

NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S
MOVEMENTS AND THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE AND WOMEN

An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History

Edited by Mary Ann Beavis, Irmtraud Fischer,
Mercedes Navarro Puerto, and Adriana Valerio

Volume 8.1: Nineteenth-Century
Women's Movements and the Bible



NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND THE BIBLE

Edited by

Angela Berlis and Christiana de Groot





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Preface

This volume began a decade ago as a symposium hosted at the University of Bern. It was preceded by an international call for proposals for essays to be included in the volume *Women's Movements and the Bible in the Nineteenth Century*. In October 2012 scholars convened from as far away as India and United States, in addition to countries in Europe. We listened to each other's presentations and discussed the ideas, methods, history and biblical interpretation provided. It was a rich and inspiring few days of engaging with colleagues and enjoying the hospitality provided by the Departement für Christkatholische Theologie at the University of Bern.

In addition to the essays presented at the conference, the editors invited other scholars in the field to contribute to the volume so that it would include studies of a more extensive and diverse group of women and women's movements. In the end, we had more material than could be accommodated in a single volume. We would like to thank Dr. Irma-traud Fischer, Professor of Old Testament at Graz University, for initiating the creation of a second volume, *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch: Bibelinterpretationen der Frauenemanzipationsbewegungen im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, volume 29 in the series *Theologische Frauenforschung in Europa* (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2020). This book gave a home to the significant articles we could not include in this volume. We would also like to thank the authors for their graciousness as we negotiated which essays to include in which publication.

To bring this volume to completion took many hands, and we would like to thank the students and institutions that supported this effort. Christiana de Groot is grateful for the grant she received from the gender studies minor of Calvin University, which underwrote the work of her student assistant, Alyssa Gagnon. Her help with editing and formatting was invaluable. In addition, we are indebted to Angela Berlis and her assistant Erika Moser and student assistant Lis Dil for carefully working through the text, footnotes, and bibliography. We thank the Karl-Fran-

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We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the generous, gracious, and thoroughly professional guidance of the editors at SBL Press. It was a delight to work with Nicole L. Tilford and Bob Buller. Without their expertise, this publication would still be languishing.

Finally, we wish to thank the authors for their patience in waiting for this volume to be published. It has been ten years in the making, and we realize that their contributions reflect their research conducted many years ago. We trust that their insights still have great value and that in the midst of our current state of battling the latest variant of COVID-19 and awareness that we have to actively promote a peaceful world, we will be inspired by the courage, struggles, brilliance, and dedication of the many women who have gone before us.

Angela Berlis and Christiana de Groot
Bern and Grand Rapids

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABGB	Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch
AHSI	<i>Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu</i>
AJPS	<i>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies</i>
ALR	Preußische Allgemeines Landrecht
APTF	Archiv für philosophie- und theologiegeschichtliche Frauenforschung
ASE	<i>The Anti-Slavery Examiner</i>
AW	<i>All the World</i>
BAG	Beiträge zur Aargauer Geschichte
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BDF	Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine
BNS	La Bibbia nella storia
BW	Bible and Women
Cc	Code civil
CC	<i>Christian Commonwealth</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CivCatt	<i>La Civiltà Cattolica</i>
CM	<i>Chambers' Miscellany</i>
CR	<i>The Contemporary Review</i>
ECVMKJ	Exhibition catalogue Villa Merkel and Kunstsammlung Jena
EDG	Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte
ETR	<i>Études théologiques et religieuses</i>
EUZ	Exegese in unserer Zeit. Kontextuelle Bibelinterpretationen
ExAud	<i>Ex auditu</i>
FE	Frauenforschung in Europa
FemSt	<i>Feministische Studien</i>
FFTS	Frankfurter Feministische Texte – Sozialwissenschaften

FGHP	Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung in der Historischen Pädagogik
<i>Frau</i>	<i>Die Frauenbewegung</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>Die Frau im Staat</i>
FSy	Forum Systematik
<i>FZ</i>	<i>Die Frauen-Zeitung</i>
GF	Geschichte der Frauen
<i>Glei</i>	<i>Die Gleichheit</i>
GPCS	Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies
GSER	Grenzüberschreitungen: Studien zur europäischen Reiseliteratur
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HF	Helvetia Franciscana. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Brüder und Schwestern des hl. Franz und der hl. Klara in der Schweiz
<i>HF</i>	<i>Helvetia Franciscana: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Franziskusorden in der Schweiz</i>
HS	L'Homme Schriften
<i>Hum</i>	<i>The Humanitarian</i>
<i>IkTh</i>	<i>Interkulturelle Theologie</i>
IRM	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
<i>JBSLP</i>	<i>Josephine Butler Society Library Pamphlets</i>
JC	Judaism in Context
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JESWTR</i>	<i>Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research</i>
<i>JFH</i>	<i>Journal of Family History</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JIWS</i>	<i>Journal of International Women's Studies</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
KJV	King James Version
KSG	Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft
LKG	Literatur, Kultur, Geschlecht, Große Reihe
LSVB	Literature and Society in Victorian Britain
<i>MCL</i>	<i>Magazine of Christian Literature</i>
MHT	Murray's Handbook for Travellers
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
MM	<i>Macmillan's Magazine</i>

MT	<i>The Methodist Times: A Journal of Religious and Social Movement</i>
NA	<i>Nuova Antologia</i>
NB	<i>Neue Bahnen</i>
NCS	The Nineteenth Century Series
ND	<i>Nuova DWF</i>
NT	New Testament
OEM	Oxford English Monographs
OT	Old Testament
PP	<i>Priscilla Papers</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PSNCACS	The Princeton Series in Nineteenth Century Art, Culture, and Society
PSNCWC	Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture
RAC	<i>Religion and American Culture</i>
RdT	Rassegna di teologia
RÉ	<i>Revue Égypte</i>
RG	Rechtsgeschichte und Geschlechterforschung
RPA	<i>Rhetoric and Public Affairs</i>
RT	<i>Rassegna di Teologia</i>
SB	<i>Storm-Bell</i>
SCHL	<i>Studies in Church History. London</i>
SGF	Schriften zur Gleichstellung der Frau
SHMME	The Social History of the Modern Middle East
SHSE	Studien zur historisch-systematischen Erziehungswissenschaft
SLNCBWW	Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers
SOK	Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte
SSAA	<i>Smithsonian Studies in American Art</i>
SSGP	Die Schweiz 1798–1998: Staat—Gesellschaft—Politik
StAC	Studien zur aussereuropäischen Christentums-geschichte
StSin	Studia Sinaitica
SV	<i>Sächsische Vaterlandsblätter</i>
SWR	Studies in Women and Religion
SymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium series

<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Edited by Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–.
TT	Topos Taschenbücher
VS	<i>Victorian Studies</i>
WA	Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Weimarer Ausgabe], 30 vols.
WCTU	Woman's Christian Temperance Union
WGL	Women in German Literature
WHR	<i>Women's History Review</i>
WPWML	The Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures
WSW	<i>W.C.T.U. State Work</i>
WWCTU	World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union
ZSSR	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte</i>
ZuK	Zugänge zur Kirchengeschichte

Introduction

Angela Berlis

The series *The Bible and Women* devotes two volumes to the epoch of the so-called long nineteenth century, which in this volume extends not from the French Revolution to 1914 (as Eric Hobsbawm proposed) but to the end of the First World War. That there are two volumes is due to the fact that there are more extensive sources available compared to previous centuries. This richness makes it possible to illuminate various aspects of the interpretation of the Bible by women. While volume 8.2 is devoted to women's religious movements of this epoch,¹ this present volume, 8.1, is concerned with the politically motivated women's movements in the nineteenth century. They are, however, not a completely new phenomenon but rather part of more comprehensive emancipation efforts reaching back further in history.²

As a consequence of the revolutions occurring around 1848, first the peasantry and then the newly forming working class demanded a political voice. The modern women's movements arose beginning in the 1840s in the context of general movements for freedom that demanded human rights for all. These occurred regionally in different ways and with their own internal rhythm: in the United States, it was primarily in the context of the movement to free the slaves, in India in the challenge to the strict

1. Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler and Ruth Albrecht, eds., *Faith and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Religious Communities*, BW 8.2 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019).

2. The conventional term *first [wave] women's movement* is misleading, since it gives the impression that women joined forces for the first time in this period in order to protest against discrimination. It is for this reason that, where necessary, the term used here is *modern women's movements*. The series *The Bible and Women* as a whole is designed to demonstrate that a patriarchal social order and an androcentric view of the world at no time remained uncontested and that therefore there were women's movements at other times in history as well.

caste system, in Great Britain in the workers' movement, and worldwide in the struggle against feudal systems.

In this volume, modern women's movements that arose in the long nineteenth century in various countries are presented by considering certain female protagonists and their method and manner of appealing to the Bible, by means of which they promoted the social and religious rights of women. Rights of women and rights for women could mean quite different things in the nineteenth century. The entire legal situation in Europe and in its colonies resembled a patchwork quilt. The legal realities for women were different from country to country.³ The commitment to women's rights, then, required differing forms and directions in different national contexts. The discourses about women's rights dealt with questions of personal freedom, the legal foundation for participation in public life, equality, and independence. Often the women themselves were not completely in agreement with one another about what rights they wanted to claim. The volume shows the diverse ways in which women appeared, with the Bible in their hands, as advocates for women and their rights.

The women investigated here were bound basically by three central concerns: they campaigned for

- ♦ access to education, which started at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the improvement in the education of girls and culminated about 1920 with the general admission of women to study at universities;
- ♦ the removal of social discrimination, particularly of enslaved persons, women, and other groups; and
- ♦ the legal equality of women with men, which was combined more and more in the course of the long nineteenth century with the demand for voting rights.⁴

3. Ute Gerhard elaborates on this in an impressive manner in her article in this volume. See also Ute Gerhard, ed., *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1997).

4. The debate about the ordination of women is not dealt with expressly in this volume since it extends far into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Nevertheless, several of the female protagonists dealt with here, such as Frances Willard, advocated for it.

1. The Bible as a Benchmark for Women Writing in the Nineteenth Century

Women authors throughout time have judged the Book of Books differently according to what it has to say about women. This was also the case in the nineteenth century. For feminist and suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), the Bible was above all a patriarchal book that contained little that was positive for women. *The Woman's Bible*, published by her in 1895/1898, should primarily be understood as a critical involvement with the Bible and its devastating cultural consequences for women.⁵ While Stanton had to endure harsh criticism even in her own ranks, other women veiled their provocative hermeneutical views through sonnets, hymns, or edifying texts.⁶ Others—for example, sisters Angelina Grimké Weld (1805–1879) and Sarah Moore Grimké (1792–1873)—invoked the Bible in order to sue for their rights as women to speak in public.⁷ Still others considered individual women or figures from the Bible as liberating for themselves.⁸ Thus Deborah, the “mother in Israel,” for example, found

5. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002). See Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, “Politicizing the Sacred Texts: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Woman's Bible,” in *A Feminist Introduction*, vol. 1 of *Searching the Scriptures*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 52–63. See also, among other titles, Elisabeth Griffith, ed., *In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Angela Berlis, “Elisabeth Cady Stanton e la *Woman's Bible*: Un'esegesi femminista nel XIX secolo,” in *Donne e Bibbia: Storia ed esegesi*, ed. Adriana Valerio, BNS 21 (Bologna: Edizione Dehoniane, 2006), 117–37.

6. See Natasha Duquette, *Veiled Intent: Dissenting Women's Aesthetic Approach to Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016). This book includes above all female poets and writers of the eighteenth century but also does reach into the nineteenth century. Stanton's achievement was finally recognized on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of her work.

7. See in this regard Michel Grandjean, “Sarah Grimké's Bibel: Eine Waffe im Kampf gegen die Sklaverei der Schwarzen und die Unterwerfung der Frauen,” in *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch: Bibelinterpretationen der Frauenemanzipationsbewegungen im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., FE 29 (Münster: LIT, 2020), 151–71.

8. These did not necessarily have to be only female figures. For many, Jesus Christ was the Liberator par excellence. There were also negatively identified figures. See in this regard Per Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

an equally large resonance among suffragists and female preachers, as well as among Jewish and Christian women.⁹

This remarkable practice of referring to the Bible may astound readers today,¹⁰ especially when such a reference occurs outside the religious women's movements or when such a reference is mentioned by those champions of the rights of women who understood themselves as secular activists. Consider, for example, the work of Louise Otto-Peters (1819–1895), the founder of the General German Women's Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*), or that of Christabel Pankhurst (1880–1958), a British suffragist who expanded political activism into religious commitment.¹¹ Such references are indications that the Bible in the still largely Christian-influenced societies of the nineteenth century was pervasive and potent as a cultural resource and the bedrock of education in general.¹²

Women writers who appealed to the Bible, used it in their struggle for equal rights, and appropriated it for themselves did so again and again

9. See, e.g., Jonathan M. Hess, *Deborah and Her Sisters: How One Nineteenth-Century Melodrama and a Host of Celebrated Actresses Put Judaism on the World Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). On the reception of Deborah, see also Joy A. Schroeder, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); on the reception of Deborah in the nineteenth century, see esp. 138–89.

10. In contemporary portrayals of literary history, though, aspects such as religion or Bible reception are lacking to a great extent. See, e.g., Dale M. Bauer, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Women's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In this anthology, only one article (by Sandra M. Gustafson) carries the word *religion* in its title.

11. On Louise Otto-Peters, see, for example, Carol Diethe, *Towards Emancipation: German Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 138–52. Religion plays no role here. My own research, however, reveals that religion and the knowledge of biblical paradigms are of significance for understanding Otto-Peters's way of thinking. On Christabel Pankhurst, see Jacqueline R. DeVries, "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 318–33.

12. This was true for all social and cultural areas. See, e.g., Beatrix Müller-Kampel, "Eva in blauseidenen Hosen, der entzweigerissene Absalom und Holofernes' abgeschlagener Kopf: Das Alte Testament im Puppentheater des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Bibel- und Antikenrezeption: Eine interdisziplinäre Annäherung*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer, EUZ 23 (Münster: LIT, 2014), 359–77.

in new ways, both negatively and positively.¹³ Women took action on the basis of biblical demands or wrote about the Bible. Through this activity, they became interpreters of the Bible in the context of their times. They claimed for themselves the right and the authority to interpret the Bible, to preach and proclaim the Bible, sometimes as charismatic female prophets, sometimes as nuns, sometimes as officeholders, sometimes as authors of books for adults, for women, or for children, and sometimes as the writers of pamphlets or of prayers.¹⁴ Their creativity was extensive.

2. Education as the Foundation of New Exegesis of the Bible

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the number of publications by women about the Bible increased in comparison with previous centuries. Because of the development of the publishing industry since the eighteenth century, there were now more possibilities for publishing. At the same time, the educational possibilities for girls and women, and thus also their access to the Bible in the original languages, remained limited. Women had recognized the basic problem already much earlier. Thus, Mary Astell (1666–1731), for example, wrote that women, inasmuch as they lacked linguistic proficiency, knew only what men provided in their translations. The lack of educational opportunities led to women being deprived of the right to interpretation.¹⁵

As a consequence of the increasing professionalization of theology and especially of historical-critical exegesis in the nineteenth century, it became evident first of all that women were not numbered among the professional exegetes of Scripture. They were excluded even when they learned the ancient languages and grappled with the scientific methods

13. See, e.g., Michael Penzold, *Begründungen weiblichen Schreibens im 19. Jahrhundert: Produktive Aneignungen des biblischen Buches Rut bei Bettine von Arnim und Thomasine Gyllembourg* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010).

14. See, e.g., Kienzle and Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets*. This volume contains essays from all epochs of Christian history. For the nineteenth century, there are essays on Maria W. Stewart and Baby Suggs by Judylyn S. Ryan, on Catharine Booth by Pamela J. Walker, and on Mother Leaf Anderson and the Black Spiritual Churches of New Orleans by Yvonne Chireau, as well as a contribution about the British suffragist movement by Jacqueline R. deVries.

15. See, e.g., Gerda Lerner, "One Thousand Years of Feminist Bible Criticism," in *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 138–66.

of their time at home through private instruction or perhaps helped their fathers or brothers in writing exegetical works. Thus, Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840–1932), the daughter and sister of an Anglican bishop who taught herself Greek, became a “research assistant” for her father in the production of a commentary on the Bible but later herself wrote works on the Decalogue and the Psalms. From 1879 to 1909, she directed a newly opened college for women, Lady Margaret Hall, in Oxford and became one of the most influential female pioneers of higher education for women.¹⁶ Women in this epoch were scholars in private, but they were not recognized as *Privatgelehrte*, a societally appreciated social position for learned, wealthy male experts in German-speaking countries. This was the situation even though in their publications women dealt thoroughly with biblical studies and were completely current in their research.¹⁷ Still, they succeeded in carving out a space for themselves in the public sphere in which they spoke and wrote about the Bible. Many of their efforts were forgotten. Sometimes politically active women were not forgotten, but it was overlooked that they also relied on biblical arguments and stories.¹⁸

Women who were active literarily and involved in social politics were confronted again and again with the same Bible passages intended to support the subordination and inferiority of the female sex. These were above all the two creation narratives in Gen 1:26–31 and Gen 2:7–3:24, as well as the misogynous Pauline interpretation in 1 Cor 11 with its construction

16. Wordsworth was against voting rights for women. See Rebecca G. S. Idestrom, “Elizabeth Wordsworth: Nineteenth-Century Oxford Principal and Bible Interpreter,” in *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, ed. Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, SymS 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 181–99. For another example from the Church of England, in which the practice of reading the Bible in the family of the longtime British prime minister William E. Gladstone is discussed, see David Bebbington, “The Spiritual Home of W. E. Gladstone: Anne Gladstone’s Bible,” *SCHL* 50 (2014): 343–53.

17. See Marion Ann Taylor, “Women and Biblical Criticism in Nineteenth-Century England,” in Sohn-Kronthaler and Albrecht, *Faith and Feminism*, 29–62.

18. See above, p. 4. In the two-volume standard work by Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz, the headings “Bibel,” “Religion,” and “Religiosität” are lacking in the subject index for vol. 2, *Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart*, whereas the situation is different in vol. 1, *Vom Mittelalter bis zur Aufklärung*. See Kleinau and Opitz, eds., *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996). The publication falls in a period before the subject of religion, and the aspects accompanying it for the period after the eighteenth century were again considered when conducting historical research on education.

of a gender hierarchy and the anthropology derived from it.¹⁹ In order to oppose this, alternate biblical interpretations that advocated for gender equality were needed. The issue of the translation of the biblical text, or of the ability to read the text in its original language, was a central concern. A correct translation, it was expected, would promote the liberation of women.²⁰ With her translation published in 1876, Julia Smith (1792–1878), for example, “repeated the work of Erasmus of Rotterdam.”²¹ Like him, she, too, translated the Bible five times: twice from the Greek, twice from the Hebrew, and once from the Latin Vulgate.²² Her concern was for an authentic text; her goal was the reinterpretation of passages that had been inaccurately translated and interpreted. Selections from her translation were used later in *The Woman’s Bible*.

3. The Pursuit of Equality and the Removal of Social Discrimination

The connection between biblical interpretation and social action became apparent in an exemplary way in Victorian America. The Bible there was the “pivotal element of private and public discourse.”²³ The concerns of the abolitionist movement, which gained in public significance beginning in the 1770s in the United States, were clearly connected with

19. So, for example, Mary Wollstonecraft in her text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London: Johnson, 1792). Although this was a secular tract promoting equal rights for women, Wollstonecraft still had to deal with the creation narrative and its exegesis that the woman was created for the man. See Holly Morse, “The First Woman Question: Eve and the Women’s Movement,” in *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood with Anna Fisk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69–74. On the problem in general, see also Kari Elisabeth Børresen and Emanuela Prinzivalli, eds., *Christliche Autoren der Antike*, BW 5.1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015).

20. Today this is designated as a process of making people aware of gender bias.

21. See Lerner, “One Thousand Years of Feminist Bible Criticism,” 159.

22. Julia E. Smith, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated Literally from the Original Tongues* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1876). On Julia Smith, see Marla J. Selvidge, *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation, 1500–1920* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 213–26.

23. Annette Kreutziger-Herr, “Sola Scriptura: Genesisinterpretation, christliche Anthropologie und Feminismus im viktorianischen Amerika,” in *Glaube und Geschlecht: Fromme Frauen—Spirituelle Erfahrungen—Religiöse Traditionen*, ed. Ruth Albrecht, Annette Bühler-Dietrich, and Florentine Strzelczyk, LKG 43 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 102.

the struggle for independence and, from 1820 on, with the worldwide strengthening of the temperance movement, which sought to ban alcohol, and with the suffragist movement. All argued using texts from the Bible. For example, the Adam and Eve motif played an important role in the abolitionist movement.

Women decisively contributed their share to these movements against social discrimination, but they also had to contend for a public role. When American women journeyed in 1840 to London to take part in the World Anti-Slavery Convention, they were seated in a women's balcony and were not permitted to speak publicly. On the basis of this key experience, Stanton, together with Quaker Lucretia Mott (1793–1880), developed for the first time the concept of a women's rights conference. This occurred finally in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, and culminated in drafting the Declaration of Sentiments. This close connection between involvement in the abolitionist movement and the transition to becoming an activist for women's rights did not exist in this way in European countries.²⁴ As a result, the American women's movement organized itself, took its concerns to the public, and opposed the male-dominated field of theology much earlier than the women's movements in Europe. The American women's movement was thus a great inspiration for many women in Europe and on other continents. In the United States, women expressed themselves in public against slavery and the subordination of women, and they found a hearing. Individual women played a public role that would have been unthinkable in Europe. Journalist, newspaper publisher, and women's rights activist Victoria Claflin Woodhull Martin (1838–1927), for example, became a candidate for the office of president in 1870!²⁵

At the same time, the image of women that remained socially and culturally dominant was strongly influenced by religion. Disputes about the gender characteristics attributable to women, namely, piety, purity,

24. For the US context, see Claudine Raynaud, "Sojourner Truth: Foi chrétienne, abolitionnisme, féminisme," *ETR* 94 (2019): 231–52. For Europe, see the case of Norway. See Jone Salomonsen, "Sharing the Theological Hopes of First Wave (Suffrage) Feminists," *JESWTR* 24 (2016): 181.

25. See Antje Schrupp, *Das Aufsehen erregende Leben der Victoria Woodhull* (Königstein: Helmer, 2002). An abridged revised edition appeared later in the light of the candidacy of Hillary Clinton: Antje Schrupp, *Vote for Victoria! Das wilde Leben von Amerikas erster Präsidentschaftskandidatin Victoria Woodhull (1838–1927)* (Sulzbach: Helmer, 2016).

domesticity, and submissiveness, were conducted in the context of the interpretation of the Bible. The authority of the Bible as such was not questioned; what was questioned was rather human (mis)interpretations and historical development.

The struggle against social discrimination and the struggle for the equality of men and women were woven together, even though not all female authors were of the same view regarding the normative roles and relationship between the sexes. The struggle for the rights of women has, of course, a long tradition.²⁶ The *Declaration of the Rights of the Woman and Female Citizen*, written by Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793) in 1791 during the French Revolution, is one example. In the United States, which was the first modern republic constituted as a democracy, the Constitution, written after the Declaration of Independence of 1776, stipulates fundamental rights for all, which nevertheless had to be reclaimed by women in the nineteenth century. Thus Sarah Grimké, for example, demanded civil rights for women. In 1869, the book *The Subjection of Women* by British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was published and initiated heated discussions in various European countries.²⁷

The religious landscape was a decisive context for these and later developments. In the nineteenth century, society in the United States was more multifaceted than in Europe. Free exercise of religion was, of course, one fundamental motivation for the emigration to America and was written into the American Constitution from the very beginning. Female biblical interpreters belonged to various so-called mainline churches or to other churches and religious communities but also to specific religious subgroups within their own religion (Christianity and Judaism).²⁸

26. See the detailed contribution by Ute Gerhard in this volume.

27. John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1869).

28. For example, in the emerging Pentecostal movement: see Margaret English de Alminana, "Florence Crawford and Egalitarian Precedents in Early Pentecostalism," in *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry: Informing a Dialogue on Gender, Church, and Ministry*, ed. de Alminana and Lois E. Olena, GPCS 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 103–39. Florence Louise Crawford (1871–1936) knew well both Frances Willard and Katherine Bushnell (both of whom are dealt with in this volume) through work in the temperance movement. The relationship between religious affiliation and involvement on behalf of the rights of socially disadvantaged persons, in this case the struggle against slavery, has not been studied in depth for very long. The abolitionist movement was sustained on both sides of the Atlantic primarily by

Women played an important role in English and American nonconformist churches, or in dissenting groups, in the emancipatory exegesis of the Bible in the nineteenth century,²⁹ just as they did in the emerging black churches in the United States. Since these groups often did not belong to the social elite of WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) in the United States, these women were doubly marginalized. This, in turn, had consequences for the acceptance of their statements.³⁰

4. The Rediscovery of Female Interpreters of the Bible Due to Research in the Twentieth Century

The (re)discovery of women who engaged the Bible in the nineteenth century occurred through the work of female exegetes and historians of the twentieth century.³¹ Research concentrated on the United States. This is not surprising for a number of reasons. *The Woman's Bible*, published toward the end of the nineteenth century, was a milestone in the history of

so-called dissenters. See Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffery, eds., *Women, Dissent, and Anti-slavery in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Involvement in the struggle against slavery, however, did not automatically mean a commitment to the rights of women, as, for example, Lucretia Mott and Victoria Woodhull had to experience painfully at the already-mentioned World Anti-Slavery Convention in London (see above, p. 8). See Carol Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

29. See, e.g., Timothy Larsen, "The Bible and Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Dissent: Elizabeth Fry, Mary Carpenter, and Catherine Booth," in *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650–1950*, ed. Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 153–75. Fry was a Quaker; Carpenter was a Unitarian; Booth was the "mother of the Salvation Army." See also Linda Wilson, "'Constrained by Zeal': Women in Mid-nineteenth Century Nonconformist Churches," *JRH* 23 (1999): 185–202. See also the chapter by Claudia Setzer on Frances Willard in this volume.

30. For the European mainland, with its less diverse religious landscape, there is a need for further research regarding the connection between affiliation to dissident groups and biblical exegesis in the nineteenth century, but also regarding female interpreters of the Bible who were members of churches that were officially recognized by the state of a country (*Landeskirchen*).

31. A list of the female interpreters of the Bible who lived and worked in the long nineteenth century is found in Marion Ann Taylor and Agnes Choi, eds., *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 559–61. Most entries refer to the English linguistic sphere.

women's interpretation of the Bible. In addition, the religious landscape in the United States in the nineteenth century was far more varied than that in Europe and offered diverse possibilities for research. Moreover, American female researchers in the second half of the twentieth century began to rediscover their own multifaceted history and use it in their own research much earlier than female academics in other countries.³²

Of defining importance for historians engaged in gender studies was Gerda Lerner's research. Born in Vienna as Gerda Kronstein in 1920, she became an American citizen in 1943. She had a broad diachronic and synchronic horizon in her work. In 1963, Lerner brought the Grimké sisters back from historical oblivion and into the narrative of history; in 1993, she published a book on the origin of the feminist consciousness, in which she presents "One Thousand Years of Feminist Bible Criticism."³³ Lerner and others along with her make it clear that the genealogy of feminist readings of the Bible stretches back much further than just the modern age.³⁴ The perception has grown in recent times, however, that the historical interpretation of the Bible by women also as a rule has followed the Western matrix of biblical interpretation.

While the English linguistic sphere in the long nineteenth century has been researched quite thoroughly with respect to the persons involved

32. For the German linguistic sphere, see Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), originally published in German in 1995. This book also contains a historical overview.

33. Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels against Slavery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Lerner, *Creation of Feminist Consciousness*. The chapter "One Thousand Years of Feminist Biblical Interpretation" in *Creation of Feminist Consciousness* also makes clear the level of knowledge about biblical interpretation by women at that time, which has expanded enormously since then (138–66). On Lerner's biography, see Gerda Lerner, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Marit Rullmann and Werner Schlegel, "Gerda Lerner: Frauenhistorikerin, Geschichtsphilosophin, Autorin," in *Denken, um zu leben: Philosophinnen vorgestellt*, ed. Rullmann and Schlegel (Wiesbaden: Marix, 2018), 249–54.

34. In regard to the term *feminist*, I follow Jorunn Økland: "All (including pre-Enlightenment) readings that aim to overturn gender hierarchies where the male is posited above the female will here be counted as 'feminist.'" See Økland, "Feminist Readings of the Bible," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible 4: From 1750 to the Present*, ed. John Riches (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 262. Økland here refers to the understanding of Marla J. Selvidge in her book *Notorious Voices*.

and their textual interpretation (e.g., the interpretation of certain biblical books or stories of the Old Testament), this is much less true for other parts of the world.³⁵ However, this is changing. Basic research is ongoing, stimulated by conferences and panels sponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature; through publications in academic journals such as the online magazine *lectio difficilior*, published in Bern (Switzerland); by dictionaries and monographs in recent times; and not least of all, by the series *The Bible and Women*, compiled in four cultural and linguistic spheres. Thus, volume 8.2 in this series, published in 2014 in German (and in 2019 in English and in Italian), is devoted likewise to the long nineteenth century. It includes additional large regional areas, such as southern and eastern Europe and the German-speaking area, and reveals surprising results, such as the discovery that an Italian nun had written a commentary on the entire Bible already in the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁶

The connections between the nineteenth-century women's movements in different countries, especially between movements in the United States, England, France, and Germany, deserve more attention, because all began after the 1840s. Nevertheless, a general survey³⁷ that includes the interpretation of the Bible as a basis of argumentation is still lacking. There are already some studies for individual countries: on individual women's activists such as Elisabeth Malo (1855–1039) in Germany or Helene von Mülinen (1850–1924) in Switzerland, but also on women in South Africa

35. See Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, eds., *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, SymS 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), which deals with the feminine interpreters of the Bible from England and the United States who at the time of the publication of the book were still overlooked; Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *A New Gospel for Women: Katherine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir, eds., *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on the Women of Genesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006); Taylor and Weir, *Women in the Story of Jesus: The Gospels through the Eyes of Nineteenth-Century Female Biblical Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

36. Adriana Valerio, "Biblical Interpretation in the Transformation of Women's Religious Communities in Nineteenth-Century Italy," in Sohn-Kronthaler and Albrecht, *Faith and Feminism*, 163–82.

37. See in general Ute Gerhard, *Frauenbewegung und Feminismus: Eine Geschichte seit 1789*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Beck, 2018); Kristina Schulz, ed., *The Women's Liberation Movement: Impacts and Outcomes* (New York: Berghahn, 2017); Rita Huber-Sperl, ed., with Kerstin Wolff, *Organisiert und Engagiert: Vereinskultur bürgerlicher Frauen im 19. Jahrhundert in Westeuropa und den USA* (Königstein: Helmer, 2002).

and in recent years in Latvia, in the Scandinavian region, or on female poets with a consciousness for women's rights in Armenia and the United States.³⁸ Further research is necessary here and is in part occurring. Just as necessary is work on individual women's organizations and their criticism of the ontological and social subordination of women in society and the churches that were founded on a certain reading of the Bible.³⁹

38. On Elisabeth Malo, see Christiane Markert-Wizisla, *Elisabeth Malo: Anfänge feministischer Theologie im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1997). Malo called for a "second Reformation" that was intended to benefit women. Her work is supported profusely with biblical references. On Helene von Mülinen, see Doris Brodbeck, *Hunger nach Gerechtigkeit: Helene von Mülinen (1850–1924)—Eine Wegbereiterin der Frauenemanzipation* (Zürich: Chronos, 2000); see also Brodbeck, "A Swiss Champion of Women's Rights: The Reception of the Bible by Helene von Mülinen," in Sohn-Kronthaler and Albrecht, *Faith and Feminism*, 287–301. On women in South Africa, see Lize Kriel, "African Women, Conversion and Evangelism in Nineteenth Century Southern Africa: A View from the 'Far North,'" in *Polyzentrische Strukturen in der Geschichte des Weltchristentums*, ed. Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann StAC 25 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 257–67. On women in Latvia, see Dace Balode, "Die Bibel auf der Seite der Unterdrückten: Bibelinterpretationen von Frauen auf dem Territorium Lettlands in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*, 67–90. On women in the Scandinavian region, see Päivi Salmesvuori, "Drei Frauen und drei Herangehensweisen an die Bibel im Kontext der Reformbewegungen in Finnland," in Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*, 19–42; Hanna Stenström, "'The Hand Maid of the Lord, Not of the Lords': Fredrika Bremer Reads the Bible in the Service of Women's Emancipation," in Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*, 43–66. On female poets with a consciousness for women's rights in Armenia, see Mariam Kartashyan, "Die Bedeutung biblischer Motive im literarischen Schaffen armenischer Frauen," in Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*, 91–122. On female poets in the US, see Caroline Blyth, "Fromme Subversion: Die (eigenwillige) Verwendung der Paulusbriefe in Emily Dickinsons Dichtung und Korrespondenz," in Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*, 123–50.

39. Protestant women's associations immediately come to mind first of all. However, that women from Catholic traditions also have contributed much to the interpretation of the Bible becomes clear, for example, in volume 7.2 of this series: Maria Laura Giordano and Adriana Valerio, eds., *Das katholische Europa im 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, BW 7.2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019). The case is similar for Anglican and Orthodox women. For a Roman Catholic female scholar who spoke up in regard to educational policy above all, see Marie-Theres Wacker, "Dr. phil. Barbara Klara Renz (1863–1955): Eine katholische Interpretin der Bibel zwischen Ethnologie, Religionsphilosophie und dem Streit für das Bildungsrecht von Frauen," *lectio difficilior* 2 (2013): <http://www.lectio.unibe.ch>.

5. Female Bible Interpreters and Their Importance in Women's Movements in the Long Nineteenth Century

The present volume contains contributions on women in the United States, Scandinavia, Italy, England, Switzerland, and India.⁴⁰ Whoever reads their stories discovers quickly that women and women's movements networked with each other in the long nineteenth century. It is impressive how many connections occurred between individual protagonists, as revealed in the individual chapters, for example, among Katherine Bushnell (1855–1946), Josephine Butler, and Frances Willard, as well as between Bushnell and Pandita Ramabai in India. Through these connections, which in many cases became friendships, transnational networks emerged for the abolition of slavery, for temperance, and for the rights of women.⁴¹ These also included transnational as well as supra- and interdenominational exchanges about the liberating message of the Bible.

Such networking required the mobility of wealthy women through travel, similar courses of education among them, and also the transfer of ideas or a body of thought by means of books and other products of the press. Through these means, women who often came from the (high) middle class could build a relationship and communicate with each other over great distances. Networking involved influence flowing in both directions. This history of transnational networking is partly interwoven with the international antislavery movement but also with colonial history and the history of imperialism.⁴² The latter is also true even when the country

40. Simultaneously with the German edition of this volume, another volume has been published on this subject, in which there are articles about Finland, Norway, Latvia, Armenia, and the United States (see n. 38). See Fischer et al., *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch*. These contributions were originally meant by the editors as part of vol. 8.1. See preface.

41. See on this Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson and Anja Schöler, eds., *Forging Bonds across Borders: Transatlantic Collaborations for Women's Rights and Social Justice in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 2017). This collection deals with, among others, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and many of the women connected with it (Frances Willard, Pandita Ramabai, Josephine Butler, Katharine Bushnell), as well as Frederika Bremer. A detailed thematization of the Bible is lacking.

42. On the international antislavery movement, see, e.g., Maartje Janse, "Holland as a Little England? British Anti-slavery Missionaries and Continental Abolitionist Movements in the Mid Nineteenth Century," *P&P* 229 (2015): 123–60. Examples of

in question did not have any colonies at all, since the influence of colonial thought and colonial economics showed itself in these countries also.⁴³

The contributions published in this volume are presented in the following summaries. The first contribution, by political scientist and philosopher of law Ute Gerhard, is fundamental to understanding the legal situation of women in the nineteenth century. The laws determined the legal space for women, and it was against this confinement that—as is shown in all the other contributions of this volume—women sought emancipation by appealing to the liberating power of the Bible. Gerhard, an icon of women's studies in German-speaking research, provides an almost monographic contribution on the particularism of women's rights in the nineteenth century. She takes as her starting point the legal situation of women, which developed locally in very different ways. She then describes the development toward more women's rights in the various spheres of law, together with the inevitably recurring setbacks. For the first time, she correlates legal development with the national and regional women's movements and in this way illuminates the life contexts of the standard bearers of the movement for women's rights. This detailed contribution, dealing with legal history in a volume that focuses on the reception of the Bible, explains many arguments and actions on the part of the exemplary women activists and women's movements presented later in the volume.

Freelance historian Elisabeth Joris, from Zurich, is concerned with Swiss pedagogue and liberal Catholic Josephine Stadlin (1806–1875) and her idiosyncratic exegesis of the eight Beatitudes in the framework of liberal educational conceptions about the right to the same education and training for women and men. Stadlin, who dedicated herself to the emancipation of the female sex, was sympathetic to Reform Catholic and early feminist ideas about the equality of the sexes. These ideas were advocated in the dissident movement of German Catholicism (*Deutschkatholizismus*) and in the Academy for the Female Sex in Hamburg (*Hamburger Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht*) but disappeared from the politi-

transnational networking as a result of colonial history are Pandita Ramabai and Helen Barrett Montgomery. See especially the chapters by Christine Lienemann-Perrin and Royce M. Victor in this volume.

43. See Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné, eds., *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). This collection, to be sure, concerns Switzerland and the twentieth century to a great extent but is essential for this issue.

cal stage after the failed revolution of 1848. For Stadlin, the Beatitudes were an “outline of human education,”⁴⁴ a pedagogical program for the development of independent and empathetic action. She entrusted this development above all to girls and women as a socially justified educational mandate. In spite of her interconnectedness in transnational networks, Stadlin’s broad impact remained limited to the German linguistic sphere.

Adriana Valerio from the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II in Naples sketches how, from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the controversy about Modernism, the interpretation of the Bible served different groups as a basis and justification for social change. The contribution shows, similar to the chapter by Joris, that antagonistic forces have an effect *within* a single denomination on what significance is attributed to texts from the Bible. The Bible was seen as a bulwark, as a foundation of ecclesiastical renewal, as a social basis for a faith lived out nondenominationally, or as a source of inspiration for the call for the rights of women. By reference to several women and their biographies, Valerio demonstrates how Catholic women, sharing these various tendencies within Italian Roman Catholicism, used the Bible for their particular concerns. What bound them together was that all of them were highly conscious of the significance of the bible for the shaping of Christian identity. The prejudicially fraught view of women that was advocated in official ecclesiastical statements was conveyed to believers with the translation of the biblical text made by Antonio Martini, with official ecclesiastical approval. The Italian women’s movement, with the first Roman Catholic feminist in Italy, Elisa Salerno (1873–1957), led the way, criticizing such misinterpretations as a means for excluding women and in this way preparing the way for the opening of civil rights to women.

Two chapters focus on the Scandinavian context: Norway and Iceland, which at that time belonged to Denmark.⁴⁵ Aud V. Tønnessen, from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo, places at the center of her reflections two pioneers of the Norwegian women’s movement and the manner in which they used the Bible against biblical arguments for the subordination of women and in favor of their feminist argument. Pastor’s daughter and writer Camilla Collett (1813–1895) and artist and daughter

44. Josephine Stadlin, *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1856), 1.

45. For further contributions in the Scandinavian context, see Salmesvuori, “Drei Frauen und drei Herangehensweisen”; Stenström, “Hand Maid of the Lord.”

of physics professor Aasta Hansteen (1824–1908) received their inspiration for new interpretations of the Bible less from their Protestant context than from contemporary literature and philosophy. In the 1870s, they engaged with John Stuart Mill's book on the subjection of women,⁴⁶ which provoked a broad discussion. Hansteen, who lived for nine years in the United States, knew the progressive American women's movement and took inspiration for her late work from *The Woman's Bible*. Her concern was the inner liberation of women and their recognition as human beings socially equal to men. She found the arguments for a changed social and cultural acceptance of women, what today we would call gender justice, in the reinterpretation of biblical texts. She saw Christ as the true liberator of women. The article is also enlightening regarding the interaction between individual female protagonists.

Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, from the Icelandic University in Reykjavík, uses the life and work of Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir (1856–1940) to show the origins of the Icelandic women's movement. For Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, the Bible is not per se a book that oppresses women but became such only through the traditional interpretation, in which men used biblical words in order to impose their will on their own wives and daughters. Through such misinterpretations and a misguided history of interpretation, women were deprived of an independent development of their personality. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir even expressed her suspicion that the Christianization of the Nordic countries had an adverse impact on the position of women and pointed, as was frequently done in other contexts in the period of awakening nationalism, to the stronger position of the female sex in the traditional Nordic sagas.

Christiana de Groot, from Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, investigates the exegesis in the book *Women of Israel* (1845) written by Jewish and British woman Grace Aguilar, who, in spite of her death at the age of thirty-one, left behind a very extensive and in her own time widely received oeuvre.⁴⁷ De Groot presents the three overlapping con-

46. Mill, *Subjection of Women*. The German edition points to the fact that this work from 1869 is also inspired by Harriet Taylor. See John Stuart Mill, *Unter Rückgriff auf Gedanken von Harriet Taylor, Die Unterwerfung der Frauen*, in John Stuart Mill: *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Ulrike Ackermann and Hans Jörg Schmidt (Hamburg: Murmann, 2012), 1:439–560.

47. Grace Aguilar, *The Women of Israel, or, Characters and Sketches from the Holy Scriptures...* (London: Groombridge, 1845). Several of her works were translated, the

texts of Aguilar's interpretation: her inclusion in the Jewish minority in the Christian-dominated English majority culture, her status as a woman in a patriarchal Jewish community, and her interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in exchange with other Jewish and Christian women and men of her time. Aguilar's exegesis can be understood well against the background of the efforts for Jewish emancipation in England during the nineteenth century. She emphasizes the compatibility of Jewish and English identity and pleads for the maintenance of the Jewish tradition, without assimilation. Within her Jewish community, she campaigned for the religious education of girls and women without giving up the socially established notion of separate gender spheres. Aguilar's exegesis of the laws of the Pentateuch is precritical and consciously gender-specific; that is, she writes as a woman for women about texts that concern them.

Champion of women's education, advocate of the rights of women, and translator of the Bible Ramabai (1858–1922), called "Pandita," that is, an educated woman, campaigned in India against the caste system and for improvement in the status of widows. Theologian Royce M. Victor, now bishop of the diocese of Malabar in the Church of South India, presents her life and her biblical hermeneutics. Having come into contact with Christianity through the Gospel of Luke, Pandita Ramabai was baptized in 1883 on her own initiative and undertook journeys to England and the United States, which led her to connect with the leading advocates of the women's movement. After learning Greek and Hebrew, she translated the Bible into Marathi. Christine Lienemann-Perrin, professor emerita for ecumenism, mission, and contemporary intercultural questions in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel, devotes herself to the comparison of the respective readings of the Bible by Pandita Ramabai and Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861–1934) and places these in the context of the ecumenical women's missionary movement. Montgomery's gender-sensitive perception of the Bible led her to idiosyncratic translations. For example, she understood 1 Tim 2:15 to teach that women were not redeemed through the birth of her own children but rather because of the

work treated here into French. See Aguilar, *Les Femmes d'Israel* (Paris: Cerf, 1900). There are translations of Aguilar's other books, e.g., in German: *Mädchenfreundschaft* (Leipzig: Voigt & Günther, 1857) and *Lohn einer Mutter: Eine Erzählung für Mütter und Töchter* (Leipzig: Voigt & Günther, 1859), and in Spanish: *Influencias de la educación doméstica: Primera parte* (Madrid, 1860). Translations into Italian are unknown to me.

birth of Jesus. The Baptist Montgomery, who played a decisive role in initiating the Women's World Day of Prayer, and Ramabai, who advocated a nondenominational Christianity, can be assigned to the same missionary community of interpretation of their time. Both belonged to the educational elite and displayed their eloquence as well as their understanding of the Bible as a book that liberates women. Both also received support from their fathers and husbands. They also influenced each other in their thought. But, on the basis of the colonial situation, they stood on two mutually antagonistic sides. The differences become visible in their analyses of mission in the context of colonialism and in the perception, very critical in the case of Ramabai and uncritical in the case of Montgomery, of the colonial and imperial world order. Both already perceived much that today has become standard regarding gender-sensitive Bible translation, exegesis critical of caste and class, and postcolonial biblical hermeneutics.

Several articles present American women active as Bible interpreters. Joy A. Schroeder from Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, shows the intersectional conjunction of various different discrimination criteria in her article on Maria Stewart's exegesis of the Bible in the context of the Afro-American women's movement. Stewart (1803–1879) was completely conscious of the fact that not only were women discriminated against for being women but also that black women, the so-called daughters of Africa, who were forced into slavery by the Christian societies of both Americas and who were robbed of their freedom, were afflicted in a twofold manner. As a daughter of a freeborn Afro-American married couple from the northern United States and with her own experiences as a domestic servant, she knew what she fought against. She committed herself passionately to the struggle against slavery and especially for the education of young women. For a long time, she was active as a teacher in different schools. Her knowledge of the Bible allowed her, by referring to female figures in the Bible, to contradict the prohibitions placed on women that were derived from Scripture and, like a prophet, to speak against the prevailing racism that intended to keep black women at the level of domestic servants. Schroeder succeeds in bringing to life the milieu in which Stewart and other fellow campaigners fought against the discrimination against Afro-American women and in demonstrating the necessity and enormous significance of education for social advancement.

Kristen Kobes Du Mez, from Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, points out the involvement of women in important, worldwide

movements in the nineteenth century such as the temperance movement and social purity movement. These women went on to become the standard bearers of a women's Christian internationalism, which, in turn, influenced the ways they themselves read the Bible and advocated for social change. In the center of her reflections stands missionary, doctor, and social reformer Katharine Bushnell (1855–1946), who involved herself in the temperance movement, “in essence a women's movement,” and in the social purity movement in late Victorian America. Bushnell's theology continued to become more radical in the course of her work. The basis for this was her reinterpretation of Gen 1, especially of the role of Eve in the so-called fall.

Claudia Setzer, from Manhattan College, deals with Frances Willard's rejection of fundamentalist biblical exegesis. Willard (1839–1898), a Methodist, was chairperson of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and her audience included conservative Methodist men and women and evangelicals from the West and Midwest. She combined her involvement in movements for abstinence, abolition of slavery, and women's rights with one another. In her bold advocacy of voting rights for women and the ordination of women, she invoked the Bible. She was acquainted with the historical-critical method and employed textual, tradition, and source criticism. She critically tracked down the falsifying translations of the Bible of her time. Her exegesis was, in contrast to *The Woman's Bible*, remarkably free from anti-Judaism.

Amanda Russell-Jones, from Regent College, Vancouver, writes about British feminist Josephine Butler (1828–1906), who was probably the most influential woman of her time. She spoke before politicians and organized campaigns for implementing her concerns, for example, against sexual double standards, which easily caused women to become outcasts, and fought against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Butler read Holy Scripture from the perspective of the victims and in this way became the voice of the outcasts. Butler was profoundly influenced by a Christ-centered hermeneutics and saw Jesus as a liberator. In this way she repeatedly referred to Jesus in the narrative of the woman accused of adultery in John 8, and she also discussed the meaning of Scripture among the male exegetes of her time. In an interview from 1894, she spoke about the “sex-bias”⁴⁸ of male exegetes of the Bible. Butler's decisive contribution, in which she wrote

48. See Taylor and Weir, *Women in the Story*, 209–11.

about a universal moral law, involved the expansion of the horizon of the question of women's rights from the inequality of rights and the chances at education to the question of the oppression of women in the structure of economic, political, and sexual power.

The essay concluding this volume, by Izaak J. de Hulster from the Helsingin Yliopisto and the Georg August University in Göttingen, is devoted to the women who, between 1840 and 1900, explored the biblical lands and conveyed their discoveries in travel accounts but also in scientific articles. Feminist theologian Janet Soskice wrote a fascinating book several years ago about the "sisters of Sinai," a pair of twins from Scotland who rendered an essential contribution to research on biblical manuscripts in Egypt.⁴⁹ More women unknown to the present day were inspired by the Bible and biblical traditions and made contributions to the understanding of the lands of the Bible in the Near East and in Egypt. The women presented in de Hulster's chapter wrote scientific articles in the areas of codicology, regional studies, botany, archaeology, and ethnology. Some of the women, with their descriptions and photographs, also offer interesting insight into the life of the local population. The contribution deals in addition with photography as a new medium of perception and interpretation of biblical stories.

Most of the women dealt with in this volume continued to see the Bible as a normative source, in spite of their critical analysis of it, and attributed great authority to it. For many female interpreters of the Bible, the primary concern was an appropriate translation of biblical texts, while others placed more emphasis on a reinterpretation. In both cases, the goal was, on the basis of Bible readings and interpretations, to arrive at impartial assessments of women that, in the final analysis, led to equal status and value and thereby to a new, nonhierarchical relationship between the sexes.

In regard to the emancipation of women, individual women promoted different aspects; many emphasized the public role of women, while others placed more value on their inner liberation and freedom. With their literary work, though, the women construed themselves as public persons with a public-political concern. This was nothing less than the deconstruction of traditional biblical exegeses and a plea for alternative interpretations

49. Janet Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Found the Hidden Gospel* (London: Vintage, 2010).

that would put right the social and legal status of women. The transnational networking of women and women's movements in the nineteenth century fortified them in the struggle against dominant social, especially legal, general conditions and patterns of perception. An important result of this volume is thus the insight that women in the nineteenth century far more thoroughly networked than heretofore perceived. To regain this history of networking and to write it back into the history of biblical interpretation, not only that by women, is a socially relevant venture and concern in the whole series *The Bible and Women*.

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The Patchwork Quilt of Women's Rights in the Nineteenth Century: The Requirements of the Law and the Legal Struggles of the Women's Movements in the Western World

Ute Gerhard

1. Introduction

Grasping the legal status of women in the nineteenth century in a transnational comparison is very challenging. The complexity of the legal sources before the unification of law through national law codes was a problem not only due to the lack of legal knowledge but also reflects a deficiency in the rule of law. This legal ambiguity and insecurity was bemoaned by all contemporaries, not only by women. It is therefore insufficient to refer to individual law books—especially the three great codifications: the Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht (Prussian Civil Code) of 1794, the French Code civil from 1804, or the Austrian Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (General Civil Code) from 1811—for information about the status of women in civil law. Their regional validity was unclear and overlaid by a variety of local and regional authorities, resulting in the fragmentation of law. This fragmentation, the so-called legal particularism, occurred through individual laws, local statutes, cantonal sovereignties, and customary laws that rested on the *Gemeines Recht* or the *ius commune* developed by jurists from their reception of Roman law. Thus, one must also take into consideration that, in the area of the former Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, all thirty-nine small states, principalities, or free cities in the German Confederation, led by the great powers of Austria and Prussia, vied for legal sovereignty. Even the Austrian Allgemeines Gesetzbuch from 1811 was valid only in the core heartland counties, as part of the Austro-Hungarian

monarchy, while other laws and regulations were in force in the new territories acquired after 1815, such as the Tyrol or Lombardy-Venetia. This was even more so the case in the areas acquired after the Polish partitions. Another example of legal particularism is provided by the status of private law in Switzerland, in which civil legislation remained within cantonal jurisdiction during the entire nineteenth century up until the passage of the Swiss civil code in 1907. A counterexample, however, of a legal source transcending national borders is the French Code civil, whose legitimacy extended beyond France and into Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Poland, and parts of Germany. This diffusion was indebted to the geography of Napoleonic conquests, and it lasted until late into the nineteenth century. The Code civil remained in force in those areas even after the end of French hegemony with only slight modifications.

In the transitional period of the conversion from corporative or local law to the fundamentally universally valid laws of the gradually emergent national states, the map of women's rights in Europe thus resembled a colorful patchwork quilt whose patterns overlapped each other and were often interwoven, and whose validity, as usual among jurists, was often a matter of controversy. In the practical application of the law, this meant that in the case of a lawsuit—for example, when a wife, through marriage, moved to the residence of her husband under another law regime—the question not only was what was legal but often needed to consider what law was valid and could be applied.

Nevertheless, in order to provide a survey of this legal particularism characteristic of the nineteenth century, the various legal sources should be ordered according to so-called legal spheres or legal families.¹ These resulted from the political history of the national states and were differentiated or connected with each other through their own legal system or legal culture. The three natural law codifications already named—the Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht (ALR), the French Code civil (Cc), and the Austrian Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (ABGB)—together with the Gemeines Recht and the English and American common law, constitute the starting point for the various legal spheres at the point of transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was

1. See on this Franz Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit unter Berücksichtigung der deutschen Entwicklung*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 496–513. He describes the European legal families and their intercontinental influence in the aftermath of colonial territorial conquests.

also canon law, that is, Catholic law along with Protestant marital law (splitting off after the Reformation). As long as the churches had jurisdiction in personal marital law—that is, in the contraction of marriage, its continued existence, and the dissolution of marriage—they should be included in this survey. With the addition of an excursus into Russian law, as well as the later Scandinavian law that distinguished itself, I have thus provided the framework in which the position of the woman in private law is developed and presented here.

The essay focuses on the development of the bourgeois private law in Europe and beyond that, first of all in the United States but also in other parts of the world, emerged in various shapes. Thereby it is also to be taken into consideration that the colonial powers in the nineteenth century, with their subjugation of extra-European peoples and territories and their economic exploitation, also based their imperial rule on their private law systems and their individual law codes. In this way, the French Code civil permanently conquered the French colonies, for example in north and west Africa as well as in the Near East and, mediated through the Spanish colonies, large parts of South America. The English common law leaves its mark to the present day on the former colonies and protectorates of the British Empire from East to South Africa, in India and Australia, and in North America. To what extent the transformations or changes through local laws and customs had an influence here cannot be included within this contribution. Nevertheless, because of the abundance of material, the following chapter must be limited to the Western world—that is, in that era of emergent imperialism, to those regions designated as “civilized countries” or “cultured countries.”² This is necessary not only for reasons of space or perhaps Eurocentric narrow-mindedness but also because in international comparative history of private law, especially in regard to women's rights, large gaps in research still exist.

The demand for human rights for women was initiated by the interventions of Olympe de Gouges (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), who had already made public the contradictory nature of modern civil law. Thereby they opened the modern discourse about equality and/or

2. Moisej Jakovlevic Ostrogorskij, *Die Frau im öffentlichen Recht: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Geschichte und Gesetzgebung der civilisierten Länder* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1897); see also Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, eds., *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung: Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in den Kulturländern*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Moeser, 1901).

difference. Yet, the women's movements in the struggle for justice mobilized themselves throughout Europe and in the United States only around the middle of the nineteenth century. From this point on, a network of crossing paths and international connections developed. To what extent they were successful in exerting influence and in achieving improvements in the law, or how and for what reasons they failed, is of interest. While there are various surveys and internationally comparative studies on voting rights for women,³ my comments focus on the most important achievements in private or civil law that regulated the existential circumstance of women: in marriage, in the relationships to their children, in the case of divorce or illegitimate birth through family law. The internationally active suffrage movement nevertheless cannot be ignored since private and public law are mutually dependent on each other and the right to vote was the foundation, or the crown and final goal, of all efforts on behalf of women's rights.⁴ "Only when women sit in the parliaments," when they were no longer outlaws but rather themselves took part in legislation—thus claimed the female activists for suffrage and the suffragettes—"will justice become possible in the relationships between the sexes."⁵

2. The Beginning: Women's Rights as Human Rights, circa 1789

The French Revolution represents a decisive turn in the history of the modern rule of law and of the idea of equality. From then on, the

3. Among others, Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds., *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994).

4. On the debate about the significance of the right to vote for the legal equality of women, see Ute Gerhard, *Debating Women's Equality: Towards a Feminist Theory of Law from a European Perspective* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2001), 96–100; trans. *Gleichheit ohne Angleichung: Frauen im Recht* (Munich: Beck, 1990), 111–12. Subsequent references will be to the English translation. On the English suffragettes, see Käthe Schirmacher, *Die Suffragettes* (repr., Berlin: Frauen-Clit Verlag, 1976).

5. So also especially the debate at the International Women's Peace Congress in The Hague, which connected the demand for the equal right to vote with its engagement for ending the war. See Aletta Jacobs, "Address of Welcome," in *International Congress of Women, The Hague 28th April–May 1st 1915* (Amsterdam: self-published, 1915), 5–8.

watchword of equality became an equivalent of social order and justice. Concrete demands and a political program of social equality were derived from it. The Revolution also initiated modern feminism, paradigmatically formulated in two basic manifestations: the *Declaration of the Rights of the Woman and the Female Citizen* by de Gouges in 1791 and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Wollstonecraft in 1792.⁶ Both texts describe the arc of tension that, with the demand for women's rights, emerged in the bourgeois society oriented on masculine legal concepts and legal prerequisites. With these two fundamental and mutually complementary texts, it became clear why women's emancipation in the modern age remained caught in a fundamental contradiction when it did not demand and take into consideration that the legal equality of women implicates and requires the consideration of gender difference. De Gouges and Wollstonecraft revealed this contradiction from the very beginning, the one with emphasis on equality, the other with insistence on the difference. Yet, both intended the same thing, namely, human rights for women, as a matter of course.

De Gouges's Declaration of the Rights of the Woman and the Female Citizen (*Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*), formulated as a paraphrase of the so-called Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁷ is extraordinary in its clarity and radicalism. The apparently minor reformulations name very concretely the sore spots in the relationship of the genders and the specific injustices experienced by women. Formulated in detail, human rights become explicitly the rights of the man and the woman and especially the right to resistance (art. 2). It is remarkable that the inherent and inalienable right to freedom is demanded not only in demarcation against the equal rights of others—"to be able to do everything that does not harm others," so the general declaration of human rights (art. 4)—but rather is demanded in one breath along with justice in order, in the face of the "continuing tyranny that the man sets against her [the woman]," to regain "what is due to them [the women]."

6. The former appears in French and German versions in Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Olympe de Gouges: Die Rechte der Frau 1791* (Berne: Stämpfli Manz, 1999). For the latter, see Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (repr. New York: Norton, 2014).

7. See on the following Gerhard, *Debating Women's Equality*, 38–58, and the comparison of the two declarations of human rights, 223–26.

Finally—and this does not quite appear to be suitable for a constitutional text—de Gouges, with the right to the freedom of opinion and thought (art. 11) as one of “the most precious rights of the woman,” demands a woman’s right to name the father of her child (precisely also those who are illegitimate) and to hold him accountable.⁸ On the other hand, in the sense of the principle of equality, she rejects all special rights, the so-called legal benefits that were granted to women in the legal systems of the ancien régime on the basis of their diminished soundness of mind (*imbecillitas sexus*). Instead of this, de Gouges demands that the currently valid laws be applied toward women equally “with great severity” (art. 9). She undergirds her demand for human rights, and therewith for a new just order also in the relationships of the sexes, with the draft of a new social contract.⁹ It is formulated as a model for a marriage contract “between man and woman” in which the necessary equality of the marriage partners in their marital relationships is shaped through regulations in regard to common children, including illegitimate children; in regard to common assets, including after a separation; and in regard to inheritance rights in particular. This understanding of the marriage contract as a social contract breaches and transcends the systematic separation between public and private law in the future civil society. She was both farsighted as well as wise since—as is shown in all future civil law codes that are understood as modern—the subordination and patronization of the woman is organized as part of private law through family law, whereas the unmarried woman fundamentally will be treated as an equal.

It is characteristic that the first declaration of human rights for women was forgotten directly after the execution of the author under the guillotine in 1793 and was ignored by historical scholarship as well as by the historians of the French Revolution.¹⁰ Her concerns for women’s rights

8. On the significance of this demand, see further the remarks on the Code civil below.

9. See Burmeister, *Olympe de Gouges*, 149–55, 168–75; see the full text of de Gouges’s *Declaration* and the *Form for a Social Contract between Man and Women* in English in Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Bronson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, *Women in Revolutionary Paris: 1789–1795* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 89–96.

10. Jules Michelet, *Die Frauen der Revolution*, ed. and trans. Gisela Etzel (repr., Munich: Langen, 1913), 68–70; recently, on the other hand, Olivier Blanc, *Olympe de Gouges* (Paris: Syros, 1981).

disappeared with efforts to make her ridiculous. On the other hand, Wollstonecraft's written defense, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, has had a broad impact over the span now of two centuries. This feminist manifesto is seen as a founding text and belongs since then, at least in the English-speaking world, among the permanent canon of theories of feminine emancipation. The book became straightaway a bestseller and since then has been translated into many languages.¹¹ How is this influence to be explained, especially since Wollstonecraft's text is hard to read today, verbose and erratic with many references to authors of her time—the more so when translations downplay her radicalism and adulterate it through lecturing commentaries?¹²

In contrast to de Gouges, Wollstonecraft's guiding legal principle is not equality but rather women's right to independence and self-determination. She appears not to want to infringe on the female destination, her "greatest natural-given duty" for the "care of her children in their earliest age," but rather emphasizes that "to be a good mother—a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands.... Women will [n]ever fulfil the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men."¹³ This means that Wollstonecraft insisted that woman's different way of life be recognized, be taken into consideration, and be livable. We will encounter this position of difference, whether understood as an intrinsic or learned difference of the sexes, again and again in the history of the women's movement. This position apparently appeared less hostile to men and more compatible to the opponents of women's emancipation than the legal principle of equality and its proponents.

11. Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1976), lists already 727 titles in her reception. See also Ulrike Weckel, "Gleichheit auf dem Prüfstand: Zur zeitgenössischen Rezeption der Streitschriften von Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel und Mary Wollstonecraft in Deutschland," in *Tugend, Vernunft und Gefühl: Geschlechterdiskurse der Aufklärung und weibliche Lebenswelten*, ed. Claudia Opitz, Ulrike Weckel, and Elke Kleinau (Münster: Waxmann, 2000), 209–47.

12. See Elisabeth Gibbels, *Mary Wollstonecraft zwischen Feminismus und Opportunismus: Die diskursiven Strategien in deutschen Übersetzungen von "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"* (Tübingen: Narr, 2004), 80–97 et passim.

13. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 181, 196.

In both of the texts presented here, it is clear that the discourses about human rights and feminism belonged together from the very beginning. Both were and remain international discourses. I will show that, in the philosophical and political debates of the next two hundred years, they have flared up and become decisive again and again because their concerns are not resolved. For “human rights have (no) gender.”¹⁴ Therewith a foundational claim is proposed in the gender conflict. At the same time, a dilemma or a contradiction becomes obvious that accompanies modern feminism to the present day. This is the difficulty of contending for equality with the man and yet not wanting to be a man, or in other words, the dilemma of rejecting the constraints and impositions of traditional femininity and gender roles and yet also making womanhood, motherliness—that is, feminine experiences and orientations—the starting point for an emancipatory policy and equal constitutional rights. Expressed in legal terms, it is the apparent paradox of insisting on the right to equality and at the same time on the consideration and acknowledgment of differences. Because this paradox is expressed most clearly in Wollstonecraft’s self-confident demands for equality even if in view of feminine difference, feminist women today speak of the “Wollstonecraft dilemma.”¹⁵ But on the question of how much equality and how much difference leads to more justice between the genders, opinions differ again and again.

3. On the Legal Situation of Women in the Nineteenth Century

One seeks in vain in the private legal codes, and also in the commentaries, for any general statements about the woman as legal subject, that is, the recognition of her ability to be an independent bearer of rights and duties. Instead of this, a plethora of different and discursive rationales are found for why the woman—in principle equal—is not to be treated as an equal in

14. Hedwig Dohm, *Der Frauen Natur und Recht: Zur Frauenfrage zwei Abhandlungen über Eigenschaften und Stimmrecht der Frauen* (Berlin: Wedekind & Schwieger, 1876); see also Ute Gerhard et al., eds., *Differenz und Gleichheit: Menschenrechte haben (k)ein Geschlecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Helmer, 1990).

15. Carole Pateman, “Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women’s Citizenship,” in *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, ed. Gisela Bock and Susan James (London: Routledge, 1992), 20. See also Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*, 2nd ed. (London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

various aspects and conditions, especially when she is a married woman. In this respect, the commentaries, reform considerations, and even decisions of the highest courts (insofar as these have been evaluated)¹⁶ deal in greatest detail with the ownership of property held by marriage partners, with the result that matrimonial property law is the object most frequently dealt with in the history of law. Marriage and divorce, on the other hand, had been under the jurisdiction of the church since the Middle Ages. These legal matters were the subject of a long tradition, especially that of canon law, and only in the nineteenth century increasingly became a subject of secular civil law.

"The mind has no sex"—this Enlightenment insight uttered by François Poullain de la Barre in his famous text *De l'égalité des deux sexes* from 1673—was induced by the *querelle des femmes* and debated since the fifteenth century as a scholarly dispute.¹⁷ This fact really could no longer be denied since the end of the eighteenth century and the transformations that were sparked by the French Revolution. Thereby, though, the legal position of women in the estate-based society of the early modern age had been a "legal system of inequality," more through the fact of their membership in a social estate, for example through the privileges of noble women and of their special sovereign or inheritance rights, than through their sex.¹⁸ At the same time, however, rules of exclusion were valid for all women, whether single or married, that caused their subordination and lack of rights to become matter of course over centuries. Thus, in the tradition of Roman law as handed down in the *Corpus iuris civilis*¹⁹ and as

16. See Christiana Damm, "Die Stellung der Ehefrau und Mutter nach Urteilen des Reichsgerichts von 1879 bis 1914" (diss., Marburg, 1983).

