

The academic journal of CBE International

Priscilla Papers

Vol 39, No 2 | Spring 2025



Extraordinary Vocations

- 3 The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas
Michaela Rollins
- 6 The Extraordinary History of the Extraordinary Call
Joan Brown
- 12 Women's Work: Vocation in Exodus 2:1–10
Jennifer M. Gash
- 15 Re-Oranting the Church: Metaphor and the Erasure of Image-Bearing
Daniel Schwabauer
- 19 Annie Royale Taylor (1855–1922): A Missionary Adventurer in Tibet
Ian Randall
- 24 More Than a Woman: Anne Hutchinson's Testimony for the Holy Spirit
Patrick Oden
- 29 Book Review: *Becoming the Pastor's Wife: How Marriage Replaced Ordination as a Woman's Path to Ministry*
Alexander Kwasi Oduro

Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos more perfectly in the way of the Lord. (Acts 18:26)

Editorial

Mollie Gregory's chronologically organized history of stuntwomen in the American movie industry (*Stuntwomen: The Untold Hollywood Story*, 2015) makes a fascinating read. Did you know, for example, that theatres played the equivalent of popular television series featuring action heroines? An alternative was for a stuntwoman to play the actress's body double.

At a time when women had minimal social and political agency, for them to watch members of their own "weaker" sex leaping off high-rises and revving into crazy car chases had the potential for tremendous change. That changed very quickly as movies became money spinners. Men made their way in, and stuntwomen were elbowed out into the margins. By the 1950s, a mafia of about a dozen bosses decided who got hired into stunt roles in Hollywood. It suited them to hire men. Much like in the theater of Shakespeare's day—and in traditional folk performances in India—men threw a wig and a dress on and stood in when the actress had to do anything that was ruled inappropriately physical for a woman. Even though this trend is undergoing reversal, the highest compliment from men that a stuntwoman still gets is ironic: "She hits the ground like a man!"

One of the voices in the book is that of Jadie David, a stunt professional whose rationale for this extraordinary vocation is relevant to the theme of this issue of *Priscilla Papers*: "I enjoyed doing something most people would call insane . . . The more fearless you are in what you do, the fewer regrets you'll have."

This issue features women who risked taking up extraordinary vocations. Michaela Rollins introduces us to the "prison diary" of Perpetua and Felicitas, who, in the early third century, fearlessly embraced the calling to be martyrs for their new faith in Jesus. This, despite Perpetua being a nursing mother, and Felicitas being heavily pregnant.

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

Advertising in *Priscilla Papers* does not imply organizational endorsement. Please note that neither CBE International, nor the editor, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any content or any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author's once an article appears in *Priscilla Papers*.

CBE grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for local use provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, they are distributed for free, the author is acknowledged, and CBE is recognized as the source.



Priscilla Papers is the academic voice of CBE International, providing peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary scholarship on topics related to a biblical view of women and men in the home, church, and world.

Joan Brown traces the chronology of the "extraordinary call," the condition under which women could be permitted to preach in exception to what was understood as the Pauline rule that women "ought not to teach" (1 Tim 2:12), making a case against complementarians and hierarchists who lay down a blanket ban on females in the pulpit.

Jenn Gash holds up for our observation the group of women who played a saving role in the infancy narrative of Moses: his mother Jochebed, his sister Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter, and her attendants. In their common female response(s) to an endangered baby, their ordinary womanly vocation was raised into the extraordinary, into a subversive act against the throne of Egypt.

Another ordinary vocation, that of prayer, is elevated into the extraordinary by metaphor. Daniel Schwabauer reads the injunction that women cover their heads (1 Cor 11:3-5) in the light of the orant, the males and females in the early centuries of the Church who stood before a congregation to offer up prayer. In this pose and position in which the man represents Christ and the woman the Bride of Christ, the prayer shawl over the woman takes on a particular meaning lost to those of us who have overlooked the Bible's use of imagery.

Ian Randall brings us the story of Annie Royale Taylor (1855-1922), a missionary adventurer who dared the icy perils of Tibet, even recruiting and leading an all-male team. Patrick Oden unpacks the court trial Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) who with extraordinary courage stood her ground on her insight into pneumatology.

I pray that this issue of *Priscilla Papers* helps us appreciate better women who bravely tread into areas of Kingdom work that to many of us would seem "insane."

Together, side by side, in God's world.

Havilah Dharamraj
Editor

Editor: Havilah Dharamraj

Assistant to the Editor: Jeff Miller

Graphic Designer: Margaret Lawrence

President / Publisher: Mimi Haddad

Peer Review Team: Andrew Bartlett, Joshua Barron, Stephanie Black, Lynn H. Cohick, Seblewengel (Seble) Daniel, Mary Evans, Laura J. Hunt, Chongpongmeren (Meren) Jamir, Jung-Sook Lee, Jill McGilvray, Ian Payne, Finny Philip, Charles Pitts, Terran Williams

On the Cover: "Anne Hutchinson on Trial" by Edwin Austin Abbey, made in 1901. Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=61404>.



Priscilla Papers (issn 0898-753x) is published quarterly by CBE International, 122 W Franklin Avenue, Suite 610, Minneapolis, MN 55404-2426 | cbeinternational.org | 612-872-6898
© CBE International, 2024.

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

The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas

Michaela Rollins

Scripture tells believers there will be persecution: “Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12 NRSVue). Jesus himself told his followers that there would be times of trouble (John 16:33). At times, persecution leads to martyrdom. Martyrdom is the act of willingly dying for one’s religious beliefs—a dramatic act and the pinnacle of a fully surrendered life. For Christians in every age, martyrdom is an act of faith. When a believer lays down their life for their hope in Christ, it forces the people around them to notice. Martyrdom is the greatest witness to the gospel of Christ and a calling in its own right.

Though Scripture mentions martyrs like Stephen and observes that women were among those persecuted (e.g., Acts 8:3), we are not told about any female Christian martyrs. The Bible may not feature their stories, but church history does. The present-day church would do well to learn from the women martyrs throughout history who were willing to use their lives and deaths as witnesses. Among these are the third-century martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas.

Ancient documents were rarely written from the female perspective. There are occasional letters—and also poetry—written by women, but a document regarding persecution and martyrdom from a woman would be a treasure amongst ancient prose. *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is one such treasure. Stephanie Cobb considers that it “is among the best known and most beloved early Christian martyr texts.”¹ This story of faithfulness and courage in the face of persecution is an example to Christ-followers in every age.

Perpetua

It was the early third century in the major city of Carthage in North Africa. Septimius Severus, emperor of the Roman Empire (193-211 AD), decided that to create religious harmony among his people, all must acknowledge the deity Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun.² Christians refused to follow this policy, causing Severus to make all conversions to Christianity illegal, hoping this would stop its rapid spread. Conversions could be punishable by death. But amidst the persecution, a young woman found faith.

The Latin version of *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* introduces five new converts: “Young catechumens were arrested: Revocatus and Felicitas, who was enslaved with him, Saturninus and Secundulus; among them also was Vibia Perpetua, of notable birth, well-brought-up, lawfully married.”³ Perpetua was a mother, still breastfeeding her son. Her father would beg multiple times for her to renounce her faith. In her first response, she used the analogy of a vase:

“Father,” I said, “Do you see, for the sake of an example, this vase lying there, or pitcher or whatever it is?”
He said: “I see it.”

I said to him: “Can it be called by another name than what it is?”
He said: “No.”
“So also I cannot call myself anything but what I am, a Christian.”⁴

Her resolute defiance of her father was incredible, but it would not be the last time he would try to convince her to save herself. Perpetua’s status as a woman did not support her religious choice. “Women were expected to worship the gods of their fathers and spouses, making the choice to become a Christian a high-risk decision if the men in the family were opposed.”⁵ Unsurprisingly, Perpetua’s father beat her for not putting aside her faith. Though a parent’s disapproval would be an especially heavy burden, Perpetua talked about being refreshed. What is more, the five converts were baptized a few days later.⁶

Life in the prison was hard. It was dark, hot, and crowded. The soldiers would extort the prisoners. Perpetua was concerned with the well-being of her child, whom she had not seen since her arrest. Two deacons, Tertius and Pomponius, interceded on behalf of the believers, getting them access to a better part of the prison for a few hours. There Perpetua was reunited with her son and was able to feed him. A few days later, her son was granted permission to stay with her in the prison. “In this manner, she appears as both a caretaker and protector of her infant.”⁷ Perpetua was in anguish for her family, saying, “I was languishing because I saw them languishing because of me.”⁸ But her brother, convinced of her faith, asked Perpetua to request a vision from God about her future, and she did.

Perpetua had three visions over the period of her stay in prison. All of them were vivid and prophetic. In the first vision, there was a bronze ladder reaching up to the sky. The ladder was narrow, allowing only one person to climb it at a time, and the sides were embedded with knives and swords. Under the ladder lay a dragon. Her friend, Saturninus, went up the ladder first, warning her of the dragon:

“Perpetua, I’m holding on for you; but be careful not to let that dragon bite you.”
And I said: “He won’t hurt me, in the name of Jesus Christ.”
And from underneath that ladder, as if he were afraid of me, he slowly stuck out his head; as if I were stepping on the first rung, I stepped on his head and I climbed up.⁹

When she reached the top of the ladder, there was a garden where she saw a man dressed as a shepherd and thousands of people in white. The man welcomed Perpetua and as the crowds said, “Amen,” she woke up. Perpetua told her brother of this vision, and they both believed it proved that suffering was imminent.

In her second dream, Perpetua saw her brother Dinocrates, who had passed away years before. His appearance was sickly: “The wound was on his face, which he had when he died.”¹⁰ She prayed on his behalf. They were separated from one another by a great distance, unable to approach each other. Suddenly, a pool of water appeared and Dinocrates tried to drink from it, but could not reach it. After this dream, Perpetua interceded for her brother, night and day. She later dreamed again of Dinocrates. This time he was healed from his illness, the wound now scarred over. The edge of the pool had been lowered, and now he could drink his fill. With this, Perpetua was confident that the Jesus who delivered her brother would be with her when she faced the beasts.

Her last vision occurred the night before the Christian converts were due to enter the arena. In her vision, a deacon, Pomponius, led her to the middle of the arena with the words: “Do not be afraid: I’m here with you and I’m struggling with you.”¹¹ An Egyptian was brought out to be her opponent. Perpetua found she was a man and was being rubbed with oil, as was customary before a fight. Another man entered, looming larger than the amphitheater and carrying a green branch with golden apples on it. He declared to the crowd: “This Egyptian, if he defeats her, will kill her with a sword; if she defeats him, she will receive this branch.”¹² The man left, and the fight began. The end of the vision is truly incredible:

And when I saw there was a lag, I joined my hands, so that fingers were linked with fingers, and I grabbed him by the head. He fell on his face, and I stepped on his head.

The people began to shout, and my supporters to sing praises. I went up to the gladiatorial trainer and I received the branch. He kissed me and said to me: “Daughter, peace be with you.” And I began to go with glory to the Gate of the Living.¹³

The three visions, vivid with detail, each prophetically points to her martyrdom.

Despite being young in faith, Perpetua stood her ground against her persecutors. The group of converts was brought before a crowd for a hearing. Here, she was repeatedly urged by her father and the procurator to retract her Christian faith by enacting a sacrifice for the health of the emperors.¹⁴ Perpetua looked the procurator in the face and declared herself a Christian. “Then he sentenced us and condemned us to the beasts; we went back down to the jail in good cheer.”¹⁵ Martyrdom was an honor for believers in the early church. It was not something that one chose for themselves but something that they believed God chose for them.¹⁶

Felicitas

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas describes Felicitas as a slave and a catechumen. One of the arrested converts, she would have shared the circumstances of Perpetua and, like her, was baptized. She would have faced the same hearing and verdict. Her name appears in the text later when it is revealed that she was eight months pregnant upon her arrest.

As the day of the spectacle approached, she was in great distress that, because of her womb, she would have to wait (since it was not allowed for pregnant women to be displayed

for punishment) and she would have to pour out her holy and innocent blood later among other criminals. But her fellow martyrs were deeply sad as well, that they would be leaving behind such a good ally as a lone companion on the same path of hope. So in a unified single groan they poured out a prayer to the Lord three days before the show.¹⁷

After the prayer ended, Felicitas went into labor. During the difficulty of childbirth, a jailor asked how she would handle the pain that the beasts in the arena would inflict. Felicitas responded: “Now I’m suffering what I suffer; but there another will be in me who suffers on my behalf, since I am going to suffer on his behalf.”¹⁸ Felicitas gave birth to a daughter, whom another believer raised. Both she and Perpetua were leaving behind infant children for the sake of the gospel.

Martyrdom

As onlookers gathered to view them—

They hurled words at the throng with the same steadfastness, warning them together about God’s judgment, testifying together to the happiness of their suffering, laughing at the noisiness of those crowding around, as Saturninus said: “Isn’t tomorrow enough for you? Why are you so willing to look at what you hate? Friends today, enemies tomorrow! Nevertheless, take a good long look at our faces so that you recognize us on that day!” Then everyone would scatter from there astonished, and many people from among them became believers.¹⁹

Martyrdom came in the next few days. The five believers were brought out into the arena, trembling with joy. Perpetua was calm. Felicitas rejoiced that she had given birth and could now fight the beasts with her family of catechumens. “But the one who said, ‘Ask and you shall receive’ [John 16:24], granted to those asking the end which each one desired.”²⁰ The two women faced their enemy together. Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped naked, clothed in nets, and thrown into the arena with a heifer, but the crowd was disturbed by the sight of the young women, and they were called back and changed into “unbelted outfits.”²¹ The heifer tossed the women around, and Perpetua, when her hair was falling down, took the time to pin it back up. “For it was not fitting for a martyr to suffer with disheveled hair, or she might seem to be mourning in her moment of glory.”²²

Eventually, the group was brought to the middle to die by the sword. Some of them received the sword with silence, but Perpetua shouted in triumph. What is more, “she herself brought the slipping hand of the inexperienced gladiator to her throat. Perhaps so great a woman could not otherwise be killed, who was feared by the unclean spirit, unless she wanted it.”²³

Significance

Perpetua and Felicitas are now commemorated as saints. They are celebrated for their faith and martyrdom on March 7 in Western traditions and February 1 in Eastern orthodoxy. Their likeness is shown in early Christian artwork—frescos, basilicas, and sarcophagi. They are mentioned in multiple works such as the *Martyrs’ Burials of the Codex-Calendar of 354*, the *Syriac Martyrology*, the *Liber Genealogus*, and *The Martyrology of Jerome*.²⁴ Sermons by Tertullian

and Augustine of Hippo mention their martyrdom. Though it might seem strange to modern audiences, the sermons that Augustine preached on Perpetua and Felicitas were joyful. “On this day—observed on 7 March in North Africa—the church celebrated the day of the martyrs’ deaths as their births into eternal life.”²⁵

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas is significant because—as a prison diary—it provides an insider view of martyrdom in the early church from a female perspective. Not only were they two women, but one was pregnant and the other a breastfeeding mother. The depictions of what happened in that jail are notably feminine—Perpetua’s compassion for her family’s suffering, the pain of childbirth and sore breasts, the grace in death. They were mothers, daughters, and sisters.

Most importantly, they were children of God. While they were tortured and beaten, they remained dignified. They sincerely cared for the well-being of their children, having a maternal instinct and love for them that is noticeable throughout *The Passion*. They stared death in the face and did not tremble. They did not allow the cruelty of their jailors to intimidate them. Rather, it moved them to speak up. Instead of being angry at their circumstances, they were joyful. In an oppressively patriarchal society, their faith changed who they were—the weak became strong, the scared became brave, the obedient became disobedient. The wealthy young mother and the pregnant slave turned the tables.

Today, Christians in many parts of the world do not face death threats for their faith in Jesus. It would be insensitive to compare any simple mockery that faith invites to the real danger that Christians in many parts of the world face for theirs. Though many Christians will not have to face martyrdom, others are called to give their lives as witnesses.

As an example, American missionary couple Warren and Donna Pett left their family behind in 1997 and flew to Africa, where they eventually taught agriculture in a Ugandan school. They worked in the Yumbe district, which is largely Muslim. Though the environment became increasingly hostile, their son Saul recalls, “They felt so calm and felt so assured by the way it all came together that they didn’t concern themselves with it because they felt that was where they were supposed to be.”²⁶ On March 18, 2004, Warren and Donna were killed by masked gunmen.

Martyrdom is intimidating. Though Jesus has defeated death, it is natural to fear it. We want death on our own terms, in our own time. Surrendering to Christ means releasing this control. Martyrdom is a calling not only for the brave but for the humble, those whose reliance is entirely on God. Acts 7:55–56 comes to mind: “But filled with the Holy Spirit, he [Stephen] gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” (NRSVue). In the face of death, Stephen encountered Christ. He serves as an example of how Christians are to respond to martyrdom.

Conclusion

And so it happened that “in the early third century, the Romans executed the catechumens Perpetua and Felicitas in North Africa in

**Though many Christians will not have
to face martyrdom, others are called to
give their lives as witnesses.**

ceremonies to honor Geta’s birthday, the younger son of Emperor Septimius Severus.”²⁷ To some, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is a tragedy. Two young women were killed mercilessly, and for what? Religion? But to believers, *The Passion* is a part of our Christian history. It is a story of faithfulness in the most unimaginable circumstances. And uniquely, it is a story of women’s faithfulness from the women themselves.

