

GOSPELS

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Society of Biblical Literature



The Bible and Women  
An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History

Edited by Christiana de Groot, Irmtraud Fischer,  
Mercedes Navarro Puerto, and Adriana Valerio

SBL Press

The Bible and Women  
New Testament  
Volume 2.1: Gospels: Narrative and History

GOSPELS  
NARRATIVE AND HISTORY

*Edited by*  
Mercedes Navarro Puerto and Marinella Perroni

*English edition edited by*  
Amy-Jill Levine

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### ANCIENT SOURCES

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 En.              | 1 Enoch  |
| 1 Esd.             | 1 Esdras   |
| 2 En.              | 2 Enoch  |
| Acts Pet.          | Acts of Peter  |
| <i>Ag. Ap.</i>     | Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i>   |
| <i>Ann.</i>        | Tacitus, <i>Annales</i>  |
| <i>Ant.</i>        | Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>                                    |
| Ascen. Isa.        | Ascension of Isaiah  |
| b.                 | Babylonian Talmud  |
| CD                 | Damascus Document  |
| <i>Cels.</i>       | Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>   |
| <i>Cher.</i>       | Philo, <i>De cherubim</i>  |
| <i>Cho.</i>        | Aeschylus, <i>Choephoroi</i>   |
| <i>Det.</i>        | Philo, <i>Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet</i>                    |
| Did.               | Didache  |
| Did. apost.        | Didascalia apostolorum   |
| Ep. Apos.          | Epistle to the Apostles  |
| <i>Eph.</i>        | Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>                                      |
| <i>Exc.</i>        | Clement of Alexandria, <i>Excerpta ex Theodoto</i>                     |
| <i>Exp. Luc.</i>   | Ambrose, <i>Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam</i>                     |
| <i>Fact. dict.</i> | Valerius Maximus, <i>Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri Novem</i> |
| <i>Flacc.</i>      | Philo, <i>In Flaccum</i>   |
| <i>Gen. an.</i>    | Aristotle, <i>De generatione animalium</i>                             |
| Git̄.              | Git̄in   |
| Gos. Mary          | Gospel of Mary   |
| Gos. Pet.          | Gospel of Peter  |
| Gos. Phil.         | Gospel of Philip   |
| Gos. Thom.         | Gospel of Thomas   |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Haer.</i>       | Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>                 |
| <i>Hist. eccl.</i> | Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>            |
| <i>Hom.</i>        | Pseudo-Clementines, <i>Homilies</i>                |
| <i>Hom. Luc.</i>   | Origen, <i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>                   |
| <i>J.W.</i>        | Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i>                        |
| <i>Jub.</i>        | Jubilees   |
| <i>Ketub.</i>      | Ketubot  |
| <i>LAB</i>         | Liber antiquitatum biblicarum                      |
| <i>m.</i>          | Mishnah  |
| <i>Med.</i>        | Euripides, <i>Medea</i>                            |
| <i>Mos.</i>        | Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>                        |
| <i>Nob.</i>        | Philo, <i>De nobilitate</i>                        |
| <i>Num.</i>        | Plutarch, <i>Numa</i>                              |
| <i>Num. Rab.</i>   | Numbers Rabbah                                     |
| <i>'Ohal.</i>      | 'Ohalot  |
| <i>Opif.</i>       | Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>                    |
| <i>P. Oxy.</i>     | Oxyrhynchus Papyri                                 |
| <i>Paed.</i>       | Clement of Alexandria, <i>Paedagogus</i>           |
| <i>Pan.</i>        | Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i>                        |
| <i>Pesah.</i>      | Pesahim  |
| <i>QE</i>          | Philo, <i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum</i>  |
| <i>Ruth Rab.</i>   | Ruth Rabbah  |
| <i>Sanh.</i>       | Sanhedrin  |
| <i>Spec.</i>       | Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>               |
| <i>t.</i>          | Tosefta  |
| <i>T. Jud.</i>     | Testament of Judah                                 |
| <i>T. Reu.</i>     | Testament of Reuben                                |
| <i>Theaet.</i>     | Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>                           |
| <i>Tib.</i>        | Suetonius, <i>Tiberius</i>                         |
| <i>Tit.</i>        | Suetonius, <i>Divus Titus</i>                      |
| <i>Virt.</i>       | Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>                        |
| <i>Vit. Apoll.</i> | Philostratus, <i>Vita Apollonii</i>                |
| <i>Vit. phil.</i>  | Diogenes Laertes, <i>Lives of the Philosophers</i> |
| <i>y.</i>          | Jerusalem Talmud                                   |
| <i>Yebam.</i>      | Yebamot  |

