Abuse victims are told we are gossiping, though if that is true, the Bible itself must be a gossip column, because the Bible does not cover up the abuses of its heroes. We are told we are bitter and need to repent, and we are told God can't be near us because of our bitterness. Yet the Bible tells us the story of a woman named Naomi. Naomi's name meant "Pleasant," yet in her grief after years of trouble, Naomi cried, "Don't call me Naomi. . . . Call me Mara [Bitter] because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me" (Ruth 1:20–21 NIV). Did God draw away from Mara for her bitterness? No! God drew closer and, through her wisdom, made her the great-great-grandmother of David. In fact, the names Miriam and Mary also come from the Hebrew word for bitter. And it was to those bitter women that God sent Moses and Jesus. Throughout Scripture, God's deliverance has been preceded by an acknowledgement of the bitter need for that deliverance. God always draws closer to those who acknowledge the bitterness of their lives to Him. Let us be people who say, "Let the bitter come to us." Let us draw closer to them. Let us hear their stories.

Conclusion

My poem, mentioned above, ends:

What better place for grief
Than in the warmth of love?
What harder place to grieve
Than in the cold outside?
Let songs of sorrow rise
Within the worship space.
Let Christ enfleshed in Church
With keening Mary weep.

Millenia ago, biblical Joshua stood before the people of Israel and declared, "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15 NIV). Today, I believe the Spirit is standing before the church and saying, "Choose for yourselves this day for whom you will be a safe space." Will you be a place where abusers run to you and are safe, or will you be a place where the victims run to you and are safe? As for Christ, we know whom he has chosen. Christ has told us that when he returns he will divide us, not by our great deeds in his name, but by this choice we make, by whether we choose to care for the least of these.

Notes

1. <https://sataskforce.net/updates/guidepost-solutions-report-of-the-independent-investigation>.
2. See, for example, pgs. 163–64 in the report cited in endnote 1.
3. See, for example, pg. 167 in the report cited in endnote 1.
4. See, for example, pgs. 161–62 in the report cited in endnote 1.
5. <https://christianitytoday.com/news/2021/november/judy-dabler-creative-conciliation-abuse-lapm-unfit-ministry.html>.

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Beyond Moses and Elijah: The Regency-Coregency Continuum as a Model for Mentored Succession with Hatshepsut of Egypt and Vani Vilasa of India as Case Studies

HAVILAH DHARAMRAJ

Moses and Joshua. Elijah and Elisha. These are the go-to OT examples of carefully mentored succession. Joshua fills Moses's shoes to complete the arc of the exodus-wilderness wandering-conquest-settlement story. Elisha follows up Elijah's onslaught against the Baal-patronizing dynasty of Ahab and Jezebel to bring it to a grisly end. These two narratives are certainly commendable picks for a conversation on preparing successors to leadership positions in Christian ministry—churches, seminaries, and Christian organizations. But perhaps one other type of biblical narrative is a better candidate: stories of regency and coregency. Alongside the biblical examples, I have picked two historical cases of mentored succession—one from ancient Egypt, and one from the recent history of the royal house of Mysore in southern India.

Being a woman in leadership, and having myself practiced mentoring for succession, I should confess that I intentionally picked female regents for the two case studies. Furthermore, readers of *Priscilla Papers* are committed to women being both mentors and mentees in the church and in other Christian organizations, and the model for mentored succession presented below can help such relationships thrive.

Regency and Coregency

Egypt

Before we speak about regency, let us understand coregencies. Coregencies are situations in which the throne is held simultaneously by two monarchs, and each can legitimately count this period into their years of rule. As an important example, coregencies were common in ancient Egypt.¹ An ageing Pharaoh would appoint for himself a coregent, typically one of his sons. Officially, the two had identical status—both were Pharaoh. The older Pharaoh was saved from abdication. The younger Pharaoh would take on responsibilities that required youthful vigour. He would lead the armies into war, quelling threats to national security or expanding the boundaries of the kingdom. He might involve himself in domestic affairs, in the governance of the realm. Which of the two royal partners was more powerful, and in what ways, varied with the dynamics of each coregency, but common to all were two pragmatic considerations: external threats that might cause the collapse of the empire, and internal dissension that might get in the way of an orderly succession. Coregency was the happy answer to both. It kept the borders safe and kept the dynasty going.²

A variation of coregency was regency, deployed in the case of an underage Pharaoh—a minor prince who came to the

throne on the untimely death of his father. In such cases, his widowed mother (or his stepmother) would be Queen Regent, playing caretaker till he came of age. Regency was a temporary and entirely practical arrangement, similar to a vice-regency. Ancient Egypt saw more than half a dozen such cases of female regency, using the practice “to protect the patriarchy, to act as stopgaps, placeholders, until the next man could fill the top spot on the social pyramid.” Many of these regent queens made brilliant rulers, perhaps some even going on to rule as sole (female) Pharaohs.

Israel

Ancient Israel seems to have learned from its older neighbour Egypt about the value of coregencies—given that there is no evidence of the practice from Mesopotamia or Canaan. The first is a clear record of transfer of power in the united kingdom—the crowning of Solomon as king and coregent as David lay incapacitated by old age (1 Kgs 1). David participated in the building of the temple within the limits of gathering material (1 Chr 28–29:9), leaving to his son and coregent Solomon the seven-year arduous task of actual building (2 Chr 2–7).