Notes

1. L. Stephanie Cobb, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2021).
2. Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (HarperOne, 2010) 97.
3. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 23.
4. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 23–25.
5. Holly Beers, “Women in the Early Church,” *BAR* 46/3 (Dec 31, 2020) 66–67.
6. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 25.
7. Jackson Lashier, “Perpetua and the Meaning of Christian Identity,” *WesTJ* (Dec 31, 2019) 5.
8. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 25.
9. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 27.
10. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 29.
11. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 31.
12. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 31.
13. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 31.
14. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 27.
15. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 29.
16. Gonzalez, *Story of Christianity*, 55.
17. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 35.
18. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 35.
19. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 35–37.
20. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 37.
21. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 37.
22. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 39.
23. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 39.
24. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 263–333.
25. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 103.
26. “American Missionary Couple Martyred in Uganda,” *Voice of the Martyrs* (June 9, 2023), <https://persecution.com/stories/american-missionary-couple-martyred-in-uganda/>.
27. Cobb, *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 1.



Michaela Rollins is a graduate student at the University of the Cumberland in Kentucky, pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching. She loves crafting and writing, and her academic interests include biblical languages, church history, and female leadership. You can often find her curled up with a good book, coffee in hand.

The Extraordinary History of the Extraordinary Call

Joan Brown

In June of 1771, John Wesley commissioned Sarah Crosby (1729-1804) as the first female lay preacher in the Methodist connection. He recognized something in Crosby that he identified as “an extraordinary call.” (Before his death in 1791, Wesley recognized forty-one such women.) Prior to Crosby’s appointment as a lay preacher, Wesley had received a letter from one of her ministry partners, Mary Bosanquet. Mary Bosanquet (1739-1815), Sarah Crosby, and Sarah Ryan (1724-1768) had been leading small group gatherings for spiritual growth called “class meetings” and, as women, had received some criticism for it.¹

In her letter to Wesley, Bosanquet says her critics often referred to Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12: “A woman ought not to teach or take authority over a man.” She agrees that a woman ought not to take authority over her husband. But Scripture does not teach that “she shall not entreat sinners to come to Jesus, nor say, come and I will show you what God has done for my soul.” She goes on to say that not every woman—or man—was called to preach, but “some have an extraordinary call to it, and woe to them if they do not obey.”²

In the article just cited, it is implied that Mary Bosanquet introduced John Wesley to the idea of the extraordinary call. However, in his *Explanatory Notes* on 1 Timothy 2:12–14, first published in 1755, Wesley writes: “Let your women be silent in the churches—Unless they are under *extraordinary impulse* [italics added] of the Spirit. For in other cases, it is not permitted for them to speak—by way of teaching in public assemblies.”³ For this reason, some have suggested that it was Wesley himself who created this terminology in order to “interpret and adapt” Paul’s restrictions on female leadership to his particular needs.⁴ In reality, neither Bosanquet nor Wesley invented the extraordinary call. It has a much older lineage.

History of the Term

Its Protestant usage dates back to John Calvin in the sixteenth century. (In his closing remarks in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:11–15, Martin Luther says, “If the Lord were to raise up a woman for us to listen to, we would allow her to rule like Huldah.”⁵ So, he too acknowledges the possibility of an extraordinary call without using the exact terminology.) Calvin uses this terminology, with some elaboration, in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:12:

But I suffer not a woman to teach. Not that he takes from them the charge of instructing their family, but only excludes from them the office of teaching, which God has committed to men only. On this subject we have explained our views in the exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. If anyone bring forward by way of objection, Deborah (Judges 4:4) and others of the same class, of whom we read that they were at one time appointed by the command of God to govern the people, the answer is easy. Extraordinary acts of God do not overturn the ordinary rules

of government, by which he intended we should be bound. Accordingly, if women at one time held the office of prophets and teachers, and that too when they were *supernaturally called* [italics added] to it by the Spirit of God, He who is above all law might do this; but being a particular case, this is not opposed to the constant and ordinary system of government.⁶

We learn here that Calvin acknowledges the extraordinary call as a valid call, coming directly from God. It may actually supersede “the ordinary system of government.” We will explore the meaning of the extraordinary (versus the ordinary) call later in this article. The important thing now is to establish the prevalence of this terminology throughout early Protestant history. It appears to be the preferred way of reconciling Paul’s prohibitions against female teaching and preaching with the biblical record of such activity as well as with the broad egalitarian vision Paul casts in Galatians 3:28. The following examples are just a few of many.

Calvin acknowledges the extraordinary call as a valid call, coming directly from God.

During the tumultuous 1640s in England, we have record of numerous female “prophetesses” and preachers, especially among the more radical Puritan groups. This would include women like Sarah Wight, Elizabeth Poole, Anna Trapnel, Jane Turner, Katherine Sutton, and Anne Wentworth, all Particular (thus Calvinistic) Baptists.⁷ London General Baptist minister, Edmund Chillenden justifies such activity with the following statement:

because the Apostle doth restrayne woemen from preaching, or others speaking in the Church, from whence it is playne, that this prophesying is ordinary, and lies in common to all the servants of Christ, for woemen that are *extraordinarily gifted* [italics added] I affirme, and the Scripture cited with me might preach.⁸

Numerous other Puritan divines reference the extraordinary call. In his *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Matthew Poole (1624–79) makes the following remarks on the 1 Timothy 2:12 passage:

But I suffer not a woman to teach; not to teach in the public congregation, except she be a prophetess, endued with *extraordinary gifts* [italics added] of the Spirit as Mary, and Anna, and Huldah, and Deborah, and some women in the primitive church, concerning whom we read, 1 Cor. Xi. 5, that they prophesied. *Nor to usurp authority over the man:* ordinary teaching of the woman was a usurpation of authority over the man, who is the head, which the apostle also forbade in 1 Cor. Xi. 3, and here repeateth. It is probable that the speaking of some

women in the church who had *extraordinary revelations* [italics added], imboldened others also to aim at the like, which the apostle here directs his speech against.⁹

Poole does not tell us how to discern between those who are endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and those who are usurpers, but he does appear to give considerable latitude to those women with an extraordinary call. In fact, elsewhere, when discussing women in the church, Poole repeatedly supports women with an extraordinary call.¹⁰

Well-known Puritan commentator Matthew Henry (1662–1714) has also weighed in on the extraordinary call. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, we hear echoes of Poole and Calvin:

Or, why should they have this gift, if it must never be publically exercised? For these reasons some think that these general prohibitions are only to be understood in common cases; but on *extraordinary occasions* [italics added], when women were under a divine *afflatus*, and known to be so, they might have liberty of speech.¹¹

Cotton Mather (1663–1728), a Puritan clergyman and theologian in colonial New England, was also acquainted with the idea of the extraordinary call. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, Mather writes:

To speak, more strictly signifies, to discourse and Debate with Men publically, about the Points then agitated. In the synagogue, it was usual for any Man that had a mind, to demand of the Teacher, a further Explication of what he had said. This was not permitted unto the Women. But still, as Dr. Lock observes, They had liberty to speak, when they had an *immediate Impulse* [italics added] and Revelation from the Spirit of God.¹²

It is interesting to note that Mather, best known for his involvement in the Salem witch trials (1692–93), was also open to allowing women to speak with spiritual authority in the church.

Ordained an Anglican priest some years earlier, Thomas Scott (1747–1821) became an evangelical Christian through his association with John Newton. Scott’s widely read commentary series was published between 1788 and 1792. In his treatment of 1 Timothy 2:12, he says: “This rule admitted of an exception, in the case of those who spoke by the Spirit of prophesy.” He again refers to women “under an *extraordinary impulse* [italics added] of the Holy Spirit” in his explanation of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.¹³ Like the others mentioned above, Scott believed that in the church God sometimes does things that are *contra mundum*—in defiance of general opinion.

These are only a few prominent voices that preceded Mary Bosanquet and John Wesley in referencing the extraordinary call. Perhaps the most widely read NT commentary to emerge during the early Methodist period was written by Adam Clarke (1762–1832). In his comments on 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, Clarke reconciles the seeming inconsistency between the biblical record and Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 as follows:

Both places seem perfectly consistent. It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what

we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercate, attempt to refute, etc., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian Church; he orders them to keep silence; and if they wish to learn anything, let them inquire of their husbands at home; for it is perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc. But this by no means intimated that when a woman received *any particular influence from God* [italics added] to enable her to teach, that she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to obey it, and the apostle lays down directions in chap. XI for regulating her personal appearance when thus employed.¹⁴

This sounds a bit like Mary Bosanquet’s admonishment to those who have received an extraordinary call: “and woe to them if they do not obey.” The women whom Wesley appointed as lay preachers preached full-length sermons. These were sometimes built on a biblical text and at other times were evangelistic. They were preached to hundreds of people.

Some contemporary complementarians would lead us to think otherwise: “So Wesley permitted women to say a few words, or ‘exhort’ audiences of both men and women at public gatherings on occasion while remaining in the traditionalist [complementarian] camp.”¹⁵ No, these women were preachers, in every sense of the word. It is true that there were also early nineteenth-century Methodist theologians who opposed women preaching like Sarah Crosby did but even so, they acknowledged the existence of an extraordinary call.¹⁶ It should be clear that the people of God, at least up into the early nineteenth century, had a general familiarity with this terminology. So then, exactly what was an extraordinary call?

**These women were preachers,
in every sense of the word.**

What was an Extraordinary Call?

The seventeenth century Puritans wrote extensively on the extraordinary call. We will look at their writings first since they give us some idea of how the general Christian populace might have understood this term. Prior to the Reformation, there appear to have been references to an extraordinary call, but they were much more restricted and, if valid at all, had to be accompanied by miracles. The idea that God would raise up leaders outside the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy was usually anathema. However, by the seventeenth century, Protestants had significantly altered and expanded the extraordinary call to create a rich body of theological discourse on this topic. After looking at the seventeenth century, we will go back to Calvin, whose views, if properly understood, were truly revolutionary. We will then close with Wesley, who clearly acted on the extraordinary call, adding to the dynamic expansion of evangelical Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The extraordinary call was not limited to women. It had a broader application and was especially important to early Protestants

who found themselves operating outside traditional ecclesiastical structures—sometimes even in opposition to those structures. Again, perhaps the best source of information we have is of the seventeenth-century Puritans.

The “extraordinary” call is frequently contrasted with the “ordinary” or “common” call. Simply put, the latter is a call to ministry that operates through traditional ecclesiastical structures, usually culminating in the ordination or appointment of the called individual to a position of authority in the church. The extraordinary call operates outside human-made structures of authority and comes directly from God. An “extraordinary call” is often coupled with an “immediate call.” We think of “immediate” as “sudden” or “instant,” but in this context it means “direct.” Protestants affirmed two equally valid ways of being sent by God—by an immediate and extraordinary call or by a mediate (indirect) and ordinary call by the church.

The early Reformers and seventeenth-century Puritans referenced a host of biblical examples of an extraordinary call including Moses at the burning bush, John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman at the well, Philip in Acts 8. Jesus himself was thought to have had an extraordinary call, as he clearly operated outside of contemporary channels of religious authority.¹⁷ Think of the many times Jesus was asked, “By whose authority do you do/say these things?”

One wonders how these seventeenth-century believers held accountable contemporaries who claimed an extraordinary call. The general route was to hold them to a standard of right living and right doctrine, referencing passages like Isaiah 8:20: “Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (NIV). Much of the emphasis was personal and subjective. One would recognize an extraordinary call if the one called labored under the Spirit’s conviction that “his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones” (Jer 20:9 NIV).¹⁸

Concerning seventeenth-century applications of the extraordinary call, the Puritans sometimes differed among themselves. Presbyterians recognized its legitimacy only in situations where there was no duly constituted church body (operating within ordinary ecclesiastical structures)—on the American frontier, for instance—whereas Congregationalists allowed laymen and women to exercise an extraordinary call within an established church body.¹⁹ If we consider puritanism as a continuum of ecclesiastical structures, Presbyterians were on the conservative end, followed by Congregationalists/independents, Separatists (the group Americans know as the Pilgrims), Baptists, and finally, on the “leftwing” of puritanism, the Society of Friends/Quakers. The less hierarchical the ecclesiastical structure, the broader the application of the extraordinary call. Southern Baptists today who oppose women in spiritual leadership positions are breaking with well documented historical precedent.²⁰

Most importantly (to the seventeenth-century Puritans), the extraordinary call gave ecclesiastical legitimacy to the Reformation. They spent a good deal of time discussing whether the early Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) were called by ordinary or extraordinary means. They believed Luther, for instance, received an ordinary call when he joined the theological faculty at the University of Wittenberg. After the Diet of Worms, however, when

his teachings began to circulate in the world outside of Wittenburg, his call became extraordinary.²¹

Now and then these seventeenth-century theologians commented specifically on women. The general principles established above applied to laymen and women who were otherwise excluded from church office and spiritual leadership by the “ordinary” rules of government, where “ordinary” means indirect, mediate, man-made.

The extraordinary call operates outside human-made structures of authority and comes directly from God.

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) was a Scottish Presbyterian minister and influential theologian. He was also one of the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. He defined the extraordinary call as follows: 1) that which is immediately from God without other intervening cause; 2) that which is contrary to the law of nature; 3) that which is outside of divine positive law; and 4) that which is against corrupt, wicked and superstitious forms of an ordinary calling.²² (Not all four criteria needed be met.) Rutherford, a Presbyterian, would have been on the conservative end, yet he established a broad arena in which women—with an extraordinary call—can operate. He made the following comments specifically about women:

- “But a woman in no case is capable of administering baptism or the Lord’s Supper, except she were extraordinarily and immediately inspired to be a prophetess.”²³
- “But [1 Cor. 14] v. 34, he sets down a new canon about women who took on them to prophesy publicly, and he inhibits so much as ordinary prophesying, yea so much as speaking in the church; and I deny not but Irenaeus, Eusebius, yea and Tertullian, Cyril, Chrysostom, Theophylactus, with warrant teach that always women extraordinarily inspired may prophesy, for in that God immediately exalts them above men.”²⁴

In the seventeenth century, the degree of liberty a woman had to exercise an extraordinary call was more closely associated with church government (ecclesiastical polity) than systematic theology.

John Calvin

Now back to Calvin. Calvin used the terminology of an extraordinary call without defining it in detail. However, his use of the words “common” and “ordinary” (system of government) tell us a good deal about how Calvin categorized prohibitions against women speaking in church. Calvin taught that “the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very widely separated.”²⁵ When it comes to the role of women in civil government (the temporal kingdom), Calvin appeals to the created order and natural law. These two sources, Calvin proposed, clearly establish women as inferior.²⁶ The kingdom of God, however, is characterized by a liberty and equality that is completely alien to the temporal kingdom. So, how does the organized church operate as an outpost of the kingdom of God in an alien culture? Are women free to exercise their gospel liberty (to teach, preach, and

exhort) within the body of believers? Calvin says “no,” as such activity would be considered immodest and therefore violate principles of order and decorum and cause the gospel to become offensive to some. In his commentary of 1 Corinthians, Calvin addresses the meaning of headship as he seeks to reconcile 1 Corinthians 11 with Galatians 3:28:

Hence as regards spiritual connection in the sight of God, and inwardly in the conscience, Christ is the head of the man and the woman without distinction, because, as to that, there is no regard paid to male or female, but as regards external arrangement and political decorum, the man follows Christ and the woman the man, so that they are not upon the same footing, but, on the contrary, this inequality exists.²⁷

Elsewhere in the same commentary Calvin says, “In the meantime, however, he [Paul] does not disturb civil order or honorary distinctions, which cannot be dispensed with in ordinary life. Here [in 1 Cor 11], on the other hand, he reasons respecting outward propriety and decorum—which is part of ecclesiastical polity.”²⁸ So, while civil order and political decorum are all a part of ecclesiastical polity, Calvin makes it clear that only Christ’s commands are binding on a believer’s conscience. Ecclesiastical laws and observances, in general, fall into the category of human governance that Christians will assent to for the sake of unity and peace, knowing in the end that they are nonessentials, things that Calvin calls “indifferent” (in Greek, *adiaphora*).

He also applies these two-kingdom standards to 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. After affirming Paul’s instructions for women to be silent in church, he concludes: “However, the discerning reader should come to the decision, that the things that Paul is dealing with here are indifferent, neither good nor bad; and that they are forbidden only because they work against seemliness and edification.”²⁹ Calvin reiterates this position in his *Institutes* by citing the example of women’s silence in the church as something that might be completely changed (“inverted”) in the future if the edification of the church requires it.³⁰ Princeton Professor of Historical Theology, Jane Dempsey Douglass, summarizes Calvin’s position as follows:

The commentary and sermons on 1 Corinthians explicitly echo the *Institutes*. Calvin goes far beyond what the text would require to insist on placing Paul’s limitation on women’s freedom in the context of human governance, not divine and eternal law.³¹

Calvin fills out our understanding of the extraordinary call and moves beyond it. He suggests that when the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven, the hierarchy of men over women established by the created order and the fall will disappear. In addition, God is presently, through his church, making all things new.³² The extraordinary call is a glimpse into that new order. The problem with Calvin is that, to our knowledge, he never acted on the extraordinary call. For that, we will now turn to John Wesley.

John Wesley

Throughout his life and ministry, Wesley looked on Methodism as an evangelical order within the Anglican Church. He never fully acknowledged that he had started a new denomination. He appointed a host of lay preachers but did not ordain them.³³ Wesley

believed that since these lay preachers were not ordained, they could not administer the sacraments. This ensured that his parishioners would have to continue attending the Anglican Church, maintaining that connection with the mother church, at least, in theory. It is in this context that Wesley appealed to the extraordinary call.