## MODERN RESOURCES

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <i>AASF</i> | Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae |
| <i>AB</i>   | Anchor Bible                           |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| ABD           | <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.   |
| ABRL          | Anchor Bible Reference Library   |
| ACFEB         | Association Catholique Française pour l'Etude de la Bible  |
| AGSU          | Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums   |
| <i>AJP</i>    | <i>American Journal of Philology</i>   |
| AnBib         | Analecta biblica   |
| <i>ANF</i>    | <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. Repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.   |
| ANRW          | <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Part 2, <i>Principat</i> . Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–. |
| ASEs          | <i>Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi</i>   |
| BAC           | Biblioteca de autores cristianos   |
| BCR           | Biblioteca di cultura religiosa  |
| BASOR         | <i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>   |
| BCH           | <i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>   |
| BECNT         | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament   |
| BBB           | Bonner biblische Beiträge  |
| BETL          | Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovensium  |
| BG            | Berlin Gnostic Codex   |
| <i>Bib</i>    | <i>Biblica</i>   |
| <i>BibInt</i> | <i>Biblical Interpretation</i>   |
| BibInt        | Biblical Interpretation Series   |
| BibSem        | The Biblical Seminar   |
| BibOr         | Biblica et Orientalia  |
| <i>BSac</i>   | <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>   |
| BHT           | Beiträge zur historischen Theologie  |
| BKAT          | Biblische Kommentar: Altes Testament   |
| BJS           | Brown Judaic Studies   |
| BNL           | Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte   |
| <i>BTB</i>    | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>  |
| BW            | Bible and Women  |
| BWANT         | Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament  |
| <i>BZ</i>     | <i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>   |
| BZAW          | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft  |
| BZNW          | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft  |
| <i>CaE</i>    | <i>Cahiers Évangile</i>  |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| CBNT           | Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament                                   |
| CBQ            | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>  |
| CC             | Continental Commentaries  |
| CCSA           | Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum                                 |
| Collection IET | Collection of the Institut d'Études Théologiques                          |
| ConBNT         | Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series                                  |
| CSJH           | Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism                                 |
| <i>CurTM</i>   | <i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>                                   |
| EBib           | Études bibliques  |
| EFETA          | Escuela Feminista de Teología de Andalucía                                |
| EJL            | Early Judaism and Its Literature  |
| EKKNT          | Evangelisch-katolischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament                     |
| Ekstasis       | Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages          |
| <i>EstBib</i>  | <i>Estudios Biblicos</i>  |
| ESV            | English Standard Version  |
| <i>ETR</i>     | <i>Études théologiques et religieuses</i>                                 |
| <i>EvT</i>     | <i>Evangelische Theologie</i>   |
| <i>ExpTim</i>  | <i>Expository Times</i>   |
| FAT            | Forschungen zum Alten Testament   |
| FC             | Fathers of the Church   |
| FCB            | Feminist Companion to the Bible   |
| FCNTECW        | Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings      |
| FKDG           | Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte                             |
| FRLANT         | Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments     |
| <i>FZPhTh</i>  | <i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i>               |
| GCS            | Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte |
| HBS            | Herders biblische Studien   |
| HCS            | Hellenistic Culture and Society   |
| HThKAT         | Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament                       |
| HThKNT         | Herders theologische Kommentar zum Neuen Testament                        |
| <i>HTR</i>     | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>   |
| HTS            | Harvard Theological Studies   |
| KEK            | Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament                   |
| IAA Reports    | Israel Antiquities Authority Reports                                      |
| <i>IEJ</i>     | <i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>   |
| IET            | Institut d'Études Théologiques  |
| <i>INJ</i>     | <i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>  |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Int</i>    | <i>Interpretation</i>  |
| JAAR          | <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>   |
| JBL           | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>  |
| JBT           | <i>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</i>  |
| J ECS         | <i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>  |
| JETS          | <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>  |
| JFSR          | <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>   |
| JLA           | <i>Jewish Law Annual</i>   |
| JR            | <i>Journal of Religion</i>   |
| JRS           | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>  |
| JSHRZ         | Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit  |
| JSJ           | <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>           |
| JSJSup        | Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods Supplement       |
| JNT           | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>  |
| JNTSup        | Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series                                     |
| JSOTSup       | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series                                     |
| JSP           | <i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>   |
| JSPSup        | Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series                                    |
| KEK           | Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament  |
| KJV           | King James Version   |
| LD            | Lectio Divina  |
| LNTS          | Library of New Testament Studies   |
| <i>LumVie</i> | <i>Lumière et Vie</i>  |
| <i>MdB</i>    | <i>Le Monde de la Bible</i>  |
| MThA          | Münsteraner Theologische Abhandlungen  |
| MthSt         | Marburger theologische Studien   |
| NASB          | New American Standard Bible  |
| NEchtB.NT     | Neue Echter Bibel, Neues Testament   |
| NHC           | Nag Hammadi Codex  |
| NHL           | <i>The Nag Hammadi Library</i> . Edited by James M. Robinson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977. |
| NHMS          | Nag Hammadi Manichaean Studies   |
| NHS           | Nag Hammadi Studies  |
| NIGTC         | New International Greek Testament Commentary   |
| <i>NovT</i>   | <i>Novum Testamentum</i>   |
| NovTSup       | Supplements to Novum Testamentum   |
| NRSV          | New Revised Standard Version   |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| NTAbh   | Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen  |
| NTD     | Das Neue Testament Deutsch  |
| NTL     | New Testament Library   |
| NTOA    | Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus   |
| NTS     | <i>New Testament Studies</i>  |
| NTTS    | New Testament Tools and Studies   |
| OBO     | Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis  |
| ÖTK     | Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar   |
| PCTSA   | <i>Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America</i>   |
| QD      | Quaestiones Disputatae  |
| RB      | <i>Revue biblique</i>   |
| REA     | <i>Revue des études anciennes</i>   |
| RivB    | <i>Rivista biblica italiana</i>   |
| RNT     | Regensburger Neues Testament  |
| RTP     | <i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>   |
| SA      | Studia anselmiana   |
| SAC     | Studies in Antiquity and Christianity   |
| SBB     | Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge  |
| SBS     | Stuttgarter Bibelstudien  |
| SBLABS  | Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies   |
| SBLDS   | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series  |
| SBLSCS  | Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies   |
| SBLSymS | Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series   |
| SBW     | Studien der Bibliothek Warburg  |
| SHAW    | Sitzungsberichte der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften   |
| SJLA    | Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity  |
| SJS     | Studia Judaeoslavica  |
| SNTSMS  | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series  |
| SSN     | Studia Semitica Neerlandica   |
| StABH   | Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics   |
| STDJ    | Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah   |
| StPat   | <i>Studia patavina</i>  |
| Str-B   | Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . Munich: Beck, 1922. |
| StudBib | Studia Biblica  |
| StudMon | <i>Studia Monastica</i>   |
| SubH    | Subsidia hagiographica  |
| SUNT    | Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments   |
| TANZ    | Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter   |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| TB            | Theologische Bücherei   |
| TDNT          | Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976. |
| THKNT         | Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament   |
| ThPQ          | <i>Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift</i>  |
| TKNT          | Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament   |
| TRSR          | Testi e ricerche di scienze religiose   |
| TS            | <i>Theological Studies</i>  |
| TSAJ          | Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum  |
| TU            | Texte und Untersuchungen  |
| <i>TynBul</i> | <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>   |
| UTB           | Uni-Taschenbücher   |
| VTSup         | Supplements to Vetus Testamentum  |
| WMANT         | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament  |
| WUNT          | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament  |
| YJS           | Yale Judaica Series   |
| ZBK           | Zürcher Bibelkommentare   |
| ZKT           | <i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>  |
| ZNT           | <i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>  |
| ZNW           | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>  |

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## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

*Amy-Jill Levine*

The fruits of feminist biblical interpretation can be harvested from different trees nurtured on different soils. The collaborative efforts of this series—essays from an international gathering of scholars, which are translated from and into French, German, Italian, Spanish, and now English—reveal both the brilliant progress feminist interpretation has made as well as introduce new sources to readers with limited expertise in languages other than their own.

Because these essays are part of a larger project, they could not be edited substantially for content. The following comments, offered in appreciation for these contributions, seek both to highlight the major arguments and to continue the conversation.

In their introduction, Marinella Perroni and Mercedes Navarro Puerto describe the Bible and Women project as a “history of Western exegesis and reception” that seeks “a gender-relevant reception of the Bible in the history of Judaism and Christianity.” Quickly, this focus on gender reveals its specificity: the project is interested not only in gender construction but also in how “biblical texts speak not only to women, but also about women.” The exegetical and the political intertwine as Perroni and Navarro Puerto firmly situate feminist exegesis within a “liberation-theological” dimension. The approaches represented range from sociological to historical-critical to literary-critical; some authors write from an explicitly Christian perspective, and others are less forthcoming about their own subject positions.