After this, as many as eleven coregencies are proposed for the period of the divided kingdom, covering the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. These are less explicit and have to be inferred. Take for example the one-year coregency proposed for Jehoram of Judah and his son Ahaziah (2 Chr 21:16–20). About two years before Jehoram's death, Judah was overwhelmed by Arab raiders who inflicted severe casualties. All his sons were killed except for Ahaziah. Shortly after this, Jehoram fell terminally ill with a bowel disease. On his death, he was not accorded the honour due a king—no funeral pyre, just a burial outside the tombs of the kings. It could be reasonably inferred that Jehoram was unpopular—his passing was “to no one's regret”—and further, that his illness rendered him ceremonially unclean, for which reason his burial location was irregular. The disease probably disallowed him from carrying out his regular duties as well. All this makes a case for a coregent—his son Ahaz—to be in place at some point in the last two years of Jehoram's reign, a probability which can be supported from Judah's regnal chronology.

As for regency, a case could be argued for Joash of Judah (2 Chr 22:10 – 24:16). As an infant, he was rescued from a bloodbath of royals by his aunt Jehosheba and his uncle Jehoiada the priest. While he lay hidden for seven years, his unofficial regent negotiated with the army's commanders, and through

them, with both the civil and religious leadership across the land to make possible the coronation of the boy king—disregarding the life-threatening nature of his enterprise. In the process, he effected a political coup dethroning a powerful pretender to the Davidic throne, Athaliah. He proceeded to initiate religious reform, re-established the cultus of the temple, and ensured that the new king had full popular support. It appears that he continued informally in the role of advisor after the king began to rule in his own right, taking care even to pick out wives for him.

We turn to consider in greater detail two regencies, one ancient and one modern, to see what we can learn from them on mentored succession, especially when the mentor is female.

Hatshepsut of Ancient Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1479–1458 BCE)

She was a king.³ After she took the throne, she had herself depicted in male clothing, and as the years went by, with a broad and bare male chest, standing with her feet planted firmly apart in the stride-pose of a male Pharaoh. She even strapped the typical Pharaonic cylindrical beard to her chin. There is evidence that some earlier relief sculptures of her were re-carved to give her a male physique. There had been a few female Pharaohs before her, but none who insisted on being a “king.”

Hatshepsut was born a princess, daughter to Thutmose I (ca. 1520–1492 BCE). At some point well before she turned twenty, she was married to her half-brother, Thutmose II—the traditional version of endogamy practiced by Egyptian royalty. Her first taste of power came at this time. Being older than her brother-husband, she became prominent in the court to the extent that she exceeded the status of a mere queen. She was installed as God's Wife, that god being none less than the chief of the pantheon, the creator god Amun. The task required her to begin each day with entering into the sanctum sanctorum of Amun's temple in Karnak to pleasure the statue of the creator deity so that his orgasm would re-birth the world. Without her services, it was feared that the cosmos would slip into chaos.

An opportunity to aggrandize her already considerable power presented itself when her sickly husband died, leaving behind as successor a two-year-old Thutmose III, born to a lesser wife. Hatshepsut, as the Dowager Queen, was installed as Queen Regent.

In the early years, statuary shows the child Thutmose III as an enthroned adult Pharaoh engaged in governance while his stepmother-aunt, the regent Hatshepsut, stands modestly to one side. De facto, however, as a tomb biography from this period testifies, “the God's Wife Hatshepsut managed the affairs of this land.”⁴ In about the seventh year of her regency, she shed any vestiges of vice-regency by having herself crowned, making her coregent. Nominally, she allowed that her stepson-nephew Thutmose III was king, but made it clear

to all that she was by far “the senior partner!”⁵ From then on, statuary depictions include both of them, foregrounding her in all her splendour, while Thutmose III is rendered in a smaller size and relegated to a secondary position either behind or below her. With inscriptions that described her with grammatical feminine gender, but statues that depicted her as no less a quintessential man than any male predecessor, Hatshepsut became the king herself.

What is more, Hatshepsut proceeded to work on a checklist guaranteed to produce a super-Pharaoh. She launched military expeditions, as warrior-kings like her father did, into Syria and Nubia. She inaugurated building projects that well exceeded the architectural accomplishments of any of her predecessors and (except for Rameses II, 1279–1213 BCE) any who came after her. She sent a trade expedition overseas to Punt (present day Somalia) that brought back an abundance of exotica never before seen in Egypt—and part of the journey involved transporting the flat-packed ships across the desert!