17. See Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 34–44; Christine de Pizan, *Das Buch von der Stadt der Frauen*, trans. Margarete Zimmermann (Berlin: Orlanda, 1986). On this discourse, see Elisabeth Gössmann, ed., *Ob die Weiber Menschen seyn, oder nicht*, APTF 4 (Munich: Iudicium, 1988).

18. See Heide Wunder, "Er ist die Sonn', sie ist der Mond": *Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1992), 243–51; Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen in der Gesellschaft der frühen Neuzeit," in *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Ute Gerhard (Munich: Beck, 1997), 27–54. For the phrase "legal system of inequality" see Gerhard Dilcher, "Die Ordnung der Ungleichheit: Haus, Stand und Geschlecht," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 55–72.

19. That is, the summary of Roman law by Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian,

was customary in the law in most south European regions, for example in the French *droit écrit* of the ancien régime, the legal capacity and competence of the woman were curtailed through the legal institution of the *Senatus consultum velleianum*. It said that women in commercial intercourse or before a court of law were not able to assume any obligations in the interests of a third party. The typical case was the provision of a guarantee or the granting of a loan. Likewise, a woman's statement as a witness in a criminal trial had little worth. The regulation was intended to protect the woman from property losses and was considered to be a legal benefit, because a woman subsequently could refuse the assumption of the obligation in the form of an objection. But the justifications were anything but well-meaning. Women were seen as worthy of protection because of their weakness in understanding, their carelessness and unreliability (*imbecillitas, fragilitas, and infirmitas sexus*). The practice in common law and many particular law systems took over this legal institution in various configurations up until the nineteenth century.²⁰

Along with this, there existed in the German legal tradition (that is, in Middle Europe from Switzerland to Scandinavia) since the late Middle Ages the legal institution of the so-called gender guardianship (*munt* or *cura sexus*),²¹ which in principle prescribed for every adult woman, single as well as married, that she be represented by a male *amicus curiae* in all legal proceedings, especially those before a court. This meant the woman was not a legal person; without an *amicus curiae* or spokesman, she was not legally competent and not capable of legal action. Here, too, there were different configurations of this paternalism and deprivation of rights. As a rule, these restrictions did not apply to women in commerce and trade,

published in 533/534 CE, which through reception became the foundation of common Middle European law. In its adaptation by the jurisprudence of the eighteenth century it also was termed *Usus modernus pandectarum*. See Arne Duncker, *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit in der Ehe: Persönliche Stellung von Frau und Mann im Recht der ehelichen Lebensgemeinschaft 1700–1914* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), 50–51.

20. Susanne Weber-Will, "Geschlechtsvormundschaft und weibliche Rechtswohltaten im Privatrecht des preußischen Allgemeinen Landrechts von 1794," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 456.

21. See on this in detail Ernst Holthöfer, "Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft: Ein Überblick von der Antike bis ins 19. Jahrhundert," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 392, 408. See also David Warren Sabean, "Allianzen und Listen: Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 460–79.

and sometimes also to widows in craft industry.²² Interestingly enough, the gender guardian for a married woman did not necessarily have to be the husband because the issue also obviously could have been the defense of the wife's rights against the husband. For such cases, the wife could choose her own guardian. Noteworthy is that the suspension of gender guardianship in individual states and free cities took place only in the course of the nineteenth century, or occasionally was also reintroduced, for example in individual pre-unitarian law codes in Italy.²³ Especially the *cura sexus* survived along with the *cura maritalis* (ruling power in marriage) until far into the nineteenth century in the free Hanseatic cities of north Germany. It was claimed that overseas trade allegedly demanded the unchecked power of the businessman to dispose of his wife's assets. This practice also occurred in most of the Swiss cantons, and in all the Nordic countries (which, though, took over a leading role in the establishment of equal rights for women at the end of the nineteenth century; see below), as well as—with the exception of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, or Congress Poland—in all of Eastern Europe.²⁴

The “simply confusing vagueness”²⁵ of these legal situations is at least reflected in the fact that besides and between these restrictions of women's agency there were also small states, individual cities, or entire regions in which single women quite early were able to shed paternalization or were to a great extent legally responsible and legally competent on the basis of the late Roman women's statute. This was true for areas governed by the *Gemeines Recht* in Germany, in the Netherlands, Italy, and France, and especially also in the English common law, which English settlers also employed to advantage in the United States.

22. Dilcher, “Die Ordnung der Ungleichheit,” 67–69; Susanne Schötz, *Handelsfrauen in Leipzig: Zur Geschichte von Arbeit und Geschlecht in der Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004), 55–72.

23. In broad portions of southern Europe, the nonage (minority) of the unmarried woman revived after the end of Napoleonic rule, for example, in the pre-unification legal codes in Italy (in the kingdom of Sicily, in Parma and the Piedmont, or in the Toscana, etc., but not in Lombardy or Venice, where Austrian law continued to be valid). It did so by extending the point of the daughters' emancipation from paternal authority up until their fortieth year. See Filippo Ranieri, “Italien,” in *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur der neueren europäischen Privatrechtsgeschichte: Das 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Coing (Munich: Beck, 1982), 3.1:344.

24. For details on this, see Holthöfer, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft,” 414–50.

25. Holthöfer, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft,” 426.

The rationale for all the forms of curtailment of the law changed over the centuries. In the transition period beginning in the eighteenth century, gender guardianship allegedly served to protect the woman from fraud and to secure her rights and was justified with the “inexperience of women” and their lack of insight in the difficult relationships in legal dealings, that is, “with the permissiveness and softness of character specific to them.”²⁶ With the French Revolution and the Declaration of Human Rights, and conceivable and furthered now also by women (see de Gouges), such arguments increasingly needed to be justified. For this reason, all modern legal codes fundamentally put the unmarried woman on an equal footing with men, even when this was not even stated explicitly. It is rather only to be deduced from the contradiction between the postulate of the “equality of the sexes” (ALR I, §24), or the proclamation of “equal civil rights” for “tout Français” (Cc, art. 8), or the phrase *jeder Mensch* (ABGB §16) in the “General Remarks” or introductory sections of the legal codes. At the same time, the discrimination and subjection of the married woman under the power of decision or authority of her husband (*cura maritalis*, also called *Ehevogtei*) was fastened and reorganized. Private law, especially family law, thus became the decisive and primary source of law from which the gender order in modern civil society, in contrast to liberal principles, could be deduced. Although the ordering of private law, with its guarantee of freedom and property and which had shaped industrial society, proceeded on the basis of the fiction of the equality of all those participating, family law provided a special legal tool to discriminate against wives and constituted an “enclave of unequal law” for married women until far into the twentieth century.²⁷

The following overview of the legal situation of women in the nineteenth century is divided according to the various legal spheres or legal families. Treated here are the Preußische Allgemeine Landrecht (Prussian Civil Code) of 1794, the Austrian Allgemeine Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch (General Civil Code) from 1811, the French Code civil from 1804 with

26. Wilhelm Theodor Kraut, *Die Vormundschaft nach den Grundsätzen des deutschen Rechts* (Göttingen: Dietrich, 1839–1859), 2:320; see also Gerhard, *Debating Women's Equality*, 129–33.

27. See Ute Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen: Frauenarbeit, Familie und Rechte der Frauen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 154–89; Dieter Grimm, *Recht und Staat der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 33–34.

examples for its application in Italy and Spain, the continental *Gemeines Recht* (*ius commune*) and the canon law (Catholic and Protestant church law), to distinguish from the English and American common law, the Russian law, Scandinavian law as an independent legal sphere, and finally the Swiss law. Considering the abundance of legal matters, this essay limits the comparison to a special example for the many-hued nature of legal relationships. The attempt to limit the comparison to certain legal questions that were and are existential for a woman's life contains nevertheless an abundance of information. Key topics are therefore the power of decision in marital relationships with due consideration of property relationships, the right to divorce, the relationship of the parents to their children, and the legal consequences of illegitimate birth.

3.1. The Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht (Prussian Civil Code) of 1794

The recourse alone to the Prussian Allgemeines Landrecht as German law could be misleading, because there was no unified Germany before 1871 and also no unified German civil code up until 1900. The confusing fragmentation of the law, the so-called legal particularism, so typical of the nineteenth century after the end of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806, can be explained with the division of authority in the German Confederation after 1815 and the tedious process of the codification of the civil law after the foundation of the empire in 1871. This was concluded only in 1900 with the coming into force of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (German Civil Code). Up to this point, the Allgemeines Landrecht für die preußischen Staaten from 1794 was not valid even for the majority of the population in the area of the German Empire, as is shown by a map from 1896 indicating the diversity of laws and fragmentation of powers in the German Confederation before 1871.²⁸

28. According to Helmut Coing, the ALR was valid for 42.6 percent; the so-called *Gemeines Recht*, a consuetudinary law derived from the reception of Roman law, for 29.2 percent; the Code civil for 16.6 percent; and the Saxon Civil Code for 10.9 percent. See Coing, "Einleitung zum BGB," in *Kommentar zum Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuch*, 13th ed., ed. Johann von Staudinger (Berlin: Sellier/de Gruyter, 1995), 3–133. See also Ute Gerhard, "Die Rechtsstellung der Frau in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1988), 439–68; Gerhard, "Legal Particularism and the Complexity

Although the law book itself was valid in some Prussian provinces only in a subsidiary sense, it still continued, along with the extension and increasing political significance of Prussia in the course of the century, to develop a growing efficacy in all the reform debates and in jurisprudence, and finally to serve as an orientation for the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* issued for all of Germany in 1900.²⁹ For this reason, it will serve here as an example for the German legal sphere, to which the Austrian *Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (General Civil Code) from 1811 (see below) also belongs. Only after the further development of the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* in the *Schweizerisches Zivilgesetzbuch* (Swiss Civil Code), issued in 1907/1911, can one discern a stronger influence of the German judicial tradition in the world (for example, in Turkey in 1926, further in Brazil in 1916, in Mexico in 1929, or in Peru in 1936).³⁰

The *Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht*, after a long period of preliminary work in a transition period, was concluded at the initiative of Friedrich II of Prussia and aimed at the “private felicitousness of each and every resident of the state” (so the edict at the time of publication in 1794). In its mixture of Enlightenment absolutism, authoritarian patronization, and paternalistic benevolence, it occupied a position between estatist and bourgeois law.³¹ Originating on the basis of current *Gemeines Recht*, which with the reception of Roman law was debated up to this point in the Latin language, the *Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht* was the first codification in the German language. It was intended to be popular in nature and to answer all incipient legal questions, if possible. For this reason, it contained not only private law but also general constitutional law as well as public law and police and criminal provisions in its total of nineteen thousand paragraphs. It is precisely this still-incomplete separation of public law and the sphere of private law that shows the compromise character of this civil code “between present and future, between the corporate

of Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” in *Private Law and Social Inequality in the Industrial Age: Comparing Legal Cultures in Britain, France, Germany and the United States*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 137–55.

29. Hans Hattenhauer, ed., *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preussischen Staaten von 1794: Textausgabe mit einer Einführung von Hans Hattenhauer* (Frankfurt am Main: Metzner, 1970), 39.

30. Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 347, 484.

31. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791–1848* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975), 23–24.

state and bourgeois society.”³² Because of its exhaustiveness and fussiness, it was nevertheless at the beginning boycotted and much chided by the prevailing jurisprudence.³³ The work was mocked especially because of its propensity for detail, for example when it says in the section concerning the rights and duties of parents, “A healthy mother is obligated to suckle her child” (ALR §67 I.2).

In regard to the rights of women, though, it was remarkably friendly to them. In spite of the explicit equality of rights granted to both sexes in the general section on personal law (ALR §24 I.1), the man here was “the head of the marital communion”; determined residence, names, and status; and was the custodian and beneficiary of all assets held in common (ALR §§184–185 II.1). But the wife was at least in part legally competent. In regard to the daily business of the household, she possessed the so-called power of the keys and was an independent legal person when the man was in any way impeded. Still, she was not allowed to engage in independent trade without the consent of her husband, nor obligate herself in an employment contract. For the husband was the custodian and beneficiary of the common and also of her assets, unless—and this was remarkable—the wife in the marriage contract had reserved her assets, that is, her gains and inherited fortune (ALR §§205, 208 II.1). This so-called reserved property or special property in favor of the wife was a bone of contention from the very beginning for male contemporaries.

In divorce law, too, the Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht was comparatively liberal since, along with the usual reasons for divorce (adultery, willful abandonment, refusal of marital duties, etc.), divorce because of one-sided “insurmountable aversion” was possible, too (ALR §§668ss II.2). In addition, the wife who was divorced blamelessly had a claim to an indemnity from the husband, or alternatively was awarded alimony befitting her social status. For marriage was considered to be a contract in civil law and therewith a terminable contract, and was oriented against ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the canonical understanding of marriage as a sacrament.

Especially well-meaningly paternalistic (not least of all for reasons of population policy) were the generous claims that the Preußische Allgemeine Landrecht conceded to unmarried mothers and their children. These

32. Hattenhauer, *Allgemeines Landrecht*, 37.

33. Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 334.

claims could be asserted not only against the fathers, but also, if the non-married father could not pay, against the parents of the progenitor, that is, the grandparents. These regulations were seen as lax and frivolous, for they allegedly were a stimulus for the recklessness and depravity of the female sex. They provided contemporary commentators with the occasion to fear that the Prussian code might “soon make the Prussian lands into a true paradise for women.”³⁴

In 1854, after the failure of the Revolution of 1848, in a time of reaction and the consolidation of a “secondary bourgeois patriarchalism,”³⁵ jurisprudence developed the concept of marriage as an institution following the sacramental character of marriage in Catholic teaching. According to this, marriage was not only a contract in private law, for which the modern doctrine of natural law and the Enlightenment had contended, but also, as a fundamental social relationship, an “objective moral order” that was not subject to the free will of the marriage partners.³⁶ That this moral order, as a reaction to the promises of freedom and equality in the French Revolution, served at the same time to secure a gender order based on a hierarchy of the sexes was not only a side effect but also thoroughly functional. The Prussian minister responsible for legislation, Carl Friedrich von Savigny, together with conservative Protestant circles, had introduced a reactionary change in family law by justifying of marriage as an institution against the protest of a liberalizing public. He also pushed through a reform of divorce that not only restricted the reasons for it but also restricted considerably the property rights of wives. At nearly the same time, the relatively far-reaching claims of single mothers and their children also were restricted through decree of the Prussian manor house with the aid of the so-called *exceptio plu-*

34. Johann Georg Schlosser, *Briefe über die Gesetzgebung überhaupt und den Entwurf des preußischen Gesetzbuchs insbesondere* (repr., Glashütten: Auvermann, 1970), 279; on this, see Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 85–86.

35. René König, “Familie und Autorität: Der deutsche Vater im Jahre 1955,” in *Materialien zur Soziologie der Familie*, ed. König (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974), 217–19.

36. Carl Friedrich von Savigny, “Darstellung der in den Preußischen Gesetzen über Ehescheidung unternommenen Reform,” in *Vermischte Schriften*, ed. von Savigny (Berlin: Scientia, 1968), 5:321–22; see also Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 167–79, as well as Dirk Blasius, *Ehescheidung in Deutschland 1794–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 39–80.

rium concubentium (the objection that the woman had intercourse with several men).³⁷

These regulations found their way into the shaping of the clauses on family law in the first civil code valid for all of Germany, the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* that came into force in 1900. Indeed, the doctrine of marriage as an institution formed the basis for the special protection granted to marriage and the family in article 6 of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) of 1949 and was invoked up to the recent past against the application of the imperative of equality required in article 3 in marriage, too.

3.2. The Austrian Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (General Civil Code) from 1811

The Austrian Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, prepared under Empress Maria Theresia and Emperor Joseph II and completed only by their successors already in the face of the French Revolution,³⁸ also was a product of enlightened absolutism. It was at pains to unify the variety of legal sources in the Habsburg lands—an association of peoples that reached from Hungary to Galicia and north Italy (Lombardy and Venetia)—and, with the idea of equal human rights, to overcome “the ‘noxiously traditional’ customs of the estates-based feudal society.”³⁹

In comparison with the other great codifications of civil law, the Austrian codification granted the woman the greatest measure of independence. Thus, according to the Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, not only the single woman but also the married woman was fundamentally legally competent and able to bring suit. But here, too, the husband was the head of the family. Indeed, even “the right above all to direct household affairs” fell to him. He was at the same time obligated “to care [for] decent maintenance” (ABGB §91). The wife was obliged “to support [the husband] in the household ... to the best of her ability [and]

37. It is typical in legal literature that, in the cases of gender questions, Latin concepts still were used.

38. Diemut Majer, *Frauen—Revolution—Recht: Die großen Europäischen Revolutionen in Frankreich, Deutschland und Österreich 1789 bis 1918 und die Rechtsstellung der Frauen* (Zürich: Dike u. Nomos, 2008), 273–89.

39. Ursula Floßmann, “Die beschränkte Grundrechtssubjektivität der Frau: Ein Beitrag zum österreichischen Gleichheitsdiskurs,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 295.

to comply with the regulations made by him" (§92). If one follows the wording of the law, it is clear that the issue here is not so much individual rights but the household or—later—the family as the fundamental basis or "germ cell" of the state. That meant, in accord with Enlightenment rational law, "the equal obligation for both parties to marital duty, loyalty, and decent encounter" (§90).⁴⁰ A substantial improvement for the wife—in connection with the common law tradition, which was based on Roman law—was also the determination of the legal status of the separation of marital property (§1237). This meant that both marriage partners remained the owners of their own assets, both those they brought into the marriage and the goods acquired during the marriage, and, in contrast to other laws of the time (for example, the French Code civil; see below), the woman also could dispose of her own assets when there was no agreement to the contrary.

In spite of this, though, in the leading commentaries—above all in the commentary by the leading author of the legislation, Franz von Zeiller, and under the imperative of bourgeois equality (see ABGB §§16–18)—the legal subordination of the wife here, too, was justified fundamentally with the "natural superiority of the man."⁴¹ In spite of the independent property rights enjoyed by the wife, the legal presumption (*praesumptio Muciana*) that the woman, on the basis of a tacit agreement, had conveyed the administration of her assets to the man (§§1237–38) increasingly became dominant and a matter of course in the daily legal dealings in the nineteenth century. Ursula Floßmann speaks in this connection about a "well-meaning educational patriarchalism," which was successful in "wrapping patriarchal sovereignty in a cloak of masculine obligations for protection and care."⁴²

Out of consideration for the marital law of the Roman Catholic Church, the conclusion of a marriage in the Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, however, was still the task of the Roman Catholic priest, Protestant pastor, or Jewish rabbi. For this reason, divorce remained basically impossible for Catholics (ABGB §111) but was possible for non-Catholic Christians and the "Jewish community" through the ordinary courts (§§115, 123–36). The preconditions for a divorce were the same for both marriage partners. For

40. On the following, see also Majer, *Frauen—Revolution—Recht*, 283–84.

41. See Floßmann, "Die beschränkte Grundrechtssubjektivität," 302.

42. Ursula Floßmann, *Frauenrechtsgeschichte: Ein Leitfaden für den Rechtsunterricht*, 2nd ed. (Linz: Trauner, 2006), 99.

a country with a population of more than 90 percent Roman Catholics, the church continued to rule within material marital law. It decided about the existing impediments to marriage and was involved through the priestly arbitration process in the prohibition of divorce that was furnished with exceptions. But, in exactly regulated exceptional cases, Roman Catholics, too, could affect a retrospective declaration of the invalidity of the marriage (for example, because of the incapacity to fulfill marital duty, §100) or a separation "from table and bed" (in Austrian parlance, "dissolution," §§103–4) with the aid of the ordinary courts. An emergency civil marriage was introduced from 1855 on for mixed marriages and those without a religious confession.

As an aftereffect of Roman Catholic canon law, which considered betrothals and so-called secret marriages (those concluded without the consent of the parents) as quasi-marriages, and also in clear renunciation of the disciplining and the discrediting punishments for fornication according to the police ordinances of the ancien régime,⁴³ the regulations for illegitimate children and mothers were strikingly considerate (ABGB §§161–71). Although the preliminary draft, the Josephinist Civil Code of 1786, already had treated legitimate and illegitimate children to a great extent as equals, the Allgemeine Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch, to be sure, rescinded this equality (§155), but it attempted to avoid at least the stigma of the illegitimate birth and emphasized: "The illegitimate birth can do no harm at all to a child in its civil dignity and its advancement" (§162). Thus, the illegitimate child had the right to demand from "its parents board, education, and care appropriate to their assets," to which "the father above all [was] obliged" (§§166–67). The illegitimate child remained, however, excluded from further rights against the father in regard to name and status (§165).

The possibilities for a retroactive legitimation of the children were quite generous (§§160–61). The opening of foundling hospitals (the first in Vienna in 1784), in which women could give birth discreetly and in which they could accommodate their children, was intended above all as a contribution toward the decriminalization and support of single mothers. The foundling hospital undertook the guardianship of the child up to the age of fifteen as well as the obligation to support it (as a rule through place-

43. Beate Harms-Ziegler, "Außereheliche Mutterschaft in Preußen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 371; see also Harms-Ziegler, *Illegitimität und Ehe: Illegitimität als Reflex des Ehediskurses in Preußen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991).

ment in a foster home). As service in return, the mothers were obliged to serve as wet nurses for the period of their accommodation.⁴⁴ Only in the course of the nineteenth century were the informal forms of living together in the lower classes, which, in terms of continental *Gemeines Recht*, were organized almost like a marriage in regard to inheritance and property rights, or the so-called concubinage of the noble classes (morganatic marriages), declared to be nonmarriages. Only then did they become illegal and as such the objects of scandal and discrimination in the course of the acceptance of a secular marital morality, not least of all with the aid of the two Christian churches.

3.3. The Legal Sphere of the French Code Civil

3.3.1. France

The Code civil, put into effect by Napoleon in 1804 at the pinnacle of his power, is considered in general as a “master stroke of the art of liberal legislation” and as a “document of national greatness.”⁴⁵ This first liberal civil code, with its basic principles, the abolition of estate privileges, and the elimination of ecclesiastical competencies in civil law, and with the guarantee of freedom and property, offered the appropriate legal framework in which the liberal market and ownership society could develop. For Napoleon himself, it was in addition a “propaganda instrument” for his imperial conquests that, so he himself wrote in 1808, meant more for the expansion and consolidation of his system in Europe than the great victories of his armies.⁴⁶ In point of fact, the Code civil, as already mentioned, not only set out on a victorious campaign with the Napoleonic conquests but also afterward put its stamp on the legal systems in many countries of Europe, especially the Romance countries, and even beyond these limits. This was accomplished either by being retained or serving as a model and pattern for subsequent law codes.

44. For details, see Verena Pawlowski, “Die Mütter der Wiener Findelkinder: Zur rechtlichen Situation ledig gebärender Frauen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 367–81.

45. Ernst Holthöfer, “Frankreich,” in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.1:884.

46. Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Der Kampf um die Einführung des Code Napoléon in den Rheinbundstaaten* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1973), 9.

The legal family of the Code civil thus comprises, also beyond the Napoleonic era, the German provinces west of the Rhine as well as the Kingdom of Westphalia and the Grand Duchy of Baden, the Netherlands, later also Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, and Portugal,⁴⁷ French-speaking Switzerland, several South American countries such as Brazil and Peru, parts of the former French settlement areas in North America (Louisiana, the Canadian province of Quebec), and Near Eastern countries with French cultural influence (Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon).⁴⁸ Influences are undoubtedly to be found, too, in the former French colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia.

This success story of the Code civil, though, has another side, one concerning policy toward women: the disgraceful position of women in marital and family law. Whenever the system of French codification, its clear diction, and the elegance of its formulations is praised, the proof provided by the novelist Stendhal always is cited, who every morning before taking up his literary activities is said to have read the Code civil "pour prendre le ton."⁴⁹ It was precisely that paragraph that defines the concept of the complete lack of rights enjoyed by the wife, article 213, that served him as an example of this. The paragraph ran, until 1938, "The husband owes his wife protection; the wife owes her husband obedience."⁵⁰ The consequences in particular were that the wife stood in every respect under the authority of her husband; she was in no way an independent legal person. For every legal act and in every individual case in the conduct of her household activities as well as that of an independent business, she required the permission (*autorisation*) of her husband. She was neither legally competent nor able to bring suit (art. 214–26). She could possess property but could not dispose of it or acquire further property, including not through profit she secured through gainful employment. Even in the case of a separation of goods agreed to before the marriage, the wife could not dispose of the real estate belonging to her without the permission of her husband. For the husband's authority extended over the person as well as over the assets of his wife; it was not possible to change this contractually (art. 1388). Especially hardhearted was the sole and unrestricted authority of the father (art.

47. On Italy and Spain, see below.

48. Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 346, 501.

49. Murad Ferid, *Das Französische Zivilrecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Metzner, 1971), 1: no. 1 A 50 (n. 76).

50. "Le mari doit protection à sa femme, la femme obéissance à son mari."

373–374); to refuse to obey him was a sacrilege.⁵¹ This meant that the father possessed the means of discipline and even could have his child locked up (art. 375–77).

The preconditions for a divorce also were unequal; it was possible only up to 1816, and afterward was forbidden until 1884. Adultery committed by the husband was a ground for divorce only when it was committed in the marital dwelling (art. 229–33). On the other hand, the betrayed husband could be divorced from his wife in any case and even could kill his wife with impunity if he caught her *in flagranti* (art. 234, in connection with Code penal 336–39).

In comparison with the other legal spheres, the hostility toward women and the lack of rights granted unmarried mothers and their children in French civil law were unparalleled. It is striking that even in the areas that were subject to French law after the Napoleonic conquests—and in those German-speaking areas where this law was retained up to 1900, such as in the duchies in Baden and in the areas west of the Rhine—the law deviated from the Code civil. Here explicit moderations were allowed with regard to the unequal grounds for divorce for husband and wife as well as to the rigid regulations concerning single mothers and their illegitimate children. The reason for this was that for many, “such a narrow restriction of the rights of the woman” appeared to be too hard.⁵² The prohibition imposed on an unmarried mother and her children against demanding support or compensation from the father of a child born out of wedlock, or in taking legal action against him, stood in the center of the injustice. In fact, the regulation stating “The pursuit for paternity is forbidden” (art. 340)⁵³ was unknown to the *droit écrit* as well as to the common law of the ancien régime and was invented only by the revolutionary legislators (decree of November 2, 1792). Since illegitimate children had been treated as equals in inheritance law in the revolutionary upheaval with the introduction of freedom in divorce (1792), people (men) were subsequently worried that “the most respectable families” might be exposed to the danger of “scandalous extortions” and “monstrous spoliations [*spolia-*

51. Philippe Sagnac, *La Législation Civile de la Révolution française (1789–1804): Essai d'histoire sociale* (repr., Geneva: Mégariotis, 1979), 363.

52. Johann N. Fr. Brauer, *Erläuterungen über den Code Napoléon und die Großherzoglich Badische bürgerliche Gesetzgebung* (Karlsruhe: Müller, 1809), 1:200. On divorce and on the rights of the unmarried mother and her children to support, see 245–49.

53. “La recherche de la paternité est interdite.”

tions monstreuses].”⁵⁴ Thus, “the honor of the women” was sacrificed to “the liberty of the fathers.”⁵⁵

The regulation was taken over at Napoleon's explicit behest into article 340 and meant an illegitimate child had no legal claims at all against the father unless he had explicitly acknowledged or supported the child born out of wedlock (*reconnaissance ou possession d'état*). The mother had no rights at all and did not receive any state support. In order to prevent abortion and the killing of the baby, the system anonymous deliveries (*accouchement secret*), foundling hospitals, and “baby hatches” (*tours*) was expanded, legally confirmed up to the middle of the century, and tolerated from the perspective of population policy and, after 1870, of patriotic considerations. In 1912, after a long struggle on the part of the women's movement, article 340 was amended; a paternity suit was still only allowed in five instances but was not yet abolished. Only in 1972 was the prohibition on paternity suits repealed, and only through laws passed in 2003 and 2005 were illegitimate children put on an equal footing in every respect.⁵⁶

In summary, this meant the subjugation of the French woman under masculine authority (*la puissance maritale et paternelle*) determined female living conditions in four existential respects: through the lack of rights enjoyed by the wife, the absolute authority of the father in the education of the children, the prohibition on divorce, and the one-sided disciplining and deprivation of rights of the unmarried mother and her children. For this reason, Marianne Weber comes to the conclusion already in her detailed legal history *Ehefrau und Mutter* that “Of all (at her time) valid law, the Code civil (had) preserved the traits of medieval patriarchalism in its purest form and for the longest period.”⁵⁷ It should be mentioned here

54. Paul Viollet, *Histoire du droit civile francais* (Aalen: Scientia, 1966), 511.

55. Nadine Lefaucheur, “Unwed Mothers and Family Law in Nineteenth-Century France: The Issues of Paternity Suits and Anonymous Delivery,” in *Family Law in Early Women's Rights Debates: Western Europe and the United States in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Stephan Meder and Christoph-Eric Mecke, RG 14 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013), 88 (orig.: “preservation of father's liberty versus mothers' honour”); see Lefaucheur, “Fatherless Children and *Accouchement sous X*, from Marriage to Demarriage: A Paradigmatic Approach,” *JFH* 28 (2003): 161–81, on the French tradition of the anonymous birth, the “baby hatches,” and the foundling hospitals.

56. Lefaucheur, “Unwed Mothers,” 102.

57. Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907), 318.

that the provisions of the Code civil especially hostile to women, with their unrestricted authority of the husband, remained in force until 1938. Also, French women acquired the political right to vote only in 1944, and this although they had formulated and sued for the political participation and human rights of women already during the French Revolution.

3.3.2. Italy

The development of Italian law up to its codification in the Codice civile, issued in 1865, is sketched out here as an example representing other countries belonging to the French legal family. Before national unification in 1861, Italy was composed of several individual states that, with the Napoleon's conquests in 1796, fell in broad parts under the dominion of French law. The exception was formed by the Habsburg possessions, which were subject up to 1861 to Austrian law.⁵⁸ While the revolutionary changes in the French *droit intermédiaire* at first were not able to achieve much against the firmly rooted *ius commune*, which in marital law was influenced by canon law, Napoleon decreed in 1806 the introduction of the French Code civil stemming from 1804. The legal institution of divorce, though, appears even after 1806 not to have been well received in practice,⁵⁹ the more so since restoration France also once again introduced the prohibition on divorce in 1816 (up to 1884). After 1814, after the collapse of the Napoleonic states, most of the individual Italian states returned to the *ius commune* and canon law (for example, in the Piedmont, in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and in the papal states), while others issued individual laws that likewise were influenced by Catholic marital law. Characteristically, in most of the pre-unification law codes the immaturity of single women was revived, and the emancipation of daughters from paternal authority became possible only with their entry into their fortieth year of life.⁶⁰

On the other hand, some innovations in marital law definitely were taken over from the French Code civil, such as the strengthening of the

58. To these belonged, from 1815 on, especially Venetia and Lombardy, while all the other codifications issued before unification were oriented on the French law (see Ranieri, "Italien," 212–13). See further Gabriele Boukrif, "Der Schritt über den Rubikon": Eine vergleichende Untersuchung zur deutschen und italienischen Frauenstimmrechtsbewegung (1861–1919) (Münster: LIT, 2006).

59. Ranieri, "Italien," 328.

60. Ranieri, "Italien," 344.

position of the husband in Roman-legal dowry law. That is, instead of a legal separation of goods, it was assumed that the *dos*, the dowry of the wife, also was the property of the husband.⁶¹ This patriarchal orientation was valid also for the Codice civile issued in 1865, which especially disappointed the women who had taken an active part in the unification and freedom movement, the Risorgimento.⁶² The position of the man as the head of the family (*capo della famiglia*) was confirmed (art. 131); the woman thereby was subject here, too, to the *autorizzazione maritale* in all legal transactions and before the court (art. 134). But a duty to be obedient, as in the French code, was here not formulated explicitly. The parental authority, however, was fundamentally a paternal one; likewise, inquiry into the paternity of children born outside marriage was prohibited (art. 189). Merely in the case of inheritance could the equality of the sexes be achieved.⁶³

The introduction of civil marriage and the possibility of divorce caused the greatest difficulties for the reformers of the Codice civile. Civil marriage, which was obligatory before the church wedding (art. 93–94), was to a great extent ignored by the people. This resulted in great legal uncertainty until the beginning of the twentieth century about how those marriages performed only ecclesiastically, and especially the children from these marriages (according to secular law, illegitimate), were to be treated. The so-called concordat marriage, agreed on with the pope in 1929, was concluded according to canon law and was acknowledged in civil law. With this marriage, there were then three forms of marriage: the canonic form, the marriage concluded by the representative (pastor or rabbi) of another religious community, and the optional civil marriage in accord with the Italian Codice civile. Divorce—previously known as only

61. Ranieri, "Italien," 343. This contradicted the original concept of the Roman dowry law, whereby the dowry (*dos*) as a contribution made by the wife to meeting the burdens of the marriage became, to be sure, the property of the husband but remained separate from his assets, because connected with it was an obligatory claim to return it after the end of the marriage. On the various forms of the law of marital property, see Stephan Buchholz, "Ehegüterrecht," in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.2:1663–71.

62. See on this the critical analysis by Anna Maria Mozzoni, *La donna in faccia al progetto del nuovo Codice civile italiano* (Milan: Tipografia Sociale, 1865); Elisabeth Dickmann, *Die italienische Frauenbewegung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Domus Editoria Europaea, 2002), 107–14.

63. Ranieri, "Italien," 348–55.

the separation from bed and board (*separazione personale*, art. 150–151)—was introduced only in 1970, and only then was the last step taken in the secularization of marital law.⁶⁴

3.3.3. Spain

Spain, too, was confronted with the law of the victor through the establishment of the French Code civil in 1808 after Napoleon's expedition of conquest. This occurred, however, at a point in time when the Spanish ancien régime already was prostrate, as the defeat forced the Bourbon kings to abdicate, and a liberal codification movement already was attempting to order and reform the traditional and obsolete legal system by producing a compilation of traditional law (Novissima Recopilación).⁶⁵ The French code, as a modern civil law book with the guarantee of property and the promise of personal freedom, thus offered itself as nothing less than a model for social reforms, even more so because with it was combined the abolition of privileges, the erection of an administration, a justice system, and military affairs—propaganda instruments that Napoleon knew how to use in reordering Europe under French leadership. In fact, the French Code civil had served as an aid in orientation for enlightened Spanish jurists even before the occupation.

After the end of the Napoleonic rule, to be sure, the official adoption of the French law code was overruled, but the Code civil, in part in literal translation, still significantly marked the legislation in Spain, not least of all the court rulings. After a tedious and repeatedly interrupted process of codification—after the short interlude of a First Republic between 1868 and 1875, in which civil marriage was introduced but afterwards immediately abolished—the *Código civil* finally could be issued in 1888/1889 as “an imitation of the *Code civil français*.”⁶⁶ In the ordering of its paragraphs centered on the institutions of family and property, it was characterized already by contemporary critics as a product of the Restoration. In con-

64. Ranieri, “Italien,” 340–41.

65. Johannes-Michael Scholz, “Kodifikation und Gesetzgebung des Allgemeinen Privatrechts: Spanien,” in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.1:427–28.

66. Scholz, “Kodifikation und Gesetzgebung,” 562. See also Mary Nash, “The Rise of Women's Movement in Nineteenth Century Spain,” in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective*, ed. Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 251–53.

trast to France, where civil marriage was introduced during the revolution, marriage in Spain was concluded according to canon law, with the result that it was considered (with a short interruption in the Second Republic between 1931 and 1936/1939) until 1978/1981 as indissoluble.⁶⁷ That is, the Roman Catholic Church determined the procedure for concluding a marriage and for the separation (*separación*, under the title *del divorcio*), as well as the restrictive grounds for the annulment of a marriage.

Characteristic once again was the unequal treatment of man and woman in the case of adultery and the fact that in spite of the separation of property and the commonality of accrued gains (to the common property was added only what was acquired during the marriage), the woman was denied every form of disposal over her property (art. 49ss.).⁶⁸ Significant is one peculiarity: a wife was not allowed to publish, or to work academically or be active in literature or artistically, without the approval of her husband.⁶⁹ Remarkable further is that the Spanish Código civil served as a blueprint for the civil law codes in several countries in Latin America.

3.4. Common and Canon Law

The so-called *Gemeines Recht* had emerged out of the multiple reception of Roman law in continental Europe. From the late Middle Ages up until the end of the eighteenth century, European countries were connected with each other in essential features through this common law, or *ius commune*, to which was always resorted wherever it had not been suspended through individual laws or, later, through codifications. The German *Gemeines Recht* rested on a mixture or superimposition of various legal sources: Roman law or its reception and interpretation by jurists, canon or ecclesiastical law, local consuetudinary laws, and influences from natural

67. Also for non-Roman Catholics, for whom from 1907 the civil wedding was allowed after providing proof that they had not been baptized as Roman Catholics. How central the principle of indissolubility was in Spanish marital law becomes obvious in that dissolubility was explicitly written into the Spanish constitution of 1978 in art. 32, par. 2, after the end of the Franco regime and was carried out in the Reform Law 39/1981. See Konrad Brenninger, "Scheidung und Scheidungsunterhalt im spanischen Recht" (diss., Regensburg, 2005). An ordinance and law from 1932 made civil marriage an obligation for the first time and ignored the church wedding.

68. Scholz, "Kodifikation und Gesetzgebung," 607.

69. Scholz, "Kodifikation und Gesetzgebung," 607.

law.⁷⁰ In marital and family law, canon law—and, since the Reformation, the Protestant teaching on marital law—determined personal relationships in marriage and, in particular, the conclusion of a marriage and the law of divorce, while matrimonial property law continued to follow the received Roman law regulations in the *Gemeinen Recht*. Generalizing statements are difficult to make. Regional application and configuration of content is confusing, because legal practices and legal conventions, individual territorial laws, and local statutes developed in diverse regional ways under various cultural and confessional influences. A sustaining role for a *ius commune*, the *Gemeines Recht*, was played here by jurisprudence, which in the so-called *usus modernus pandectarum* (modern use of the pandects, the Roman sources of law) decisively determined the practice of law and the knowledge of it, conveyed only in Latin. Its most important legal source was the *corpus iuris civilis*, the compilation of Roman law initiated by Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. Its revision by the legal schools in Bologna since the eleventh century founded a scientific discourse spanning international borders and thus European jurisprudence.⁷¹

For all these reasons, only a few features characteristic of marital law or of the family relationships will be portrayed here. According to late Roman law, which with the absolute authority of the *pater familias* had left the *manus* marriage of earlier times far behind, the conclusion of a marriage in the classical period had no influence on the legal capacity and the pecuniary circumstances of the woman. To be married was considered as “a factual relationship of social life,” since entry into marriage and the separation of the marriage relationship were hardly juridified.⁷² The Catholic Church, with its increasing influence in the sphere of personal relationships in marriage, had seen to it since the Middle Ages that the sovereign rights of the man and the subjugation of the woman

70. See, in detail, Duncker, *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit*, 115–22, 147–50, et passim. On canon law as a discipline, see Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 71–80.

71. Elisabeth Koch, “Die Frau im Recht der Frühen Neuzeit: Juristische Lehren und Begründungen,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 73–76. See also Koch, “*Major dignitatis est in sexus virili*”: *Das weibliche Geschlecht im Normensystem des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Jus commune, 1991).

72. For particulars, see Duncker, *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit*, 52; see also Stephan Meder, *Familienrecht: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013), 46–66.

were assured as “divine law” (*ius divinum*), the more so since the lordly authority in marriage allegedly conformed better to the German legal tradition of gender guardianship (*munt*) and thus conventions and habits.⁷³ In matrimonial property law in the *Gemeines Recht*, however, in some areas⁷⁴ the property rights of wives remained up to the codification of the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* in the form of the so-called dowry law (*dos* = dowry) or in the form of the commonality of accrued goods. The reason was that property law remained, in contrast to the personal marital relationships, to a great extent under the jurisdiction of the secular courts. Still, the practical consequence of this small provision of property rights for the woman in the early modern period itself was not clarified, since reference is made repeatedly in the literature to a dominant teaching that contested the wife's freedom to dispose of her own assets without the approval of her husband.⁷⁵

Since the twelfth century, canon law dominated in the personal relationships in marriage. From that time on, the Roman Catholic Church increasingly had gathered to itself not only regulatory competence but also jurisdiction in marital matters. The most important legal source here was the *corpus iuris canonici*, in which, from 1140 on (the *Decretum Gratiani* was the first collection), the older ecclesiastical law collections and laws were compiled. Theological and legal treatises from the church fathers, popes, and councils, as well as exemplary legal cases and schools of thought, formed its foundation. In its justification, certain biblical passages were drawn on, which since then were considered as proof of a God-given gender order (e.g., Gen 2:21–23; Eph 5:22–24, 33; 1 Cor 11:3).⁷⁶

The formal unification of the various law codes to form the *corpus iuris canonici* occurred only in 1580 at the initiative of Pope Gregory XIII. This was the period after the Council of Trent that saw the conclusion of a process, dragging on for centuries, of finding justice and of shaping Catholic Church law. For, in the decisions of the Council of Trent

73. Holthöfer, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft,” 415; subjects relative to BGB 1888, IV:143–44, quoted in Meder, *Familienrecht*, 42.

74. For almost 30 percent of the population of the German Empire. See Coing, “Einleitung zum BGB,” no. 24.

75. Koch, “Die Frau im Recht,” 81.

76. Ida Raming, “Stellung und Wertung der Frau im kanonischen Recht,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 699–70; see also Duncker, *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit*, 60–90.

(1545–1563)—not least as a powerful answer to the questions raised by the Reformation—those regulations on marital law that were laid down as obligatory were legally valid well into the nineteenth century and, not essentially unchanged, beyond the first Vatican Council of 1869/1870 and into the twentieth century. To these belonged especially the form of concluding a marriage (before the priest and two witnesses) and the sacramental character of marriage, to which a prohibition on divorce was attached, as well as the shaping and control of the impediments to marriage. The supervision of the preconditions for concluding a marriage (impediments to marriage and prohibitions because of consanguinity or further degrees of relationship, because of bigamy or impotence, etc.) and the possibility for issuing dispensations created for the church over centuries a position of power not to be underestimated, quite apart from the lucrative fees that kept poor people from marrying.⁷⁷

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church on personal marital law contributed on the one hand to an upgrading of marriage, which was based on the sacralization of the marriage as divine law and was fixed in its structural principles: the foundation of marriage alone on the consent of both sexes, that is, no marriage against the will of the woman. This means that the paternal right of the approval of a marriage was restricted, just as was also the assent of estate owners and feudal lords to the marriage of male and female servants. This meant, further, equal marital duties—the duty of loyalty on the part of the husband, a prohibition on polygamy, no marriage within the biblically prohibited degrees of relationship, no discretionary repudiation of the woman, and, finally, the indissolubility in principle of the marriage.⁷⁸ The purpose of marriage also was determined explicitly to be the procreation and education of posterity. On the other hand, against the cultivation of marital relationships stood the disciplining of the woman under the authority of the man, which repeatedly justified

77. On the various forms of the ecclesiastical prohibition of marriage, class barriers to marriage, and police or communal restrictions on marriage, which prevented the families of the lower classes from concluding a formal marriage until far into the nineteenth century and also cost money, see Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 113–39.

78. Paul Mikat, “Ehe,” in *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, ed. Adalbert Erler and Ekkehard Kaufmann (Berlin: Schmidt, 1971), 1:818; Dieter Schwab, *Wertewandel und Familienrecht* (Hannover: Jur. Studiengesellschaft Hannover, 1993), 10; see also Schwab, *Grundlagen und Gestalt der staatlichen Ehegesetzgebung in der Neuzeit* (Bielefeld: Giesecking, 1967).

the disregard and degradation of the woman not only in marriage but also in all ecclesiastical offices and functions, based on the typical biblical passages focusing especially on the fall of Eve (Gen 3:16), as punishment for which she was saddled with the yoke of the *imperium martii*.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the emphasis on equitable consensus in marriage as the core of the concluded marriage had long-lasting consequences. The Catholic Church, to be sure, had fought for a long time for the ecclesiastical marriage service as the form of the conclusion of marriage and had prescribed this in 1563 for the first time since the Council of Trent as obligatory. However, it is to be noted that this council decree came into force only where it had been explicitly proclaimed. That is, there were wide areas, and not only Protestant ones, in which this regulation was not valid, for which reason informal marriages, which were founded on a promise to marry or on a vow—likewise *clandestine marriages*,⁸⁰ insofar as no impediment stood against them—continued to be acknowledged as valid marriage according to *Gemeinem Recht* as well as in the practice of canon law. This liberality was strengthened by the common-law practice according to which the “treading of the marriage bed,” the *copula carnalis*, was recognized as a fact of the foundation of a marriage and was constitutive for all the legal consequences in regard to marital property rights, inheritance rights, and status rights. In the *Sachsenspiegel*, one of the oldest and most important law codes of the Middle Ages (ca. 1230), Eike von Repkow formulates this view of the law deeply rooted in the people thus: “The woman is the man’s companion and comes into his right ‘svenne se in sin bedde gat’ (as soon as she goes into his bed).”⁸¹ The Catholic Church took this interpretation of the law into consideration insofar as, in the exceptional approval of separations, it based its argument for the nullity of the marriage on the question about the consummation of the marriage.

79. Stephan Buchholz, “IX. Sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tibi (Gen 3:16): Das Imperium mariti in der Rechtsliteratur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts,” *ZSSR, Kanonistische Abteilung* 80 (1994): 363; see on the whole Raming, *Stellung und Wertung der Frau*, 698–712; Duncker, *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit*, 407–17.

80. These were the marriages concluded without the consent of the parents but founded on the consensus of both marriage partners according to the Christian understanding of the law.

81. Quoted in Carl Friedrich von Gerber, *System des Deutschen Privatrechts* (Jena: Mauke, 1863), 574.

The line of the demarcation between marriage and nonmarriage, or engagement, is therefore difficult to draw in retrospect and remains a controversial point in legal as well as in social history.⁸² In any case, the sharp division between legitimacy and illegitimacy, between marriage and concubinage, became legally effective only in the nineteenth century in the course of the unification and nationalization of civil law. Before this, canon law had exercised leniency through forms of retrospective legitimation derived from Roman law as well as through the presumption of paternity, at least toward the children of the bride. Indeed, it even adjudicated an obligation on the part of the parents to provide alimentation for children fathered in adultery or incest or in spite of a sacrilege (marriage prohibition) and obligation to care for these children. On the other side, the increasingly rigid marital policy of the church also had strongly adverse effects on unmarried persons in that the canonic discourse from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries for a long time supported the condemnation and discrimination of illegitimate birth through the means of state law.⁸³

The formalization since the Council of Trent of the conclusion of a marriage with the participation of a priest as the guarantee of its validity was also an answer to the Reformation and the development of a Protestant marital law. Martin Luther, in the gradual disengagement from the Roman Catholic Church with his burning of the *corpus iuris canonici*, had terminated its legal sovereignty also and especially in marital matters.⁸⁴ The sacramental character of marriage was the target of his critique, along with priestly celibacy and the ecclesiastical control of marriage through far-reaching prohibitions. In his view, marriage was “externally a worldly thing ... like clothing and food, house and farm, subject to secular authority. [For this reason] it does not behoove us clergy and servants of the Church to regulate it or to govern it.”⁸⁵ At the same time, Luther spoke of marriage as “God’s work,” as well as of the “hallowed” and the “noblest estate that runs through and reaches throughout the entire Chris-

82. See also on the following and in detail Harms-Ziegler, *Illegitimität und Ehe*, 65–74.

83. Harms-Ziegler, *Illegitimität und Ehe*, 74.

84. Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther: Rebell in einer Zeit des Umbruchs* (Munich: Beck, 2014), 201.

85. Martin Luther, “Von Ehesachen (1530),” WA 30:205.

tian estate, indeed, the whole world.”⁸⁶ Thus, legally marriage was seen as “*causa mixta*,”⁸⁷ which, being Christian, required the church's blessing but should interest theologians only as a matter of pastoral care.

On the one hand, the wife and housewife profited from the religious upgrading of the form of living called marriage, from her equality in faith, and from the priesthood of all believers. The retention of a strict division of tasks in the household also did not serve to devalue female caring functions. On the contrary: in his early text “Of Married Life,” Luther says, “If a husband would go and wash the diapers or do some other contemptible work with the child.... All of these humble, unpleasant, contemptible works ... (are) bedecked with the divine good will as with the most precious gold and jewels.”⁸⁸ On the other hand, inequality in secular matters and patriarchal marital order in the common life of housefather and housemother remained undisputed,⁸⁹ but was alterable as secular law, as was to be shown. The powers of the keys necessary for the conduct of the household served to maintain this order; likewise, the widow remained legally competent in the craft enterprise or the business trade. In the new relationship between marriage and the family, the children, too, had a duty of obedience toward their mother; after the death of the father, the mother even could assume guardianship for her children.

The most important innovation was the concession of divorce in marriage, and this, to be sure, on the basis of equal rights for the man and the woman, but under a narrow interpretation of the reasons for divorce. The lifelong marriage vow also was valid in principle in the Protestant teaching about marriage. Still, adultery, “malignant abandonment,” and unbelief on the part of a partner or the turn to another religion were acknowledged as reasons for divorce. The innocent divorced party was allowed to remarry, while punishments for adultery awaited the guilty party. These and other punishments for sexual offences were controlled through church orders

86. Martin Luther, “Vom ehelichen Leben (1522),” WA 10:294; Luther, “Deutsch Catechismus (Der Große Catechismus) 1529,” WA 30:162.

87. Hartwig Dieterich, *Das protestantische Eherecht in Deutschland bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Claudius, 1970), 77.

88. Luther, “Vom ehelichen Leben (1522),” 295–96. See on this Gerta Scharfenorth, “Im Geiste Freunde werden: Mann und Frau im Glauben Martin Luthers,” in *Wandel der Geschlechterbeziehungen zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, ed. Heide Wunder and Christina Vanja (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 97–108.

89. Luise Schorn-Schütte, “Wirkungen der Reformation auf die Rechtsstellung der Frau im Protestantismus,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 96.

and police regulations. For protestants now, secular authorities, territorial court chancelleries, and so-called consistories on the lower levels (formed by theologians and jurists) assumed jurisdiction in marital matters that first of all had to develop and then had to shape the new marital and divorce law.⁹⁰

The literature on legal history, however, emphasizes a “remarkable continuity” between Protestant and Catholic legal teaching already by the end of the sixteenth century.⁹¹ In explanation of this, recourse is made not to canon law but rather to the *gemeines* or common law, since canon law and common law were intertwined with each other over the course of the centuries in regard to marital relationships.⁹² To this was added that, in the era of orthodoxy and religious wars, the Protestant teachings on marriage, with their interpretation of the nature of marriage, also approached the interpretation of canon law, and church orders and so-called church discipline took over the regime from Luther’s two-kingdoms doctrine. Thus, the church wedding in Protestant marital law was not constitutive but was still required as a blessing on the marriage. In addition, the reintroduced requirement of the consent of the parents strengthened the public character of marriage, whereby clandestine marriages were repressed and more children and mothers were excluded as illegitimate. Since the early modern period, the controversies not only between the Christian denominations, but increasingly between secular and ecclesiastical power, illustrate the way in which the discourses on the form of marriage, or on illegitimacy and sexual morality, have formed a powerful dispositive, which determined the power relations within the marriage and the legal status of women with their children across times and spaces.⁹³

90. See Ralf Frassek, *Eherecht und Ehegerichtsbarkeit in der Reformationszeit: Der Aufbau neuer Rechtsstrukturen im sächsischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wirkungsgeschichte des Wittenberger Konsistoriums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

91. Schorn-Schütte, “Wirkungen der Reformation,” 97–101.

92. Harms-Ziegler, *Illegitimität und Ehe*, 79; see also Dieterich, *Das protestantische Eherecht*, 112–17.

93. See Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2020). Quite insightful are, for example, the controversies documented in the legal proceedings undertaken by the Prussian auditor, including reasons for the reform of the ALR, ca. 1830, printed in excerpts in Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 396–442.

3.5. English and American Common Law

In English common law, the legal position of women in the nineteenth century stood in particularly flagrant contradiction to the early constitutional institutions of England and its—if also through the census limited—parliamentary constitution. In contrast to the unmarried woman, who in England was an independent legal person already in medieval law, the wife lost her legal competency once she married. Marrying meant “civil death” for her—according to the repeatedly quoted formulation by William Blackstone, who, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–1769), explains: “By marriage, the husband and the wife are one person in law.”⁹⁴ Therewith, the English husband had a right to the person of his wife and to her earnings and her property, even to the personal objects that she brought into the marriage. It is then stated further: “The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of her husband; under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything; ... and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*.”⁹⁵ *Coverture* thus meant the nullification of the woman as a legal person. She could not effectively carry out any legal transaction, could not commission a will, and could not be the legal guardian of her children. Parental authority also lay in the hands of the father. The conclusion of a marriage remained, until 1857, under the supremacy of the Church of England (there were exceptions for Jews and Quakers), and divorces also were possible for only a very few through an individual petition, connected with high costs, by an act of the English Parliament.⁹⁶

94. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1765), 1:442; see also Ursula Vogel, “Zwischen Privileg und Gewalt: Die Geschlechterdifferenz im englischen Common Law,” in Gerhard et al., *Differenz und Gleichheit*, 219. In detail see Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage and Property in Nineteenth Century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 42–55; see also Ursula Vogel, “Patriarchale Herrschaft, bürgerliches Recht, bürgerliche Utopie: Eigentumsrechte der Frauen in Deutschland und England,” in *Bürgertum und bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1988), 406–38.

95. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws* 1:442; Basch, *In the Eyes*, 48–50.

96. Rebecca Probert, “Family Law Reform and the Women’s Movement in England and Wales, 1830–1914,” in Meder and Mecke, *Family Law in Early Women’s Rights Debates*, 174–75. It was evidently different in Scotland, where Calvinist influ-

There was now in England—and likewise in its rebellious colonies in America, which had declared their independence in 1776—no unified codification and also no family law, but rather since the late Middle Ages collections of legal cases and court decisions. These were interpreted through the administration of justice at the royal courts and were developed further from case to case (case law). In contrast to the codifications of natural law issued on the Continent, in the nineteenth century the maintenance of this tradition based on judge-made law became increasingly intolerable, especially in marital and family law for women in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States. In business transactions in a civil society depending more and more on the availability of property, this “immobilism from the point of view of legal policy”⁹⁷ also proved to be obstructive. Therefore, from the end of the eighteenth century on, the courts developed principles of equity (equity jurisdiction) that, in individual cases, alleviated the severities of the common law and at first were applied in special courts of chancery and later were used also in the general courts.⁹⁸ Thus, from the needs of fathers and families to secure the property of daughters after their marriages, there developed a dual system in the application of the law,⁹⁹ in which it was possible in an equity proceeding—through premarital contractual agreements, such as the appointment of legal counsel (trust) or through a marriage contract (equity to a settlement)—to protect certain property rights of a married woman against their dissipation by her husband. Apart from the fact that these arrangements did not necessarily serve the independence or autonomy of the married woman but rather were intended primarily to preserve the family assets in the inheritance, this legal decision remained an exception, a class privilege, that first had to be contended for in court. It did not solve fundamentally the problems of common law, especially the fiction of the unity of the marriage and therefore with the legal disenfranchisement of the wife. In the comparison between English and American law, the practice of equity law in Great Britain therefore accrued at first to the advantage of the upper class, while in the United

ence treated marriage as a civil contract that was to be dissolved through divorce. See William R. Cornish, “England,” in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.2:2264–65.

97. Majer, *Frauen—Revolution—Recht*, 334.

98. See Basch, *In the Eyes*, 70.

99. Cornish, “England,” 2265.

States it was used increasingly by an expanding middle class, by farmers, and by businesspeople.¹⁰⁰

3.5.1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

As a result of the different initial political position and social structure in the English motherland and the United States, separated from it for liberal-democratic reasons, legal practice and legal reform developed differently and not concurrently in the two countries in the nineteenth century. The number of laws subject to reform in the area of family law were decidedly few in Great Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century. Only very gradually and reluctantly were concessions to social change allowed through individual legislative acts.¹⁰¹ An important step in changing the political power relationships was the reform of electoral law (Reform Act) in 1832, in which the circle of eligible masculine voters was expanded by adding urban houseowners who had a certain level of income. However, here the adjective *masculine* was for the first time inserted explicitly into the text of the law; this clarification appeared, after all, to have become necessary. In 1836, the first civil register of births, deaths, and marriages was introduced, whereby civil marriage outside the church thus became possible. Since, according to common law, the father alone possessed parental authority, the Custody of Infants Act, pushed through in 1839 after much ado through the efforts of lone activist Caroline Norton, was a tiny step toward the limited rights of mothers. After this, mothers, after a separation of the married couple, could contend in the equity courts (Courts of Chancery) for the custody of their children up to the age of seven years and a right of visitation for children under sixteen years of age, but only when she was not guilty of adultery.

The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 finally made possible divorce through due process of law—not just through a private act of Parliament, which was not affordable and executable for normal people.

100. Lawrence M. Friedman, "A Moving Target: Class, Gender and Family Law in the Nineteenth Century-United States," in *Private Law and Social Inequality in the Industrial Age: Comparing Legal Cultures in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155–77.

101. On the following see also Cornish, "England," 2264–65; Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 95–104.

Even after this law of 1857, there was, however, only one established court in London responsible for these cases (court for divorces and matrimonial causes). In addition, considerably different reasons for divorce for men and for women remained. While a woman could demand a divorce only when the adultery committed by the man was at the same time to be qualified as incest, or as special cruelty, or as sodomy or bigamy, a man could gain a divorce merely on the basis of the woman's adultery. Only in 1923 were the reasons for divorce regulated equally for both sexes. This law also granted rights to support to the innocently divorced wife for the first time. The most important consequence of the law, therefore, was that women after their divorce could acquire property and especially could dispose of their own earnings. This consequence, to be sure, was criticized immediately by contemporaries as a "revolution in the family" because it questioned the ideal and the ethics of the institution of marriage and treated the divorcee as well as the widow like a *feme sole*.¹⁰² But when we consider the comparably few numbers of divorces in the United Kingdom up to the end of the nineteenth century, then such fears appear exaggerated.¹⁰³ The significance of the few reform laws lies rather in that they were the result of often-lengthy public debates and disclosed a legal reality in which women's experiences of serious injustice since the middle of the century were brought forward for discussion by a women's movement.

The position of illegitimate children (bastards/nonmarital children) and their mothers had been problematic in common law for centuries. With respect to the father, an illegitimate child was a *filius nullius*; above all, it had no right to an inheritance. Custody lay alone with the mother; she also could not achieve any subsequent legitimation of the child, neither through acknowledgment by the father nor through marriage to him.¹⁰⁴ The majority of unwed mothers and their children, who had no provider and no income, were subject to the poor laws, under which, in order to avoid the costs borne by the responsible communities, could prosecute the father or also punish both mother and father. The public welfare establishment also could compel unwed mothers to accept forced work in workhouses. By the provisions of the Poor Law of 1834, though, the mother so punished

102. *Feme sole* means the single woman, in contrast to the *feme covert*, the married woman. Both designations were taken from Norman French and were legal concepts from the common law of the later Middle Ages.

103. See Probert, "Family Law Reform," 175; Cornish, "England," 2267.

104. Cornish, "England," 2270; legislation in this regard was changed only in 1926.

was forbidden explicitly to demand support from the father for the child, a relief for fathers, which—as shown above in the example of the Code civil and the reform of the Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht in 1854—conformed with the general trend of legal systems in the nineteenth century dominated by a bourgeois patriarchalism. But, after it was established, it became obvious how useless this disciplinary measure was; the father, since passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1844, could be obligated to pay a minimal support for the child after a citation before the court.¹⁰⁵

3.5.2. American Common Law

The legal position of the American woman was in no way better than that of the English woman. Norma Basch emphasizes, rather, not only just how long and how deeply Blackstone's influence was on American jurisprudence¹⁰⁶ but also that, until well into the nineteenth century, a wife's lack of rights according to common law dominated public opinion and discourse about gender roles and the function of marriage. For even the free female citizen of the United States lost all her civil rights as soon as she married; she could not execute legal transactions nor possess or bequeath property. Also, she could not initiate any trial in defense of her rights without or against her husband. She was, in the judgment of one of the highest courts soon after the proclamation of American independence, obligated primarily to loyalty toward her husband and not toward the state.¹⁰⁷ And this although, or precisely because, the new bourgeois cult of domesticity and of true womanhood, with the self-assertion of the liberal market economy, sustained and consolidated the ideology of separate gender roles. In spite of all the sentimentality and idealization of marital communion (marital unity) as *the* social institution stabilizing social conditions, marriage in American common law chiefly had an economic function, namely, to guarantee the legality of inheritance. Consistent with this was that questions concerning the legal ownership of property above all became the

105. Cornish, "England," 2269.

106. Basch, *In the Eyes*, 24, 44, 230–33. See, e.g., James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law*, 11th ed., 4 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1867), quoted in Basch, *In the Eyes*, 61. Thereby, Blackstone's *Commentaries* were adapted only minimally to American commercial needs. They formed the basis of the training of every jurist.

107. Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998), xxxix.

object of court decisions and the first steps in reform of the law. In addition, proceedings on the basis of reasons of equity for the appointment of an attorney or a trust, or the creation of a marriage contract securing the assets of the wife, were here customary on a wider basis than in England. Since the 1830s, years in which women pressed for equal opportunities for education and were needed, for example, in the textile industry, or as teachers in educational institutions for girls, the women's question appeared in debates about reform in the course of increasing prosperity, but also because of economic instability or in connection with women's involvement in the antislavery movement.¹⁰⁸

For further development, it is important to notice that legislation in family law was the province of individual states, for which reason a unified legal situation did not arise but rather here, too, was a patchwork of nonconcurrent attempts at reform: In 1839, the first Married Women's Property Law was issued in Mississippi. In 1848, public pressure became so great that, on April 8, a Married Women's Property Statute was passed in the state of New York after protracted debate. This statute is considered to be a milestone in the history of women's rights in the United States and owed its realization not least of all to agitation on the part of women's rights activists, who quite soon were to play a significant role in the American women's movement, with Ernestine Rose and Elizabeth Cady Stanton leading the way. It is not an accident that, only a few weeks after the passage of this law, on July 19, 1848, two hundred women and—after all—forty men came together in Seneca Falls, a nondescript town in the state of New York, in order on the very next day to sign the Declaration of Sentiments, which marked the start of the movement for women's rights in the United States (see above).¹⁰⁹

Around 1850, there were similar statutes concerning the property rights of women in seventeen states in all.¹¹⁰ The New York statute provided that, with the conclusion of a marriage, a separation of goods prevailed between

108. See Angelina Grimké, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," *ASE* 1.2 (1836): 16–26; Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* (Boston: Knapp, 1838), both cited in Alice S. Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1973), 282–322.

109. On the history of the American women's movement, see Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

110. Friedman, *Moving Target*, 165.

the married persons. This meant that a wife from now on was the owner of her personal possessions and real estate. But, the legislator neglected to confer upon the woman the legal capacity to dispose of her property. Again, she was dependent on the benevolence of a legal counsel (trust). In addition, the law applied first of all only to couples who had married since 1848. Only through several hard-earned amendments up to the end of the century did wives achieve the same status as that of unmarried women, a *feme sole*, in regard to property rights. The Earnings Act from 1860 in the state of New York had special significance for all female employees and the increasing number of professional women, for whom the newly organized women's movement had campaigned especially. Therewith, wives finally obtained their own property and the authority to dispose of their own earnings (in trade, business, labor, or services).¹¹¹

With the outbreak of the Civil War (1861–1865), though, this development toward more rights regressed, in part because other priorities and conflicts took precedence within the women's movement. Thus, joint custody of parents, which was introduced with the Earnings Act, was withdrawn in favor of the father already in 1862, and to the mother was conceded only a right of veto in individual questions.¹¹² On the whole, custody rights held by mothers for children up to a certain age (after a separation or a divorce), pushed through piecemeal in the course of litigation in individual states, convey a very confused picture.¹¹³ For illegitimate children and their mothers, the same discriminatory regulations of the common law as in Great Britain remained in force: The illegitimate child was not a legal person. Not only did there exist no legal relationship to the father (*filius nullius*), but there was also no obligation on the part of the father to support financially either the child begotten by him or the mother. Custody of the child was awarded to the mother, too, only in 1883 through a judicial decision. The child could not inherit, was excluded from certain professions and social positions, and fundamentally had no legal claim to support from the state. Only during the course of the nineteenth century, or at the beginning of the twentieth, were improvements introduced through laws in individual states, such as the

111. See Basch, *In the Eyes*, 164–65.

112. Basch, *In the Eyes*, 207.

113. See Marion Röwekamp, "Equal Rights for Mothers: Custody Law Reform and Equal Rights Movement in the USA, 1848–1930," in Meder and Mecke, *Family Law in Early Women's Rights Debates*, 200–17.

possibility of legitimation through the subsequent marriage of the parents or a statutory right of inheritance, at least in regard to the mother. In 1925 in the state of New York, the terms *bastard* or *illegitimate child* were replaced in all legal provisions by *children born out of wedlock*.¹¹⁴ The shame and disgrace that illegitimate birth meant for mother and child up to the 1960s and 1970s everywhere in the Western world served as a means of disciplining all women in marriage and often was supported by religious notions of morality. And yet, in the United States, where one could escape from stigmatization through migration to another state, there apparently were pragmatic solutions above the poverty level that made claims against the father possible through court decisions or also private arrangements.