Most of the contributors display a cautious but ultimately optimistic sense that historical data can be mined from the narratives both canonical and noncanonical. The consensus is that Jesus broke gender expectations and reconfigured family values away from hierarchical structures, although whether his disruption of the household was a temporary social experiment, meant to have permanent value, or anticipated an imminent eschaton has no consensus answer. A broad consensus returns in the claim that later traditions gradually foreclosed options for women especially concerning community

authority and evangelizing, replaced or supplemented women's testimony, and reinscribed prevailing gender norms. The data we have—archaeological, epigraphical, canonical—reveal women's presence; the interpretation of the data in light of class considerations, religious traditions, and historiographical stances will remain issues of contention.

The opening essays by Carolyn Osiek and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza offer methodological observations that can inform feminist work. Osiek details how attention to epigraphic data and cross-cultural social-science categories assessed by "conscious reading strategies" can help place women in the center of investigation and so say something meaningful about their lives. She begins by observing that for the most part, the lives of Jewish and Christian women were indistinguishable from those of their neighbors and thus offers a caution against apologetic readings that tend to regard Jewish and then Christian women as "unique": always ready to fight the patriarchy; always egalitarian amid a society governed by patron/client relations; always challenging the dominant categories of honor/shame and sacred/profane in a way that would appeal to most politically progressive people today. Her test case, how to interpret a woman's letter about exposing an infant, neatly reveals the problems of moving from "what the text says" to "what it means." For Osiek, the letter shows the pervasive structures of "patriarchy, slavery, and empire" along with "gender discrimination" in which women's lives "and the survival of their children" are controlled. Yes, and feminist interpreters should also note that not all women want children; that we lack access to the circumstances of the child's conception or father's role in the mother's life (Was he absent? Did she hate him and so hate his child? Did he encourage her to abandon the child or to keep it? Was the child in good health or not?); that we do not know the woman's economic status (Could she afford the child?); and that we do not know how, in her particular situation, exposed children were treated (Were they adopted as heirs or as slaves? Were they left to die?). Bringing women's lives to the front of historical investigation thus adds to our knowledge even as it raises new questions.

Despite Osiek's locating of sociology and anthropology as subfields of biblical studies, the subsequent essays reveal limited engagement with either sociological or anthropological categories (honor/shame, patron/client, challenge/riposte, fictive kinship [beyond brief mention], female/male space, observations on dining or food, collectivism versus sociocentrism, power dynamics, the role of children, etc.). Here Sean Freyne and Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce are the primary exceptions. Whether this omission is an effect of scholarly discourse (the sociological work tends to be in English, Spanish, and German rather than French and Italian), the subject areas (how figures function in a literary text as opposed to the world behind the text), or

the perceived usefulness of the approaches for feminist studies of the Gospels has to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Whereas Osiek focuses on the extracanonical data we have or can adduce, Schüssler Fiorenza looks to recover data we have lost, as well as the reasons for this loss. Schüssler Fiorenza begins with the presupposition that canon formation, hand-in-hand with the church's relation to the empire, resulted in the exclusion of women's leadership and traditions. Rather than foregrounding material culture or cross-cultural analysis, she insists that the "criterion" for evaluating biblical texts must be articulated today in and through "wo/men's struggles for liberation."

For example, Schüssler Fiorenza proposes that the "radical democratic" understanding of the *ἐκκλησία* made it possible for anyone—male or female, free or slave—with appropriate charisms to achieve communal leadership. Osiek's approach would ask related questions: What other groups had such open leadership? How is leadership gained? Economic status or patronage? Glossolalia or prophetic pronouncement? Familial connections? Direct connection to Jesus or his immediate followers? Of what does "leadership" consist, especially in a "democratic" or "egalitarian" system, and what does the leader "do"? One might also query what a radically democratic system is within a group with charismatic leaders or in a pre-Enlightenment culture where the group tends to be more important than the individual. Schüssler Fiorenza proposes, based in part on noncanonical texts, that Mary Magdalene was the "leader" of the "wo/men disciples"; several of the other contributors, notably Andrea Taschl-Erber, support this view with close readings of Mary's canonical appearances.

Schüssler Fiorenza's insistence that feminist scholarship cannot remain within canonical limits complements Osiek's insistence that we look to the social contexts of the texts to help interpret them. Readers who regard the canonical texts as products of their own contexts and as reflecting the diverse impressions of Jesus's followers rather than as offering objective and timeless teachings regarding gender, discipleship, and polity should be able to embrace the new readings opened by much of feminist analysis. For readers who view the Bible as timeless as well as unquestionably right or whose first move in interpretation is to cite 2 Tim 3:16 on the "inerrancy" of Scripture, information derived from outside the canon will have no purchase, and sociological claims will hold little merit. Nevertheless, for these readers, it is precisely the canonical material that can challenge certain restrictive gender constructions and models of ecclesial leadership.

Supporting both Osiek's social-scientific appreciation and Schüssler Fiorenza's hermeneutical suspicions and political heuristic, Freyne inquires into the extent that Mark's Gospel both reflects and resists life in Roman Judea and

Galilee.<sup>1</sup> Enhancing his approach are two additional methodological guidelines that can and should be applied to biblical exegesis. First, he takes account of the apologetic tendency to construct a moribund Judaism against which Jesus and his followers reflect liberation; second, he recognizes the apologetic tendency to regard Jesus and his followers as those who resist, without any colonial mimicry, a Roman imperial system that, like the construction of Judaism, is viewed as unrelentingly evil. Feminist analysis has long recognized that readers do not come to our texts as unbiased; the more we know of our own subjective concerns, the better able we are to put those concerns into conversation with our texts and so we are better able to understand the interpretive choices we make.

Freyne locates the composition of Mark's Gospel broadly "in or near Galilee" and "written from the perspective of the little tradition of peasant people." Given Osiek's warnings that literature is generally produced by and for the elite, questions immediately surface: what constitutes "peasant" literature and to what texts in the empire might this "peasant" Gospel be compared?

Commenting on the widow in the temple (Mark 12:42–44), Freyne explains, "Women were therefore, not excluded from worship, but they were suitably circumscribed, suggesting a sense of 'otherness' even in the presence of the Holy One." His observations can be extended, and perhaps nuanced, by investigation of the categories of sacred/profane: Jewish women are closer to the holy of holies than either gentile women or gentile men, so membership in the community of Abraham trumps gender. Israelite men did not enter the court of the priests; whether they had a sense of "otherness" is a question rarely addressed. Another approach might be to look at gender roles as practiced in pagan temples. A third might be to interrogate language: rhetoric of "exclusion," "circumscription," or "hierarchy" has a different impact than language of "increasing degrees of sanctity." Yet a fourth, impacted by studies of queer theory and spatiality, might be to listen to the voices from outside the center to see how they understand their position: as restricted, or as giving new perspective, or a combination?