Meanwhile, when her coregent came of age, she allowed him to take charge of the army. He occupied himself within these limits and perhaps survived her thirteen-year reign as “Pharaoh” by discreetly biding his time. Hatshepsut died in her late 40s or early 50s, and Thutmose III finally claimed de facto the throne that had been his for twenty-one years. On acceding to the throne, he backdated his reign to the death of his father Thutmose II, erasing his stepmother-aunt out of Egyptian royal

The mentee caught up in such a relationship goes ignored and untutored, is deprived of any opportunity to learn, remains in a state of inexperience, and becomes increasingly frustrated.

chronology. About twenty years into his reign, he systematically and violently set about destroying material evidence of her existence as “king”: her statues had their eyes gouged out or head hacked off; her images were chiselled off temples, monuments, and obelisks; and her engravings were overlaid with stone. Either Thutmose's attempts to erase Hatshepsut's legacy are evidence that, even two decades after her death, he continued to reject her treatment of him, and/or his attempts may have been aimed at expunging the undesirable encouragement she might provide for future queens with an eye on kingship. At any rate, his enthusiasm for obliterating Hatshepsut is ironic, considering she obsessed about etching herself indelibly into history. She set into stone her grand titles, accounts of her lineage and accomplishments, and stories of her history (both real and created). She even left engraved on an obelisk her anxiety about her posterity: “Now my heart turns this way and that, as I think what the people will say. Those who see my monuments in years to come, and who shall speak of what I have done.”⁶ As remarkable as her achievements were, the Hatshepsut-Thutmose III pair make a less-than-ideal case of coregency. If their relationship was to be translated into mentor-mentee situations in churches and seminaries, here is a mentor who sees their mentee as a bothersome obligation thrust upon them; or as a threat that, since it cannot be eliminated, must be strategically and

constantly managed; and, perhaps, as a potential obstacle to their personal aspirations. The mentee caught up in such a relationship goes ignored and untutored, is deprived of any opportunity to learn, remains in a state of inexperience, and becomes increasingly frustrated.

Quite different from Hatshepsut was a queen of the royal house of the erstwhile princely state of Mysore in South India.

Kempa Nanjammani Vani Vilasa Sannidhana of Mysore (1866–1934)

When her husband, the twenty-third maharaja of Mysore, suddenly succumbed to diphtheria in 1894, Kempa Nanjammani Vani Vilasa Sannidhana was twenty-six years old.⁷ For two days, she gave herself over to grief, and on the third day emerged ready to take on the responsibility the British government entrusted to her: to be the Maharani Regent, custodian of the kingdom of Mysore, till such time as her oldest son, aged ten, came of age to take the throne of the Wadiyar dynasty (1399–1950), a dynasty that had been guardian of the realm for nearly half a millennium.

She picked up the mantle of governance at a time when a grievous famine was crippling the economy (1894–1902). A few years into her regency, just as an outbreak of smallpox subsided, bubonic plague tore through the capital city of Mysore, reducing its population by half (1898–1900). In the eight years that she held the reins of state (1894–1902), the Maharani Regent not only restored the financial fortunes of the princely state of Mysore but took it into an era decades ahead of its time. Her contribution to the famine relief fund was noted for its generosity. She tripled the spending on healthcare, establishing hospitals such as Bangalore's Victoria Hospital, and decongested Mysore and Bangalore through new, well-planned, and attractive suburbs. She built dams to preempt future droughts—it is said that she sold family jewellery to contribute to the building of the monumental Krishnaraja Sagar Dam. Hydroelectric projects, way ahead of their time, churned electricity out of falling water, bringing lighting to city roads. It was she who donated 372 acres of land to the now prestigious Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. She established schools and colleges exclusively for girls, including widows, and instituted pre- and postnatal care for women. Her oval face with its heavy-lidded eyes and gentle smile only complemented her steel-strong courageous leadership.

The British viceroy Lord Curzon “eulogized the wisdom of her . . . rule.”⁸ It was said that her “many virtues and noble qualities attract toward her all the love and duty of her subjects.”⁹ Most telling is the witness of her acting Dewan T. R. A. Thumboo Chetty, a Christian, who said this in praise of her:

In my repeated official visits I was really struck with Her Highness the Maharani's capacity for business, fair knowledge of things and amiable character. She listened to everything with exemplary patience. Her mind was bold and acute, and whatever be the subject of discussion, she came directly to the point and brought

it to a happy completion. Sometimes her enlightened suggestions and direction most agreeably surprised me and afforded ready solution of many difficulties. Her anxiety to promote the highest and best interests of the country was always perceptible. I invariably retired from the interviews I had with a strong sentiment of devotion as well as admiration and respect for Her Highness' high character and intellectual qualities.¹⁰

The British government had honoured her with the Imperial Order of the Crown of India (1893), an award Empress Victoria had instituted for women of highest merit.

All that said, perhaps her most admirable work was her careful fostering of her son, the underaged king. It is on record that “she has been able to make the most satisfactory arrangements for the education and training of His Highness during his minority,” and there was confidence “that the good seed sown in this respect will bear good fruit in course of time, i.e., by the time His Highness attains age and assumes charge of the reins of Government himself.”¹¹ And so it was. When her son reached the legal age of eighteen in 1902, she graciously handed over the throne to him. Taking the throne as Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, he ushered in what came to be known in retrospect as Mysore's Golden Age—surely made possible by the foundation the Maharani Regent constructed through her wise rule, and equally, through the preparation of her son for independent kingship. The gratitude of the young king for what he had received is apparent. His mother passed away peacefully in 1934 at the age of seventy-five. In the year following, he named Bangalore's grand newly built hospital after his mother. Here was a regent who well knew that all she had was eight years on the throne, and who carefully stewarded that limited time towards the greater good of her ward.