Especially complex and controversial were, on the other hand, regulations in divorce law in the United States.¹¹⁵ Although the individual states retained the rigid restrictions in divorce from the common law even after independence, it still could be achieved successfully in the northern states since the end of the eighteenth century through the action of a civil court (judiciary divorce). However, in the southern states, marriage partners were granted a divorce only by the decision of the legislature (legislative divorce). For example, in South Carolina, this was the practice into the twentieth century. The reasons for divorce were shaped variously, but as a rule adultery, abandonment, and different forms of cruelty were sufficient for both marriage partners. Legislatively, the reform was frozen. Lawrence Friedman, however, points out that in no other legal area was there in daily practice such a strong breach between the legal prescriptions (the law on the books) and the legal practice of the lower courts (law in action) as in the process of divorce. As the dramatically increasing number of divorces at the end of the nineteenth century shows, it had become usual, apart from every moral objection, to obtain a divorce by mutual agreement under one of the few prescribed

114. Jonas Johannsen, "Rechtslage und Reformforderungen zum Recht der nichtehelichen Kinder in den US-Bundesstaaten (1830–1914)," in *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht international*, ed. Stephan Meder and Christoph-Eric Mecke (Colgne: Böhlau, 2015), 616–17. See also Jeanne Hamilton-Beck, "Reform Debates of Early Women's Rights Movements in the USA Regarding Paternity Proceedings in Selected States (1830–1914)," in Meder and Mecke, *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht international*, 591–614.

115. See also Friedman, *Moving Target*, 166–67, on the following.

reasons through secret arrangements (collusive agreements) before the start of a civil trial. Here, too, more than 70 percent of the petitions for divorce were submitted by women.

On the whole, what is to be observed about development in the nineteenth century under the common law is that jurisprudence and judicial practice recognized the necessity for reform, especially of property rights, which were so fundamental for the liberal self-understanding of Americans, but wanted to avoid every change in the dominant position of the man in marriage.¹¹⁶ Also in the United States, the legal achievements of women that had been won up until 1860 were construed as traditionally and as conservatively as possible in the commentary literature and in jurisprudence.¹¹⁷ Thereby, equity was the governing concept, but not equality or equal rights.

3.6. Excursus: Russian Family Law

In examining the circle of European legal families, a look at the status of women's rights in Russia in the nineteenth century should not be absent. On the one hand, czarist Russia as an absolute monarchy, in which all law was posited in the czar and merely confirmed by the State Council, was characterized by a deficit in modernization in the social, economic, and political spheres when compared with Western Europe. On the other hand, the women of the noble class and among civil servants, the daughters of the so-called *Intelligenzia*, took part—since the middle of the nineteenth century, after the Decembrist Revolt in 1825, or at the latest since the Crimean War—in an emancipation movement that promoted women's participation in education, the arts, and science, as well as toward charitable involvement and radical social reform.¹¹⁸ In the history of the women's movement, well-known are the female Russian students who, after the University of St. Petersburg had denied them entry, disturbed the

116. Basch, *In the Eyes*, 56.

117. Basch, *In the Eyes*, 200–201.

118. Natalia Pushkareva, "Feminism in Russia: Two Centuries of History," in *Women's Movements in Post-Communist Countries in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Edith Saurer, Margret Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak, HS 13 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 365–82. See also Linda Edmondson, "Feminism and Equality in an Authoritarian State: The Politics of Women's Liberation in the Late Imperial Russia," in Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements*, 221–39.

University of Zürich beginning in 1864 as a radical, extravagant group. In any case, it must be kept in mind that the radical break with the constitution and also with the private law of the nineteenth century brought about by the Russian Revolution of 1917, and thus the “discontinuity between Russian and Soviet development of law,” makes a consideration of legal history more difficult or lets it appear apparently obsolete.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, if it is assumed in retrospect today that the legal status of the Russian woman (inclusive of her property rights) after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 was “rather sound” in comparison with Western Europe,¹²⁰ then precise distinctions are to be made.

The foundation of private and commercial law was formed by a collection of laws, the *Svod*, a more or less systematic compilation of all laws and legal usages valid in Russia that was intended at first to form the foundation for a codification but was enacted summarily as law in 1833 by Czar Alexander I with the support of a skimpy majority in the State Council. Family law, the first book in the tenth volume, is unusual for its time “in part,” as Marianne Weber emphasizes, as “a quite peculiar mixture of patriarchal and individualist ideas.... The mutual duties assigned the spouses bear less the character of legal regulations than much more that of a sermon on the marital state.”¹²¹ Of course, this also can be said about other family law systems in Europe, but undoubtedly the system of complete separation of goods belonging to the married couple is unusual—“a traditional institution in Russian law.”¹²² This meant that, upon conclusion of a marriage, a woman retained their property or assets, and also everything that she acquired during the marriage became her property, over which she could dispose without the consent of her husband. At the same time, married women as well as unmarried women from the age of twenty-one were in every respect legally competent, whereby there was a peculiar gradation between the fourteenth, the seventeenth, and up to the twenty-first year of life for the acquisition of full legal competence. Also nonpatriarchal was the regulation of a “parental,” that is, not a “paternal” authority. The mother had the same obligations to provide support and education as did the father—but did she thereby have the same authority?

119. Norbert Reich, “Russland,” in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.2:2282.

120. Pushkareva, “Feminism in Russia,” 370.

121. Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 346, 348.

122. Reich, “Russland,” 2288.

Against this stood the fact that "the woman is [was] obligated to obey her husband as the head of the family, to persevere in love for him, in esteem, and in unlimited obedience, and as the lady of the house to render him every act of kindness and devotion."¹²³ Weber comments on this with the remark: "So, both are intended to feel love, esteem, and the willingness to help. The law-givers, though, would like to implant 'submissiveness and 'unlimited obedience' in the women."¹²⁴

The celebration of marriage and also the process of divorce remained, however, the task and in the competence of the Orthodox Church, which, as did the Catholic Church, treated marriage as a sacrament. Adultery, impotence, loss of status rights, deportation to Siberia, and prolonged disappearance were considered reasons for divorce and applied to both spouses in the same way; responsible for divorce were the ecclesiastical courts of justice. Only in 1917, with the Russian Revolution, was civil law marriage introduced, which was performed in the registry office. Before that, at least for the radical Russian intelligentsia, forms of nonlegal cohabitation had existed, since withdrawal from the church was not possible. These were the so-called free marriages conceived as a "purely moral and conventional, non-legally guaranteed relationship," in which children were entitled to inherit.¹²⁵ For, in inheritance law, daughters as well as also spouses fundamentally were disadvantaged excessively compared to other relatives.¹²⁶

The same applied to illegitimate children, called here "unlawful" children. Just as everywhere in this period, they were without rights and class. Their status was the object of criminal regulations. According to §994 of the penal code, the father was obligated, "if such a licentious life has the birth of a child as a consequence ... to afford the child and its mother respectable support in accord with his means."¹²⁷ The mother, though, could file suit for payment of child support only after performing ecclesiastical penance. After vehement reform discussions, it was decided at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1891, that the civil courts now were responsible for at least prosecuting the father. In addition, it became possible, through a subsequent marriage, to make the children legitimate.

123. Quoted in Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 348.

124. Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 348.

125. Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 352.

126. Reich, "Russland," 2289.

127. Reich, "Russland," 2301.

The partially women-friendly regulations of the Svod nevertheless do not convey the legal reality in the Russia of the nineteenth century, because they had effect only in a minimal part, a thin urban upper stratum composed of civil servants and merchants as well as landowners. For the great mass of the rural population, the peasants, however, the local customary law of the village and rural communities remained in force, even after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 under Czar Alexander II. In addition, special, quasi-estate courts (*volost*) were responsible for their legal affairs. The elders of the village community, the Mir,¹²⁸ had absolute supremacy over the distribution and cultivation of land as well as over the workloads and levies imposed on the peasants. Likewise, they exerted influence on marriage in the community and on education and the family relationships in general. Even after the liberation of the peasants, their redemption rights were not shaped as individual rights. The individual peasant could not acquire any property but rather remained bound to the soil through tax payments and limitations on his freedom of movement (for example, through the denial of passports). Under this—as before—unbroken form of patrimonial rule, there was no place for women's rights, and abuses and violence against women and children were as popular as in that adage typifying the state of the so-called Russian soul: "Love your wife like you do your soul and beat her like you do your pelt."¹²⁹ Only the October Revolution in 1917 brought acknowledgment of the equality of all Russian women in law.¹³⁰

3.7. Scandinavian Law

In the comparison of legal systems and in the history of law, the Nordic countries are treated as a separate legal sphere¹³¹ distinguished by pragmatic interpretations and concrete-practical reforms. In Scandinavia, too, gender guardianship over single and unmarried women was abolished only in the middle of the nineteenth century—for unmarried women in

128. Weber (*Ehefrau und Mutter*, 356) here makes reference in a footnote to the studies conducted by her husband. See Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976), 736, 742.

129. Quoted in Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 360.

130. On the further development, see Edmondson, "Die Lösung der Frauenfrage."

131. Ditlev Tamm, "Einführung: Skandinavien als selbständiger Rechtskreis," in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.4:3–18.

Denmark in 1857, in Norway and Sweden in 1863, followed by Finland in 1864.¹³² But, in the legal comparison, wives also were conceded property rights and an equal right of inheritance relatively early—in Sweden with respect to separate property rights of the wife in 1845, or through a marriage contract or from their own earnings in 1874, in Norway in 1888, and in Denmark in 1899.¹³³ From the end of the nineteenth century, there arose in the Nordic countries a legislative cooperation in which at first commercial and contract law were unified, while family law, significantly, encountered greater difficulties because of cultural peculiarities in the legal systems in this region.¹³⁴ But the accelerated transition from an agrarian society to a modern industrial society at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the shortcut of a detour via a bourgeois-patriarchal gender order, obviously saved the women in Scandinavia from some hardships.¹³⁵

The fundamental equality of women in marital and family law (Sweden in 1920, Denmark in 1925, Norway in 1927, Finland in 1929) and the early, almost simultaneous granting of political voting rights (Finland in 1906, Norway in 1913, Denmark in 1915, Sweden in 1921) became possible in Scandinavia through the pragmatic cooperation between different groups: a group of radical liberal male politicians and jurists who supported the women's movement that grew in strength up to the end of the nineteenth century, female representatives of the women's movement, and those from the social-democratic and bourgeois spectrum who were recruited primarily from the Fredrika Bremer Association. The group of national representatives from the Swedish women's associations joined the International Council of Women already in 1898. In 1904, its radical representatives founded the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Berlin. The Nordic cooperation in legislation resulted in the special circumstance

132. On Denmark, see Inger Dübeck, "Dänemark," in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.4:37. On Finland, see Holthöfer, "Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft," 446.

133. On Sweden see Nils Regner and Johan Hirschfeldt, "Schweden," in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.4:247–48. On Norway see Gudmund Sandvik, "Norwegen," in Coing, *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur* 3.4:392. On Denmark see Dübeck, "Dänemark," 37.

134. Tamm, "Einführung: Skandinavien als selbständiger Rechtskreis," 11.

135. Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, "Gender Equality and the Welfare State: Debates on Marriage Law Reform in Sweden at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," in Meder and Mecke, *Family Law in Early Women's Rights Debates*, 257–58, also on the following.

that women quite early (1915) were involved here as regular members of the national or Scandinavian legal commissions that prepared the reform. Thus it happened that, for example, in Sweden in 1917 and in Norway in 1915, laws were passed for the betterment of illegitimate children.

Mutual agreements also were concluded in regard to the conclusion and dissolution of marriages. In the Nordic countries, the unmarried cohabitation of couples with children was quite usual (one spoke of the concept of "Stockholm marriages").¹³⁶ For this reason, the concern was, on the one hand, the liberalization of divorce, but on the other hand the clarification of the regulations for the conclusion of a marriage through a formal act, either in the church or, much more usual, in the civil registry office. The rights of decision held by the husband were abolished in the family law codes that were issued in 1920s to a great extent through establishing the equality of marriage partners, especially in economic affairs (through a community of goods and the division of it into equal parts after the dissolution of the marriage, or through a special power of disposition granted the wife, or through the separation of goods regulated by means of contract, etc.).¹³⁷ With the introduction of the right to trade in Sweden in 1864, the right of women to their own earnings and therewith to securing an independent livelihood—at least for single women—was established early in comparison with other European countries. Thereby, gender-specific occupational safety rules were waived.¹³⁸ Due to the alliances between the workers' and women's movements, which did not succeed in the other countries of Europe, the special path of development led to the Scandinavian welfare states. Characterized by a determined and radical equality and social policies, they have extended their lead over other countries in regard to more gender justice since the 1960s.

136. Wetterberg, "Gender Equality," 266.

137. See Dübeck, "Dänemark," 44; Regner, "Schweden," 247–48; Sandvik, "Norwegen," 392.

138. Teresa Kulawik, *Wohlfahrtsstaat und Mutterschaft – Schweden und Deutschland 1870–1912: Politik der Geschlechterverhältnisse* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 186; Barbara Hobson, "Frauenbewegung für Staatsbürgerrechte: Das Beispiel Schweden," *FemSt* 14.2 (1996): 18–34.

3.8. Switzerland: A Special Case?

In regard to women's rights, Switzerland is a classic example for the paradox that forms of direct democracy (since 1830 in various cantons and since 1874 in the federal constitution) and the republican tradition admired throughout the rest of Europe are not guarantees for the acknowledgment of the legal equality of women. It is rather that the question arises whether the down-to-earth and citizen-oriented rule of men in the communities and cantons did not lead to a deferment of women's rights. In any case, Swiss women were granted equality in the family, in education, and in the workplace later than in all the other European states, that is, only in 1981 through insertion of article 4, paragraph 2 in the Swiss constitution.¹³⁹ The federal law implementing the equality of man and woman also had to wait until March 1995 before it came into force.¹⁴⁰

The federal constitution of 1848, which introduced the right to vote for men, created the political and economic structures of present-day Switzerland, but private law remained until 1898 in the competence of the cantons. The Swiss Civil Code (*Schweizerisches Zivilgesetzbuch*) was adopted only in 1907 and took force in 1912; it also provided a uniform regulation of marital law for the Swiss Confederation.

A further impediment to an improved legal position for women was undoubtedly the complexity and fragmentation of legal relationships throughout the nineteenth century, since the individual cantons, after the reordering of the regions by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, oriented themselves on three different legal systems or legal families: in the German-speaking regions on the Austrian *Allgemeine Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* and on the German legal traditions such as the Civil Code for the Canton of Berne (*Civilgesetzbuch für den Canton Bern*) or the Zurich Private Legal Code (*Zürcher Privatrechtliches Gesetzbuch*) of 1853/1855. At the same

139. Likewise, the right to vote was conceded to them very late, only in 1971. After Switzerland joined the Council of Europe in 1962 and while the pending discussion associated with this about the signing of the European Convention for Human Rights was being conducted, a further delay in introducing women's right to vote threatened to damage the reputation of Switzerland in foreign countries. See Beatrix Mesmer, *Staatsbürgerinnen ohne Stimmrecht: Die Politik der schweizerischen Frauenverbände 1914–1917* (Zürich: Chronos, 2007), 315–16; see also Sibylle Hardmeier, *Frühe Frauenstimmrechtsbewegung in der Schweiz (1890–1930): Argumente, Strategien, Netzwerke und Gegenbewegung* (Zürich: Chronos, 1997).

140. Majer, *Frauen—Revolution—Recht*, 305–17.

time, the French Code civil continued to be valid in the French-speaking cantons.¹⁴¹ Although these legal codes (with the exception of the legal code for the Canton Berne) no longer recognized gender guardianship of single women, this medieval legal institution still appeared as a legal custom in several cantonal legal codes, known as the linguistically watered-down “gender assistance” (e.g., in the canton of Vaud in 1820, Berne in 1826, Lucerne in 1832, Valais in 1853, in the canton of the Grisons in 1862).¹⁴² The requirement to appoint an “assistance” for all contracted and judicial actions undertaken by an unmarried woman was repealed only in 1881 through a federal law in the last remaining cantons. In the cantons under French law, on the other hand, the unmarried woman was of course legally responsible and legally competent. Here again, the wife was subjected to the much stricter authority of the husband, for she could neither dispose of her own assets nor complete any kind of legal transaction without his approval.

This coexistence of different legal situations in the smallest region had to lead to problems. Thus, for example, single women from the Jura region who previously had been subject to French law and, through the change in regional borders, belonged to Berne since 1815 did not want to tolerate “the annoying limitations” of gender assistance. After the Grand Council in 1839 had approved the restitution of French law for them, that is, for the Jurassic part of the canton, this unequal treatment fomented the protest of the women in the Old Berne part of the canton. With the aid of a petition, they achieved the enactment of a so-called Emancipation Law (1847) that freed all unmarried women in Berne and also the widows from the requirement of gender assistance. Besides this, it also contained relaxations in regard to the property rights of wives, which, however, once again were rescinded in great part through an explanatory law only a year later.¹⁴³ Similar frictions and contradictions are recorded for the cantons Basel-City and Basel-Country, which had been separated since 1832.¹⁴⁴

141. On the following, see also Regula Gerber Jenni, “Rechtshistorische Aspekte des bernischen Emanzipationsgesetzes von 1847,” in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 480–93.

142. Holthöfer, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft,” 443.

143. Gerber Jenni, “Rechtshistorische Aspekte,” 486–90.

144. See Annemarie Ryter, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft in der Schweiz: Das

But fundamentally, wives in all the cantons—whether under German, Austrian, or French law—were subjected more or less to the husband's authority in decision-making in the marriage. The Swiss *Schweizerisches Zivilgesetzbuch* from 1907 also preserved, as did the German *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* from 1900, the—in principle—patriarchal constitution of the family: the man remained, as before, the head of the family (art. 160); the determination of the place of residence, the administration of assets, and the representation of the married couple externally were, as previously, the affair of the husband (art. 161–62). The legal system of marital property was the consolidation of this property, in which the possessions brought into the marriage by the wife and the property acquired by her during the marriage became the property of both married persons but was administered by the husband (art. 178, 195, 200). What was new was that the wife, with the approval of her husband, was permitted to exercise a profession or to conduct a business, a right that, in case of her husband's refusal, she could also contend for successfully, if necessary, with the aid of a judicial decision (art. 167).¹⁴⁵ All of these male privileges were fixed as late as the beginning of the twentieth century in a modern codification directed against the interests of the Swiss women's movement, which was widely anchored and influentially organized in the civil society since the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶

3.9. Provisional Result of the Comparison of Legal Systems

In view of all the variance in the legal sources and the political parameters, the comparison of the legal systems is disappointing in regard to women's rights in the nineteenth century. In spite of the declaration of universal human rights and of the conceivable equality of the genders, the "authority

Beispiel der Kantone Basel-Landschaft und Basel-Stadt," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 494–506.

145. Majer, *Frauen—Revolution—Recht*, 315; see also Susan Emmenegger, *Feministische Kritik des Vertragsrechts: Eine Untersuchung zum schweizerischen Schuldvertrags- und Eherecht* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1999), 204–5.

146. Beatrix Mesmer, *Ausgeklammert—eingeklammert: Frauen und Frauenorganisationen in der Schweiz des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1988); Mesmer, "Schweiz: Staatsbürgerinnen ohne Stimmrecht," in *Feminismus und Demokratie: Europäische Frauenbewegungen der 1920er Jahre*, ed. Ute Gerhard (Köngstein: Helmer, 2001), 104–15.

of the husband” or “the supremacy of the man in the house” was established in all civil law systems as the controlling norm in the theory and practice of family law. Thereby, though, the gender order at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the traditional form of the *ancien régime*, had become brittle. This created insecurities and appeared to promise some leeway. But, whatever discourse we consider, whether the liberal, republican, or conservative social theories and their juridical interpreters, the vocabulary and the political practice of paternalism, of discrimination against women in the private sphere, and of their exclusion from the sphere of politics are very similar to each other, even if also with varying rigidity in the assertion of male prerogatives and supremacy.¹⁴⁷ For all of them, the family was regarded as a fundamental communal relationship and as the mainstay of the state, intended to justify the exclusion of women from the political sphere and their assumption of responsibility for children and family.

Consequently, a new discourse developed in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century that was interest-bound and, in the social sphere, closely connected functionally with the strengthening of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois family as the nucleus of the state. Thereby, quite different interests coincided and strengthened one another. There were, first of all, the churches, which defended marriage as a sacrament or at least as a divinely ordained order against a dangerous (because individualistic) trend toward secularization and which unfolded their mechanisms of power in the disciplining and control of all nonmarital forms of living and sexuality.¹⁴⁸ Then, among those who wanted to become someone in the new bourgeois society, there was undoubtedly a motive that made the form of the division of labor based on a gender hierarchy appear to be natural and unchanging. Marianne Weber, a chief witness for the nineteenth century, speaks of “hardly disguised gender egoism,” of the “great effect of

147. Joan B. Landes, “The Performance of Citizenship: Democracy, Gender and Difference in the French Revolution,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996), 295–313. Landes speaks of “overlapping vocabularies” (296). See also Ruth Lister et al., *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe: New Challenges for Citizenship Research in a Cross-National Context* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007), 26.

148. See Michel Foucault, *Sexualität und Wahrheit I: Der Wille zum Wissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

the need of the husband for comfort ... as far as work in the 'household' is concerned."¹⁴⁹

But, beyond national borders and legal circles, political philosophy and jurisprudence had, since the Enlightenment, renewed effort to justify the hegemony of the husband in marriage, by making marriage an institution, to secure a gender order based on gender hierarchy and a new bourgeois patriarchalism in civil law. For this reason, family sociology speaks of the strengthening of a specifically bourgeois patriarchalism, a "secondary patriarchalism,"¹⁵⁰ which had established itself in law and in the bourgeois society at least since the middle of the nineteenth century.

If teachers of natural law, such as Samuel von Pufendorf and Christian Wolff, still had attempted to justify the contradiction between the original equality of all human beings and the inequality and subordination of women with the peculiarity of the marriage contract, then the subjugation of women as "the nature of the woman" was simply assumed by later bourgeois "master thinkers."¹⁵¹ The justification was: In the private law marriage contract, the woman "of her own free will" granted marital authority and all rights over her to the man, and thus was obligated to obedience to him, just as the subject was to the ruler. The special—specifically bourgeois and romantic—nub in this lay in that the subjugation of the woman in marriage in this understanding, directed unilaterally toward the woman, was compatible with marital love. For, as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, to whom all teachings on marriage up into the twentieth century referred, formulated it, one expected "unlimited love from the side of the wife, unlimited magnanimity from the side of the husband." The "continuing necessary ... wish [of the woman] to be subjugated," so Fichte continued, excluded her from all rights. "In consequence of her own necessary will, the man is the administrator of all her rights."¹⁵² With the advancement of

149. Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, 414, 426.

150. König, "Familie und Autorität," 219.

151. Christian Wolff, *Grundsätze des Natur- und Völkerrechts* (repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1980), III §870; on Pufendorf, see also Manfred Erle, "Die Ehe im Naturrecht des 17. Jahrhunderts: ein Beitrag zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Grundlagen des modernen Eherechts" (diss., University of Göttingen, 1952), 143: "On the basis of nature, there is no right justifying the hegemony of the man over the woman; the woman first must subjugate herself through an agreement with the man." See Ute Frevert, "Bürgerliche Meisterdenker und das Geschlechterverhältnis," in *Bürgerinnen und Bürger*, ed. Frevert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

152. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach den Prinzipien der*

this gender philosophy to a doctrine of marriage as an institution by the jurists of the nineteenth century, marriage was no longer seen as a sacrament, but it was also not only just a contract—that is, not only a juridical but rather a “moral relationship” that, as an “essential and necessary form of human existence in general,” had to be “independent from individual arbitrariness and opinion.”¹⁵³

In the development from status to contract—for legal development in general a characteristic development—family law thus turned out to be more and more a “special law for women,” with which the jurists up into the twentieth century could define marriage openly as a “power relationship.”¹⁵⁴ No matter whether in English common law marriage was fabricated as consisting of only “one person,” and the husband then was considered to be this person (Blackstone); whether the French Code civil described marriage explicitly as the area of “masculine supremacy” (art. 1388); or whether in Germany the “dignified view of marriage especially among our people” was called on in order to maintain—inconsistently enough—that “the equal status of the married partners [is] recognized in fundamental relationships, but a prevailing influence is conceded to the husband.”¹⁵⁵ For this reason, a great juridical effort had to be made, especially after the knowledge won during the Enlightenment and all the more after the proclamation of human rights, to justify the inequality of the wife especially in the law. The French Code civil, in consistent implementation of bourgeois gender philosophy, had marked out the way in a modern version of private law that was especially hostile to women and that was followed only all too willingly by others in the course of the nineteenth century.

Yet it is interesting to track the different developments taken by the progression of law in regard to the rights of the woman in view of this patriarchal understanding of marriage in the various legal families and

Wissenschaftslehre (Hamburg: Meiner, 1960), 331, 341; see also Carole Pateman, “The Fraternal Social Contract,” in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, ed. Pateman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 33–57, as well as Gerhard, *Debating Women's Equality*.

153. Von Savigny, “Darstellung über Ehescheidung Reform,” 238.

154. Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 187; Rudolf Sohm, *Institutionen: Geschichte und System des Römischen Privatrechts* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911), 613.

155. Georg Beseler, *System des gemeinen deutschen Privatrechts* (repr., Berlin: Weidmann, 1873), 480–81.

legal cultures. Likewise, the question of whether women's movements were able to accomplish something with their awakening in the middle of the century is also of interest. In any case, the various paths of legal development, as comparative gender and family research has determined, have left their marks to the present in the national styles of gender and social policy.¹⁵⁶

4. Awakening and Legal Struggles of the Women's Movements since 1848

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, apart from the women in the French Revolution or the early socialist women after the July Revolution in 1832 in France, it was individual women who sued publicly for the rights of women.¹⁵⁷ The revolution of 1848, however, marks a turning point in the history of social and political women's movements. At nearly the same time—in the spring of 1848 in France, in partially occupied Italy, or in Hungary against the Habsburg monarchy, as well as in all the states of the German Federation, and not least of all in Switzerland—the peoples raised their voices against feudal despotism and the political reaction, and advocated national unification, democratic constitutions, and social justice. Whether in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, in Milan or Venice, in Lemberg or Prague, everywhere women took part in this “awakening to freedom,” not only as observers sitting in the galleries of the newly assembled parliaments or serving in their conventional role with “charpie pulling, caring for the wounded, sewing clothes, and cooking for the army,”¹⁵⁸ but rather

156. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, “Politics and Policies towards the Family in Europe: A Framework and an Inquiry into Their Differences and Convergences,” in *Family Life and Family Policies in Europe: Problems and Issues in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Kaufmann, Anton Kuijsten, and Hans Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 458; Göran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945–2000* (London: Sage, 1995). See also Ute Gerhard, Trudie Knijn, and Anja Weckwert, eds., *Working Mothers in Europe: A Comparison of Policies and Practices* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2005).

157. For example, Anna Doyle Wheeler (together with William Thompson) in England in 1825; Angelina Grimké in 1837 in the US; Flora Tristan in 1843 in France. See Susan Groag Bell and Karen Offen, eds., *Women, the Family and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, vol. 1, 1750–1880 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983).

158. Lothar Gall, ed., “1848 Aufbruch zur Freiheit”: *Katalog zur Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums und der Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt zum 150-jährigen*

as comrades-in-arms on the “barricades of the revolution,” in assemblies and associations, or as writers in the press, which was finally liberated from censorship.

It was again the French women who ventured the furthest forward. The women from the early socialist movement who, after the July Revolution in 1830 in France, already combined their experiences of injustice as working women and wives with a fundamental critique of society. They had protested in 1832 in their journals *La femme libre*, *Apostolat des femmes*, and others against the enslavement of the female gender,¹⁵⁹ once again took up the struggle in the 1848 revolution for the legal equality of women. Among these activist women were Jeanne Derooin, Eugénie Niboyet, and Pauline Roland.¹⁶⁰ As everywhere in Europe’s large cities and centers of revolution, they founded newspapers, fought passionately for the right to work as the basis for the solution of the social problem, organized women’s clubs and democratic women’s associations, and took part in popular assemblies and in the press engaged in constitutional debates. First of all, they demanded again and again and everywhere the reform of family law along with the right to vote, since in 1848, as a first concession to the revolution, “all” French people had received the right to vote. For the “restrictive fetters,” the “manifold obstructive family relationships of the present”—so Louise Otto in the *Frauen-Zeitung* (women’s newspaper) she founded—were to blame for the fact that women “speak [of freedom] in a whisper” “only behind closed doors.”¹⁶¹ “The relationships in marriage bear the ‘stigma of slavery’” was how Louise Dittmar very sharply formulated it in her critical text “Das Wesen der Ehe” (The Nature of Mar-

gen Jubiläum der Revolution 1848/49 v. 18. Mai bis 18. September 1998 (Berlin: Nicolai, 1998); Louise Otto, “Die Frauen-Zeitung, 1849/1850,” in “*Dem Reich der Freiheit werb’ ich Bürgerinnen*”: *Die Frauen-Zeitung von Louise Otto*, ed. Ute Gerhard, Elisabeth Hannover-Drück, and Romina Schmitter (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1979), no. 14/1849, 113.

159. Claudia von Alemann, Dominique Jallamion, and Bettina Schäfer, *Das nächste Jahrhundert wird uns gehören. Frauen und Utopie 1830 bis 1840* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981); Helga Grubitzsch and Loretta Lagpacan, *Freiheit für die Frauen—Freiheit für das Volk* (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat 1980); Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 61–87.

160. Moses, *French Feminism*, 127–49; see also Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, 57–89.

161. Otto, *Die Frauen-Zeitung*, no. 2 (1850): 204–5.

riage), which also was printed in excerpts in the *Frauen-Zeitung*.¹⁶² The gender history of the revolution of 1848 tells of various personal attempts at liberation that preceded all political mobilization and participation.¹⁶³

Not least of all, the religious opposition movement of *Deutschkatholizismus* and of the free church congregations had initiated a protest movement already in *Vormärz* that had originated from criticism of mass pilgrimages on the occasion of the exhibition of the "Holy Coat" in Trier¹⁶⁴ and was opposed to the veneration of relics, religious dogmas, and the authoritarian hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The protest was sparked by an open letter in October 1844 from Catholic curate Johannes Ronge, who, in an interdenominational and class-spanning appeal, combined his criticism of religion and church with social and democratic demands. The Association of Protestant Friends, named derisively by its opponents "Friends of the Light,"¹⁶⁵ as a protest movement had turned already as early as the beginning of the 1840s against the prevailing orthodoxy and the close linkage of the Protestant church with the absolutist Prussian state.¹⁶⁶ They soon came into contact with the *Deutschkatholiken* and, like these, campaigned for a "true Christianity" and a democratic self-government of their congregations. Since Christianity and Christian values were not only a confession but also a way of life for the greatest part of the people at that time, religious goals united quite as a matter of course with

162. Louise Dittmar, *Das Wesen der Ehe: Nebst einigen Aufsätzen über die soziale Reform der Frauen* (Leipzig, 1849), printed in excerpts in *Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Vormärz*, ed. Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 55–58, 62–64, 94–103, 208–19; reviewed in Otto, *Die Frauenzeitung*, no. 5 (1849): 49–50.

163. See Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1990), 42–70.

164. Which Jesus allegedly had worn on the cross. See also on the following Sylvia Paetschek, *Frauen und Dissens: Frauen im Deutschkatholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden 1841–1852* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). See also Catherine M. Prelinger, "Religious Dissent: Women's Rights and the Hamburger Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany," *CH* 45 (1976): 42–55.

165. Christian Uhlig, "Lichtfreunde," *TRE* 21:119–21.

166. See the print of the "Grundzüge zur [...] Gründung einer freien religiösen Gemeinde," *Die Frauen-Zeitung*, no. 12 (1850): 239–43. Recall that the reform of divorce in the ALR, successfully pushed through by von Savigny, was achieved only with the aid of conservative Protestant circles (see above).

social and political goals in this “first mass movement of the *Vormärz*,”¹⁶⁷ for which reason citizens’ assemblies and liberal associations very soon were impeded and, after 1850, also persecuted and forbidden. In the free or free-church congregations, many women from all the social strata of the population not only were active but also for the first time experienced equality in participation, for the emancipation of women that Ronge explicitly advocated was a part of religious reform. Likewise, preschool and kindergarten education, established and spread by the members of the liberal and democratic women’s associations as part of a necessary political reform along the lines of Friedrich Fröbel’s ideas, also was of lasting significance. The pedagogic conception of the education of human beings to become free, thinking, and independent human beings appeared to state authorities to be suspicious. The prohibition of kindergarten education in 1851 in Prussia and elsewhere, however, did not prevent the idea of Fröbel’s kindergarten from being carried into the world.¹⁶⁸

What role networks play in the history of social movements may be illustrated by a detail: Ronge’s open letter appeared in 1844 in the *Sächsische Vaterlandsblätter*, edited by Robert Blum, the same liberal-democratic newspaper in which Louise Otto, in a letter to the editor, published her first comment in 1843 on the necessary “Participation of the Feminine World in Political Life” and with which she sparked a debate.¹⁶⁹ With the *Frauen-Zeitung*, which she edited from 1849 under the motto “I recruit women citizens for the realm of freedom” and which became the platform for women’s questions as well as for the religious opposition movement in Germany, she provided the impetus for founding democratic women’s associations and one of the first women’s movements in Germany. In several articles, the Christian faith was taken seriously there as a “religion of freedom,” and the idea of equality before God was understood as an encouragement to independent thought and to the struggle against “the three-fold tyranny of dogma, convention, and the family.”¹⁷⁰ The same was true for the influence of the Quakers, who granted women a voice in church affairs and in public and from whose commitment in the antislavery move-

167. Paletschek, *Frauen und Dissens*, 11.

168. Paletschek, *Frauen und Dissens*, 214–18.

169. Louise Otto, “Die Theilnahme der weiblichen Welt am Staatsleben,” *SV* 3 (1843): 633–34.

170. Malwida von Meysenburg, *Memoiren einer Idealistin* (Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1875), 1:172.

ment leapt the spark for the American women's movement.¹⁷¹ But also the confrontation with "What the Pastors Think"¹⁷² or the critical commentary on the Bible arranged by Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (1895), from which her religiously conservative colleagues distanced themselves explicitly at the voting rights congress in 1896, are witnesses to a Christian-motivated opposition.¹⁷³ Stanton herself considered this the culmination of her work. The history of the struggle for the equality of women in the nineteenth century is for this reason not to be thought of without the questions of faith and the ecclesiastical criticism that again and again made reference to the validity of biblical authority or an independent exegesis of the Bible.

It often became clear to women only during the downswing of the revolutionary uprisings that whenever it was spoken about the people or about the rights of citizens, women were not meant at all. When they, in 1848/1848, built their network of associations or spoke indignantly in their periodicals and in the general press about the exclusion of women from political life, they had "already lost the struggle for the political (re-)definition of freedom, equality, and citizenship throughout Europe."¹⁷⁴ Still, the new public spheres constructed in the Vormärz and in the revolution had created a "political structure of opportunity," in which women's movements took their start in Germany, Austria, France, and elsewhere.¹⁷⁵

171. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 44; see also Angelina Grimké, "Appeal to the Christian Women," quoted in Rossi, *Feminist Papers*, 296–304. For more on the role of religion in creating networks and promoting emancipation, see the introduction by Berlis in this volume.

172. Hedwig Dohm, *Was die Pastoren denken* (Berlin: Schlingmann, 1872).

173. Elisabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002); see Rossi, *Feminist Papers*, 401–6; see also Ute Gerhard, Petra Pommerenke, and Ulla Wischermann, eds., *Klassikerinnen feministischer Theorie. Grundlagentexte*, vol. 1, (1789–1919), FFTS (Königstein: Helmer, 2008), 152–66.

174. Gabriella Hauch, "Frauen-Räume in der Männer-Revolution 1848," in *Europa 1848: Revolution und Reform*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Dieter Dowe, and Dieter Langewiesche (Bonn: Dietz, 1998), 845.

175. Herbert Kitschelt, "Politische Gelegenheitsstrukturen in Theorien sozialer Bewegungen heute," in *Neue soziale Bewegungen: Impulse, Bilanzen und Perspektiven*, ed. Ansgar Klein, Hans-Josef Legrand, and Thomas Leif (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1999), 144–63. Here and in the following, the literature on the historical women's movement has become in the meantime so extensive that I mention only as examples some of the survey works I used: Flexner, *Century of Struggle*; Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950*; Laurence Klejman and Florence Rochefort, *L'Egalité en*

Although these first awakenings on the European map in the process of the emancipation of women failed, and indeed the reactionary state authorities now explicitly excluded women, too, from political activity and civil rights in their imposed constitutions (through the lasting prohibition of women's clubs or women's political associations and their press organs in France and the German Federation), the events around 1848 stand for the dawning of a new age. For, in spite of the direct failure of the revolutions in Europe, the characteristic of gender, like class and race, now also had become a political issue, since from this point onward political speech, intellectual possibilities, and the expectations attached to a new political order had changed. What the female champions of the women's movement once had said, demanded, recognized, and deplored—the discourse about women's rights and about the woman as a citizen with equal rights or as a legal person in family law—was now in the world and became a part of a history of feminism that in other circumstances and in other times could unfold a new significance and efficacy. What had become clear was that “Freedom is indivisible! Thus, free men may not tolerate any slaves next to them.”¹⁷⁶

It was different in the United States, where the history of the women's movement began likewise in 1848 with an act of foundation but with different dynamics that quickly yielded successes. The female initiators of the assembly in Seneca Falls, New York, had gotten to know one another in their commitment against slavery and had agreed on how necessary was the abolition of the “slavery of women, too,” in their own country, the United States, in regard to the common law and the lack of civil rights (see above). The Declaration of Sentiments passed there on July 14, 1848, was a trenchant summary of American women's experiences of injustice and of their claims to legal rights. The text—in a way similar to the declaration of women's rights by de Gouges in its recourse to the declaration of human rights—was formulated as a paraphrase of the American Declaration of Independence from 1776, that is, the linguistic style used and the demands made in each case correspond to each other. When it is stated in the original from 1776, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal,” then the sentence now ran “that man and woman are cre-

marche: Le féminisme sous la Troisième République (Paris: des femmes and Antoinette Fouque, 1989); Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements*; Ute Gerhard, *Frauenbewegung und Feminismus: Eine Geschichte seit 1789*, 5th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2022).

176. Louise Otto, *Die Frauen-Zeitung* 1 (1849): 40–41.

ated equal." And when, in the American Declaration of Independence, the English king, whose abuse of power and pretensions were rebuked, is the addressee for the demand for self-determination, then the point of attack in the Declaration of Sentiments is the "absolute despotism of the man," to which the accusation and the demand for the inalienable rights of "nature and her creator" are directed.¹⁷⁷

The echo and the public sensation that the meeting aroused were considerable. The press throughout the nation reported about it. This signal of a new awakening was such a lasting success because American women, supported by a network of social reformers, from this time onward up until the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 held women's rights conferences yearly that found wide notice in the public and thereby were able to attract a continually larger circle of adherents and to expand their organizations. A fundamental difference in regard to the European situation existed in that the American women campaigning for women's rights were supported in their propaganda, meetings, and campaign by a not inconsiderable number of prominent men—in contrast to the political muzzle that the laws regulating associations and the press signified for all women's efforts after the revolution of 1848 in most parts of Europe. For, according to these association laws (valid in France up to 1901, in Germany and Austria up to 1908 and 1918, respectively) not only was it prohibited for "female persons" as well as minors to become members in political associations, but not even their participation in the sessions and meetings of associations that dealt with political matters was permitted. What counted as political was determined by the police, who could break up these meetings and levy fines on them. According to a decision by the German Imperial Court from the year 1887, "all affairs" were considered as political "which encompass the constitution, administration and the legislation of the state, the civil law, and the international relations of the state."¹⁷⁸ This meant that whatever women sought to achieve by way of legislation for the improvement of their legal or social situation could be interpreted as a political issue. This hindered the organizations active in

177. "'Declaration of Sentiments' (1848)," in Bell and Offen, *Women, the Family and Freedom*, 252–55; see also Rossi, *Feminist Papers*, 413–21.

178. Decision of the Imperial Court from November 10, 1887, RG 1888, vol. 16, 383–86; see on this Ute Gerhard, "Grenzziehungen und Überschreitungen: Die Rechte der Frauen auf dem Weg in die politische Öffentlichkeit," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte*, 529–30.

the women's movement in these countries for at least two generations. Certainly, the American women's movement, too, was confronted by a reactionary antifeminism that, especially after 1860, after the outbreak of the Civil War, revoked much and intended to hamper the unity of the movement in the controversy about the right to vote. But the resistance there was not comparable with this political muzzle in Europe.

What remained remarkable, though, were the international connections and the traces of a new feminist consciousness that, after 1848, were established in both directions beyond national borders and over the Atlantic. Only a few examples should illustrate this:¹⁷⁹

- ♦ Harriet Taylor (1807–1858), who had just married economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill, published an extensive report in the English *Westminster Review* in 1851 about the first American women's rights conference (National Women's Rights Convention) held in 1850 in Worcester, Massachusetts. At this conference, equality in private law and female suffrage were demanded. Taylor's essay "Enfranchisement of Women"¹⁸⁰ procured publicity for these demands also in Europe and advanced to the status of the largest-selling text from the American women's movement. Taylor's essay formed the basis for the standard work of feminism that originated from Mill, with the cooperation from Taylor, called *Die Hörigkeit der Frau* (1869) (*The Subjection of Women*).¹⁸¹ This work was translated into many other languages and became a world bestseller and the "true Bible" of Anglo-American feminists.¹⁸²

179. On the following, see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, who has researched the transnational networks and the personal as well as political connections among the core group of the first women's rights activists.

180. Reprint in Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, eds., *Sexual Equality: Writings by John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill and Helen Taylor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 178–203. This also appeared in German, without bibliographic references, as Harriet Taylor, "Über Frauenemanzipation," in *Texte zur Frauenemanzipation*, by John Stuart Mill, Harriett Taylor Mill, and Helen Taylor, ed. Hannelore Schröder (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1976), 73–108.

181. John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, and Helen Taylor, *Die Hörigkeit der Frau* (Königstein: Helmer, 1997); see John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

182. Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York: Octagon, 1976), 112.

- ♦ Frenchwoman Jeanne Deroin (1805–1895), on the side of the socialists, who was punished for her agitation on behalf of the right of women to work and women's right to vote after the failure of the Revolution, and, while still in prison, wrote a message of greeting to the American women's rights conference in 1850 in Worcester together with her comrade Pauline Roland. In 1852 she published in French a summary of Taylor's essay in the bilingual *Almanach des femmes*.¹⁸³ Louise Otto also published several articles on "Johanna" Deroin in her continued *Frauen-Zeitung* outside Saxony, where the Saxon ban on the press was not valid.¹⁸⁴
- ♦ Like many other female activists of the Revolution of 1848, Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817–1884), who likewise had edited a *Frauen-Zeitung* in Cologne in 1848, also had immigrated to the United States and, from 1852 to 1854, edited a *Deutsche Frauenzeitung* in Milwaukee. Herein she translated many texts by American and English feminists into German but also arranged for the translation of German classics into English, for example excerpts from Theodor G. Hippel's *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber* (On improving the civil status of women) from 1792.¹⁸⁵ At the third American women's rights conference in New York in 1853, she delivered a much-noted address that was translated and also delivered by feminist Ernestine Rose.¹⁸⁶
- ♦ Ernestine Rose (1810–1892), a Polish Jew who had immigrated in the 1830s to the United States after stays in Berlin, Paris, and London, and instigated a campaign for the property rights of women quite quickly after her arrival in New York in 1836/1837, a campaign that was destined to fail several times but was to prepare the way for the New York Property Act of 1848. A friend of Frenchwoman Jenny d'Héricourt and a follower of Robert Owen, she soon made her mark as a saga-

183. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 9; on Deroin, see Scott, *Only Paradoxes*, 57–89.

184. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*; see also *Frauen-Zeitung: Ein Organ für die höheren weiblichen Interessen*, ed. Louise Otto, (Gera) 3 (1851) no. 33, 227–28. In a later issue, in the same year no. 49, 358, the name "Deroin" becomes "Dorvin."

185. Martin Henkel and Rolf Taubert, *Das Weib im Conflict mit den socialen Verhältnissen: Mathilde Franziska Anneke und die erste deutsche Frauenzeitung* (Bochum: Edition Égalité, 1976), 131; Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber* (repr., Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1977).

186. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 10. See also Bonnie S. Anderson, *The Rabbi's Atheist Daughter: Ernestine Rose International Feminist Pioneer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

cious and unswerving companion of Stanton and as an excellent public speaker.¹⁸⁷

- ♦ Swedish author Fredrika Bremer (1801–1865), who traveled in the United States between 1848 and 1851 and published in 1857 her famous novel *Hertha oder Geschichte einer Seele: Skizze aus dem Leben*, which put the women's question in Sweden on the political agenda. Bremer lent her name to the first feminist women's organization (Fredrika-Bremer-forbundet) in Sweden.¹⁸⁸

The personal and political contacts between likeminded persons around the middle of the century are evidence for the fact that early feminism already was to be characterized as a transnational movement. For these female activists, who often represented only a radical minority in their own national contexts, this international women's network as well as the discourse carried out across all borders, especially in times of upheaval, was an important support and encouragement. They exchanged stories of their experiences and information, read the same books, and arranged for the dissemination of their ideas and common concerns. Yet the chances and the achievements evolved extremely differently, in each case in accord with political opportunities and social conditions, as shown by the data on political and civil equality.

5. Different Developments: An Outlook Leading up to the Twentieth Century

In the following, the legal struggles and the demands of women's movements in regard to the position of women in private law are pursued only by way of example for various legal families in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁹ This part of the chapter concentrates on reforms in the position of women in the private law sector and consequently does not claim to report comprehensively on the history of the women's movements in individual countries or to do justice to their manifold demands

187. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 47–53; Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 96.

188. See on this Ulla Manns, "Gender and Feminism in Sweden: The Fredrika Bremer Association," in Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements*, 152–64.

189. See a contemporary survey in Lange and Bäumer, *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*.

for social, cultural, and political change. The suffrage movement¹⁹⁰ will be considered only insofar as the question about the right to vote is closely interwoven with the position of women in private law and especially in family law, since—as women activists for the right to vote always have argued—the right to vote as the epitome of rights generally would be the precondition for participation and change in legislation. For this reason the focus of the following remarks lies on the problems in private law developed in the first section of this chapter. Private law here is criticized as a decisive support of male dominion in the conservative—in part feudal—society as well as also in the liberal, capitalist, so-called bourgeois societies of the nineteenth century. Their different political structures and opportunities also required a variety of political strategies.

After a period of stagnation and reaction, with the prohibition of democratic women's associations and with a muzzling of their political press, women's movements in European countries reorganized themselves since the end of the 1860s. This occurred across a broad spectrum comprising emancipatory educational and earnings associations or conservative patriotic women's associations, and either was connected with the left and the workers' movement or engaged in the constant struggle for recognition with republicans or progressive liberal-bourgeois parties. They argued about whether it was opportune to prove themselves first through education and social activities and to make themselves deserving among the people and in the Fatherland, or whether a more radical approach was necessary and thus to contend for voting rights. Against the common attributions of historical women's movements as feminisms of equality in contrast to the so-called new feminisms of the twentieth century, which have emphasized gender differences, it is to be pointed out that this juxtaposition was at no time useful, nor did it do justice to the goals of recognition, equality, and participation that were set by women. Women in their struggle for rights have emphasized various issues in accordance with the historical context or political strategy but always have demanded both, that is, equal rights and equal freedoms as well as also the consideration or recognition of a gender difference, however this was justified or construed. In order to escape the so-called Wollstonecraft dilemma (see above), femi-

190. Exemplary for this is Daley and Nolan, *Suffrage and Beyond*; on the discourse about suffragettes, see Maroula Joannou and June Purvis, eds., *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

nist theoreticians have suggested dissolving these “false antitheses,”¹⁹¹ for, in the alternative between equality or difference, there resonates a misunderstanding of the legal principle of equality. It was never the case that the important issue for women was “being equal” with or being assimilated to men, but rather argued for equality as a measure of freedom and equality possible for all human beings. For equality as a legal demand makes sense only in view of the circumstance that human beings are different. It is the condition for the possibility for realizing different ways of living without disadvantages emerging from this for the individual. Equality for this reason has no fixed dimension but is rather a dynamic and relational concept, which was repeatedly grappled with and about which there was much contention in the historical struggles. In addition, there can always be equality only in regard to certain aspects relevant for opportunities in life, while there never can be an assimilation or a complete identity.¹⁹² It is uncontroversial that women’s movements at different times and in different ways have grappled with these relevant aspects of equality in view of manifold differences, not only among women, and thereby have brought to bear new standards for equality.

5.1. The French Women’s Movement

The women’s movement in France experienced a new revival at the end of the 1860s, together with the strengthening of the republican opposition in the Second Empire and, after 1871, in a close relationship with the Third Republic.¹⁹³ Again and again, if also with many breaks and internal separations, the struggle for rights, the mobilization against the ignoble position of the woman in the family law of the Code civil, was the focus of diverse associations and the women’s press. This is shown alone by the names of the associations as well as the titles of women’s publications and

191. See Nancy Fraser, “Falsche Gegensätze,” in *Der Streit um Differenz: Feminismus und Postmoderne in der Gegenwart*, ed. Seyla Benhabib et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer), 50–59, 145–60; Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 172.

192. See Gerhard, *Debating Women’s Equality*, 7–11.

193. For France see Klejman and Rochefort, *L’Égalité en marche*; Florence Rochefort, “The French Feminist Movement and Republicanism, 1868–1914,” in Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women’s Emancipation Movements*, 77–101; Moses, *French Feminism*; Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*.

the congresses they organized. This is true, for example, for the periodical *Le Droit des femmes*, founded by Léon Richer and Maria Deraismes in 1869, and the subsequent Association pour le droit des femmes, founded in 1870; for the more radical association Droit des femmes, founded by Hubertine Auclert in 1876; or also for the first international Congrès français et international du Droit des femmes in 1878, which was followed by others.¹⁹⁴ Detailed suggestions were relentlessly developed for the reform of the unjust individual articles of the code that concerned the inferior position of the woman in civil law, including the demand for the right to work, equal wages, the right of divorce, and the possibility of a paternity suit—but for a long time without success.¹⁹⁵

“The feminist project,” as Florence Rochefort termed the development of the women’s movement after 1871, “once revolutionary, became reformist in its goals and in tone.” The dilemma of the French movement consisted in that it had attached its fate to that of the republic. “But, the republicans in power were ... enemies of the feminist project.”¹⁹⁶ “It is not the Republic that is against us; it is the republicans,” as Maria Deraismes also testified.¹⁹⁷ Socialists, following Proudhon’s antifeminism, suspected a fundamental clericalism and conservatism among women and were likewise not reliable allies. In order not to endanger the republic, the majority in the bourgeois women’s movement thus advocated from the 1870s on a policy of small steps (*politique de la brèche*), a reticence that also guided the majority in the German women’s movement in this period. In contrast to this, Hubertine Auclert advocated a more radical policy (*stratégie de l’assault*) because for her the republic was democratic only when women participated equally in it. For this reason, she gave absolute priority to woman’s suffrage above all other legal demands, founded corresponding associations and periodicals (for example, *Le Citoyenne*, from 1882–1891), fought in varying coalitions together with feminists and socialists, submitted a myriad of petitions, and practiced methods of civil disobedience that later became typical of the English suffragettes: she organized demonstra-

194. Klejman and Rochefort, *L’égalité en marche*, 45–85; see also Patrick Kay Bidelman, *Pariahs Stand Up! The Founding of the Liberal Feminist Movement in France, 1858–1889* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982), 73–105.

195. Rochefort, “French Feminist Movement,” 82; on the paternity suit, see Lefaucheur, “Unwed Mothers,” 95–96.

196. Rochefort, “French Feminist Movement,” 83–84.

197. Quoted in Rochefort, “French Feminist Movement,” 87.

tions, a tax boycott, and the disruption of marriage ceremonies at which, according to French custom (as Napoleon once had demanded), the notorious obedience paragraph, Code civil article 213, was read. As a result, she was arrested and taken to court repeatedly but also was ostracized by her earlier female companions and increasingly was pushed into the position of an outsider.¹⁹⁸

To be sure, French women up to the end of the nineteenth century had achieved several improvements in their legal position, for example, the establishment of state higher schools for girls and colleges (1880), the right to create an account at the savings banks (1881), the annulment of the prohibition on divorce (1884), or a right of testimony before the court (1897). On the basis of the early (in comparison with other European countries) opening of universities to women (1863), their licensing for the legal profession (1900) then followed. At the same time, many female doctors already had taken up practice. But the movement that at the beginning of the twentieth century had split into many factions could agree on the foundation of a national women's council (Conseil national des femmes françaises) only in 1901 and became a member in the International Council of Women and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in 1909. Even so, there was a growing number of voices, also in jurisprudence, from the turn of the century on, and on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the Code civil, that urgently demanded a revision of the outmoded and authoritarian family law.¹⁹⁹ Leading feminists of various stripes, along with Auclert also Jeanne Oddo-Deflou and Caroline Kauffmann, attempted to disrupt the state banquets and ceremonies on the occasion of this centennial in October 1904 and organized a protest march through Paris under the motto "Down with the Code" with the plan to burn a copy of the Code civil at the Place Vendôme. The plan did not work out because the police intervened and the press reported about it only modestly, and once again the women activists were not in agreement about how to proceed further. The much-praised Code civil was, after all, considered sacrosanct, as the guarantee of a social balance (*de l'équilibre social*) that obviously presumed a hierarchical order of the sexes. To take

198. See Steven C. Hause, *Hubertine Auclert: The French Suffragette* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), who with his political biography has erected a memorial to the French suffragette.

199. See La Société d'Études Législatives, ed., *Le code Civil 1804–1904: Livre du Centenaire*, vols. 1–2 (Frankfurt am Main: Sauer & Auvermann, 1969).

action against the code was therefore not only reformist, but also quite revolutionary. But the question whether this militant step in public was an important moment in the struggle for women's rights remains a controversial one among male and female historians.²⁰⁰

There followed manifestations and many petitions. A law from 1907 permitted French women for the first time free disposal over their earned income. From 1912 on, paternity suits were also permitted, but only in five cases: seduction, rape, through explicit written evidence, in the case of social fatherhood (*possession d'état*), or in consensus with the father.²⁰¹ The obedience paragraph in Code civil article 213 finally fell through a law passed by the Popular Front government in 1938. There-with, unlimited legal competence was conceded to the wife, whereby the administration of the legally prescribed community of goods remained in the hands of the husband until 1965. The same Popular Front government under Léon Blum—who, for the first time, had appointed three women as state secretaries in his cabinet, among them the female president of a suffrage association, the Union française pour le suffrage de femme (UFSF)—neglected, however, to push through woman's suffrage before the Second World War.²⁰² This remained reserved for Charles de Gaulle through the decree of his Provisional Government on April 21, 1944. To be noted here is that other countries under the law of the Code civil took even more time in the abolition of the *incapacité* of the wife. The Netherlands, for example, waited until 1956, Belgium until 1958, Portugal until 1966, and Luxemburg until 1972.²⁰³ Only Italy broke ranks with this delay through French-influenced law by certifying the complete legal competence of wives by means of an amendment from 17 July 1919—a late success for the efforts of Anna Maria Mozzoni and her companions.²⁰⁴

200. Klejman and Rochefort, *L'Égalité en marche*, 256–58; Hause, *Hubertine Auclert*, 183–87.

201. Lefaucheur, “Unwed Mothers,” 98 and above.

202. Klejman and Rochefort, *L'Égalité en marche*, 295–301; Christine Bard, “Feministinnen in Frankreich: Frauenstimmrecht und Frieden, 1914–1940,” in *Feminismus und Demokratie: Europäische Frauenbewegungen der 1920er Jahre*, ed. Ute Gerhard (Königstein: Helmer, 2001), 84–103.

203. See Holthöfer, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft,” 448–49.

204. Ranieri, “Italien,” 346.

5.2. The American Women's Movement

As mentioned, the American women's movement at first spread quite quickly after 1848 and achieved some successes, since the declaration of Seneca Falls, built on the pattern of the Declaration of Independence of the United States, offered a convincing intellectual and political foundation for further agitation and the struggle for women's rights also in the area of marital and family law.²⁰⁵ In the foreground stood property rights and their configuration in the other individual states. But still, even in the legislation of the state of New York, which was considered progressive, women still had no right of disposal of their property, that is, they had not yet achieved full legal competence (see above). It must be said, though, that the majority of feminists were hesitant in regard to other demands in family law, such as equal right to divorce or educational and custody rights of mothers (child custody),²⁰⁶ since these demands were suspected of attacking the institution of marriage, even if not of destroying it.

The American women's movement had been closely allied from the very beginning with the black liberation movement, indeed, had even emerged from the antislavery movement. For this reason, women's rights activists at first had deferred their concerns when the American Civil War (1861–1865) began. Yet when it became apparent after the end of the war that only black male citizens were given the right to vote in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the American Constitution (1868 and 1870) and that all women would continue to be denied participation in legislation, the frustration was great. Especially Stanton, who in all the years since 1848 had campaigned so tirelessly for the rights of women in individual states before senators and members of the legislative and judicial branches and also had found male supporters, was deeply disappointed. It became clear to her and her fellow campaigners that the resistance and the male monopoly of those positions dominated by jurists were to be overcome only through the participation of women in legislation, that is, through female suffrage. The break with the American Equal Rights Association, in which women

205. Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 79–91, also on the following.

206. See Röwekamp, "Equal Rights for Mothers," 203–17, 222–37: increasing recognition of the rights of guardianship and the custody rights of mothers by law or in decisions in individual cases.

had fought together with men for both black and women's rights, took place in 1869.

With this, though, there emerged a split in the American women's rights movement into two organizations: the National Woman Suffrage Association, under the leadership of Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry Blackwell. Both associations were convinced that the right to vote was the decisive lever for improving the social position of the woman. But while the National Woman Suffrage Association wanted to persuade Congress with spectacular actions and merciless pressure and remained open for other legal problems such as the divorce question or for alliances with organizations for female workers, the American Woman Suffrage Association preferred the traditional petition campaigns in individual states, in order in this way to achieve its goal step by step. These differences of opinion on the question of the right to vote between moderates and radicals about methods and political alliances also characterized the European women's movements of that time, the French (*stratégie de la brèche ou de l'assault*), the English (between *suffragiste* and *suffragette*), and the German, in which around 1900 the left wing, the so-called radicals, split off from the moderate majority in the bourgeois faction of the women's movement. Eleanor Flexner called the "split in the right-to-vote front a disaster" and characterized it with the juxtaposition of respectability versus radicalism.²⁰⁷ The majority of women belonged preferably to the moderates, who, as before, based their special strength on the "culture of femininity" or on the "cult of true womanhood or of domesticity" and thereby established the emphasis on gender difference.²⁰⁸ The American public also viewed the radical procedures more and more skeptically. The astonishingly early successes of the suffrage movement in several states (in Wyoming in 1869 and in Utah in 1870) thus are attributed to the great influence of the temperance movement²⁰⁹ in these states.

207. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 142–55.

208. Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 44–47; see also Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

209. See Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 17–19; in more detail, Ross Evans Paulson, *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control* (Glenview, IL: Foresman, 1973).

But, after the suffrage movement increasingly had arrived in the “camp of decorum”²¹⁰ toward the end of the 1880s, the unification of both voting rights movements was attained in 1890. With the initiative leading to the founding of the International Council of Women in 1888 in Washington, DC, American women quickly assumed leadership on the international level in that they motivated women’s movements of other countries to form their own national umbrella organizations for the purpose of unifying all charitable women’s associations regardless of their religious or political affiliation (see below).

Up until 1914, the American women’s movement definitely could boast of progress in various areas. Along with the admission to the medical and especially the legal professions (the first licensing of a female lawyer was in 1869 in Iowa)—an important step in regard to all legal questions—married American women by means of statutes in various individual states (with exceptions in Florida and Kentucky) increasingly won the right of disposal over their property, over their own earnings, and over their separate assets. Thereby the separation of goods prevailed in law. In addition, a widow had claim to a third of her husband’s assets (the dower). Thereby wives were legally competent, entitled to take legal action, and at least economically independent. On the other hand, the privilege of paternal authority before parental authority remained valid in most states. The right to divorce also was still restrictive, the grounds for divorce being equal for both partners but also limited. Apart from the right to vote in only a few individual states, there was also limited suffrage on the local level and in school and tax administrations.²¹¹ American women gained universal suffrage on the national level through the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920. It soon became clear that thereby not all the hurdles against the discrimination of women in private law and the job market had been overcome. But the attempt to anchor the equality of the woman in all areas, also in the area of private law, in the American Constitution with an Equal Rights Amendment—an attempt begun already in 1923 by Alice Paul with the National Woman’s Party and repeated up to the year 1982—failed again and again and in the meantime has been

210. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 216.

211. See Daley and Nolan, *Beyond Suffrage*, 349; International Council of Women, *Women’s Position in the Laws of the Nations—Position des Femmes dans les Lois des Nations—Die Stellung der Frau im Recht der Kulturstaaten* (Karlsruhe: Braunsche Hofdruckerei und Verlag, 1912), 10.

converted into a general antidiscrimination legislation that encompasses the various dimensions of social inequality, or the "axes of difference,"²¹² especially also discrimination because of race.

5.3. The English Women's Movement

In the historiography of the English women's movement, too, there is no agreement about what share the movement actually had in the exceedingly long process of the improvement of the legal situation of women.²¹³ The gradualism²¹⁴ that characterized English legislation and disassociated itself from radical reform through a policy of a continuing and only incremental development of democratic parliamentary institutions in England was strengthened not least of all by the fact that the common law, with its case-by-case decisions, which in each instance originated on the basis of individual experiences of injustice and intervention, did not so conspicuously offer collective targets. There was also the fact that there was no systematic or synoptic codification, for example, of family law, and that draft laws up until the end of the nineteenth century often were introduced by individual members of Parliament and not by the government. These drafts were initiated and sustained by individual petitioners or lobby groups, but it was not certain whether they could achieve the necessary majority by means of this procedure (Private Member's Bill). This did not exclude the possibility that especially crass and subjectively perceived unjust legal decisions quite definitely played a role in the development of the law. In this context, litigation conducted by author Caroline Norton is cited repeatedly. Her husband, after their separation, forbade her, on the basis of his sole paternal authority, to have any contact with her children, all the more the personal care of them. In her texts, open letters, and pamphlets, however, she succeeded in informing the public about

212. See Gudrun-Axeli Knapp and Angelika Wetterer, eds., *Achsen der Differenz: Gesellschaftstheorie und feministische Kritik II* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2003).

213. See Probert, *Family Law Reform*, 178; Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 95; see also on the following Jane Rendall, "Recovering Lost Political Cultures: British Feminisms, 1860–1890," in Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Womens's Emancipation Movements*, 170–93; Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, 28–47.

214. Bryan S. Turner, "Outline of a Theory of Citizenship," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1992), 53.

the scandalous lack of rights of a wife and mother and in mobilizing this public. The first Infant Custody Act of 1839, which awarded mothers the custody of their children at least up to the age of seven, and improvement in the rights of mothers in the case of divorce, possible since 1857, are attributed in part to her influence.²¹⁵

The British women's movement organized itself only in the 1850s and 1860s and this in the form of committees and women's clubs. In contrast to the American movement, it originated from confrontation with the racial question less and was more defined by class barriers. It was women of the middle class, primarily in London, who constructed their networks for individual campaigns. In the center of such a network stood for a long time the circle gathered around Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Rayner Parkes, who, as "the ladies of Langham Place," along with their manifold activities for the improvement of women's education and their means for earning a living, first provided the impulses for petitions for reform of married women's property rights. They led campaigns on various fronts but were not organized in associations and had no leader. Their means of propaganda were the spoken and written word; public appearances were considered "unladylike."²¹⁶

Parkes, a poetess and essayist who in 1856 had published a critical book on the education of girls, founded the periodical *English Woman's Journal* in 1858 together with Barbara Bodichon. It quickly became a forum for women's questions. In 1857, Smith published a pamphlet under the title *Women and Work*, whose theme was the dishonorable legal position of the woman; it also was taken up by the Law Amendment Society. In general, it was typical for the English women's movement to find prominent masculine supporters from its very beginning. From the middle of the 1860s, the Langham Circle, which Emily Davies joined as a lobbyist for women's right to education and higher studies, championed women's suffrage. They persuaded John Stuart Mill,²¹⁷ who after the death of his wife Harriet Taylor Mill was a member of Parliament for the Liberal Party (the

215. Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 103; Probert, *Family Law Reform*, 179–83.

216. Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 85, also on the following; see also Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, 28–47.

217. Mill at this time had not yet published his world bestseller *The Subjection of Women* (London, 1969). By his own account, he had written this book together with Harriet Taylor. See Ulrike Ackermann, "Einleitung," in *John Stuart Mill. Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Ackermann and Hans Jörg Schmidt (Hamburg: Murmann, 2012), 1:23–38.

Whigs) in the English Parliament from 1865 to 1868, to bring a motion on the occasion of the reform of voting rights in 1867 that was intended to grant women the franchise according to the same criteria as for men. One should keep in mind here that in Great Britain up until 1918 a census suffrage prevailed, that is, before the reform of 1867 only about 20 percent of the male taxpayers were entitled to vote, and even after several expansions up to 1918 merely 60 percent of adult men had a right to vote in Parliament.²¹⁸ The motion failed, but it was surprising that a third of the members of Parliament agreed to the proposal.

After repeated defeats for suffrage initiatives in 1868 and 1869, the women's movement in England picked up speed.²¹⁹ With various nationwide campaigns, vigorous groups—for example in Manchester, led by Lydia Becker and the National Society for Women's Suffrage founded by her in 1867 with its periodical *Women's Suffrage Journal* (from 1870)—and supported by the Law Amendment Society, it was possible to pass a Married Women's Property Act in 1870. According to it, at least a woman's own earnings and certain assets such as inheritances or savings were to remain her property even after being married. But only further reform through a law in 1882 legally secured the principle of the separation of goods. Even if both laws served primarily the securing of family property,²²⁰ since the wife, under the principle of marital *coverture* did not possess any right of disposal over her own property, they still were an important step. The courts for decades afterward were occupied with mediating between married couples in the property question and exploring the ins and outs of contractual agreements. Without granting the wife personal equality, the theoretical ability to possess property in the sense of possessive individualism in the increasingly industrial-capitalist society led, at least for propertied women, to more advantageous starting conditions, since, according to liberal theory, individual freedom was bound together with the ability to dispose of property.²²¹

218. Jane Rendall, "Citizenship, Culture and Civilisation: The Language of British Suffragists, 1866–1874," in Daley and Nolan, *Suffrage and Beyond*, 129.

219. Bolt, *Women's Movements*, 126–43; Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, 120–21.

220. Cornish, "England," 2217–79.

221. Crawford B. Macpherson, *Die politische Theorie des Besitzindividualismus* (repr., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973). See also Ursula Vogel, "Gleichheit und Herrschaft in der ehelichen Vertragsgemeinschaft—Widersprüche der Aufklärung," in Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, 291.

Beyond this, several details are interesting: In 1869, women in England and Wales were granted the right to vote in parish elections. This was intended, at first, for only unmarried women, but in the course of the next years all women were admitted incrementally to different offices on the municipal level (in the poor and school administration).²²² Among the various initiatives undertaken by the English women's movements in this period, the battle against state-regimented prostitution also is to be mentioned. Supported by prominent women such as Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau, Josephine Butler initiated this struggle and organized it on a worldwide basis in 1869 on the occasion of the passage of laws for the control of sexual diseases (Contagious Diseases Acts). As early as 1875, her campaigns against "white slavery" and trafficking in women led to the foundation of an International Abolitionist Federation, within which branch associations were formed in many European and overseas countries. As an organization for moral reform, its representatives engaged in a "civilizing mission" for a sexual morality that often operated on the border between right and coercion or freedom and disciplining.²²³ Striking on the other hand is that the other side, the rather dark side of marital law, namely, illegitimacy or the rights of illegitimate children (bastards) was hardly discussed at all in the public sphere of the movement of Victorian feminism, apart from questions dealing with financial support.²²⁴

Filled with impatience at the merely gradual and reluctant concessions to social change in private law, British feminists at the end of the century—as also American women—laid the focus on of their activities on the struggle for the right to vote.²²⁵ For this purpose, the various, increasingly partisan groupings, the liberal ones as well as the suffrage associations with leanings toward the workers' movement, joined in forming the National

222. Rendall, "Recovering Lost Political Cultures," 34.

223. On the ambivalence of the moralizing campaigns, see Mary P. Ryan, "Mief und Stärke: Ein frühes Lehrstück über die Ambivalenzen weiblicher Moralisierungskampagnen," in *Listen der Ohnmacht: Zur Sozialgeschichte weiblicher Widerstandsformen*, ed. Claudia Honegger and Bettina Heintz (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1981), 393–415.

224. Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); See Nora Bertram, "Reformforderungen englischer Frauen zum Bastard Law im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert," in *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht 1: Westeuropa und die USA (1830–1914)*, ed. Stephan Meder and Christoph-Eric Mecke (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 461–80.

225. See Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, 37–38.

Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, in which prominent representatives of the women's movement such as Emily Davies, Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler, and Millicent Garret Facett (from 1907 for many years the president of the union) collaborated. But, since 1903, the moderates—the later, for demarcation purposes, so-called suffragists—were confronted with the matter and in radical language by the competition of the Women's Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel: the suffragettes.²²⁶ Their imaginative propaganda, which at first consisted in peaceful activities and in an unprecedented number of mass protests as well as in manifold forms of civil disobedience (for example, the refusal to pay taxes or a boycott of the census), escalated to violence and militant resistance only in the wake of the mercilessness of the English Parliament and of the disproportionality of police actions and arrests. The suffragettes justified this breach of law and their increasing militancy with the fact that women, as long as they had no right to vote, stood outside the legal order imposed on them by men (“they were ‘outlaws’”).²²⁷ In this way—with radical consequence and personal courage—the suffragettes in the end placed women's suffrage on the worldwide political agenda. The press, especially the expanding women's press before 1914 in the heyday of historical women's movements, reported on the tactics and methods of struggle on the part of the suffragettes as spectacles or sensations or with more passionate indignation. From this point on, opinions differed about whether they were appropriate or counterproductive. Also, for those who otherwise know little about the history of the legal struggles of women, the designation *suffragette* has become worldwide the epitome of a sensational and insubordinate mania for women's rights.

The universal right to vote for men, introduced in Great Britain in 1918, came into consideration first of all only for housewives over thirty years of age and for university graduates; only in 1928 were all mature

226. See on this Daley and Nolan, *Suffrage and Beyond*; Joannou and Purvis, *Women's Suffrage Movement*. Schirmacher (*Die Suffragettes*) is a very detailed contemporary report.

227. Claire Eustance, “Meanings of Militancy: The Ideas and Practice of Political Resistance in the Women's Freedom League, 1907–14,” in Joannou and Purvis, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 52; Ute Gerhard, “Im Schnittpunkt von Recht und Gewalt—zeitgenössische Diskurse über die Taktik der Suffragetten,” in *Faltenwürfe der Geschichte: Entdecken, entziffern, erzählen*, ed. Sandra Maß and Xenia von Tipelskirch (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2014), 416–30.

women able to enjoy this privilege. Equality of women in marriage was achieved only in several legislative steps in the twentieth century (for example, via the so-called Marriage Bill of 1937, which treated married couples equally at least in regard to the reasons for divorce) until fundamental reforms were undertaken from the end of the 1960s.²²⁸

5.4. The Women's Movement in Germany

Because of the prohibition on political associations for women, the goals set by the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General German Women's Association), organized in 1865 and composed primarily of bourgeois women, were concentrated at first on the education of girls and women and "the right of women to earnings,"²²⁹ and on the expansion of charity work up to the level of professional social work. But when, three years after the foundation of the Reich in 1871, the work on the codification of a Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (German civil code) for all of Germany began—a mammoth task in view of the particularism of the law with approximately one hundred different forms of regulations concerning marital property²³⁰—it quickly became quite clear to the activists gathered in the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein that they had to document their repeatedly debated experiences of injustice and to articulate them publicly. What incensed them the most was the lack of rights for mothers, who in questions of education as well as in the case of divorce were without rights. "The law knows no rights for mothers; made by men for men, it knows only the fathers" was the summary in a report at the Women's Congress, the general assembly of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein in 1876 in Frankfurt am Main, which gave the decisive impulse for mobilization in the question of women's rights.²³¹ In order to prepare a

228. On the further development, see in particular Kathleen Kiernan, Hilary Land, and Jane Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60–123; Jane Lewis, *The End of Marriage? Individualism and Intimate Relations* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2001), 113–19.

229. See Louise Otto, *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1866). On the following, also Gerhard, *Unerhört*.

230. Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 468–83. The same was true after the unification of Italy for the codification of the Italian Codice civile from 1865 (see Boukrif, *Der Schritt über den Rubikon*, 26–30).

231. Charlotte Pape, "Die Rechte der Mutter über ihre Kinder," *NB 2* (1876): 9–12. See on this Susanne Schötz, "'Einige Deutsche Gesetzparagrafen': Louise Otto-Peters

petition for the Reichstag, Louise Otto-Peters invoked her fellow sisters to communicate to her, with the aid of jurists, their experiences “with the legal consequences ... that follow upon their leap into marriage” or with the laws of their respective places of residence—“since different laws prevail exactly in the relationships regarding the position of women in marital and custodial law in almost every German state.”²³² The memorandum “Some German Law Paragraphs” issued in 1876 is thus a rather unsystematic collection of the inventories of injustice in marital law, in regard to which Louise Otto wrote in the foreword: “The material documenting feminine martyrdom would suffice for filling volumes with it.”²³³

But only in the 1890s, as the second and third reading of the draft of the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* were on the agenda and, in the midst of the liberalization of political circumstances, many new initiatives were formed in the leftist as well as in the bourgeois spectrum of the civil society, did the women's movement in all its orientations take up the struggle for women's rights. The Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein commissioned Swiss jurist Emilie Kempin to rework the text issued in 1876, which now served as the basis for further mass petitions “in order to let the legislators of the German Reich hear forcefully the wishes and needs of women.”²³⁴ In 1894, the liberal and charitable women's associations had merged, at the suggestion of the International Council of Women, to form the national *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine* (Council of German Women's Associations). However, in deference to the association law still valid up to 1908 and also to the prohibition on political activity, socialist women had not been asked to join. For the growing proletarian women's movement under the leadership of Clara Zetkin, this was an inducement to pursue from now on a policy of a “clean separation” and to struggle “side by side with

und das Engagement des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins für Frauenrechte,” in *Menschenrechte sind auch Frauenrechte*, ed. Ilse Nagelschmidt (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 53–78.

232. On the diversity of the legal sources, see also Gerhard, *Gleichheit ohne Angleichung*, 157–62.

233. Louise Otto-Peters, *Einige deutsche Gesetzesparagraphen über die Stellung der Frau* (Leipzig: Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein, 1876), 4.

234. Emilie Kempin, *Die Stellung der Frau nach den zur Zeit gültigen Gesetzesbestimmungen sowie nach dem Entwurf eines bürgerlichen Gesetzbuches für das Deutsche Reich*. Hrsg. im Auftrag des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins (Leipzig: Schaefer, 1892), 1.

the comrades" against the women of the ruling classes.²³⁵ Nevertheless, Zetkin also urged her Social Democratic Party comrades in the Reichstag "to campaign wholeheartedly for the full equality of the sexes."²³⁶ Here, August Bebel, with his influential work *The Woman and Socialism* (1879)²³⁷ already had prepared the ground and, as party leader and eloquent Reichstag deputy, repeatedly had advocated for the equality of women. In 1891, the Social Democratic Party at its party convention in Erfurt had taken up women's right to vote into its party platform—one reason more that it appeared suspect, if not inopportune, for the conservative and liberal parties and also for their feminine sympathizers to advocate this right. As detrimental as carrying out class conflict between the bourgeois and proletarian women's movement was for the women's cause—quite differently from in Sweden (see below)—socialist and bourgeois women in this respect agreed in their struggle for the civil rights of women and against the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch. Thus there occurred mass meetings, protest assemblies, campaigns for the collection of signatures, and petitions, as well as a flood of propaganda texts and information publications, also written by masculine supporters, such as was previously unthinkable.

The legal protection offices, established especially by the members of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein, proved to be the driving force behind the agitation. The first was founded in 1894 under the aegis of Marie Stritt through the Legal Protection Association in Dresden; many others quickly followed (up to 1918, over 100 associations).²³⁸ This was a project by women for women spanning all classes, in which mostly bourgeois women offered legal advice and legal assistance at no cost at first in their private apartments. In this project, they at the same time could practice solidarity in the confrontation with the legal problems of all women of whatever social class or status. Since, at that time, women in Germany were

235. Clara Zetkin, "Reinliche Scheidung," *Glei* 8 (1894): 63, 102–3; see also Gerhard, *Unerhört*, 178–95.

236. Clara Zetkin, "Nur mit der proletarischen Frau wird der Sozialismus siegen!" in *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, ed. Zetkin (Berlin: Dietz, 1957), 1:102; see also *Die Gleichheit* 11 (1896): 85–86; 12 (1897), 90–91.

237. August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Zürich: Volksbuchhandlung, 1879). With its fifty editions alone up to 1910, the book was one of the most important agitation texts in social democracy. It was translated into twenty languages up to 1913.

238. Beatrix Geisel, *Klasse, Geschlecht und Recht: Vergleichende sozialhistorische Untersuchung der Rechtsberatungspraxis von Frauen- und Arbeiterbewegung (1894–1933)*, SGF 16 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997).

not yet allowed to study at universities (official admittance to German universities followed only between 1900 and 1908), it was thus laypeople who acquired their legal knowledge in private study and, in difficult cases in women's questions, consulted reliable attorneys. In the detailed critique of law, including of family and civil law, participants not only acquired expert knowledge but also developed a new consciousness of injustice. "The up until then primarily theoretical and abstractly-treated legal question was brought closer to them for the first time in particular concrete demands and became a question of eminent current significance,"²³⁹ as Marie Stritt summarizes it. The chairwoman of the Bund deutscher Frauenvereine at that time (until 1910) provided a bridge to the left wing of the bourgeois women's movement, the so-called radicals, which distinguished itself more and more vigorously in legal questions. Among them were Minna Cauer, Anita Augspurg, and Lida Gustava Heymann, and also Helene Stöcker, all of whom became involved from the end of the nineteenth century internationally in the struggle against state-regimented prostitution and in the campaign for a new ethics in the sexual relations of the sexes, as well as in the campaign for political rights and women's suffrage.²⁴⁰ Augspurg, as the first German female jurist, had studied in Zürich, and Heymann founded the first German suffrage association in 1902; both were critically involved in the founding of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Berlin in 1904. The radical democratic women on the international level in this International Women's Suffrage Alliance pressed for a more decisive legal policy than did the International Council of Women, founded in 1888 in the United States, which had pledged itself in its constitution to political neutrality and noninterference.²⁴¹

In point of fact, the women's protest, called disdainfully the "women's *Landsturm*," against the family law clauses of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch had little success, except for minor improvements. The right of decision of the husband "in all affairs concerning communal marital life" (BGB §1354) was retained. To be sure, paternal authority now was termed

239. Marie Stritt, *Das bürgerliche Gesetzbuch und die Frauenfrage* (Frankenberg: Reisel, 1898), 4.

240. See Gerhard, *Unerhört*, 216–25; Susanne Kinnebrock, *Anita Augspurg (1857–1943): Feministin und Pazifistin zwischen Journalismus und Politik* (Herbolzheim: Centaurus, 2005).

241. See Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 15–18.

parental authority, but the father still retained the right of final decision in all controversial questions (BGB §§1626–1634). The wife's employment contract could be terminated by the husband, but the wife could appeal to a court in the case of improper exercise of this right (BGB §1367). Her wages and what she acquired through an independent business were now at least property reserved to her (BGB §1358)—the strengthened Social Democratic Party had been able to push through this clause. The husband's rights in the administration and usufruct of communal assets were retained, but also the possibility for the wife to reserve for her own use a part of her own assets through a marriage contract (BGB §§1363–1372). The women's movement, though, castigated the precarious legal position of unmarried mothers and their children as a "blatant injustice." Here legislators took over the more severe strictures of the Preußische Allgemeine Landrecht from 1854 (see above), instead of following other, more generous legal traditions in general or in Saxon law. A mother had to care for her child but had no parental authority; for this, a guardian appointed *ex officio* was required. In any case, the father of the child was obligated to provide support (BGB §§1705–1718); he could evade his obligations, though, with the objection of the extra intercourse of the mother. Because claims of support against the unmarried father to the present are, in light of experience, difficult to enforce, the women's movement demanded state-supported legal protection of all mothers, or a comprehensive maternity insurance. In divorce law, both sides enjoyed the same preconditions, and the guilty party was obligated to provide support befitting the social status of the other (BGB §§1564–1586).

All in all, the German *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* enacted almost one hundred years after the French Code civil, was only a lightly modernized version of patriarchal bourgeois law. German women received universal and equal suffrage in 1918, after defeat in World War I and the end of the empire—"as an admission of the collapse of the previous masculine politics,"²⁴² as the feminists saw it. But it was of little use so long as they privately remained bound to the hegemony of the men. Even greater efforts were required, in several laborious stages of reform (1957–1977) after 1949 and after the anchoring of equal rights in article 3, paragraph 2 of the Bonn Grundgesetz (Basic Law), in order to rectify all those clauses

242. Helene Stöcker, "Die Frauen und die Parteien," *FS* 1 (1919): 6.

that women at that time had criticized as “ignoble, outmoded, and culturally inhibiting.”²⁴³

5.5. The Swedish Women's Movement

The Swedish women's movement organized itself with the foundation of the Fredrika Bremer Association (Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet) in 1884 and thereby built on the Revolution of 1848 and the experiences of literary rapporteur Fredrika Bremer, who was a participant in the production of the Declaration of Seneca Falls (see above).²⁴⁴ How lasting this line of tradition was is shown by the fact that the name of the heroine in her novel *Hertha, or the Story of a Soul* (1856), also became the title of the Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet's published organ from 1914 on. One of the initiators of the association was Sophie Adlersperre, who, as early as 1859, had founded a *Magazine for the Home* (*Tidskrift för hemmet*), in which not only practical women's problems were dealt with, as the title would lead one to expect, but also—as in the subsequent periodicals edited by her (*Dagny*, from 1886, and *Hertha*, from 1914 to 1999!)—a plethora of themes revolving around training and education, self-help and women's work, and detailed questions about private law.

As in England and the United States, marital property law was the sphere of one of the first demands, for which reason an Association for Property Law took up its work in 1873 and later merged in 1880s with the Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet.²⁴⁵ But along with this, current legal problems were discussed continually, and legal demands were formulated concerning the age at marriage and of maturity, divorce law, and the education and custody rights of both parents, and strengthening the rights of single mothers. The position taken by Adlersparre and expressed in these publications was remarkable insofar as there, under the motto of a “true emancipation,” traditional gender roles already were

243. BDF-Appeal, *Die Frauenbewegung* 12 (1896), 114–15.

244. See, also on the following, Manns, “Gender and Feminism in Sweden,” 152–64; Agnès Toulas, “Organisation und Handlungsformen der frühen Frauenrechtsbewegung in Schweden im Hinblick auf Reformforderungen zur Verbesserung der privatrechtlichen Stellung der Frau,” in Meder and Mecke, *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht* 1, 643–68.

245. As a reminder, in 1874 wives in Sweden had obtained the right of disposal of the assets reserved to them through a marriage contract and their own earnings.

questioned, questions concerning sexual morality as well as masculine hegemony were discussed, and fundamental equality with men was demanded.²⁴⁶ For this reason, Ellen Key,²⁴⁷ who had begun in 1874 as an author for the *Magazine for the Home*, sharply criticized the Swedish women's movement at the turn of the century on her lecture tours throughout Europe and in her book *The Abused Power of Women* (1898). Key held the diversity in nature between man and woman, as well as the gender-specific division of labor, to be indispensable and based her reformist educational theories on the incompatibility of motherhood and profession (so-called maternalism).²⁴⁸

But typical for the Swedish women's movement, and undoubtedly for its formula for success, was—and this is confirmed by all feminine experts²⁴⁹—a pragmatic approach. That meant, in the first place, that cooperation with men was seen as indispensable, for the membership of leading personalities, even in the board of directors of the Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet, undoubtedly had advantages.²⁵⁰ The female representatives of the women's movement were introduced in this way quite early to the relevant knowledge and involved in the commissions for legal and social reform at the turn of the century. In the second place, the liberal and charitable women's associations, such as the Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet, did not shy away from working together with the Social Democratic women when it was strategically useful. These women likewise had formed themselves into so-called committees in the Social Democratic Party beginning in the 1890s. So it happened in just this way at the founding of the first Swedish women's suffrage association (*Landsföreningen för kvinnans politiska rösträtt*) in 1904, where a group of feminists from all schools of thought converged. This did not mean, though, that there were no difficulties or no great resistance, especially

246. Manns, "Gender and Feminism," 154.

247. The author of the bestselling book, translated into many languages: Ellen Key, *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (Berlin: Fischer, 1902).

248. Manns, "Gender and Feminism," 160; see Gerhard et al., *Klassikerinnen feministischer Theorie*, 1:245–62.

249. Manns, "Gender and Feminism," 158; see also Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, "Equal or Different? That's Not the Question: Women's Political Strategies in a Historical Perspective," in *Is There a Nordic Feminism? Nordic Feminist Thought in Culture and Society*, ed. Drude van Fehr, Anna G. Jónasdóttir, and Bente Rosenbeck (London: UCL Press, 1998), 21–43.

250. Manns, "Gender and Feminism," 154 and n. 9.

on the side of the conservatives. Confrontations even led to the Fredrika-Bremer-förbundet now also drawing near ideologically to theories of the distinctiveness and complementarity of the sexes. What remained decisive was that women in Scandinavia, at almost the same time, gained equal rights and recognition in the private sphere and as citizens of the state. To their aid in this cause came the practice of cooperation in the area of legislation in the Nordic countries, accompanied also by exchange between the women's movements in each country.²⁵¹

After Finland in 1906, Norway in 1913, and Denmark in 1915, Swedish women obtained universal and equal suffrage in 1920. Preceding this already in 1915, a marital law was passed and put into effect that introduced equality into marriage and conferred equal rights in the exercise of parental authority or custody on both marriage partners. In addition, divorce was liberalized, and the principle of fault was replaced by the principle of irreconcilable differences. In 1917, the improvement of the legal position of unwed mothers and their children became law, without, however, achieving the complete equality of illegitimate children. In 1920, in the regulations on marital property, marriage was now characterized as a community of goods subject to compensation at the beginning and the end of the marriage and with the separation of goods during the marriage.²⁵²

Thereby, the Nordic countries granted women not only the right to vote but also equal rights in marital and family law, and this more than a generation before all the other European and overseas states. This was true also for women in postrevolutionary Soviet Russia, who received the right to vote in the course of the Revolution of 1917 and, in several legal steps in 1918, 1920, and 1926, equal and liberalized family and divorce law. Yet, these achievements, worn down through physical distress and Bolshevik dictatorship, were lost with the family law code issued in 1936.²⁵³ The pio-

251. The differences and commonalities of the Nordic women's movements in this period unfortunately cannot be dealt with here. See, though, e.g., Ida Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement from 1880–1914: Changes and Continuities," in Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements*, 125–51.

252. Wetterberg, "Gender Equality," 260–70; see also Kari Melby et al., "The Nordic Model of Marriage," *WHR* 15 (2006): 651–61.

253. See Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

neering role played by Sweden as a model for a women-friendly welfare state necessarily required free and democratic conditions.

6. In Conclusion

The already-mentioned International Council of Women was founded in 1888 in Washington, DC, with the goal, as an umbrella organization of all charitable national women's organizations in the world, to promote "the unity and mutual understanding between all associations of women of the various countries"—so its constitution.²⁵⁴ In 1912, the International Council of Women published a noteworthy documentation in three languages that is of interest in the context of the discourse about women's rights. It contains, under its trilingual title, a compilation of the legal clauses valid at the beginning of the twentieth century concerning "women's position in the laws of the nations."²⁵⁵ Actually, this project, commissioned in 1909 at the world congress in Toronto, contradicted the previously advocated policy of neutrality followed by the council and its vow not to interfere in the affairs of other states, that is, in law and politics. Added to this was that the council, basically conservatively oriented, had behaved so reticently in regard to the suffrage question that women's rights activists in 1904, in connection with the world congress of the council in Berlin, founded another international organization, the International Women's Suffrage Association, in order to advocate more decisively for the rights of women. Nevertheless, the documentation commissioned in 1909 contains reports from seventeen of the twenty-one national associations²⁵⁶ that, until 1911, had joined the International Council of Women, among them five individual reports from the British dominions in Australia and New Zealand.

On the basis of a predetermined catalogue of questions on the most important problems in private law, especially family law, and on public rights in the local community and the state, the reports vary greatly in informative value and in their usefulness since, in most cases, the legal

254. Quoted from International Council of Women, *Women's Position in the Laws*, 181: "formed in various countries for the promotion of unity and mutual understanding between all associations of women working for the common welfare of the community."

255. International Council of Women, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*.

256. So Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 16: in this counting, Rupp combines the four Australian dominions but lists New Zealand separately.

norms are merely written down or listed without any systematization or commentary. This is especially noticeable in the country reports from the sphere of common law, which is regulated through individual case decisions and various legislative acts in the individual states, for example in the United States.²⁵⁷ The legal situation is easier to survey when civil law is codified, as in the case of Austria, an elaboration of which codification Mara Spitzer presented on behalf of the Bund Österreichischer Frauenvereine (Council of Austrian Women's Associations). A survey is offered also by the report on Germany by Camilla Jellinek, who, after the unsuccessful struggles against the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, valid since 1900, could draw on the pending demands made by the German women's movement, especially in family law. The French reporter, one of the few male authors, confirmed once again that the legal sphere of the Code civil offered the longest and hardest resistance to the recognition of equal rights, also of women, up until well into the twentieth century.²⁵⁸ One learns details about countries that in most cases are given short shrift in surveys, for example, Bulgaria, Greece, and Hungary. On the whole, private law with its many pitfalls and details here also proves to be difficult material for nonjurists. The participants were agreed that women's right to vote was the key to the improvement of the woman's legal position. Yet, experience in the meantime teaches us that smaller or larger representation of women in parliaments and their participation in legislation are still no guarantee that women in the family, society, and state have equal rights. Indispensable for a change in circumstances and in law are, therefore, again and again, new social movements, political alliances, the creation of public spheres and multifaceted persuasiveness, and not least also knowledge of the law, along with work on and critique of detailed legal questions. Rights, including those of women, are not a matter of having or possession but rather always must be won and defended anew.²⁵⁹

What brought on the struggle for equality in the women's movements during the long nineteenth century was the realization, surpassing individual experiences of injustice, that discrimination, subordination, and dispossession were not only a personal misfortune or individual fate but

257. International Council of Women, *Women's Position in the Laws*, 9–18.

258. International Council of Women, *Women's Position in the Laws*, 136–46, 19–35, 98.

259. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 25.

rather the program of a gender order that was not in order, because it could no longer be reconciled with the modern principles of freedom and equality, with human rights. The communication of these experiences within the personal and international networks of women's movements made it possible to interpret this injustice as a violation of the inalienable rights of all human beings and to translate their complaints and demands into the language of the law. The concept of rights thus had a double significance: First, they experienced it as a right of coercion, as a means of power for the assertion of above all male privileges and dominant interests. The accomplices in this in the long nineteenth century were jurisprudence and legal philosophy, which founded the constitution of the bourgeois family on the inequality of the sexes as a cornerstone of the civil society and likewise assigned the concept of the polarization of gender roles as in underpinning the state as well as in forming gender identities. "The women are the representatives of love, just as the men are representatives of the law in the most general sense,"²⁶⁰ ran the short formula that was to be read in the encyclopedias of the nineteenth century under the heading *Geschlechterverhältnisse* (Gender Relationships).

On the other hand, individual women at first, and then increasingly more of them, with their understanding of human rights (exercised by women, too, since the French Revolution) and with the promise of freedom and equality and a "particular right to resistance against oppression"—so de Gouges in her own version of human rights, article 2—got to know the law as an instrument of liberation and, in the consciousness of another justice, to employ it as a lever in changing social conditions. This learning process becomes clear in a public appeal made by Anita Augspurg in 1895 in the context of the legal struggles against the German Civil Code. Therein she also appeals for the solidarity of all those who, at that time as well as today, are of the opinion that they can reach their goal without the benefit of equal rights:

The woman's question is, of course, in great part a question of nurture, but perhaps in even greater measure a question of culture, ... but most of all, it is a legal question.... Whatever an individual woman attains

260. *Conversations-Lexikon oder encyclopaedisches Handwörterbuch für gebildete Stände* (Stuttgart: Macklot, 1818–1819), 2:783; quite similar is Brockhaus from 1864, "Frauen," in *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände: Conversations-Lexikon* (Leipzig: Brockhaus 1865), 6:553.

and achieves in art, science, industry, in general esteem and influence, it is something private, personal, momentary, isolated—the character of the exceptional and only tolerated remains stuck. But, it is not really warranted and, for this reason, cannot become the rule, cannot gain influence in the general public.²⁶¹

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261. Anita Augspurg, "Gebt Acht, solange noch Zeit ist!" *Frau* 1 (1895): 4.

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Christ—Liberator of Women? On Feminist Biblical Interpretations in Nineteenth-Century Norway

Aud V. Tønnessen

Introduction

Camilla Collett (1813–1895) and Aasta Hansteen (1824–1908) are regarded as pioneers in the Norwegian suffragette movement. They were famous in their time and an inspiration for generations of feminists to come.¹ The Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, established in 1884, made them honorary members. At a time when a woman was expected to lead a private life as mother, daughter, wife, and sister, they spoke out in public against this. They argued that women's concerns were ignored, that they lacked the freedom to speak up for themselves and were not met with the same respect as men. These arguments were supported by references to the Bible. Hansteen is recognized today as an “early feminist lay theologian.”² The same could well be said of Collett.

In the presecular context in which they operated, the Bible was still a cultural reference book for laws and regulations on the roles and rights of men and women. For example, politicians in Parliament referred to the

1. The notions of feminist and feminism are anachronistic when applied to Collett and Hansteen, since such terms first came into use later. Instead, in the nineteenth century one referred to women's emancipation and the cause of women when describing the work of the suffragettes and the campaign for women to be legally recognized as individuals in their own right, even when they were married. Even so, I find it fruitful to regard the work by Collett and Hansteen, as well as other of their contemporaries, as part of feminist history and therefore think it relevant to apply the concept *feminist* to them.

2. Jone Salomonsen, “More on Aasta Hansteen,” <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress6013a2>.

Bible when arguing against increased rights for women.³ Theologians and clergy engaged in public debates defending the view that women were subordinate to men according to Holy Scripture. If women were to engage in these debates, they had to challenge the very basic conceptions of gender that were derived from the Bible, conceptions that seemed to define woman as the eternally inferior sex. This is what Hansteen and Collett did, providing alternative interpretations of pertinent biblical passages.

This article explores their use of the Bible in feminist argumentation. Which verses were important? What inspired their interpretations? Whereas the dominant discourse used the Bible to argue against women's emancipation and for their subordination under men, Hansteen and Collett presented a critical alternative and anticipated the much later feminist theological claims for gender equality. This essay will study their ideals of woman and explore what kind of emancipation they argued for.

Short Biographies

Nineteenth-century women were admired for their beauty and humility, their silence and obedience, but Collett and Hansteen wrote and spoke in a way that provoked and challenged these conventions. Collett was a famous novelist in her own lifetime. She came from a gifted family. Her father, Nicolai Wergeland, was one of the founding fathers of the Norwegian constitution (1814), an enlightened and politically interested man who secured his daughter's higher education by Moravians in Denmark. He was a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. Her brother, Henrik Wergeland, a graduate in theology, is primarily known as one of Norway's leading poets. He was an ardent spokesman for democracy, national liberation, and religious-humanistic ideals of tolerance. The independent mindset that marked both father and brother was also found in Collett. The Moravian emphasis on self-reflection has been noted as an explanation of her personal style of writing.⁴ From the Moravians, Collett had learned that men and women were equal in spirit, and she learned to write about her spiritual life. The personal slant in all her writings characterizes Collett's authorship. Her most famous book is the novel

3. Bente Nilsen Lein, *Kirken i felttog mot kvinnefrigjøring* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 93ff.

4. Kristin Ørjasæter, *Selviakttakelsens poetikk: En lesning av Camilla Wergelands dagbok fra 1830-årene* (Oslo: Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet, UiO, 2002), 120–23.

Amtmandens døtre (The district governor's daughters) from 1854 to 1855. There she addressed the situation of young women in the bourgeoisie who were without social means to express their feelings and therefore became easy objects of manipulation by their family and surroundings. The novel has been described as a tendency novel, that is, a novel that aims to shape public opinion on social, political, and religious matters. Collett not only aimed at storytelling but implicitly provided arguments for the inner and emotional emancipation of women.⁵

In her many essays she addressed the situation of women more directly than in the novel. Her style was elegant, though often biting, not without humor, but more often with an ironic edge challenging male dominance, and it was therefore considered provocative.

Collett married and had four sons but became a widow at a young age. In 1876 she became the first woman to receive a state stipend as a writer.

Hansteen was twelve years younger than Collett. Her father was the first professor of physics at the newly established university in Christiania (today Oslo). She was one of the first women in Norway to receive professional training in art and was represented at the world exhibition in 1855. From an early age she engaged in public debate and claimed a freedom for herself that challenged social and cultural conventions. She never married. She insisted on walking alone in the streets without being accompanied by a man, and for that she was constantly harassed by mobs of young men. Despite constant and stern criticism, she toured Norway, Sweden, and Denmark in the 1870s, giving public lectures on women's situation, including critical readings of the Bible, theological speculations, and anticlerical statements.

She wrote more extensively than Collett on theology and is famous today for her booklet from 1878, *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede* (Woman created in the image of God). The disparaging rejection of Hansteen's writings and lectures almost led her to leave the country permanently. In 1880 she moved to the United States, where she immediately contacted representatives for the progressive women's movement and met, among others, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the driving force behind *The Woman's Bible*. After nine years, she returned home to continue her struggle for emancipation and joined the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, established in 1884.

5. Torill Steinfeld, "Amtmandens Døttre: Tendensromanen som ble klassiker," in *Bokspor: Norske bøker gjennom 350 år*, ed. Per Strømholm (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993), 67–79.

On the Theological Subordination of Women

The importance of theology in the early women's movement is an international phenomenon and should be understood partly as a result of the predominantly presecularized context of contemporary societies. When it comes to Norway, one also has to consider the impact of the state church system. In the nineteenth century, the Church of Norway was an Evangelical Lutheran state church, and society was monocultural and religiously and ethnically homogenous. Being Norwegian in the nineteenth century meant being Lutheran. The constitution §2 stated that the Evangelical Lutheran religion was the state religion. All civil servants until 1892 were obliged to belong to the state church. Politics, laws, and moral issues regulating the relationship between man and woman were to a large extent based on Christian teaching. Typically, conservative politicians would argue against married women's rights to private property with reference to Gen 2 and Paul's letter to the Ephesians, both supporting arguments in favor of men's dominance. If married women were given the right to separate property, it would violate the natural order created by God, the debate in Parliament maintained.⁶ Man's right to dominion would be violated if a married woman received the right to separate private property. Theological claims were valid in political argumentation, for example; God had, according to Gen 2:21–23, created woman to be subject to man, and Eve was created after Adam and from him in order to be his helper:

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*⁷

The fall had only confirmed this order of creation: “and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16). This interpretation concluded that man should rule over woman. The relationship between man and woman was established from the beginning and for all eternity

6. Lein, *Kirken i felttog*, 94–95.

7. I have used the KJV throughout the essay. Collett and Hansteen referred to a Norwegian translation of the Bible from 1858. Therefore, I found it appropriate to use the English translation from the same period.

as a relationship between a superior and an inferior. Woman was by nature weaker and therefore easier to deceive. That was the reason sin had entered the world through her, and that was why Paul in Ephesians had made man her head: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph 5:22–23). In the nineteenth century, Lutheran orthodoxy and Romantic ideals merged, with the result that man from the creation, as indicated by his nature and virtue, was understood as active, dominant, strong, and articulate, whereas woman was meek, silent, obedient, and humble.⁸ Theologians and clergy from all theological parties agreed that the relationship between man and woman was according to creation and thus by nature, one between a dominating male and dominated female.⁹

At the Faculty of Theology at the University in Christiania, students were taught orthodox Lutheran theology. The theology of creation order has been described as a combination of right Hegelianism, Lutheran confessionalism, and Pietism, and was a reaction against modernity and Darwinian evolutionary principles.¹⁰ Professor of systematic theology Gisle Johnson merged Gen 2 and Eph 5 when explaining to his students how God from the beginning made man physically and spiritually stronger than woman, and that man was therefore by nature her head and she his helper.¹¹

Widely read Danish professor and Bishop Hans L. Martensen argued against the modern claims for women’s emancipation. With reference to 1 Pet 3:1 (“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands”), Martensen insisted that within the creational and natural order of superiority and inferiority woman was consigned to obedience.¹² He actively criticized demands that women should take part in the public sphere. This contradicted her God-given nature as man’s inferior, he said. Being infe-

8. Inger Hammar, *Emancipation och religion: Om den svenska kvinnorörelsens pionjärer i debatt om kvinnans kallelse ca 1860–1900* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1999).

9. Lein, *Kirken i feltog*, 33.

10. Inge Lønning, “‘Kinder, Kirche und Küch’: Luthersk teologi og ordningsteologi,” in *Sedelighet og samliv*, ed. Kjetil Hafstad, Gro Hagemann, and Trygve Wyller (Oslo: Norges Forskningsråd, 1997), 87.

11. Gisle Johnson, *Forelæsninger over den christelige Ethik* (Kristiania: Dybwads, 1898), 233–34.

12. Hans L. Martensen, *Den sociale Ethik* (Kjøbenhavn: Boghandels, 1894), 58.

rior, her natural orbit was the private sphere, whereas the man's sphere was public and political. Her spiritual and emotional abilities suited her as wife, mother, sister, daughter, and friend, but not as a public person: "Femininity is modest, is chaste in relation to the world, is shy to transcend the borders given by nature. To femininity belongs the veil."¹³

Fredrik Petersen, who replaced Johnson in the chair as professor of systematic theology, was considered a modern theologian, one who tried to bridge the gap between theology and modern science. He has been described as engaging new ideas sympathetically.¹⁴ But his sympathy did not encompass modern thoughts about women. His view on women and the relationship between men and women was as conservative as his predecessor. When directly challenged by Gina Krogh, leader of the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, who appealed to him as an open-minded Christian and challenged him to take a positive stance for women's rights, Petersen insisted that men and women were created unequal. The relationship was meant by God to be one between a superior and a subordinate. He criticized the feminist movement, which questioned the "natural subordination" of women.¹⁵ He claimed that the demands for women's emancipation had nothing to do with Christianity and could not be sustained by the Bible. He agreed that there were certainly texts in the Bible that should be read using historical criticism, but according to the order of creation, man was dominant and woman his subject. This was unchangeable.

Woman's subordinate position to man was confirmed by the marriage ritual. Until 1918 all members of the Evangelical Lutheran state church were obliged to be married in church. It was the majority church and included 97–98 percent of the population as members. The ritual underlined the importance of subordination and obedience by reading Eph 5, emphasizing the woman's obligation to submit herself to her husband. Her subordination was branded on her body through marriage.

This relationship was also confirmed in the popular Christian literature that could be found in so many homes. One such very popular book was *La Femme: Deux discours*, by French Protestant pastor Adolphe Monod. The Norwegian translation, *Kvindens Opgave og Liv i Evangeliets Lys*, was published in five editions and widely read and referenced. Monod

13. Martensen, *Den sociale Ethik*, 61.

14. Hallgeir Elstad, *Nyere norsk kristendomshistorie* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2005), 70.

15. Lein, *Kirken i felttog*, 80–81.

emphasized not only that God created man as superior and woman as his inferior and subordinate, but also that he created man first and woman second. The man was thus created independent, whereas the woman was secondary and dependent. She could not and should not live for herself but quietly lead a domestic life and beautify his life. She was created after him, for him, and by him, Monod wrote with reference to Gen 2.¹⁶

Popular Christian movements have often challenged hegemonic traditions, including the conservative evaluation of women. It is well known that in many lay movements women have more easily found a space to preach and play a more independent religious role than in mainline churches.¹⁷ But women such as Collett and Hansteen received little support for their emancipatory views, either within the church or within the Christian lay movement. Inspiration for new readings of the Bible was instead found in philosophy and poetry.

On *The Subjection of Women*

Most significant was the book *The Subjection of Women* by British philosopher John Stuart Mill. The book was published in 1869, and a Danish translation was issued the same year. The reception of the book in Norway was mixed and stirred debate. Martensen argued actively against Mill in his book on social ethics, insisting that equality between man and woman would harm woman's nature.¹⁸ Collett and Hansteen held quite the opposite opinion. They agreed with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who found Mill to be the first man who had written truthfully on the degradation of women.¹⁹ Collett recommended the book as "excellent" but regretted that very few women read it.²⁰

Mill built on evolutionary principles, arguing that women's emancipation and equality with men would benefit all humankind.

16. Adolphe Monod, *Kvindens Opgave og Liv i Evangeliets Lys: Tvende foredrag* (Christiania: Forlagt af Boghandlerforeningen, 1861), 11.

17. Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe, 1789–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

18. Martensen, *Den sociale Ethik*, 61.

19. Susan Moller Okin, "Editor's Introduction," in *John Stuart Mill: The Subjection of Women*, ed. Okin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), v.

20. Camilla Collett, "Om kvinden og hendes stilling," in *Siste Blade, 2den og 3dje Række: Samlede Verker. Mindeudgave*, ed. Hans Thure Smith Eitrem (Kristiania og Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendalske Boghandel. Nordisk, 1872), 208.

That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.²¹

Not only would women gain from education and being given the right to vote, but so would men, he said. He accused the existing marriage law of reducing women to slaves and argued in favor of a businesslike contract between equals.

An article was in 1870 printed in a Norwegian newspaper by an anonymous writer. A woman accused Mill of promoting ideas and ideals that contradicted Christian teachings.²² She supported her claims by referring to Gen 2. Woman was created to help man, and he to rule over her, the anonymous woman wrote. Thus they could not be equals. According to Scripture, woman should lead a hidden and quiet life. Drawing attention and becoming a public person would mean going against her God-given nature and would lead to her being punished. This was the voice of traditional orthodoxy. The reference to the harm emancipation would inflict on a woman's nature was classic. It was this article that motivated Hansteen to write her first article on the situation of women. She also published anonymously, heeding the social pressure that discouraged women from engaging in a public debate on such a delicate and controversial issue as woman's status and role in society.

In several articles Hansteen tried to refute the main arguments against Mill by providing a new reading of Gen 1–2.²³ Worth noting is that Hansteen included Gen 1 in her argument, whereas traditionally only Gen 2 was referred to. Hansteen focused especially on Gen 1:26–27:

And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own

21. John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 471.

22. "Protest mot Stuart Mill," *Morgenbladet*, 18 June 1870.

23. Aasta Hansteen, "Kvindernes Mening om 'Kvindernes Underkuelse,'" *Dagbladet*, 13 July 1870, 6 August 1870, and 12 August 1870.

image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Hansteen had read Mill's book and been deeply moved and inspired by it. To her, Mill was a true liberator of women, one who spoke authentically about the relationship between man and woman. As she saw it, it was not Mill who argued against biblical principles; rather, it was the anonymous woman who built her argument on false interpretations of the Bible. It was she who had mistaken what the Bible said about man and woman.

God created humankind, "man and woman," Hansteen emphasized in her articles, thus highlighting that humankind by definition entailed equality between man and woman. It was the original plan from creation that man and woman together comprised humankind and together were created in the image of God (Gen 1:28). The word from God in Gen 1, that all creatures are under the rule of man, was therefore a commandment given to man and woman alike. That man for too long had understood this as his task alone was built on false assumptions and had led him to believe in his own divinity, Hansteen said. It was sin and punishment for sin that were the reasons for the existing inequality, not the creational order. The original plan was for man and woman to be equals and to have equal tasks given to them by God. Now was the time to return to this order, Hansteen proclaimed. In a manner much inspired by perspectives of the Enlightenment, she insisted that the time had come, punishment had been fulfilled, and man and women were ready to enter into a new phase, one in which they recognized each other as equal and equally free.

Her articles were sharp in their criticism of man, who too long had subjected woman to an inferior position. They also contested the theological views expressed by the anonymous woman, who only confirmed the common theological naturalization of the romantic concept of woman as domestic and publicly invisible. Not without irony, Hansteen pointed out that the anonymous writer in fact broke her own ideal when going public with her opinions on Mill. Hansteen also asked rhetorically whether it would have been more properly feminine and in accordance with the word of God if Florence Nightingale were to stay at home and enjoy her wealth instead of traveling to the Crimea and taking care of wounded soldiers.

Hansteen placed the whole question of women's emancipation into an argument of development. Subordination was not part of creation but entered the world with the fall, as a punishment. With the Enlightenment, time had come for this period of punishment to end. The modern eman-

cipation of women was a sign of the situation returning to normal, that is, to the way things were at the creation, when man and woman had equal status. The emancipation of women was thus understood in the light of creation as an expression of God's original plan for humankind: woman, like man, was created in the image of God.

The points made in her articles were further developed as Hansteen became more involved in the discussions on women and the Bible. She soon wrote under her full name and did not limit herself only to writing. She also started touring Scandinavia giving public lectures on the topic. Mostly, she was ridiculed and mocked.²⁴ She had a presence that many found unattractive. Not only was she, according to the beauty standards of the time, small and "manly," but many also found her way of addressing her audience aggressive. Added to this list of offenses was her provocative message. In her person, performance, and speech, she challenged the very ideal of a woman as private, humble, and obedient. She questioned the normative foundation for a polity built on women's subordination.

Woman Created in the Image of God

In 1878 Hansteen published the book *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede* (Woman created in the image of God).²⁵ This book represented a further development of the arguments made in the initial debate in 1870, namely that woman, in the same way as man, was created in the image of God and was therefore equal to him. Through an analogy with the Trinity, much inspired by Danish poet Frederik Paludan-Müller (1809–1876), she argued that man and woman participated equally in their relationship with God, nothing more and nothing less: "When God says that a human being (man and woman) is created in 'our' image, he must thereby mean that those two, as persons who constitute one human being, represent the three persons that together form the Christian God, that is the Triune God."²⁶

Her theology of the Holy Trinity rested on a distributive idea. The Trinity consisted of three persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and since woman, in the same way as man, was created in the image of God, she must therefore be representative of humankind, equally and in the

24. Lein, *Kirken i felttog*, 102.

25. Aasta Hansteen, *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede: Anden forøgede udgave* (Kristiania: Steenske Bogtrykkeri og Forlag, 1903).

26. Hansteen, *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede*, 7.

same degree as man. Hansteen further developed this into a gendered distinction and division of the three persons in the Trinity. She depicted God as the father and the male Jehovah. He was the prototype of man, the one with creative power and powerful actions. Correspondingly, the Holy Spirit was depicted as the prototype of woman, the one who revealed the truth to mankind by love and through emotion, thereby ensuring that truth entered into people's hearts. In order to keep the gender balance, Christ, as the true human being, was depicted as man and woman, equally and in the same degree. Christ was in the middle, representing true humanity and reconciling man and woman.

That this understanding of the triune God had only been disclosed recently had to do with the gender of clergy and theologians. Hansteen claimed an epistemological position that came close to the position adopted later by feminists such as Sandra Harding. According to Harding, a feminist epistemology represents a fuller and more objective concept of knowledge and hence encompasses a larger picture of reality.²⁷ Women can ask critical questions that bring about new knowledge not only regarding their own lives but also men's lives as well as the relation between them. From a less privileged position they present and represent reality in a different way, providing insights into other aspects of life.²⁸ Hansteen's version of a perspectival feminist epistemology was adapted to her critique of male power in the church:

When the male thinker does not realize that human beings consist of two persons that form a unity, but considers human being as only one personality, and when he also wants to uphold the idea that a human being is created in the image of God, it becomes impossible for him to imagine God as anything other than one single personal God when he proceeds from the image to its origin or prototype.²⁹

And further:

For female knowledge, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is far easier, since she under all existing conditions, always imagines a human being

27. Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'?" in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49–82.

28. Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology," 54.

29. Hansteen, *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede*, 60.

as two-fold, since it is impossible for her to be ignorant about or overlook male existence, since man has until recently been representative of humanity and has thus functioned as far as it in any way is physically possible, as both man and woman.³⁰

Hansteen developed a theological position that provided positive arguments in favor of women's emancipation and critically addressed the antifeminist sentiments of clergy and church. In this way she introduced a feminist theological critique a century before the wave of 1970s feminist readings. It was in the nineteenth century and the time of Hansteen that the historical-critical reading of biblical texts was introduced, opening theology up to more liberal reflections. Analysis of the biblical texts as historical texts inspired more critical readings. Hansteen's readings of biblical texts are fundamentally based on a hermeneutics of theological anthropology, namely that humankind consists of man and woman alike and that the triune God is just as much female as male. At the same time, she does not argue against an understanding of gender based on ontological differences between man and woman. Rather, her model of the Holy Trinity builds on the assumption of gender essentialism and polarity. To begin with, she combined this theological anthropology with philosophical and poetic sources of inspiration. By the end of the century, she also included more historical-critical perspectives.

Anticlerical Perspectives

In 1897 Hansteen published a new book, called *Kristi Kirke i det nittende Aarhundrede* (Christ's church in the nineteenth century). The book was inspired by *The Woman's Bible*.³¹ For nine years, from 1880–1889, Hansteen had lived in the United States. The women's movement in the United States was a great inspiration for her.³² She was impressed by American women's engagement in public debates. In contrast to her experience of being harassed when speaking in public, women there were met with

30. Hansteen, *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede*, 61.

31. Aasta Hansteen, *Kristi Kirke i det nittende Aarhundrede* (Kristiania: Sabro's Forlag, 1897), 45.

32. Janet E. Rasmussen, "Aasta Hansteen og Amerika," in *Furier er også kvinner: Aasta Hansteen 1824–1908*, ed. Bente Nilsen Lein et al. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984), 140.

respect when speaking out against slavery and women's subordination. She attended suffragettes' meetings and other women's conferences and listened to American pioneers such as Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, and Mary Livermore. Hansteen found Livermore to be an especially gifted orator. According to Hansteen, the United States was "the first place on earth for women."³³

During her time in the United States, she learned about Stanton's project to produce a feminist interpretation of biblical texts about women. This matched the ambitions of Hansteen as they were presented in *Kvinden skabt i Guds billede*. She also sympathized with the anticlerical perspectives of Stanton. Strong anticlerical sentiments can be found in Hansteen's book *Kristi Kirke*. She shared the ambitions of Stanton to liberate women from the orthodox interpretations of the Bible that were forced on them by men in power. Hansteen accused clergy and theologians of presenting false interpretations of biblical texts. She claimed that their gender bias had blinded them from the truth. Their hegemonic masculinity prevented them from understanding the true meaning of the Bible. Therefore it was necessary for women to participate actively in the interpretation of biblical texts. Only by doing so could they be emancipated.

According to Hansteen, the clergy based their dominance over women on an arbitrary selection of biblical verses as well as doubtful exegesis. She referred to Eph 5:22–23, where Paul exhorted wives to submit themselves to their husbands, pointing to the fact that whereas Paul wrote about a marital situation and relationship, the clergy addressed all men and women, exhorting women to submit themselves to all men and any kind of men. This was absolutely meaningless teaching, she argued, referring to Danish writer Pauline Worm: as if any woman owned obedience and subordination to any man, including idiots.³⁴

There are no clear anti-Judaistic references in her writings, as it was rather the Protestant religion she addressed as being predominantly masculine and oppressive of women. Hansteen criticized the interpretations rather than the texts themselves. She found that men read the Bible in order to sustain their own power and dominance over women. Women's social position is thus determined by biased and false interpretations. One example was the often-quoted verse by Paul in 1 Cor 14:34, where women

33. Rasmussen, "Aasta Hansteen og Amerika," 144.

34. Hansteen, *Kristi Kirke*, 41.

are told to be silent. In combination with 1 Tim 2:12, where Paul writes that no woman should teach or decide over men, 1 Cor 14:34 has been a standard biblical passage cited to oppose women's ministry in the church. Hansteen did not address the specific question of women's ministry, but she contested the interpretations of this verse as a general commandment to women to be silent in church. Paul did not mean that women should be without spiritual and public authority but rather addressed concrete situations where women interfered and disturbed order, she said.³⁵ After all, Paul expected women to be preaching in the church, she explained further, referring to 1 Cor 11:4–5, which stated: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." These verses prove, Hansteen writes, that Paul presents man and woman as equal, with the same mandate to pray and prophesy in the church.³⁶

Hansteen did not develop her feminist interpretations into political programs for women's right to vote or to be ordained as ministers in the church. At this point she was much like her contemporary feminist colleague Collett. They shared a concern for women's inner liberation, the freedom for women to express emotions and to be recognized as fully human beings and social equals to men, and they found arguments for a change in the social and cultural acceptance of women in new interpretations of biblical texts. They both maintained the essential difference between man and woman. The problem was not the gender differences, but rather the cultural and social evaluation of them and the lack of respect for women. To prove culture wrong, they went to the Bible. In Hansteen's theology, Christ became the representative of man and woman alike. Collett perceived Christ to be the true liberator of women.

Christ—the Liberator of Women

Collett's style of writing might have been more elegant than Hansteen's, but her critique and biting irony provoked equally strong reactions. When she published *Fra de stummes leir* (From the encampment of the mutes) in 1877, a collection of essays containing a strident critique of orthodox biblical and cultural interpretations, she became the target of angry defenders

35. Hansteen, *Kristi Kirke*, 31

36. Hansteen, *Kristi Kirke*, 32.

of the traditional order. At the same time, the liberal elite celebrated her as the one to introduce feminism to Norway.³⁷ But even the liberal and radical intellectual male elite could not support her completely. For example, Georg Brandes, who in 1869 had translated Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, wrote that it was understandable that male writers such as Swedish August Strindberg expressed hatred of women. After all, he had for too long had to listen to the cries of hatred and war from the "encampment of the mutes." Strindberg was nothing more than a male version of Mrs. Collett, Brandes wrote.³⁸ What in her essays could provoke such reactions? Obviously it was not only theologians who found feminism problematic.

Already in 1872 she had published an essay titled "Om kvinden og hennes stilling" ("On Woman and Her Position"). There she engaged in a critical review of the popular religious book *La Femme* by Monod, a French Protestant minister. This was the first essay in which she seriously presented an alternative feminist interpretation of traditional theology. She strongly disagreed with the book and in particular with Monod's statements that in creation woman had a lesser status than the man. According to Monod, "man was part of the great creation," but her creation "was of a secondary order."³⁹ Monod supported this statement by references to Gen 2 and Paul.

In order to refute Monod, Collett went to the Bible and gave an independent interpretation of how the relationship between man and woman was to be understood. She wanted to correct Monod and other men who thought like him. In 1 Corinthians, she found a basis for an argument that secured an equal relationship between man and woman before God. When Paul in 1 Cor 6 wrote about how man should fear God in body and spirit, he addressed man and woman alike, she said.⁴⁰ Paul there presents a common law they both are obliged to obey. Throughout the centuries, the understanding of this common law had been perverted. Man received an increased freedom, including the freedom to be liberated from religion, whereas continuously heavier moral and spiritual demands were enforced on woman. It was as if there were no limits to how many demands could be placed on her. Paradoxically, Collett said, it was the man, who accord-

37. Ellisiv Steen, *Den lange strid: Camilla Collett og hennes senere forfatterskap* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk, 1954), 241.

38. Steen, *Den lange strid*, 343.

39. Monod, *Kvindens Opgave*, 13.

40. Collett, "Om kvinden," 219.

ing to Monod was created first and to an independent life in God, who was excused for his lack of religious dedication, whereas the woman, who was only created secondarily in order to exist for man, was condemned if she did not live a moral and religious life. This was a distortion of the original order and of the relationship between God and humankind and between man and woman. With an allusion to 2 Cor 3:6, she found the orthodox reading of the Bible regarding the place of women as too concerned with the letter that kills without heeding the Spirit that gives life. The result was a moral gap, a double standard, between man and woman.

Collett further developed her arguments against Monod in a later essay from 1877.⁴¹ This time she engaged in a reinterpretation of the controversial verses by Paul in Eph 5, where he exhorts man to be the head of the woman, and wives to be subjects to their husbands. According to Collett, Paul was not writing about any man but only the man who was under the gospel. This man would understand that he was under the same divine law as the woman and that the exhortations to fear God applied just as much to him as to her. Too many men ignored this and misused their power over women, depriving them of their rights and oppressing them. In reality, men detached themselves from the common law of gospel while continuing to place religious and moral demands on women that they did not apply to themselves. These demands are onerous and without the redemptive love of Christ. Christ lightened the burden of the law and placed man and woman in an equal relationship to God. Christ was the true liberator of women: "Yes, he, Christ, the just One, was a true liberator of woman. He filled the gap between man and woman and restored a relationship of equals, which is the only true relationship, the one we have to proceed from—or more correctly, to return to."⁴²

Feminist Theological Critique

The subordination of women, which was so crucial for conservative Christians, was based on misinterpretation of the Bible and of the gospel, according to Collett. Christ had liberated woman from the misunderstood and erroneous position that man from time immemorial had placed her in and continued to place her in. If the social and cultural status of women

41. Camilla Collett, "L'Homme-Femme (Af Alexandre Dumas)," in *Fra de stummes leir* (Christiania: Mallings Boghandel, 1877), 199–232.

42. Collett, "L'Homme-Femme," 201–2.

was to be changed, it was therefore necessary for Collett, as for Hansteen, to go to the very source by which men substantiated their superior position and thus prove them wrong. The Bible had to be reinterpreted. Only thus could women achieve the same freedom that men had. Women had to go back to the same sources and argue for emancipation on the very basis by which the normative culture maintained the hierarchical relationship between the genders.

The critique presented by Hansteen and Collett was not directed at the Bible itself but applied to male interpretations of the texts throughout the centuries. They shared the same hermeneutics of suspicion toward the hegemonic conservatism of biblical interpretations. They agreed that the Bible could be used to sustain claims for women's emancipation and a new and equal relationship between man and woman. It was the oppressive use of the Bible that they wanted to refute. Collett found men in general to be misusing the biblical texts in order to maintain their superior position to women. These men might not be very skilled readers of the Bible, she said, and might not be faithful believers in the holy texts, but still they knew "by heart all the regulations sustaining their own power."⁴³

Collett also regretted that there was no help to be had from men in the struggle for women's emancipation. It was therefore important that women experienced an inner emancipation. It was this inner emancipation that was her concern. Woman had to understand her own value and agency and respect her equal status with man. Therefore she had to get rid of all misinterpretations of her situation that placed her in a subordinate position. It was not a structural change of society Collett spoke about, not a political but first and foremost an inner liberation. Her theological and ethical message converged in this: Christ had liberated woman to be what she was from the creation, equal in status to man. Since "no man here in Scandinavia" would seriously make such a statement, the woman's cause was placed in the hands of women.⁴⁴ But the cause, the emancipation of woman, would result in what was best for both man and woman, restoring their relationship as it was meant to be from the creation, a relationship between equals. In order to achieve this, it was also necessary for women such as Collett and Hansteen to turn to the biblical texts and present them

43. Collett, "L'Homme-Femme," 199.

44. Collett, "Om kvinden," 209.

in a different way than the hegemonic interpretations, proving that they could be read in the light of gender equality.

The Bible as a Normative Source of Cultural Life

Fundamental in Hansteen's and Collett's engagement with biblical reinterpretations was the recognition of the Bible as the norm for social, cultural, and political life. If women were to be accepted as equal in worth and status to men, it was necessary to change the foundations that so far had upheld and legitimized the hierarchy between man and woman. For this to happen, new interpretations of the biblical texts were needed. Texts such as Gen 1–2 and Ephesians were not only parts of a theological discourse; they were also vital in political debates. Women's subordination to men was postulated in Parliament as natural and intended from God's creation of human beings. As the superior, man was active and articulate, the one intended for public life, whereas woman was silent, meek, and domestic. It would therefore harm woman's nature if she had the right to vote, or if a married woman had the right to separate private property, or even for young girls and boys to be taught in the same classrooms.⁴⁵ As long as the hegemonic theology presupposed segregation between the public man and the private woman, suffragette demands were denied. It made no sense to give a woman independent rights as long as she was recognized only as secondary and dependent on man. On the contrary, it would destabilize the social order if women were given legal and economic power over their own lives. Theological reinterpretation such as the work by Hansteen and Collett was therefore necessary to change the basis for women in society.

By breaking the silence and constructing themselves as public persons, Hansteen and Collett laid the foundation for the more politically directed work of the suffragette movement in Norway. They destabilized the gender theology of the church and the political establishment. They demonstrated to what extent traditional biblical interpretations contributed to the construction of woman as naturally and eternally subordinate to man. By presenting alternative readings, they opened the way for new understandings of the relationship between man and

45. Lein, *Kirken i felttog*, 136.

woman and also, in the long run, for politics. In the presecular context of Hansteen and Collett, the entrance to the political arena was through a theological critique.

Summary

Through their writings and their lives, Collett and Hansteen made the private sphere political, long before the concept had been invented. However, their theological works have often been ignored. Hansteen surpassed Collett in developing a feminist theology that was modern and included strong elements of power critique. In that way she anticipated a much later theological development. Both of them identified how male dominance was reproduced in culture and politics through theology and the work of male clergy, how women were thus placed in a subordinate and minor position, and how men used their hegemony to ridicule critique. They shared with their opponents the view that man and woman had different capacities and qualities, but they opposed the idea that the differences made them unequal. Instead they insisted that man and woman were created as equals.

Where traditional interpretations prioritized an understanding of Gen 1–2 that emphasized the sequence in creation—Adam was created before Eve—and made sequence into hierarchy, Hansteen insisted that man and woman together constituted humankind, that they were equally created in the image of God. This order of equality from creation had been destroyed by sin, and it was therefore now necessary to put the relationship between man and woman in its rightful place. Hansteen challenged traditional interpretations from the hermeneutical position she had posited with her interpretations of Gen 1–2. According to Hansteen, not even Paul could be used to uphold women's subordination. Instead she found that he clearly stated that he expected women to take equal responsibility with men in the church and to speak and prophesy, as men did. His commandment to women to be silent was understood on assumptions similar to those inspired by the historical-critical method: it was a commandment addressing a situation of chaos and disturbance, not a normal situation.

Collett also positioned herself as an early feminist theologian when arguing that Christ was a true liberator of women. She placed theology in the midst of the cultural discussion on the status of women in family and public life, making the Bible relevant as a source to address the contemporary subjection of women. By reading the biblical texts from the

perspective of the Spirit that gives life and not the letter that kills, she found a key to liberating interpretations. Collett found that the texts themselves provided her with the means to argue for the emancipation of women. Christ became the ideal man, the one who placed woman in her right position by reestablishing man and woman as equals. At the same time, she confirmed the validity of the biblical text as a religious and cultural guide to a right way of life when she reinterpreted Ephesians as emancipatory rather than oppressive for women. Collett argued that Paul did not relate to the modern man who had emancipated himself from faith in biblical texts but to the man of the gospel. This man was bound by God's texts and laws in the same way as woman was and thereby recognized her as his equal. When Paul therefore spoke of man as the head of the woman, he addressed a man who understood his position before God to be the same as that of a woman.

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She Had the Courage to Break the Silence: Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir—A Leader of the Suffrage Movement in Iceland

Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir

Introduction

Eight years prior to the publication of the first volume of *The Woman's Bible* in 1895, the first public lecture given by a woman on an island in the middle of the Atlantic was presented to a packed audience.¹ The topic was the lack of women's rights and education.² At that time, Iceland belonged to the Danish kingdom and was inhabited by an impoverished population of approximately seventy thousand people. The speaker, a thirty-one-year-old woman named Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, would become an important leader of the Icelandic suffrage movement and an avid spokesperson for women's rights.³

Like her sisters on both sides of the Atlantic, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir recognized that the Bible had played an important role in preventing women from gaining full equality with men. In her public lecture of 1887, she called particular attention to the history of the interpretation of the story of woman's creation in Gen 2, to misogynist Old Testament laws and narratives, and to some of the teachings of the apostle Paul about women's

1. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ed., *The Woman's Bible*, vol. 1 (New York: European Publishing, 1895).

2. Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna" [A lecture on the status of women and their rights], in *Kúgun kvenna* [The subjection of women], by John Stuart Mill (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1997), 331–67.

3. Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, "Bjarnhjedinsdottir, Briet (1856–1940)," in *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide*, ed. Marion Ann Taylor and Agnes Choi (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 76–78.

submission to men. She noted how the account of the creation of the woman out of the man's rib had been used to argue for women's subordination. The traditional argument claimed that because God created woman from man's rib, God intended for woman to be subordinate to man. She concluded that those who blamed subordination on God had simply used the Bible to, in Bjarnhéðinsdóttir's own words, "trash human goodness and sense of justice."⁴

Biography

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was born in 1856 to a poor family in the northern part of Iceland. She was the oldest of four children. Her parents were farmers, and Bjarnhéðinsdóttir and her sister and brothers were required from an early age to help with the daily chores. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir's mother became sick and unable to attend to her family when Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was a teenager, and being the oldest daughter, she had to take over her mother's duties. Later on, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir reflected on the different expectations for girls and boys she observed as a child in her home. Generally, girls were expected to work longer hours, as it was their duty to help with the housework after the work outside was done. Thus, girls had to work more and had less spare time and fewer educational opportunities. While both girls and boys learned to read at home, boys were more often taught to write and do mathematics, even when the girls were more eager to master those skills.

At the age of twenty-four, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir had a chance to attend one of the newly established women's schools. She was able to attend only the second year of a two-year program, but she nevertheless graduated at the top of her class. Though her formal education was limited, she was able to support herself as a young adult by teaching children to read and write in their homes. Her experience of being paid only half of the amount that men were paid for the same job made her acutely aware of the need to publicly address the issue of gender inequality. Later in life, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was able to take private lessons in English and Danish, which allowed her to become involved in international women's movements later on. In 1888, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir married Valdimar Ásmundsson (1852–1902), the editor of one of the largest journals in Iceland at that time. When he died

4. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 334.

at the age of fifty, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir became a single mother of two young children and the family's sole breadwinner.

Like most Icelanders, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir and her family belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church and followed the custom of rural Icelanders of reading pietistic literature in the evenings. A part of the program in the women's school was to participate in daily prayer meetings with devotional readings and prayers. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir's knowledge of the Christian faith and the Bible was undoubtedly based on those readings as well as the catechism (most likely Luther's *Small Catechism*) she had to memorize in preparation for her confirmation.⁵

A Writer, Social Critic, and Activist

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was not only the first woman to give a public lecture in Iceland but also the first one to have an article published in an Icelandic journal. Her article was published in the summer of 1885 in a newspaper edited by a women's rights supporter.⁶ The editor was Ásmundsson, who later became her husband and coworker after Bjarnhéðinsdóttir established her own newspaper dedicated to women's affairs.

In her article, written under a pseudonym, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir emerges as a strong voice and a robust social critic. She was the first Icelandic woman to publicly criticize the attitude toward women and their social situation, especially their lack of education. She concludes that lack of education is the main reason for women's oppression, as it prevents women from being able to fulfill the same responsibilities and enjoy the same rights as men. She believes women and men were created equal, though "the story of the rib" has from early on been successfully used to support the patriarchal structure of the society and secure the privileges of men.⁷ In her public lecture, delivered two and a half years later, on 30 December 1887, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir picked up where she left off in her article by focusing on the sources of women's oppression, past and present.

5. Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, "Briet og Biblían. Um bibliutúlkun í upphafi íslenskrar kvennabaráttu," in *Kvennabaráttu og kristin trú. Greinasafn*, ed. Guðmundsdóttir and Kristín Ástgeirsdóttir (Reykjavík: JPV, 2009), 175–78.

6. Auður Styrkársdóttir, "Forspjall," in Mill, *Kúgun kvenna*, 50.

7. Sigríður Dúna Kristmundsdóttir, "Doing and Becoming: Women's Movement and Women's Personhood in Iceland 1870–1990," in *Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 1997), 63–79.

As a writer, public speaker, and political advocate, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir promoted women's rights and education. Her lecture was published in a monograph only few months after it was delivered and became an important force behind the women's movement in Iceland toward the end of the nineteenth century. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir founded the *Women's Magazine* in 1895 and was its editor and main contributor until 1919. After attending a congress of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Copenhagen in 1906, she initiated the foundation of the Icelandic Women's Rights Association in 1907 and chaired the association for twenty years. In 1907, Icelandic women were granted universal municipal suffrage and eligibility. Together with three other women, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir became a member of the city council of Reykjavik, elected from a nonpartisan women's list supported by all the women's organizations of Reykjavik at that time. She continued her work in politics as a member of the council from 1908 to 1911, and again from 1913 to 1919.⁸

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir and the Bible

It is hard to imagine the courage it took at that time to invite the general public to the main auditorium in Reykjavik to listen to the first woman to give a public lecture in Iceland. As far as we know, it was Bjarnhéðinsdóttir herself who decided to do this, even if her friends among prominent people in the community might have encouraged her. The audience had to pay an admission fee, which did not prevent people from attending. The auditorium was packed.

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir began her lecture by humbly admitting that she was not the most qualified woman when it comes to public speaking. She nevertheless maintained that since the "more educated" women had not taken the initiative to address the situation of Icelandic women, she had decided to "break the silence," hoping that more qualified women would follow suit.⁹ She articulated that her task was to make the public aware of the seriousness of women's lack of opportunity to make proper use of their talents and potential. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir revealed the sources of women's oppression, starting with the stories from the past—the first being the Bible itself.

8. Auður Styrkarsdóttir, *From Feminism to Class Politics: The Rise and Decline of Women's Politics in Reykjavik, 1908–1922* (Umea: Umea University, Department of Political Science, 1998), 109–49.

9. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 331.

When we look back, we have only the stories to rely on, first of all the Bible-story, most of us are familiar with. The story about the creation of Adam and Eve has for a long time been seen by many as a definite guarantee for God's intention from the beginning to have women take the second seat to men in the society. Otherwise, God would not have spent so little on her, to create her from just one rib from the man's body, because God would hardly have been lacking material or ways to create her differently. Hence, they assume, this proves the fact that God never intended the woman to be anything more, in comparison to the man, than the rib she was made of, comparing to the whole body.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Bjarnhéðinsdóttir did not mention the first creation story and did not seem to realize that there were in fact two creation stories, and only one mentioned the rib. She drew attention to other texts from the Old Testament that reflect women's secondary status to men. She considered the rules regarding women's cultic purity in Lev 12, where women are considered unclean for seven days after giving birth to a male child but twice as long, for fourteen days, after giving birth to a female child. The lack of women's rights to inheritance was another example of the injustice women experienced in the ancient Hebrew world. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir cited the story about the daughters of Zelophehad in Num 27, who were initially denied their inheritance because of their gender.

It is obvious that women did not have the same rights to inherit as men did among Jews, before the days of Moses. Only after the daughters of Zelophehad had complained about being deprived of their inheritance, did Moses command that daughters had their rights to inherit, when there were no sons. But then they had to marry somebody inside their own clan, to make sure the properties would not go to anybody outside it.

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir examined other texts from the Old Testament in which women are mistreated because of their gender: "There are many examples from the book of Judges which disclose that fathers and husbands had unlimited authority over their daughters, wives, and mistresses, and could abuse and even kill them without any repercussions. They were their properties and they could decide themselves if they treated them well or badly."¹¹

10. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 333.

11. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 334.

When she studied the Pauline corpus, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir maintained that it was a logical continuation of the Old Testament. She suggested that Paul wanted to be faithful to the creation story by ordering women to be submissive, forbearing, and obedient to their husbands. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir highlighted Paul's instructions for women in 1 Cor 11:2–16, where he tells them to cover their heads in church and public gatherings while instructing men to be bareheaded because they are the glory of God, as man is not from a woman but woman from a man. The same conclusion held for Paul's advice in 1 Cor 14:33–36 for women to remain silent in meetings and instead ask their husbands at home, as it is not appropriate for women to speak in public. There was no doubt in Bjarnhéðinsdóttir's mind concerning the serious consequences of Paul's message to women. She said: "This teaching of the apostle Paul has to some extent been the cause of the cruelty and oppression women have had to suffer after Christianity was introduced, on behalf of their fathers, husbands, and other men who have ruled over them."¹²

Still, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was not sure Paul was rightly to blame, because those who had used his words as an excuse for abusing their power had inadequately interpreted Paul's words. She claimed interpreters had used the instructions to husbands and wives in Eph 5:22–33 to justify male headship rather than focus on the significance of the comparison Paul draws between the relationship of husband and wife and between Christ and the church. It was her suspicion that they either simply forgot about this comparison or that they found it an inconvenient hindrance to their dominance. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir found support for her suspicion in the Middle Ages, when daughters were frequently deprived of their freedom and human rights and given away against their will either into marriage or to a convent. When women resisted, the men who claimed ownership of them defended their act by citing the word of God.

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir concluded that Christianity weakened women's rights in the Nordic countries compared to what they previously had enjoyed. She cited the old sagas in order to prove her point.¹³ After Christianity became the dominant religion, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir argued, women's situation worsened, as men realized how convenient it was to use Scripture to justify their oppression of women.

12. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 335.

13. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 338.

When they [i.e., men] got to know the Bible and how the texts were interpreted, then their eyes were opened, and they saw how incredibly conducive these explanations were. Wasn't it right and fitting that the living daughters of Eve would suffer because of the disobedience and curiosity of their foremother, which had caused men so much labor, and to shed so much sweat. And wasn't it appropriate that men, true sons of Adam, would blame all evil on women: sin, afflictions, and death.¹⁴

For this reason, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir maintained, men had assumed that they should use their power over women, given to them by God, to vent their anger and impress on them who was in charge. Yet, she thought it was only fair to say that Christianity was the *indirect* cause of women's oppression, because it had been generated by men's misinterpretation and implementation of Christianity rather than Christianity itself. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir maintained that prior to the invasion of Christianity, the Nordic countries had no law or regulations to reinforce men's superiority. This changed after Christianity became the main religion and women's secondary status was secured through legal codes and religious customs. Even if violent behavior and abuse was contradictory to the foundation of the Christian message and therefore banned by law after Christianity took over, psychological oppression and humiliation had become part of everyday reality for women for centuries. This was based on the fact that cruel and controlling men were able to cite texts from the Bible or the church fathers in order to excuse or even justify what was obviously ruthless and simply wrong.

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was aware that to some this might have sounded like a strange description of the Middle Ages, as it was commonly assumed that Christianity improved the situation of women in every possible way. She claimed that something similar could be said about the cruel reality of slavery. Here too hardhearted people justified their right to abuse and beat innocent people by quoting the apostle Paul's instruction to slaves to obey their earthly masters (Eph 6:5). She asked:

Is it possible that it was Paul's intention, or in accordance with the spirit of the Christian faith, that such a large part of humanity, namely all black persons, were created to be deprived of all human rights? Or were they meant to suffer the harshest and the most merciless treatment, which immoral tyrants could come up with, in order to unleash their anger?

14. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 338–39.

By doing this, they were taking advantage of the fact that slaves or black persons neither had anywhere to go, nor were protected from their masters by the law.¹⁵

Bjarnhéðinsdóttir's answer was clear. She did not believe this was the intention of the apostles but was convinced they needed to adjust their teaching to the customs and practices of those to whom they were preaching in order to guarantee a successful mission. If they had insisted on the transformation of social structures and practices as part of their mission, such as the end of slavery and the equal status of women and men, their mission to spread the gospel would likely have failed.¹⁶

In her striving for gender equality, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir addressed not only problematic biblical texts but also the history of their interpretation. Her approach was similar to the approach used in *The Woman's Bible*, which was first published in 1895, eight years after Bjarnhéðinsdóttir delivered her lecture on women's freedom and education in 1887. However, it is important to recognize that Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was indeed familiar with the writings on gender equality and the oppression of women on both sides of the Atlantic. In her lecture Bjarnhéðinsdóttir cited another public lecture, also on women's freedom and education, that was delivered in Reykjavik in 1885 and published the same year. It was given by a young lawyer named Páll Briem who had been educated in Copenhagen. Páll was familiar with the *History of Woman Suffrage* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Mathilda Gage, and also John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.¹⁷ Although Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was most likely indebted to the scholarship of other interpreters of the Bible, her own experience of inequities in education and employment was undoubtedly the driving force behind her lifelong effort to promote gender equality. Hence, Bjarnhéðinsdóttir rightfully belongs among the women pioneers who contributed to a critical interpretation of biblical writings worldwide, toward the end of the nineteenth century. Their ground-breaking work

15. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 341.

16. Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 341–42.

17. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda J. Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols. (1881–1922); John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1869), cited in Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, "Fyrirlestur um hagi og réttindi kvenna," 344.

was imperative for the vital feminist scholarship that materialized in the second part of the twentieth century.

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Secret Societies, Modernism, and Women's Movements in Italy (1789–1920): The Bible as Basis for Social Change

Adriana Valerio

1. The Fragmented Catholic Church

The historical period from the French Revolution to fascism in Italy (1789–1919) was marked by deep social and religious tears. Three independence wars (1848–1870)¹ resulted in the unification of Italy, with the capture of Rome and the fall of the papal state (1870). This entailed a head-on clash between the aspirations of the Italian elite, aiming at a sovereign state, and the Catholic Church hierarchy, which viewed revolutions and modernity as a threat to their organization.

The encyclical *Quanta Cura* (1864) and the annex *Syllabus of Errors* represent the refusal of the Catholic Church to change in the context of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which promoted freedom of thought, people's autonomy, and independence.

Furthermore, with the capture of Rome, Pius IX declared himself a prisoner and prevented Christian Catholics from taking part in the Italian political life (*Non expedit*)² as a sign of protest for the lack of independence of the Holy See. This increased the distance from society even further.

Finally, the First Vatican Council, with its two constitutions, *Dei Filius* (Dogmatic constitution of faith) and *Pastor Aeternus* (Dogmatic constitution of the church, which covers the primacy and infallibility of the pope

This chapter was translated from Italian by Annapaola Letizia and Daunia Pavone.

1. The First World War (1915–1918) is considered the fourth independence war, completing the process of Italy's unification with the annexation of Trieste and Trento. See Gilles Pecout, *Il lungo Risorgimento: La nascita dell'Italia contemporanea (1770–1922)* (Milan: Mondadori, 2011).

2. The regulation was revoked in 1919.

when he solemnly defines a dogma), opened a wider breach within the Catholic community. Many, in fact, viewed the ideals of Risorgimento as an opportunity for cultural and religious renaissance.³

Indicative of retrenchment, Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X opposed any significant change on the status of women. Revolutionary movements were viewed as an outcome of Protestantism, and popes saw them as cause of destruction of traditional values and social, moral, and religious order. Therefore, they considered it necessary to safeguard the family as a traditional, patriarchal, and hierarchical institution to the advantage of maintaining the political and social status quo. Women were to fulfill their mission exclusively within the domestic sphere: to take care of and lead the family by example. The traditional interpretation of some biblical passages supported these stances, drawn from Gen 1–2 and from some letters by St. Paul (Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy).

An article published by the Jesuit magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* in 1852, under the papacy of Pius IX, faithfully follows the Holy See's directive when it describes the Catholic woman's role according to clear biblical reference:⁴ the woman was created "similar" to the man, as comfort and help to him (Gen 1–2). The woman submits to the man, as she was made from him (1 Cor 11:9). She must obey him, like Sarah obeyed Abraham by calling him "her lord" (1 Pet 3:6). Women's sphere of activity is the family (Eph 5).

Other articles published in 1854 further clarify the different nature of males and females and justify women's exclusion from any active participation in social and religious life.⁵ Only men are entitled to "the name of citizen and the use of citizenship."⁶

Studying the liberal arts and science was also prohibited for women, because, it was argued, knowledge and education were not for everyone. They were dangerous for women, as well as inappropriate, as they went against women's modesty.

3. Risorgimento was a political and social movement that resulted in the unification of Italy.

4. "La donna nel Cristianesimo," *CivCatt* 10 (1852): 381–97. The article is not signed.

5. "Dell'educazione dell'uomo e della donna," *CivCatt* 6 (1854): 491–505, 977–91, 1237–52, 1369–88.

6. "To man only the name of Citizen and Usage of Citizenship belongs, by universal delivery of Providence" ("Dell'educazione dell'uomo e della donna," 502).

Leo XIII discussed women's role in several circumstances. He asserted the view of a hierarchical society in which inequality, established by God, was to be accepted in order to avoid going against laws of nature. In the encyclical letters *Quod apostolici Muneris* (1878, n. 7), *Arcanum* (1880, n. 7), *Diuturnum* (1881, n. 6), and *Rerum Novarum* (1891, n. 6), the pope refers to traditional excerpts from Eph 5–6 and 1 Corinthians to confirm the sacred character of authority and the consequent subjection of women. Leo XIII sees egalitarian theories as “monstrosities,” as they do not take into account that “inequalities among men on earth are necessary and inevitable.”⁷

While approving the creation of a women's Catholic movement, Leo XIII wants it to be limited to the sphere of charitable work, as means to “improving the maternal instinct.” He excludes the possibility of this movement working on the social and political emancipation of women.

The role of women and their mission did not change under Pius X. Although the pope supported the foundation of the first women's association, the Union of Catholic Women (1909), he did so with the purpose of ensuring that women remained within the domestic sphere and countering the ongoing laicization process. Moreover, Pius X's theological orientation condemning modernism led to dark times. There followed a fifty-year-long shadow on the life of the church that hampered any intellectual and spiritual investment in studies and debate. This was particularly hard on biblical research. It severely affected the issues raised by women's movements that advocated for a different interpretation of sacred texts, namely, an interpretation that could support a new woman identity that was taking shape in the society and in the church.

2. Biblical Interpretation and the Role of Women

In the nineteenth century, Italy was using Abbot Antonio Martini's translation of the Bible, the official translation for the Italian Catholic Church for over two centuries, which was reprinted more than forty times.⁸

7. Quoted in Adriana Valerio, “Pazienza, vigilanza, ritiratezza: La questione femminile nei documenti ufficiali della Chiesa (1848–1914),” *ND* 16 (1981): 68 n. 26.

8. 1720–1809. Antonio Martini, *Old Testament according to the Volgata and Annotations, illustrated by the High reverend Antonio Martini, Archbishop of Florence*, 26 vols. (Venice: Giuseppe Rossi qu. Bortolo, 1781–1786); Martini, *The Old Testament, translated in vulgar language and with annotations illustrated by the High rev-*

Upon Benedict XIV's request, in 1757, Abbot Martini started translating the Bible based on the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate. He completed it in 1771 under the papacy of Pius VI. Six volumes of the New Testament were published (1769–1771) and, later, seventeen volumes of the Old Testament (1776–1781). Rabbi Daniel Terni assisted the abbot with the translation from Hebrew.

Martini decided to include the Vulgate on the left column of the text, next to the Italian translation, which was on the right. He introduced brief and clear footnotes to comment on the difficult and obscure concepts. These comments reasserted preconceived gender notions promoted by Catholic exegesis, highlighting female weakness and its inferior nature compared to men where the biblical text provided the opportunity.

The relationship between Bible and science was raised at the time of Galileo. It resurfaced in Italy during the eighteenth century at the time when the historical-critical method was applied to the sacred text in the German and French academies. Italian Catholic scholars, however, rejected a method that seemed to dismantle the pillars of revelation.⁹ The debate reignited around the issue of inspiration for the Bible and the infallibility of the Scriptures. Its basic question asked, Is the sacred text the word of God in all its statements, or does the interpreter need to distinguish between the message of faith and the historical context?

The dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* of the first Vatican Council (1870) had already defined, in line with the Tridentine doctrine, that the Scriptures were inspired by God: the Bible was written under the action of the Holy Spirit, and God was its author. Leo XIII supported this view and reasserted it in the *Providentissimus Deus* (1893): the Bible has no mistakes in all its statements. With these claims, the church teachings crushed any possibility of free research studies.

Cut off from the French debates and due to a strong presence of church censorship, the delay in biblical studies in Italy became even more evident under Pius X. His papacy halted any opening in the studies of scholars of the modernist movement. There were several condemnations of initiatives for the development of biblical studies during his papacy.

erend Antonio Martini, *Archbishop of Florence*, 10 vols., illustrated by High Reverend Antonio Martini, Archbishop of Florence (Venice: Giuseppe Rossi qu. Bartolo, 1786).

9. Rinaldo Fabris, "Lo sviluppo e l'applicazione del metodo storico-critico nell'esegesi biblica (secoli XVII–XIX)," in *La Bibbia nell'epoca moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Fabris (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1992), 135.

The decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* (2 July and 8 September 1907), as well as several interventions of the Biblical Commission (from 1906–1907), to safeguard the inerrancy of the Scriptures excluded any discussion on the sensitive relationship between the word of God and the human word in the Bible. Such condemnations deeply affected women's movements, as they drew inspiration and principles from a different understanding of the sacred texts.

In the nineteenth century, then, Italian Catholic women were active in opposing factions. We find them participating in secret societies, involved in political movements aimed at the unification of Italy, leading the establishment of the first women's movements, and agents of change in the years of modernism.

In all these contexts, the Bible became more relevant and took on new meaning. It was used as a bastion to counteract laicism and modern views regarding secret societies and religious associations, or it was studied to found an ecumenical faith (Dora Melegari) and a liturgical and ecclesial reformation (Antonietta Giacomelli), or promoted as a source of inspiration to assert women's rights (Elisa Salerno).

Given the extent and complexity of a topic still not widely studied, I present examples of women who started the difficult process of redefining of the identity of the "new woman." They did so through a new approach to the sacred text and with an increasing awareness that culminated in the affirmation of citizenship rights, to use a twentieth-century term.

3. Women in the Amicizia Cristiana Secret Society: Leopoldina Naudet and the Apostolate of the Book

3.1. The Amicizia Cristiana

The Amicizia Cristiana was a secret society founded by Nikolaus von Diessbach (1732–1798) in Turin in 1780. It aimed at shaping the intellectual Catholic elite through the wide circulation of texts to fight against false doctrines.¹⁰

Von Diessbach was born in Bern in 1732 in a Calvinist family and converted to the Catholic faith in 1755. After a short marriage, lasting

10. Candido Bona, *La testimonianza delle "amicizie Cristiane"* (Rome: Lanteriana, 1980).

just three years and ending with his wife's death in childbirth, he decided to become a Jesuit in 1759. He received the sacred order in Fribourg in 1764 but was unable to complete the profession of the four vows due to the suppression of the Society of Jesus. He then had the idea of founding an association that could unite Christian Catholics in one common battle against what he considered a lack of faith during his times. The press appeared to von Diessbach as the most effective means to launch a counteroffensive to the opposing propaganda, which was spreading what he considered to be false ideas linked to the philosophy of the Enlightenment through books. He proposed a union of all the friends of the Catholic faith to defend the real faith through the circulation of orthodox books.¹¹ The role of women was fundamental for this mission: "Not only are women not excluded from the Amicizia Cristiana, but it is very useful for so many reasons that they are part of it."¹²

On the basis of this statement, included in the statutes of the group, titled *Les Loix de l'Amitié Chrétienne*, it is clear that women were important in the organization, according to von Diessbach, and that they had a significant role. The society was composed of members of the elite and consisted of groups (cells), and each cell consisted of twelve Friends: six men (priests and lay) and six women. Women could not access executive roles, such as first and second librarian, promoter, missionary, and secretary. However, roles such as instructor, who trained the female candidates to the membership, were reserved for women. Women were separated in community practices, but they had the right to vote. They cooperated as consultants and assistants. Women could undertake their apostolate and seek among their own acquaintances one or two male or female researchers. These researchers enhanced the circulation of those books, considered appropriate, outside the society. Everyone, members and associates, men and women without difference, were to be people of learning, moved by true zeal.

The Amicizia was founded on a close network of relationships in which women's role was particularly important. In the apostolate of the

11. Nikolaus Joseph Albert von Diessbach, *Le Chrétien catholique inviolablement attaché à la religion par la considération de quelques unes des preuves qui en établissent la certitude* (Turin: Fontana, 1771).

12. See *Les Loix de l'Amitié Chrétienne*, in Carlo Bona, *Le "Amicizie": Società segrete e rinascita religiosa (1770–1830)* (Turin: Deputazione Subalpina di Storia Patria, 1962), appendix, 476–88.

book, the sacred text had particular significance. In 1817, a biblical society was created in Turin to counter the Protestant one. It was to be a public branch of the Amicizia with the participation of laypeople only.¹³

The focus on sacred Scriptures was already present among the Amicizia circle. We know from her speech in Turin, in a meeting held on 29 January 1811, that Marquise Massimino proposed to print the book of Tobit as a model for newlyweds.¹⁴ They felt the need, in fact, to disseminate the sacred texts to a wider audience of Catholics. Such interest around the circulation and knowledge of the Bible is significant, even if that knowledge was intended to function in the defense of Catholic doctrine.

3.2. Leopoldina Naudet

Leopoldina Naudet (1773–1834) is particularly notable among the women involved in the Amicizia Cristiana. She was born in 1773 from a French father (Giuseppe) and a German-Slovak mother (Susanna d'Arnth). Because Naudet participated in three different linguistic and cultural arenas, she gained an unusual Europe-wide education.¹⁵ In 1789 she was in Florence as teacher of Grand-Duke Leopold's children. She was in Vienna in 1790 with Maria Luisa, wife of the then-emperor Leopold. She was in Bohemia in 1792 in the direct service of Archduchess Mary Ann, abbess of the canonesses of Prague.

13. Bona, *Le "Amicizie,"* 315 n. 66. This society was first called the Ecclesiastic-Biblical Society. Afterward it became Catholic Friendship.

14. Cited in Archivio Postulationis, OMV, II.225 a.b. The collection of letters by Bruno Lanteri is rich with information on the presence of women in the network of Friendship. See Pio Brunone Lanteri and Paolo Calliari, *Carteggio del Venerabile Padre Pio Bruno Lanteri (1759–1830)* [Collection of letters of the venerable Pius Father Bruno Lanteri], vols. 1–5 (Turin: Lanteriana, 1975–1976).

15. Rino Cona, *Leopoldina Naudet (1773–1834)*, 2 vols. (Verona: Gabrielli 2017); Adriana Valerio, "Da donna a donne: La serva di Dio Leopoldina Naudet e l'educazione femminile agli inizi dell'Ottocento," in *Santi, culti, simboli nell'età della secolarizzazione (1815–1915)*, ed. Emma Fattorini (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1997), 515–28; Cristina Simonelli, *Leopoldina Naudet: Sette stanze e un'ouverture* (Verona: Gabrielli, 2009). The documentation is valuable: *Beatificationis et canonizationis servae Dei Leopoldinae Naudet, Veronae (1773–1834), Positio super virtutibus*, 2 vols. (Rome: Congregatio de causis sanctorum, 1994). Further, knowledge of her writings is fundamental. See Leopoldina Naudet, *Le conferenze spirituali*, ed. Adriana Valerio (Verona: Gabrielli, 2014); Naudet, *L'epistolario*, ed. Adriana Valerio, 4 vols. (Verona: Gabrielli, 2016–2018).

Von Diessbach's acquaintance with Naudet began in Vienna in 1790 when he was confessor at court and became her spiritual director. In 1790, while in Vienna, von Diessbach pleaded with Emperor Leopold II to support the "healthy" Catholic press to counteract "irreligious" essays. He intended to do so through a large number of translations, publishing and distributing books of clear Catholic and antirevolutionary mold.¹⁶ In 1798, he repeated this idea to Archduchess Mary Ann in Prague. She never warmed up to the project, while Naudet supported it.

Many factors lead us to believe that Naudet gravitated toward the *Amicizia*.¹⁷ In 1808 she moved to Verona and established a religious community (the Sisters of the Holy Family). There she exchanged books with the important personalities of the city, but, more interestingly, her library included over fifty biblical texts. Naudet left a library with more than seventeen hundred texts. Many texts were for private use and have manuscript annotations: among these texts a particular place is reserved for the sacred texts.

Her own private library included the translation of the Bible in thirty-seven volumes by Antonio Martini; paraphrases and stories from the Bible commented on by Agostino Calmet, Jean Baptiste Duchesne, Pellegrino Farini, and Antonio Cesari; some narrations of Jesus's life based on consistencies among the four gospels by Jean Compans, Arnaldo Duquesne, Carlo Massini, and Federico from Stolberg; paraenetical narrations of the Scriptures that were fashionable at the time by Andrea Micheli, Nicolas Fontaine, and Domenico Rossetti; and finally liturgical comments by Alessandro Calamato and Nicola de Tourneux.

The presence of the works of Dominican priest Remigio Fiorentino (1521–1581), converted Jew Paolo Medici (1671–1738), and Jesuit Ferdinando Zucconi (1647–1732) highlights her attention to the dissemination of didactical and apologetic aspects of the Scriptures.

The inclusion of the popular work *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* (Anversa, 1593), written by Jesuit Jerome Nadal, is of value. The text is based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. It is enriched by accurate and precious xylographies of the gospels used as a pedagogical tool. His innovative work included footnotes to provide a meticulous and

16. Bona, *Le "Amicizie"*; Giovanni Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e Illuminismo nell'Europa del Settecento* (Venice: Marsilio, 1994).

17. Adriana Valerio, "Leopoldina Naudet, *l'Amicizia Cristiana e la Bibbia*: l'influenza dei gesuiti nell'apostolato del libro," *AHSI* 167 (2015): 79–109.

detailed explanation of each scriptural detail reproduced in the images.¹⁸ Its presence in the Naudet library is an additional testimony to her focus on the sacred text and its understanding, in line with the counterreformation pedagogy.

The books kept in Naudet's library do not reveal, unsurprisingly, an interest in the exegetic analysis that was starting at the time of the Enlightenment. The focus was rather on practical study, addressed to the spiritual education of the Christian. It advocated evangelizing women and above all initiating them in a profound educational endeavor. The goal was to create a strong cultural and social community to give women the opportunity to meet, debate, reflect, and grow from a human and spiritual point of view in the postrevolutionary society.

The cultural novelty brought by Naudet was her awareness of ignorance as a possible source of corruption for women and that studying was for women a key instrument of human and spiritual growth. For this reason, she was committed to education of all female youth. Her curriculum plan had a clear Jesuit influence and included studying the Bible, even if it was linked to learning the catechism and was made functional to church doctrine. Naudet deeply understood the value of books and culture as pillars of revitalizing the Catholic community. She realized, with similar conviction, the need for a clear understanding of the sacred text through the dissemination of educational works. Such works also illustrate how, lacking a direct relationship with the Bible, Catholics in Italy could access a variety of publications that offered, through paraphrases, comments, and annotations, considerable opportunities for understanding and approaching the sacred text. Ignorance of the sacred Scriptures was no longer tolerable. Knowledge was a requirement, even though that knowledge was filtered through doctrine and liturgy.

18. The doctrinal structure appears even clearer in Jerome Nadal's other work, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Euangelia* (Anversa: Martin Nuyts, 1595). The starting point is an image representing the gospel text excerpt; the exposition is accompanied by annotations drawn from the church fathers' comments to facilitate the *meditatio*. Each table is thus accompanied by a comment aimed at assisting meditation and preaching. This text, which may have belonged to Leopoldina, can be now found in the library of Stigmatini of Verna. It is likely part of the texts that Naudet used to exchange, in this case with Father Gaspare Bertoni. For Nadal, see Genoveffa Palumbo, *Le porte della storia: L'età moderna attraverso antiporte e frontespizi figurati* (Rome: Viella, 2012), 49–62.

4. Antionetta Giacomelli and Modernism

The presence of women in the wide and complex movement called modernism has not been well studied. However, proof of the active and deep faith of some women emerges from the limited research in the archives. These women provided new elements for cultural growth, triggering significant breaks with the past. Cultural circles and salons led and attended by women and promoting a strong religious idealism supported reform and new ideas. One example is the women linked to Ernesto Buonaiuti and to his *koinonia*, a community gathered around the reading of the gospel. Within the context of modernism we can situate the experience of Antionetta Giacomelli.

4.1. The Liturgical Reform

Giacomelli was born in Treviso on 15 August 1857. Her parents were Angelo, a patriot of the struggle for the unification of Italy, and Maria Rosmini, the niece of philosopher Antonio Rosmini. She moved with her family to Rome in 1893, where she met Swiss-Italian Protestant writer Dora Melegari (1849–1924).¹⁹ They jointly founded the *Unione per il bene* (Union for good), an association open to women and men with the purpose of promoting cultural and philanthropic meetings. Through meditation on the gospel and charity work, the members, both clergy and laypeople, could kindle an active faith shared with other religious denominations.²⁰ The association was interdenominational, open to dialogue and the exchange of ideas. It was based on the need for a religious awakening

19. Dora Melegari was enthusiastic about the idea of the new woman. She was open to dialogue and expressed a tolerant and ecumenical spirituality. Melegari's novel *Ames dormantes* (Paris, 1900) professes a Catholic faith without renouncing the primacy of conscience and "free examination" of Protestant derivation, as well as a simple and sincere faith à la Tolstoy. See Roberta Fossati, "Dal salotto al cenacolo: intellettualità femminile e modernismo," in *Salotti e ruolo femminile in Italia tra fine Seicento e primo Novecento*, ed. Maria Luisa Betri and Elena Brambilla (Venice: Marsilio, 2004), 455–73.

20. Roberta Fossati, "Tra Marta e Maria: riformismo religioso e donne nuove nell'Italia tra Otto e Novecento," in *Donne sante, sante donne: Esperienza religiosa e storia di genere*, ed. Società italiana delle storiche (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1996), 285–308; Fossati, *Élites femminili e nuovi modelli religiosi nell'Italia tra Otto e Novecento* (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1997).

centered on the gospel, promoting a practical faith shared by everyone as it worked for “good.”²¹

The circles of the union spread in different Italian cities such as Rome, Turin, Milan, and Venice. These groups had a strong ethical-philanthropic commitment as well as pursuing an awakening of the faith in a society in transformation. This society required the redefinition of the role of the new woman, no longer characterized by passivity and ignorance but as a proponent of a conscious religiosity. The union was criticized by several church representatives due to its strong ecumenical inspiration. This was a particularly dramatic period for Catholicism, as modernism was seen by the hierarchy as a threat to faith and institutions. Giacomelli continued with her work notwithstanding the criticism, even after 1902. In that year she moved back to Treviso and opened her salon to so-called enlightened intellectuals such as Antonio Fogazzaro, Giovanni Semeria, Tommaso Gallarati-Scotti, Paul Sabatier, and Romolo Murri and to bishops such as Geremia Bonomelli and Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.

In this context, between 1904 and 1907, Giacomelli developed a project aimed at supporting a liturgical awakening by writing the essay “La Messa” (The Mass, 1904), and her work *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, a trilogy of meditations, comprising “Letture e preghiere cristiane” (Christian readings and prayers, 1904), “Rituale del cristiano” (The ritual of the Christian, 1905), and “L’anno cristiano” (The Christian year, 1907).²² It aimed at increasing the active participation of believers in the liturgy of the Mass, advocating for its celebration in Italian language, obtaining a wider involvement of laypeople in the life of the church, and promoting ecumenism as a moment of universal salvation.

It is important historically that Giacomelli, a woman, proposed a reform centered on the conscious participation of each believer in the liturgical life, even before the liturgical movement. She included the meaning of the biblical texts in the daily liturgy to facilitate believers’ understanding and to help comprehend the symbolic meaning of ritual gestures.

21. Cettina Militello, “Figure femminili del modernismo: Un tentativo di rilettura teologica,” *RT* 2 (2005): 321–59.

22. Antonietta Giacomelli, *La Messa: Istruzioni, rito liturgico e preghiera* (Rome: Pia Società San Girolamo per la diffusione dei Santi Evangelii), 1904; Giacomelli, *Adveniat regnum tuum*, 3 vols. (Rome: Pia Società San Girolamo per la diffusione dei Santi Evangelii, 1904–1907).

Giacomelli's position became more and more problematic after the promulgation of Pius X's *Pascendi* (7 September 1907). In addition, considering them to be closely linked to contemporary religious convictions, Giacomelli actively participated in social and political movements that dealt with the most sensitive issues around the condition of women. Such movements raised many concerns in the church hierarchy.²³ In April 1908 she was at the first Women's Congress in Rome. The following year, in Milan, she held a conference titled "Women in the Family" during the national meeting organized by the Women's Union.

The work *Adveniat Regnum Tuum* was examined by the tribunal of the Congregation of the Index on 13 August 1911. On 22 January 1912, the tribunal declared that the volumes were not in line with the Christian doctrine and condemned them. Pius X approved the decree two days later.²⁴ Giacomelli was reproached as a *femina quaedam* who, according to the accusation, with her "little books" (*libercula*) had sought "a reform of the allegedly outdated and superstitious worship according to the model of the ancient liturgy."²⁵ The congregation, moreover, judged as "modernist" the reformation that Giacomelli wanted to implement, including "forced translations and interpretations of scriptural texts."²⁶

Despite the severe condemnation, Giacomelli did not submit to the decision of the Holy Office and even considered a separation from the Catholic Church to found an "Evangelic Apostolic Catholic Church." She went so far as to write the church a programmatic manifest based on liturgical reformation.²⁷

23. Adriana Valerio, *Donne e Chiesa: Una storia di genere* (Rome: Carocci, 2016), 200–203.

24. Ilario Tolomio, *Dimenticare l'antimodernismo, filosofia e cultura censoria nell'età di Pio X* (Padova: Cleup, 2007), 144.

25. See Giuseppe Sovernigo, "Il Movimento Cattolico a Treviso nel primo decennio del '900 (1900–1910)" (diss., University of Padova, 1970–1971), n. 1.

26. Tolomio, *Dimenticare l'antimodernismo*, 151–52.

27. "If our priests restored with us the ancient assembly, the eucharistic banquet could return to be a fraternal sharing; preaching would not a vain rhetoric, but gospel comment, that would replace the catechism. We would elect the bishop among the elders. The bishop would ordain the new priests who would not grow up in seminars but around priests, taking care of souls. Our church, in addition to the reform of customs and social principles, should action internally all reforms of cult that the Christian spirit asks of the official church." Quoted in Camillo Brezzi and Antonietta Giacomelli, *Dizionario storico del Movimento cattolico in Italia, 1860–1980* (Turin: Marietti, 1982), 2:236.

Giacomelli, dissuaded by her friends, abandoned this project. She, however, did not remain silent and responded to the condemnation by publishing *Per la riscossa cristiana* (For the Christian uprising),²⁸ her personal manifesto against the inadequacy of the Catholic institution. In this case also, censorship was immediately activated. The book was placed on the Index on 13 November 1913, accused of modernism. Being a woman played a highly relevant role in Giacomelli's condemnation. She was disparaged as a "she-theologian," "amazon," "*femina quaedam*," "poor fanatic," and "poor fool." Unexpectedly, in 1916, Giacomelli, hoping for an internal church reform, made an act of submission and retracted her books. *Adveniat* was finally republished in 1942, after having been amended.

During the fascist regime, she withdrew into a house of nuns and led a life in poverty. She died on 10 December 1949.

4.2. The Spiritual Awakening

Antonietta Giacomelli was convinced that the religious culture of women should draw from the sacred Scriptures and from patristics. This would support their cultural promotion, reject any clericalism, and start a deep social and Christian reform. Defending women's dignity entailed strengthening their intellectual life.²⁹

Giacomelli intended to provide an effective tool for education and communication. For this reason, *Adveniat* proceeded through the liturgical calendar (Advent, Christmas, Septuagesima, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and after Pentecost) with a timely description and explanation of various seasons so that the believer could live these seasons with the right spirit. Within the text, in fact, there are several clarifications on the historical and theological meaning of a liturgical season and information on the practices and symbols used at each moment. There are also translations and explanations of biblical passages, along with historical footnotes and commentary on the spiritual meaning. Giacomelli includes prayers, often written by her own hand, to modernize the meaning of liturgical moments. Three aspects are particularly interesting: the comparison

28. Antonietta Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana* (Milan: Libreria Editrice Milanese, 1913).

29. Anna Scattigno, "Antonietta Giacomelli," in *Italiane: Dall'unità d'Italia alla prima guerra mondiale (1861–1914)*, ed. Eugenia Roccella and Lucetta Scaraffia (Rome: Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria, 2004), 1:97–100.

among the Greek, Latin, and Ambrosian rites; the changes over time, from the early church to the Middle Ages to the early 1900s; and the attention to the biblical text and its historical and then spiritual meanings. All those components make the *Adveniat* a guide of high spiritual worth, inviting “the cold and apathetic souls” to welcome God.³⁰

Giacomelli’s work was put on the Index in 1912, and she was excommunicated *vitanda*, denied Holy Communion and any contacts with other believers. She interpreted her condemnation as a tragic error of those who had misunderstood “this awakening of spirits and conscience ... this great movement of Christian uprising which has manifested itself in the Catholic Church and that enemies tried to diminish by calling it *modernism*.”³¹ Equally significant is *Per la riscossa cristiana*, a “libro di battaglia,” as she defined it.³² The work aimed to awaken the conscience of “those aloof souls, asleep souls, who never read the gospel” and prepare them for a profound reformation of the church.³³ Such reformation would be achieved by giving back more responsibility to the lay community, converting the ecclesiastic power into service and charity, allowing freedom of thought and speech for believers, and not hampering the historical-critical research of theology and biblical studies.³⁴

The book is a collection of texts. Each chapter is introduced by excerpts drawn from sacred Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, followed by citations drawn from the church fathers or from authors of the Christian tradition. Finally, there are excerpts drawn from the works of contemporary authors of various origins, many of them close to the modernist movement: Paul Sabatier, Giovanni Semeria, Giulio Salvadori, George Tyrrell, Antonio Fogazzaro, Tommaso Gallarati Scotti.

Giacomelli is particularly effective in her writing on the importance of reason and science for interpreting the Bible and the construction of

30. All volumes were published with the typography of “Pius Society Saint Girolamo for the circulation of Holy Gospels,” created with the purpose of circulating biblical texts in Italian translation, adding to that the publication of educational works for believers.

31. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, i.

32. Giacomelli considered *Per la riscossa cristiana* a tool in her religious and political struggle. See Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, xxxi.

33. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, iv.

34. Giacomelli identifies “a sign of times” in the awakening of the religious problem (*Per la riscossa cristiana*, i, 18).

dogmas. An accurate rereading of the gospel, for instance, led her to refuse the theology of mediation and atonement.³⁵

She refers to Tyrrell's considerations of how textual criticism should not shock the believer. Love for the truth in fact is at the root of intellectual progress, must argue against superstition and errors.³⁶ It requires understanding that the gospel was written in the language and concepts of fishermen from Galilee rather than those from modern culture.³⁷

Giacomelli recognizes the autonomy and the independence of science. Supporting critical and historical research helps free the Scriptures from transient forms of expression that must be made more intelligible.³⁸

Moses, Job, Susanna, Mary of Magdala, the Samaritan, and the disciples all become animated in the pages of *Per la riscossa cristiana* as models for reforming the church. It will be a poor church, without power, where "the last of the repentant publicans is as great as the heir of the high papacy," where the authority will return to have a function of humility and love, where one can enjoy a profound democracy, and where, against all forms of despotism, love, brotherhood, and the harmony of free spirits reign.³⁹

In light of a new approach to the sacred text, the image of God changes also: "God ... more than a very abstract Entity and pure concept of many ancient people, is the Living God of the Prophets, Jesus's Father, the Being *in quo vivimus, movemur et sumus* of Saint Paul."⁴⁰ Christian identity, in brief, is redefined: from one side there is the commitment to the world so to promote the common good, on the other, the central role of the Bible and liturgy, revitalized through forms of historicized interpretations and actualizations.

5. Elisa Salerno and the Birth of Christian Feminism

Elisa Salerno (1873–1957), journalist, writer, and feminist,⁴¹ stands in solidarity with the concerns expressed by the women's movements of the

35. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 92, 302.

36. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 114.

37. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 116.

38. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 311.

39. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 126, 243, 228–30, 272, 397, 400.

40. Giacomelli, *Per la riscossa cristiana*, 64.

41. Elisa Salerno, *Un piccolo mondo cattolico: Ossia episodi e critiche pro-democrazia e femminismo* (Rocca S. Casciano: Cappelli Editore, 1908); Salerno, *Risorta? Commenti*

early 1900s. These movements were characterized by religious inspiration alongside political commitment.⁴² She can be considered the first Italian Catholic feminist because she coupled an intense social commitment with devout theological reflection. Her reflections criticize Thomas Aquinas's thinking as much as biased interpretations of the sacred Scriptures, both considered by Salerno as the foundation for subordination of women. In this double commitment, the Vicentine writer offers an Italian contribution to women's issues, unmasking the errors of exegetical and philosophical premises that were used to discriminate against women in society and in the Catholic Church.

In a quest for an antidogmatic faith open to public affairs, Salerno employed theological reflection to dismantle the "antifeminist heresies" in Thomas Aquinas. At the same time, she bravely conducted a feminist rereading of the sacred texts to recover the original biblical female characters, who had been distorted by the biased and malicious interpretation of men of the church.

In her work *Per la riabilitazione della donna* (For the rehabilitation of women, 1917), Salerno analyzes Aquinas's conceptual framework regarding the role of women and refutes it in the light of reason and the Bible itself. As an example, Salerno examines the basis of the equality and dignity of Adam and Eve from Genesis in opposition to St. Thomas, who highlights the art employed by God in shaping the woman as a "masterpiece in his hands." "Let us make for him a helper like himself" thus should not be understood in a material way but rather spiritually. The woman's task is to cooperate with man in searching for God.⁴³ For this reason, the authority

illustrativi dell'Allocuzione di Sua Santità Benedetto XV alle Donne Cattoliche (Vicenza: Rossi, 1920); Salerno, *Pro muliere: Programma di studio e azione* (Vicenza: Rossi, 1921). She founded the journal *La Donna e il Lavoro* in 1909, focused on the issues of female workers. The magazine was censored by the Vicentine diocese for Salerno's criticism of the stance of the church on the female condition. For this reason, many priests refused to give her the Eucharist. In 1919 the title was changed to *Problemi femminili* to widen the focus to all the issues faced by women. This magazine was censored in 1925, and reading it was forbidden. On Salerno, see Michela Vaccari, *Lavoratrice del pensiero: Elisa Salerno, una teologa ante litteram* (Cantalupa (To): Effatà, 2010); Elisa Vicentini, *Una chiesa per le donne: Elisa Salerno e il femminismo cristiano* (Naples: D'Auria, 1995).

42. Adriana Valerio, "Donne e Teologia nei primi trent'anni del '900," *RT 1* (2001): 103–14.

43. Elisa Salerno, *Per la riabilitazione della donna: Al Sommo pontefice Benedetto XV* (Vicenza: Fratelli Pastoris, 1917), 46.

of the husband over his wife, which finds justification in some excerpts of Paul (Eph 5:22, 1 Tim 2:11–15), is put in a different perspective. According to Salerno, this should be read as common obedience to God: “It is legitimate to disobey her husband in things that are contrary to the laws of God.” Faith in God is liberating for the woman, as the gospel shows.⁴⁴ When she sent the work to Benedict XV, Salerno expressed an urgent request: “Remove from circulation, I beg you, the antifeminist theories of the *Summa*!”⁴⁵

The ethical impact of Salerno’s insight was to encourage a passionate social and political commitment aimed at the creation of a strong solidarity among women for the defense of labor rights and for the safeguarding of women’s own human dignity. Her criticism of a dual and hierarchical anthropology and her refusal of the so-called double moral standard are the theoretical premises of a religiosity committed to participating in history, a religion of practice that combines faith and daily life. “The foundation of Christian feminism is the personality of the woman, the sincere acknowledgement of her personal integrity. Denying this principle is equivalent to accepting only half of the gospel.”⁴⁶ Salerno identified in the Scriptures, or rather in their biased interpretation, the foundation of female exclusion that so deeply characterized human history. In a letter addressed to the president of the Union of Catholic Women of Italy, the marquise Maddalena Patrizi, on 9 September 1919, Salerno contests the marquise’s suggestions on what books to recommend to Catholic women. Among these there was Martini’s Bible: “I see that you recommend the sacred scriptures with comments by Martini. Some of these comments should be deplored, as erroneous and injurious interpretations of our sex, made in several parts of the sacred text, that promote discredit and oppression of women, rather than their elevation.” Martini’s work indeed contains denigrating comments about women. Salerno succeeded in dismantling the antifeminist interpretation of the famous biblical scholar in the following years.⁴⁷

44. *Per la riabilitazione della donna*, 58.

45. *Per la riabilitazione della donna*, 86.

46. Elisa Salerno, “Il femminismo cristiano,” *La donna e il lavoro*, 7 December 1917.

47. These remarks find wide development in her works, kept and reprinted by the Centre of Documentation and Studies Presenza Donna in Vicenza: *Per la riabilitazione della donna: Donne e Chiesa* (Vicenza: CTO, 2006); *Commenti critici alle note bibliche antifemministe dei primi 24 libri sacri cioè dalla genesi ai 4 sapienziali inclusive*,

For Salerno, the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures by men makes the church antifeminist and heretical. It is hence necessary to return to the Bible to capture the novelty represented by the strong female presence in the history of salvation and by Jesus's message, a message that liberated women from marginalization and handed them back their authentic dignity. Whereas Salerno attempted to combine the term *feminism* with *Catholicism*, they appeared irreconcilable to the ecclesiastical hierarchies, who were concerned that women's rights claims could subvert the doctrinal, social, and political order. Salerno died marginalized and destitute but always strongly convinced of her Catholic and feminist identity: "I will be faithful to the Catholic faith in everything but its antifeminism."⁴⁸

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48. Elisa Salerno, letter to Bishop Ferdinando Ridolfi, 5 April 1925.

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Grace Aguilar: An Advocate for Jewish Women

Christiana de Groot

1. Introduction

The impact Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) had on her contemporaries can be measured by the obituaries and tributes published at her death. Memorial tributes from Jewish and Christian writers appeared in Britain, France, the United States, and Jamaica.¹ Michael Galinsky includes a sampling, citing Abraham Benisch writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*, who laments her death as a national loss and notes that her works were more appreciated abroad than in her homeland, England.² Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia writes eloquently in *The Occident*, “There has not arisen a single Jewish female in modern times who has done so much for the illustration and adornment of her faith as Grace Aguilar.”³ Christians as well as Jews wrote moving testimonials to her. Anna Maria Hall, a Christian novelist, describes their friendship, Aguilar’s remarkable abilities, devotion to her faith and community, and the significance of Aguilar’s work in her account of her pilgrimage to Aguilar’s grave. She describes Aguilar’s goal in writing: “Grace Aguilar prayed to God that she might be enabled to do something to elevate the character of her people in the eyes of the Christian world and—what was, and is, even more important—in their own esteem.”⁴

Perhaps the group who mourned Aguilar’s death the most was Jewish women in England and the United States. Before her departure to Germany, where she had hoped to improve her health, she was presented with

1. Michael Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar: Selected Writings* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Literary Press, 2003), 355.

2. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 356–57.

3. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 357.

4. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 360.

a tribute from “a few of the ‘Women of Israel’ of Great Britain.” In language alluding to the Deborah narrative, they wrote, “Until you arose, it has, in modern times, never been the case, that a woman in Israel should stand for the public advocate of the faith of Israel.”⁵ They praised her because she had taught them “to know and appreciate our own dignity.... You have vindicated our social and spiritual equality with our brethren in the faith.”⁶

As these many tributes indicate, at her death at the young age of thirty-one, Aguilar was revered by women and men, Jew and Christian, English, European, and American. Yet within fifty years her work was all but forgotten, only to be revived in these past two decades. That her contribution, so significant in its own time, was forgotten is unfortunately typical of women biblical interpreters.⁷

It has been one of the important tasks of feminist scholarship to recover these forgotten voices of the past so that women and men can better understand their history. In the case of Aguilar, bringing her extensive writings into the light once again allows us to reconstruct the history of nineteenth-century England, particularly as it relates to the Jewish community and the specific situation of women. Further, studying her writings on the laws in the Pentateuch that deal with women illuminates the history of exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. We now know that the history of interpretation that has dominated the field of biblical studies has been androcentric and Christian-centric. Rectifying the omission of women’s, especially Jewish women’s, contribution is an act of justice and will enrich our appreciation of both the Hebrew Bible and its reception.

As has been alluded to, Aguilar’s literary output was remarkable both for its vast quantity and for the variety of genres in which she excelled. Rebecca Gratz commented on this in correspondence to Miriam Gratz Cohen in February 1847, “Miss Aguilar stands at the head of the present tree of literary

5. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 355.

6. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 355.

7. See Galinsky’s discussion on five ways to make Anglo-Jewish history disappear. He includes gender as the first reason, explaining that in the Jewish context women were exempted from studying Torah. They were valued for their work in the domestic sphere and not for intellectual achievements. As a result, Aguilar had difficulty finding a Jewish publisher at first, and in the end the androcentric history of the Jewish community excluded her and other Jewish women writers. See Michael Galinsky, *The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 17–22.

Jews.”⁸ In her lifetime she published poetry, fiction, theology, history, and biblical studies. She broke new ground in several areas. For example, her publication *The History of the Jews in England* (1847) was the first history of Jews in England written by a Jew.⁹ After her death her mother published other manuscripts, mainly fiction, that she had completed. The work under consideration, *The Women of Israel* (1845), considered her greatest achievement, is a woman-centered history of Israel in three volumes beginning with Eve and continuing through the Talmud and dispersion.¹⁰

This essay will focus on the four sections of *The Women of Israel* that interpret the laws affecting women in the Pentateuch. It is located in the second volume, chapters 2–5.¹¹ Aguilar arranges her study of the laws into the various roles played by women, beginning with laws relating to mothers and continuing with laws relating with wives, widows, daughters, maidservants, and “sundry other laws.” We will analyze her interpretation in the several contexts in which she operated in order to clarify her readings. We will explore her context as a Jew, a member of a minority subculture in a Christian nation. In addition, she was a female Jew writing within a patriarchal Jewish community. Furthermore, she was interpreting the Hebrew Bible in conversation with other women and men who were also intent on explaining the meaning of this ancient text to their contemporaries. When we understand the issues and challenges posed by these overlapping contexts, we will comprehend more clearly Aguilar’s particular contribution to the history of interpretation.

2. Aguilar’s Exegesis in Dialogue with Her English, Christian Context

Aguilar wrote *The Women of Israel* as a Jew in England during the period in which Jewish political disabilities were slowly being removed. Between

8. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 362.

9. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 14; Grace Aguilar, “History of the Jews in England,” *CM* 18.153 (1847).

10. The complete text is available online at <https://archive.org/details/womenofisrael0000agui>. Parts of it have appeared in anthologies. The section “The Exodus-Laws for the Mothers of Israel” was included in *The Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature*, ed. Mary K. Shazer (New York: Longman, 2001), 690–95. More recently, the introduction and chapters on Sarah, Miriam, and Deborah were published in a collection of selected works by Aguilar. See Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 247–301.

11. Grace Aguilar, *The Women of Israel*, 3 vols. (London: Groombridge & Sons, 1845), 137–87.

1830 and 1871 Jews in England achieved full political and civil rights.¹² This transformation occurred because the Jewish community challenged the nature of English society and English identity. England moved from being an Anglican state to a Christian state with the passing of the Catholic Relief Act in 1828, and from there to a secular state when the oath of office no longer contained references to the Christian faith, when Jews were allowed to graduate from universities (University Test Act, 1871), when Jewish factories were allowed to operate on Sunday (Factory Act, 1871), and when Jews were allowed to cast their vote before the Sabbath (Ballot Act, 1871).

This transition was not smooth, and along the way many English Christians argued against each of these changes, claiming that to be English and Christian was inseparable and that Jews were and must remain an alien element in the population. Other Christians who supported public tolerance argued for it by contrasting the English, Protestant tolerance of Jews with the Spanish, Roman Catholic persecution of Jews. However, both groups of Christians desired to convert Jews. Protestant Christians criticized the conversions that occurred in Catholic countries as nominal. Their support of tolerance went hand in hand with the goal of “genuine” conversion. They believed that Jews who were well treated would recognize the superiority of the religion of their Christian neighbors and convert. This effort to convert Jews was centered in evangelical, bibliocentric Christian subculture.¹³ The London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews was founded in 1809 and by various tactics and arguments worked for the conversion of Jews as a route to their salvation and assimilation in English society. Jewish women were especially targeted for two reasons: Christianity was seen as a religion of the heart, engaging the emotions, and hence was more suitable for women; and Judaism, by contrast, was seen as legalist, worshipping a distant God who had issued laws degrading to women.¹⁴

In the course of writing *The Women of Israel*, Aguilar addressed many of these charges. First, it is significant that she responds in kind to the attacks of Christians. In conversation with Protestants who claimed ulti-

12. David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1–13.

13. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 64.

14. Michael Ragussis, *The Figures of Conversion: “The Jewish Question” and English National Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 146.

mate authority for Scripture, Aguilar interprets Scripture. This work, read by Jews and Christians alike, makes the case that God has a special love for Jewish women; that the laws are given to promote women's well-being and are intended to be understood spiritually.

In the introduction to *The Women of Israel*, Aguilar presents her agenda. She asserts that the charge that "the law of Moses sank the Hebrew female to the lowest state of degradation, placed her on a level with slaves and heathens, and denied her all mental and spiritual enjoyment" is completely unfounded.¹⁵ Rather, she claims, "The Word of God at once proves its falsity; for it is impossible to read the Mosaic law without the true and touching conviction, that the female Hebrew was even more an object of the tender and soothing care of the Eternal than the male."¹⁶ Aguilar comes back to this theme often. For example, the first law she exegetes is the commandment requiring that children obey their father and mother (Exod 20:12), repeated and expanded in Exod 21:15–17, Lev 19:3, and Deut 5:16.¹⁷ She notes that both parents are explicitly listed and that both are God's representatives to their children. She concludes her reflection on the high calling and status of mothers by asking, "With laws like these ... how can anyone believe in, much less assert, the Jewish degradation of woman."¹⁸

When considering the laws against incest, Aguilar disputes the reverse side of the coin denigrating Judaism, namely, exalting Christianity. She disagrees with the claim that only due to Jesus and the teaching of the apostles did woman take her proper station. Rather, she notes that centuries before Christianity, laws prohibiting incest were given and adopted in the civilized world.¹⁹ Rather than Christianity being superior to Judaism, Aguilar claims that gentiles are in debt to Jews, since Jewish laws are the foundation of other laws that cherish woman.²⁰

Aguilar also refutes the charge that the God behind the laws is distant and unfeeling in her commentary on the laws regulating warfare, which stipulate that a man shall stay home for one year in order to cheer up his wife (Deut 24:5). She notes that the concern of this law is not for

15. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 8–9.

16. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 9.

17. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 139.

18. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 140.

19. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 145.

20. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 159.

the husband's benefit but the wife's and draws a touching picture of the differing meaning of marriage for each. The man did not leave his family and friends upon marriage, while the woman has "left the home of her youth, the fond parents.... She has turned from her occupations.... She has turned from all for the love of one."²¹ At this vulnerable time in her life, the wife needs the presence of her husband, and so God's law shows his special care and love for the new bride. Aguilar concludes this section with a call to devotion addressed to her fellow Jews: "And must not we, the lineal descendants of those to whom such a revelation of God's love was given, feel, to our heart's core, that God is indeed the God of love which he proclaimed Himself to Moses?"²²

Again and again Aguilar addresses the negative stereotypes that the dominant Christian culture assigned to Judaism and the laws in the Pentateuch in particular. She demonstrates instead that there is congruity between the Christian and Jewish understanding of God's character and desire for women and men. Rather than Jesus being a bright light in contrast to the darkness of Judaism, Aguilar claims that the Christian belief in a loving God is based on the foundation of Judaism. For all these reasons, Aguilar implores Jewish young women not to convert. For example, in the section dealing with wives, Aguilar pleads, "And let not, then, our young sisters be tempted to quit their native faith for another, where they are told greater privileges await them, both as women and as immortal beings."²³

Aguilar's intent to teach Jewish women that their religion was worthy of respect involved two strategies. As we have seen, she displayed the excellence of Judaism and portrayed it in terms congruent with Protestant Christianity. This involved locating authority in Scripture, focusing on belief more than actions, and emphasizing the individual rather than the community or nation. Since England privileged the Anglican Church, Aguilar's portrayal aligns Judaism with the dominant form of Christianity. Aguilar's other strategy was to distance Judaism from Roman Catholicism. This tactic was in response to the popular equation between the two, promoted especially by pamphleteer Alexander McCaul, professor of Hebrew and rabbinical literature at King's College, London. He was a primary evangelist for the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews and claimed that Judaism had distorted the Old Testa-

21. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 149.

22. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 149–50.

23. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 155.

ment as the pope had distorted Christian teachings. He contrasted “Jewish popery” and “Protestant Christianity.”²⁴

Aguilar does not respond to these charges by defending the rabbinic interpretation of scripture; rather, in Protestant fashion, she turns to the laws themselves to defend Judaism.²⁵ To counter the claim of legalism, defined as the application of the particulars of the law rather than the principle of the law, Aguilar claims that it is the spirit of the law that applies in the present. For example, in the law regulating warfare just studied, Aguilar notes that this law, applicable to the Israelite state, can no longer be obeyed. “It cannot be, for we are not now in our own land.”²⁶ Is it then of no value? Aguilar claims that it is still to be revered. She continues, “But it is the spirit of the ordinance which so nearly concerns us, more especially as women.”²⁷ She follows this by concluding, “The law, in form, like the human frame, may die for a time, but the spirit of the ordinances, like the soul of the body, is immortal.”²⁸

Discussing the laws requiring charity to the fatherless and widow, Aguilar reiterates that it is the spirit of the law that endures, not the particulars, and here she goes on to describe the character of the spirit, which, because it is God’s spirit, does not change. “God is immutable—a Spirit of Truth, knowing not the shadow of a change; and therefore, do we know and feel that the same love from which issued these beautiful laws, actuate His dealings with his people now.”²⁹

In addition to distinguishing Judaism from “popery” in how laws are interpreted, Aguilar occasionally goes on tangents to distance Judaism in other ways from Roman Catholicism. For example, in her discussion on the laws pertaining to vows, she includes a section condemning nuns.

We have often heard (among the Gentiles, not among ourselves) ... of what is termed a saint. One avowedly devoted to the course of religion; passing hours in her closet, surrounded by religious books, all we may

24. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 54–56.

25. However, she did know and use rabbinic sources elsewhere. Mayer I. Gruber’s annotated edition of *The Women of Israel* notes that she refers to rabbinic sources but does not cite them. See Gruber, *The Women of Israel by Grace Aguilar*, JC15 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2013), xxv, xxix.

26. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 150.

27. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 150.

28. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 152.

29. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 163.

observe, commentaries, but not the Word of Life itself; or, with religious friends, wearing a peculiar dress, and most peculiar manners; visiting the poor, more often with tracts than with food; censuring every innocent amusement as profane and temptations of Satan.³⁰

She caricatures the monastic life, in a manner familiar to Protestants, and claims that it is foreign to Judaism.

When discussing the law regarding the priest's marriage, Aguilar again notes that God allows women to share in the holiness of elected servants by permitting daughters to eat sanctified food (Lev 22:13), and also that God allows priests to marry rather than requiring the sacrifice of human emotions. For this reason, there are no abuses in Judaism such as "in the monastic seclusions of the Roman church."³¹ Aguilar marshals many arguments to convince Jewish women of the excellence of the Jewish religion and of their high status within it with the hope that they will resist the temptation to convert. She concludes her section on laws relating to daughters by emphasizing their superiority. "We trust, however, we have said enough to convince our young sisters that, as daughters of Israel, they have higher and nobler privileges than the daughters of any other race."³²

Aguilar wrote, I noted, in the context of the struggle for Jewish emancipation in England in the nineteenth century, and her interpretation of the laws in the Pentateuch can be better understood if we situate them within this struggle. For example, one concern involved whether Jews were a nation and whether the laws in the Pentateuch were national laws. In response, Aguilar makes two claims about the pentateuchal laws. First, she notes that their original historical context was often very different from the present and reflects the time when Israel was a nation. For instance, laws protecting the widow and fatherless are addressed to the nation.³³ Presently, however, she writes, these laws need to be applied at the individual level. Aguilar chastises her fellow Jews who consider these laws irrelevant because the Jews are not living in their own land. She considers the laws invaluable because they inculcate virtues that protect women. She then makes a connection between England—a Protestant

30. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 152.

31. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 158.

32. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 176.

33. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 151.

nation that studies the Bible and is refined, civilized, and tolerant—and Catholic nations, such as Spain, that do not read the Bible and are not civilized nor safe for women. She writes, “This is the safeguard of Protestant woman, and this they owe to the spirit of that law given to US by God Himself.”³⁴

Another section that reflects Aguilar’s identity as a member of a minority addresses the economic discrimination experienced by the Jewish community.³⁵ One reason that Jews were not in some trades and professions was their observance of the Sabbath. Christian companies and employers would not accommodate Jewish religious practices, and hence Jews were excluded from many opportunities. In the section dealing with laws related to maidservants, Aguilar addresses this injustice and suggests a practical solution: Jewish domestics should be employed in positions where it would be no hardship to her employer if she be excused on the Sabbath from some of her duties. “We simply mean those classes where there are upper and lower domestics—where one day in the week, the former may not be called upon for servile work, or to break through any of the forms which hallow the Sabbath day.”³⁶

In a variety of ways, Aguilar is constructing the case that being English and Jewish is compatible. One need not be sacrificed for the other. Hence she encourages Jews to remain Jews, to resist conversion and assimilation, and at the same time she claims that the spirit of Judaism is in harmony with Protestant Christianity and of no threat to England’s national interest. Because of Aguilar’s understanding of Judaism and Protestant Christianity, she can encourage her community to acculturate to English society while not assimilating. She expects Jews to maintain their distinctive tradition, their customs of keeping kosher, Sabbath observance, and family rituals. There was no conflict for Aguilar between her Jewish identity and full participation in civic life.³⁷

34. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 157.