Freyne also proposes that the woman who anoints Jesus (Mark 14:3–8) enters into "male space" and that those who chided her were "males, possibly some of them male disciples." Yet he also observes how archaeological work in the Galilee reveals no gender-determined space. Given the numerous claims about Jesus's own open fellowship, Osiek's observations about cultural com-

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1. Sean Freyne, a good friend and, to use the Yiddish term, a *mensch*, died in August of 2013. In memory of him and in gratitude for his numerous contributions to the study of Jesus and the Gospels, such conversations about method and data, apologetic and history, continue.

monality, and the guests' lack of surprise at the woman's *presence*—the focus is on the apparent waste of expensive ointment and not the anointer—we might inquire about the assumption that Jesus found himself at a male-only dinner party (Do we presume women were not present, because we have a cultural construct of women in the East as having separate dining space, or because we see the group as consisting of celibate men, or because, apologetically, we want to keep women from being among the ones who complain?) or why we see the issue as primarily about gender rather than about economics or Christology.

Luise Schottroff, who also addresses Mark's setting and the construction of the Jewish context within which Jesus lived, both complements and complicates Freyne's conclusions. First, Schottroff proposes a setting for Mark in Syria and locates all the Gospels as composed in "the large cities of the Roman Empire": would the change in location change the way we interpret the text? Indeed, that the Gospels are addressed to specific communities or whether they were intended for a broader audience of anyone who followed, or might follow, Jesus, remains a hypothetical matter.

Next, Schottroff rejects the "traditional academic Christian" view that gentile women in the early Jesus movements lived "free ... from the pressure to fulfill the torah." Behind this construction is the supposition that torah, and especially purity issues, were a burden to be endured rather than a means of celebrating identity, resisting assimilation, and sanctifying the body. In recuperating the role of gentile women in the communities formed in Jesus's name, Schottroff also recuperates torah as "an expression of divine affection" from a loving father rather than as a rulebook produced by an autocratic king. She also appeals to translation by following the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*,<sup>2</sup> which sets up the traditionally understood "antitheses" (Matt 5:21–48) not with "but I say to you" and so distinguishing Jesus's comments from torah, but rather as "I interpret this for you today in this way."

Freyne and Schottroff both propose that the early Jewish followers of Jesus resisted bringing their good news to the gentiles. This situation for Schottroff explains Jesus's reluctance to perform an exorcism on behalf of the Canaanite woman's daughter. She proposes that in the aftermath of 70 CE, Jews needed to focus on "the healing of the nation of Israel." However, since gentiles were welcome in the Jerusalem temple (the court of the gentiles), since they joined Jewish gatherings in synagogues (the God-fearers), and since Matthew does not appear to be writing either in or to Jerusalem where the effects of the war were paramount, the rejection of gentile affiliates

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2. Ulrike Bail et al., eds. *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, 3rd ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007).

would run counter to the Jewish cultural context. Nor did Jews, as far as our sources tell us, expect that in the messianic age, that gentiles would become Jews. If they did, then God would only be the God of the Jews and not the God of the universe. It may be more likely that the Canaanite woman's story explains to the gentiles why *Jesus* did not engage in a gentile mission: gentile conversion was not part of his agenda. That the Canaanite woman's story both echoes those of her Canaanite fore Sisters Tamar and Rahab in Matthew's genealogy and that she models the Sermon on the Mount's teachings regarding responding to evil with cleverness rather than with abjection or violence suggests that Matthew's narrative may be more about ethical behavior than about ethnic prejudice.<sup>3</sup>

Shifting approach from historical criticism to literary studies and reception history, Irmtraud Fischer details the conventions imported from Israel's Scriptures into the Gospels, including: genealogies and type scenes of infertile women who become pregnant; discussions of virginity, courtship, marriage and levirate marriage; motherhood; divorce; adultery; women prophets; healings and miraculous provisions; allusions to Sophia; female-identified metaphors for the divine; Jerusalem; and congregational groups. Fischer markedly eschews earlier apologetic approaches that sought to show the New Testament as comparably more friendly to women than the antecedent Scripture; instead, she shows both the continuities as well as the variations of the motifs; she also opens numerous areas for additional conversation.

Among her many insights, Fischer points to the striking fact that "the self-designation ['slave'] is never used by people in a subjected state" and thus glosses the Magnificat in a way that celebrates Mary's authority rather than her humility. The point may have particular resonance for readers who recognize, especially through communal memory, the wounds of slavery. In the United States, where systemic problems still exist a century and a half after the Emancipation Proclamation and globally today where human trafficking impacts all continents, we might query this biblical language of slavery. Can it be recovered, or is the term too complicit? When a free person, whether Mary the mother of Jesus, Paul, or the person who claims today to be a "slave of Christ," uses the self-designation "slave," is the term a cooptation? What does its use today say about our view of real slaves?

The numerous motifs Fischer adduces anticipate the remaining essays in this volume; at the very least, her essay demonstrates that knowledge of the

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3. Luise Schottroff—scholar, mentor, friend, and feminist—died in February 2015. Her contributions to feminist studies, sociohistorical biblical interpretation, and Jewish-Christian relations comprise only a small part of her legacy. Stories will continue to be told in memory of her.

antecedent Scriptures is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the Gospels. Equally notable, Fischer dismantles the common view, which Marcion would have appreciated, that the New Testament offers an unqualified improvement from the Old concerning the representation and roles of women.

Also focusing on interpretation of traditional texts but broadening the focus to include select Dead Sea Scrolls and pseudepigrapha, Luca Arcari inquires into the Jewish messianic concepts that influenced the women who accompanied Jesus and told stories about him. Following a discussion of the nativities of two ancient savior figures, Noah and Melchizedek, Arcari moves to the role of women in Jewish messianic narratives. The metaphor of a woman giving birth, which appears in Israel's Scriptures and is developed in Qumran material, provides a pregnant test case; placing Arcari's essay into conversation with Turid Karlsen Seim's contribution in the volume on Johannine language shows how the same intertext, 1QH XI, 7–18, offers multiple interpretations.

Arcari suggests ecstatic or apocalyptic visions, within which pregnant women symbolize an anticipated redemption, function as an instrument of liminal peoples, including women. Thus women's visionary experience, seen in the light of Jewish messianic expectations, is the mother of the special proclamations made by Jesus's women followers, including the canonical proclamations of Jesus's resurrection. Whether every text that speaks of an eschatological savior stems from a "specific social group," let alone whether these groups were "liminal," will remain debated questions, given that texts may be prescriptive rather than descriptive, communities can hold mutually exclusive theological texts, apocalypticism has been associated with scribal groups within which the participation of women remains unknown, apocalyptic can reveal a literary genre rather than an actual vision, and liminality can be perceived rather than actual.

My own essay on Matthew's Gospel begins by repeating Osiek's warnings about distinctions among women: No physical marks or distinctive dress distinguished Jewish women from their gentile or Samaritan sisters. This essay supplements Schottroff and Freyne's warning about the tendency in New Testament studies to set up Judaism as a negative foil. After clearing out the negatives, I turn to what we can say about Matthew's female characters and what we might extrapolate from those literary figures to women who might read Matthew's Gospel. The First Gospel commends celibacy over childbearing, mobility over stasis, and the family of faith over natal configurations. "Women in Israel and women from the nations enter the church: their ethnic origins, religious backgrounds, and familial relationships are all subordinated to their new identity as 'mothers' and 'sisters' of the Christ." But in this new identity, they may have the same social roles they had before.