Transposing this story of regency to mentoring within church and seminary environments, we have a mentor-mentee relationship in which the mentor is, at every point in the journey, aware of the temporary nature of their tenure; intentionally plans the education of the mentee; takes pains to build a stable and prosperous present from which the mentee can launch the future; and undertakes the task of mentoring against the backdrop of the grand plan of generational succession. The mentee, meanwhile, receives an excellent preparation for their future role; steps into it at the right time; and is perhaps able to maximize the advantages received to move on to accomplishments even greater than those of their mentor.

Regency-Coregency as a Model for Mentoring

There are—I think!—good reasons for picking the regency-coregency continuum as a mentoring paradigm over the usual prophetic succession models of Moses-Joshua and Elijah-Elisha.

First, the regency model does start as a relationship between social unequals, but here is where it departs from the prophetic succession model. The very commencement of the relationship is founded on the mentor filling a time-limited space. The regent occupies the throne, but occupies it *for* their mentee. The regent's

function comes to an end, not upon retirement or death, but when the mentee comes of age. So, whether in terms of position or time span, the practice of regency favours the mentee, not the mentor. This is why we evaluate Hatshepsut as a failure. Rather than direct her energy at grooming her mentee into his role as king, like many queen mothers in the dynasties before her had done, she redirected her efforts into her aggrandizement from regency into a politically illegitimate coregency. “My divine mind is looking out for posterity, the king’s heart has thought of eternal continuity,”¹² she says in one of her inscriptions, making it clear that everything she did was motivated by obsessive attachment to her position as monarch and to her hopes to be remembered forever as one. Vani Vilasa, on the other hand, seemed constantly aware that she only held stewardship over the throne of Mysore, and worked towards a smooth handover.

The spirit of the primacy of the underage monarch over the regent, the mentee over the mentor, is wonderfully captured in an inscription by Rameses II, the Pharaoh of movie fame. He describes how his father Seti I perceived him: “the All-Lord himself made me great, while I was a child, until I reigned. He gave to me the land while I was in the egg. . . . When my father appeared in public, I being a child in his arms, [he] sa[id] concerning me, ‘Crown him as king, that I may see his beauty while I live with him’. [Thereupon approached] the courtiers, to set the double diadem upon my head. . . .”¹³ The regent-mentor must have the mind of Seti I, the desire to rejoice in the “beauty” of the ward. The prophetic model does not make this explicit, and perhaps even lacks this dimension.

Secondly, the primacy of the mentee does not necessarily restrict the regent or the mentor from actualizing their own potential. Vani Vilasa’s achievements put her in an exclusive bracket. Historian Rao Bahadur Narasimhachar counts her as one among the “three jewels in Mysore’s history.”¹⁴ King Joash’s regent, the priest Jehoiada, received unprecedented and unparalleled honour by being buried in the tombs of the kings “because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple” (2 Chr 24:16 NIV). These are accomplishments gained with an eye to the handover. The regent or the mentor works enthusiastically towards the future success of the mentee by establishing stability, by laying a foundation for prosperity, and by setting an example for best practice.

Thirdly, we understand that in monarchies, regencies have a built-in sunset clause. They lead to coregencies only when the regent plays Hatshepsut and usurps a position that is not legitimately theirs. In contrast, in Christian ministry “regencies” should lead to “coregencies.” What we mean by this is that the mentor gradually eases their position of “regent” as the mentee grows in years and capabilities.

Jesus the Coregent

We remind ourselves that all analogies come with limitations. This one even comes with undesirable associations with monarchy—power, pomp, and presumption. However, coregency is a biblical metaphor, one which describes our place

in the age to come: “We will also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:12 NIV; cf. Rev 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). Our future hope is expressed in terms of coregency. What is more, the relationship between the Father and the Son uses the analogy of coregency. In Daniel 7, there is “one like a son of man,” a human, brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days, gloriously holding court. And the Ancient of Days authorizes this figure in the manner of an eastern coregent: “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power. . . . His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:14 NIV). The Christ hymn of Phil 2 celebrates the actualization of this in Jesus: “God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9–11 NIV). Among the last pictures of Jesus in the Bible is him as coregent. The one “seated on the throne” in its closing chapters, declaring himself to be “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End,” is Jesus (Rev 21:6). We know because we have met him at the start of the book, the one who “was dead” but now is “alive forever,” describing himself as the “First and the Last” (Rev 1:17). Indeed, the throne in the new Jerusalem is “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1). That is perhaps sufficient persuasion for building the practice of mentored succession on the analogical chassis of regency and coregency.

Conclusion

Regencies and coregencies can go horribly wrong, and Thutmose III would agree. But they can also result in a “whole” that is “greater than the sum of its parts,” as Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV would affirm.

While the perfect partnership between God and Jesus should inspire both men and women leaders, I find it telling that, across time and cultures, women were nearly always the immediate choice for the solemn and high office of regent. Perhaps that is an added endorsement for women in leadership to consider this model of mentored succession. And so, like a blue-blooded dynasty, we play our part in perpetuating the mission of God: Not through obelisks, but through a Kingdom version of king-making.