Just as the Puritans used the extraordinary call to give legitimacy to the Reformation, Wesley used it to give legitimacy to his movement while remaining within the Anglican fold. His lay preachers were “extraordinary ministers,” empowered to preach and evangelize. On the other hand, the Anglican priests were “ordinary” and were thus called to give pastoral care, administer the sacraments, and ordain. Wesley made a fundamental distinction between pastor-priests (ordinary) and preacher-evangelists (extraordinary). He found biblical justification for this division in both Testaments: “It is true extraordinary prophets were frequently raised up, who had not been educated in ‘the school of the prophets,’ neither had the outward ordinary call. But we read of no *extraordinary priests*.”³⁴ Wesley believed the Holy Spirit had empowered preachers and evangelists with an extraordinary call to renew the church and expand God’s kingdom. Some of these evangelists and preachers were women.

He [Calvin] suggests that when the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven, the hierarchy of men over women established by the created order and the fall will disappear.

However, Wesley’s sacramentalism never allowed him to consider the ordination of women. He summarized his position as follows:

Both the evangelists and deacons preached. Yea, and women when under extraordinary inspiration. Then both their sons and their daughters prophesied, although in ordinary cases it was not permitted to “a woman to speak in the church.” But we do not read in the New Testament that any evangelist or deacon administered the Lord’s Supper; much less that any woman administered it, even when speaking by extraordinary inspiration, that inspiration authorizing them for the one but not authorizing them for the other.³⁵

The Anglican in Wesley gave him a conservative bent, compared to someone like Samuel Rutherford, who allowed that women with an extraordinary call might baptize and administer the Lord’s Supper. However, Wesley did appoint a number of female lay preachers, putting abstract theory into practice. It would be Methodism’s more evangelical offspring—the Salvation Army and the Holiness churches—that would first ordain women. In summary, Wesley’s general understanding of the extraordinary call was consistent with what was taught for the two centuries prior.

Conclusion

For any scholar to suggest that in the Protestant tradition there is no historical precedent for women teaching or exercising authority over men in the church is disingenuous. The possibility of a woman having

an extraordinary call was a widely held conviction up into the early nineteenth century and was sometimes put into practice. On the other hand, ordination, considered an indirect, mediate rite, was reserved almost exclusively for men. It was not until later in the nineteenth century that some evangelical denominations began to ordain women. I believe that it is within Calvin's sermons, commentaries, and *Institutes* that we see the most expansive and prescient exposition of the extraordinary call. His views on women in the church grew out of his understanding of the kingdom of God. The coming of God's kingdom was not a return to Eden or creation regained. It was a new heaven and a new earth, radically egalitarian. The created order did dictate the subordination of women to men in civil government and society which, according to Calvin, was part of ecclesiastical polity. But, because it was not foundational to the kingdom,³⁶ the subordination of women in the church was a thing indifferent, a nonessential. He even envisioned a time and/or place when women speaking with spiritual authority in the church might become a normal observance.

Mary Bosanquet and many others, including Martin Luther, believed that, based on Genesis 2, the headship principle was confined to marriage.³⁷ Even then, Paul turns that headship principle on its head in Ephesians 5 by making marriage a picture of Christ's sacrificial love for the church. In addition, Calvin rejected male headship as fundamental to life in the church. Calvin categorized it as a nonessential. In today's world, it is often a detriment to the edification of the church and the advancement of the kingdom. At the very least, an understanding of the historic extraordinary call mitigates against the absolutist position that most contemporary complementarians/hierarchists take. We need to consider the wisdom of those who went before to inform our conversations going forward.

Notes

1. Jennifer Woodruff Tait, "I Received my Commission from Him, Brother," *Christian History* 82 (2004).
2. Tait, "I Received my Commission from Him, Brother."
3. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, vol. 2, *Romans to Revelation* (Baker, 1983) n.p.
4. Frederick A. Norwood, "Expanding Horizons: Women in the Methodist Movement," in *Triumph Over Silence: Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Greenwood, 1985) 152.
5. Martin Luther, *Lectures on 1 Timothy*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 28, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Concordia, 1973) 280.
6. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 21, trans. William Pringle (Baker, 1981) 67.
7. Curtis Freeman, ed., *A Company of Women Preachers: Baptist Prophetesses in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baylor University Press, 2011) 17–18.
8. Freeman, quoting Edmund Chillenden, *A Company of Women Preachers*, 14–15.
9. Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 3, *Matthew – Revelation* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1963) 778.
10. Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 577, 591.
11. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, unabridged, vol. 6 (Kindle edition by B&R Samizdat Express, n.d.) 583.
12. Robert E. Brown, ed., *Biblia Americana by Cotton Mather, America's First Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, *Romans – Philemon* (Mohr Siebeck, 2018) 299.
13. Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 6, *Romans to Revelation* (Samuel T. Armstrong, and Crocker and Brewster, 1831) 428, 187.
14. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus*

- Christ*, vol. 3, *Matthew to Revelation* (Abingdon, 1977) 279.
15. Dan Doriani, "Appendix 1, A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2: 9–15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Scheiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Baker, 1995) 262.
16. See Joseph Benson, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (T. Carlton and J. Porter, 1810) 197.
17. "Quotes 7+," Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent* (1565 – 73), 9th Topic, concerning Holy Orders, from the 23rd Session, Section 4, ch. 4, in *Chemnitz's Works*, vol. 2: *Examination of the Council of Trent*, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
18. "The Extraordinary Call as Understood in Congregationalism," in *The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished*, by John Owen (London, 1644) chs. 4–7. <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
19. "The Extraordinary Call as Understood in Congregationalism," John Owen, *The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished*, ch. 4, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
20. See <https://thegospelcoalition.org/article/faqs-southern-baptists-women-ministry/>.
21. "Rutherford's Distinctions," Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644), pt. 1, Question 5, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
22. "Rutherford's Distinctions," Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644), pt. 1, Question 5, Distinctions 1 – 4, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
23. "Quotes 7+," Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644), pt. 1, pp. 454 – 455, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
24. "Quotes 7+," Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644), pt. 2, p. 303, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/on-an-extraordinary-calling>.
25. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, trans. Henry Beveridge (Eerdmans, 1970) 4.20.1. The Beveridge translation is based on Calvin's 1559 edition.
26. "Inferior" meaning "of a lesser rank."
27. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. William Pringle, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 20 (Baker, 1981) 353–54. First published 1555–1557.
28. Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, 354.
29. John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* in *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Eerdmans, 1960) 307.
30. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10. 31–32.
31. Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin* (Westminster, 1985) 62.
32. John Calvin, *Calvin's Sermons on Galatians*, trans. Kathy Childress (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997) 353. First published 1563.
33. Wesley did finally ordain ministers for American Methodism, citing a lack of ordinary clergy to administer the sacraments on the frontier.
34. Howard A. Snyder, quoting John Wesley, *The Radical Wesley, and Patterns for Church Renewal* (InterVarsity, 1980) 93–94.
35. Howard A. Snyder, quoting John Wesley, *The Radical Wesley*, 94.
36. Calvin makes the following curious but revealing remark in his commentary on 1 Tim 2: "it will be a mingling of heaven and earth, if women usurp the right to teach."
37. See Luther's commentary on 1 Tim 2:11–15.



Joan Brown's journey with biblical equality began 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. Joan taught high school and college level history, and now teaches English to international refugees in St. Louis, Missouri.

How to Give to CBE In Your Will

Benefits of Gifts in a Will

- **Satisfaction:** Experience the joy of putting your resources to work for Kingdom purposes.
- **Availability:** Retain access to your God-given resources for the remainder of your lifetime, or for as long as you need them.
- **Flexibility:** Change your mind at any time about how your charitable gifts are designated.
- **Capacity:** Potentially give the largest gift you'll ever have the ability to give.
- **Impact beyond your lifetime:** Ensure that CBE continues to promote the biblical message that God calls and gifts women and men to serve and lead equally in the home, church, and world.

Language for Your Will

I give to Christians for Biblical Equality, a nonprofit ministry with its principal offices located at 122 W. Franklin Ave., Suite 610, Minneapolis, MN [the sum of \$ ____] OR [____ % of the residue of my estate], to be used [for its general purposes] OR [designated purpose]. If, in its opinion, the need for funds for the designated purpose no longer exists, CBE is authorized to use these funds for a similar purpose.



Women's Work: Vocation in Exodus 2:1–10

Jennifer M. Gash

Exodus 2:1–10, often referred to as Moses's birth narrative, initially caught my attention because of the number of women in the story. I wondered about the practice of wet nursing in the ancient Near East and what this arrangement may have entailed for the baby's nameless mother. I wondered about the baby's sister, who also remains unnamed in this passage. Did she realize that speaking to Pharaoh's daughter was subversive due to their class and ethnic differences? Was this action worthwhile enough to risk the consequences? I wondered about Pharaoh's daughter, too. How did she know the baby was a Hebrew? What compelled her to help him? I wondered about her servants, those who silently drew the baby out of the water but whose mistress takes credit for this action. But most of all, I wondered what it means that God chose to partner with these women in accomplishing God's mission—women whose vocations entailed nurturing and serving, yet were vital to the story of Israel.

The Narrative Context of Exodus 2:1–10

The first eighteen chapters of Exodus detail the "enslavement and subsequent escape" of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.¹ Exod 2:1–10 immediately follows the story of the midwives who save the Hebrew babies against Pharaoh's orders. The midwives introduce the theme of women acting disobediently. They allow the Hebrew babies to live, attributing their helplessness to follow the royal command to the vigorousness of the Hebrew women in delivery. Their role to bring life into the world is quintessentially female; yet, in doing what midwives are meant to do, they are disobeying Pharaoh. Thus, Exod 1 previews what the narrative of Exod 1–2 will be: "resistance literature."² As will become clear, this is not resistance literature for its own sake but for the sake of fulfilling God's purposes for the people of Israel through Moses. Women have a key role in this.

Moses's Mother (vv. 1–3, 8–9)

Though she is unnamed in this passage, readers later learn that Moses's mother is named Jochebed (Exod 6:20). Like the midwives, Jochebed does what mothers are expected to do: She ensures the survival of her baby. After she births a healthy baby that she is supposed to kill, she hides him for as long as possible before concocting a plan to preserve his life. This is a subversive action on her part, but one which emerges through her efforts to fulfill her vocation as mother. Lynn Japinga describes her as "clever, courageous, and quick-thinking," all of which are crucial to Moses's survival.³ These, in Eastern cultures, are perceived as "masculine" traits. There is no indication that her husband is part of this plan. Jochebed is the one who "puts" Moses in the basket and then "places" it in the reeds. In contrast to Pharaoh's command to "throw" male Hebrew babies in the Nile, these actions imply gentle, non-violent life-saving action. These are subversive acts.⁴ We do not know how long the basket is in the river after she places it there, further emphasizing the magnitude of the risk she takes to protect her child.⁵

Elements of the story that follows are atypical, including the conditions of Jochebed's wet nursing. She is part of the enslaved class and from a different ethnic group than the adoptive mother, yet Pharaoh's daughter offers to pay her for her services.⁶ Additionally, though not explicit, the text implies Jochebed is allowed to take Moses home.⁷ Wet nursing contracts ranged from six months to three years; however, it is believed that children were not weaned until three years of age, which means that Jochebed likely has that much time with Moses.⁸ Because his mother raises him, Moses is "nurtured in a Hebrew way," which contributes to his ability to lead his people later.⁹ We infer that Moses retains lessons from his mother that stay with him throughout his life.

It is not clear why Jochebed releases Moses back to Pharaoh's daughter after the terms of agreement are complete.¹⁰ She may fear punishment, but I suggest that she wants what is best for her son. She knows he will be safe in the palace. However, Gale Yee notes that the bond "was not always severed when the nurse handed over the child," so it is possible that Moses continues in relationship with his birth mother after he moves to the palace.¹¹ This would allow Jochebed to continue to instill Israelite values in Moses, despite him being steeped in Egyptian culture.

Thus, God's plan for the people of Israel is effected through the routine and unremarkable responsibilities of a woman—birthing, nursing, and nurturing.¹²

Moses's Sister (vv. 4, 7–8)

Moses's sister is first mentioned by name as "Miriam the prophet" in Exod 15:20. She plays a critical role in how the plot unfolds.¹³ The text does not explicitly say that her mother instructs her to watch over her brother after they put him in the basket. It does say that she "stood at a distance." It is important to Miriam to know what is going to happen to her baby brother (Exod 2:4). Miriam exhibits fewer traits that a modern reader may expect from a woman in the patriarchal ancient world, as her vocation in this story is not related to birthing, nursing, or nurturing. However, her shrewdness is instrumental to reuniting her family—a trait she shares with various other women in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴

As an unmarried daughter, Miriam's primary role is serving the family, which she does through her cleverness. Miriam is not able to stage a coup to overthrow Pharaoh, but she is able to defy his rules. Japinga describes her as "smart," for she orchestrates the plan for Jochebed to take care of Moses.¹⁵ She is also seen as "cunning" and "sly" in effectively tricking Pharaoh's daughter into going along with her plan.¹⁶ In the previous chapter, the midwives Shiphrah and Puah are praised and rewarded for engaging in trickery when it furthers a greater aim.¹⁷ Thus, there is no indication that Miriam's "trickster" role in this narrative is unethical. Rather, Mary Obiorah and Nkiruka

**God's plan for the people of Israel is effected
through the routine and unremarkable
responsibilities of a woman—birthing,
nursing, and nurturing.**

Okafor describe Miriam as “audacious, empathic, and persuasive.”¹⁸ Miriam is bold to speak to Pharaoh’s daughter, despite their class and ethnic differences. Perhaps they connect over a shared concern for the well-being of a child, a value in both of their cultures.

Miriam’s empathy and service to her family aligns with the expectations placed on women in her time, but her bolder traits reflect that she—like various other women in the Hebrew Bible—has a personality which leads her to actions outside of those related to reproduction.

Pharaoh’s Daughter (vv. 5–10)

Pharaoh’s daughter intends to go to the river and bathe like on any other day, but on seeing a basket in the water, she sends her attendants to inspect its contents. We have no indication of whether she suspects there would be a Hebrew child in it, but she instantly realizes this once she opens the basket. William Propp suggests various reasons that Pharaoh’s daughter would have known he was a Hebrew child. It could be because he is in the Nile, because of his clothing, or just through the fact that he has been abandoned.¹⁹ She “takes pity on him,” the usual response to an abandoned baby crying. Anyone can have pity on a baby, but what Pharaoh’s daughter does next is extraordinary.

She is “moved by compassion” to save the baby she sees in the water.²⁰ This Hebrew phrase used to describe the princess’s motivation to care for Moses is used elsewhere in Scripture to “describe the protective affections of a parent for their child in the midst of destruction.”²¹ She treats him as a son from the moment she meets him. Obiorah and Okafor observe that the princess proves “her feminine quality of compassion” when she sees Moses.²²

Rescuing the infant and arranging for his care, Pharaoh’s daughter thwarts her father’s plan, which “contributes to his failure.”²³ Her vocational position of power allows her to perform this subtle act of defiance which has a larger impact than she anticipates. Though unnamed herself, she gives Moses his name. She translates his name as “I drew him out of the water.” The name is an active participle that can be rendered “one who draws out.” As such, the name “foreshadows his future” as the one who will lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.²⁴ Pharaoh’s daughter, though belonging to the opposing people group, acts in the quintessentially feminine role of mother through showing compassion to Moses. In turn, there are far-reaching positive effects for the Israelites.

Pharaoh’s Daughter’s Attendants (v. 5)

The Hebrew word for the women who accompany Pharaoh’s daughter (*na’aroth*) has been translated in various ways. It can mean “young

women” generally but also refers to “maidservants” or “attendants,” especially “those of royalty.”²⁵ “Attendants” fits the context.

These attendants do not speak in the text, but they act, for they are the ones who draw Moses out of the water. Though Pharaoh’s daughter takes credit for this action in her naming of Moses, readers know that the attendants actually did so. They play an essential role in saving Moses’s life and by doing so inadvertently play an essential role in the eventual liberation of the Israelites from slavery. Obiorah and Okafor note that they could have endangered Moses.²⁶ Hoping to be rewarded, they could have informed Pharaoh of a Hebrew baby in the palace, but they say nothing. Though we cannot know why they do not speak out, it is perhaps because of their loyalty to their mistress or because of their womanly nurturing inclination. This makes them attendants of not only the royal family, but also of Moses, and—by extension—of God’s people.²⁷ Though their vocation carries limited power, Pharaoh’s daughter’s attendants—through an ordinary act of obedience to their mistress—become critical characters in both this narrative and in the larger story of the Israelites.

The Women in Moses’s Birth Narrative

Pharaoh completely underestimates the women in this story, not realizing this small group of women would thwart his plans. His order in Exod 1:22 is to “let every daughter live” and to kill all the sons born to the Israelites. He does not realize “just how dangerous daughters could be,” as his own daughter and the daughter of an enslaved Israelite couple work together in saving the child who would lead the Israelites out of Egypt.²⁸ He seems to forget that women “play a crucial role in the biological reproduction of a people,” meaning that the Israelites would continue to grow as a population if the daughters were allowed to live.²⁹ Unnamed mothers, daughters, and attendants—seemingly of no consequence—outsmart Pharaoh within their everyday vocational roles.

Akkadian mythology from the third millennium BC tells the story of a baby who is drawn out of the water and who later becomes a national hero: Sargon of Akkad. His mother also gives birth in secret and places her child in a basket in a river, not knowing what his fate would be.³⁰ Sargon also comes under “female protection” at the beginning of his life and is given a name related to water: Aqqi (from which “Akkad” derives) means the “drawer of water.”³¹ Whether or not the Moses story is intentionally parallel to that of Sargon is not what is important here. Rather, difference in detail is what matters. In Sargon’s story, a man—not women—goes to the river to drink and finds the baby in the water.³²

Both Moses and Sargon go on to become great leaders, but only Moses is helped by women to get there. God chooses to partner with women to raise up a future leader. This reflects the character of the God of the Israelites. He is a God who makes women indispensable to the story of Exodus by working through their routine and unremarkable vocations.