Navarro Puerto distinguishes “the Twelve,” who are usually assimilated to “his disciples” (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ) from the more inclusive “those who were around him” (οἱ περὶ αὐτόν) and the new family of “whoever does God’s will.” In this configuration, women do not become “disciples”; they are “female followers” who epitomize even as they connect the Marcan themes of following (ἀκολουθέω) and service (διακονέω). The vertical relationship of teacher to disciple is then replaced by a nonhierarchical communitarian system, into which the remaining “disciples” (the Twelve) can be integrated. Although the category of the Twelve disciples is ruptured, women preserve continuity in following and in service (from Simon’s mother-in-law to the women who plan to anoint Jesus’s body); Navarro Puerto further argues that it is only through the mediation of the women at the tomb that readers can gain access to the Easter event.

Offering a less optimistic reading of Luke’s Gospel, Marinella Perroni finds that Luke sets up women as “primarily models for wealthy sponsors of the Christian mission” while discipleship remains a male prerogative. For the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42), Perroni proposes that the house setting reflects the household church, where “the conflict between serving and listening had to do with women” and where, for Luke, women were to listen rather than to preach. Her attention to the household setting, already adduced by Freyne and Osiek and especially developed in this collection by Destro and Pesce, introduces a current crux in feminist interpretation: Is the house a place of openness or constraint? of women’s space or women’s confinement? Does it represent an extension of, a complement of, or an alternative to the church or itinerant ministry? Is it a place of safety or of danger?

One could claim that Luke’s story of Mary and Martha—figures who are studied in this volume also by Karlsen Seim, Romano Penna, and, especially, by Bernadette Escaffre and Judith Hartenstein—is less about *women* hosts than about women *hosts*, given that Jesus typically treats those who invite him to dinner with critique rather than compliment. If so, the story is less about “downplaying Martha’s deaconship” than it is about promoting hospitality. Yet Perroni correctly observes, “no disciple is silenced the way Martha is, and no counterpart is rebuked as directly as is Martha.” She supports this conclusion by demonstrating how Luke establishes the paradigmatic disciples as celibate males. Depictions of women in Acts—Tabitha, Lydia, Damaris, Mary (of Jerusalem), Priscilla, Philip’s daughters—locate women at the center of Christian communities; at the same time, Luke precludes them from missionary proclamation and apostolic activities.

Karlsen Seim begins her study of John’s Gospel by noting how Jesus’s address to his mother, “woman,” marks a “renegotiation” of the familial relationship; this alternative kinship structure, which includes Jesus’s own human



and divine natures, then develops throughout the text. Similarly, the women at the cross have a familial function rather than the witnessing role assigned to them in the Synoptic tradition. Maternal roles are acknowledged but then subsumed by the Father—life-giving becomes a male prerogative—even as Jesus is himself the epigenetic Logos who possesses no female admixture and who, on the cross, manifests (or co-opts) the act of birthing. Women are to facilitate, to mediate, and to believe, and in doing so they serve as exemplars and as children of God, sharing the same Father with Jesus and with the men in their community.

Pius-Ramón Tragán begins his study of the Johannine Epistles by noting that they have no explicit female presence despite the very pronounced female figures in the Gospel and Revelation (Tragán rejects the theory that the “elect lady” of 2 John 1 [cf. 2 John 5] refers to an actual woman). There is, however, an implied presence of women, as demonstrated in the plural authorship of 1 John (“we”); readers are addressed as “my children,” “brothers,” and the collective “beloved” without gender distinction. Tragán supports these inclusive interpretations by appealing to the political and liturgical roles gentile women held in Ephesus. He also draws the logical extension: there would also be women among the “false prophets” the elder condemns.

Next, opting for a revisionist chronology in which the letters precede the Gospel and Revelation follows it, Tragán proposes that the Johannine tradition portrays a progressive inclusion of women, with the Gospel showing the “full acknowledgment of their theological and ecclesial roles” that were erased by the “early Judeo-Christian tendency” that put in place synagogue leadership structures represented by *presbyteroi*. Thus he offers a progressive Jesus, a regressive Jewish-based leadership system, and the Gospel’s recovery of that original progressivism once the church became emancipated from that Judeo-Christian influence. Since synagogues in the diaspora, like pagan associations, had women leaders and since the increasingly limited roles accorded to women in the Pastorals and the Petrine Epistles do not reflect a synagogue connection, perhaps putting the Johannine Epistles also into greater conversation with the other later epistolary texts as well as with historiography would offer alternative explications for their gender roles.

Turning from reconstructing the background of the texts, Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati’s study of the reception from the tenth century to the twentieth of Revelation’s female characters—Babylon and Jerusalem—reveals a remarkable consistency in conveying the woman-city as either prostitute or pure, dystopian or utopian. John’s Babylon, marked by the terms “blasphemy” and “prostitution,” is defined not simply by threatening ambiguity but also by perversion: both as woman and as city, she is not what she seems; she fascinates and disgusts. The pure Jerusalem replaces the perverse Babylon, although her desirability is less

fascinating even as it lacks any ambiguity. Yet despite their reified receptions, the appropriations as well as the Apocalypse itself show the woman as dependent on the man, whether as client of Babylon or bridegroom of Jerusalem. This fascinating essay does more than take soundings of select receptions; it reminds us that we do not come to the text without prior cultural impressions; our readings are necessarily biased, whether we realize it or not.

In a comparably more optimistic effort in finding good news for and about women, Romano Penna seeks christological models that emerge in light of Jesus's contacts with female figures. For example, from Mark's resurrection scene, Penna finds that Jesus is both "*helped* by women in that he can feel their feminine thoughtfulness in a moment of extreme testing" and shown to be "surprising" in that, contrary to anyone's expectations, he rose from the dead. Luke's "sinful woman" (7:36–50)—Penna takes her to be a prostitute and asserts apodictically that "contact with prostitutes was absolutely prohibited" in Israel—reveals Jesus's exceptional mercy and grace. The Samaritan woman of John 4 reveals Jesus's role as "representative of the new Israel" and "awaited Messiah"; in complementary fashion, Silvia Pellegrini suggests that she is the "recipient of the revelation of God's yearning for her" even as Jesus provides the resolution to her failed search for love. Penna's conclusion moves from the exegetical to the homiletical in showing his desire "to stimulate Christian faith of all times."

Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce document the shifts from what they describe as Jesus's interstitial voluntary association detached from kinship, *ethnos*, and *oikos* to the community aggregates that became the church. In their understanding, Jesus's "unrelenting dislocation" and focus on direct personal communication disrupted conventional household routines as well as the domestic roles of the men and women who left their homes and families to follow him. Destro and Pesce suggest these followers were primarily from the intermediate adult generation, with the women being elderly elites who "broke barriers that kept them in the background or else in separate rooms." More generally, Jesus's contact with women brought them out of their normally "silent" situation and away from their husband's "mediation" (the extent to which these gender roles were in place, that any houses in lower Galilee had separate rooms to which women would be confined, or that women felt constrained, remains open for discussion; also open is the question of who, given this dislocation, cared for the children and the elderly). After Jesus's death, the *ἐκκλησία* formed in his name depended on households for its membership and support, and this reinstating of the household relegated women to the standard, gender-determined domestic functions Jesus, they claim, initially disrupted.

Enrico Norelli and Silke Petersen turn attention to Mariology. Norelli's first move, consistent with Schüssler Fiorenza's cautions about canonicity,

is to “relinquish the distinction between canonical and noncanonical texts.” Adducing materials from the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocryphal Acts of Peter, the Apocryphon of Ezekiel, and the Protevangelium of James, he argues that the nativity accounts derive from a set of *testimonia* concerning Jesus’s divine status, including his lack of a human father. Mariological interest thus is a secondary factor, conceived in christological development.

Seeking historical information about the mother of Jesus, Petersen finds several plausible points within the Synoptic tradition: Mary was the mother of at least seven children; she had a reserved or even broken relationship with Jesus, a point consistent with Jesus’s afamilial ethos that several other contributors mention; Mary, like her son James, eventually may have joined the movement. In John’s Gospel, Petersen finds an interest in the maternal role of Jesus’s mother, not in her person; this observation matches Norelli’s reading of the Protevangelium of James, where the focus is on Mary’s virginity, not on her action. For Luke’s Gospel, Petersen proposes, “the power of the Spirit is less suspect than are Gabriel’s actions” in that the angel “goes into” Mary: the phrase can connote sexual intercourse. Petersen also remarks on Mary’s “consent,” which makes her an active rather than passive figure. From here, Mariology develops through her perpetual virginity in the Protevangelium to her association with the woman in Rev 12 and so with the mother-goddess tradition.

Bernadette Escaffre finds both evidence of women’s ecclesial leadership and attempts to suppress it in the figure of Martha. Reading Luke 10:38–42 as affirming Mary’s discipleship status, Escaffre nevertheless admits that women for Luke neither serve as missionaries nor have eucharistic responsibilities; discipleship for Mary and so by extension for women is “limited to listening.” For John’s Gospel, Escaffre sees development: women have “official” responsibilities in “house churches,” and Martha’s confession (John 11:27) as confirming “the central role of women in the Johannine congregation.”

Assessing the Gospels’ numerous nameless women in comparison with the nameless men first in terms of statistical percentages and then in terms of narrative impact, Silvia Pellegrini finds “proof that female qualities overrode the quantitative predominance of males” within the Gospels’ androcentricity; although the anonymous women tend to be located in restrictive social roles, their relationship to Jesus demonstrates, she argues, a surprising open-mindedness that surpasses gender constructions of the time. She also asserts that the uniformity of the tradition regarding named women among Jesus’s followers “supports a claim of high historical reliability.”

Andrea Taschl-Erber seeks to recover both the literary function of Mary Magdalene in the primary sources, apart from reception history, and to discern historical information beneath the literary portraits. From Mary’s consis-

tent reference across the canonical Gospels, Taschl-Erber finds confirmation of both “prominence and authority.” Her study of the connotations of *διακονέω* erases the stereotype of the women’s “service” as limited to providing meals and proposes instead “the sense of an especially qualified activity,” including the fulfilling of commissions. The consistency of Mary’s Easter witness coupled with the attempts to confirm it by men also point to the early authority of the tradition.

Judith Hartenstein finds it “remarkable” that John’s Gospel depicts women as subjects who think in theological terms and who engage Jesus in the same manner, with the same types of misunderstandings, as do male characters. Although male and female characters are not interchangeable, because the accounts of the women presume “typically female roles” such as “mother” or “bride,” the Gospel also dismantles gender roles. Not only do women become confessors and evangelists, but also male characters such as Nicodemus and Peter cede male privilege, male readers can identify with women’s experiences (John 16:21–22), and Jesus himself “preserves clearly feminine features.”

In several instances, for which I note five, the articles complement each other. First, a number of contributors comment on the infancy materials. Canonical reports of Jesus’s virginal conception can be read as an “inversion” of the convention of the conception to an infertile woman and as a continuation of miraculous narratives present in Second Temple Jewish texts, including the birth of Noah according to the Genesis Apocryphon and the birth of Melchizedek in 2 Enoch, or narratives built from testimonia now available only in noncanonical Christian sources. Several authors also draw connections between the Logos of John’s prologue to Wisdom/Sophia, as well as to Aristotle’s theory of epigenesis wherein the ideal son bears no maternal admixture in his conception. Whether the connection of the Logos to Wisdom is a positive recognition of female-identified terms and a positive foreshadowing of John’s use of labor imagery later, a cooptation of women’s roles, or a rejection of the female entirely given that, following the epigenetic model, a male who gives birth does not signal either androgyny or femininity but rather omnipotence and completion, remain questions yet to find a consensus response.

Second, the presence of the women at Jesus’s tomb offers numerous points of convergence and commentary. Inquiries prompted by these essays include the following: If the women are, as some conclude, “official mourners,” how is “official mourning” distinct from nonofficial mourning? Who in both Jewish and pagan settings was expected to prepare the corpse for burial and to mourn? Next, with respect to Mark’s narrative: how likely is it that anyone would seek to anoint a body *after* it has been entombed? Fruitful would be a discussion of how these three named women relate to the

three named men who fail Jesus at Gethsemane. This structural pattern then offers insight into the characterization of the woman who anoints Jesus: she is anonymous, as is the centurion at the cross, who is the other figure who understands the meaning of Jesus's death. Or, could the fact that these unnamed outsiders succeed where the insiders fail be read as a Marcan critique of the church's Jerusalem leadership?

Third is a focus on women as "disciples" along with the matter of what the term connotes. Although the canonical Gospels identify no woman as a "disciple" (Acts 9:36 names Tabitha as a *μαθήτρια*, and the title is accorded to women in the Gospel of Peter), several commentators see women as fulfilling and even modeling the discipleship role through their serving, fidelity, and witnessing. Some authors suggest that women are masked by androcentric language: women are included in all collectives ("disciples," "brothers," etc.) unless the text is explicitly limited to men or to "the Twelve"; further, women's ministry (*διακονέω*) is not limited to table service but refers rather to the commissions Jesus gives, including witnessing and proclamation. Yet others observe that Jesus does not share his healing ministry with women, despite evidence of Jewish women healers, and most see the evangelists imposing increasing restrictions on women's authority.