Notes

An extended version of this article will soon be published in a festschrift for Graham Houghton by SAIACS Press, Bangalore, India, as a chapter titled “Beyond Moses and Elijah: The Regency-Coregency Continuum as a Model for Mentoring Faculty in Theological Institutions.”

1. For a compact overview see E. Ball, “The Co-Regency of David and Solomon (1 Kings 1),” *VT* 27/3 (1977) 268–79. For a monograph dedicated to the subject, see William J. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, *SAOC* 40 (The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, 1977).

2. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, 263–65.

3. This account of Hatshepsut has been collated from the following sources: Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, 32–44; Kara Cooney, *The Woman Who Would be King: Hatshepsut’s Rise to Power in Ancient*

Egypt (Crown, 2014), cited in <https://thenotsoinnocentsabroad.com/blog/9-fascinating-facts-about-the-early-life-of-hatshepsut/>; Joshua J. Mark, “Hatshepsut,” *World History Encyclopedia* (19 Oct 2016), <https://worldhistory.org/hatshepsut/>; Chip Brown, “The King Herself,” *National Geographic* (April 2009), <https://web.archive.org/web/20210118013335/https://nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2009/04/hatshepsut/>; Elizabeth B. Wilson, “The Queen Who Would be King,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (Sept 2006), <https://smithsonianmag.com/history/the-queen-who-would-be-king-130328511/>.

4. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, 32.

5. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, 34.

6. James P. Allen, “The Speos Artemidos Inscription of Hatshepsut,” *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 16(2002) 1–17, <https://ancientneareast.net/egypt/the-speos-artemidos-inscription-of-hatshepsut/>.

7. The account of this Queen Regent has been taken from the following sources: T. Royaloo Chetti, *A Brief Sketch of the Life of T R A Thambo Chetty, C.I.E, formerly Chief Judge and Officiating Diwan of Mysore* (Madras: Hoe & Co, 1909); Aditi Gurkar, *Swarajya* (26 Oct 2020), <https://swarajyamag.com/culture/how-the-mysuru-queens-combated-pandemics>; *Amar Chitra Katha*, “Legendary Personalities” (29 Aug 2020), https://amarchitrakatha.com/history_details/maharani-vani-vilasa-1866-1934/; Arpita, “Vani Vilasa Sannidhana: The Queen who led Mysore’s Way to Prosperity” (17 Feb 2020), <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/02/17/vani-vilasa-sannidhana-queen-mysores-way-prosperity/>; Gopi Karelia, “This Mysuru Queen Scripted History by Selling Jewellery to Supply Water to Millions,” <https://thebetterindia.com/245219/mysuru-bengaluru-history-queen-kempananjammani-vani-vilasa-cauvery-water-electricity-education-india-gop94/>.

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8. Chetti, *A Brief Sketch*, 211.

9. Chetti, *A Brief Sketch*, 232.

10. Chetti, *A Brief Sketch*, 249–50.

11. Chetti, *A Brief Sketch*, 167.

12. Allen, “The Speos Artemidos Inscription.”

13. Ball, “The Co-Regency of David and Solomon,” 276.

14. T. R. Sathish Kumar, “Women Behind Development of Mysuru State Pretermitted in History,” *Deccan Herald* (8 March 2018), <https://deccanherald.com/state/districts/women-behind-development-of-mysuru-state-pretermitted-in-history-643466.html>.