Overall, the work of these women can be summarized as “caring actions.”³³ These are the distinctives of their routine roles as women. But those roles subvert royal authority and undo the enslavement of Israel. While some of the traits displayed are traditionally masculine³⁴ and are critical to the plot, the task of saving the infant Moses could

not have been done by men. Men could not birth, could not nurse, and could not nurture in the way these women collectively did.

Women and Their Vocations

Today, many women have vocations that extend beyond giving birth, nursing, caring for children, and other unpaid labor encompassed by the term “women’s work.” However, it is important for women whose vocations lead them to lives full of diapers and feeding bottles to know that they, too, are serving God. Those who are inclined toward nurturing and mothering are no less vital to God’s kingdom than those who attend seminary and pursue ordination.

With the increasing number of women who work outside of the home and serve the church in formal capacities, it is worth the reminder that not every woman has the same vocation. Kenneth Ngwa compares the culture of ancient Israel to that of the Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria—both being cultures in which women “operate in the background.”³⁵ Like the women in this story, women in Igbo culture “powerfully propagate the good course of society.”³⁶ Though women can operate in the foreground as well, it is important not to lose sight of the “background” work that many women do.

Ngwa reminds readers that both of Moses’s mothers, biological and adoptive, saved his life, and “not knowing what he would be in the future, they prepared for the salvation of the whole nation.”³⁷ Women who raise their biological children, raise adopted children, and take care of other people’s children do not know who those children will become. They do not know what God’s specific purpose for them is, but they can instill values in those children that will equip them to further the kingdom of God.

Some women, like Pharaoh’s daughter, demonstrate compassion. Others, like Miriam, display courage. God asks us to be the women that we are, not to try to be men or to try to be other women. God has a place for women who see themselves in Pharaoh’s daughter, who have positions of influence. God has a place for women like Jochebed and Miriam who would risk anything for their families. God has a place for women who do not see themselves in this story but identify with women in leadership positions like Huldah or Deborah. God wants to partner with each woman to fulfill God’s mission, and the women in Exod 2:1–10 show that it can be done within our vocations and through our unique personalities.

Notes

1. Nyasha Junior, “Exodus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Westminster John Knox, 2012) 56.
2. Gale A. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me’: Wet Nurses and Resistance in Ancient Israel,” *BTB* 39/4 (2009) 185.
3. Lynn Japinga, *From Widows to Warriors: Women’s Stories from the Old Testament* (Westminster John Knox, 2020) 40.
4. William Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (Yale University Press, 2021) 154.
5. Japinga, *From Widows to Warriors*, 40.
6. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 184–85.
7. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 182.
8. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 185; Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 152.

9. Sonia Kwok Wong, “The Birth, Early Life, and Commission of Moses: A Reading from Hong Kong,” in *Exodus and Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan and Gale A. Yee (Fortress, 2012) 145.
10. Junior, “Exodus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 59.
11. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 185.
12. I do not imply these are the *only* responsibilities women in the ancient world had; rather, these are responsibilities that only women were able to have.
13. Junior, “Exodus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 59.
14. Shrewdness is also exhibited by Lot’s daughters (Gen 19), Tamar (Gen 38), Shiprah and Puah (Exod 1), and Jael (Judg 4), to name a few.
15. Japinga, *From Widows to Warriors*, 43.
16. Mayer I. Gruber, “On Miriam and Jochebed,” in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol L. Meyers et al. (Eerdmans, 2001) 186; Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 181.
17. Exod. 1:21–22 says God “dealt well” with the midwives who deceived Pharaoh and “gave them families” as a result. In Judg 5:24, Deborah sings, “most blessed of women be Jael,” for she tricks Sisera to give the Israelites victory over the Canaanites.
18. Mary J. Obiorah and Nkiruka C. Okafor, “Moses’ Mother in Exodus 2:1–10 and Mothers in Personal Names among the IGBO People, South-East Nigeria,” *AcT* 40/1 (June 2020) 86.
19. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 151.
20. Japinga, *From Widows to Warriors*, 40; J. Cheryl Exum, “Exodus 2:5–10—Daughter of Pharaoh,” in *Women in Scripture*, ed. Carol L. Meyers et al., 186.
21. Mal 3:17, referenced in Kenneth Ngwa, “Ethnicity, Adoption, and Exodus: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of Exodus 2.1–10,” *JSOT* 38/2 (Dec 2013) 173.
22. Obiorah and Okafor, “Moses’ Mother,” 86.
23. Melissa A. Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: A Subversive Collaboration*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford University Press, 2012) 69.
24. Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible*, 73.
25. Carol L. Meyers, “Exodus 2:5—Attendants of Daughter of Pharaoh,” in *Women in Scripture*, ed. Carol L. Meyers et al., 186.
26. Obiorah and Okafor, “Moses’ Mother,” 86.
27. Meyers, “Exodus 2:5—Attendants of Daughter of Pharaoh,” 186.
28. Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible*, 76.
29. Yee, “‘Take this Child and Suckle It for Me,’” 187.
30. Junior, “Exodus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 59.
31. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 155.
32. Junior, “Exodus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 59.
33. Mikael Larsson, “In Search of Children’s Agency: Reading Exodus from Sweden,” in *Exodus and Deuteronomy*, ed. Brenner-Idan and Yee, 83.
34. By masculine traits, I mean those *commonly* used to describe men in the Hebrew Bible, including courage, cleverness, and quick-thinking. As mentioned above, there are various examples of women behaving with these traits; these are not exclusive to men, nor do I imply they are God-ordained for men to exhibit rather than women.
35. Obiorah and Okafor, “Moses’ Mother,” 83.
36. Obiorah and Okafor, “Moses’ Mother,” 83.
37. Obiorah and Okafor, “Moses’ Mother,” 83.



Jennifer M. Gash is an MDiv student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and serves as the Connections Director at Waves Church of Christ in Malibu, California. She will soon begin her PhD in Old Testament at Baylor University where she plans to study women in Old Testament narrative and law as well as comparative Semitics.

Re-Oranting the Church: Metaphor and the Erasure of Image-Bearing

Daniel Schwabauer

One of the more subtle consequences of the Reformation is the way iconoclasm shaped our ability to recognize the metaphors of Scripture. Protestants in the Western church are often not very good at thinking in images, preferring instead the conceptual logic of texts and tending to ignore the implicit. This in turn can lead to being blind to interpretive possibilities suggested by biblical imagery.

To understand what I mean, consider first this line from Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Put out the light, and then put out the light."¹

This may be the most disturbing bit of dialogue in the play. It works because the simple repetition of four common words conveys two very distinct meanings, one literal and the other metaphorical: first Othello will snuff out the candle in his bedroom, then he'll strangle Desdemona in bed. These two meanings are completely transparent to the audience, which is what makes the ensuing action so packed with tension. We see the killing coming, but we're powerless to stop it. The literal and metaphorical meanings work together to advance the story.

This is also how we process life. We use metaphors every day, often unconsciously, to understand the world and each other. Metaphors work by joining distinct things that don't at first seem to be connected. They aren't similes. They don't say that one thing is *like* another. Metaphors claim that one thing *is* another thing—and usually a very different sort of thing. A man's home *is* his castle. Time *is* money. Life *is* a roller coaster.

One of the more subtle consequences of the Reformation is the way iconoclasm shaped our ability to recognize the metaphors of Scripture.

Metaphors are useful because they help us understand realities that aren't obvious by filtering them through the characteristics and nuances of something else. In writing, "his fists were clubs," for instance, an author can import the violence and cruelty of a blunt weapon into the personality of a character. The result is not just a physical description of strength, but the invisible aspects of brutality and domination that are overlaid onto the character's humanity.

In other words, metaphor is a powerful way of conveying depth through association, and in particular the association of imagery. This is why I believe our Protestant heritage of iconoclasm, or image-breaking, is still impacting our ability to understand Scripture even when we lament the statue-smashing, tapestry-tearing, stained-glass window-shattering history of the iconoclasts. Consequently, we tend to be blind to certain theological images that make sense of passages which are typically unpacked through textual assumptions that are

incomplete or inaccurate. This essay will focus on one example, the role of the female orant, or praying person, in understanding Paul's instructions about head coverings in 1 Corinthians and what his imagery means to us today.

The Legacy of the Reformation

In prioritizing text over images, the Reformers fractured not just the stained glass and statuary of the medieval church, but the essential nature of our contemporary imagination. While it's true that many Protestant denominations have retained aspects of symbolic imagery in their liturgical practice, church architecture, and clerical tradition, still it is evident that, as a whole, we've made the gospel a matter of conceptual truth and downplayed the importance of embodied truth. We've said that the story had to be conveyed through text, and through text alone, and thereby have elevated one type of symbolic meaning over every other type of symbolic meaning. When we replaced the sanctuary altar with a pulpit, we did more than highlight the importance of Scripture; we prioritized words over images—and we've been doing so ever since.

Even when we do recognize metaphorical thinking in the Bible, it is often in ways that point to propositional truths rather than to concrete images. For instance, the Greek word for "head," *kephalē*, can—though not as commonly as in English—be used metaphorically to mean authority. (Think "head of household" on your tax forms.) That it can be used to mean a literal human noggin while simultaneously pointing to a deeper truth—"head over heels," for example—doesn't seem to occur to us. At least, it doesn't occur to us when we interpret the Bible.

Instead, our theology is driven by propositions and doctrines that, however true, are often difficult to imagine. Try to picture *righteousness by faith*, for instance, or the *infallibility of Scripture*, or even something as simple as *grace*. You'll end up scratching your *kephalē*. Like the first phase of creation, concepts are always formless and void—and we seem to like it that way. Since the Reformation, it's nearly impossible to use St. Patrick's three-leaf clover analogy as a picture of the Trinity without someone helpfully pointing out that a shamrock's leaves are distinct *parts* while the Godhead consists of distinct *persons*. "All analogies break down," someone will say, as if this obviously means that analogies are therefore pointless.

In prioritizing text over images, the Reformers fractured not just the stained glass and statuary of the medieval church, but the essential nature of our contemporary imagination.

Or take *penal substitutionary atonement*; what precisely does this mean to us today apart from Jesus on the cross? The answer may be found in thousands of complex and theologically sound sermons, none of which will ever approach the power of crucifixion imagery. Yet we continue to prioritize the exposition of the gospel story over its experiential nature as a story. Deep concepts may be summarized through text, but capturing their nature requires embodiment. And it is this embodiment that many—though not all—evangelical traditions have failed to explore.

Consequently, and perhaps not without some justification, our theology tends to be oriented around the particularizing linguistics of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. We miss the synthesizing nuances of metaphor and metonym that require indirect association. We miss these connections because whenever we encounter a difficult text in the Bible, our primary explanatory filter is the words themselves, not how those words create layers of meaning. So we turn first to the original text; then reluctantly to its historic and cultural context; then, perhaps in desperation, to doctrinal principles. (*We know Paul was talking about authority here, right? So that must be what this is about. Head equals “boss.” Got it.*) Rarely do we ponder other possibilities related to Scriptural metaphors—even though Jesus himself prioritized the use of metaphor in his teachings.

I can’t say with any certainty why do we do this, but I suspect it’s because we’ve been indoctrinated into a distrust of images, and that distrust is so deep and unconscious that we extend it even to the source of imaging, our own imaginations. I suspect that iconoclasm has distorted our ability to think like the early Christians.

Head Coverings and the Orant

Nowhere is this absence of metaphorical theology more apparent than in our ubiquitous puzzlement over Paul’s instructions about head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. (1 Cor 11:3–5 NIV)

Suggested resolutions for the idea that women should pray with their heads covered (but men should not) vary widely. Perhaps the most prominent of these is simply reading the word “head” as a metaphor for “boss” in verse 3 but as a physical head elsewhere. The husband is the woman’s “head,” but only for one verse. Few readers who interpret the passage this way seem to think that a woman who prays must physically cover her husband while doing so. Thus, the *head* = *boss* reading often gets generalized into a doctrine of male authority.

A second, less common, interpretation of the passage incorporates the practice of head covering in Corinth at the time: women who covered their heads showed they were under the protection of a powerful father or husband and were therefore not someone to be mistreated. If this was Paul’s intent, the letter is liberating in its symbolic demonstration of God’s protection for vulnerable women, but it also leaves much of the passage still puzzling since it does not seem to fully account for Paul’s references to angels and to woman-as-the-glory-of-man.

A third idea—and there are many more—considers the historical possibility that long or loose hair was considered sexually provocative, in which case the passage could be directing men to pray “uncovered” (have short hair) but for women to put their hair up instead of letting it hang down. As with other interpretations, such a reading leaves the universality of Paul’s instructions—the implication that all of the churches should comply in verse 16—baffling to modern Christians.

I list these briefly not to dismiss such interpretations but to indicate the measure of our universal befuddlement. Many scholars have tackled the passage with great insight regarding the language of this letter and the historical context in which it was written. But the fact so many believers are still puzzled seems to indicate a continuing dissatisfaction with these answers, thoughtful though they may be. Generally speaking, we don’t think this passage has been fully understood and we don’t really know what to do with Paul’s instructions. At any rate—and with some exceptions—the majority of Western Christians don’t *behave* like we really believe women should cover their heads when they pray, though in America men will often remove their hats. (To be fair, this may be a vestigial tradition of respect. Plenty of men also de-hat at the playing of the national anthem.)

We miss the synthesizing nuances of metaphor and metonym that require indirect association. We miss these connections because whenever we encounter a difficult text in the Bible, our primary explanatory filter is the words themselves, not how those words create layers of meaning.

Many teachings on this passage begin with an assumption that Paul is writing about authority, and that the framing language of verse 3—“But I want you to realize”—is simply a polite phrase introducing the pattern that follows. This assumption misses the implication that Paul’s audience is about to receive something they may not otherwise understand. He wants them to see the practice of congregational prayer and prophecy with new eyes, to understand something that *isn’t* obvious. This undercuts the idea that Paul intends to establish a divine pattern that places God above the man and the man above the woman because such a pattern was already ingrained in the ancient world. Indeed, it is ingrained in us still. Rather, what we’re meant to “realize” is the *transformation* of that pattern. But seeing congregational prayer and prophecy with new eyes is difficult if we approach the text with presuppositions of a hierarchy. This is why it’s almost impossible for contemporary readers to consider the possibility that when Paul uses the word *kephalē* in this passage he means a literal human head but in a metaphorical X = Y construction.

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Cor 11:3 NIV)

Instead of reading this as an example of who's bossing who, I suggest that the essential framework is the early church tradition of congregational prayer and prophecy to which Paul is pointing, and that framework depends on an image-based metaphor rather than one based in the concept of headship or governance. When Paul uses the word *head* here, he means an actual human head, something capable of being literally covered by a prayer shawl.

Now obviously this raises two questions: how can a man's physical head *be* Christ? And how can a woman's physical head *be* man/mankind?

The answer lies in the same basic metaphor Paul uses in Ephesians 5:22–23 and 2 Corinthians 11:2, that husband and wife are not just a human image but a divine image, the united image-bearers of Genesis 1:27. Seen this way, the man and the woman are, together, a picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5:32), and that union is in turn a picture of heaven and earth.

The man, in other words, is a symbol or representation of Christ—a cosmic logo for the *Logos*—even when he is not very Christlike as an individual. And the woman is likewise a symbol or representation of the church—the whole church, all of us, male and female—“for we are members of his body” (Eph 5:30 NIV). Even when the woman is not on her best behavior, she is nonetheless a kind of Nike swoosh for redeemed humanity. And it should be obvious that in their symbolic capacity neither of these symbols, the man nor the woman, is based in the self. Each is meaningful because it points *outside* the self to something else.

The imagery of this interpretation makes sense of the entire passage—but only if we recognize early church imagery. That is, the metaphor Paul uses depends on a recognition of the picture he has in mind, the picture that serves as his reference point—that of the orant, or praying person. In *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*, author Alan Kreider explains the significance of the orant to Christian worship:

Christians adopted the orant—typically a female—as the most common depiction of the Christian. They could do this confidently, because the stance of the orant was the stance of the Christian at prayer. . . . The outstretched hands indicated innocence but also mimed the cross. . . .”²

The orant, in other words, was the man or woman who stood in front of the congregation and either prayed to God on behalf of the church or prophesied to them as a mouthpiece of heaven. Furthermore, those who served as an orant always stood in the same posture: feet together, arms outstretched, eyes open and looking heavenward. Robin M. Jensen notes that, “The majority of surviving examples are female, male parallels are less abundant,” later adding that, “Early Christian writers noted that the prayer posture imitated the appearance of Christ on the cross (Minucius Felix, Oct. 29.7–8; Tertullian, Or. 14).”³

An orant thus presented to their congregation one of two images. A man stood in the posture of crucifixion; he imaged Christ. A woman in this posture portrayed supplication and surrender; she imaged the church. This may be the concrete, embodied image Paul's metaphor points to. Indeed, we can point to it even today

because those early Christians left the image for us. It is painted again and again in the catacombs as a memorial for the dead. There it's recorded as a defining identity, as if to say that in life this person may not have been wealthy or powerful, but they stood for God and for the church, and could anything be more important?⁴ And orant imagery wasn't just commemorative; scholars are now recognizing that a ritual element was likely present too.⁵ I don't mean to suggest that the orant is the point. I mean only that the orant is the primary image, perhaps the only image, through which Paul's metaphor can be understood. We might say that it is the *equals* sign of his $X = Y$ language.

It should be obvious that in their symbolic capacity neither of these symbols, the man nor the woman, is based in the self. Each is meaningful because it points *outside* the self to something else.