Fourth, several essays speak to domestic arrangements. Most remark upon Jesus's afamilial program, household divisions, preference for celibacy, and configuring of kinship relations away from the biological and to ecclesial; they also comment on how the Gospel narratives then reinstate traditional households, including the gender roles within them. Related to the interest in alternative familial constructions is attention to the matter of divorce. Although a few essays repeat the view that only Jewish men could grant a bill of divorce, biblical and noncanonical (e.g., Elephantine papyri, Josephus) attestations of Jewish women divorcing their husbands demonstrates that rabbinic limitations of divorce to men are prescriptive rather than descriptive; on this question, Fischer's article is particularly helpful.

Concerning the woman caught in adultery (John 8) and the notice that nowhere does the Tanakh depict the stoning of an adulterous couple, additional questions arise. For example, the Pharisees' question to Jesus about stoning the woman may be an honor-challenge. Were Jesus to sanction stoning, they can accuse him of barbarism; were he to disagree, they could accuse him of violating a commandment. Concerning the multiply married Samaritan woman (John 4): to the arguments against regarding her as "of easy virtue" because divorce was a male prerogative could be added the point that the Samaritans themselves did not negatively judge the woman: it is unlikely the community would have accepted her word about meeting the messiah had they found her of ill repute.

Finally, several authors comment on Jewish purity traditions and, more broadly, women's role in Judaism. Missing is attention to male ritual impurity, gentile purity practices, and how women (in Jewish and also Muslim context especially) might understand their own practices. To claims that Jesus's contacts with the daughter of the synagogue official and the bleeding woman (9:18–26) reveals that he is “free from any scrupulous legalistic worrying about impurity” and that he has removed himself from the Mishnaic “casuistry” and “religious taboos” (Penna), that these intercalated stories indicate Jesus's “breaching the prescriptions on purity,” and that Luke's “stories of the woman sinner (7:36–50), the hemorrhaging woman (8:42b–48), and the bent-over woman (13:14–17) ... clearly shows that issues relating to purity could not prevent women being in contact with God or fully participating in liturgy” (Peronni), should be appended several remarks: the texts themselves do not speak about ritual impurity; nonpriests should have no hesitation in attending to corpses; Jesus abrogates no purity laws but rather heals people; synagogues do not restrict women or the ritually impure.

Other authors regard women's fully developed theological and ecclesial roles “as a consequence of a further separation from previous Judeo-Christian influence” (Tragan) or that the title “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:16: *θυγατέρα Ἀβραάμ*) indicates “Luke's intention to acknowledge that the circumcision-focused approach was overcome and that women were accordingly fully legitimate members of saved Israel” (Peronni). These observations also prompt several questions: What within the “Judeo” part of the church would preclude affirmation of women's roles? What were the options open to women in Jewish practice, and how do those options compare with what we know of pagan women's roles in voluntary associations and temple or cultic gatherings? Why would Jewish women be seen as illegitimate or less legitimate members of Israel? Is baptism, or the related concept of being “born anew,” a cooption or replacement of women's maternal role?

The contributors to this collection utilize various approaches, place themselves in conversation with different discussion partners, investigate dissimilar subjects, and reach disparate conclusions. Despite the diversity of approaches and sources, the articles reveal a generally unified purpose, which is one of recovery, whether of the lives of women behind the text, or the role of women at the origins of Christianity, or the enfranchisement of women who today look to the Bible as authoritative.

For readers who share these values and concerns, the collection does more than enhance our knowledge of the biblical texts and their transmission. The introduction of numerous studies in Spanish, French, German, and Italian—including seminal (or, for a more appropriate metaphor, ovarial) studies that would not appear in an ATLA search or major English language com-

mentaries—will be of benefit to anyone seeking new voices and new ideas. At the same time, the broadening of voices alerts all readers that context matters: had this collection also included feminist scholarship from Africa, Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe, we can only imagine the increased richness of the discussion.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Mercedes Navarro Puerto and Marinella Perroni*

This volume is part of the ambitious Bible and Women project, which presents a history of Western exegesis and reception of the Bible from the perspective of gender.<sup>1</sup> It involves the work of several hundred researchers, both male and female, from different academic disciplines and cultural spheres, who seek a gender-relevant reception of the Bible in the history of Judaism and Christianity.

The biblical texts speak not only to women but also about women. Of even greater importance is the fact that women always have taken the Bible in hand, or, if they were illiterate, they knew it at least from hearing about it. They have internalized and commented upon biblical texts as much as was possible for them and sometimes more than they were permitted to do. Thereby, they contributed to the history of biblical reception.

This publication is the first volume on the New Testament. Because of the wealth of varied material, two volumes have been planned for the New Testament: the first for the Gospels and the second for the Epistles. Since Acts is the second of Luke's two-part work and the Johannine letters and Revelation are assigned to the Johannine corpus, the treatment of these New Testament books in the first volume seems appropriate.

An introduction to the themes of the volume means directing attention to the different approaches through which scholars have integrated feminist or gender-specific perspectives into a plurality of research methods. While in the previous century the question of the relationship between the Bible and women was seen, above all, as a "hunting ground" for women, the work not only of female scholars but also of male scholars in this project shows that the

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1. For a detailed description of the entire project, see the introduction to the first volume of the series: Irmtraud Fischer, Jorunn Økland, Mercedes Navarro Puerto, and Adriana Valerio, "Introduction—Women, Bible, and Reception History: An International Project in Theology and Gender Research," in *Torah*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., BW 1.1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 1–30.

academic world is now concerned with this subject on a broader basis. Apparently, what Leonard Swidler predicted with a healthy dose of common sense decades ago is proving to be true: the characterization “feminist” designates a person who speaks out for the equality of men and women, inasmuch as both are human beings, and for justice.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it appears necessary to outline, above all for others, the broad frame of reference of feminist perspectives and gender research that today also has found its way into biblical studies.

### 1. A BROAD FRAME OF REFERENCE

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the differences and agreements between feminist perspectives and gender research. Beyond an essentialist notion of what is feminine or masculine, or the assumption of a “feminist sensibility,” the question of the relationship between women and the Bible for some time has led to a dual research approach: that of feminist-critical hermeneutics and that of gender analysis applied to biblical texts. The two approaches frequently overlap, and in many aspects they diverge, but both share the same basic assumption: in the history of the origins and reception of the Bible, what women have said and done, thought and believed, hoped and achieved, must be restored. The first approach is more comprehensive; the second is rather functional. Both, however, have facilitated the rise of a new heuristic perspective also in the area of biblical studies. Although we are aware of the limitations of every kind of schematizing definition, we stress the fact that a liberation-theological dimension is to be assigned to feminist exegesis.<sup>3</sup> While some scholars, after biblical studies had been opened in the direction of gender studies, prefer to use sociological models for the construction of the sexes in text analysis, other researchers direct attention to female figures present in the texts and in the interpretation of Scripture. Thus, they apply a historical perspective in research on women.