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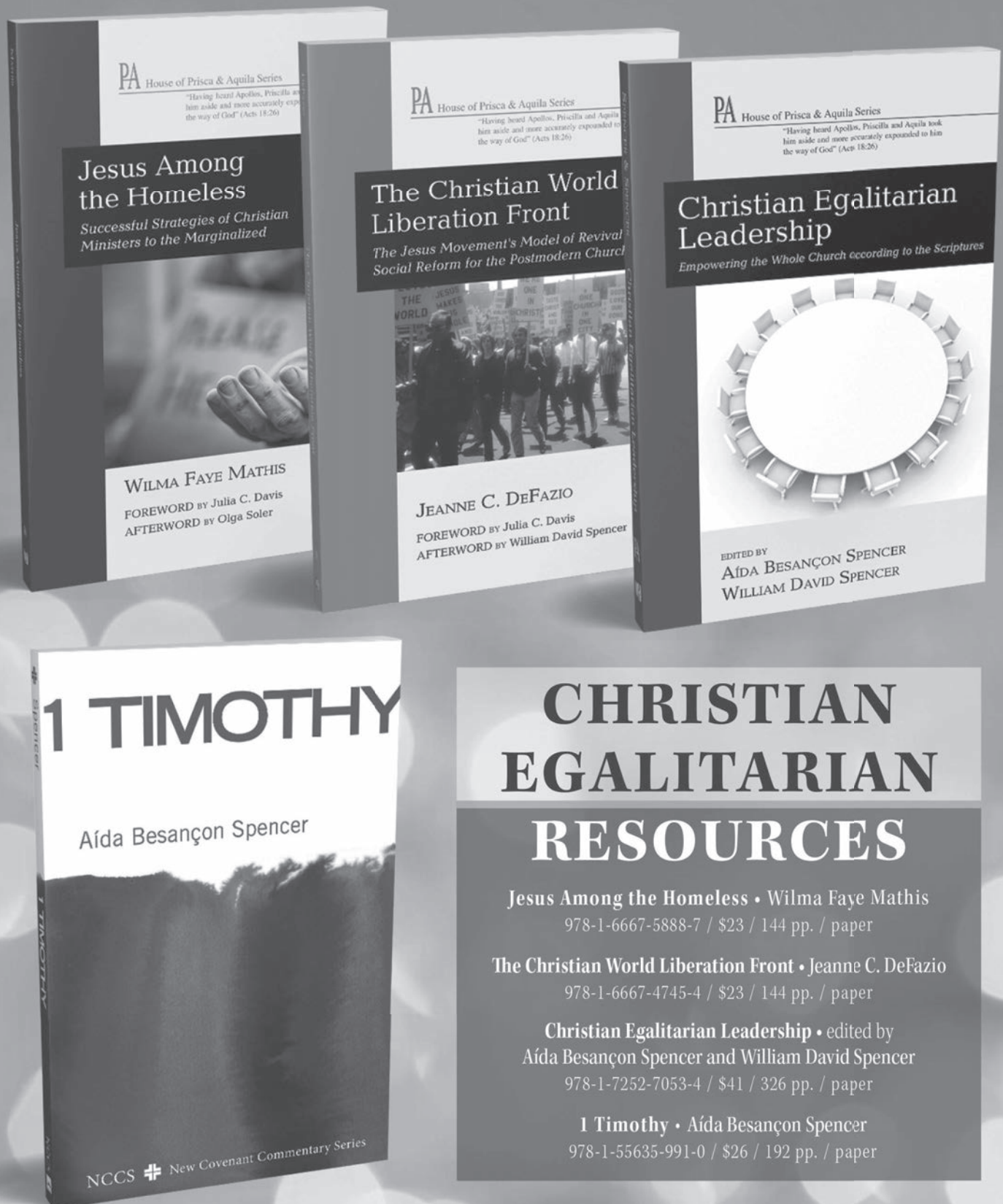
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Sheerah, the Unknown City-Building Woman of 1 Chronicles 7:24

ERIC E. RICHTER

The genealogies that make up the early chapters of the book of 1 Chronicles have generated curiosity and intrigue among Old Testament researchers due to the details, and sometimes the oddities, they contain. In them can be found not only a thorough description of family lines but also military censuses, geographical details, family anecdotes, and even a well-known prayer (1 Chr 4:9–10).¹

This article's objective is to study an obscure reference to a woman who is described as a builder of cities. Chapter 7 of the book of Chronicles contains, among other things, a list of Ephraim's descendants, where his granddaughter Sheerah is mentioned (v. 24). The description of this woman is striking. Scripture credits her with having "built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzzan-sheerah." Ralph Klein correctly points out that "this is *the only place* in the Old Testament where a woman is named as the founder of a city."²

Who was this pioneering woman that, in the midst of an ancient patriarchal culture, managed to build and rule three cities? Why does the book of Chronicles include a description of her when so many names in the genealogies are mentioned with no description at all? In this article, we will summarize what is possible to know about Sheerah and her architectural achievements. In addition, we will attempt to decipher the significance of her mention in the book of Chronicles.

In our first step we will see how her story is strategically placed among the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 7 to highlight her outstanding achievements as a builder of cities.

The Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 7

The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles consist of a series of genealogies beginning with Adam and continuing through Jacob. In ch. 2, the description of the descendants of Judah begins (ch. 2, 4:1–23), including the royal line of David (ch. 3). Then it continues with the genealogies of Simeon (4:24–43), Reuben (5:1–10), Gad (5:11–17), Levi (ch. 6), Issachar (7:1–5), Benjamin (7:6–12, ch. 8), Naphtali (7:13), Manasseh (7:14–19), Ephraim (7:20–28), and Asher (7:30–40). Finally, in the ninth chapter, the Jews who returned from Babylon after the exile to reoccupy their lands are mentioned.

The description of the descendants of Ephraim, including Sheerah, is characterized by the lack of military censuses and the inclusion of colorful family anecdotes. Interestingly, this section of the genealogy has no parallel in similar OT passages.³ In fact, most of the names in these verses are never used again in the Bible.⁴

Sheerah is mentioned after a brief narrative about the circumstances that led to the birth of Beriah, Ephraim's last son. She is described as *his* daughter (1 Chr 7:24), which

technically could refer to either of these two men (such ambiguity is common in genealogies, since they are concisely expressed).⁵ However, since Beriah is the closest earlier referent, we are confident that Sheerah is his daughter and thus Ephraim's granddaughter.⁶ This would make her the sister of Rephah (1 Chr 7:25), a man for whom, in contrast to Sheerah, no achievement is mentioned. In fact, no other descendant of Ephraim mentioned in this section is described as achieving anything. As interpreters, we should wonder whether the resulting emphasis on Sheerah is intentional.