Picture, then, a male orant of the first century in a crowded, candle-lit room standing in the posture of crucifixion, praying or prophesying to his brothers and sisters in the Lord, and hear Paul's words again:

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. (1 Cor 11:3–4)

Whether he's praying or prophesying, a man in this posture is imaging the embodied *Logos* that bridges heaven and earth. As long as he stands before his congregation as an orant, he represents Christ on the cross. Wearing a *tallit* (prayer shawl) is inappropriate for a male orant because it suggests a limitation of Christ. Wearing it would suggest a symbolic need for covering when in fact Christ is that covering. Or, to put this even more simply, men should stop wearing a prayer shawl when they serve as an orant because doing so visually portrays something untrue about God.

Or again, picture a woman standing as an orant, bathed in the flickering light of that same household and reflecting in her very posture the supplication of the church—arms outstretched, eyes and hands raised, the very glory of mankind—and listen to Paul's concern for the image of prayer she represents:

A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. (1 Cor 11:7–10 NIV)

Woman-as-the-glory-of-man is not a hierarchical statement but a collective one. This woman standing before us represents all of us, the whole congregation, male and female. And her glory is covered not because she is a woman but because she is our glory, and as Paul tells us in the first chapter of this same letter, “no flesh should glory in his

presence” (1 Cor 1:29 KJV). This woman who prays or prophesies before the congregation, whoever she is and whatever position she holds in the church, is not just a woman, and her head is not just a *kephalē*. For as long as she stands there speaking and imaging and embodying the rest of us, she doesn’t represent women or wives or even the act of submission. She represents humanity—both men and women—and because she is the image of God but also the glory of man, she covers her head to image properly our right of access. Many translations refer to this head covering as a “symbol of authority,”⁶ which is to say a token of the power to appear before the throne of grace. But, we who have been brought into the family of God have been brought near not through our own merit or glory but through something far beyond human achievement. The woman who serves as orant is a reminder of this fact.

That covering on the female orant’s head is not a sign of her being under the authority of her human husband. It is rather, the authority of the covenantal blood of Jesus. When she speaks to or for God, she speaks as his Bride—the Church. Which is why it matters that woman was created for man; without that understanding—the X of an X = Y—we would perhaps miss the startling revelation that the church was made for Christ.

To be clear, I don’t think this interpretation implies that women must cover their heads whenever they go to church. Just as the priest entering the holy of holies donned the glory of his garment only when going before God’s presence on behalf of the people (Exod 28:2, 29), the essential principle is that the metaphor matters because it points to a spiritual reality. But that reality must be imaged properly. If the church were to bring back the function of the orant—an idea for which we may not be ready—then I think Paul’s instructions to the church at Corinth might regain their original power and significance.

**We were image-bearers once. But in our
zeal to eradicate idols from our midst we
seem to have hammered out a new one,
making of our sacred and inspired text
something besides “the Scriptures that
testify about me [Jesus]” (John 5:39 NIV).**

It’s probably more important that we return to the power and significance of imaging, of embodiment, and of recognizing the depth of metaphor in Scripture. We were image-bearers once. But in our zeal to eradicate idols from our midst we seem to have hammered out a new one, making of our sacred and inspired text something besides “the Scriptures that testify about me [Jesus]” (John 5:39 NIV). Instead of following these words of life to the Word of Life, instead of letting the Bible testify about the incarnate *Logos* who joins heaven and earth, we have flattened the words into imageless patterns and propositions. We have re-made ourselves from image-bearers into text-bearers. And in so doing we have missed the point, which is Christ. I daresay we have put out the light, and then put out the Light.

It’s not that the gospel isn’t meant to be shared with words, or that the gospel texts of the New Testament aren’t meant to be read—and read regularly. I mean only that the gospel isn’t a matter of words only, or even of words first. It isn’t, as we seem to unconsciously accept, a set of propositions that must be believed unto salvation, the bullet-point statement of faith on every church’s website. The gospel is a story that must be lived. It must be embodied, and embodied by the body of Christ, the church—male and female.

In the end, the gospel is a Person to be followed, the Word made flesh, the very image of the invisible God.

Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, act 5, scene 2, line 7.
2. Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Baker Academic, 2016) 204–5.
3. Robin M. Jensen, “Ritual and Early Christian Art,” *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*, ed. Risto Uro et al. (Oxford University Press, 2018) 589–90.
4. Such ceremonial respect for the orant may have even earlier roots in the OT; David’s last words, recorded in 2 Sam 23:1–7, are not a recollection of his wars or his building aspirations but of the simple fact that God spoke *to* him and God spoke *through* him. For us this should come as a rebuke not only of our materialism but of our text-only approach to Scripture.
5. “Among the visual images that decorated early Christian tomb chambers and stone sarcophagi are depictions of individuals engaging in certain ritual activities. ... One common motif among these funerary images is a frontally rendered and veiled figure with arms extended to indicate the act of prayer.” Jensen, “Ritual and Early Christian Art,” *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*, ed. Risto Uro et al., 588.
6. ESV, NET, and NASB all use this phrase. Young’s Literal Translation uses “[a token of] authority.”



Daniel Schwabauer, ThD, teaches English at MidAmerica Nazarene University and writes award-winning fantasy and science fiction. He earned an MA in creative writing under science fiction legend James Gunn and completed his doctoral work in semiotic theology with Leonard Sweet. He lives in Olathe, Kansas, with his wife and dogs.

Annie Royale Taylor (1855–1922): A Missionary Adventurer in Tibet

Ian Randall

In 1894, *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* published an article, “My experiences in Tibet,” by Annie Royale Taylor. The article was derived from a paper that Annie Taylor read at meetings of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) in Edinburgh and Glasgow in December 1893.

She began by saying that in addressing members of a learned society, she regretted that owing to her “lack of scientific knowledge and the want of instruments,” she was unable, during what had been her recent travels in Tibet, to make observations that carried scientific weight. However, she felt that because Tibet was so little known in Britain, her experiences had value. She wanted to make clear that she had appreciated the Tibetans as “hospitable, friendly, trustworthy, and by no means averse to intercourse with Europeans.” She described in some detail a gruelling journey of seven months in 1892–1893 in which she had hoped to reach Lhasa, with its Palace of the Dalai Lama. A Chinese man, Noga, who was part of her group, not only stole from her and threatened her life, but took defamatory information about her to Lhasa chiefs. This contributed to making her aspiration to reach Lhasa unachievable.¹

Various writers have found Annie Taylor a fascinating character. William Carey Jr (1788–1853), a son of the well-known William Carey who pioneered Baptist mission in India, was in Tibet in 1899 and subsequent to meeting Annie there was able to publish her diary of her 1892–1893 trek.² More recently, Jo Woolf, a Writer-in-Residence for the RSGS, wrote in 2016 about Annie’s spiritual ambitions, as well as commenting on all that was involved in her travels—with others—in the early 1890s, which included combatting sub-zero temperatures, wind-chill, and oxygen starvation. Jo Woolf said that “it is absolutely astonishing to think that she survived,” since there were occasions when she was equipped “with just a simple tent and a sleeping bag.”³

More than one biography covers Annie as a traveller but does not investigate the spiritual call at the core of her endeavours.⁴ However, as this study shows, Annie Taylor’s spiritual motivation was crucial to her travels. She was an adventurer and explorer, although as one commentator put it, her geographical knowledge was “of the vaguest character.”⁵ Yet, what was primary for her was to bear Christian witness where that had not happened before, notably in Tibet.

Formative Influences and Spiritual Initiatives

Annie (originally Hannah) Taylor told aspects of her own story of adventure and witness in a book, *Pioneering in Tibet* (1895).⁶ She was born in Egremont, Cheshire, UK, on 17 October 1855. Her father John Taylor, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, was himself a traveller. It was said by some that he spent the greater part of his life “wandering” in parts of the world. He was a director of the Black Ball shipping line. His wealth, as a result of his business, meant that his

wife, who was Brazilian, and their ten children, enjoyed privileges; they travelled and lived in several countries.

In Annie’s case, her health was so poor in her early years that she was not expected to live. The medical diagnosis was valvular heart disease. At age nine she nearly died from an attack of acute bronchitis. One consequence of these health issues was she had limited early schooling, although she was able to have later education in England and in Germany, as well as studying art for a time in Italy. Another result of her situation was that she was left to her own devices to quite an extent. This produced a headstrong spirit which was helpful in moulding an intrepid outlook, but caused considerable tension at home.⁷

The spiritual journey that eventually took Annie to China and then Tibet began at age thirteen at a Sunday evening service in a Congregational Church in Kingston-on-Thames. She had been in the habit of going to church or chapel, but at the close of this particular service she seemed to hear a voice which spoke of Christ’s death as being for her. She came to a personal acceptance of Christ and resolved to read the Bible and follow God’s way for her life. It was not clear to her what she could do, but another turning point was at a meeting held by the leading evangelical, Lord Radstock. Among those at this meeting was Syrie Louise Emsley, who married and then worked alongside the Christian philanthropist and founder-director of homes for poor and deprived children, Thomas Barnardo. She bluntly asked Annie when Annie was going to work for Jesus. In a typical response, Annie went looking on the streets of Richmond-on-Thames to find a poor person to help, but failed to find anyone.

The call to become a missionary overseas came when she was sixteen. She was at a boarding school by that stage—Clarence House School, Richmond—and she heard a talk by John Moffat, the son of the pioneering missionary in Africa, Robert Moffat.⁸ John Moffat addressed himself to the young men in the audience. He did not seem to see the need to encourage young women, despite his mother, Mary Moffat, being an outstanding woman who was fully involved in pioneering alongside her husband and who at times had greater faith than he had regarding the outcome of their work.⁹

Annie did not feel restricted by the call being directed towards young men. The mission to which she was attracted was the China Inland Mission (CIM), with its entrepreneurial “faith” principles and acceptance of women. She began to make plans to join CIM, with a view to Tibet. Her father was adamant that he would not support her. However, Annie was as strong-minded as her father, perhaps even more so, and although she did not find a way to go overseas at that point, she sold her jewelry and so was able to rent accommodation in London. This was especially so that she could undertake training as a nurse.

In 1884, she was accepted by CIM and sailed to China, to be located in Gansu Province on the border of Tibet. In her journey to China, she was accompanied by a friend, Nellie Barclay, who went on to marry another CIM missionary, Tom Botham, and served in China until 1927.¹⁰ Annie learned Chinese and worked for a time near the Tibetan frontier. In 1887 she visited the monastery where the French priests, Gabet and Huc, had learned Tibetan.¹¹ Her CIM service was, however, tumultuous and ended prematurely after three years. She was such a strong individualist that colleagues found her difficult. Nonetheless, Hudson Taylor, the founder of the CIM (no relation) appreciated her spirit and Annie spoke of the friendship of Hudson Taylor and his wife Maria as “one of the joys of my life.”¹²

Entering Tibet

The choice that faced Annie after her CIM period was either to return to Britain or to find a new direction to achieve her Tibetan goal. Her health was still an issue so she had a period of recuperation in Australia. Her father had by this time accepted her way of life and was giving her support, as was her mother, who had come to a new spiritual experience while in Italy.

On returning to Asia, this time to India, Annie was initially in Darjeeling and came to know missionaries, such as the Scottish Presbyterians, John A. Graham and his wife Katherine, in Kalimpong.¹³ Her father came out to India to see her. As a member of the Royal Geographical Society, he could bring back informed reports. Annie spent a year in the Indian state of Sikkim (West Bengal) and from there she could see snow-capped peaks that were the way into central Tibet, and to the holy city of Lhasa to the north. For Tibetan Lamaism, a form of Buddhism, the city was a shrine. Sikkim was a “gate” to Tibet.¹⁴ Annie lived in basic local accommodation to understand more of life in the region and learn the Tibetan language. As an outsider who was asking about Tibetan customs, she came under suspicion. At one stage there was an attempt to poison her by offering her eggs laced with aconite. During the time she spent close to the Tibetan fort of Khambajong, a Tibetan chief objected to her presence and ordered her back to Darjeeling. She then found a relatively safe space near a Tibetan monastery.¹⁵ Having endured considerable mistrust in her early days, it is to Annie’s credit that she later became accepted in the Tibetan context.

During the period Annie was in Sikkim, she learned to speak Lhasa Tibetan. Further, the training she had in London meant that she was capable of basic medical help. One person she treated was Pontso, a nineteen-year-old young man escaping from cruelty in Lhasa. In her subsequent travels, Pontso was her companion. Having embraced the Christian faith through Annie, he (and later his wife) became her firm support and fellow evangelist.

In 1891 Annie moved from India to China, together with Pontso and a small team she gathered. Gnatong was to be a longer-term base. China was seeking to keep anyone from Britain or Russia out of Tibet, as these political players in the “Great Game” discovered Tibet’s potential for trade.¹⁶ Despite the dangers, or perhaps because of them, Annie was determined to keep Lhasa firmly in view. Preparations for a journey into Tibet began. Cooking pots and pans, supplies of food, sleeping bags, cloth for barter, and gifts for any

chieftains, were all gathered for the expedition. Annie adopted as much of the local way of dressing as she could. Her “library,” carried in the folds of her sheepskin gown, consisted of a New Testament and Psalms, a hymn-book, and Daily Light devotions. Six people and sixteen horses set off on 2 September 1892 for what would become the famous 1892–1893 trek, following a Tea or Silk Road used by merchants. Mary Russell described Annie, their leader, as a “rocklike and forceful woman.” These qualities were essential.¹⁷

At a later time, William Carey Jr, based at Serampore, India, visited Annie Taylor, after having read her *Pioneering in Tibet*. He regarded the claim to be a “pioneer” as unfortunate since the Moravians had been active in these regions since 1856.¹⁸ (Annie was well aware of this, and before producing *Pioneering* had paid tribute to “the heroic Moravians” and their translation of the New and part of the Old Testament into the Tibetan language.)¹⁹ On his visit, Carey was excited when Annie opened a drawer and took out a black, fairly dirty and wet, notebook. It was a diary she had kept during 1892–1893. He did not attempt to read it, as it was evidently written in a kind of shorthand, but he was intrigued, and later asked Annie if he could borrow the diary. He managed to decipher and transcribe the 162 pages and was then able to publish it along with other work on Tibet.

The choice that faced Annie after her CIM period was either to return to Britain or to find a new direction to achieve her Tibetan goal.

The diary had vivid accounts of warding off bandits and robbers, sleeping out in the open, and navigating frozen waters. There was much to create interest from a cultural standpoint; for example, Annie’s record of her encounter with members of a tribe, the Golok, known to be ferocious fighters with raiding parties 2,000 strong, who had never been subdued by either Tibet or China. The expedition fell into the hands of one of their clans, but as it happened, this clan was ruled by a female chieftain, Wachu Bumo. When Bumo heard that Annie’s group was led by a woman, she gave her protection.²⁰

The widely read evangelical paper, *The Christian*, which followed her activities, hailed Annie as opening the way into Tibet, as David Livingstone had done into Africa.²¹

However, it proved impossible for Annie to achieve her goal of reaching Lhasa, despite the fact that after travelling almost 1,000 miles only three more days of travel remained. The message from Lhasa was that officers would bar her entry. She protested, and although Lhasa remained prohibited, she was able to obtain a tent, horses, and provisions for the return to China.²² The group was by then diminished, because one member had proved untrustworthy, and another had died due to the extreme conditions.

The remaining members turned east and reached the border town of Tachienlu (Kangding) in April 1893. Isabel Robson, a prolific and popular author of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, recorded that Annie “was most kindly received” by French Catholic missionaries there.²³ Annie now concluded that she needed to recruit a team from Europe for Tibet.

The widely read evangelical paper, *The Christian*, which followed her activities, hailed Annie as opening the way into Tibet.

Recruiting a Team

In July 1893, back in London, Annie approached the CIM's London Council about her vision. There was some logic in CIM including Tibet in its purview, as a protectorate of China, but the CIM view was that outreach to Tibet would need to be from India and the CIM could not make India part of its mission.²⁴ A suggestion was made that Annie might link with the International Missionary Alliance (later the Christian & Missionary Alliance, CMA), which was based in the USA and had an interest in Tibet.²⁵ The CMA in early years gave considerable space to women, but this lessened over time.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, Annie did not warm to the suggestion of being absorbed into a much larger body. She proceeded to set up her own Tibetan Pioneer Mission and the CIM expressed its full sympathy.²⁷

Meetings were set up across Britain, and these attracted large audiences, especially in Scotland. She was making her experiences in Tibet known in various publications.²⁸ She had avowed and able publicists on her side, such as Annie Marston, a missionary writer who produced a book, *The Great Closed Land: A Plea for Tibet* (1894).²⁹ At meetings, Pontso, with Annie as translator and with both in Tibetan dress, shared his story and experience of Christ, asking for help for “his brothers and sisters in Tibet.”