Regarding this volume, it is enough to say that it is anchored in the broad frame of reference of feminist perspectives. Feminism is not understood only as a historical movement that has marked the last century and a half and that in diverse ways and with varying success has queried different cultures

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2. See Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 11.

3. So it is portrayed by the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Vatican Documents (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, which classifies feminist theology among the approaches characterized by liberation theology, without taking into account gender research, which was in its beginning phases at the time.

and different religious traditions and has achieved far-reaching institutional changes by promoting the emancipation of women. It also has to do with an epistemological perspective and a paradigm of assessment, indeed with a *cosmovisión*.<sup>4</sup>

Feminism thus is a kind of red thread that runs through reality in all its dimensions. Women are capable of making history and also of narrating it because they are individually and collectively natural and legal persons. The feminist *cosmovisión* is a critically structured theory and therefore is not just selective or reactive. It is not deterministic, or abstract, or absolutizing; rather, it is bound to the concreteness of life and, thus, to the discussion of the plurality of forms to which the dialectic between the sexes can lead. It is a *cosmovisión* that, accordingly, does not exist outside the diverse contexts in which it is realized, and it is capable of remaining open and interconnected while searching for a kind of “democracy of meanings” in order to go beyond every form of colonialization or standardization. It is a *cosmovisión* that is developed, on the one hand, through an internal debate that is attentive to diverse facets of the feminist perspective and, on the other hand, through an honest discussion of points of criticism.

Much must change, since genuine revolutions in ways of living and thinking are realized only on a profound, latent level and require considerable time. On the other hand, the feminist *cosmovisión* does not appear as an isolated event; it is rather much more a process. We cannot know, once it is set into motion, where it will lead and when it will arrive at its goal. It is also possible that it has no expiration date, since it is a new way to understand humanity. This global red thread, thus, needs time to stabilize.

There is no doubt that the feminist *cosmovisión*, when it encounters biblical studies or here, more concretely, the exegesis of the New Testament, especially the Gospels, leads to a change of perspective and marks out a dividing line between *before* and *after*. Of course, a question is suggested here: who, in fact, has access to the changes of perspective contributed by the feminist *cosmovisión* to the investigation of New Testament texts? The present volume is motivated exactly by this question.

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4. We prefer here the Spanish term *cosmovisión* to the German *Weltanschauung*, the corresponding Italian designation *visione del mondo*, or the English “worldview,” because it seems to us that *cosmovisión* evokes the universe rather than universal categories. This is so because the term, through its broader horizon, is marked less by ideology and is not aligned with the reality of an inner world, but rather with the cosmic one.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Much time has passed since Adolf von Harnack recognized the historic role played by women in the spread of developing Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Jesus's open relationship towards women subsequently appeared as a simple answer to feminist questions. Then, this at first apologetic view, with its anti-Jewish tendencies, gave way to increasingly exact and specific studies on the role of women in Jesus's movement before and after Easter, as well as on their participation in the proclamation in Pauline Christian circles and in the foundation of the first congregations in the cities of the Roman Empire.

The volume we present here is one in this series. It is divided into two parts. (1) The first is more introductory, has a methodological character, and intends to delineate the context within which feminist exegesis of the canonical Gospels developed. (2) The second, more broadly executed part revolves around three themes: (2.1) the reconstruction of some social-historical and religious contexts in which the Gospel traditions were formed; (2.2) the four canonical Gospels and the literary traditions that are connected with two of them (Luke's double work and the Johannine writings), as well as the fundamental areas of biblical theology to be extracted from the Gospels, such as Christology and ecclesiology; finally, (2.3) several specific figures who are accorded a special theological relevance in the Gospel narratives. The volume, thus, is not a commentary on the four Gospels but rather, much more, the attempt, from the perspective of gender, to enter into their historical, literary, and theological atmosphere.

The discussions among the female and male authors of this volume, conducted during an academic colloquium in Seville in May, 2009, brought to

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5. At the beginning of the last century, he devoted a whole chapter of his weighty and perceptive reconstruction to the participation of women in the spread of Christianity, on the basis of a broad investigation of the documents pertaining to the history of early Christianity. See Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908). According to Susanne Heine, "Selig durch Kindergebären (1 Tim 2:15)? Die verschwundenen Frauen der frühen Christenheit," *Theologie feministisch: Disziplinen, Schwerpunkte, Richtungen*, ed. Marie-Theres Wacker (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1988), 59–79 (64), Harnack's study could have been written by a female feminist. At the same time, one of Harnack's pupils, Leopold Zscharnack, *Der Dienst der Frau in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten der christlichen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), widened and deepened his teacher's remarks in an interesting monograph that, on the basis of the abundance of material presented and its balanced assessments, deserves a broader dissemination outside the German-speaking world. Enormous progress has occurred since these studies. The detailed bibliography at the end of this volume shows the wealth of research that has been published to date on this theme, above all by women.

light how a common perspective can take different points of view and be formulated in various ways. The studies display a broad methodological range: from apologetic approaches to the historical-critical method, along with cultural anthropology, narrative analysis, and sociological approaches. Thereby they reflect not only the current status of New Testament research, which is characterized by a great variety of different currents, but also confirm the flexibility of feminist research. This feminist research does not make do with a single method of investigation; it rather aims at confronting results critically, and it shows the functionality of the different approaches. Some thematic overlap among the essays is, therefore, unavoidable, but this offers the opportunity for affirmations from another perspective.

It should not be forgotten that the volume also has the goal of disseminating scholarly findings in a larger context, so that the results obtained and the methods used can become a common legacy shared among all. From this perspective, the volume is also a beginning. It does not claim to be complete, whether in regard to the selection of themes (which also could have been different, broader, and more complete) or methodology (the diversification in the methods used also perhaps could have been broader).

The concluding bibliography is intended to be a contribution. Not only are the bibliographic references used by the individual female and male authors listed in each case, but also additional titles in other languages show new tendencies in research. Therefore, we hope that the volume can become a common resource for New Testament scholars and those who know that the study of the Scriptures cannot be, and may not be, the privilege of only a few.

We are thankful to all who have shared this adventure with us and who were willing to make their contribution, either with their essays or also with their translations into the other languages in which the series appears. Thanks are due to the University of Seville and, in particular, Prof. Mercedes Arriaga, for accommodating us hospitably at the preparatory academic colloquium. We thank the Escuela Feminista de Teología de Andalucía (EFETA) for support in the organization in every detail of the colloquium, which thus became a special experience. We would like to thank the Vice Rector of the University of Graz, Prof. Roberta Maierhofer, for substantial financial support of the research colloquium.

To the sisters of the Spanish province of the Order of the Bienaventurada Virgen María (Mary Ward Sisters), we once again express our thanks that they, from the beginning, have believed in the significance of the Bible and Women series and have supported us generously.

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