It is likely that Sheerah's story was placed here to directly contrast with her father's and brother's stories. Beriah's birth came after Ephraim lost his two youngest sons in a fight after attempting to steal cattle from Canaanites (1 Chr 7:21–23). The name chosen for this child is the union of the preposition *be* ("in" or "with") and the noun *ra-ah* ("calamity" or "misfortune"). Both the circumstances of his birth and the name he received point to a curse or divine punishment. In contrast, the fact that Sheerah has built cities in the promised land manifests divine blessing. Antje Labahn and Ehud Ben Zvi correctly point out that "building activities within Israel reflect divine blessing within the ideology of the book of Chronicles and accordingly, the readers of the book are asked to understand Sheerah's actions as both a blessing and a reflection of a divine blessing."⁷

In the same way, the fact that she had a brother shows that the construction of these cities was not a necessity due to a lack of male leadership. Rather, this achievement seems to be mentioned to highlight her achievements in the face of her brother's lack of initiative or success. As Ben Zvi succinctly expresses, "the case of Sheerah is presented as even more remarkable, because she is not the only child of the head of the household. Her father has a son, and perhaps more than one, but she is the builder."⁸

It is also striking that only two individuals in the genealogies that constitute the opening nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are portrayed as builders of cities. Besides Sheerah, 1 Chronicles 8:12 mentions a man named "Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns." Shemed built two cities (plus their surrounding villages), in contrast to the three cities built by Sheerah (which most certainly would also include some small villages around them, cf. 1 Chr 6:68 [6:53 in the Hebrew text and its Greek translation]). The close proximity of these references (7:24 and 8:12) also serves to emphasize Sheerah's outstanding architectural achievement.

In addition, perhaps the role played by the cities built by Sheerah in the history of Israel is a clearer example of her remarkable talent and leadership capacity.

The role played by the cities built by Sheerah in the history of Israel is a clearer example of her remarkable talent and leadership capacity.

The Cities Built by Sheerah

Sheerah is credited with building three cities: Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzzan-sheerah.

The first two settlements were neighboring cities, now known as Bet Ur et-Takhta and Bet Ur el-Foka, respectively.⁹ They were on the western side of the mountains of the region of Ephraim. The lower city was at the foot of the mountain, while the upper city was at a mountainous elevation. They were separated by approximately 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) and joined by a road that passed through them. This road was “the most important of all the routes in the hill country from the coastal plain.”¹⁰ In fact, numerous military confrontations have taken place in or near these cities throughout history due to their strategic location.

The famous battle between the forces of Israel led by Joshua against five Canaanite kings, in which God stopped the sun, occurred near Beth-horon (Josh 10:10-11). After the conquest of Canaan, the cities of Beth-horon were given to the tribe of Ephraim (Josh 16:3, 4; 18:13-14). Due to their favorable geographic location for transit, they were designated as cities of refuge (Josh 21:21-22).

It is clear that Sheerah was not the one who initially founded cities at these locations, since they had been previously inhabited by the Canaanites. However, after the conquest of Canaan, she took possession of these towns; she repaired, fortified, and enhanced them for habitation. The verb used in 1 Chronicles 7:24 to refer to the building of the three cities is *banah*, which is frequently used in the OT to refer to repairing and fortifying cities, even for building military fortresses (Judg 18:28; 1 Kgs 12:25, 15:17, 21, 22, 23, 16:24; 2 Kgs 14:22; 1 Chr 11:8; 2 Chr 11:5-6, 14:6-7, etc.).¹¹

Controlling the cities of Beth-horon carried several substantial advantages. Being an important ancient route, it allowed Sheerah to protect the tribe of Ephraim from possible attacks from the east (as happened later, in Saul's time, 1 Sam 13:17-18). In addition, because this was an important trade route, it guaranteed its ruler a constant source of income. It was also the easiest route to access the thriving seaports of Lebanon from the direction of Jerusalem and the prosperous Jordan Valley.¹² The fact that Sheerah controlled this vital road undoubtedly secured for her an important social position among the leaders of her tribe. This may explain why she is mentioned so prominently in Ephraim's genealogy.

Many years later, King Solomon also perceived the strategic importance of these sister cities and “built [*banah*] Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars” (2 Chr 8:5; cf. 1 Kgs 9:17). If the man touted as wisest in the world (see 1 Kgs 4:29-34) imitates your actions, it is evident that you also are wise!

The third city that Sheerah built is Uzzan-sheerah. This designation is composed of the name of its founder and the Hebrew term *uzzen*, which is related to the Hebrew word for “ear.”

The city name probably means something like “corner” or “small land plot.” It is possible that the name is related to the Hebrew term *akhuzzan* which has a technical meaning in the book of Chronicles, for it “designates the territory to be held inalienably in perpetuity by a tribe as its share in God's land.”¹³ So the name of this town could mean something like “Sheerah's small estate.” It is unknown where this place was located, although it is speculated that it could be the modern village of Beit Sira.¹⁴ It is likely that Sheerah did not name her third city herself, but it instead came to be known that way over time.

Conclusion

Although Sheerah is only mentioned once in the Bible, the brief description reveals much. She was an intelligent, farsighted, and capable woman. She perceived the strategic importance of these cities and worked hard to rebuild and fortify them. This woman soon controlled one of the most important routes in the region, the location of which was militarily, commercially, and logistically vital to the people of Israel. Her work in this regard surely granted her a high social status among the leaders of her tribe and guaranteed her a privileged place in Ephraim's, and thus Jacob's and Rachel's, genealogy.