Annie, in her talks, appealed for twelve missionaries for Tibet. It seems clear that Annie's “warm heart, her keen merry eyes, her manner full of engaging frankness, her light-hearted acceptance of the discomforts inseparable from the performance of her task” inspired her audiences.³⁰ Evan Mackenzie, from Dingwall in the north of Scotland, was among the first to respond. He was accepted to travel accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth, and their infant child.³¹ There were six others from Scotland—from Peterhead, Aberdeen, and Peterculter in the north, and Dunfermline, Lochgelly, and Greenock in Scotland's central lowlands. Only two came from England (from London). Unusually for a small British-based initiative, four were Scandinavians who were seeking mission opportunities: Theodor Sørensen and Edvard Amundsen (Norway), Johan Johansen (Sweden), and Anders Jensen (Denmark). A public farewell meeting for the “Tibetan Pioneer Mission” band was held in London's Exeter Hall, an evangelical centre that hosted many large events. The report in the CIM's *China's Millions*, stated that Annie regarded her mission agency as a “child” of CIM.³²

With the help of her CIM contacts, Annie had managed to assemble an impressive set of “referees” for her Mission including Hudson Taylor himself. An influential female supporter was Annie Macpherson, based in the East End of London. She offered food, shelter and various kinds of industrial or domestic training to children, initially to boys, and by the 1880s also to girls, wives, and mothers. She was also holding well-attended evangelistic meetings at the time when Annie Taylor knew her. Leading figures in the large interdenominational Keswick Convention,

an annual evangelical gathering in the English Lake District, also lent their support, including Elder Cumming, a Presbyterian minister in Glasgow, H. B. Macartney, an Anglican clergyman in Melbourne, Australia, and Robert Wilson, of Cockermouth, a Quaker who was one of the founders of the Convention in 1875. With such support, by early 1894, the Tibetan Mission's newsletter happily announced that sufficient money had been received to fund the team's journey to India and their early months there.³³

On 23 February 1894, the team set sail from the Royal Albert Dock on the steamship *Manora*. The journey, the arrival in Sikkim, and then what proved to be the difficult move to Gnatong, were recorded by one of the team members, Henry Martyn Stumbles. He was only twenty when he volunteered to join Annie in the new mission. His home was Lewisham, in southeast London. His committed evangelical family had given him the name Henry Martyn, after the inspirational nineteenth-century missionary from Cambridge who went to India and then to Persia. Stumbles noted in his papers that to be involved in missionary service was the “realisation of a long-cherished desire.” He had begun medical studies. (Annie had wanted qualified doctors but did not manage to recruit them.) The reports by Stumbles on the Tibetan Band's experiences were extracts that he took from his personal diary, and these were published in 1895–1896 in the newspaper, the *Kentish Mercury*, under the heading “A Lewisham Man in Furthest India.” On his return to Britain, Stumbles began to preach in Baptist, Methodist, and Free Church of Scotland congregations, communicating his interest in crossing cultures. He subsequently obtained his medical qualifications at the University of Edinburgh and had medical practices in England.³⁴ Annie's influence continued.

Divergent Directions in Mission

Though Annie had recruited a gifted team, she probably did not have the gifts to lead such a large and diverse group. Divergence took place. Carey later records that within a few months of settling in Gnatong, an “inevitable” breakdown of relationships occurred. This was due to “incompatible elements” between Annie and her recruits “which ought to have been foreseen.”³⁵ Her CIM experience should have flagged this. On some issues, her views were markedly at variance with those of the team.

Annie found Gnatong a place of interest, while for Stumbles (and probably others) it was completely inhospitable. No accommodation had been arranged. It is also almost certain that a group of men at that time would not have previous experience being led by a woman.³⁶ In 1895, a notice in *China's Millions* stated, somewhat ingenuously, that Annie Taylor, “notwithstanding her remarkable energy and endurance, has found the burden of leading the Mission too heavy for her.” She had requested “friends she knew” to invite Cecil Polhill-Turner, who had been a member of the famous Cambridge Seven who went to China with the CIM, to take responsibility for the Tibetan Band members. He and his wife had served on the Chinese-Tibet border. He was pleased to help, as he put it, in “setting free Miss Taylor for the more direct work of pioneering, a work which lies so near her heart and for which she is so especially suited.”³⁷

For her part, Annie was deeply disappointed. Only one of the team, Anders Jensen, wanted to remain with her, but sadly, he died of typhoid. In a letter to Hudson Taylor's wife, Maria, in January

1895, Annie claimed that the men had wanted a mission “on a big scale like the established Church Missions,” and that they “did not understand trusting God & going forward.” This was clearly not the case, since most team members eventually accepted a transfer to the small scale CIM. One of them, William Soutter, from Peterhead in north-east Scotland, became a leading figure in CIM work on the Chinese-Tibetan border. Sørensen, who also joined CIM, was the first Protestant missionary systematically to compare crucial aspects of the Christian and Buddhist faiths.³⁸ In March 1896, Polhill-Turner and Hudson Taylor agreed that the Tibetan Mission would be officially affiliated with CIM.³⁹

Annie, meanwhile, told Maria that she was “asking for sisters” to go with her. She had concluded that the men “found hardships in things which the sisters in China would praise God for.”⁴⁰ Making her new appeal for women, Annie wrote that work in Tibet meant (as she knew) “suffering cold, privation and other hardships.” She asked for “women of God, who knowing the difficulties and counting the cost, will willingly give their lives to the work of God” in Tibet. She assured that they would find, as a blessing, that “Tibetans respect women.”⁴¹

For over a decade from the mid-1890s onwards, Annie was settled in Tibet, trading in a shop she set up. The *Regulations regarding Trade, Communication, and Pasturage* attached to the 1890 Sikkim-Tibet Convention had permitted British traders to reside in Yatung, in the Chumba Valley. The shop, dedicated to medicines and small items, was popular. Annie saw her work as “missionary” in character.

Meanwhile, her appeal for “sisters” elicited a response. In an 1897 booklet, *Pioneering in Tibet*, she named Bella Ferguson and Mary Foster as coworkers. Among their activities—alongside the shop—were giving out Gospels and illustrated “Text Cards” in Tibetan and Chinese. These amounted to several thousands over time. The cards, produced by Emma Grimké in Manchester, were translated into over fifty languages.⁴² Copies of the Gospels even found their way into monasteries. Merchants who passed through were among those who asked for literature. The three women were making friends with local people, and on Christmas Day 1896, a tree was lighted and over 200 Tibetans and Chinese came to have tea, cake, bread and jam, and receive gifts. Annie also gave a magic lantern show on New Year’s Day. (This is an early image projector, which used pictures on glass plates, a lens, and a source of light. Missionaries were among those who used them.) Some British soldiers who came to be stationed nearby began to attend meetings. On two evenings each week there were evangelistic meetings, with another evening devoted to Bible study and still another to a prayer meeting. Annie reported that “some of the men have decided for Christ,” and that one, John T. Collier, a former lance corporal from the Manchester Regiment, was her “right hand helper” in work among soldiers. He then left the army to study at the Methodist Cliff College, Derbyshire.⁴³ This was evidence that Annie could work with men.

The time with female coworkers was fruitful. Bella Ferguson reported being given a new name by the local women—Anni Saba. The term “Anni” was one given, out of respect, to single women. It was also a term for Buddhist nuns. Bella began to teach local children. She made local visits such as to a Tibetan chief who had rented a storeroom and housing to Annie. He was pleased, together with his wife, to meet Bella. At the local temple she and Mary also found a warm reception and were shown Buddhist prayer-wheels.

Annie, Bella, and Mary could all sing, and they had managed to procure a harmonium for musical accompaniment. The Tibetans were “enchanted with the playing and singing.” The ladies used hymns and songs to convey the Christian message. Some locals and itinerant travellers were coming back to meetings again and again. One notable visitor, who came with his wife on several occasions, was the Prime Minister of Bhutan. He took a copy of the Gospel of John. Bhutan, together with Nepal and Tibet, constituted “closed lands” and in his book on that subject, J. A. Graham drew attention to Annie as a trader at Yatung who was “working and witnessing” and whose “notable expedition” had taken her near to Lhasa.⁴⁴ Bella Ferguson concluded her report by saying that quite a few Tibetans “had been healed in the name of Jesus by the laying on of hands in answer to prayer.”⁴⁵ Trade, witness, medicine and prayer for healing all went hand in hand.

By 1899, however, despite her efforts, Annie was once again left without her British coworkers. They were denied extended permission to stay, presumably by the British authorities. Distribution of the Scriptures remained essential for her, and funds were available for that. But Annie spoke of being exhausted, and her sister Susette, who with another sister had visited Annie, wrote in 1904 about Annie as “the only Englishwoman in Tibet.”⁴⁶ In 1903–1904 there was a British invasion of Tibet, motivated by a fear of Russian influence. Initially, Annie sympathised with the British perspective and volunteered as a nurse to give medical help to the wounded. But as more and more Tibetans were killed, she found herself at odds with the British military. As always, her concern was for Tibetans. Her verdict in 1905, writing to *The Christian*, was that “the prestige of Britain has been weakened all along the border between Tibet and India, the only gain in this respect being on the part of China.”⁴⁷ Annie was feeling great strain and in 1907 she left the region for good: “Completely broken down by the stress of work, anxiety and disappointment, she returned to England where, her friends hoped, a prolonged rest would restore her to health.”⁴⁸ Restoration was at best partial.

Conclusion

Annie Royale Taylor’s pioneering endeavours and reports thereof did a great deal to raise the profile of Tibet in evangelical missionary thinking. Her early life, with her health limitations, did not hold out promise of what she became, but her powerful faith, sense of missionary calling, and her spirit of adventure led to achievements that were remarkable. After her trek of 1892–1893 she was able to mobilise a team for Tibet, and although she largely failed to retain their allegiance, a number of them continued to serve in the region, several with CIM. William Soutter and Theodor Sørensen served long-term with the CIM. So did James Moyes. (Interestingly, he eventually had a rose native to western China, *Rosa moyesii*, named after him.) Edvard Amundsen, too, was with CIM before joining the Bible Society. Evan and Elizabeth Mackenzie stayed in Kalimpong in the service of the Church of Scotland mission.⁴⁹

Annie was able to live in Tibet for over a decade and her missionary witness, for a time with two other women, was significant. But it seems evident that from the 1880s to the early twentieth century she had overstrained herself, physically and mentally. The hoped-for full recovery in England did not happen, despite care from sisters and brothers in her large family. In later life Annie lived in Otto House,

a psychiatric hospital in Hammersmith, London. She died there. Like many of her contemporaries she was “a sincere and zealous missionary,”⁵⁰ and uniquely, a missionary adventurer.

Notes

1. *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 10/1 (Jan 1894) 1–8.
2. William Carey, *Travel and Adventure in Tibet: Including the Diary of Miss Annie R. Taylor's Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu Through the Heart of the Forbidden Land* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1902). Annie's diary is reproduced in pages 137–285.
3. Jo Woolf, “Annie Taylor: Breaking into Tibet, with Cold Tea and a Christmas Pudding” (unpublished, 2016). I am grateful to Jo Woolf for this text, which began as a blog. The title refers to Annie making tea which had to be drunk before ice formed, and at Christmas, making a pudding.
4. For example, Luree Miller, *On Top of the World – Five Women Explorers in Tibet* (The Mountaineers, 1984); Jane Robinson, *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford University Press, 1994).
5. Graham Sandberg, *The Exploration of Tibet* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1904) 211.
6. Annie R. Taylor, *Pioneering in Tibet* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1895).
7. Isabel Robson, *Two Lady Missionaries in Tibet* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., 1910) 11–13. This book looked at Annie and at Dr. Susie Carson Moyes.
8. For one account of Robert Moffat, see William Walters, *Life and Labours of Robert Moffat* (London: W. Scott, 1883).
9. John himself wrote about his parents: John Moffat, *Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1885).
10. See the book by her daughter, *A Life Worth Living: Nellie Botham of North China* (London & Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1939).
11. For their work, M. Huc, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China, During the Years 1844–5–6* (London: National Illustrated Library, 1852).
12. Ruth A. Tucker, “Unbecoming Ladies,” *Christian History*, 52 (1996) 30–33; Taylor, *Pioneering in Tibet*, 6.
13. Some missionaries in the Darjeeling/Kalimpong region hoped to move into Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal. See J. A. Graham, *On the Threshold of Three Closed Lands* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1897).
14. See L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1895); J. A. H. Louis, *The Gates of Tibet* (Calcutta: Catholic Press, 1894).
15. Annie R. Taylor, *Tibetan Pioneer Mission: The Origin of the Tibetan Pioneer Mission Together with some Facts about Tibet* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1894) 2–3. I am indebted to John Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold: Annie R. Taylor's Tibetan Pioneer Mission, 1893–1907,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* 50/1–2 (2014) 91–116.
16. Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game* (London: John Murray, 1990).
17. Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt* (Coogee, Australia: Flamingo, 1994) 46.
18. Hermann G. Schneider, *Working and Waiting for Tibet: A Sketch of the Moravian Mission to the Western Himalayas* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1891); John Bray, “Christian Missionaries on the Tibetan Border: The Moravian Church in Poo (Kinnaur), 1865–1924,” *Tibetan Studies* (1892) 369–75.
19. Taylor, *Tibetan Pioneer Mission*, 4.
20. William Carey, *Travel and Adventure in Tibet: Including the Diary of Miss Annie R. Taylor's Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu Through the Heart of the Forbidden Land* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902). Annie's diary is in pages 137–285.
21. “Miss Annie R Taylor. Chinese Missionary and Traveller in Tibet,” *The Christian* (17 August 1893).
22. Jo Woolf notes that the first European woman to enter Lhasa was a Frenchwoman, Alexandra David-Néel, in 1924.
23. Robson, *Lady Missionaries in Tibet*, 78. For early Catholic mission, see Filippo de Filippi, ed., *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoia, S.J., 1712–1727* (London: George Routledge, 1937).
24. Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold,” 96, citing School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library Archives and Special Collections. China Inland Mission archives: Minutes of 18 July 1893, London Council Minute Book [LCMB], vol. 7, 141–42.
25. Wenwen Li, “Kansu-Tibetan Border in the Eyes of American Christian and Missionary Alliance Missionaries,” *Ching Feng: A Journal on Christianity and Chinese Religion and Culture* 14/1–2 (2015) 71–90.
26. Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford: Regnum, 1994) 301.
27. Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold,” 96, citing Minutes of 5 Sept 1893, LCMB, vol. 7, 153; Minutes of 2 Oct 1893, LCMB, vol. 7, 164.
28. For example, Annie R. Taylor, “An Englishwoman in Tibet,” *National Review* (September 1893) 19–35.
29. Annie Marston, *The Great Closed Land: A Plea for Tibet* (London: S.W. Partridge; New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1894) 107–8. This was publicised in *The Spectator* (1 Dec 1894).
30. For this, see Robson, *Lady Missionaries in Tibet*, 79–81; D. Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge, 1965) 124.
31. Taylor, *Tibetan Pioneer Mission*, 7.
32. “The Tibetan Pioneer Mission,” *China's Millions* (1894) 46–48.
33. Taylor, *Tibetan Pioneer Mission*, 9, 10.
34. See Henry Martyn Stumbles Papers, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, HS/1–HS/11. My thanks to the librarians. The letters can also be searched through the British Library Newspaper Archive.
35. Carey, *Travel and Adventure*, 143–44.
36. Inbal Livne, “The Many Purposes of Missionary Work: Annie Royale Taylor as Missionary, Travel Writer, Collector and Empire Builder,” in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. H. Nielssen, I. M. Okkenhaug and K. Hestad-Skeie (Brill, 2011) 59 full page range, 43–70.
37. *China's Millions* (1895) 6. For Polhill-Turner see John Usher, Cecil Polhill: Missionary, Gentleman and Revivalist, Vol. 1 (1960–1914) (Brill, 2020).
38. Published later as *The Difference between Christian and Buddhist Teaching Concerning God, Creation, Man, Sin, and Salvation* (Kalimpong, India: World Mission Prayer League, 1962).
39. Annie Marston, *With the King* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1905) 171–72.
40. Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold,” 107, citing Annie Taylor to Mrs. Hudson Taylor, 19 Jan 1895. SOAS CIM archives. CIM/JHT Box 15/412–419/Letters 1895–1899.
41. Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold,” 108, citing Annie Taylor, May 1895, a printed letter included in Tibet Pioneer Mission pamphlet. SOAS CIM archives. CIM/JHT, Box 15, letters 1895–1899.
42. These cards were also used by Susie Carson Rijnhart (later Moyes). See her *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* (London: White Lotus, 1902) 202, 212.
43. Annie Taylor, report and letter dated “Gnatong, 1895,” in *Pioneering in Tibet* (London: Morgan & Scott; Delhi: Pranava Books, 1897) 52–57.
44. Graham, *On the Threshold*, 44.
45. Bella Furguson report, *Pioneering in Tibet* (1897) 58–70.
46. Susette M. Taylor, “The Only Englishwoman in Tibet,” *Wide World Magazine* 13 (1904) 391–401, 440–44, 528–34.
47. “The Present Position in Tibet,” *The Christian* (20 July 1905) 16.
48. Robson, *Lady Missionaries in Tibet*, 112.
49. Bray, “Stumbling on the Threshold,” 113. For a wider picture of Mission relating to Tibet see Paul Hattaway, *Tibet: The Roof of the World* (SPCK, 2020).
50. Livne, “The Many Purposes of Missionary Work,” 68–70.



Ian Randall is a Baptist minister who has had local church pastorates, was a hospital chaplain, and for twenty years was a lecturer in church history and spirituality at Spurgeon's College, London, and in Prague. He has written extensively in these areas. He is a Senior Research Associate of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide.

More Than a Woman: Anne Hutchinson's Testimony for the Holy Spirit

Patrick Oden

The mid-1600s was a wild time in church history, much more than most people realize. With the changes in Europe and the newfound opportunities and challenges in the American colonies, there was a stirring of ecclesial discontent and rediscovery. Some of these new directions were quite unorthodox, while others can be called orthodox but not conventional. Among the latter, we can think of those like Roger Williams (1603–1683), George Fox (1624–1691), or Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643). Fox tells us a lot about himself, and we are privileged to be left with a significant amount of Williams's writing. The same is not true for Anne Hutchinson.¹ Though she did not formally lead a movement, her influences continued in various ways and her insights on the Holy Spirit continued to be driving arguments for why women are so important to the ministry and life of the church. Given this, some may see Hutchinson as a proto-feminist in a time of supposed intense misogyny. Others may see her as an antinomian ranter rising up against an oppressive religious theocracy, an early seventeenth-century warrior who can speak into our times. The reality of her situation is more complex.²

Born Anne Marbury in 1591 into the family of an English cleric in Alford, Lincolnshire, she received a privileged education. After her marriage to William Hutchinson, the couple followed the preacher John Cotton, a leading English Puritan who unconventionally emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. When Cotton emigrated to the British colonies in America in 1633, the Hutchinsons followed a year later and took up residence in Boston, part of the developing settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in New England. Besides working as a midwife, Hutchinson began to assert herself in the religious sphere. She began hosting meetings for women in her home, where she would pick up on the sermons Cotton preached at church and expound them further. Soon, men, such as the governor of the colony, Henry Vane, began to attend these meetings. It is for the theological tenor of these activities that she was eventually taken to stand trial.