Her description in 1 Chronicles 7:24 was carefully placed to contrast with those of her father and brother. The divine blessing manifested in her construction of cities in the promised land contrasts with the tragic circumstances of the birth of her father, as well as the lack of successes and initiatives of her brother. There is also probably a contrast to the Shemed of 1 Chronicles 8, who built two cities in the land of Benjamin. All this emphasizes the importance of her architectural achievements.

Although little is known about Sheerah, the Bible portrays her as a talented leader who achieved remarkable successes with the help of divine blessing. As such, she should move from being an obscure figure in the OT to becoming a role model for women, and for men as well, today.

Notes

1. 1 Chr 4:9-10 increased in popularity with the publication of Bruce Wilkinson's *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life* (Multnomah, 2000). The passage reads, “Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, ‘Because I bore him in pain.’ Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, ‘Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border [NRSVue “territory”], and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!’ And God granted what he asked.” Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations in this article have been taken from the 1989 New Revised Standard Version and remain essentially unchanged in the 2021 NRSVue.

2. Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Fortress, 2006) 234, emphasis added.

3. See John C. Endres, William R. Millar, and John Barclay Burns, eds., *Chronicles and Its Synoptic Parallels in Samuel, Kings, and Related Biblical Texts* (Liturgical, 1998) 38.

4. William Johnstone, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 2 vols., JSOTSup 253 (Sheffield Academic, 1997) 1:107. The source from which the Chronicler obtained the information he presents here is unknown; see Steven J. Schweitzer, “Judging a Book by Its Citations: Sources and Authority in Chronicles,” in *What was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana V. Edelman (Eisenbrauns, 2011) 48. The source is likely a now-lost historical account of the Ephraimitic clans; see Nadav Na’aman, “Sources and Redaction in the Chronicler’s Genealogies of Asher and Ephraim,” *JSOT* 16/49 (1991) 108.

5. James T. Sparks, *The Chronicler’s Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1–9* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2008) 197–98.

6. The ambiguity can be seen by comparing translations. Some, such as the 2015 Amplified Bible, supply Beriah’s name at the beginning of 7:24, making explicit that he was Sheerah’s father. Other translations, such as the 1995 Contemporary English Version, instead supply Ephraim’s name. Most translations retain the Hebrew text’s lack of a personal name and simply read, “His daughter was Sheerah. . . .”

7. Antje Labahn and Ehud Ben Zvi, “Observations on Women in the Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9,” *Bib* 84/4 (2003) 475.

8. Ehud Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles* (Equinox, 2006) 185.

9. John L. Petersen, “Beth-Horon,” *ABD* 1:688.

10. Petersen, “Beth-Horon,” 1:688.

11. See S. Wagner, “*bānāh* [*bānā*],” *TDOT* 2:169.

12. David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) 183–84.

13. Johnstone, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 1:108–9.

14. Simon J. de Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, FOTL 11 (Eerdmans, 1989) 80.



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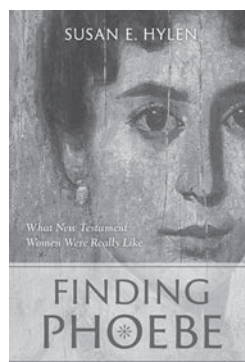
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Finding Phoebe: What New Testament Women Were Really Like

Susan E. Hylen

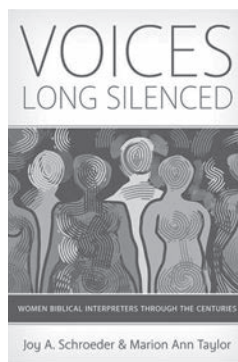
Contrary to popular conceptions of "biblical womanhood" as passive and silent, women often served as leaders and prophets in their communities, owned property, worked outside the home, and were educated. In this learned yet accessible book, Hylen introduces first-century primary sources to illuminate readers' understanding of New Testament women.



The Letter to the Ephesians (New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT))

Lynn H. Cohick

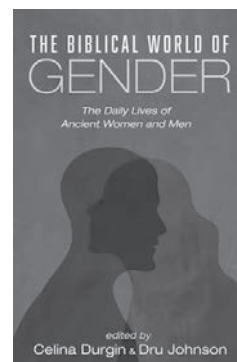
Cohick provides an exegetically astute analysis of the six chapters of Ephesians, offering an insightful account of the letter's theology and soteriology. Her extensive knowledge of the social realities of women and families in the ancient world is evident throughout. Historically sensitive and theologically rich, Cohick's commentary will be an abundant resource for a new generation of scholars, pastors, and lay leaders.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters through the Centuries

Joy A. Schroeder,
Marion Ann Taylor

In this book, Schroeder and Taylor introduce readers to the notable contributions of female commentators through the centuries. They unearth fascinating accounts of Jewish and Christian women from diverse communities—rabbinic experts, nuns, mothers, mystics, preachers, teachers, suffragists, and household managers—who interpreted Scripture through their writing.



The Biblical World of Gender: The Daily Lives of Ancient Women and Men

Celina Durgin and
Dru Johnson, eds.

What were the lives of women and men like in ancient Israel? How does it affect their thinking about gender? Taking insights from anthropology and archaeology, the authors of this collection paint a dynamic portrait of gender in antiquity that has been put into conversation with the biblical texts.