Puritan on Trial

As mentioned, Hutchinson did not leave did not leave substantive writings or teachings. Her only direct testimony is, in fact, literally a testimony! Her testimony to the court in Boston concerned an array of charges laid against her in the years 1637–1638, few of which were actual legal violations.³ “I am called here to answer before you,” she says, “but I hear no things laid to my charge.”⁴ Her trial was, in many ways, a coming together of a vast number of historical developments that reflected the great religious struggles of her century and beyond. She represented, in her person, the coming wave of resistance—spiritual resistance—of later colonists.

John Winthrop, the magistrate, opened the trial by noting that Hutchinson had been “called here as one of those that have

troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here.”⁵ He continues, “You are known to be a woman. . . .” For some commentators, this is enough to develop the narrative of Hutchinson's crimes, focusing on a feminist narrative of Hutchinson charged primarily with “talking while a woman.”⁶ Yet, while Winthrop mentions her gender, this is descriptive rather than emphatic, and it is what he continues to say in his charge that is most important. “You are known to be a woman,” he says, “that hath had a great share in the promoting and divulging of those opinions that are the causes of this trouble and to be nearly joined not only in affinity and affection with some of those the court has taken notice of and passed censure on.”⁷

The gruelling trial she was forced to endure came about because she not only dared assert a leadership role as a woman but did so claiming that it was the Holy Spirit who inspired this work.

She had participated in the causing of troubles. This seems a vague charge, but not vague in the minds of those who brought her to trial. Hutchinson was being charged with speaking theologically unacceptable doctrine, and in doing this, she had also “spoken divers things as we have been informed very prejudicial to the honor of the churches and ministers thereof. . . .” Specifically, she was accused of telling others that most of the ministers in Boston were not ministers of Christ but of antichrist due to their promotion of what she saw as a theology of works. Though not publicly, she was undermining ministers through conversations in her home and elsewhere. She also participated in quiet forms of resistance such as getting up and leaving, along with other women, when such a minister was going to begin preaching. She attributed such an act to “feminine issues,” and thus made refutation embarrassing.

Winthrop ends his list of charges by addressing Hutchinson's leading meetings in her house. This, finally, is a specific gender issue: “You have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor fitting for your sex.”⁸ This indicates how discussions about women's roles and opportunities were not fixed. When given the opportunity and space, many women and men sought to express their freedom in ways that the authorities rejected.

These charges were, it seems, an attempt to forestall a rising independence that had both issues of theology and issues of authority at the root. Hutchinson was not simply a wayward woman who needed to be put in her place.⁹ For those in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the issue was—at first, at least—a more narrowly focused theological quibble. It involved how different people answered the

question, “How do I know I am saved?” There were two answers to this question being offered in the early days of Massachusetts.¹⁰

One camp argued that we could examine our lives for signs of sanctification. Those who held this approach were called sanctificationists. A number of ministers in early New England held this view, most notably among them Winthrop and Thomas Shepard. The other camp argued that we can be assured of our salvation only by a direct testimony of God into our hearts—the Holy Spirit would testify to us. This was the free grace movement to which belonged Sir Henry Vane, Hutchinson, and her brother-in-law Thomas Wheelwright.¹¹

Discerning the Work of God

This issue of the Holy Spirit was a key Reformation topic. The free grace movement argued that sanctificationists were teaching a salvation by works. For the most part, this early debate went on behind the scenes, in private conversations or indirect forms of protest. Among the most important disputants was Hutchinson, who did not have a pulpit but rather had, it seems, an engaging way about her, a strong intelligence, and independence of thought. Further, and to her advantage, she was involved in those particular aspects of community which were not open to men. She increasingly, it seems, made note that many ministers were no longer real servants of Christ, but in their teaching of salvation by works—in her estimation—they were antichrists, leading the new community of Boston astray, leading them back toward the despised doctrine of Catholics.

Her opponents were not slow to react. The idea that salvation could only be validated by a direct witness of the Spirit appeared to them a dangerous teaching. It was far too similar to a rash of heresies that had begun by emphasizing a newfound revelation by the Spirit and had led to lawlessness and immorality. Like many heresy hunts, similarity of language sparked accusation of full blown heresy, with the results of these heresies being trumpeted as the reason for “wayward” believers.¹² Among the more “dangerous” heresies being noted were the Familists and the Anabaptists.¹³

Due to the nature of the mission of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, these theological issues easily drifted into divisions of power and identity. Jeffrey Kahl writes that “the Puritan elders of New England primarily proceeded against Hutchinson not for theological reasons but for the very practical purpose of maintaining the implementation of their vision.”¹⁴ Kahl goes on to bring his own experience as a pastor to his analysis of the situation: “I think of the numerous conflicts that I have endured in my job. . . . As the person in the leadership position, I have often found that the integrity of my vision for ministry would have been jeopardized if my opponents were allowed free reign. Thus, I had to accept the hard burden of confronting those individuals, explaining their errors, and in some cases, removing them from their positions.” Such a response raises the question of why one person’s vision should be prioritized over another’s. The ministers of New England, on both sides of this issue, had theological reasons behind their vision, but they had to clarify why their vision was the “right” one.

More than simply being a woman who dared to make her opinion known, Hutchinson was a central leader for one side in the struggle

for power and control. As such, her trial was about community and religious politics, with theology used to drive the accusations.

In her trial, Hutchinson showed herself to be extremely adept at countering the accusations.¹⁵ She had, it seemed, mastered the art of displaying herself as an intelligent leader while staying within the cultural expectations of a woman. Indeed, it can be argued that she exploited these expectations by working behind the scenes to constantly undermine the influence of the sanctificationists. Her opponents turned this tactic against her, making public what she thought was private, and exposing what she had carefully kept out of public view. This put her on the spot to respond openly to specific charges and in doing so, to speak about the theology that underpinned her ministry.

Beyond the Bible

Hutchinson was finally banished from Massachusetts Bay colony—not over the competing theologies of free grace and sanctification, but because of her assertion that the Holy Spirit spoke to her directly. This moved the argument into radical directions. Like most of the church in the West (as opposed to the Eastern Orthodox), Puritan pneumatology tended to subsume discussions about the Holy Spirit within the topics of soteriology and ecclesiology. The issue of how the Holy Spirit worked in salvation was the direct reason for the trial, but surrounding this was a rising disagreement about the Holy Spirit’s wider work within the Christian community.

While it was agreed that the work of the Spirit permeated the whole ministry of the church, it was thought that the Spirit’s work was focused through the Word, namely, the preaching of the Word by ordained ministers.¹⁶ Hutchinson’s claim that the Spirit spoke to her directly was perceived as a significant slight against the established church order. Whether this was a statement of Hutchinson’s personal experience or was part of a wider conversation within her community, we do not know. But, it seems to be the impetus for both her unwillingness to accept correction and her assumption that she would prevail.

Indeed, this seemed a possibility earlier in the trial. She was extremely adept at parrying the various charges related to the primary soteriological issues. Her husband, William, was not an active part of her trial, but his experience as a deputy for the court certainly was a factor in her understanding of courtroom tactics. Hutchinson faced her accusers mostly alone and, despite her lack of formal education, showed herself to be more than the equal of her accusers. She was humble and thoughtful in her response, willing to admit her ignorance or misstatements at times, while also continuing to hold to her overall positions. This, no doubt, drove them even more to rid themselves of this “troublesome” woman.

It was not their charges, however, that led to her defeat, and thereby the defeat of the free grace faction in Boston. Rather, in a move that still flummoxes many historians, Hutchinson herself gave the ammunition for her conviction. When questioned on her claim that many of her opponents were not “able ministers of the new testament”¹⁷ she answered that she reached this conclusion because—while not a minister herself—she was a prophet. She said her authority to judge ministers for their theology came from speaking God’s own judgment “by an immediate revelation.”¹⁸

Worries about heresies related to extra-biblical revelations supposedly mediated by the Spirit go as far back as the early church. Montanism, for example, was an especially strong movement in which new prophecies—including those made by women—were included as an important part of Christian revelation. Such heresies undermined ecclesial authority. The person who heard directly from the Spirit bypassed human church leadership.¹⁹

Hutchinson's appropriation of the office of prophet assumed there could be a direct personal extra-biblical revelation.²⁰ She claimed revelation that transcended ministerial authority.²¹ "Now," she says at the end of her startling declaration, "if you do condemn me for speaking what in my conscience I know to be truth I must commit myself to the Lord."²² With this, the trial took a new turn, becoming embroiled in the question of whether the work of the Holy Spirit included extra-biblical revelations. Hutchinson asserted that she had direct communication with God. She felt she could trust her own impressions about Scripture and thereby judge those ministers who interpreted it in error.

This is how Hutchinson became a clear and present danger to those who sought to establish a community in Massachusetts based on clearly regulated religious ideals—regulated by ministers who shared a basic agreement about doctrine and revelation. Hutchinson challenged the established ecclesial order. With no telling what else these "revelations" might lead to, her opponents decided it was best to put a fence in front of the slope right away.²³

Pioneer and Martyr rather than Movement Leader

Historically, no lasting "Hutchinsonian" freedom faction spilled over the borders of Massachusetts. To be sure, Hutchinson did not have sufficient opportunity to catalyze this, given her tragic death in 1644 in a massacre resulting from the hostilities between the colonists and the native population. Hutchinson had the charisma, but had neither the time nor the leadership opportunities afforded to men.²⁴ Rather than seeing her influence in terms of movements, it is much more useful to assess her contribution in terms of how she opened the door for others.

Hutchinson, it seems, did have followers.²⁵ Among Hutchinson's followers was Mary Dyer, born in 1611. After Hutchinson died, however, Dyer became a Quaker, and in 1660, she was hanged by the government of Boston for her persistent testimony to the active work of the Spirit in the lives of those saved by Christ. With this, and other indications, it seems much more likely that Hutchinson's lasting influence was not in creating a movement, but in preparing the way for the Quakers.²⁶

With Hutchinson, we see a woman seemingly content within the bounds of the ecclesial conventions of her time. The charge that she, a woman, overstepped her prescribed bounds was among the least successful. She successfully countered her accusers with evidence that her actions in hosting women's meetings were to be encouraged.²⁷ She was extremely intelligent, and she displayed strong insight into Scripture. These led to the popularity of her home meetings.²⁸

Hutchinson's radical departure from established theology came with her emerging doctrine of the Holy Spirit. She argued that the

Holy Spirit can be understood outside of Scripture, though always in agreement with Scripture. This led the ministers who supported her to eventually distance themselves from her, seemingly because her expanding understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in those who are faithful to Christ went beyond what they were willing to fight for publicly.²⁹ Instead of offering support, they let her take blame for what were previously shared perspectives.

How did Hutchinson resist the pressure to conform while others in her circle succumbed? Her status as leader and her deep conviction pushed her beyond the boundaries of the conventional theology of her time. She, being a pioneer, lacked the support of robust pneumatology such as developed later in the twentieth century. Her theological instinct alone was insufficient to guide her, and this left her isolated and seemingly discouraged.³⁰ Later, the Quakers continued to provide a prophetic influence in the church. Their early fights against slavery were based on their pneumatology, understanding that the Spirit empowered and transformed all people irrespective of race. We can likewise see this pneumatology inspiring later women preachers like Mary Bosanquet Fletcher (1739–1815) and Jarena Lee (1783–1864) to break through their social and ecclesial barriers.³¹

Conclusion

While Anne Hutchinson's story is not one of victory, her voice can speak into the struggles of the present day. Her goal was not necessarily to further women's rights but to discern and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In this cause, she assumed she had the support of key male leaders. However, when she was brought to trial in court, she found herself on her own. Today, her example encourages men and women who may not fit within ministry boundaries prescribed by the church. May we follow her example of truth and courage, going wherever it may lead us.

Notes

1. For good, recent biographies of Anne Hutchinson that deal with the lack of details of her life by delving deeply into the context in which she lived see Timothy Hall, *Anne Hutchinson: Puritan Prophet* (Longman, 2010) and Michael P. Winship, *The Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson: Puritans Divided* (University Press of Kansas, 2005).
2. See Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (Oxford University Press, 1992), a study that acknowledges the complexity and the context while pushing to assess Hutchinson as an example of early modern trends. Her assessment of Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, and John Cotton are especially insightful as to contributing causes for the overall crisis.
3. There were, in fact, two separate trials. The first, discussed here, was an examination by the General Court in Nov 1637. This resulted in her being sentenced to banishment. The second was a trial before the church in Boston in March 1638. This was more theological in focus and resulted in her excommunication.
4. David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Duke University Press, 1990) 312.
5. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312.
6. See Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, "Feminism, Anne Hutchinson, and the Antinomian Controversy, 1634–1638," *TJ* 2/1 (1981) 42ff. for a brief discussion of this interpretive approach in regards to Hutchinson.
7. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312.

8. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312.
9. Winship, *Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson*, 132, notes that one of her accusers, Hugh Peters, began by asking “Hutchinson to search her heart for further repentance and cautioned her that he feared she was not well grounded in her catechism!” This reflects the ministers’ theological disagreement. Peters goes on and “asked Hutchinson to consider that she had stepped out of all the various subordinate identities she occupied—a husband rather than a wife, a preacher rather than a hearer, and a magistrate rather than a subject—and she had not yet been humbled for this multiple subordination. Winship writes, “Some scholars have seen Peters’s statement as a frank expression of his anger at Hutchinson for forgetting her place as a woman. It was that in part, but two of his three categories applied to men as well as to women. The general principle of subordination to authority in a hierarchical society was what Hutchinson was forgetting, just as Vane had forgotten it when he disagreed with Peters over a year ago, in spite of what Peters told him was his youth and ignorance.”
10. Hall, *Anne Hutchinson: Puritan Prophet*, 62ff., is immensely helpful in bringing more light to these positions and helping to frame the debate between them.
11. In all likelihood, Hutchinson saw herself as a follower first of John Cotton, then of Thomas Wheelwright and Henry Vane. There is no indication that she saw herself as the leader of any movement, nor the chief architect of a specific system. She seemed to have aligned herself with particular ministers who themselves were more the public leaders, even as she probably exhibited the most courage and steadfastness in asserting her positions. Sir Thomas Vane, who was of the same beliefs as Hutchinson, was far too connected and influential to openly resist, and it was only in his leaving for England that allowed his opponents to make strong moves against those who were previously his compatriots of theology. Hutchinson, and others, hoped for his return long after the trial, seeing his influence and insight as a necessary aid to their cause. In a way, Vane was their version of the Quakers’s William Penn, with Penn showing more dedication and commitment to the American cause and his associates than did Vane. For a clear expression of Wheelwright’s position, see “A Fast Day Sermon” in Hall, *Anne Hutchinson: Puritan Prophet*, 152–72.
12. See Stephen Foster, “New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630–1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3/4 (1981). The idea of free grace was not the only “heresy” Hutchinson was accused of, though this is likely the central reason for division within the community. Hutchinson also argued for “mortalism,” which essentially said that the soul died along with the body, to be resurrected together by Christ, or to be entirely annihilated if not saved. See J. F. Maclear, “Anne Hutchinson and the Mortalist Heresy,” *New England Quarterly* 54/1 (1981) 80: “Usually mortalist thought was linked to intense eschatological conviction; since history was soon to be completed and the dead raised to judgment, the doctrine of the soul’s immortality was deprived of meaning. At other times the heresy found expression in ‘Spiritist’ circles where the union with the Holy Ghost was so conceived that God’s Spirit ruled in the saint and no created persona identity could be allowed to possess immortal being.” See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).
13. These charges, not surprisingly, were also commonly applied to Quakers. That the Family of Love made a point of denying their beliefs in the face of accusation made for both frustrating questioning as well as, most likely, more persistent and common pursuit of those who might share some similarity of doctrine. Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (J. Clarke, 1981) 139, writes, “The widespread interest in mysticism, the perfectionist and antinomian views which had such a success in the New Model Army, the birth of new non-conformist groups and sects which often bear a superficial resemblance to Familism, make it particularly difficult to trace any direct connection between the Family of Love and the most lasting spiritual offspring of the freedom of expression which characterized the Commonwealth, the Society of Friends, or Quakers, founded by George Fox shortly before 1650.”
14. Jeffrey M. Kahl, “The Antinomian Controversy and the Puritan Vision: A Historical Perspective on Christian Leadership,” *ATJ* 35 (2003), 56. Kahl goes on to argue that “their actions were justifiable (or at least excusable) given the nature of their task and the realities of the situation.” This is shaped, it seems, by his own experience as a pastor.
15. This should not, however, over-estimate Hutchinson’s contribution, and in this respect another aspect of her gender is relevant. While she was extremely adept at rebutting her accusers at her trial, and was apparently both knowledgeable enough and a good enough communicator to attract what was considered a dangerously large meeting in her home, as a woman she did not have the opportunity for the kind of education her opponents were given. Throughout her trial, she acknowledged where she may have mistaken theological assumptions and seemed willing to accept corrections.
16. See Nuttall, Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, ch. 1. One reason the Puritans later opposed the Quakers so strongly was the Quakers’s perceived inclusion of other forms of inspiration by the Holy Spirit, to the point of seemingly putting such inspiration at par with or even above Scripture. The tension then, and now, is that far too many conflate their interpretation of Scripture with Scripture’s own authority, thus placing the full ministry (and vision) of the Holy Spirit under the expressed leadership of the minister or ecclesial body. Fox was not protesting Scripture in his work with the Quakers; he was protesting corrupt or co-opted ministers who he felt ignored Scriptural teaching on how the Holy Spirit works.
17. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 336.
18. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 337. See Michael G. Ditmore, “A Prophetess in Her Own Country: An Exegesis of Anne Hutchinson’s ‘Immediate Revelation,’” *William and Mary Quarterly* 57/2 (2000) for an excellent overview of this event in its wider context.
19. For further comparison with Montanist leanings see William Tabbernee, “Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry in Carthage c. 203 C.E.,” *PRSt* 32/4 (2005) 421–41.
20. Ditmore, “Prophetess in Her Own Country,” 352, writes, “in this sense, Hutchinson’s theory of revelation may be considered a precursor of the Quaker Concept of Inner Light and related theories of post- or extrascriptural inspiration.”
21. Ditmore, “Prophetess in Her Own Country,” 361ff., argues that it was her reading of the Geneva Bible which gave space for her resistance. He writes, “the Geneva commentary accompanying the Bible passages she cites recommends to readers a critical evaluation of those in ministerial positions, and this evaluation entails the empowering of lay members by placing the critical faculty of judgment in the listener’s discernment of the ‘spirit’ of any particular prophet. . . .” He goes on to note that one passage Hutchinson cites, 1 John 4:1–3, “provided grounds for cautioning Christians individually to exercise a healthy measure for skepticism toward the ministry, thought without breaking trust with godly preachers. This not an anticlerical message per se, but to trust ministers blindly would be to risk coming under the ministry of an Antichristian false prophet, and Hutchinson’s reference indicates how far she was leaning in the separatist direction Roger Williams had already taken.”
22. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 337.
23. It is this that led to the charges, and lingering label, of antinomianism. However, there is no evidence that Hutchinson pursued or supported the kind of behavior that was associated with other, more properly named, antinomians. As such, this is more an epithet that once applied by the victorious party has stayed on in discussions of Hutchinson. Stephen Foster, “New England and the Challenge of Heresy,” 631, writes, “The labels

'Antimonian' and 'Famelist' were applied rather loosely in the 1630s to varied collections of people who had no necessary connection with Continental Anabaptist movements or with the original Family of Love." He adds later, 637, "Much of the reputation of the pre-Civil War sects originated in . . . tainted evidence, whether given by would-be informers, preachers with troublesome congregations, or hack writers eager to titillate their audience with a little religious scandalmongering. As a consequence, the image of the Antinomians was terribly distorted, and their numbers may not have justified the degree of attention they received." Like Roger Williams, Hutchinson's arguments for spiritual freedom were accompanied by more, rather than less, moral stringency than most of her contemporaries, albeit moral stringency with particularly interpreted emphases, such as including hospitality.

24. Important Hutchinson scholar, David Hall, however, doubts her charisma, writing that "more adequate measure of Hutchinson's charisma is that, with the exception of two of her sons, the entire (male) membership of her congregation voted to excommunicate her, and there is nothing to suggest that her visionary capacities gained her a significant audience in Rhode Island where she went to live." David Hall, "The Passion of Anne Hutchinson. An Extraordinary Woman, the Puritan Patriarchs, and the World They Made and Lost. By Marilyn J. Westerkamp," *JEH* 73/4 (2022) 889–91. I think Hall is too quick to attribute Hutchinson's lack of support to any reflection of her charisma. Her earlier leadership and later support is certainly more due to those in the community wanting to maintain their own status. A person can be charismatic and also become seen as toxic to those who want to be seen on the "approved" side of politics and culture.

25. See Ditmore, "Prophetess in Her Own Country," 137ff.
26. See Winship, *Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson*, 146ff.
27. See Hall, *Anne Hutchinson: Puritan Prophet*, 55ff.
28. In this we can see a similarity with Susannah Wesley, whose home meetings were quite popular and she had to defend herself against criticisms. Unlike Hutchinson, however, her husband seems to have stood up for her.
29. Ditmore, "Prophetess in Her Own Country," 378, writes, "Whereas before the Holy Spirit had guided her in the interpretation and discrimination of false from authentic ministers, now it began to lead her to further specific promises and assurances toward and about the future, as we have already seen from her reference to the far country of captivity in Jeremiah."
30. However, there are indications that even this understanding of conventional practices was changing after she had been banished from Massachusetts. See Hall, *Anne Hutchinson: Puritan Prophet*, 141ff., and Winship, *Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson*, 143ff.
31. For the latter see her interesting autobiography: Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel* (Philadelphia, 1849).



Patrick Oden is the Associate Dean for the School of Ministry and Christian Thought at Oklahoma Wesleyan University and is ordained in The Wesleyan Church. He is married to Amy, a worship leader. They have two kids, Vianne and Oliver, and live in Lake Arrowhead California.

LET HER LEAD

The Biblical Basis for Women's Leadership

Romans 16:1–7

September 4–6, 2025
Buenos Aires, Argentina

LEARN MORE OR REGISTER AT
cbe.today/argentina2025.



Aida Besançon Spencer
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Senior Professor of New Testament



Mimi Haddad
CBE International President



Charles Read
Norwich Diocese
Director of Liturgy and Director of Reader Training



Mayra Ugalde
Honorary Director of the Bible Society of Costa Rica



William David Spencer
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts



Sheri Onishi
Cru Global Leadership Resources and Development—VP team, Students Movements



Keith Onishi
Cru Global Chief of Staff for the VP of Student Movements



More speakers to be announced!

Book Review: *Becoming the Pastor's Wife: How Marriage Replaced Ordination as a Woman's Path to Ministry*

By Beth Allison Barr (Brazos, 2025)

Alexander Kwasi Oduro

Beth Allison Barr describes her book, *Becoming the Pastor's Wife: How Marriage Replaced Ordination as a Woman's Path to Ministry*, as “the history of how Christian women gained a new and important leadership role” (xxii). Nevertheless, “it is also the history of how this gain came at a cost for some women. Both the cost and the gain are bigger than we have yet realized” (xxii). Within this context, Barr clearly relays how women who are married to pastors have had their desires for ordination to full-time ministry replaced by the church with their positions as wives of pastors. In the nexus of her own experiences as a wife of a Southern Baptist pastor for over two decades, and as a professor of medieval history, women's history, and church history, Barr contends for change in how the role of the pastor's wife has been used to push women out of ordained ministry.

Correctly situating the thesis of the book in groundbreaking scholarly historical and theological academic resources that span from 1923 to 2023, Barr helps readers navigate the main argument. Ardent support of her argument with convincing historical records demonstrates that the past informs the present, while the present informs the future. Candid existential realities about her personal life and ministry add flavour to the historical narrative. That said, I found that certain extraneous information distracted from the book's main argument.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter one exemplifies the essential role of pastors' wives. Chapter two critically examines the history of women who served in diverse leadership positions in the ancient church. This is evidenced by the Priscilla Catacombs, an ancient cemetery in Rome notable for serving as a cemetery for early female Christians and for its preservation of portraits of female leaders in the ancient church. Chapter three presents medieval women's ordination into pastoral ministry as a real case for the



In the nexus of her own experiences as a wife of a Southern Baptist pastor for over two decades, and as a professor of medieval history, women's history, and church history, Barr contends for change in how the role of the pastor's wife has been used to push women out of ordained ministry.

ordination of women into pastoral ministry in the contemporary era. Chapter four examines the strategic ways the pastor's wife has risen to prominence amidst prevailing challenges that tend to thwart her efforts. Chapter five determines how the high expectations of the pastor's wife are considered crucial for the upkeep of her home and the sustenance of her husband, children, and other congregants. Chapter six looks at the qualities of the stereotypical ideal pastor's wife. Chapter seven addresses the policy of the Southern Baptist Church regarding the ordination of women into pastoral ministry. Chapter eight discusses the public appearance of wife of the pastor. Chapter nine, the culmination of the book, analyzes how the perceived traditional role of the pastor's wife can be re-conceptualized by recognizing the pastor and his wife as partners in ministry for the advancement of the gospel.

Barr cautions that women who are married to ministers of the gospel are not to be misconstrued as being enrolled or ordained automatically into full-time ministry or to the service of the church. Instead, they should be permitted to seek ordination into ministry positions if they feel called into such capacities. This should extend to ordination to the office of pastor, for mutual growth and nurturing of the church with

their husbands. “What a difference it would make for a ministry wife called to ministry to be able to serve as a ministry partner alongside her spouse instead of subsumed under his role!” (44).

Barr bemoans the fact that the white evangelical church and Southern Baptist tradition have “used the pastor's wife role to enshrine biblical womanhood as the only godly role for women” (192). The rationale for this decision, according to Barr, is that they believe “the pastor's wife role provides an acceptable way in complementarian theology for women to serve in ministry,” thus, “it has been weaponized to condemn women's ordination and exclude women from pastoral positions” (192). Apart from being unfair to

women, this is not in conformity with Scripture. Indeed, women were an integral part of Jesus's earthly ministry (see Matt 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1, 9; Luke 10:38, 40; 24:10).

“The pastor’s wife role provides an acceptable way in complementarian theology for women to serve in ministry,” thus, “it has been weaponized to condemn women’s ordination and exclude women from pastoral positions.”

Barr is right to ask, “What if the White evangelical church could follow the example more prevalent in Black churches where women married to ministers can serve as co-pastors alongside their husbands?” (192). This could offer Christian women and pastors’ wives fertile avenues to utilize their spiritual gifts and talents in a more advanced, liberated, and guided manner for the growth and development of the church, beyond simply complementing the efforts of their husbands.

Could it also be that women are sometimes denied this amazing privilege because they are their own worst enemies? To this end, Barr admonishes women to encourage one another in their calling instead of fighting against one another (192). She entreats both men and women to remember the pastoral and leadership positions of women like Milburga, Sarah Lee, Maria Acacia, Weptanomah Carter, Emily Dorothy Scarborough, Bertha Smith, and “the *orans* position

[extending hands during prayer] as indicative of authoritative religious speech” (36, 48).

Since historical evidence abounds for how women and pastor’s wives have positively impacted the church, what then prevents those who feel called to pastoral positions to be ordained? Would their ordination not glorify God (1 Cor 10:31)? Together, the local and global church ought to chorus with Barr that indeed, “it is time we change it” (193). Marriage should not be considered a replacement for ordination as a woman’s path to ministry in the church.

This book is a valuable, balanced, and thoughtful treasure for embracing the gifting and talents of the wives of pastors and of Christian women in general for the furtherance of the church around the world, now and in the future.



Alexander Kwasi Oduro holds a bachelor’s degree in Special Education & Social Studies (University of Education, Winneba, Ghana) and an MDiv in Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care (Carey Theological College, Vancouver, Canada). He is a congregational

leader, has served as the Ghana director of the Overseas Gospel Mission Bible School, and has mentored student pastors in sub-Saharan Africa.

Unlock the Power of Biblical Equality with CBE International!

Get up to 15% off church and organization memberships!

Visit cbe.today/orgsale or scan the QR code to claim your discount today!



 **CBE**
INTERNATIONAL

CBE INTERNATIONAL (Christians for Biblical Equality)

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

Priscilla Papers is the academic voice of CBE International, providing peer reviewed, interdisciplinary, scholarship on topics related to a biblical view of women and men in the home, church, and world. "...when Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately," (Acts 18:26b, NRSV).

MISSION STATEMENT

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

STATEMENT OF FAITH

- We *believe* in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons equal in power and glory.
- We *believe* in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We *believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- We *believe* the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- We *believe* the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally created in God's image and given equal authority and stewardship of God's creation.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.
- Therefore, we *lament* that the sins of sexism and racism have been used to historically oppress and silence women throughout the life of the church.
- We *resolve* to value and listen to the voices and lived experiences of women throughout the world who have been impacted by the sins of sexism and racism.

CORE VALUES

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin that manifests itself personally, relationally, and structurally.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from women and girls what God has given them: their dignity, freedom, and leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects a patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy as God's standard for human relationships.
- Christ's redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.
- God's design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a woman and a man, celibate singleness, and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women's gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel worldwide.
- Followers of Christ are to advance human flourishing by opposing injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that demean, diminish, marginalize, dominate, abuse, enslave, or exploit women, or restrict women's access to leadership in the home, church, and world.

ENVISIONED FUTURE

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

CBE MEMBERSHIP

CBE is pleased to make available, for free, every *Priscilla Papers* article ever published. In addition, find the full archive of CBE's magazine, *Mutuality*, and hundreds of book reviews and recordings of lectures given by world-renowned scholars like Linda Belleville, Lynn Cohick, Nijay Gupta, N.T. Wright, and more! Find it all at www.cbeinternational.org.

CBE BOARD OF REFERENCE

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

JOIN

If your church, seminary, school, or nonprofit agrees with CBE's Statement of Faith and Core Values, join CBE as an organizational member to receive publications, discounted conference registrations, and more. Visit cbe.today/orgmembers for more info.

SUBSCRIBE

Receive a year of print copies of *Priscilla Papers*, CBE's academic journal, and *Mutuality*, CBE's popular magazine. Subscriptions are available for individuals, churches, and libraries. Learn more at cbe.today/subscriptions.



CONNECT WITH CBE

Connect with CBE online to learn more about us, enjoy the resources we offer, and take part in our ministry



Visit our website, cbeinternational.org, to find thousands of free resources—articles, book reviews, and video and audio recordings.



Get news, updates, and free resources (cbe.today/news).



Follow our blog (cbe.today/mutuality).



Follow us on X @CBEInt (twitter.com/cbeint).



Find us on Facebook (facebook.com/cbeint).



Follow us on Instagram @cbeinternational (instagram.com/cbeinternational).



Follow us on LinkedIn (linkedin.com/company/christians-for-biblical-equality).



Find us on YouTube (youtube.com/@cbeinternational).



Listen to us on Soundcloud (soundcloud.com/cbe-international).



CBE International
122 W Franklin Ave, Suite 610
Minneapolis, MN 55404-2426 | (612) 872-6898



Scan to
subscribe to
Priscilla Papers.

CBE International
122 West Franklin Ave, Suite 610
Minneapolis, MN 55404-2426

Forwarding Service Requested

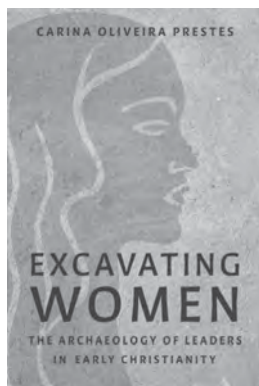
Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
(St. Paul, MN)
#26907



cbeBookstore

providing quality resources on biblical gender equality

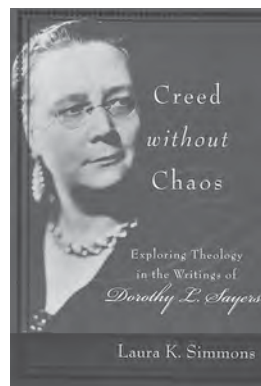
Featured in CBE Bookstore! Scan the QR code or visit cbe.today/bookstore and browse new resources.



Excavating Women: The Archaeology of Leaders in Early Christianity

Carina Oliveira Prestes

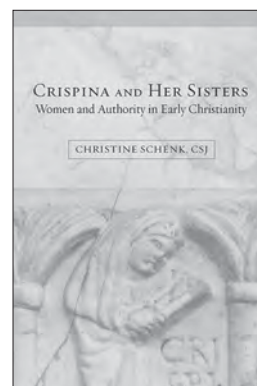
Modern readers often look at the past with distorted presuppositions about women's participation in early Christianity. However, women had a prominent role in society and in religious leadership in the Greco-Roman world. *Excavating Women* investigates the leadership of women in Christian churches during the first six centuries of the common era through a study of the archaeological remains.



Creed Without Chaos: Exploring Theology in the Writings of Dorothy L. Sayers

Laura K. Simmons

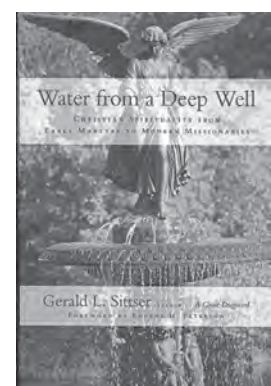
"In this superb commentary on Sayers, Laura Simmons brilliantly helps church members and leaders of all sorts recover the task of speaking biblical truth clearly. Not only did this book inspire me immensely with Sayers's (and Simmons's) keen theological insights into such topics as how the writing process illustrates the Trinity, but it also offers great suggestions for future study of Sayers."—Marva J. Dawn, teaching fellow in spiritual theology, Regent College, Vancouver



Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity

Christine Schenk

Discovering reliable information about women in early Christianity is a challenging enterprise. Most people have never heard of Bitalia, Veneranda, Crispina, Petronella, Leta, Sofia the Deacon, and many others even though their catacomb and tomb art suggests their authority was influential and valued by early Christian communities. This book explores visual imagery found on burial artifacts of prominent early Christian women.



Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries

Gerald L. Sittser

"Gerald Sittser offers us two enormous gifts in this compelling history of Christian spirituality—a wonderfully flowing narrative that catches us up into the lives and practices of great saints, and voluminous endnotes so that we can pursue more thoroughly the topics and characters he describes. This beautiful book will widen everyone's spirituality..." Marva Dawn, Author of *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*