35. Zatlin describes some of the restrictions experienced by Jews before their emancipation. They were not allowed to enter retail trades in London until 1831; professions requiring skill refused to take Jews on as apprentices, and often street peddling was the only occupation available to them. See Linda Gertner Zatlin, *Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel* (Boston: Hall, 1981), 15–18.

36. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 177.

37. Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Presentation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 17.

3. Aguilar's Exegesis in Dialogue with Her Patriarchal Jewish Context

The second context in which to read Aguilar's interpretation of the laws in the Pentateuch is within her own Jewish community. Aguilar, and other Jewish women, not only called for reform in the political and economic arena in England but also desired change within their subculture.³⁸ Some significant changes had occurred, such as the use of English for the sermon in some synagogues and the founding of the first Reform synagogue in 1840.³⁹ However, these reforms had not addressed the inequities faced by women in the tradition. Aguilar especially focused on the exclusion of girls and women from religious instruction and the study of sacred texts. To oppose this prevailing practice, Aguilar notes the inclusion of women at festivals in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 16:11, 14) and on that basis deduces that those who restrict women, who insist that religion is too deep for them, must be perverted.⁴⁰ On the contrary, she claims that when God required that women as well as men love him with heart, soul, and might and that this devotion must be taught, hence girls as well as boys need religious instruction.⁴¹ She concludes that the practice of exempting girls from instruction is at odds with God's addressing women as participants in festivals: "Were the maidens of Israel to keep aloof from all religious observances, to be bound to household duties and frivolous employments, because authorized to leave all the concerns of an immortal soul and of eternity to the care of the fathers, husbands or brothers, we should find no mention of such a class of beings."⁴²

Aguilar also addresses a warning that neglecting religious instruction for daughters will result in their yielding to the temptation to convert. However, if girls are encouraged and instructed in their own religious tradition, they will not be tempted to stray.⁴³

This passionate call for religious education does not coincide with Aguilar supporting full political and economic rights for women. Rather,

38. Galinsky describes the great literary outpouring of English Jewish women in the nineteenth century who wrote for both Jewish emancipation and internal reform, and lists the many Jewish women writers and their publications (*Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 15–17).

39. Zatlin, *Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel*, 24–25.

40. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 167.

41. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 167.

42. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 166.

43. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 174.

the call for religious education goes hand in hand with her support of separate spheres for women and men. Men were called to fulfill their duties in the public arena, and women were to fulfill their vocation in the private realm. This division of roles and spheres is supported in the pentateuchal laws, according to Aguilar. For example, when discussing Lev 27, she notes that boys' births are celebrated while girls' births are not, following the pattern begun when Abraham celebrated that Isaac was weaned (Gen 21:8). This neglect of the girls is not due to a devaluing of girls compared to boys but is due to their differing callings:

To my own heart, the different reception of male and female children is an exquisite illustration and type of their respective paths. The world and man must be the theatre and fellow-actor of the boy; he must go forth armed with a religious heart and unbending spirit to meet the temptations of pleasure, ambition and a host of other passions and emotions which must assail his more public path. But, to the girl, home is her theatre, her God her only stay. Why should festivity and idle revelry hail the birth of one, in whose heart must be her purest pleasure, distinct from every pleasure (so called) of the world, whose path must be one of quiet and unostentatious retirement and usefulness?⁴⁴

Aguilar claims that the law distinguishes between the spiritual and moral equality of men and women and the differing roles that they are called to fulfill. As she states, "The law of God, while it elevates and spiritualizes woman to an equal share of immortality and responsibility before Him, in no way permits or encourages her coming unduly forward or exalting herself above man. Her weaker frame, her less mighty mind, her more easily excited emotions, all mark the necessity of a more retiring and dependent station."⁴⁵

Aguilar sees congruence between the differing abilities of women and men and the differing values that attach to their contributions. For example, the differing amounts of men and women's vows (Lev 27:1–7) is due to the different amount of work that they are capable of contributing to the temple. That women are required to pay less "is no proof of her inequality, but simply that the service she could render the temple was, from the weakness of her frame, and the retiring nature of her sex, of less use and importance than man's."⁴⁶

44. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 183.

45. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 182.

46. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 182.

The hierarchical relationship between men and women also explains why the vows taken by women need the approval of men, while men's vows do not need the approval of women (Num 30:1–16). Aguilar argues against the view that this is insulting to women. She rather sees it grounded in the differing character of men and women:

Man did not need such restraint upon his “singular vows”; because in the first place, he was more independent than woman; in the next reason not feeling, being his guide, he was not likely to fall into the temptation of ill-regulated enthusiasm, even in his holiest and dearest duty. Woman's guide in general is feeling: she is a creature of impulse, ever likely, unless strongly yet tenderly restrained, to turn aside from the safer and less excitable path of daily duty.⁴⁷

Aguilar's claim that women and men are spiritually and morally equal supports her advocacy of religious education for girls and their full participation in religious exercises. At the same time, the ideology of separate spheres undergirds her claim that women should not seek political or economic equality with men but remain in the domestic setting.

Aguilar was not alone in her support of the ideology of separate spheres; it dominated England in the nineteenth century as the ideal for middle-class families. Her views are consistent with a spate of Christian and Jewish writers instructing women on their role as the “angel of the home.”⁴⁸ In the Introduction to *The Women of Israel*, Aguilar mentions the writings of Elizabeth Sandford, Sarah Stickney Ellis, and Elizabeth Hamilton, all of whom wrote on women's roles.⁴⁹ Galinsky suggests that Aguilar's *The Women of Israel* drew inspiration from a book by Ellis, published in 1839, *The Women of England*.⁵⁰ The relationship between the two works is consistent with the relationship Aguilar has with many women within her context. On the one hand, she differs drastically from Ellis, who claims that the foundation of morals and gender roles is the Christian religion.⁵¹

47. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 153.

48. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 24–27.

49. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 2. Gruber's annotated version includes a brief biography and lists the publications of each of these women (4–7).

50. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 12.

51. Sarah S. Ellis, *The Women of England* (London: Fischer, Son, 1839), 5, 69, 85–86, 90.

Aguilar also roots the roles and status of women in their faith but claims that the Jewish faith is the foundation on which the Christian faith is built.

However, on the content of the faith and on the proper roles for middle-class women they are in agreement. For both, women's proper sphere is the home, and here she is called to self-sacrificial service on behalf of others. Ellis describes woman's calling in this way: "It is necessary for her to lay aside all her natural caprice, her love of self-indulgence, her vanity, her indolence—in short, her very self—and assuming a new nature ... to spend her mental and moral capabilities in devising means for promoting the happiness of others, while her own derives from a remote and secondary existence from theirs."⁵² Like Aguilar, she does not believe that women should be involved directly in public life; rather, it is through women's influence on men that they affect the broader society. Ellis describes woman's role as the "conscience of man."⁵³

Ellis's book also includes a section detailing changes that must be made in the education of girls to equip them for their tasks in the home. She suggests doing away with foreign languages and other subjects that do not prepare girls for their vocation of "disinterested kindness." However, she proposes that more instruction in "the benign principles of Christian faith and practice" are needed to support the motivation for doing good as well as equipping women to speak about their faith.⁵⁴ Here too, Ellis and Aguilar are in agreement, although for Aguilar the promotion of religious education of girls is a call to reform, while for Ellis it is a commendation of the one bright light in a typical English education. For both of them, women, especially mothers, have a key role to play in the shaping and instructing of children in the home.

Both Ellis and Aguilar were participants in the feminization of religion in the nineteenth century. After the industrial revolution, when the spheres of home and work were bifurcated for the middle class, religion was allotted to the private sphere, to matters of the heart. As such, religion "fell within women's domain, for it drew upon emotions to disseminate morality and fortify the social order. Modern men were considered too busy with worldly concerns to assume this task."⁵⁵ Like Christian women, Jewish women fulfilled the role of transmitting a home-based faith.

52. Ellis, *Women of England*, 45.

53. Ellis, *Women of England*, 53.

54. Ellis, *Women of England*, 69, 85–86, 90.

55. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 25–26.

Aguilar's background as the daughter of Crypto-Jews who had fled to England to escape the Inquisition perhaps played a role in her promotion of the home as the site of religious instruction. Since public, male spaces such as schools and synagogues had been closed in Spain and Portugal, the home became paramount as the place to exercise Jewish faith. Hand in hand with this phenomenon, in Sephardic culture it was customary for women to be transmitters of the tradition. When this community established itself in England, it remained common for daughters as well as sons to be educated by their parents.⁵⁶ Aguilar's family followed this pattern. Both parents supported her throughout her career. Her father who was homebound for health reasons taught his daughter Jewish history and perhaps Hebrew. He was often her amanuensis, and her mother provided her with religious education.⁵⁷ In her own home, and in her subculture of Sephardic Judaism, Aguilar had a model for Judaism that was centered in the home and in which the mother was the primary religious teacher.⁵⁸

In the two contexts in which we have explored Aguilar's writings, we see her straddling contested boundaries. Within the broader English context, she was a promoter of tolerance and emancipation, and yet opposed those Christians who espoused tolerance as a strategy to accomplish the full assimilation of Jews. Aguilar passionately opposed efforts at conversion and addressed both the Christian community and the Jewish community when she portrayed Judaism, particularly the laws in the Pentateuch, as worthy of allegiance and respect.

Within the Jewish community she also pushed for reform at the same time that she maintained the status quo. Here she advocated for girl's religious education on the basis of the teachings of the law of Moses and argued for the spiritual equality of women and men. However, she accepted the prevailing distinction between the public and private sphere, which delegated men to enter the fray of politics and economics and women to stay at home. She understood women's role to be derivative and dependent,

56. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 18; Galinsky, *Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 145.

57. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 18–19.

58. See her novel *The Perez Family* (The Cheap Jewish Library, 1843) for an ideal picture of a Sephardic Jewish family living in England (Galinsky, *Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 87–180). Note especially the scene in which the family is preparing for the Sabbath and the mother, Rachel, gives a lesson on the meaning of the Sabbath and how one ought to dress on that day (110–11).

denying the self in order to serve the other. Galinsky aptly summarizes her views: "Aguilar proposed a bargain: if 'tolerant' Christianity would agree to quit their philo-Semitic persuasion, Jews would restrict their expression of differentness to the domestic sphere."⁵⁹

4. Aguilar's Exegesis in the Context of Nineteenth-Century English Biblical Interpretation

The third context of Aguilar's work is nineteenth-century biblical interpretation. Aguilar did not use footnotes or anywhere indicate whose work she was drawing on, so we cannot in that way trace her conversation partners. On the basis of the content and genre of her writing, we will construe how she fits into the broader landscape.

First, Aguilar reads the Hebrew Bible precritically. She presumes that the "laws of Moses" were delivered between the exodus from Egypt and Israel's entrance into the promised land.⁶⁰ Aguilar nowhere in her comments suggests that some laws reflected an earlier period and some a later period in Israel's history. She never discusses the differences in the same law in Exodus and Deuteronomy, even though she sometimes notes that the law occurs in both places. An example of this involves the laws regulating debt slavery found in Exod 21 and Deut 15.⁶¹ She comments on the topic of the debt servitude as envisioned in the laws without ever noting the significant differences between the two. Nowhere does she note that the laws in Deuteronomy tend to elevate the status of women compared to the laws in Exodus. She reads the laws flatly, bringing verses together without attention to their literary context. Although she wrote before Julius Wellhausen published his monumental work on the Documentary Hypothesis, much scholarship suggesting multiple sources for the Pentateuch was available, but Aguilar shows no awareness of this literature. Similarly, the archaeological discoveries that caused many believers to reexamine the dates of biblical events are not engaged in Aguilar's writings.⁶² As a pre-critical interpreter, Aguilar takes no stand for or against the new theories

59. Galinsky, *Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 145.

60. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 139.

61. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 178.

62. For a discussion of the advances in biblical scholarship which influenced many women interpreters of scripture, see Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, "Recovering Women's Voices in the History of Biblical Interpretation," in *Recovering*

and discoveries, and in her work we find no comments either criticizing or applauding the work of scholars.

Aguilar addresses the androcentric language of the laws and whether women are included as addressees or not several times. In the most extensive discussion, she makes the claim that the Hebrew word *son*, and here she writes out the Hebrew word, is translated “son” but actually means “child,” for which there is no distinct Hebrew word. She cites as evidence Deut 7:2, 4, noting that the antecedent of *son* in the phrase “For they will turn away thy son from following ME” includes both the son and the daughter.⁶³ She concludes that women are included in the terms *son* and *sons* even when not explicitly mentioned. Yet again, when discussing laws pertaining to wives, Aguilar quotes Deut 31:11–12, “When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God.... Gather the people together, men, women, and children.”⁶⁴ Aguilar applies what is explicit in this text, namely that women are included when all Israel is addressed, to all the laws in the Pentateuch. In addition, she notes that in marriage, man and woman are united and become one flesh. On the basis of these two claims, she concludes, “she, as well as her husband—one with him—was the recipient, the obeyer, and the promulgator of every law in which there were no specified distinction of individual duties.”⁶⁵ By this reasoning, Aguilar has read women into the silences of the texts regarding women. Without using the label “androcentric,” Aguilar is reading women’s presence into a text, which often makes women linguistically invisible. This is a strategy employed by contemporary feminists such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza when reconstructing the role of women in the history of early Christianity.⁶⁶ Aguilar’s strategy is a precursor to present-day efforts to write women into the history of Judaism and Christianity.

Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible, ed. de Groot and Taylor, SymS 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–18.

63. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 170.

64. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 148, emphasis original.

65. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 148.

66. In Schüssler Fiorenza’s discussion of the translation issues that arise due to the androcentric character of the biblical text, she writes, “In other words, androcentric language is inclusive of women but does not mention them explicitly. Such androcentric inclusive language functions in biblical text the same way as it functions today—it mentions women only when women’s behavior presents a problem or where women are exceptional individuals.” See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 45. That the discussion of translating gender is ongoing is indicated by David E. S.

In her exegesis of the laws of the Pentateuch, Aguilar works with the Authorized translation, the King James Version of the Bible, as there was no Jewish vernacular translation available. She is surprisingly lax about citing the passage she is discussing, perhaps expecting her readers to know their Bible so well that she does not need to supply citations. She rarely displays her knowledge of Hebrew and then only uses it to comment on the meaning of a specific word. For example, Aguilar explains the word *hated* in the law regulating inheritance in a polygamous family (Deut 21:15–17). She notes, “The Hebrew term translated hated here, as in the case of Leah, does not signify so strong a feeling, but simply the one less beloved than the other.”⁶⁷

Aguilar does not explicitly draw on the resources of her Jewish tradition in her interpreting, although Mayer Gruber shows that she alluded to rabbinic sources without citing them.⁶⁸ Aguilar also read Christian material.⁶⁹ Not only did she read Christian sources, but she also visited churches and advocated Jews praying together with Christians.⁷⁰ One of her poems is titled “A Vision of Jerusalem, While Listening to a Beautiful Organ in One of the Gentile Shrines.”⁷¹ Her writing is a testimony to her conviction that Christians and Jews can live together amicably, in mutual respect, because their differing faiths are in harmony with each other.

The books closest to Aguilar’s *The Women of Israel* were written by Christian women. Although we do not know for certain whether she read these books, her work is not *sui generis*. A body of work that is only recently coming to light indicates that in the first half of the nineteenth century, Christian and Jewish women were engaged in writing commentaries, catechisms, hymns, poetry, and sermons that interpreted Scripture for a lay audience.⁷² Aguilar’s writing fits into this remarkable literary

Stein, “Unavoidable Gender Ambiguities: A Primer for Readers of English Translations from Biblical Hebrew,” SBL Forum, 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013a>.

67. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 146.

68. Gruber, *Women of Israel by Grace Aguilar*, xxv, xxix.

69. Galinsky, *Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 145.

70. Galinsky, *Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer*, 144.

71. Galinsky, *Grace Aguilar*, 196–97.

72. Marion Ann Taylor and Heather Weir have published excerpts of the writings of fifty nineteenth-century Christian and Jewish writers interpreting Genesis in a variety of genres. See their annotated anthology *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006). The introductory essay (1–19) describes the variety of genres employed, analyzes the

achievement by English-speaking women on both sides of the Atlantic. In both England and the United States, women's role as the teacher of the faith to children opened opportunities for them to study the Bible and write material for use in instruction. For example, Lucy Barton, an English Quaker, penned *Bible Letters for Children* in 1831.⁷³ Esther Hewlett Copley, a British Anglican, later Baptist, published, among many other writings, *Scripture History for Youth* in 1829 and *Scripture Biography* in 1836.⁷⁴ In 1805, Sarah Trimmer, an Anglican who lived mostly in London, published a commentary on the entire Bible, Old and New Testament as well as the Apocrypha, titled *A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures: being an attempt to explain the Bible in a familiar way*.⁷⁵ Mary Cornwallis, wife of an Anglican priest, published *Observations, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical on the canonical Scriptures*, a four-volume work, in 1817.⁷⁶ The author who perhaps comes closest to Aguilar's *The Women of Israel*, because it focuses on the women of the Bible, is Frances Elizabeth King, who published her popular book *Female Scripture Characters: Exemplifying Female Virtues* in London in 1813. The impetus for King's work came from the omission of women in the book by Thomas Robinson, *Scripture Characters, or a practical improvement of the principal histories in the Old and New Testament*.⁷⁷ Aguilar's work *The Women of Israel* may well be a response to King's. In the effort to prevent the conversion of Jewish women to Christianity, it would be strategic to have a volume on women in the Hebrew Bible to counterbalance King's volume on women in the Old and New Testament. Rather than Jewish women reading only about the women in the Hebrew Bible through the lens of the New Testament, a volume was needed that showed the exalted view of women in the Hebrew Bible when considered alone.

social context that contributed to this flowering of women's writing, and describes the interpretive strategies employed in these texts.

73. Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 29–32.

74. Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 32–35.

75. Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 109–12. See also Weir's essay on Trimmer's exegesis, "Helping the Unlearned: Sarah Trimmer's Commentary on the Bible," in de Groot and Taylor, *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters*, 19–30.

76. Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 334–38. See also Taylor's essay, "Mary Cornwallis: Voice of a Mother," in de Groot and Taylor, *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters*, 31–44.

77. Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 112–18.

King and Aguilar are in agreement in many ways that affect their interpretation. They both read Scripture as God's word given to be the foundation for a believer's faith and life practice, and they interpret the women of the Bible in order to teach women about their role and status. For example, King begins her exegesis on Eve by quoting 2 Tim 3:16–17, that all Scripture is inspired and profitable for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. She then goes on to reflect that the female characters in Scripture are mirror images of ourselves, for good or ill. The purpose of studying them is not merely academic, but "let us then survey this interesting picture for our own benefit; let us study, and endeavour to copy their virtues; and in the contemplation of their faults, let us search our own hearts for similar defects." All this is done so that the reader "may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he has given us in our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST."⁷⁸

King's exegesis of the Hebrew Bible is transparently Christian, and she often interprets female characters through the lens of the New Testament. For example, in her study of Sarah, she notes that 1 Peter cites Sarah as a model for the virtuous wife in that she called Abraham "lord" and follows that with instructions to women to be respectful of their husbands because the husband is the head of the wife, citing Eph 5:23.⁷⁹ However, King is also knowledgeable about Jewish sources, and in her essay on Sarah cites Josephus's assessment of Sarah's beauty.⁸⁰

Aguilar and King also differ in some fundamental ways, the most significant being their contrasting faith convictions and goal of addressing either a Jewish or Christian faith community. Their different religious traditions affect which women are included in their volumes. King includes only women about whom there are narratives and includes women in the Old and New Testament as well as the Apocrypha.⁸¹ Her exclusion of the laws reflects a typical Protestant neglect of Old Testament law. Because of this omission, Aguilar was the first to study the treatment of women in the pentateuchal laws in the nineteenth century.⁸²

78. Frances E. King, *Female Scripture Characters: Exemplifying Female Virtues* (Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1816), 2–3.

79. King, *Female Scripture Characters*, 22.

80. King, *Female Scripture Characters*, 23.

81. King, *Female Scripture Characters*, v–xii.

82. In the second half of the nineteenth century, after Aguilar's death, the amount of writing on biblical women increased dramatically (Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak*

Aguilar's reading of Scripture, like other nineteenth-century women interpreters, is consciously gendered. She writes explicitly as a woman and addresses the concerns the text raises for women. Her reading is subjective, and she makes no pretense at being objective—a typical feature of premodern exegesis. Although she often raises questions of the text that are not in its purview, Aguilar does not read against the plain meaning of a passage, with one exception. In her writing on the laws that regulate maid-servants (Exod 21:7–11), Aguilar interprets the phrase in verse 7, “she shall not go out as the men-servants do.” The verse is parallel to the beginning of the preceding law dealing with manservants (Exod 21:2), which specifies, “If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh year he shall go out free for nothing.” The parallel structure and the following verses indicate that women are not released after six years, since they become part of the master's family as a concubine for the master or his son. However, Aguilar reads this verse quite differently: “The simple words ‘they shall not go out as man-servants do’ reveal the loving care for their protection, that they should not be exposed to all the rougher labor of the field.”⁸³ Here her reading goes beyond being subjective to being biased.

In interpreting other difficult passages, we have seen Aguilar employ several exegetical strategies common among nineteenth-century interpreters. For example, she understands that the laws reflect their ancient context and in that light were both understandable and necessary. She comments thus on the law of the rebellious son (Deut 21:8): “In those times, they must have been needed or they would not have been given.”⁸⁴ She goes on to consider why the laws required practices that are offensive to modern readers and concludes that God accommodates the laws to sinful humanity as an act of mercy. For example, she comments on the law allowing polygamy thus, “Polygamy was permitted in Israel, at the period of the

for Herself). This literary gold mine is still not well known, resulting in an erroneous assessment of Aguilar's contribution. For example, the recently published *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* cites Aguilar's *The Women of Israel* as one of its most significant forerunners and indicates that it was published in 1845: “Preceding by fifty years the celebrated *Woman's Bible* of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a commentary usually credited as the first feminist interpretation of the Bible.” See Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, *The Torah A Women's Commentary* (New York: Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), xxxviii. Aguilar's work, although very significant, is one of many that focus on biblical women and calls for reform based on biblical teaching.

83. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 178.

84. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 141.

delivery of the law, simply because the Eternal's mercy would not interfere with immemorial usage, which His wisdom knew, from local customs and long-indulged habit, would demand violence to be relinquished."⁸⁵ However, this accommodation is not the end of the matter. Aguilar claims that the goal of the law is the improvement of the human race. For instance, she argues that monogamy with love and equality was God's original intention for marriage and that when Jews are faithful, the laws will lead them to this "holier union."⁸⁶

5. Conclusion

Aguilar's reading of the laws in the Pentateuch is undeniably a gendered reading. She writes explicitly as a woman to women readers and focuses on the women in the laws. Less clear is whether her reading is also a feminist reading as defined by Gerda Lerner. Lerner's classic definition of feminist consciousness involves five criteria: the awareness that women belong to a subordinate group, that they have suffered wrongs as a group, that their position of subordination is not natural but is socially determined, that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs, and that they must provide an alternate vision of social organization in which women and men enjoy autonomy and self-determination.⁸⁷ According to this standard, Aguilar scores a three out of five. She understood that women experience wrongs as a group. In the section exegeting the laws in the Pentateuch, Aguilar is vocal on the need for girls to receive religious education and that this neglect of girls is an injustice visited on women by men. In her writing, she calls for reform so that women will have equal educational opportunities and envisions how the Jewish community would flourish if the doors to women's inclusion in religious life were opened.

Lerner's checklist does not address the particular context in which women work and the overlapping identities they negotiate. For example, Aguilar could be castigated for her conventional ideas about women's and men's roles and her view that men are characterized by thinking while women are characterized by feeling. Because of differing abilities based in gender, Aguilar does not conclude that the existing hierarchy between

85. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 145–46.

86. Aguilar, *Women of Israel*, 147.

87. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14.

men and women is socially constructed. Rather, she understands that hierarchy is the natural and positive outcome of God's creating men and women for different purposes. It is not hierarchy per se that Aguilar criticizes but only one aspect of the hierarchy, namely, limiting religious education for girls. However, it is difficult to criticize Aguilar for her lack of feminist consciousness in this area because she was not only negotiating gender issues but also religious and race issues. Her vision of a better future included autonomy and independence for her fellow Jews, and she championed Jewish emancipation in a critical period in English history. That the Jews in England won economic and political equality in the fifty years between 1830 and 1880 is testimony to the effective efforts of Aguilar and many others.

One can analyze Aguilar's position as a partial or protofeminist as a political expediency, but in *The Women of Israel*, there is no place where she reflects on her position as a strategy. Rather, what we can say is that in the patriarchal Christian context in which Aguilar lived, she was defined both as a Jew and as a woman, a doubly subordinate identity, and she was heroic and effective in her advocacy on behalf of Jews and women within the Jewish community. That she excelled in her work as an advocate is made abundantly clear in the tributes, testimonials, and eulogies that were written upon her untimely death, aptly described as a national loss.

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Pandita Ramabai: A Forgotten Hero of Indian Hermeneutics

Royce M. Victor

Introduction

The second part of the nineteenth century in India witnessed several social uprisings demanding dignity, equality, justice, and respect for all people. There were mass movements as well as a few individuals who worked tirelessly against the religiously sanctioned and imposed degradation that existed in society. Although women are absent among the leaders in the written records of these movements, it is evident that a large number of them actively participated in these struggles. The omission of women can be seen as another form of rendering them invisible. Pandita Ramabai was one among those individuals who toiled during her life for the improvement of the poor and downtrodden, especially for women. She was one of the earliest Indian women to practice biblical hermeneutics as well as being an activist and social reformer. This essay will study the life and ministry of this great woman, who significantly contributed to the emancipation of women in Indian society. Since it is difficult to detach her life story from her ministry, they will be examined together. Ramabai's life and work will be divided into two major eras: her preconversion period and postconversion period, and, following that discussion, this essay will present a critical appraisal of her life and ministry.

Early Years of Wandering

Ramabai was the sixth child born to Anant Shastri Dongre and his wife, Lakshmibai, in Mangalore, Karnataka state, in south India on April 23,

1858.¹ Three of her siblings died during childhood. The siblings who survived were her elder sister, Krishnabai (b. 1848), and her brother, Srinivasa (b. 1850). Her father, who was a priest and a Sanskrit scholar, had a vision that not only his son but also his wife and daughters should be educated. Even though female education aroused great hostility from his community since education was strictly prohibited for women and lower-caste people, Dongre continued to teach the women in his family. Ramabai was born in a remote mountainous place, Ganga Moola, and began her education at the age of eight with the support of both of her parents. She was extremely fortunate to have a learned mother like Lakshmibai, and she gratefully acknowledges her mother's contributions in her life in her book *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, published in 1887.² She learned Sanskrit language, vocabulary, and grammar, and memorized several Sanskrit texts and scriptures.

Ramabai's family made its living as Puranikas, that is, Sanskrit specialists who traveled extensively throughout the country reciting and expounding the Puranas, one of the major collections of Hindu scriptures. For Ramabai's family, being Puranikas allowed them to earn an honest living without begging. The Puranika usually gave an explanation of the text, which is in Sanskrit language, for the benefit of his hearers. As a member of the family of a Puranika, Ramabai traveled widely all over the country as a child.

At the age of sixteen, in 1874, Ramabai and her family faced a severe famine that befell the country. Both of her parents and her sister quickly died. Her father and mother passed away in 1874, followed by her sister in 1875, and she was left with only her brother, Srinivasa. For three years the siblings wandered around the country "still visiting sacred places, bathing in rivers and worshiping the gods and goddesses, in order to get

1. The details of her childhood and parents can be found in Ramabai's writings, published in 1883 and later reproduced as Amritlal B. Shah, ed., *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1976), 15–18. Also see the excellent biographical source Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions* (Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1995); also Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction," in *Pandita Ramabai's America*, ed. Frykenberg, trans. Kshitija Gomes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1–54; and Nirmala Charles, *Pandita Ramabai and Modern Indian Renaissance* (Lucknow: Lucknow, 2004), 15–32.

2. She dedicates this book to the "sweet memory of [her] beloved mother." See Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (Philadelphia: Rodgers, 1887).

[their] desire.”³ Finally, in 1878 Ramabai and her brother reached Calcutta (Kolkata), a center for intellectual and religious activity. In Calcutta her erudition attracted a great deal of attention. She came into contact with several scholars and social and religious reformers including Keshab Chandur Sen, Kalicharan Bannerji, and J. C. Bose, who were astounded at her knowledge in Sanskrit language. Since such academic ability was rare and unheard of for a woman, she became an immediate sensation. Her great learning brought her public recognition and honors. She was publicly examined by a group of scholars, who gave her the title “Saraswati” (Goddess of Learning) and called her “Pandita (a learned woman).”⁴

Death continued to haunt Ramabai as her brother unexpectedly died in 1880, leaving her alone in the world. In the same year, she married Bipin Beharidas Medhavi, who was a lawyer by profession and a friend of her brother. It was an intercaste marriage, since Ramabai came from Brahmin background and her husband from Sudra caste. Through their marriage, they challenged the norms of the caste-ridden society. However, their happiness did not last long, as her husband died in 1882, after only nineteen months of their marriage. During this period, in 1881, she gave birth to a daughter and named her Manoramabai. Once again Ramabai was bereaved, but now with a little girl to share with her life.

Rise of a Social Reformer

In Calcutta, Ramabai came into contact with the Brahmo Samaj, a reform movement within Hinduism started by Rajah Ram Mohan Roy fifty years prior. Ramabai was attracted to the teachings and practices of the Brahmo Samaj, probably because of its strong stand in support of women and its condemnation of caste. She joined the Brahmo Samaj and dedicated her life to the cause of improving the life of Indian women. She started to lecture across north India, focusing on women’s issues. In 1882, she shifted her place of ministry to Poona, a city in the western state of Maharashtra.

3. Pandita Ramabai, “A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure,” in *Pandita Ramabai through Her Own Words: Selected Works*, ed. and trans. Meera Kosambi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 300.

4. Padmini Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: Her Life and Work* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 72–75; see also Frykenberg, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati,” 8.

At Poona Ramabai faced a mixed reaction. On the one hand, she was warmly welcomed by the reformers and progressively minded people, who requested that she work among them. On the other hand, she had several opponents who regarded her as a woman who had transgressed the traditional caste system and religion and who had traveled to their city with the intention of spreading her “unholy” ideas to influence people.⁵ During that time in India, widows were considered inauspicious and sinners, irrespective of caste and class. Ramabai, being a widow herself, decided that she would not submit to the oppressive practices of her religion. Unlike many social reformers, she continued to seriously address the issues concerning women, even in the face of strong opposition. She particularly concentrated on the conditions of widows and destitute women. In 1882, she established Arya Mahila Samaj, a forum that was meant to unite women in order to denounce the crimes perpetuated against them in the name of religion and tradition. The *samaj* was primarily meant for the emancipation of women, delivering them from customs such as child marriage and thus virtual slavery. Several branches of the Arya Mahila Samaj were formed in cities of western India, including Bombay (Mumbai).

Ramabai appeared before the Hunter Commission on Education, sent by the British Government in 1882 to study the education situation in India and to submit proposals for future plans. She addressed the commission on the need for general as well as medical education for women. She argued for the appointment of female teachers and doctors to educate and treat girls, explaining that women would find it very difficult to describe their problems to male teachers or doctors.⁶ By addressing the commission, Ramabai not only challenged the existing religious and social system but also made the wider world hear the cries of the most marginalized people of India, the most silenced group in the country. Thus, she became the voice of the millions of voiceless women of the country.

Her work with Arya Mahila Samaj helped her to understand in more depth the conditions of widows. She was able to gauge the impact of reforms carried out by the elite males in Maharashtra for improving the condition of women’s lives. She found such reforms lacking the strength and vigor to be transformative and saw the need for structural change to

5. See Charles, *Pandita Ramabai*, 38.

6. Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswathi*, 94–95; also Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 8.

the patriarchal system.⁷ Consequently, Ramabai distanced herself from it and explored alternative reform measures that would grant women the agency to change the structures that exploited them.⁸ She tried to discover an alternative model of liberation for women in India. It is this background experience with Hinduism and traditional Indian traditions that helps explain her affinity and later conversion to Christianity.

Encounter with Christianity

While Ramabai was living with her husband in Assam, she had her first encounter with the Bible. The Gospel according to Luke in Bengali language was the first book she read. Later she met a Baptist missionary, Mr. Allen, who explained the message of the Bible to her. As she began learning to read the Bible and understanding the Christian faith, she slowly lost her faith in Hinduism and started moving away from it. She explains, “As I had lost all faith in my former religion, and my heart was hungering after something better, I eagerly learnt everything which I could about the Christian religion, and declared my intention to become a Christian if I were perfectly satisfied with this new religion.”⁹ However, because of the strong opposition of her husband, she could not move toward conversion to Christianity at that point.

After the death of her husband, when Ramabai moved to Poona and started her ministry among poor and destitute women, she came to know about the English education system and sought to acquire an English education in order to improve society. She started learning English from a Christian missionary, Miss Hurford.¹⁰ Through this acquaintance, Rama-

7. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 189–204.

8. Udaya Kumar Irvathur and N. K. Rajalakshmi, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswathi: Making of A Social Entrepreneur” (paper presented at National Seminar Pandita Ramabai: A Search for Spirituality, Emancipation of Women and Cooperation between Religions, Mangalore University, 29–30 August 2008), 8–10.

9. See Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony: The Life Story of Pandita Ramabai* (repr., Melbourne: Keswick Book Depot, 1946), 16.

10. Miss Hurford was an educational worker who later became the superintendent of the Female Training College at Poona. She was also connected with the mission carried out by the Wantage sisters and Cowley fathers (Society of St. John the Evangelist).

bai learned more about Christian teachings.¹¹ It was not easy for her to abandon her faith and convert to a new one, and for a long time she was skeptical about the Christian faith.¹² During this time, Ramabai decided to go to England to continue her studies. She wrote her first book, *Stri Dharma Neethi* (Marathi: Morals for women) in order to raise sufficient funds to go to England. At the age of twenty-five, in 1883, Ramabai went to England with the intention to study medicine, believing that the best way to work for the advancement of Indian women was to become a doctor. While in England, it was discovered that Ramabai was hard of hearing, which disqualified her from pursuing a medical career, so she shifted her focus of study to become a teacher. Miss Hurford's friends in London, the Wantage sisters, gave her the support she needed to accomplish her educational pursuits in London. While with the Wantage sisters, she had the opportunity to observe the ministry of the sisters carried out among the women and the poor in London city and its surroundings. It was the first time Ramabai experienced religion showing compassion to women, and she was very impressed. She understood that there was a genuine difference between Hinduism and Christianity in the attitude of each toward people, especially toward women and the destitute.¹³ Finally, on 29 September 1883 in the Wantage Parish Church, Ramabai and her daughter, Manoramabai, received baptism.¹⁴ Ramabai's decision to undergo baptism invited severe criticism from many corners in India; however, she was bold enough to defend her stand before the public.

A New Phase in Life and Ministry

Having spent a year studying English in the Home of St. Mary at Wantage, she secured a position as professor of Sanskrit at the Women's College at Cheltenham in 1884, where she also entered as a student of mathematics, science, and English literature. Shortly thereafter, in 1886, she decided to visit the United States, traveling extensively and lecturing on various

11. For her first encounter with Christianity, see Charles, *Pandita Ramabai*, 47–52.

12. See Sen Guptha, *Pandita Rama Bai Sarswathi*, 112–16.

13. See Ramabai, *Testimony*, 18–19.

14. For details, see Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 18–20; also see the discussion in Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati," 16–24.

topics. She convincingly explained the conditions of women in India and then invited her audience to respond to the immediate need to support the women.¹⁵ Ramabai published her book *The High Caste Hindu Woman* in 1887 while she was still in the United States; like her speeches, it describes the plight of Indian women and appeals to Americans for help. Her campaign resulted in the creation of the Ramabai Association in Boston in 1887 with the object of supporting education for child widows of India. Within a short period of time, under her influence, over three hundred branches of the Ramabai Association were established all over America, and each pledged to support Ramabai in her mission.¹⁶ She translated several educational books from English to Marathi for the use in the schools she planned to open in India on her return.

In November 1888, she sailed for India from San Francisco. Now she was no longer a poor, friendless, homeless widow but a leader, supported by thousands of sympathetic people in England and America. On her return, she concluded that Poona was not a suitable place to start her ministry, so she decided to move to Bombay and put into practice what she learned from her new religious faith. In the following year she established Sharada Sadan (Home of Wisdom) in Bombay. This was a center for learning as well as a home for widows, many of whom were mere children who had been given in marriage to much older men. When their husbands died, their families shunned and abused them because they believed that those deaths were caused by the widows' evil deeds in a previous life.

Initially, Ramabai began the *sadan* as a religiously neutral center, where she welcomed widows from all religions and did not impose her religious beliefs on the women. However, she did conduct Bible studies and Christian teaching classes for the widows of the *sadan* regularly. The

15. When Swami Vivekananda visited America in the nineteenth century and delivered lectures, he presented a splendid picture of India. However, the picture of Indian women that Ramabai gave to the same people was different. It was said that Vivekananda was unhappy about it. Moreover, there were occasions where men shouted over Ramabai without allowing her to express her views after her return to India from the United States (see Sen Gupta, *Pandita Rama Bai Sarawathi*, 163, 205–6). Also see Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India 1885–1920* (London: Ashgate, 2000), 35–36; Meera Kosambi, ed., *Pandita Rama Bai through Her Own Words: Selected Works* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); Uma Chakravathy, *Rewriting History: Pandita Rama Bai, Her Life and Times* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

16. Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 25.

conservative Hindu sect had always looked at her activities with suspicion. Later, Ramabai changed her religious convictions and became more open about her faith.¹⁷ The girls in her *sadan* began to receive baptism. This coupled with the change in her religious attitude created a huge uproar among the Hindu section of the society. Sharada Sadan became an “avowedly and explicitly Christian” institution.¹⁸

Ramabai found it difficult to run the home in a city like Bombay, where living expenses were higher than she expected, so she moved Sharada Sadan back to Poona in 1890.

Beginning in 1896, severe famine again ravaged the country. Ramabai launched herself into a massive rescue and relief campaign. She courageously traveled to the famine-affected areas, rescued famine orphans, and brought them to the Sharada Sadan at Poona. When the number of people housed at the Sharada Sadan rose to three hundred, she had to shift most of them to a remote village, Kedgaon, where she purchased one hundred acres of farmland. She named the new place Mukti Sadan. The Mukti Mission was built largely with funds derived from Ramabai’s supporters in America. The number in her home quickly increased and reached nearly two thousand, and she faced the real challenge of meeting the people’s day-to-day needs singlehandedly. She provided the members with everything from clothing and shelter to spiritual needs, gaining strength from the Lord and reading of the Bible. Through her teachings and ministry many of the members of the community were attracted to Christianity and became baptized Christians. In 1897, she started Mukti Church at her campus at Kedgaon. European missionaries became the pastors, and some of the older women of the *sadan* became the officers of the church. Ramabai also started Kurpa Sadan (Home of Grace), a rescue home for famine victims. Hundreds of girls, boys, and women found safety in this home. Ramabai was able to give them education and other essential items. She was able to run these homes and accomplish her vision until her death in 1922.

For training the girls and women in her *sadan*, she started an industrial school. Every girl was trained to learn some trade. Studies and work went

17. Many explain this change in her attitude as her Pentecostal experience. For example, see Ruth Vassar Burgess, “Pandita Ramabai: A Woman for All Seasons—Pandita Ramabai Saraswati Mary Dongre Medhavi (1858–1922),” *AJPS* 9 (2006): 183–98; Alan Anderson, “Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism,” *Transformation* 23 (January 2000): 37–48.

18. Frykenberg, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati,” 36.

side by side. Weaving, sewing, embroidery, oil-press and dairy, laundry, baking, making garments, tinning culinary utensils, carpentry, masonry, and brickmaking are some of the trades she taught in the school. She also started a printing press and book-binding unit for the community. These industries were opened not only to train the members but also to give them employment so that the women could be self-reliant in the future.

With the help of her daughter, who studied Braille in England, Ramabai started a home and school for the blind. Manoramabai assisted her mother in all her endeavors. Unfortunately, she fell ill in July 1921 and died at the age of forty. Her death was a severe trial to Ramabai, and she died soon after, on 5 April 1922.

A Paradigm Shift in the Focus of Ramabai's Ministry

Conversion to Christianity helped Ramabai locate the essential paradigm for mission and ministry for the improvement of the status of women and the poor in her society. Through several of her writings, she expressed her joy about being in communion with Christ through her religious conversion. She explains,

I have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and have the joy of sweet communion with Him. My life is full of joy, "For the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." Now I know what the Prophet means by saying, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." I can scarcely contain the joy and keep it to myself. I feel like the Samaritan woman who "left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"¹⁹

She further describes her new experience: "I was comparatively happy that I found a religion which gave its privileges equally to men and women, there was no distinction of caste, color or sex in it."²⁰ The caste and gender discriminations in India of her time were a major challenge for her ministry. She could not find compassion toward women or to the poor in other faiths and traditions. When she encountered Christianity, Ramabai learned that kindness toward the marginalized was central: "Here for the

19. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 12.

20. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 23.

first time in my life I came to know that something should be done to reclaim the so-called fallen women, and that Christians, whom Hindus considered outcasts and cruel, were kind to these unfortunate women, degraded in the eyes of society.”²¹ As mentioned earlier, when she first observed the ministry of the Wantage sisters, she could not understand what led them to do social work among the poor and the destitute. When she heard about the story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus (John 4), she began to understand. Through that encounter, Jesus broke with the prejudices of his people by asking the woman to give him a drink from the well. He also announced that she could have the wells of living water springing up within her that could give her new life and would overflow for the good of others. Ramabai decided to claim the living water in her life so that she could also follow her Master’s path, just as the Samaritan woman did, by sharing living water with others.²² Her deeds were deeply rooted in her understanding of the Bible, which was often radically different from the hermeneutics of her contemporaries. She turned to the Bible, which she considered as the repository of the life and work of Jesus. Thus, Ramabai became the first woman biblical interpreter in India.

Against Patriarchy

Ramabai challenged patriarchy throughout her life, and she often experienced the hostility of patriarchy in her life and ministry. In both her pre- and postconversion life, she had to face this harsh reality. As Meera Kosambi points out, her challenge against patriarchy started with her father’s insistence on educating her in Sanskrit, the divine language reserved for upper-caste men.²³ Her challenge continued in the formation of Arya Mahila Samaj to mobilize women. After her conversion to Christianity, her position on patriarchy became more evident. Initially, Ramabai was impressed by the gender-egalitarian nature of the Christian doctrine. However, she soon discovered that the church was not fully liberated from patriarchy and authoritarianism. She faced staunch oppo-

21. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 18.

22. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 18. See also the discussion in Charles, *Pandita Ramabai*, 53–54.

23. Meera Kosambi, “Multiple Contestations: Pandita Ramabai’s Educational and Missionary Activities In Late Nineteenth-Century India and Abroad,” *WHR* 7 (1998): 193–208.

sition against her stand on patriarchy by leaders of the Christian church, such as the Anglican bishop of Bombay, who objected to her teaching men. Ramabai vehemently rejected this stance, arguing, "It surprises me very much to think that neither my father nor my husband objected [to] my mother's or my teaching young men while some English people are doing so."²⁴ Ramabai's understanding of patriarchy is clear in Miss Beale's statement on her stance: "In Christ she [Ramabai] had learned that there was perfect liberty, and though there was necessarily a church order and subordination, yet in the Spirit, there was in Christ neither male nor female. It seemed going back to what she had been delivered from."²⁵ Ramabai clarifies her stance as follows: "What good news for me a woman, a woman born in India, among brahmans [*sic*] who hold out no hope for me and the like of me! The Bible declares that Christ did not reserve this great salvation for a particular caste or sex."²⁶ In sum, Ramabai's life involved a lifelong battle against male hegemony both in Hindu society and in the Christian church. As a Hindu woman, she fought against the oppression of women within the religion, and as a Christian convert, she struggled against colonial bishops and male hegemony in the Christian religion. One can see her life as a narrative of parallel but discursively distinct struggles against patriarchy.

Hermeneutics and Bible Translation

Ramabai's biblical hermeneutics and deeds often challenged the Christian church and its leaders. Immediately after her baptism, the Wantage sisters discovered both her deep conviction on the teaching of Jesus Christ and her doubts about some Christian doctrines.²⁷ She could not accept the doctrines such as the Trinity, the miraculous birth of Jesus, and the divinity of Christ, whom she regarded as the Son of God. She rejected parts of the Athanasian Creed and was skeptical about all doctrinal developments of the postbiblical period. She also had serious doubts about the mira-

24. Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 60.

25. Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 49.

26. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 32.

27. For a discussion of the dispute between Ramabai and the Anglican sisters, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 118–52.

cles in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments.²⁸ She interpreted miracles as parables. Ramabai boldly rejected the advice of the sisters and others who tried to change her theological understanding. She said,

It seems to me that you are advising me ... to accept always the will of those who have authority, etc. This however I cannot accept. I have a conscience, and mind and a judgment of my own, I must myself think and do everything which GOD has given me the power of doing.... Although priests and bishops may have certain authority over the church yet the church has another Master Who is Superior even to the bishops. I am, it is true, a member of the Church of Christ, but am not bound to accept every word that falls down from the lips of priests or bishops.... I have just with great efforts freed myself from the yoke of the Indian priestly tribe, so I am not at present willing to place myself under another similar yoke by accepting everything which comes from the priests as authorized command of the Most High.²⁹

The Wantage sisters, especially Sister Geraldine, and others continued to pursue her to believe Christian doctrines and demanded a complete surrender before the authority of the church. However, Ramabai remained adamant throughout her life about her faith convictions.

She was also critical of the denominational spirit of the church leaders and their teachings. The Anglican Church always tried to guard her against other Christian denominations who competed with one another to win so valuable a prize as her. Her critical outlook can well be seen in her words:

Besides meeting people of the most prominent sects, the High Church, Low Church, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Friends, Unitarian, Universalist, Roman Catholic, Jews and others, I met with Spiritualists, Theosophists, Mormons, Christian Scientists, and followers of ... the occult religion. No one can have any idea of what my feelings were at finding such a Babel of religions in Christian countries, and at finding how very different the teaching of each sect was from that of the others.³⁰

28. See the discussion in Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 87–156. Also see the discussion in Christine Lienemann-Perrin, “Success and Failure in Conversion Narratives,” *IRM* 96 (July–October 2007): 322–42.

29. Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 59.

30. Ramabai, *Testimony*, 19–20.

No one could ever convince her of the significance of the spirit of denominationalism. In 1897, when she started a church (Mukti Church) at Kedgaon, she intentionally established it as unaffiliated with any denomination. Moreover, women of her ashram held all positions in the church, and European missionaries (Anglican) often became the pastors working under the leadership of Ramabai. Both women's holding the offices of the church and Europeans' working under Indian leadership were unimaginable for many believers of that time.

Ramabai never wanted to be separated from her culture and people, even after her conversion to Christianity. She always wanted to be an Indian Christian deeply rooted in Indian culture, and never wanted to adopt an alien culture's Christianity brought to her country. The struggle between Christianity and her Indian cultural identity continued throughout her life. She also wanted to bring up her daughter, Manoramabai, as an Indian, in spite of constant efforts to the contrary by Sister Geraldine, in whose care the girl had been left periodically during Ramabai's travels. In one of her letters to Sister Geraldine, she wrote, "I cannot make up my mind to leave Mano in England.... I want her to be one of us, and love our country people as one of them, and not a stranger or a superior being.... I do not want her to be too proud to acknowledge that she is one of India's daughters. I do not want her to blush when our name is mentioned, such being too often the case with those who have made their homes in foreign lands."³¹

Ramabai tried to indigenize Christianity in many ways. Instead of using Western hymns introduced by European missionaries, she introduced Marathi devotional songs and *kirtan* (songs of praise) for worship. She also translated the Psalms into Marathi and had them set to classical Indian *raga* (tunes).³² Ramabai is unique in that she had been a professional reciter and interpreter of sacred texts since her childhood. She interpreted Hindu scripture before her conversion to Christianity, and later, after adopting Christianity, she became an interpreter of the Christian Scripture. Her hermeneutical position is evident throughout her writings—from her first writing, *Stree Dharma Neeti*, to her Bible translation.³³

31. Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 199.

32. Shamsundar Manohar Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1979), 46–67.

33. Meera Kosambi could see Ramabai as a mature interpreter and feminist in her first writing, *Stree Dharma Neeti*, itself. On the other hand, Rajkumar Boaz Johnson

She always tried to look at the text from the perspective of women and the downtrodden in India. Hers is undoubtedly a liberationist interpretation while also taking into account the historical and social context of the text.³⁴ She was also critical of the existing missionary and Western modes of interpretation as well as the classical Indian methods of interpretation. She distanced herself from these modes of interpreting by connecting the experience of the people to the context of the text. In doing so, she brought a new meaning to the text. As Razkumar Boaz Johnson points out, "This method of interpretation results in the formation of a 'new text,' i.e., a 'new identity.' This is the Mukti text, the Mukti identity, the Mukti community."³⁵

One of Ramabai's most important endeavors as an interpreter was in her work as a Bible translator. She found a problem in the Marathi (her mother tongue) translation of the Bible in that it used "missionary Marathi" and "high Marathi language full of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian words" that were "understood by scholars only."³⁶ In fact, the existing Bible in any Indian language was translated by Western missionaries with the help of Hindu scholars. So, she decided to translate the Bible from its original languages to Marathi while avoiding the influence of Western and Hindu philosophy.³⁷ For this purpose, she learned Biblical Hebrew and Greek and began her work translating the Bible in 1905.³⁸ Bible translation became the great consuming work of her life until her death.³⁹ She wanted her translation to be simple so that it could be easily

argues that Ramabai became a mature feminist thinker and Indian Christian feminist theologian when she translated the Bible. See Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*; Kosambi, *Pandita Rombai through Her Own Words*. See also Rajkumar Boaz Johnson, "The Biblical Theological Contribution of Pandita Ramabai: A Neglected Pioneer Indian Christian Feminist Theologian," *ExAud* 23 (January 2007): 111–36. However, one could very well see her growth as a feminist thinker and interpreter from the beginning of her career. Christianity and the Bible helped her to sharpen her thoughts and new vision to do ministry among the poor and women.

34. Here I agree with Johnson, who argues that her method of interpretation is not merely following the classical methods or postmodern reader-centered methods but "inner-biblical intertextuality" ("Biblical Theological Contribution of Pandita Ramabai," 124–25).

35. Johnson, "Biblical Theological Contribution," 125.

36. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 201.

37. See Johnson, "Biblical Theological Contribution."

38. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 197–99.

39. See Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 172.

comprehensible to common people, many of whom lived in villages. Ramabai also thought that a Bible in the common people's language was not enough. The people also needed aides to understand the Bible. So she also produced Hebrew and Greek vocabularies and grammars, interlinear translations, a Bible commentary, and a concordance.⁴⁰ The very purpose of producing these lexical tools was to provide assistance to minimally educated preachers and Bible interpreters in their task of evangelism. She completed her task of translating the whole Bible into Marathi one week before her death in 1922. Importantly, in this endeavor, she used her own method, detaching herself from the methods of the colonial Bible translators and translations and thus challenging the norm that only the missionary translations were valid.

It is evident that Ramabai was rebelling against a controlling and imperialistic hierarchy as well as the orthodoxy that was being propounded by that hierarchy. She was extremely ambivalent toward Western Christians and Western Christianity, and she was also alienated from the religion of her childhood and youth. Her faith came to be characterized by Enlightenment rationalism and logic and not by a deep devotion to a personal Lord of Indian religion. In her hermeneutics, she gave much importance to the teachings of Jesus. Christian leaders in India were initially jubilant to see Ramabai's conversion as a jewel in their crown, but her theological disputes with the ecclesiastical authorities turned her into a crown of thorns for Christian orthodoxy.⁴¹ She was also unwilling to detach from her previous tradition, as the missionaries wanted. She considered her conversion to Christianity as a fulfillment of her spiritual quest. She completely submitted to the teachings of Christ, who put into practice what he preached. One could see her struggle to maintain her identity as an Indian Christian while detaching herself from the Western form of spirituality. She tried to look at the Bible from below, with the people giving importance to the context, whereas missionaries, dominated by Western-

40. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 199; see also Meera Kosambi, "Indian Response to Christianity, Church and Colonialism Case of Pandita Ramabai," *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 24–31, 1992, 65; Arun Jones, "Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922)," in *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters—A Historical and Biographical Guide*, ed. Marion Ann Taylon and Agnes Choi (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 416–18.

41. See the discussion in Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97–105.

ers, presented a hermeneutics from above. This kind of hermeneutics was new to the Indian church. However, as Rasiah Sugirtharajah points out, Ramabai has been given little importance in the study of Indian biblical hermeneutics, even today.⁴² Many consider her hermeneutics as representative of the oppressive brahmanical tradition.

Conclusions

As the pioneer in the field of woman's education, champion of human rights, and interpreter of Scripture, Pandita Ramabai contributed significantly to the improvement of women's condition in nineteenth-century India. In 1919, she received the royal Kaiser-I-Hind award from the British government in recognition of her pioneering services to women and to the community at large. She was the first Indian woman ever to receive this award. People disagreed with the means she chose to improve the condition of women, but there is hardly any disagreement about the ends she wanted to achieve. She had to face tough opposition from the conservative sectors of society, both Hindu and Christian. During Ramabai's time, changes in the lives of women would have hardly been brought by the state without the active participation of people such as Ramabai. Her many endeavors showed a great deal of strategic thinking, courage, vision, boldness, and belief in herself. Undoubtedly, she was able to think much ahead of her time.

It is, of course, an irony that a well-known and learned figure of Hinduism became the most revolutionary reformist by accepting Christian faith to improve the status of Hindu women in India.⁴³ It is also disturbing to note that contributions of this social activist have been ignored by both Christians and other social groups. Christians often speak of her achievements with religious reverence while forgetting her social role; other social groups are struck by Ramabai's conversion as a major obstacle, overlooking her contribution to women's empowerment. Hindu conservatives thought of her works among women and children as her hidden plan for converting them to Christianity. Moreover, Christian missionaries often tried to detach themselves from her works because of their disagreement with her hermeneutics. Undoubtedly, she stands out as the most important

42. Sugirtharajah, *Bible and the Third World*, 104–5.

43. See the discussion in Parinitha Shetty, "Christianity, Reform, and the Reconstruction of Gender: The Case of Pandita Mary Ramabai," *JFSR* 28 (2012): 25–41.

social figure of the nineteenth century, one whose contribution needs to be revisited in the light of recent debates on development, empowerment, and gender. Ramabai's life and contributions to wider society are still a challenge to several of us. However, today, Christian circles, including feminists—both Western and Indian—are largely unaware of her existence.⁴⁴ She was not just a woman biblical critic of the past century, for she went beyond mere gender concerns to include the needs of children and the poor in her translations and her deeds. However, her contributions are often forgotten by all, from historians to theologians. Thus, she continues to be a forgotten hero of our society.

Among her publications, the following are the most important: *Stri Dharma Niti* (Marathi, 1882), *The Cry of Indian Women* (1883), *An Autobiographical Account* (1883), *Indian Religion* (1886), *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1887), *Religious Denominations and Charities in the USA* (1889), *The Condition of Women in the USA* (1889), *Famine Experiences* (1897), *To the Friends of Mukti School and Mission* (1900), *A Short History of Kripa Sadan, or Home of Mercy* (1903), *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* (1907), and *The Word Seed* (1908).

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Women's Reading of the Bible in the Missionary Context: Helen Barrett Montgomery (United States) in Comparison with Pandita Ramabai (India)

Christine Lienemann-Perrin

Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861–1934) celebrated the nineteenth century as a women's century.¹ With this, she epitomized the beginning of the emancipation of women in American society and especially the self-consciousness of the women's missionary movement, which had promoted women's liberation in the Asian context as well. Montgomery was a leading figure in American democracy and women's (missionary) movements. In ecumenical studies, she is known as one of the most important initiators of the World Day of Women's Prayer and as such as a key person in the ecumenical movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Less known is that she was one of the first women to translate the New Testament into English and in addition that she was the author of a remarkable commentary on the Bible from the missional perspective.² Montgomery's public activities in the most diverse communal, civil society, ecclesiastical, and missionary society functions, as well as in ecumenical contexts, were permeated by a basic orientation informed by reflection on the Bible. She was convinced that the Bible as the fundamental document of Christianity

1. Helen B. Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 3: "The organization of the Women's Missionary Societies is but one of a remarkable series of movements among women that have made the nineteenth century known as the Women's Century."

2. Helen B. Montgomery, *Centenary Translation of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1924); Montgomery, *The Bible and Missions* (West Medford, MA: Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1920).

must have direct consequences not only for the individual person but also for the shaping of the private household, the community, the church in America, and world missions. But above all, Montgomery hoped for social change and an improved position for women in family, society, and church based on the Bible.

In the first part of this essay, biographical influences on Montgomery's work will be outlined. In the main section of the article, her work as the translator and interpreter of the Bible will be the focus. Her missional approach to the Bible is recognizable above all in that she embeds her reading of the Bible in the nineteen-hundred-year history of Bible translations and the resulting history of the Bible's influence. As a protagonist of the ecumenical women's missionary movement, Montgomery kept in contact with Christian women's networks worldwide and thus also knew the works of Indian woman Pandita Ramabai, who is introduced by Royce M. Victor in this volume.³ The career development, works, social commitment, understanding of the Bible, and the fundamental missionary orientation of both Montgomery and Ramabai display several parallels, which, together with the differences between them, will be compared.

1. Biographical Influences on Helen B. Montgomery's Work⁴

1.1. Family Background, Studies, and Marriage

Helen Barrett was born in 1861 into a Baptist family in Kinsville, Ohio, and lived as a child in Rochester, New York, where she spent most of her life. She and her two sisters were reared according to the ideal virtues prevalent in the Victorian era: "simplicity, piety, intellectual curiosity, self-sufficiency, self-discipline, and patriotism."⁵ Her father, Judson Barrett, was called later in life, in 1876, to become pastor of the Lake Avenue Baptist Church in Rochester, in which he baptized the sixteen-year-old Helen

3. Royce M. Victor, "Pandita Ramabai: A Forgotten Hero of Hermeneutics," in this volume.

4. On the following, see the detailed study by Kendal P. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery: The Global Mission of Domestic Feminism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009). Mobley is senior pastor at the Enon Baptist Church, Salisbury, NC, and lecturer in church history at Pfeiffer University, Miesenheim, NC.

5. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 12.

in the same year. The congregation was permeated with a missionary spirit and stands as a symbol for a period of increased Protestant activities.⁶

Helen Barrett received her education above all at home, essentially from her father, whom she revered very much. Even as an adult, she still labored to measure up to his high expectations of her.⁷ She was influenced much less by her mother, who embodied the middle-class ideal of true womanhood, the self-sacrificing, subordinate, pious, and domestic woman and mother who persistently avoided the public sphere and stayed at home. Later, Barrett attended Livingston Park Seminary in Rochester, whose director, Cathro Mason Curtis, likewise promoted the true woman ideal. At her own wish and with the approval of her father, Helen Barrett entered Wellesley College in 1880, which had been founded in 1875 in Rochester and whose teaching faculty was made up exclusively of women. As one of the very few elite schools for female students, Wellesley graduated women who became leaders in religion, politics, and social reform. Among them was also Barrett, who remained deeply influenced in her later career by her time at the college.⁸ Wellesley was an interdenominational educational institution in which an internal Protestant-ecumenical spirit prevailed, which broadened Barrett's narrow Baptist horizons. Bible studies and instruction in Greek, prerequisites for Barrett's later translation of the New Testament, were a fixed component of the four-year curriculum. However, the historical-critical research method, at that time still in its nascence in Europe, did not yet play a role. A basic missionary orientation at Wellesley was preparation for Barrett's development into a missionary and biblical scholar endowed with practical experience. The college oriented itself on the concept of symmetrical womanhood, according to which a woman was a complete human being even when she did not have a husband and a role as a housewife. A single woman was considered healthy, emotionally balanced, and well-educated. It was understood that she stood as a committed

6. Rochester was also the sphere of activity of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), chief advocate of the social gospel in North America. The commitment to social change on the basis of Christian conduct bound him and Montgomery to each other.

7. The close father-daughter relationship that resulted in support of the daughter's education was characteristic for the career development of American female activists for women's rights in the nineteenth century. Helen B. Montgomery fit this pattern (Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 14).

8. Wellesley College was founded in order to be able to offer women a university education on the level of Harvard, which did not admit women. Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright are well-known graduates of Wellesley.

citizen and activist in the service of her political community. Barrett internalized this ideal but still combined it with true womanhood, which was focused on domesticity and motherhood. This was commensurable with the type of the new woman, which was a mark of the progressive era that, at the end of the nineteenth century, superseded the Victorian era.⁹

In contrast to many of her fellow college graduates, Barrett, as a working woman, did not abstain from marriage when she married the seven years' older widower William A. Montgomery in 1887. He was an inventor and tinkerer with little formal education who, after several setbacks in selling his products, had achieved a certain affluence. He played a key role in his wife's successful professional career in that he supported her unconditionally in her decisions to assume public offices. He often took a back seat to his wife. After eight years of marriage, a five-year-old girl was adopted, for whom Helen Montgomery, now thirty-four years old, cared along with keeping her numerous professional obligations. Thus, in the conduct of her life, she showed that it was possible, even at that time, even if rather rare, to balance marriage, family, and profession.

1.2. Professional Positions and Commitment in the Civil Society

Between her time at college and her marriage, Montgomery was active as a secondary-school teacher in Rochester and subsequently at a preparatory school for Wellesley candidates in Philadelphia. After her marriage and return to Rochester, she attracted attention with her eloquent, vigorously argumentative lectures on the most diverse subjects of public and ecclesiastical life. This competency procured her access to numerous functions in ecclesiastical organizations on both the local and national levels.¹⁰ After the death of her father, the congregation named her preacher¹¹ of the Baptist Congregation of Rochester, a role that lent

9. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 25–46.

10. Montgomery, among others, was a member of the executive committee of the Women's Home Mission Union (1888), vice-president of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society (1888), president of the Women's Home Mission Union of the Monroe Baptist Association (1889), and president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (1893). She was the only female member of the Education Commission of the Continuation Committee at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

11. Women were admitted neither to the study of theology nor to the ordained ministry in the Baptist Church.

a practical grounding to her later Bible studies. Within the framework of a continuing education course for women¹² that she initiated in Rochester and which she regularly supervised in a teaching function over the course of forty-four years, she increasingly expanded her image of women for whom, up to that point, there was no place in male-dominated politics.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, she was engaged in nationwide campaigns for the adoption of suffrage rights for women. She attempted to mediate between the religiously neutral women's rights activists and evangelical feminism. The former were interested in the empowerment of women in the public sphere and in their rights in the private sphere, while the latter emphasized the mother role and the moral influence of women in the family, society, and worldwide mission. Montgomery's middle position between the two camps corresponded to domestic feminism, which assigned women the role of transforming the public sphere in the manner of a municipal housekeeping. She stood very near to the guiding principle, widespread at that time in the United States, of social housekeeping, which allowed for the traditional division of labor among the sexes to exist in the public sphere.¹³ According to this, women were intended to care for improved social welfare, to establish ministry to prisoners, to create training opportunities and protective measures for poor women and women working in industry, to erect centers for deprived children, and to assume the general care of the weak in the society, all of which had no priority in male-dominated politics. The municipal housekeeping developed on the local level was expanded step by step by Montgomery through regional politics up to the international and global level and thus contributed to the women's movement in the ecumenical world and in world missions.

12. A contemporary praised "Montgomery's class as one of the most influential in the city of Rochester" (Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 66).

13. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 72–76. On the guiding principle of social housekeeping, see Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "Geschlechterbilder in der Mission," in *"Was ist der Mensch?" Theologische Anthropologie im interdisziplinären Kontext. Wolfgang Lienemann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Graf et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 71–91, esp. 87; Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Women's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920*, FSy 22 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

1.3. Montgomery's Significance for the Women's Missionary Movement

The largest anniversary celebration of missions in the history of the United States, the Golden Jubilee of 1910/1911 in commemoration of the founding of the ecumenical women's missionary movement in 1860/1861, is indebted primarily to Montgomery's initiative. For months, numerous celebrations were held on the local level everywhere in the United States, celebrations in which tens of thousands of women took part. In contrast to the usual conferences in the ecumenical world, in which only a few experts traveling great distances came together, the Golden Jubilee offered missionary women many opportunities to participate at their own places of residence at a minimum cost. This ecumenical model has been developed further by the World Day of Women's Prayer and was also initiated by Montgomery. The World Day of Women's Prayer exists to the present day and is considered the oldest and largest ecumenical movement today.¹⁴

Montgomery never worked as a missionary in a non-Western area.¹⁵ Her commitment to mission was evident in the management team of the Baptist World Mission and its department for women's missions, in ecumenical mergers of women's missionary agencies, and in work on commissions in the worldwide ecumenical movement. On a journey in 1913 to Europe, Asia, and North Africa, she formed an impression of missionary practice, of the living conditions of women, and of the social-political situation in the countries where mission was carried out.¹⁶ Her observations shaped her missional approach as well as her readings of the Bible. In an extrapolation of the idea of municipal housekeeping to the worldwide mission fields, she pointed out to women missionaries new challenges in homes cut off from the external world (India: *Zenanas*), in

14. In 1912, Montgomery and her close friend and missionary to India Lucy W. Peabody (1861–1949) initiated the conflation of the days of prayer sponsored by home missions and world missions into a World Day of Prayer as a global institution. See Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "The World Day of Women's Prayer: From Experience to an Intercultural Hermeneutics," in *One Gospel—Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross-Cultural Theology*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 173–98.

15. "Helen never believed that she received a missionary call—at least not a call to become a career missionary" (Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 34).

16. The six-month-long trip took her to Egypt, India, Ceylon, Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan. The goal was the promotion of middle and higher education for young women on an ecumenical basis.

mission stations, and in missionary congregations. For Montgomery, there was practically no area of individual and social life without relevance for the work of missions: "We come to realize that in this cause of foreign missions are included statecraft, and civilization, and geography, and history, and biography, and philosophy, and poetry, and art, and the living history of the living kingdom of God."¹⁷ Everything is a concern to women, she said, and they should be able to have their say in all questions, even if—in accordance with the motto of cooperative diversity—not all offices and functions should belong within their area of responsibility.¹⁸

Whenever Montgomery observed Christianity in her American homeland from a non-Western perspective, she always used the term *Christendom*, with its negative connotations, in order to indicate that the variations on Christianity in the West in part had betrayed, perverted, or departed from the gospel: "In Christendom we have the white-slave trade, the red-light district, and other hateful and debasing traffics of womanhood."¹⁹ Western civilization disconnected from the gospel, she said, was inglorious and had a disastrous effect in non-Christian countries. Positive social change in countries of the non-Christian world could be brought about, in her opinion, only through mission and the civilizing efforts of the colonial powers inspired by it.²⁰ After the Second World Missionary Conference (Jerusalem, 1928), Montgomery in her later book *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem* praised the native proclaimers of the faith

17. Quoted in Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 204.

18. In contrast to women, men are said to be responsible in missions for church foundations and the training of pastors and future church leaders. Foreign missions that were separated according to gender, which Montgomery advocated, considerably expanded the room of women to maneuver, on the one hand, but did not, on the other hand, put into question the separate areas of responsibility for women in church, missions, and the public sphere. Montgomery justified the gendered missions with the argument that women at that time could develop their potential only without the guidance and control of men. On the guiding principle of gendered missions, see Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

19. Quoted in Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 216.

20. "Writing a historical overview of the missionary enterprise provided Montgomery with an opportunity to present her critique of the West in a more complete and systematic fashion, and to place it in the context of the Christian church's continuing struggle to maintain faithfulness to the gospel message in the face of temptations to compromise" (Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 237).

and “emphasized the autonomy of indigenous Christians and even their resistance to the negative aspects of Western civilization.”²¹ Without using the expression, she addressed the idea of a “reverse mission” returning from the global South to North America and Europe. In this way, she said, Christian existence could be rerooted in the North. Montgomery held mission in the direction from south to north to be essential, particularly since a Christianity that had been lost in Christendom was the greatest hindrance for mission in the non-Western world.²²

2. Montgomery’s Bible

Montgomery repeatedly praises the Bible with superlatives. “The Bible is the Great Missionary Charter of the Church.” It is “God’s Mission Study Text-book,” “the Charter of Man’s Freedom.”²³ She ascribes an active role to the Bible in the dissemination of the faith.²⁴ Montgomery reads and interprets the Bible consistently and exclusively from the mission perspective. The Great Commission is, according to her, the most important mandate that Jesus entrusted to his congregation of disciples and obligates the church more than everything else. Montgomery’s life and work, reading of the Bible, and missionary understanding require and strengthen one another mutually. One example of this is her book *Bible and Missions*, which, along with her translation of the New Testament and *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, was consulted primarily for the following observations.²⁵ Three premises govern Montgomery’s approach to the Bible as a

21. Helen B. Montgomery, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: “Fly Abroad, Thou Mighty Gospel”* (Cambridge, MA: Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1929); Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 239.

22. Montgomery, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, 190–91.

23. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 7–8, 131.

24. “The Bible itself became the active agent in the dissemination of Christian truth” (Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 96). She places a citation by John R. Mott as a motto before the third chapter (“Every Man in His Own Tongue”) of her book *Bible and Missions*: “The most important single agency in the work of evangelization is the Bible” (96). The American Mott was active for the Young Men’s Christian Association and in 1910 convened the First World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh.

25. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*; Montgomery, *Centenary Translation*; Montgomery, *Western Women*. The book *Bible and Missions* deals in part 1 with mission in the Old Testament and New Testament; part 2 devotes itself to Bible translations and their effects on mission.

whole as well as to individual biblical texts: (1) The Bible is the only book that is directed to all humanity. (2) So that the Bible can fulfill its mission among all peoples and in all cultures, it must be transmitted into every language, currently a task of the missionary societies in the West, especially in America. (3) The Bible is the most potent force in human history for changing society and for this reason must be brought to bear anew not only in non-Christian cultures but also in the partially Christianized West—in Christendom.²⁶

2.1. The Bible as a Book for All Humanity

The book *Bible and Missions*, published in 1920, devotes more space (forty-four pages) to the Old Testament than to the New Testament (thirty-eight pages). It does not offer a detailed exegesis of individual books, chapters, or verses, although Montgomery is familiar with the exegetical literature of her time and makes use of it.²⁷ What it presents, rather, is a (missionary) theology of the Bible that, in comparison with other studies of this kind, is extraordinary even today. For, as a rule, publications on the biblical prerequisites for the theory and practice of mission start with the New Testament, after a fleeting glance at the Old Testament, and work on the assumption of the contrast between the predominantly nonmissionary Old Testament (and Israel) and the New Testament (and the church) oriented on world mission. Montgomery reads the Old Testament primarily as a record of God's history with the people of all nations and only secondarily as a witness to God's special relationship with the people of Israel. What interests her in the New Testament is above all how the gospel reached the people of other nations, cultures, and languages outside the circles of the disciples, the Jews, and the first congregations. The focus of her interpretation lies on the

26. Montgomery uses *Christendom* as a negatively connoted antithesis to the positively connoted *Christianity*, as well in the formulation of younger churches in mission lands. On the use of the term *Christendom*, see Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "European Christianity Put to the Test: Observations Concerning the Use of the Term 'Christendom' in the Study of World Christianity," in *Converting Witness: The Future of Christian Mission in the New Millennium*, ed. John G. Flett and David W. Congdon (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019), 59–79.

27. This becomes clear in her translation of the New Testament, in which she responds to Dwight L. Moody, Adolf Deissmann, and Archibald T. Robertson.

outward missionary orientation of Christianity in the first centuries, to which it must return in the twentieth century.

Montgomery sees in both Testaments traces of God's working in human history according to a plan fixed from the very beginning. In all ages, God steers the fates of human beings and peoples following this plan. The first sign of God's plan can be detected in the Old Testament, but the fulfillment of it becomes visible only in the New Testament. For Montgomery, the Bible is from the first to the last line a Christocentric book in which God turns to human beings. In the Old Testament, the missionary quality of the Torah is shown, for example, in that the law creates expanded circles of blessing, through which Israel becomes a blessing also for other peoples and nations beyond the sphere of influence of Israelite religion.²⁸ Israel's election is not the justification for any privileges but is rather the call to become the channel of blessing for the nations (Gen 49:10). Israel, of course, neglected its missionary commission in regard to the nations, similar to the Christian church later, which places little value on its mandate to carry out mission to the world.²⁹

According to Montgomery, there is evidence for the universality of the biblical message already in the Old Testament: a universal dimension appears in the form of Eve in her role as the mother of all life.³⁰ The Bible's orientation toward universality is shown also in the true faith in God among human beings who live outside the Israelite religious community: King Hiram I of Tyre, Naaman, Ruth, Job, the inhabitants of the city of Nineveh. The prophetic books witness to "God's righteousness and God's providential government not only of his chosen people, but of the world,"³¹ just as the prophet Isaiah proclaims "Jehovah's" authority over all the nations (Isa 19:24–25). From this Montgomery concludes for the church that "We, too, must in the name of God claim the world for our parish."³² Thus, she finds the church's commission to engage in mission in

28. For example, in the form of the promise to Abraham to be a blessing for all the nations (Gen 12:3; Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 19).

29. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 14–22.

30. Montgomery's exegesis thus distances itself from the widespread degradation of Eve to the level of a gateway for sin in humankind.

31. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 36.

32. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 37. She finds the most remarkable guide to mission in Mal 1:14: "My name is feared among the nations!" (*Bible and Missions*, 44). Interestingly, the autobiography of the first general secretary of the World Council of

the world already in the Old Testament. In Ezek 34, the faithless shepherds are scolded because instead of tending to the sheep entrusted to them, they "tend to themselves," with the result that they deliver up the herd to dispersal and to being devoured by wild animals. Montgomery exegetes this passage to illustrate Israel's refusal to embody an outward orientation, which, instead of being concerned with the salvation of the heathen, cares only for its own salvation and practices a salvation egotism. She reads this passage as a criticism of the neglect of mission among those of different beliefs: "Can it be that America, called to be a shepherd nation, will close her eyes to Christ's flock, scattered without a shepherd upon all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek after them?"³³ According to Montgomery, God's great plan comes to a decisive turning point in world history in the New Testament, more exactly in the Acts of the Apostles: the life given in the death and resurrection of Jesus is brought to all peoples from now on as a joyous message. John the Baptist announces the Messiah, who, through miracles and parables, proclaims the dawning of the kingdom of God. With this message, Jesus himself proves to be a missionary who sends out those belonging to him in order to bring the good news to the ends of the earth with the greatest urgency.³⁴ Montgomery once again makes a direct transition from the Bible to her own present day with the words, "The world *can* be evangelized in this generation."³⁵

How persistently Montgomery reads the New Testament from the perspective of the missionary idea is shown in her choice of words: On his second "missionary tour" (Luke 8:1–3), Jesus takes along his twelve disciples, or missionaries,³⁶ his "missionary training school." Likewise, the members of the first "women's missionary society," among them Mary Magdalene, Johanna, and Susannah, accompany him. Further missionary

Churches, Willem A. Visser't Hooft, bears the title *Die Welt war meine Gemeinde* [The world was my congregation]: *Autobiographie* (Munich: Piper, 1972).

33. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 40.

34. "With terrible earnestness he sent forth his disciples to hasten to the ends of the earth with Good News that brooked no delay.... What a glory that gives to missionary work" (Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 70).

35. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 71. John R. Mott had expressed it in this way, too, at the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and therewith embodied the world missionary optimism with which the conference was pervaded.

36. Only by chance, writes Montgomery, were *mathētēs* or *apostolos* ("disciple" or "apostle") not translated with "missionary" in English-language editions (*Bible and Missions*, 73).

tours by Jesus follow, in which he prepares first the circle of the Twelve and later the larger group of the Seventy for being sent out on their own. Equipped with Jesus's spirit, they are to complete the work he began among his own people and bring it even to the ends of the earth.³⁷

Montgomery describes the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42) as a key text for the understanding of mission in the New Testament.³⁸ The words of the Samaritans who were missionized by the woman, “for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42), are in Montgomery's opinion a missionary charter in and of themselves.³⁹ Likewise, Matt 28:16–20 deserves to be called “the Missionary's Great Charter,” because here the missionary commission is reduced one-sidedly neither to the proclamation of the word nor to social commitment.⁴⁰ The direct, explicit missionary commission in the Synoptics, in the Gospel of John, and in the Acts of the Apostles is given priority over all the other instructions given by the earthly Jesus because the duty of proclaiming the gospel is inherent in the nature of the gospel. Montgomery connects the core of the missionary commission with John 20:21: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” Not merely are the disciples commissioned to bring the good news to all the nations, but they have received the same mandate from Jesus that he received from God.⁴¹

Outside the four gospels, it is above all the Acts of the Apostles that is pertinent for the missionary message. Montgomery distinguishes four zones of mission in the Acts of the Apostles that are portrayed in the mis-

37. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 72–75.

38. The chief references to the missionary message of the gospels are, according to Montgomery (*Bible and Missions*, 82): Luke 24:33–49, John 20:21, Matt 28:16–20, Mark 16:15–20, Acts 1:1–9.

39. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 71. “We have heard him for ourselves” became at the end of the twentieth century the motto of some non-Western theologians, both male and female, as the sign that they no longer required the mediation of the biblical message through the auspices of missionary people from the West but rather had found their own forms of the expression of faith. See Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Wir selber haben ihn gehört: Theologische Reflexionen zum Christentum in Afrika* (Freiburg: Exodus, 1988).

40. “We have here the universality of the missionary message; its purpose of discipling the nations; its churchly organization, and its educational and disciplinary content” (Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 80).

41. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 81.

sionary landscape of their time: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the areas up to the very ends of the world. Corresponding to the four zones are community mission or mission in and through the local congregation (parish missions), social change (state missions), domestic mission (home missions), and world mission (foreign missions).⁴² For Montgomery, the focus lies on the foreign missions initiated from the center in Antioch. Using this example, she contradicts the objection widespread in her time that there was enough to do at home before one could think of foreign missions. The Pauline letters, in Montgomery's opinion, give plenty of indications for the missionary practice of the first congregations. Along with the sharing of the burden between poor and rich congregations, references to organizational structures of the congregations and especially to the entry of women into congregational offices above influential. The list of greetings in Rom 16, in which many women are mentioned, shows, she says, that "the prominence of women workers in these early lists is little less than amazing, when the social customs of the times are considered."⁴³

Further publications by Montgomery are relevant for her gender-sensitive biblical exegesis.⁴⁴ Women were the first witnesses and heralds of the resurrected Jesus. Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28–29) was fulfilled in them at Pentecost. The New Testament texts provide evidence that women had a part in all aspects of the life of and service in the congregation. The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses; Priscilla together with Aquila instructed

42. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 77. In another passage Montgomery emphasizes that the early church was thoroughly mission-oriented. According to the witness of the New Testament, mission was an expression of congregational life. Thereby she criticizes an undesirable development of her time and mentions the danger that mission "may be officialized, externalized, becoming the cult of a group rather than the expression of the church's life" (88). According to Mobley, in her later work (Montgomery, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*) she further develops the missionary approach founded in God's mission, "in which the mission of the Christian Church is not rooted merely in biblical mandates such as the Great Commission (Matt 28:19–20), but in the very nature of God's interaction with humanity throughout history.... The kingdom of God that Jesus announced and inaugurated was the plan in its 'developing phases', and the missionary enterprise was synonymous with the growth of the kingdom of God" (Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 234).

43. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 86.

44. On the following see above all Montgomery, *Western Women*; Montgomery, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, esp. 39–41; for references to Montgomery's unpublished letters, see Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 248, 299 n. 3.

Apollos and possibly was the author of Hebrews. Phoebe served in the leadership of the congregation at Cenchreae.⁴⁵ Junia (not the masculinized form Junius) is counted among the apostles, and Tryphena and Tryphosa possibly preached like Paul. Montgomery was convinced that, in accordance with New Testament tradition, early Christianity was a “democracy of the spirit in which men and women shared alike.”⁴⁶ The Pauline admonitions directed against women are due to special circumstances and indirectly confirm the speaking and teaching activities of women in the congregation. According to Montgomery, only from the third century on did men assume control of the church as ecclesiastical leaders and thereby betray the witness of the gospel. The restrictions imposed by Paul on women, she says, are rather more situation related than of a universal nature and were an application of the principle “Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor 14:40). Likewise, according to Montgomery, the admonition directed to women in Ephesians to subordinate themselves to men must be read together with Paul’s exhortation to all that they subordinate themselves to one another. On this, Montgomery writes, “I would think this would be very good doctrine for some leaders.”⁴⁷ Paul adhered to Gal 3:26–28 as a guiding principle for the relationship between men and women.⁴⁸

Montgomery cannot emphasize often enough the significance of the Bible for social change in general and for the improvement of the living conditions for women in particular. As the authoritative source for the Christian world and as an instruction for the greatest exponents of Christianity, the Bible honors women and urges the purity of life. The Bible revolutionizes the position of women according to five principles that one day will lead to their complete emancipation: “(1) the supreme worth of the individual, (2) their direct responsibility to God, (3) the obligation of unselfish service laid on all irrespective of sex, (4) human brotherhood, (5) divine fatherhood.”⁴⁹ Only the gospel, “the most tremendous engine

45. Montgomery noticed that in current Bible translations, the Greek term *diakonos* is translated in various ways, each according to whether a woman or a man is the subject: for Phoebe, the word “servant” is used; for Timothy “minister of the Church.” In contrast, Montgomery translates *diakonos* in both cases with “minister.” See Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 259.

46. Montgomery, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem*, 40–41.

47. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 253 (quoted from Montgomery’s letters).

48. For further (indirect) references to the central significance of Gal 3:26–28, see Montgomery, *Western Women*, 73, 207.

49. Montgomery, *Western Women*, 206.

of democracy,”⁵⁰ can remove the vertical “caste mentality” (“caste of sex”) in the relationship between the genders. From Jesus, the great emancipator of women and children and the perfect democrat, she expected the transformation of American society as well as—through mission—the non-Christian world.⁵¹

2.2. New Translation of the New Testament into English

The missiological significance that Montgomery ascribed to the never-ending attempts at translation of the Bible into ever more languages was derived from God's plan for human beings in world history. She also promoted overcoming socially conditioned linguistic barriers within a linguistic area. As a book for all people regardless of their social class or level of education or gender, the Bible in her view may not be withheld from anyone: neither women nor laypeople, lower classes, or children, to whom access to the standard language of social elites, and thereby often to the only extant biblical language, is denied. It was therefore only logical that Montgomery presented her own translation of the New Testament in 1924 after nine years of work.⁵² Her intent was to make the New Testament accessible in everyday language to uneducated people, above all the youth of the alleyways. In addition, the misogynous undertones in previous translations were to be countered with a gender-fair translation. She treats translation variants and Greek terms (*apostolos* translated as “missionary” instead of the usual “apostle”) in the footnotes. She provides chapter sections with subtitles as an aid to readers. These in part let one detect her interpretative tendencies.⁵³

In the Pauline letters, she inserts quotation marks where, in her opinion, Paul cites his opponents literally or summarily. An example of this is 1 Cor 14:34–36, where Paul writes, “‘In your congregation’ [you write], ‘as

50. Montgomery, *Western Women*, 206.

51. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 218.

52. Montgomery, *Centenary Translation*. It appeared on the occasion of the hundred-year jubilee of the American Baptist Bible Society, for this reason the title *Centenary Translation*. On this translation, see the analysis and commentary by Sharyn Dowd, “Helen Barrett Montgomery's Centenary Translation of the New Testament: Characteristics and Influences” (paper presented at the yearly meeting of National Association of Baptist Professors, Kansas City, MO, 23 November 1991).

53. Thus, the conclusion of the Letter of James (Jas 5:19–20) is provided the title “Blessedness of Soul-Winning.”

in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak.... It is shameful for a woman to speak in church.' What, was it from you that the word of God went forth, or to you only did it come?"⁵⁴ Montgomery inserts the remark in brackets, "you write," into the text in order to make clear that Paul in this verse cites his Judaizing opponents, whom he himself contradicts. The following sentence, "What, was it from you that the word of God went forth, or to you only did it come?" then contains the meaning that the opinion of Paul's opponents, which discriminates against women, is not that of God but rather springs from their own imagination.⁵⁵ When Montgomery translates 1 Tim 2:15, where it is said of a woman that she will be saved through the bearing of children, as "Notwithstanding she will be saved by the Child-bearing (so will they all), if they continue in faith and love," she intends to express the idea that women are saved on the basis of Jesus's birth, not through the births of their own children.⁵⁶

2.3. The Existence of the Bible in Multiple Languages

In the second part of her book *Bible and Missions*, Montgomery, citing the nineteen-hundred-year history of Bible translations, demonstrates that the basic document of Christianity had always existed in multiple lan-

54. Quoted in Dowd, "Helen Barrett Montgomery's Centenary Translation."

55. This passage was translated and commented on in a similar manner already before Montgomery by Katharine C. Bushnell; Montgomery possibly took it over from Bushnell (Dowd, "Helen Barrett Montgomery's Centenary Translation"). See, on Bushnell, Kristin Kobes Du Mez, "Women's Movements and the Bible in the Nineteenth Century (Katharine Bushnell)," in this volume. The American Bushnell (1855–1946) was active as a missionary doctor in China and was considered a prominent Bible scholar with knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. See her most important book: Katharine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2003). According to Bushnell's understanding, there existed a connection between the misogynous Bible translations and the lower status of women in the missionary churches of Asia as well in the churches of the West. For her, there was no question that Jesus Christ had restored the original equality of the sexes through his work of salvation and that Paul, too, adhered to this equality. Bushnell is a forerunner of contemporary feminist exegesis of the Bible.

56. Dowd, "Helen Barrett Montgomery's Centenary Translation." In 1 Tim 3:11, Montgomery translates *gynaikas* with "deaconesses" and thus relates the women in the section about the admonition of the deacons to the service of deaconesses and not to women in general.

guages. The Bible is not only translated but is itself a translation, which Montgomery establishes with reference to the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, and is also evident in that Jesus's proclamation is handed down not in his mother tongue of Aramaic but rather in Greek translation.⁵⁷ For Montgomery, the translation of the Bible into more and more languages is not only the means for the transmission of the message but also part of the message itself. Montgomery remarks on the great demand for translations of the Bible into Syrian, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Latin during the first three centuries. In the ancient church, she says, the Bible was not a fetish under the control of church leaders but rather belonged to the laity as "the voice of God speaking in reproof, in instruction, and in upbuilding in righteousness."⁵⁸ Montgomery makes the (undocumented) claim that, in the entire first millennium, daily Bible reading was a part of family life. While Jerome's translation into Latin (Vulgate) had become, after several crude Latin variants, the official translation of the Roman Church, Wulfila had translated the Bible into Gothic in the fourth century and thereby at the same time put the oral language into written form in order to bring the gospel to the barbarian tribes. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Montgomery claims, hierarchy and liturgy were developed continuously with the consequence that only the clergy and monks were allowed to read the Bible. "The Church, fearful of heresy, opposed the idea of lay-reading of the Bible."⁵⁹

This historical review leads then to an inventory of the translations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which resembles a journey through all the continents; Chinese, Japanese, and Korean translations of the Bible are mentioned along with those in the languages found on Tahiti, Hawaii, in the Hebrides, on New Guinea, in Uganda, in the Muslim world, and among the indigenous peoples of North America. Although no other book has been translated so often as the Bible, many further translations still must follow, so claims Montgomery, if its purpose is to be fulfilled. Montgomery describes in detail the difficulties in finding equivalents in

57. Thereby Montgomery anticipated the accentuation on translatability in the present-day missional studies on world Christianity. See Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

58. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 97.

59. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 103.

other languages for biblical concepts such as sanctification, justification, redemption, retribution, belief, hope, and law. Concrete examples for the translation of biblical verbal imagery into linguistic, imaginative, and existential realms of existence that correspond to the relevant cultures and geographic conditions serve as illustration.⁶⁰

2.4. Effects of the Bible in World Society

In Montgomery's view, the Bible develops a life of its own in relative independence from the intentions of the missionaries interpreting it. The Bible itself is an agent in the dissemination of the Christian truth, in accord with John Mott's principle quoted before part 2 of *Bible and Missions*: "The most important single agency in the work of evangelization is the Bible."⁶¹ Montgomery illustrates the continuing effect of the Bible beyond missionary activity with an example from Madagascar, where mission personnel were denied access for twenty-five years, native Christians were persecuted, and the possession of Bibles was forbidden. Even so, the Bible continued to be read in secret; the number of believers in this time grew from fifteen hundred to seven thousand, although several thousand had been condemned to death or sold into slavery. Montgomery's comment on this is, "The Book whose mere introduction could arouse such devotion may well be called the Charter of Man's Freedom."⁶²

Audaciously, Montgomery attributes everything glorious in modern civilization, as flawed as this may have been, to the effect of reading the Bible. As examples, she mentions Roman law, the *Sachsenspiegel*, the English legal tradition, the Constitution of the United States as initiated by the pilgrim fathers, the Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson, who "had drawn many of the principles from his observations of the practices of self-government in a local Baptist Church,"⁶³ and Lincoln's abolition of slavery. The Bible further, she says, worked in a civilizing

60. In the imaginary world of Alaska, where there are neither sheep nor shepherds, she says, the phrase "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps 23) becomes in the translation of the missionaries: "The Lord is a first class mountain hunter." In Greenland "Look, the Lamb of God" becomes "Look, God's little Seal" (Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 107).

61. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 96.

62. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 131.

63. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 173.

manner on art, music, and festivities and also brought literate culture to many societies of the non-Western world. No nation on earth to the present day, she claims, has embraced the fundamental ideas of democracy without the influence of the Bible.⁶⁴ Montgomery connects the immense influence of the Bible on non-Christian nations with India, which was one of the most difficult countries if not the most difficult country of the world, she says, for mission.

She is impressed with the effect of the Bible in the world of Hindi scholarship. She mentions a Hindu scholar who had read the Bible daily for thirty years. She cites a rajah who said, "If I were a missionary I would not argue, I would distribute the New Testament," and the maharajah of Travancore, who said, "Where do the English get their knowledge, intelligence, cleverness, and power? It is their Bible which gives it to them; and now they have translated it into our language, bring it to us and say, 'Take it, read it, examine it, and see if it is not good.' Of one thing I am convinced, do what we will, oppose it as we may, it is the Christian Bible that will sooner or later work out the regeneration of our land."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, that the Bible had by far its greatest effect among the outcasts in India did not escape Montgomery. In Montgomery's time, 80 percent of the members of Indian Christianity were outcasts. They had their conversion to Christianity to thank for upward social mobility. Women, according to Montgomery, were freed from many evils thanks to the effects of the Bible; centuries-old customs that seemed impossible to change were overcome step by step under the influence of the Bible and missions. In short, "there is not a department in their life unaffected by contact with Christian women of the West, and by diffusion of the Christian Scriptures."⁶⁶ Palpable improvements in living conditions are reported from east Africa and from the Pacific islands of Maori and Tahiti. In Korea, which Montgomery herself visited, she records an extraordinary change in society as a consequence of the translation of the Bible. In Japan, courageous Christians criticized Japanese militarism and the offensive war against Korea. Japan's married women experienced an

64. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 195.

65. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 177. In this context, of course, it is to be kept in mind that the reception of the Bible is not a problem for Hindu scholars, as long as this does not lead to the change of religion in favor of Christianity. Christian thought was reflected in Reform Hinduism as diaconal commitment.

66. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 179.

improvement of their status in marriage. Prison reform and the introduction of a prison ministry in Kobe resulted from Christian initiative. As a conclusion, Montgomery states that, through the triumphal march of the Bible around the globe, a new consciousness in world society is in the making: "A great sense of commonalty is in the air."⁶⁷ While the West at one time received the Bible, Christ, and the alphabet from the Orient, the Orient now comes back to the West, in order to receive from it anew what is its own.

3. Montgomery and Pandita Ramabai in Comparison

There are at least two sides to the reading of the Bible in the mission context at the threshold of the twentieth century: the mission emanating from the West and the target groups of such mission in the global South. In this volume, there are three chapters on the reading of the Bible in connection with mission (those of Du Mez, Royce, and Lienemann-Perrin). The two last-named chapters complement each other insofar as the one is focused on the sending side (Montgomery) and the other on the receiving side (Ramabai) of missionary communication.⁶⁸ While both women belonged to the same missionary community of interpretation, they embody two opposite sides in regard to colonial mission and the geopolitical assumptions of imperialism. How did this community of interpretation take form between them? Do their interpretations of the world also stand in tension with each other in view of their different life experiences in the colonial context? The life journeys, the written works, and the reading of the Bible by both the American woman and the Indian woman might be compared here in conclusion.

A comparison almost forces itself on one because both women, in their interest in foreign social and ecclesiastical circumstances, undertook journeys to India or to the United States and thereby engaged the networks of the American women's missionary movement. Montgomery knew Ramabai's book *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, which decisively influenced her image of India.⁶⁹ Her description of the social status of high-caste widows

67. Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 195.

68. For purposes of comparison, it is assumed in the following that the chapter by Royce has been read.

69. Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (Philadelphia: Rodgers, 1887).

in *Western Women in Eastern Lands* testifies to this.⁷⁰ Conversely, Ramabai's diaconal projects for the benefit of high-caste widows and casteless women in Poona and Kedgaon in India are indebted not least of all to her close contacts with the ecumenical missionary women's movement in the United States and to its financial support. Ramabai's remarkable analysis of American society, which has been compared rightly with that by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), found expression in her hopes for future social change in India.⁷¹

3.1. The Biographies of Montgomery and Ramabai in Comparison

The careers of these two contemporaries of almost the same age, the Indian Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922) and Montgomery, include several commonalities that contributed decisively to their profiles as biblical scholars. Both were indebted substantially to their fathers for their extraordinary ascent to the American and Indian educational elite, respectively. Ramabai was introduced to the writings of Hinduism by her father, a religious scholar, although it was disapproved of among Brahmins to grant women access to this literature. Decisive for both was the support of their professional careers by their husbands. In the case of Ramabai, who became a widow after only a year of marriage and remained so for the rest of her life, there was the additional factor that she succeeded, contrary to the predestined and cruel fate reserved for high-caste widows, in escaping the influence of her relatives and leading a self-determined life. In contrast to Montgomery, who enjoyed social recognition in the middle class, to which she belonged, Ramabai lived as a child in extreme poverty and homelessness. While she at first was bestowed with the highest praise because of her phenomenal knowledge of the Indian holy scriptures in Sanskrit and then was given the honorary title “Pandita” Ramabai (*Saraswati*), she experienced social

70. Montgomery explicitly mentions Ramabai and assumes awareness of her in the North American women's missionary movement (see, *Western Women*, 59, 61–62, 224–26). The book also contains a picture of Ramabai and her daughter (236).

71. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Allyn, 1873). Pandita Ramabai's *Conditions of Life in the United States and Travels There* appeared in 1889 in the Marathi language; an English translation recently has become available in Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). In addition, see the explanatory notes by Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction,” in Frykenberg, *Pandita Ramabai's America*, 1–54.

ostracism through her family and caste on her path via reform Hinduism to Christianity. However, she was showered with admiration and support in missionary circles during her stay in the United States. Montgomery and Ramabai, as eloquent speakers excelling in argument, were women with great public charisma. Both were masterful in literary expression. Beyond this, Ramabai displayed a linguistic genius and perspicacity in social analysis, which she applied in her critique of colonial mission and colonialism.

For both women, the world of mission became a cosmos in itself within their homelands and an ideational home worldwide, in which they proved themselves as scholars, authors, and social actors. They used world mission to expand their ecumenical horizons. Montgomery's understanding of ecumenism moved within an internal Protestant framework, whereby she herself remained true to her Baptist roots. Without exception, she had a negative image of all non-Christian religions and the civilizations of the non-Western world. Ramabai, on the other hand, as a convert who had suffered under colonial mission and Anglican confessionalism during her stay in England, advocated a nondenominational Christianity and thereby anticipated a form of Christianity that expanded swiftly in the global South in the twenty-first century. In the Indian village Kedgaon, she initiated a living community in accordance with her vision of Christianity as a religion that reduces schisms, tears down fences, lives out the idea of community among diverse individuals, and respects the conscience of those individuals. She was on the whole more open than Montgomery to (in the Anglican view) Christian heresies and non-Christian religions. Against the opposition of the sisters' community in Wantage, in England, she cultivated contacts with Catholics, Anabaptists, Unitarians, Reformed, and Methodists. She justified her serious reservations against the Anglican doctrine of the Trinity with the argument that accepting it would exclude principally a considerable portion of Christianity, but above all those of different belief such as Jews and Muslims, from salvation. With this dogma, she said, one would deny to them any insight into the truth as well as God's care. Although Ramabai expressed herself critically over against Hinduism, she at the same time esteemed it as characteristic of India's identity and defended it against Western criticism, in which she detected racism and British ethnocentrism.⁷² In her correspondence with Dorothea Beale

72. See on this Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "Success and Failure in Conversion Narratives," *IRM* 96 (2007): 322–42.

on doctrinal questions, she inserted a fictive religious conversation with learned Hindus. She wanted to understand and to convey the content of Christian faith so that her arguments would be intelligible to Hindus, above all, to Brahmins, and to the representatives of reform Hinduism.⁷³

3.2. Comparison of Perspectives on Colonial Mission

Characteristic for Montgomery as well as also for Ramabai was the ability to change perspective, which made it possible for them to take an outsider's view of their own societies. This ability then influenced their reading of the Bible. Yet, the differences in their analyses of mission in the context of, and in the connection with, colonialism are unmistakable. Montgomery, for example, uncritically advocated the occupation of the Philippines by the United States as a window of opportunity for mission, translation of the Bible into local languages, education, medical mission, and evangelization. "The protection of the American flag meant the right to free thought, free speech, and a free Bible in a free state."⁷⁴ Because the dissemination of biblical knowledge in the non-Western world had first priority for Montgomery, she showed unqualified esteem for missionaries E. C. Bridgman, K. F. A. Gützlaff, P. Parker, and R. Morrison as translators of the Bible into Chinese without criticizing the roles they played as translators in the conclusion of the unfair trade agreements made by the United States and Great Britain with China.⁷⁵ As a citizen of the United States, Montgomery thus did not fundamentally question US imperialism but criticized only forms of it that were perverted and detached from Christian influence. She also accepted mission uncritically and unreservedly as a part of colonialism and cultural imperialism. What

73. Amritlal B. Shah, ed., *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1977).

74. Helen B. Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise: A Century of Baptist Mission, 1813–1913* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1913), 254 (quoted in Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery*, 243).

75. "The first treaty negotiated with America, in 1844, was accomplished through the services of Rev. E.C. Bridgman and Dr. Peter Parker, two men who in obedience to the Bible had left home and country to become Chinese to the Chinese, that they might win them to Christ [see 1 Cor 9:22, CL-P].... It was through the medium of Morrison and Gützlaff that England negotiated their first treaty" (Montgomery, *Bible and Missions*, 188–89). On Gützlaff, see Ulrich Dehn, "Der Missionar und Gelehrte Karl Gützlaff im Kontext der Geschichte Ostasiens," *IkTh* 41 (2015): 78–95.

Montgomery lacked was, however, distinctive in Ramabai: on the basis of intensive Bible studies during her stay of several years in England, she developed a subtle sense of the difference between the transmission of the biblical message and the transmission of culture as a means of civilizing and disciplining.⁷⁶

3.3. The Reading of the Bible in Comparison

The Bible was exceptionally important in the lives of Montgomery and Ramabai. Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42) played a key role for both: for Montgomery as a Magna Carta for (women’s) mission; for Ramabai in connection with her “second conversion,” in which she felt called to become a messenger of the faith among her fellow compatriots.⁷⁷ Both women read the Bible as the book that liberates women. Jesus was for them, as well as also for Katharine Bushnell, missionary to China and translator of the Bible, the liberator of women per se. In the light of Gal 3:26–28, they, however, did not consider the emancipation of women to be an isolated concern but rather to stand in connection with overcoming class and racial asymmetries. Montgomery and Ramabai saw in the biblical tradition as a whole a power for changing society that, like no other, can bring about social change issuing in a new race of human beings.⁷⁸

76. Revealing in this connection are Ramabai’s intensive Bible studies, which left their trace in her correspondence (see Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*) with Dorothea Beale, Sister Geraldine, and representatives of the Anglican clergy. Frykenberg characterizes Ramabai’s correspondence as a “battle over whether Church or Bible would have prior claim on her allegiance.” See Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Pandita Ramabai and World Christianity,” in *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of Pandita Ramabai*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim, and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 155–67; see also Royce’s chapter in this volume.

77. Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* (Kedgaon: Mukti Mission, 1907), 10, 12: “I realized, after reading the 4th Chapter of St. John’s Gospel, that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India and of every land.... I feel like the Samaritan woman who ‘left her waterpot, and went her way into the city and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?’”

78. In the living community at Mukti (“temple of salvation”) Ramabai attempted to put into practice life in Christ according to Gal 3:26–28. See Royce in this volume.

Both women spent several years in making new translations of the Bible or New Testament in their mother tongue. Ramabai is considered to be the first Indian biblical scholar and a pioneer in the area of Indian-Christian theology. She not only learned Hebrew and Greek for her Bible translation project but also taught both languages to a circle of seventy female students in the Mukti community, on the model of the Septuagint, in order to pursue with them the translation as a communal enterprise.⁷⁹ Because the language of the rulers was typical of the English- or Marathi-language Bible translations and remained foreign to the socially marginalized (the proletariat, street kids, the casteless, and women), on the one hand, and, on the other, also cemented the social gap between the classes, castes, and genders, Montgomery and Ramabai sought a new approach to the Bible in the languages of the lower classes and women. In her Bible translation, Ramabai avoided foreign Sanskrit words in the Marathi language and replaced them with pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan colloquial terms. She replaced Marathi terms for “son” and “sonship,” which emphasize the pre-eminent religious position of the oldest son over other family members, lower castes, and the casteless, with neutral terms without religious or socially discriminating overtones. For the name or designation for God (the Tetragram, Elohim, Adonai), she employed pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan expressions in order to underline the difference between the biblical God and the divine notions in the Hindu tradition (Sat Cit Ananda, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva).⁸⁰

3.4. The Lasting Significance of Montgomery and Ramabai in Comparison

Montgomery and Ramabai were pioneers of the ecumenical and missionary movement of the twentieth century. Their perspectives on the common vision of a worldwide community of faith, of course, reveal that there were also breaches and disparate dynamics between the central (colonial) missionary agencies in the West and the Western missionary foundations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The World Day of Women's Prayer, which Montgomery decisively helped to initiate, had a primarily American stamp in its beginning phase but already showed a tendency toward

79. Rajkumar Boaz Johnson, “The Biblical Theological Contribution of Pandita Ramabai: A Neglected Pioneer Indian Christian Feminist Theologian,” in Hedlund, Kim, and Johnson, *Indian and Christian*, 195–223; esp. 211–12.

80. Johnson, “Biblical Theological Contribution,” 214–15, 219–20.

a global orientation. Nevertheless, in comparing Ramabai's diagnoses of the times, it must be stated in qualification and critique that Montgomery's interpretation of the world did not go beyond the colonial world order. Likewise, her understanding of the Bible as a book for the entire human race had a triumphalist coloring, in which the imminent victory of Christianity over all other religions and non-Western cultures resonated. In contrast, whenever Ramabai encountered such undertones during her stay in England, she reacted with vehement criticism.⁸¹ As the World Day of Prayer was taken up and shaped step by step by women from all continents in the twentieth century, its Western orientation receded in order to provide room for the critique of the negative consequences of globalization for the people not only in the South but also in the North Atlantic regions. Its profile changed in favor of an immense diversity of liturgical, theological, and diaconal manifestations of life. Thanks to its ability, on the one hand, to reposition itself in response to the demands of the time and, on the other, to remain true to its motto "informed praying, praying action," the World Day of Women's Prayer has remained to the present the largest ecumenical movement in Christianity.

While Montgomery's significance has remained restricted to the ecclesiastical-ecumenical sphere, that of Ramabai lives on far beyond the churches of India and worldwide ecumenism in an astoundingly broad reception. Without her encounter with the Anglican mission in India, with Christianity in the heart of the British colonial power, and with women's mission in the United States, Ramabai's career would have proceeded quite differently. But it would be a mistake to reduce it alone to these influences, just as it would be to attempt to filter the Christian elements out of her emancipatory model of life. Both have been done in the history of her reception, depending on which academic assumption has been the foundation of the studies. What connects most of the studies in Ramabai research with one another are the selective perceptions and interpretations of her lifework. In the first half of the twentieth century, the retelling of Ramabai's conversion to Christianity predominated. In this, the focus was on the character of her conversion biography as a model for others.⁸² In Pentecostal literature, Ramabai today is counted as one

81. So, e.g., Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*, 108–9; see also Lienemann-Perrin, "Conversion Narratives," 332.

82. Nicol MacNicol, *Pandita Ramabai: Die Mutter der Ausgestossenen* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1930); Anna Oehler, *Vom Dschungel zum "Haus der*

of the founding figures of the global Pentecostal movement, while her rejection of Pentecostal piety in the last years of her life—to which, on the other hand, Protestant authors especially refer—remains unmentioned.⁸³ Ramabai was discovered and recognized astonishingly late as a precursor of the Indian Dalit theology.⁸⁴ She appears in postcolonial studies as early critic of colonial and colonial missionary dependencies.⁸⁵ Within Indian feminism, there is a controversy about what significance Ramabai's turn toward Christianity has for her emancipatory profile.⁸⁶ Indian humanist Amritlal Shah, as a “confessing atheist” (Suarsana), pays tribute to Ramabai as an outstanding figure in the history of India without devoting even a single line to her Christian character.⁸⁷

The biblical scholars Montgomery and Ramabai leave the impression among their very heterogeneous readership that what was researched and advocated academically a century after them is not at all new and has not been said for the first time. Astoundingly, much already was thought of and committed to paper in the early twentieth century under different historical circumstances and in other ways: gender-sensitive Bible translation, class- and caste-critical biblical exegesis, and contextual or postcolonial biblical hermeneutics. So, did everything already exist back then? Certainly not, for, under the circumstances of an immensely accelerated globalization in the political, military, economic, cultural, religious, and medial spheres of life, the question of what it means to interpret the legacy of the Bible for people in church, society, state,

Weisheit”: *Das Leben der Inderin Pandita Ramabai* (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1944).

83. On this, see the broadly conceived study by Yan Suarsana, *Pandita Ramabai und die Erfindung der Pfingstbewegung: Postkoloniale Religionsgeschichtsschreibung am Beispiel des “Mukti Revival”* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013).

84. Johnson, “Biblical Theological Contribution.” *Dalit*—translated literally as “the downtrodden”—is an expression for casteless people and generally for people at the margins of Indian society. *Dalit* theology is the Indian variant of liberation theology.

85. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

86. Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions: Focus on Stree Dharma-Neeti* (Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1995).

87. In his introduction to the *Letters and Correspondence*, Shah (1920–1981) has raised a monument to Ramabai as an Indian social activist. In his eyes, she was “the greatest women produced by modern India and one of the greatest Indians in all history” (xi).

and the community of peoples must be explored anew today. A deeper acquaintance with Montgomery's and Ramabai's work can be a help in this effort, but it cannot replace reading the Bible with the eyes of people at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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Victorian Women's Global Activism and Female Biblical Interpretation: Katharine Bushnell's *God's Word to Women*

Kristin Kobes Du Mez

To a degree often underappreciated, nineteenth-century Anglo-American Protestant women participated in a globally oriented faith. Already by the 1860s, the women's foreign missionary movement was turning the hearts and minds of tens of thousands of Christian women to "heathen lands." By the 1870s temperance reform had emerged as a movement uniting Protestant women across denominations, and it was not long before temperance reformers began to look globally as well, commissioning "round-the-world missionaries" to bring the gospel of temperance to women and men the world over.¹ In subsequent years many temperance women also took up the cause of social purity, a movement that soon came to rival temperance in popularity. By the end of the century, social purity feminists had succeeded in locating opposition to prostitution and to the sexual double standard at the very heart of the Victorian women's movement, and, through their efforts to combat the trafficking of women globally, they, too, had taken their campaign to the world stage.

As they pursued their global activism, late Victorian Protestant women actively participated in an imagined "global sisterhood," a "worldwide sorority rooted in a common sense of gender oppression."² In some cases

Portions of this work are excerpted from Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *A New Gospel for Women: Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

1. On the international reaches of the WCTU, see Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

2. Tyrrell, *Woman's World*, 7.

elevating gender over race and nation, many Christian women advanced “a distinct kind of gendered, Christian internationalism.”³ On the one hand, this global women’s activism can be seen as an expression of a broader cultural imperialism, as the imposition of Western values on non-Western societies. At a time when Christianity was inextricably bound up with notions of Western civilization, many Victorians believed that the spread of the gospel necessarily entailed accompanying cultural transformation. Yet at the same time, scholars have demonstrated how overly simplistic understandings of cultural imperialism have obscured the powerful ways in which Western women were themselves transformed through their global encounters.⁴ In fact, even as they were propelled by their Christian faith to transform the world, Victorian women’s international activism in turn altered their own beliefs.⁵ By changing the way women read their Bibles and challenging traditional theological understandings, global encounters contributed to a dynamic era of women’s biblical interpretation during the late Victorian era and into the twentieth century.

Katharine Bushnell

One of the most compelling examples of the influence of global encounters and international social activism on Anglo-American women’s biblical interpretation can be seen in the life and work of Katharine Bushnell (1855–1946). Although nearly forgotten today, Bushnell was once a leading female reformer and internationally known activist. She began her career in the 1870s as a medical missionary to China and later became one of the most prominent members of the World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and one of the leading proponents of social purity in the United States.⁶ Close friends with Frances Willard, president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and Josephine Butler,

3. Jane H. Hunter, “Women’s Mission in Historical Perspective: American Identity and Christian Internationalism,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 31.

4. See Connie Anne Shemo, *The Chinese Medical Ministries of Kang Cheng and Shi Meiyu, 1872–1937* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011), 6–8.

5. Tyrrell, *Woman’s World*, 96.

6. The most prominent non-Western WCTU activist was Pandita Ramabai. For more on Ramabai, see Victor Royce’s chapter in this volume.

the “founding mother” of British feminism (the two women who were perhaps most responsible for directing the attention of Victorian women globally while at the same time calling for a gendered reassessment of the Christian Scriptures), Bushnell was at the very center of Victorian female reform.⁷

From the earliest days of her activism, Bushnell's reform work—first as a missionary and then as a global purity worker—challenged her understanding of the very faith that motivated her to action. It was only after repeatedly observing Western, *Christian* men wielding power over women and treating them with alarming cruelty, often with impunity, that Bushnell came to question the very foundations of Western Christianity. In 1916, Bushnell published the culmination of her biblical investigations in *God's Word to Women*, a collection of one hundred meticulously researched and tightly argued lessons in which Bushnell recasts the gospel of Christ as one of liberation for women the world over.⁸ This essay will explore the interplay between Bushnell's theology and her activism and present an introduction to key aspects of her revised biblical narrative.

It was Bushnell's international experience as a foreign missionary that set the stage for her future work. As a young woman coming of age in Evanston, Illinois, Bushnell had pursued a career in medicine for the purpose of Christian service, and upon graduation from medical school she accepted a position with the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary

7. On Butler's faith, see Lucretia A. Flamming, “‘And Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophesy’: The Voice and Vision of Josephine Butler,” in *Women's Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of Their Fathers*, ed. Julie Melnyk (New York: Garland, 1998), 151; Lisa Severine Nolland, *A Victorian Feminist Christian: Josephine Butler, the Prostitutes and God* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004); and Timothy Larsen, “Evangelical Anglicans: Josephine Butler and the Word of God,” in *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 219–46. For an example of Willard's theological writing, see Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (Boston: Lothrop, 1888). For more on Willard, see Claudia Setzer's chapter in this volume. On Josephine Butler as the “founding mother” of British feminism, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 255.

8. Katharine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Divine Economy* (repr., Peoria, IL: Cosette McCleave Joliff and Bernice Martin Menold, n.d.). Bushnell first published her Bible lessons as *God's Word to Women* in 1916, but it was not until 1923 that she published the edition most commonly reprinted today. She issued the final edition of her book in 1930.

Society to serve as a medical missionary to China. Though ill health compelled her to abandon her work after three eventful years on the mission field, she returned home with a new appreciation for the subjectivity of biblical translation and with a growing suspicion of masculine theology. It had been only a few weeks after arriving in China that Bushnell had come across a Chinese translation of the Bible, and though still a novice in the language, she had noticed a seeming discrepancy between the Chinese translation of Phil 4:2–3 and the KJV, with which she was familiar. Whereas the KJV mentions two women who had labored with Paul in the gospel, the Chinese translation switched the gender of the helpers from female to male.⁹ Upon confronting a male missionary about this discrepancy, Bushnell was told that “undoubtedly it was so rendered because of pagan prejudice against the ministry of women.”¹⁰ What seemed to him a logical and pragmatic decision was for Bushnell a shocking revelation. It “had never before entered [her] mind that such a thing could be,” that the gospel of Christ could be blatantly distorted to align with cultural prejudices.¹¹ It soon occurred to her that if devoted Christian missionaries could so easily justify a sex-biased Chinese translation, other translations of the Bible might also bear the mark of prejudice. She began to compare her Chinese and English Bibles to her Greek Testament, whereupon she discovered additional signs of gendered mistranslation. She then took up a study of Hebrew and from that point on devoted her spare moments to an examination of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures in order to root out instances of male bias in the translated text.¹²

After cutting short her missionary career, Bushnell returned to the United States and set up a medical practice in Denver, Colorado. But she “had not studied medicine for its own sake, but as a help in Christian work,” and soon became discontented with her practice.¹³ However, she found more fulfilling work with the Colorado branch of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Temperance had only recently emerged as the centerpiece of women’s reform efforts, thanks in large part to the

9. Catherine Clark Kroeger, “The Legacy of Katherine Bushnell: A Hermeneutic for Women of Faith,” *PP* 9.4 (1995): 1–5.

10. Katharine C. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell: A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford: Rose & Sons, 1932), 20.

11. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 20.

12. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 20.

13. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 5.

remarkable expansion of the union under the leadership of Bushnell's friend and former neighbor, Frances Willard, who had helped transform temperance into "the paramount women's issue of the day."¹⁴ By successfully convincing her "White Ribbon Army" that women needed the vote in order to reform society, Willard brought thousands of middle-class women into the suffrage ranks and helped transform suffrage from a disreputable cause into a religious duty.¹⁵ In this way the temperance movement was instrumental in bringing together Christianity and feminism in late Victorian America and in defining the shape both would take. Temperance was at its heart a women's movement, one premised on a fundamentally antagonistic view of women and men. For Bushnell, this antagonistic relationship found clear expression in her theological reflection.

As a temperance worker in Denver's saloon districts, Bushnell turned her attention as well to the plight of the city's prostitutes, whose numbers included a number of Chinese women. It was not long before Willard asked Bushnell to help lead the union's new social purity department.¹⁶ Social purity was a broad reform movement that encompassed diverse and occasionally contradictory endeavors, including antvice campaigns, censorship, sex education, and efforts to raise the age of consent.¹⁷ But at the center of the social purity movement was a critique of the sexual double standard, the Victorian convention that held women to far higher standards of sexual purity than men. Purity was a controversial endeavor at the time, but Willard had been inspired to take up the cause of purity by Josephine Butler, the British evangelical activist who had spearheaded the social purity movement in Britain. Thanks in no small part to Bushnell's efforts, social purity soon joined temperance as the mobilizing force of both the British and American women's movements.

Bushnell wasted little time in using her new position to introduce the nation to the cause of purity. In summer 1888 she conducted a highly publicized investigation into the rumored "white slave trade" in the lumber camps of northern Wisconsin and Michigan. In four months Bushnell visited fifty-nine "vice dens" and interviewed "some 575 degraded

14. Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 69.

15. Mary Earhart, *Frances Willard: From Prayers to Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 150, 193.

16. *Union Signal*, March 4, 1886; Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 5.

17. Tyrrell, *Woman's World*, 191–92.

women.”¹⁸ Although at the close of her investigation she reported that “that sensational picture of a den with a stockade as high as its roof, a whole pack of trained hounds and an armed doorkeeper,—is an exaggeration,” she concluded that there were “more formidable obstructions to a girl’s escape from a life of shame”: the “total lack of sympathy” on the part of “men, women, and officers of the law.”¹⁹ She castigated seemingly respectable local businessmen who profited from the trade in women, local and state officials who turned a blind eye to the prostitution in their own jurisdictions, and medical doctors who not only tolerated but even encouraged “the spread of this iniquity” for the additional business they garnered.²⁰ She was particularly dismayed to find that some “*virtuous* (God forbid the misnomer!) women” considered “the degradation of young girls” necessary for the protection of their own virtue, believing that such women provided an outlet for men’s natural iniquity.²¹

It was this erroneous ideology, Bushnell contended, that bore the greatest responsibility for the entrapment of women in a life of prostitution, and she located the sexual double standard at the crux of the problem: “Down through the ages has ever rung that saying, which has been looked upon as so complimentary to female chastity, ‘Woman stands so much higher than man, that when she falls she falls lower than he.’” But Bushnell countered this assertion: “Is there any higher elevation upon which woman can plant her feet than the Rock of Ages? and can man stand securely on any other plane of living?” The Son of God modeled perfect purity for women, she maintained, but also for men. “Dare man pretend to be Christian at all and pattern his life after a less perfect model?”²² Bushnell knew, however, that few Victorian Christians shared this conviction, and for this she blamed the church. The church, she claimed, had failed to follow Christ’s own example; just as Christ refused to throw the first stone at the woman taken in the act of adultery, so, too, ought society to respond to “fallen women” with compassion and tenderness.²³ Reports of Bushnell’s investigation were published in newspapers across the nation, and “the whole country”

18. WSW (November 1888): 1–2.

19. WSW (November 1888): 7.

20. WSW (November 1888): 2–4.

21. WSW (November 1888): 7.

22. Kate C. Bushnell, *The Woman Condemned* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 10–11.

23. Bushnell, *Woman Condemned*, 17.

was swept up in "the White Slave question."²⁴ Bushnell had helped shatter the conspiracy of silence that had surrounded public discussion of sexuality and had established purity as "the latest and greatest" domain of moral reform.²⁵

Impressed with Bushnell's efforts, Butler asked Bushnell to undertake a similar investigation in British India, providing Bushnell with an opportunity to re-create on an international stage what she had just accomplished in the United States. In 1886, after over a decade of petitioning, Butler and other reformers had succeeded in bringing about the repeal of Britain's Contagious Diseases Acts, a set of laws dictating the compulsory examination of prostitutes and the forced confinement of diseased women in lock hospitals. To purity activists these laws exemplified the double standard at its worst; poignantly symbolizing the power men wielded over women, the laws effectively sanctioned prostitution as a social necessity while demonstrating the state's willingness to sacrifice the rights of women over their own bodies in order to enable soldiers to do as they pleased. Butler had made opposition to the acts the focal point of her campaign for women's rights, but not long after defeating the measures reformers began to suspect that the compulsory examinations and forced confinement of women continued in the colonies under new Cantonment Acts.²⁶ Bushnell and her friend Elizabeth Wheeler Andrew (a coeditor of the WCTU's journal, the *Union Signal*, who had worked closely with Bushnell during her Evanston years) were charged with conducting an investigation to uncover whether this was in fact the case.

Upon arriving in Calcutta in 1891, Bushnell and Andrew quickly learned that their task would not be a simple one. The local missionary assigned to assist them "could not hide his impatience at two women who would undertake (to his mind) so unseemly a task," a fact that moved Bushnell to "righteous indignation." She retorted that it was certainly

24. *Union Signal*, November 8, 1888, 4; Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 8.

25. David Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868–1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973), 10.

26. See Josephine Butler, *The Constitution Violated* (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1871); Jenny Uglow, "Josephine Butler: From Sympathy to Theory," in *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 146–64; Helen Mathers, "The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler, 1828–1906," *JEH* 52 (2001): 282; Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 95.

appropriate for Christian women to investigate “what pagan women had to suffer at the hands of men from a Christian country” and that God would help them in their cause if he would not.²⁷ Deciding to set off on their own, Bushnell and Andrew traveled 3,597 miles, visited ten military stations, investigated 637 cases of cantonment prostitutes, and interviewed 395 individuals,²⁸ gathering ample evidence that the compulsory examination and forced confinement of Indian women continued unabated. In every case, they noted, women’s health was “made subservient to the health and convenience of the British soldier.”²⁹ In their published report on their investigations they stated their case compellingly: “Weigh the soul of that one dark-skinned heathen girl against the diseased bodies of a standing army of men, and God knows which has most weight in his sight, even if a whole materialistic nation may have forgotten.”³⁰

Upon reading their report Prime Minister Gladstone was “simply horrified,” and he called for a governmental committee to investigate their claims.³¹ In spring 1893 Bushnell and Andrew returned to England to give evidence before the committee, and later that summer they confronted Lord Roberts, the commander of the British army in India, in a dramatic showdown. Roberts had denied the truth of their report, but when additional documents arrived from India corroborating “nearly every statement” Bushnell and Andrew had made, the humiliated Lord Roberts conceded defeat.³² The cause of social purity had won a notable victory in the court of public opinion.

The next year Bushnell and Andrew were asked to undertake an investigation of the opium trade in China, Singapore, and Hong Kong,

27. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 12, 14–15. For a slightly more sympathetic account of this man, see Elizabeth W. Andrew and Katharine C. Bushnell, *The Queen’s Daughters in India* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1899), 25.

28. Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics*, 105; “Indian Journal” (original manuscript), 1892, Papers of Henry Joseph Wilson, The Women’s Library, London Metropolitan University, 3HJW/F/05.

29. Andrew and Bushnell, *Queen’s Daughters*, 56–57.

30. Andrew and Bushnell, *Queen’s Daughters*, 41.

31. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 13.

32. Andrew and Bushnell, *Queen’s Daughters*, 91. See also “Is Vice Regulated by the State in India? Interview with General Lord Roberts,” CC 11 (1893): 519; and “Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Butler, 24 August 1893,” in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, ed. Jane Jordan and Ingrid E. Sharp (London: Routledge, 2003), 5:209–13, 381–82.

and around the same time they agreed to investigate “the slave trade in Chinese girls for immoral purposes” in Singapore and Hong Kong at the request of the colonial office in London.³³ Conducting both investigations simultaneously, they soon identified close links between intemperance and impurity. And as they had discovered in British India, in both cases it was Westerners who bore chief responsibility for the perpetuation of vice. Bushnell's earlier American investigations had already revealed to her the complicity of respectable, Christian gentlemen in prostitution and the trafficking of women, but her global campaigns presented this conundrum in far starker terms. Time and again, they discovered that it was *Christian* men who were committing acts of unspeakable cruelty against so-called heathen women. The book they later published on these investigations, *Heathen Slaves and Christian Rulers*, was filled with stories condemning the uncivilized, unchristian practices of respectable and even renowned “Christian gentlemen.”³⁴ That Christian men, supposedly representatives of a higher civilization, could act in such unchristian ways toward women, and with such frequency, planted seeds of doubt in Bushnell's mind as to the nature of the faith that provided the purportedly moral foundations for that civilization.

It was in the summer of 1899 that Bushnell finally confronted these questions directly. Having recently returned to India, she and Andrew were alarmed to discover that the government regulation of prostitution persisted, despite their earlier efforts. Dismayed at repeated reports of the abuse of Indian women at the hands of purportedly Christian men, Bushnell turned to her Bible for direction, “prayerfully seeking light as to what the Word teaches of the duty of one sex towards another.”³⁵ With renewed intensity she searched the Scriptures to comprehend how Christian men could perpetrate such deplorable acts against women, and with immunity.

By the end of the summer Bushnell outlined in a letter to Butler a comprehensive critique of traditional theology. She alleged that male theologians had effectively established a “doctrine that the sexual abuse of wife by husband was ordained by God at the fall of Eve.” She defended such

33. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell*, 19.

34. Elizabeth Andrew and Katharine Bushnell, *Heathen Slaves and Christian Rulers* (1907).

35. Katharine Bushnell to Josephine Butler, 30 August 1899, Butler Letters Collection, Women's Library, 3JBL/43/28; Josephine Butler, “Dead Hands on the Threshold,” *SB* (1899): 202–6.

jarring language by arguing that what theologians taught to be “the God-ordained marriage relation between man and woman” in fact robbed women of their “will and wishes” in the marriage relation and thus amounted to nothing less than “the sexual abuse of the wife by the husband.”³⁶ Yet while theologians insisted that the “God of truth and justice” had placed “humiliation and abuse and sorrow in the compulsory bearing of children upon the female, *simply because she is a female*,” they essentially gave free reign to their own egotism under cover of “headship.”³⁷ But Bushnell believed the atrocities Christian men perpetrated against women were “quite sufficient to spoil all such theology.” In fact, she connected the abuse of women directly to such faulty theology, since “if theology teaches the enslavement of woman to man *inside* the marriage relation” it should come as no surprise that men would extend that domination to all women. “Men cannot make unquestioning, obedient slaves of *wives only*—sooner or later the iniquity of slavery will be visited upon the head of *unmarried* women also; for iniquity knows not the name of restriction.”³⁸

Convinced that traditional, patriarchal interpretations of Christian theology led to the system of domination and abuse of women that she had witnessed in the United States, British India, and east Asia, Bushnell set out to provide a new theology, one that corresponded to her understanding of the gospel of Christ. Equipped with a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, Bushnell had carefully studied the Scriptures ever since her encounter with the sex-biased Chinese translation, a moment when she had not only glimpsed the enculturation of the gospel within Chinese society but, more significantly, had come to suspect that her own faith might have been shaped by similar cultural prejudices as well. Already in the 1870s, Bushnell had begun to publish preliminary reports of her theological investigations in the pages of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’s *Union Signal*. But her global purity work made starkly visible to her the effects of patriarchal distortions of Christianity on the status and treatment of women and led her to dedicate her life to the task of providing a new gospel for both women and men.³⁹ In 1916, after over a decade

36. Bushnell to Butler, 30 August 1899.

37. Bushnell to Butler, 30 August 1899, emphasis original.

38. Bushnell to Butler, 30 August 1899, emphasis original.

39. It should perhaps come as no surprise that Bushnell’s theology was inspired by her international social activism. As missiologist Andrew F. Walls makes clear, the “cross-cultural diffusion of the Christian faith invariably makes creative theological

of study devoted to the project, she published the first edition of *God's Word to Women*.

What was perhaps most remarkable about Bushnell's theology was that she pressed her radical feminist claims while upholding the inerrant, authoritative truth of the Scriptures. Rejecting the tools of higher criticism, she considered every word of the biblical text "inspired, "infallible," and "inviolable."⁴⁰ But because she believed modern translations to be thoroughly corrupted by masculine bias, she called on women to provide more reliable translations. With *God's Word to Women* she hoped to lead the way, hewing a new path for women to follow.

A New Gospel for Women

Bushnell's revisionist theology was rooted in her reinterpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. Like other female theologians before her, she rebuffed arguments for women's inferiority based on the creation narrative, but it was her reinterpretation of Gen 3, where Adam and Eve first sinned, that provided the unique foundation for her innovative feminist theology. Whereas traditional theology assigned Eve culpability for humanity's fall and therefore subjected Eve, and through Eve all women, to masculine domination, Bushnell offers a dramatically different reading. To begin with, Bushnell refuses to find women's destiny in a curse. To locate woman's destiny in Gen 3:16 effectively denies the efficacy of Christ's atonement for women and in so doing represents an egregious *theological* double standard.⁴¹ More significantly, however, Bushnell denies the very existence of Eve's purported curse. Bushnell locates humanity's fall into sin not in Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit, nor in Adam's, but rather in Adam's response to God, drawing attention to the strikingly different ways in which the two respond to God after they have eaten the fruit. Eve truthfully confesses, "The *Serpent* beguiled me, and I did eat"; Adam also confesses but adds, "The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, *she*

activity a necessity." See Walls, "The Ephesian Moment," in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 79.

40. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, paragraph 2. Consistent with Bushnell's own practice of citation, here and following I cite Bushnell's numbered paragraphs rather than page numbers.

41. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 345, 363.

gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”⁴² Whereas Eve assigns the remote cause of her sin to Satan, Adam instead “accuses God to His face of being Himself that remote cause.”⁴³

Bushnell ascribes profound significance to Adam and Eve’s contrasting responses. By “becoming a false accuser of God,” Adam “advanced to the side of the serpent.” But Eve, by exposing “the character of Satan before his very face, created an enmity between herself and him.”⁴⁴ For Bushnell, this divergence provides a crucial context for understanding the curses found in Gen 3:14–19. Why would Adam, “who accused God of unwisdom and sheltered Satan from blame,” be “elevated to government over women; and . . . be allowed to dictate, by his own whims, how much or how little physical suffering she is to endure, as the price of his fleshly indulgence?” Bushnell remarks.⁴⁵ If anyone caused Eve to suffer through a curse, Bushnell reflects, it would be Satan, her newly established enemy. Through careful textual analysis, then, Bushnell concludes that the curse was not in fact Eve’s divine punishment but rather *Satan’s* handiwork, meted out to punish Eve for rightly blaming the serpent’s deceit rather than her God.⁴⁶ Thus it was Adam and not Eve who was thrust out of Eden. Indeed, she points out, even as Adam was facing his spiritual death, fulfilling the prophecy that he “would surely die” if he ate from the tree, he addresses Eve as “Living”—marking a spiritual contrast between himself and his wife.⁴⁷ And yet further reading finds Eve outside the garden. It is here, Bushnell explains, that the immediate consequences of the prophecy found in Gen 3:16 become clear; Eve subsequently made the disastrous choice to turn to her husband, away from her God, and follow him out of Eden.⁴⁸

It is important to note that Bushnell does not exonerate women from all sin, but she does dramatically redefine what constitutes sin for women and men. She maintains that conventional associations of sin with pride remain accurate when applied to men but argues that since the time of the fall, women have been far more likely to commit the sin of inappropriate

42. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 68; Gen 3:12–13.

43. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 69.

44. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 71.

45. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 104.

46. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 104.

47. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 95–97.

48. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 122.

humility. Both Adam and Eve wanted to be “as God” when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she explains, a sin of pride. But whereas Eve repented, Adam continued in his rebellion, and since that time a dispute had raged between God and man for control of the throne. And what role would God have women play in this dispute? Bushnell asks. According to a tradition shaped by male expositors—men who, Bushnell claims, continued to wage this battle for the throne—women were to “show their humility, their willingness to take a lowly place,” to “show they owe no allegiance but to MAN ALONE,” not even to God’s angels.⁴⁹ But if women were to obey this injunction, Bushnell challenges, would they not be acting as accomplices in man’s rebellion against God? “What madness for women to do this!” she exclaims, “And call it ‘humility!’”⁵⁰ For Bushnell, male authority over women contradicts God’s will and perpetuates man’s original rebellion against God. “Satan knew very well how to clothe an insult to God in the garments of ‘humility’ and ‘womanliness,’” she writes; when men urged women to be silent, submissive, and “womanly,” they followed in Adam’s footsteps, in alliance with the devil.⁵¹ Women, on the other hand, continued to commit the sin of Eve when they submitted to men rather than to God. In a theological coup, then, Bushnell redefines virtue and vice for both women and men, directly contradicting Victorian constructions of womanhood.

Bushnell considered her biblical studies “vital to the advancement of purity.”⁵² Rehabilitating Eve was a crucial first step, but she knew that more must be done in order to undo the theological roots of the sexual double standard. Early on in her biblical studies she identified cases where translators had assigned an “unusual meaning” to a word whenever it referred to a female, and she found this gendered pattern of mistranslation alarmingly evident when it came to passages concerning women’s virtue. The clearest example of this trend could be observed in connection with the Hebrew word understood to connote “force, strength, or ability.”⁵³ But there were four exceptions to this rule: “In every case where it referred specifically

49. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 390. Here Bushnell quotes Arthur Penryn Stanley, dean of Westminster.

50. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 391.

51. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 391.

52. Katharine Bushnell to Ethel Sturges Dummer, 20 May 1921, Ethel Sturges Dummer Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA.

53. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 623–24.

to a woman,” translators had assigned a different meaning: “‘virtue’—i.e. chastity.”⁵⁴ The first of these exceptional cases occurs in the book of Ruth, where Ruth, having left her home and family to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi back to Israel, is described as “a woman of *cha-yil*.” From the list of available meanings Bushnell considers “an able woman” or “a woman of courage” to be suitable translations, in accord with other instances found in the Old Testament.⁵⁵ But it “almost” seems to Bushnell as if “our English translators took no care” as to the precise language of the text when they rendered the phrase “thou art a virtuous woman.”⁵⁶ Despite the fact that *hayil* never once refers to any moral characteristic other than strength or force, here “man was praising woman, and ‘of course’ here is a reference to her reputation for chastity,” Bushnell comments wryly.⁵⁷

Bushnell found additional mistranslations of *hayil* in Prov 31, a passage theologians had long turned to for a description of the ideal wife. But Bushnell points out that while the text praises the woman of Prov 31 for her “general goodness and trustworthiness, energy, efficiency, enterprise, far-sightedness, early-rising, business capacity, gardening, muscular strength, weaving, benevolence, fore-thought, embroidery work, elegant clothes for herself, tailoring for her husband, honour, wisdom, kindness, piety ... as it happens, no definite reference is made to her purity, or to her faithfulness to her husband in the marriage relation.” Yet when the text describes her as “a woman of *cha-yil*,” translators rendered the term as “a *virtuous* woman.”⁵⁸ Bushnell observes, “We must suppose that the translators hastily concluded that they knew, without looking closely at the original, what sort of a woman” should be held up as an ideal; “Who can find a *virtuous* woman?” undoubtedly represented the sentiments of the translators, she reasons, “but it *does not represent* the teaching of the original text.” Though she concedes that “‘Virtue’ is of priceless value to woman, to be sure,” she insists that a woman’s “duty to her husband is not her *only* duty; all her life cannot be summed up in that *one* moral quality.”⁵⁹

54. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 624, 633. The exceptions can be found in Ruth 3:11 and (three times over) in Prov 31.

55. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 625; see Ruth 3:11.

56. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 626.

57. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 626.

58. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 627–29.

59. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 629.

Reviewing the anomalous translations of *hayil*, Bushnell can only conclude that there must have been “an instinctive distaste, disrelish” on the part of the translators in showing that the Bible praised “a ‘strong’ woman, for doing ‘valiantly.’”⁶⁰ But, she insists, “women prefer to know what the Bible says, rather than to be merely reminded of a favorite axiom among men.”⁶¹ Though Bushnell concedes that sexual purity should indeed be considered “a quality of great importance to women,” she contends that women would be better equipped to guard that virtue if properly instructed from the pulpit to be “strong, in body, mind, and spirit.”⁶²

Bushnell found a similar pattern of gendered mistranslation when she turned her attention to the New Testament. The Greek adjective *sōphrōn*, for example, occurred four times; twice it is translated “sober” and once “temperate,” but when it refers to women only, the KJV renders it “discreet” (Titus 2:5).⁶³ Bushnell found blatant evidence of this sex-bias in Henry Alford’s Greek commentary, where, having established the meaning of *sōphrōn* as “self-restraint,” Alford nonetheless insists that “discreet” “certainly applies better to women,” for the latter implies effort, “which destroys the spontaneity, and brushes off, so to speak, the bloom of this best of female graces.”⁶⁴ Bushnell sardonically thanks Alford “for thinking that women can practice self-restraint without effort,” but on behalf of Christian women everywhere she adds: “when we are reading our Bibles we prefer to know *precisely* what the Holy Ghost addresses to us, instead of finding between its pages the opinion of even the most excellent uninspired man.”⁶⁵ In a New Testament lexicon, too, Bushnell found the noun form of *sōphrōn* given a “female meaning” — “modesty,” further

60. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 630.

61. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 631. Bushnell recognized that critics might argue that *virtue* need not refer to sexual purity, that it might in fact connote “a summing up of all moral characteristics,” but she countered that the English Bible was translated for “the common folk,” the majority of whom would understand *virtue* to refer to a woman’s chastity. She also understood that the term *virtue* was rooted in the Latin *vir*, meaning “man,” but again pointed to the contemporary use of the word; in English *virtue* did not connote “manliness,” but, among men, “‘morality’ in general,” and with regard to women, “morality of one sort,” namely, sexual purity (*God's Word to Women*, 632).

62. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 279, 630–33.

63. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 639.

64. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 639.

65. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 639.

confirming her suspicion that translators assigned distinct meanings based on gender.⁶⁶ She found additional examples of bias in other New Testament passages; the Greek word *kosmios*, for instance, is translated “well ordered, in both outward deportment and inner life,” except when referring to women’s dress, where it is rendered “modest.”⁶⁷ And *hagnos*, a term meaning “holy,” is translated “pure” or “clear” five times, but on each occasion where it qualifies a noun of the feminine gender, it is rendered “chaste.”⁶⁸ Given this pattern, Bushnell wonders why men shouldn’t also be taught chastity. “These may be straws,” she concludes, “yet they all point in the same direction.”⁶⁹

Bushnell also contends with each Pauline passage on the authority of women and with numerous other texts, well-known and obscure, in order to fashion a comprehensive revision of the central narrative of the Scriptures—from creation and fall through redemption and restoration. By recasting sin for men as the oppression of women, and sin for women as submission to men, Bushnell effectively redefines redemption in terms of the emancipation of women. But though Christ’s sacrifice made this redemption possible, it alone did not fully accomplish this; women themselves must claim their birthright. In Gen 3:15 God prophesied that the seed of woman would crush the serpent’s head, a prophecy fulfilled in part with the coming of Christ.⁷⁰ But in other New Testament passages Bushnell finds evidence of God’s further redemptive promises to women. Most compellingly, she looks to Jer 31:22, which she translates: “How long wilt thou keep turning away, O thou turning away daughter? For the Lord hath created [something] new in the earth, Female will lead male about.”⁷¹ “In other words,” Bushnell explains, “it seems God’s design that the ‘new woman’ in Christ Jesus, shall no more ‘turn away,’ as did Eve, to her husband, but remaining loyal to God alone, and true to her destiny as the

66. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 640.

67. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 644; here Bushnell cites 1 Tim 2:9.

68. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 644; *hagnos* can be found in Phil 4:8, 1 Tim 5:22, Jas 3:17, 1 John 3:3, 2 Cor 7:11, 11:2; Titus 2:5, 1 Pet 3:2.

69. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 644.

70. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 71–74.

71. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 413. In the KJV the passage is translated: “How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” Bushnell also points to Isa 40:10–11 and Ps 68:11 as pointing to women’s role in ushering in Christ’s kingdom (*God’s Word to Women*, 793).

mother of that Seed,—both the literal, Jesus, and the mystical Christ, the Church,—shall lead man about,—out of the wilderness of the inefficiency of egotism into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”⁷² Bushnell believed that it was only “when the women of the Church become free” that the promises of Pentecost would be fulfilled and the church would finally “come out into that ‘glorious liberty of the children of God’” (Rom 8:21).⁷³ But Bushnell reminds her readers that “prophecy is not fate” and that women must claim their birthright.⁷⁴ Having witnessed an age of women’s unprecedented social activism, Bushnell believed that women’s ultimate redemption was at hand; through *God's Word to Women* she hoped to empower women to throw off the social and theological shackles that had long restrained them, equipping them to bring about the fulfillment of the Scriptures and usher in the second coming of Christ.

Conclusion

Bushnell’s theology was directly inspired by her international activism, and she hoped in turn that her theology would bring about dramatic social change. By rejecting traditional interpretations of Christian womanhood, she sought to undermine powerful Victorian conventions, including patriarchal marriage, the celebration of female virtue and domesticity, and the very notion of a separate woman’s sphere. In eloquent terms, she castigated Victorian Christians for their racist and imperialist attitudes. Speaking to an international audience in fall 1893, Bushnell insisted that the “stronghold of Satan at the present day and hour is in the international hatred,—race prejudice.”⁷⁵ It was Bushnell’s gendered Christian internationalism that opened her eyes to the limitations of Western Christianity and that enabled her to fashion a comprehensive critique of patriarchy and presumed Western cultural and racial superiority.⁷⁶

72. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 413.

73. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 798. Bushnell believed the complete fulfillment of Gen 3:15 was foretold in Rev 12.

74. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 834.

75. *Union Signal*, November 2, 1893, 5.

76. Bushnell’s critique of Western imperialism was not without its limitations, however. For a more detailed exploration of the ways in which Bushnell was both an agent and a critic of Western civilization, see DuMez, *New Gospel for Women*, 62–85.

Ultimately, by offering a new view of Christian womanhood, Bushnell hoped to bring about a new era for women, a time when they could claim their social and spiritual redemption in Christ, and also a new era for the church, when the church would be enabled to fulfill its role in drawing all societies to Christ. But Bushnell never achieved the religious and social revolutions she anticipated. By the early twentieth century she had become estranged from the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; both Willard and Butler had died, temperance and purity were in decline as mobilizing forces within the Anglo-American women's movements, and Bushnell had retreated to a life of study in order to produce her new theology. By the time she published *God's Word to Women* in 1916, profound changes within Christianity and feminism limited the reception of her work.

On the religious front, liberals and conservatives had drawn stark battle lines. With liberal Protestants increasingly abandoning careful study of the Scriptures and conservatives often retreating from social reform, women such as Bushnell who had been inspired by biblical theology to pursue women's rights found themselves marginalized by both camps. At the same time, changes within the women's movement further eroded the once-powerful alliance between evangelical reformers and women's rights activists. By the 1910s, a new generation of feminists came to reject social purity feminism, along with its ethic of restraint, in favor of a new sexual ethic based on freedom—for women as well as for men—leaving the older generation of purity activists increasingly out of step with modern feminism.

With the decline of the once-vibrant world of female reform, the audience for Bushnell's work was diminished as well. Her book failed to secure a large readership, and for a time it seemed as though Bushnell's life and work would be forgotten. The book did, however, continue to find a small but dedicated following among evangelical and Pentecostal Christians committed both to the authority of the Scriptures and to a theology of empowerment for women. Handed down from one generation to the next, Bushnell's work found an eager audience among a new generation of Christian feminists in the 1970s and 1980s. Even as Bushnell's theology had been formulated in the crucible of late Victorian social reform, many of her insights spoke powerfully to the issues facing Christian women nearly a century later. Her writings provided Christian feminists not only with powerful arguments for women's religious authority but also with biblical resources to combat the domestic abuse of women and the trafficking of women and children in America and around the world.

Despite this late twentieth-century resurgence of Christian feminism, the close alliance between faith and feminism that inspired Bushnell's theology has not reemerged in contemporary America. Indeed, many Americans continue to see Christianity and feminism as incompatible. In an intriguing turn of events, however, Bushnell's teachings have begun to find a growing audience among Christian women in the Two-Thirds World. Through the work of missionaries and the global presence of the internet, Bushnell's work is reaching women and men in places as varied as Pakistan, Mexico, and Kenya.⁷⁷ For women committed to the authority of the Scriptures and seeking alternatives to patriarchal cultures, Bushnell's feminism often conforms more closely to their own values than do secular Western feminisms. And like the women of Bushnell's generation, many women in the global church today are looking to the Bible to address contemporary social issues and to the Christian faith to provide a foundation for women's social and religious emancipation.⁷⁸ Although in her own day Bushnell ultimately failed to bring about the dramatic religious and social transformations she had envisioned, if her hopes are yet to be realized, the setting may well be in the twenty-first-century global church.

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77. Godswordtowomen.org was founded in 1998 by three Pentecostal women: Barbara Collins, Gay Anderson, and Pat Joyce.

78. On parallels between late Victorian Protestantism and conditions in the global church today, see Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 15–16; Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 11–15.

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Maria Stewart, Scripture Interpretation, and the Daughters of Africa

Joy A. Schroeder

“How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?”¹ With these poignant words evoking Matt 25:18, political speaker Maria W. Miller Stewart (1803–1879) laments the limited educational and vocational opportunities open to African American women in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the first recorded female African American political writer and the first American woman known to address a mixed audience of men and women on political topics, Stewart was a forerunner for a host of nineteenth-century black and white women who took up the pen or ascended the speaker’s platform to argue for racial and gender equality.

Biblical language permeated Stewart’s speeches and writings. Adopting the persona of a persecuted prophet, she compared her own afflictions to that of Jeremiah, the apostle Paul, and Jesus. She addressed African Americans (“the sons and daughters of Africa”) and Euro-Americans (whom she called “the Americans”) with strong words that echoed the judgments pronounced by prophets such as Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and John of Patmos. Stewart used her oratorical gifts to urge the United States to end its racist practices, and she exhorted African Americans to unite in order to improve their own economic and educational prospects. She condemned white men’s sexual exploitation of African American women. Stewart’s words are a powerful indictment against American racism, offering a vision of a society guided by biblical principles of justice and equality.

1. Maria W. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, in *Spiritual Narratives*, SLNCBWW (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16.

Maria Stewart's Life and Career

Most of the available biographical information about Stewart comes from her own personal accounts and a small number of archival documents. Maria Miller was born in 1803 in Hartford, Connecticut, to free parents of African descent. After being orphaned at the age of five, she was "bound out" as a servant to a white clergyman's family, who raised her for ten years. She reports that there "I ... had the seeds of piety and virtue early sown in my mind; but was deprived of the advantages of education, though my soul thirsted for knowledge."² Her experience as a domestic servant significantly shaped her political views. Marilyn Richardson observes: "Stewart gained the first-hand experience that enabled her to write so compelling of the effects of endless toil and drudgery on the minds and spirits of those blacks in the North she would come to consider only nominally free."³

Maria Miller left the clergyman's household when she was fifteen. She attended weekend Sabbath schools for several years, gaining as much education as she could. It is possible that she worked as a servant until her marriage in 1826 to James W. Stewart, a Navy veteran and Boston businessman, whom she described "a tolerably stout well built man; a light, bright mulatto."⁴ Though Maria Stewart apparently was Episcopalian her entire adult life, the couple was married at the African Baptist Church in Boston. James Stewart, approximately thirty years old at the time of their marriage, was a shipping agent who fitted out whaling and fishing vessels. After her husband's death in 1829, Maria Stewart was defrauded of her considerable inheritance by unscrupulous white executors.⁵

Stewart deeply mourned the loss of her husband. The following year she was devastated by the death of her friend and mentor, David Walker (1785–1830), an African American activist living in Boston who died under mysterious circumstances. Stewart, like many, was convinced that Walker had been assassinated for his political views. In the midst of despair, she underwent a conversion experience and was baptized. Her conversion empowered her to become a public speaker, and she felt a religious calling

2. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 3.

3. Marilyn Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), xv.

4. Pension Claim 35165, War of 1812, Claim of Widow for Service Pension, National Archives, Washington, DC, quoted in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 3.

5. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 3–7.

to work for justice for African Americans. She compared her emotional turmoil and subsequent conversion to the experience of the Gerasene demoniac exorcised by Jesus (Luke 8:26–39). The demon-possessed man, shackled with chains and mentally bound, raged like an animal and lived naked among the tombs. After being healed by Jesus, the man sat at his savior's feet "clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35 KJV).⁶ Echoing biblical language, Stewart reports: "In imagination I found myself sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed in my right mind. For I before had been like a ship tossed to and fro, in a storm at sea."⁷

Stewart delivered four public orations in Boston in 1832 and 1833, speaking at venues such as the African Masonic Hall and the Franklin Hall. One of her lectures was addressed to the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston, a self-improvement society that met monthly in the basement of the Belknap Street African Baptist Church for the study of literature.⁸ Several of Stewart's essays were printed in the "Ladies Department" of William Lloyd Garrison and Isaac Knapp's influential abolitionist paper, *The Liberator*. A political essay, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality* (1831), was published by Garrison and Knapp in pamphlet form.⁹ A collection of her spiritual reflections and prayers was printed in a pamphlet titled *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (1832). Most of Stewart's writings were collected together into an eighty-four-page book titled *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, published in 1835 by Garrison and Knapp.

Stewart's life in Boston was filled with hardships. Though the Massachusetts State Supreme Court had abolished slavery in 1783 and Boston became a center of abolitionist activity, the city remained segregated.¹⁰ White Bostonians used a vicious racial slur to identify the section of Beacon Hill where a large number of African Americans dwelled.¹¹ As Stewart attests, Bostonians of African descent had limited economic prospects and endured numerous indignities. Schools were segregated.

6. All Scripture quotations are drawn from the KJV, the biblical text used by Stewart.

7. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 73.

8. Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 169.

9. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 3–22.

10. Susan Roberson, "Maria Stewart and the Rhetoric of Mobility," *JWS* 4.3 (2003): 57.

11. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 4.

Most African American children and adults had limited opportunities for education.¹² Occupations available for African American men in Boston were varied, but most were limited to labor or service. Female options for employment were even more limited:

The City Directory for 1826 lists blacks employed in a variety of occupations. They worked as waiters, coachmen, sailors, barbers and hairdressers, dealers in new and used clothing, tailors, wood sawyers, musicians, and teamsters, among other jobs. The great majority of men, however, are listed simply as laborers. Black women are listed as cooks, laundresses, and proprietors of boarding houses. There are two ministers in the directory; no physicians or attorneys.¹³

Stewart's essays and speeches reveal that Stewart regarded the racist treatment of African Americans in the northern states to be hardly better than slavery in the south. She condemned the lack of educational and employment opportunities available to African American men and women. She was particularly critical of the colonization solution proposed by many Americans, both black and white, who wished to send African-descent individuals "back" to Africa, to the colony of Liberia. She regarded these efforts as a racist attempt to rid America of its black residents. Stewart feared that African Americans might be forcibly relocated: "They would drive us to a strange land. But before I go, the bayonet shall pierce me through."¹⁴

Stewart was outspoken. Sometimes she leveled criticism against her fellow African Americans, whom she believed were not doing enough to increase their opportunities for economic and political success. She apparently provoked opposition from some African American Bostonians, who argued that women should not speak publicly.¹⁵ Stewart's speaking career was short-lived. Frances Smith Foster writes: "Unfortunately, Stewart could not long withstand the social pressure that denied women, of whatever color, the freedom of speech. Scarcely a year after her first public lecture, Maria W. Stewart retired from the podium."¹⁶

12. Moss, *Schooling Citizens*, 130–63.

13. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 4.

14. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 72.

15. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 75.

16. Frances Smith Foster, *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746–1892* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 4.

After delivering a “Farewell Address to her Friends in the City of Boston” in September 1833, Stewart departed for New York. There she found support from Alexander Crummell (1819–1898), an African American Episcopal priest and political activist. Stewart received lessons in “arithmetic, geography, grammar, and other branches” from schoolteachers eager to instruct her.¹⁷ She eventually served as a schoolteacher at various schools in New York. She joined an African American women’s literary society and attended the inaugural Women’s Anti-Slavery Convention of 1837.¹⁸ Stewart moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1852. There she opened a school and struggled to make a living as a teacher. She reports that her lack of experience as a businesswoman caused her to undercharge tuition for her pupils.¹⁹

In 1859 Stewart moved to Washington, DC, and worked at a Baptist-supported school. As the political conflict between the northern and southern states was heating up prior to the American Civil War, many supporters of the North regarded Episcopalians (whom Stewart described as “unpopular with the Government”) as sympathetic to the South.²⁰ Stewart lost her teaching position because she refused to leave the Protestant Episcopal Church and become Baptist. She remained loyal to the Episcopal Church even though she often experienced racism within her predominantly Euro-American denomination. Indignities she suffered included being passed over at the Communion rail at times when she came forward for the Lord’s Supper.²¹ She compared herself—a black woman in a primarily white congregation—to one of the martyrs whom “John saw in vision on the Isle of Patmos having harps in their hands” (Rev 14:1–5).²² When St. Mary’s Church was organized as an Episcopal church for African Americans in Washington, DC, she “rejoiced” that she had finally found “a home not only in the Protestant Episcopal Church, but in the Holy Church Catholic throughout the world.”²³

17. Maria W. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (Washington, DC: n.p., 1879), 10.

18. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 27

19. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 13–14.

20. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 15.

21. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 22.

22. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 22.

23. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 22.

In 1871, Stewart became matron of the Freedman's Hospital (now Howard University Hospital) in Washington, DC. She later learned that, as a widow of a veteran of the War of 1812, she was eligible for a pension. In 1878, when she received a generous pension and the promise of a land-grant warrant for 160 acres of government land, Stewart used part of the proceeds to finance the republication of her writings. The resulting *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (1879), published under the same title as her 1832 short pamphlet, consisted of the works found in her 1835 book *Productions* together with additional autobiographical material and letters of commendation from distinguished individuals, including William Lloyd Garrison and various clergymen. She died in 1879, the same year she witnessed the publication of her book.

The Public Voice: African American Women Speakers and Writers

The time frame of Stewart's public career overlapped with that of the public activities of her better-known African American female contemporaries, such as the formerly enslaved abolitionist speaker Sojourner Truth (ca. 1797–1883) and preachers Jarena Lee (b. 1783), Zilpha Elaw (b. 1790), and Julia Foote (1823–1900). As freeborn northern African-descent women who experienced enormous struggles in their ministry, Lee, Elaw, and Foote furnish particularly apt comparisons. Each of them spent part of her childhood bound out as a servant in the home of a white family, a common experience for African American girls as well as Euro-American girls from rural areas and lower economic classes. Each took on a public speaking role and eventually funded the publication of her own book.

Though she never preached a sermon, Stewart had much in common with the female preachers who were active in America's Second Great Awakening (ca. 1790–1844) and its aftermath. Similar to most female preachers of her era, Stewart reports having had a religious conversion, a calling from God, and spiritual empowerment for ministry. Like them, she had to defend her right to speak publicly.²⁴ Opponents confronted women preachers and speakers with biblical texts such as 1 Tim 2:11–12: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp

24. Maria Stewart used the following Scriptures for empowerment and to validate her authority to speak: Gen 1:27–28; Judg 4:4; 5:12; Esther 4:1–8:17; Pss 8:4–5; 68:31; Isa 5:27; 52:1; Jer 9:1; 29:18; Matt 8:20; 25:14–30; 28:1–10; Luke 8:26–39; John 4:25; 8:1–11; Acts 17:26; 1 Cor 9:19; Rev 14:1–5.

authority over the man, but to be in silence.” Similarly, they used 1 Cor 14:34–35: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

To deal with New Testament prohibitions against female speech, a common rhetorical strategy for both African American and European American women was to defend their public speaking by invoking the examples of biblical women such as Mary Magdalene (Matt 28:1–10), Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14–20), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9).²⁵ Lee, an African Methodist Episcopal preacher from Philadelphia, asked: “Did not Mary [Magdalene] *first* preach the risen Saviour, and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity—hangs not all our hope on this, as argued by St. Paul? Then did not Mary, a woman, preach the gospel? for she preached the resurrection of the crucified Son of God.”²⁶ When challenged by an English woman, Elaw defended her ministry by asserting that “the Lord, who raised up Deborah to be a prophetess, and to judge His people, and inspired Hulda[h] to deliver the counsels of God, sent me forth” as a Methodist preacher.²⁷ Stewart made a similar argument in her 1833 Boston “Farewell Address,” invoking Hebrew Scripture and New Testament women:

What if I am a woman; is not the God of ancient times the God of these modern days? Did he not raise up Deborah, to be a mother, and a judge in Israel? Did not queen Esther save the lives of the Jews [Esth 4:1–8:17]? And Mary Magdalene first declare the resurrection of Christ from the dead? Come, said the woman of Samaria, and see a man that hath told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ [John 4:25]?²⁸

25. Joy A. Schroeder, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 149.

26. Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee*, in *Spiritual Narratives*, 11.

27. Zilpha Elaw, “Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels, and Labours of Mrs. Elaw (1846),” in *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. William L. Andrews (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 147.

28. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 3.

Suzanne Marilley observes, “Stewart’s scriptural references presented all women versed in the Scriptures with models grounded in an authority far more powerful than the ideals of liberty and equality could be at the time.”²⁹

Female preachers and orators had to explain how their public speech did not contradict the words of Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians and the presumed author of 1 Timothy. Elaw believed that the prohibition against women’s speech and teaching was part of “the ordinary course of Church arrangement,” but “this rule was not intended to limit the extraordinary directions of the Holy Ghost.”³⁰ Thus, while maintaining that the Pauline prohibitions normally prevailed, Elaw felt that her own ministry—and that of other women with a similar extraordinary call—was authorized by the Holy Spirit.³¹ Foote, who was a missionary, preacher, and ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, used Paul’s own words, especially his commendation of female collaborators, to support her own preaching:

But the Bible puts an end to this strife when it says: “There is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus” [Gal 3:28]. Philip had four daughters that prophesied, or preached. Paul called Priscilla, as well as Aquila, his “helper,” or, as in the Greek, his “fellow-laborer.” Rom xv. 3; 2 Cor viii. 23; Phil ii. 5; 1 Thess iii.2. The same word, which in our common translation, is now rendered a “servant of the church,” in speaking of Phebe (Rom xix. 1 [*sic*]) is rendered “minister” when applied to Tychicus. Eph vi. 21. When Paul said, “Help those women who labor with me in the Gospel,” he certainly meant that they did more than to pour out tea.³²

Stewart, for her part, used a situational approach to Paul, imagining how he would respond to his observations of the experiences of African American women in nineteenth-century America. Paul had been addressing an audience and situation that was different from her own. If he were to

29. Suzanne M. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 33.

30. Elaw, “Memoirs of the Life,” 124.

31. Mitzi Jane Smith, “Zilpha Elaw,” in *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Marion Ann Taylor and Agnes Choi (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 186–87.

32. Julia A. J. Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch*, in *Spiritual Narratives*, 79. The Romans reference is an error; the passage appears to be referring to Rom 16:1.

see how black women were treated, he would certainly endorse Stewart's public protests:

St. Paul declared that it was a shame for a woman to speak in public, yet our great High Priest and Advocate did not condemn the woman for a more notorious offence than this [John 8:1–11]; neither will he condemn this worthless worm. The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. Did St. Paul but know of our wrongs and deprivations, I presume he would make no objections to our pleading in public for our rights.³³

Thus, in the extreme situation of racism and gross abuse of African Americans, particularly women, the apostolic prohibitions against women's public speech did not apply.

A Persecuted Prophet and the Wrath of God

Stewart invoked biblical female exemplars and refuted the more constrictive interpretations of Pauline texts about women's silence. However, her chief strategy for authorizing her public voice was the adoption of the persona of a biblical prophet to call her audience to repentance and pronounce divine judgment on a racist nation. Cedrick May observes, "Stewart fashioned for herself a public identity as a prophet."³⁴ Chanta Haywood explains that African American women such as Stewart used the concept of prophesying as "a trope for God-inspired social critique."³⁵ Using a prophetic style of speaking and echoing biblical males such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Stewart leveled strong accusations against white Americans for their hypocrisy and brutality. In like manner, she chastised her African American audience members for failing to unite for moral and political reform.

The prophetic persona adopted by Stewart may have been particularly necessary and apt in her particular context. Linda M. Grasso argues that many nineteenth-century women, socialized toward domesticity and a "middle-class code of emotional restraint," found it problematic to express

33. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 75.

34. Cedrick May, *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760–1835* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 117.

35. Chanta M. Haywood, *Prophesying Daughters: Black Women Preachers and the Word, 1823–1913* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 21.

anger.³⁶ They faced criticism from others and underwent their own interior struggles if they gave voice to indignation or rage, no matter how greatly it was warranted. This white middle-class ideal was shared by many African Americans. Grasso writes:

To “free” African Americans involved in their own nation-building enterprises, adhering to the conventions of propriety and emotional restraint that were fundamental to the gendered ideology of anger was more than a determinant of middle-class status; it signified freedom.... Exhibiting “good moral character” enabled members of the “free” black community to demonstrate that they were upstanding citizens who in no way resembled debased racist stereotypes. Behaving in accordance with middle-class precepts bolstered self-respect and procured community status.³⁷

In such a context, Stewart’s sense of prophetic calling allowed her to use biblical language to “appropriate the stance of an angry, patriarchal God while still viewing the world from a female perspective.”³⁸ Stewart claimed that she was a humble instrument even as she spoke forth strong, divinely inspired words: “I am sensible that my writings show forth the want of knowledge, and that they are scarce worthy of a perusal. But as I have said before, I say again, such knowledge as God giveth to me, I impart to you.”³⁹

Stewart chose the prophet Jeremiah as one of her models. Jeremiah was active during the forty years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587–586 BCE by the forces of the Babylonian Empire. He used strong language to condemn his people’s sins and faithlessness and to warn of God’s coming judgment. The biblical book of Jeremiah contains divine pronouncements and also narrates the persecution that the prophet experienced at the hands of his own people (Jer 38). In like manner, Stewart addresses her own nation: “Oh, America, America, foul and indelible is thy stain! Dark and dismal is the cloud that hangs over thee, for thy cruel wrongs and injuries to the fallen sons of Africa.”⁴⁰ She paraphrases Jer 9:1 in a poignant lament: “I feel almost unable to address you; almost incompetent to perform the task; and, at times, I have felt ready to exclaim,

36. Linda M. Grasso, *The Artistry of Anger: Black and White Women’s Literature in America, 1820–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 52–53.

37. Grasso, *Artistry of Anger*, 53.

38. Grasso, *Artistry of Anger*, 53.

39. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 23.

40. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 18.

O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the transgressions of the daughters of my people.”⁴¹ Stewart notes parallels between Jeremiah’s time and her own: “I really think we are in as wretched and miserable a state as was the house of Israel in the days of Jeremiah.”⁴² Her own personal struggles were like those of the prophets and the afflicted people of biblical times. Echoing Jer 29:18 (addressed to Judean exiles in Babylonian captivity), she says that her speeches on behalf of African Americans have caused her to become “a hissing and a reproach among the people; for I am also one of the wretched and miserable daughters of the descendants of fallen Africa.”⁴³

Some of Stewart’s strongest critiques employ language from the book of Revelation, particularly John of Patmos’s reproach of Babylon (symbolizing the Roman Empire⁴⁴), which trafficked in slaves (Rev 18:13) and was “drunk with the blood of the martyrs” (Rev 17:6). Richardson observes, “The book of Revelation, with its emphasis on the written word, on didactic prophecy, and on the cataclysmic destruction of the forces of evil, was the source of much of Stewart’s spiritual self-definition.”⁴⁵ Addressing “America” for its mistreatment of the “sons of Africa,” Stewart writes: “The blood of her murdered ones cries to heaven for vengeance against thee. Thou art almost become drunken with the blood of her slain; thou has enriched thyself through her toils and labors; and now thou refuseth to make even a small return.”⁴⁶ John of Patmos refers to Babylon’s idolatrous “fornications,” speaking metaphorically (Rev 18:3–9). Stewart applies this, in a literal way, to the situation of African American women sexually abused and exploited by Euro-American men. The dominant culture regarded African American women’s bodies as commodities, and black women were stereotyped as being unrestrained and sexually permissive, even voracious, in their sensual appetites.⁴⁷ Aware of the significant power differential between white men and black women, whether enslaved or

41. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 5.

42. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 8.

43. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 55.

44. Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 86–88.

45. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, xv.

46. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 18.

47. Carla L. Peterson, *“Doers of the Word”: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830–1880)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 20–21.

free, Stewart holds the men alone responsible: "And thou hast caused the daughters of Africa to commit whoredoms and fornications; but upon thee be their curse."⁴⁸ Echoing Rev 6:16, Stewart warns: "O, ye great and mighty men of America, ye rich and powerful ones, many of you will call for the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and to hide you from the wrath of the Lamb, and from him that sitteth upon the throne; whilst many of the sable-skinned Africans you now despise, will shine in the kingdom of heaven as the stars forever and ever."⁴⁹

Though she used strong language to criticize Anglo-Americans, many of Stewart's jeremiads were addressed toward African Americans. With her evangelical Christian commitments and sensibilities, Stewart exhorted her audience to undergo moral reform. She accused black men, especially youths, of spending too much time drinking, dancing, and gambling when they should have been focusing on education, self-improvement, and political activism.⁵⁰

Though she provides far less autobiographical material than did Lee, Elaw, and Foote, Stewart's writings and public addresses make reference to the opposition she received. For the sake of her activism, she endured the "fiery darts of the devil" and "the assaults of wicked men."⁵¹ Her 1879 *Meditations* includes eleven pages narrating her "sufferings during the [American Civil] war," where she recounts her desperate poverty, her sojourns in inhospitable cities, her opposition from antagonists, and her struggles to find and keep teaching positions.⁵² She relates instances of being underpaid, cheated, and rejected.⁵³ All of these struggles align her with the persecuted prophets, the apostle Paul, and even Jesus himself. Paraphrasing Paul's words in 1 Cor 9:19, she announces: "Dearly beloved: I have made myself contemptible in the eyes of many, that I might win some."⁵⁴ Like Jesus, she faces the prospects of poverty and homelessness, and she applies his words (Matt 8:20) to herself: "And if it is the will of my heavenly Father to reduce me to penury and want, I am ready to say, amen, even so be it. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests,

48. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 18.

49. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 19.

50. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 67–70.

51. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 21.

52. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 13–23.

53. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 13–14.

54. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 81.

but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”⁵⁵ As May comments, “Her personal sufferings have prepared her for her true calling, that of a prophet.”⁵⁶

Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands

Living in a culture that generally accepted biblical arguments as authoritative (even if individuals disagreed about interpretation), Stewart made generous use of scriptural arguments to support the rights of African Americans—especially African American women. Valerie Cooper observes, “By appropriating scripture, Stewart also appropriated the authority of the Bible at a time in American history—following the Great Awakening’s revival of evangelical fervor—when the Bible wielded extraordinary cultural authority.”⁵⁷ Stewart used a number of biblical passages to argue that racial equality was God’s intent. For instance, addressing African Americans, she draws on the Gen 1 creation story and Ps 8 to assert that all people are created in God’s image:

Many think, because your skins are tinged with a sable hue, that you are an inferior race of beings; but God does not consider you as such. He hath formed and fashioned you in his own glorious image, and hath bestowed upon you reason and strong powers of intellect. He hath made you to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea [Gen 1:27–28]. He hath crowned you with glory and honor; hath made you but a little lower than the angels [Ps 8:4–5]; and, according to the Constitution of these United States, he hath made all men free and equal. Then why should one worm say to another, “Keep you down there, while I sit up yonder; for I am better than thou?” It is not the color of the skin that makes the man, but it is the principles formed within the soul.⁵⁸

In like manner, Elaw condemned American racism, using reason and biblical examples to argue for the God-given equality of all people:

55. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 79.

56. May, *Evangelism and Resistance*, 117.

57. Valerie C. Cooper, *Word, Like Fire: Maria Stewart, the Bible, and the Rights of African Americans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 19.

58. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 4–5.

The pride of a white skin is a bauble of great value with many in some parts of the United States, who readily sacrifice their intelligence to their prejudices, and possess more knowledge than wisdom. The Almighty accounts not the black races of man either in the order of nature or spiritual capacity as inferior to the white; for he bestows his Holy Spirit on, and dwells in them as readily as in persons of whiter complexion: the Ethiopian eunuch was adopted as a son and heir of God; and when Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto him [Ps 68:31], their submission and worship will be graciously accepted.... Oh! That men would outgrow their nursery prejudices and learn that "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the face on the earth" [Acts 17:26].⁵⁹

As was the case with numerous male and female African American interpreters, Stewart regarded Ps 68:31 as prophetic and especially pertinent to the question of racial justice. In a psalm about Israel's prominence, victories, and the centrality of the Jerusalem temple, the biblical psalmist writes: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Many nineteenth-century people interpreted this as God's special commendation of African-descent people. Some also regarded it as prophecy that Africans and African Americans, in large numbers, would be converted to Christianity.⁶⁰ Referencing this verse numerous times throughout her writings and speeches, Stewart uses the verse as "a rallying cry."⁶¹ Summoning her audience to action, she proclaims: "Truly, my heart's desire and prayer is, that Ethiopia might stretch forth her hands unto God. But we have a great work to do."⁶² She references the text again in a speech protesting the lack of employment opportunities beyond manual labor and domestic service:

Again, continual hard labor irritates our tempers and sours our dispositions; the whole system becomes worn out with toil and fatigue; nature herself becomes almost exhausted, and we care but little whether we live or die. It is true, that the free people of color throughout these United States are neither bought nor sold, nor under the lash of the cruel driver; many obtain a comfortable support; but few, if any, have an opportunity of becoming rich and independent; and the employments we most

59. Elaw, "Memoirs of the Life," 85–86.

60. Cooper, *Word, Like Fire*, 56 n. 58.

61. Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 18.

62. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 5–6.

pursue are as unprofitable to us as the spider's web or the floating bubbles that vanish into the air. As servants, we are respected; but let us presume to aspire any higher, our employer regards us no longer. And were it not that the King eternal has declared that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God, I should indeed despair.⁶³

Thus we see that this verse from Ps 68 was a source of personal comfort and inspiration for Stewart as she contended with a social and economic system that systemically denied opportunities to her and other African Americans.

Buried Talents, Domestic Servitude, and the Daughters of Africa

When she addressed the limited educational and vocational opportunities for African American women and men, Stewart frequently invoked the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14–30, with a parallel in Luke 19:12–28). In the parable, Jesus tells the story of a wealthy man who entrusted money to three servants before he departed on a journey. To one servant he gave five talents, to another he gave two talents, and to another he gave one talent. The first two servants invested the money aggressively, doubling their funds. The last servant buried his talent in the ground. The master praised the first two servants but condemned the last one as “wicked and slothful” for squandering his opportunity to invest the money and gain profit. (*Talent* is derived from a Greek unit of weight and monetary measurement. In the Middle Ages, due to this influence of this parable, the word *talent* entered into the English language to refer to natural abilities and aptitudes.⁶⁴) This parable was a key passage for Stewart, who exhorted her African American audience members to use their intellectual and creative capacities through education and profitable employment—to the degree that circumstances permitted:

All the nations of the earth are crying out for liberty and equality. Away, away with tyranny and oppression! And shall Afric's sons be silent any longer? Far be it from me to recommend you either to kill, burn, or

63. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 54.

64. William F. Albright and Christopher S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB 26 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 304.

destroy. But I would strongly recommend to you to improve your talents; let not one lie buried in the earth. Show forth your powers of mind.⁶⁵

Though she encouraged African Americans to take advantage of all available opportunities, Stewart observed that such options were limited by societal attitudes and a system filled with racial privilege. Relegation to domestic service and manual labor forced countless African Americans to bury their talents—a situation that she felt European Americans avoided whenever possible. Drawing on her own experience as a servant and her observations of others in similar situations, she characterizes this underpaid labor as physically exhausting, mind-numbing, and soul-crushing—a form of involuntarily burying one's talents:

Few white persons of either sex, who are calculated for any thing else, are willing to spend their lives and bury their talents in performing mean, servile labor. And such is the horrible idea that I entertain respecting a life of servitude, that if I conceived of there being no possibility of my rising above the condition of a servant, I would gladly hail death as a welcome messenger. O, horrible idea, indeed! to possess noble souls aspiring after high and honorable acquirements, yet confined by the chains of ignorance and poverty to lives of continual drudgery and toil. Neither do I know of any who have enriched themselves by spending their lives as house-domestics, washing windows, shaking carpets, brushing boots, or tending upon gentlemen's tables.⁶⁶

At various times in the last two centuries, European and European American women have used the parable of the talents to assert women's rights to be educated, use their intellectual gifts, work outside the home, and write for publication.⁶⁷ They decried the waste of the precious gifts of intellect and creativity when women's aspirations and talents were stifled by gender roles. Among privileged women, one form of burying one's talents was being "educated in order to perform a social and decorative function

65. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 4.

66. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 52–53.

67. Lynn S. Neal, *Romancing God: Evangelical Women and Inspirational Fiction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 17–18; Ruth Y. Jenkins, *Reclaiming Myths of Power: Women Writers and the Victorian Spiritual Crisis* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 84; Pat Starkey, "Women Religious and Religious Women: Faith and Practice in Women's Lives," in *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, ed. Deborah Simonon (London: Routledge, 2006), 197.

on the dance floor.”⁶⁸ A female character in Charlotte Brontë’s 1849 novel *Shirley* protests that too many women in British society metaphorically hid their talents in “a broken-spouted tea pot,” or in “a china-closet among tea-things,” or in “a willow-pattern tureen” of cold potatoes rather than using their talents for more meaningful endeavors.⁶⁹ Stewart, interpreting the parable as a daughter of Africa, had a different, harsher experience of female roles and labor. In her 1832 lecture at the Franklin Hall, Stewart cried out: “How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?”⁷⁰ Teapots and willow-pattern tureens symbolized the domestic squandering of the intellect and gifts of Brontë’s Victorian ladies, while Stewart’s daughters of Africa had to contend with the more grueling physical labor represented by iron kettles. At a later point in her Franklin Hall lecture, Stewart explicitly contrasted the experiences of African American women with that of her “fairer sisters”:

And doubtless many are the prayers that have ascended to Heaven from Afric’s daughters for strength to perform their work. Oh, many are the tears that have been shed for the want of that strength! Most of our color have dragged out a miserable existence of servitude from the cradle to the grave.... O, ye fairer sisters, whose hands are never soiled, whose nerves and muscles are never strained, go learn by experience! Had we had the opportunity that you have had, to improve our moral and mental faculties, what would have hindered our intellects from being as bright, and our manners from being as dignified as yours?⁷¹

Though Stewart calls manual labor honorable, saying that she “would highly commend the performance of almost any thing for an honest livelihood,” she asserts that it is miserable for those who aspire to other professions or who do not have the physical capacity to perform hard work.⁷² Furthermore, long hours and grueling labor make it difficult to study and learn: “And what literary acquirements can be made, or useful knowledge derived, from either maps, books or charts by those who con-

68. Starkey, “Women Religious,” 197.

69. Charlotte Brontë [pseudonym Currer Bell], *Shirley: A Tale* (London: Smith, Elder, 1888), 337.

70. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 16.

71. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 54.

72. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 54.

tinually drudge from Monday morning until Sunday noon?"⁷³ Stewart speaks from her experience as a household servant: "As far as our merit deserves, we feel a common desire to rise above the condition of servants and drudges. I have learnt, by bitter experience, that continual hard labor deadens the energies of the soul, and benumbs the faculties of the mind; the ideas become confined, the mind barren, and, like the scorching sands of Arabia, produces nothing; or, like the uncultivated soil, brings forth thorns and thistles."⁷⁴

Antebellum African Americans encountered multiple obstacles to receiving education. Most northern schools refused to accept black students. Those who opened schools for African American children often encountered violent opposition. Stewart's younger contemporary Foote reports the threats that female teachers received "from a pro-slavery mob in Canterbury, CT, because they dared to teach colored children to read."⁷⁵ Foote knew a student who had been harassed and traumatized by a mob of opponents, becoming "so frightened that she went into spasms, which resulted in a derangement from which she never recovered."⁷⁶ Foote herself had limited opportunities for education. Like many African American women, she had spent part of her childhood living in a white household where she did domestic work. Foote reports that the family she served used its influence to "send me to a country school, where I was well treated by both teacher and scholars."⁷⁷ Foote was educated there between the ages of ten and twelve, but her opportunities were short-lived after the family she resided with whipped her with a rawhide whip, and Foote persuaded her parents to let her leave the household of her employers.⁷⁸ She studied the Bible on her own and encountered numerous obstacles in her attempts to obtain an education.⁷⁹

Another contemporary, Elaw, was educated at an integrated school in Pennsylvania, but as an adult living in Burlington, New Jersey, she observed that African American children there were not permitted to attend school with white children. Physically frail and exhausted from her work as a

73. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 5–6.

74. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 53–54.

75. Foote, *Brand Plucked*, 38.

76. Foote, *Brand Plucked*, 39.

77. Foote, *Brand Plucked*, 19.

78. Foote, *Brand Plucked*, 24–26.

79. Foote, *Brand Plucked*, 39.

domestic servant, Elaw left domestic work to open a school for African American children.⁸⁰ In many respects, Elaw's commitment to education resembled Stewart's. By opening schools and teaching, both women could find work that was less physically exhausting and more fulfilling to them than domestic labor, even as they improved the prospects for children who otherwise had no opportunities to study.

At the time of her Boston speeches in the early 1830s, Stewart had received only a minimal education. In her 1832 lecture delivered at the Franklin Hall, she laments her lack of schooling (while still claiming religious authority from her biblical study and divine inspiration): "O, had I received the advantages of early education, my ideas would, ere now, have expanded far and wide; but, alas! I possess nothing but moral capability—no teachings but the teachings of the Holy Spirit."⁸¹ Stewart says that she had studied for five years in Sabbath schools. In nineteenth-century America, church-based Sabbath schools provided instruction in Scripture as well as other subjects, with instruction on weekends and sometimes classes on weeknights for working adults. If her description of those who "continually drudge from Monday morning until Sunday noon" reflects her own experience, Stewart may have had only Sunday afternoons free to attend classes.⁸² In his letter of commendation at the beginning of Stewart's second book, Alex Crummell reports that, when he first met her shortly after she arrived in New York, Stewart had had only six weeks of schooling and that she had dictated her first pamphlet to a ten-year-old girl child, who wrote out "every word of this book," a detail that Stewart herself does not mention.⁸³

In light of her personal observations and experiences, Stewart advocated education as the first means of developing African American women's minds, so that their precious talents would not languish, buried beneath heavy iron pots and kettles in white households. During her time in Boston, she encouraged her female audience members to establish a high school for African American children:

Shall it any longer be said of the daughters of Africa, they have no ambition, they have no force? By no means. Let every female heart become united, and let us raise a fund ourselves; and at the end of one

80. Elaw, "Memoirs of the Life," 85.

81. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 52.

82. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 5–6.

83. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen*, 10.

year and a half, we might be able to lay the corner-stone for the building of a High School, that the higher branches of knowledge might be enjoyed by us; and God would raise us up, and enough to aid us in our laudable designs.⁸⁴

Stewart herself later put her principles into practice. She gained an education in New York and spent several decades of her life running schools and teaching African American children and adults as she employed her own talents and encouraged the development of others' gifts.

In addition to promoting education, Stewart urged her audience to pursue another avenue of community uplift: economic partnerships among African Americans. Stewart had tried to gain allies among European American women, encouraging white female shop owners and business managers to begin employing African American women. She reports that the European American women registered no personal objections to hiring black women, but they worried about their customers' opinion and losing business. Stewart accuses her "fairer sisters" of hypocrisy:

I have asked several individuals of my sex, who transact business for themselves, if providing our girls were to give them the most satisfactory references, they would not be willing to grant them an equal opportunity with others? Their reply has been—for their own part, they had no objection; but as it was not the custom, were they to take them into their employ, they would be in danger of losing the public patronage. And such is the powerful force of prejudice. Let our girls possess what amiable qualities of soul they may; let their characters be fair and spotless as innocence itself; let their natural taste and ingenuity be what they may; it is impossible for scarce an individual of them to rise above the condition of servants.⁸⁵

Since European American men and women—even those who professed solidarity with African Americans—would not offer equal access to employment, Stewart urged the sons and daughters of Africa to promote community well-being by starting businesses, opening stores, patronizing one another's establishments, and pooling resources when necessary:

84. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 16.

85. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 52.

How long shall a mean set of men flatter us with their smiles, and enrich themselves with our hard earnings; their wives' fingers sparkling with rings, and they themselves laughing at our folly? Until we begin to promote and patronize each other. Shall we be a by-word among the nations any longer? Shall they laugh us to scorn forever? Do you ask, what can we do? Unite and build a store of your own, if you cannot procure a license. Fill one side with dry goods, and the other with groceries.... We have never had an opportunity of displaying our talents; therefore the world thinks we know nothing.... The Americans have practised nothing but head-work these 200 years, and we have done their drudgery. And is it not high time for us to imitate their examples, and practice head-work too, and keep what we have got, and get what we can?⁸⁶

Stewart wanted the members of her community to experience dignity and have opportunities for meaningful employment. She thought that only community solidarity in the areas of education and business would provide the conditions for African Americans—especially the daughters of Africa—to develop their talents fully.

Conclusion: O, Ye Daughters of Africa, Awake! Awake! Arise!

In her study of Stewart's use of Scripture to support her political activities, Cooper observes, "As she read the biblical text, Maria Stewart contended that the Bible spoke to her and of her, and she employed a hermeneutic that privileged as its interpretive key her identity as an African American and as a woman."⁸⁷ In the introduction to her 1832 pamphlet *Meditations*, Stewart explicitly mentions the manual labor she performed to make a living and her lack of formal education while simultaneously invoking biblical authority for herself: "I have borrowed much of my language from the holy Bible. During the years of my childhood and youth, it was the book that I mostly studied; and now, while my hands are toiling for their daily sustenance, my heart is most generally meditating upon its divine truths."⁸⁸

As we have seen, Stewart drew on numerous scriptural passages to give voice to her life experiences and ideas. Her rhetoric echoed the jeremiads of the Hebrew prophets, the prophetic warnings of John of Patmos, and the exhortations of St. Paul. When challenged on account of her sex,

86. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 16–17.

87. Cooper, *Word, like Fire*, 19.

88. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 24.

she set herself within an authoritative female authoritative tradition that included biblical women such as Deborah, Esther, and Mary Magdalene. Resisting the dominant culture's racist views, she asserted that she, together with her African American sisters and brothers, was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), who "hath made of one blood all nations" (Acts 17:26). She took comfort in the promise that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Ps 68:31). She believed that the parable of the talents was a particularly apt image to describe African American people's possibilities. Talents, too often buried beneath the iron pots and kettles that symbolized drudgery of physical labor, could be developed through education and strategic use of resources.

Stewart sought community solidarity, particularly with African American women, whom she called to action with words that echoed the prophets Deborah (Judg 5:12) and Isaiah (5:27, 52:1): "O, ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties."⁸⁹ She used these words to address other African American women, but arguably these words also describe Stewart's own aspirations. She worked tirelessly on behalf of racial and gender equality. She pursued a career as a writer, orator, and teacher. She actively sought out opportunities to publish her writings, which have been preserved to inspire later generations of readers. Despite numerous obstacles and struggles, her relentless efforts to use and develop her own talents testify that Stewart embodied the virtues of the prudent servants in the parable that she loved so much.

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89. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 6.

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A Cyclone of Absurdities: Frances Willard's Rejection of Biblical Literalism

Claudia Setzer

The nineteenth century witnessed the questioning of biblical authority and literalist exegesis from several quarters. The abolitionist movement was forced to confront biblical passages that seemed to accept slavery. The movement for women's suffrage had to contend with opponents who cited women's subordination as God-given. Both movements developed non-literal interpretations that promoted broader liberationist and egalitarian themes from the Bible. They also developed an early form of exegesis that contextualized problematic material.

At the same time, European scholarship was developing the tools of the historical-critical method. Higher criticism in particular promoted ideas based on human authorship and editing of the biblical text, thereby undermining divine authorship and relativizing biblical authority. These tools made their way to North America and were promulgated by intellectuals who were also part of the antislavery movement. Debates over biblical authority and European methods of criticism went on at the seminaries of Harvard, Andover, and Princeton. While American women were not theology professors, neither were some women exegetes unaware or unaffected by what took place in the academy. Talented "amateurs" such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frances Willard refer to and make use of critical methods as they wrestle with the Bible's authority to address the issues of women's rights. Confronting slavery had required a more supple and less literal approach to the text, which carried over into the struggle for women's equality. While these women vary in their admiration for the

biblical text, they share certain strategies of exegesis to dethrone literalism, excavate liberationist themes, and peel away cultural accretions.¹

1. Frances Willard (1839–1898)

Willard's interpretation wrested the Bible from those who would claim it opposed women's equality or spoke with one voice. Her theory of mutuality in male and female understandings of the text not only allowed but demanded women's participation. Because of her prominence as president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she commanded an international audience, and contemporaries report her riveting rhetorical style. She linked temperance to suffrage as necessary to "home protection," a union slogan. Willard spoke to more conservative Methodists and evangelicals of the West and Midwest, people who might not have been congenial to the suffrage groups of the Northeast, who were often made up of Unitarians, Quakers, and Episcopalians.²

Willard championed many other reforms, including the abolition of slavery, rights of labor, free education, and women's ordination in the Methodist church. Her commitment to women's equality and suffrage appeared at roughly the same time as her commitment to temperance, and remained part of her temperance crusade. In 1866, she wrote of hearing a temperance sermon and resolving to become more active. As early as March 1868, she wrote in her diary, "I believe in the *Woman Question* more and more. I'm going to give my little help to it in all possible ways."³ Less than a year later, while still in Europe, she wrote of her plans to publicly speak for it, claiming, "always, I have dimly felt it to be my vocation."⁴ In her autobiography, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, she claims she cannot remember a time when she was not aware of the injustice of women's inequality.⁵ Moreover, the vote for women would dovetail with temperance aims, as

1. Claudia Setzer, "Slavery, Women's Rights, and the Beginning of Feminist Biblical Interpretation in the Nineteenth Century," *Postscripts* 5.2 (2009): 145–69.

2. Amy R. Slagell, "The Rhetorical Structure of Francis E. Willard's Campaign for Woman Suffrage, 1876–1896," *RPA* 4 (2001): 1–23.

3. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, ed., *Writing Out My Heart: Selections from the Journal of Frances E. Willard, 1855–96* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 265.

4. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 292.

5. Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (Chicago: Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1889), 692.

Willard predicted women's votes would bring down the liquor industry and usher in prohibition.

Willard's formative years took place in the American Midwest, as the family lived in Oberlin, Ohio, for four years (1841–1846), then moved to Wisconsin for eleven years, where she grew up on the family farm. She studied at a women's seminary in Evanston, Illinois, graduating as valedictorian in 1859. She taught for several years, then went on a two-year tour of Europe in 1868, spending time in the British Isles, Western Europe, imperial Russia, and the Mediterranean, including Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, and Italy. In Berlin she became close to the wife of Charles Augustus Briggs, a biblical scholar taking up the practices of historical-critical method, and she spent a particularly fruitful time in Paris, learning French and attending lectures, including those of literature professor Maurice Guizot. She was impressed by his lecture on women poets of France and "his contempt for the critic who did not deal with women as with men when they entered the same field." She reports that she finds everywhere "the men best-educated—most gifted—liberated most from prejudice and the unilluminated past, think of woman as a human soul placed by a kind Creator on the earth to be all that she can."⁶ Willard resolved while in Europe to study "the Woman Question" in Europe and America so that she may speak in public on it when she returns to the United States.⁷ She returned to become head of the Woman's College at Northwestern University, the result of a merger of a former Ladies' College with the previously all-male Northwestern. She might have remained there happily had she not clashed with a later president (also her former fiancé) and resigned in 1874. In need of employment, she became president of the Chicago Women's Christian Temperance Union, then later won the state (1878) and national (1879) presidencies of the organization.

After attaining influence and fame as president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Willard returned to Europe numerous times to help forge an international movement, writing a "polyglot petition" in 1884 to prohibit alcohol, opium, and all addictive substances, which garnered nearly a million signatures from over fifty countries. From 1892–1896 she lived much of the time in England at the home of Lady Henry Somerset as the two worked on an international reform movement. They responded to

6. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 298.

7. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 292.

reports of Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1895 by joining an international effort to sanction the Turkish government, and the two set up a soup kitchen and shelter in Marseille to aid Armenian refugees.

Willard was one of the most well-known and respected women of her time. When her presence, along with some other women, as a lay delegate to a church convention threatened to cause a flap, an editor in the *New York Times* wondered, "They can't think of putting out Miss Willard, can they?"⁸ In fact, a series of snubs and instances where she was not allowed to speak to certain Protestant groups ignited her desire to defend women's right to preach and be ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁹ She wrote *Woman in the Pulpit*, publishing it in 1888. The work coincided with the flurry over whether Willard could be seated as a delegate to the General Convention in Cincinnati in 1888. Already the president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, she had given her presidential address to forty-four hundred hearers at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City.¹⁰ Willard was elected by her own diocese, the Rock River conference, to the general convention as a lay delegate, one of five women elected. Controversy ensued about whether to seat her because she was a woman, but in the end, her mother's illness prevented her attendance. At that conference, the assembly voted down the rights of women to sit as lay delegates. Ironically, women already had been acting as preachers and as circuit riders and pastors with local licenses for decades.¹¹ Some of the

8. *New York Times*, April 29, 1888, 11.

9. Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 160–63.

10. Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography*, 115.

11. Barring women from leadership roles in the Methodist church, particularly if we consider all its branches, was coming too late. Willard herself notes that women were already active teachers, preachers, and missionaries. Jarena Lee was given permission by Rev. Richard Allen to preach and hold meetings in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819. Women had been circuit riders and preachers since the 1860s, when Helenor Alter Davisson was ordained by another minister in the Methodist Protestant church as a circuit rider in Indiana. Willard herself reports of a talented woman preacher who, in her two-year circuit, rode over 4,500 miles and preached 163 sermons. One husband-and-wife team of pastors, Charles and Eugenia St. John, presided over a church in Kansas City, with Eugenia granted a local license to preach in 1877. During the 1870s, seventy women were granted licenses as local preachers in the Methodist Episcopal church. In 1880 Anna Howard Shaw and Anna Oliver applied to the Methodist Episcopal Church New England Conference for ordination and were turned down. They took their case to the General Conference in Cincinnati in the

women went to the Methodist Protestant Church, a smaller group that had split from the larger Methodist Episcopal group in 1830 over governance, and were ordained there.¹²

Willard's strategy used nineteenth-century ideas of the cult of domesticity and women's moral superiority to make the case for temperance and women's rights. She labeled the movement "Home Protection," characterizing its pleasant meetings as "the home going forth into the world."¹³ In so doing, she erased the lines between the two spheres of home and public life, undermining the idea that women belonged only in the former. Her argument also undercut two arguments against the vote for women. The first argument said that women were too pure and good to dirty themselves with politics, and the second said that because they exercised moral suasion with their sons and husbands in the home, women already voted by proxy.

Suzanne Marilley calls Willard's arguments a "feminism of fear," making the case that temperance and women's power were necessary to meet the threat to domestic tranquility and women's rightful place as queen of the home. Marilley suggests that Willard's strategy quite consciously moved from temperance and mothers to voting and lobbying to suffrage.¹⁴ Yet Willard claimed she had always supported women's equality and suffrage, and she copied an excerpt from her journal about being a teenager and watching her twenty-one-year-old brother, father, and the hired hands ride off to vote. She remarked to her sister, "Wouldn't you like to vote as well as Oliver? Don't you and I love the country just as well as he and doesn't the country need our ballots?"¹⁵ The woman question and temperance appear at about the same time, in the 1860s, in her journal.

same year and were turned down again. The conference voted against women's ordination and further decreed that all local licenses granted to women preachers since 1869 be rescinded. The Methodist Episcopal Church would not grant women local preachers' licenses again until 1920, the same year women were granted the vote. Women were given full clergy rights in 1956.

12. Gestures toward reconciliation between 1874 and 1939 suggest the different branches of Methodism continued to be aware of one another. See Frederick Mazer, *The Story of Unification, 1874–1939*, vol. 3 of *The History of American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 407–78.

13. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 471.

14. Suzanne M. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 106–8.

15. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 69–70. Ruth Bordin suggests this may be Willard's embellishment after the fact, saying Willard's notes at the time do not show her

2. Willard's Biblical Interpretation

Willard was for a while acquainted with Phoebe Palmer and the Holiness movement, which underlined women's call to preach. In *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, Willard reports that she studied the Bible with W. J. Eerdman, a local pastor, and spoke in churches, literally preaching without identifying it as such.¹⁶ After speaking at a Wesleyan chapel in Britain in 1896, she wrote of herself, "I should have loved best of all to be a Gospel Preacher."¹⁷

Willard's appeal to the Bible to prove women's equality and right to preach could answer those who opposed suffrage both from religion and from nature. Willard shows a remarkable freshness and agility in her interpretation of the Bible. Unlike Cady Stanton, Willard does not see the Bible as implicated in patriarchy but considers it has been misused or misunderstood. For her, it is a narrative that promotes progress and liberation from all forms of injustice. Initially Willard agreed to be part of Stanton's *Woman's Bible* project but later withdrew. Nevertheless, in a letter printed in the back of the *Woman's Bible*, she suggests that Stanton, with her eloquence and passion for justice, is a product of a biblical nation.¹⁸

Many of Willard's methods mirror methods developed by historical-critical scholarship, at its height in the nineteenth century. In using these approaches, she wrestles the Bible away from those who would use it to argue against women's equality.

(1) Most broadly, she rejects literalism, giving many examples of how it can lead to absurdities. Although she spent some time with Dwight Moody at his Bible institute and praises him as a fellow-supporter of women's rights, she breaks with him for two reasons: his criticism of her appearance on the same platform with a Unitarian, her colleague Mary Livermore, and his literalist exegesis. In her autobiography she recalls, "Brother Moody's Scripture interpretations concerning religious toleration were too literal for me; the jacket was too straight—I could not wear it."¹⁹ She calls literalism "a two-edged sword that cuts both ways," inviting

feeling this way (*Frances Willard: A Biography*, 22). Willard cites this as an excerpt from her own diary, however.

16. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 356–57.

17. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 411.

18. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002), 2:200–201.

19. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 361.

every man who argues for women's perpetual subjection because of the sin of Eve to be certain to make it a duty to every day "eat his bread in the sweat of his face [Gen 3:19]."²⁰ And like Shakespeare, she notes that even the devil can cite Scripture.²¹

Willard tweaks Protestant clergy who argue for literalism but go against it, say, in performing marriages despite Paul's preference for celibacy:

In 1 Cor. viii., Paul sets forth a doctrine that, literally interpreted, certainly elevates celibacy above marriage and widowhood above remarriage, but exegetical opinion does not coincide with the great Apostle, neither does the practice of the church, else not one of its adherents would be alive to state the fact; nor have Protestant clergymen been known to manifest the least reluctance of conscience in performing the marriage ceremony in general, or in taking marriage vows upon themselves, nor has such reluctance become apparent when a widow was thereby involved in taking a second marriage vow.²²

(2) Willard wonders about the possibility of early tampering and manuscript variations. The examination of different manuscript traditions and search for the best readings is the work of "lower criticism." In one case where Willard cites a deliberate mistranslation in Chinese translations of the Bible to make the message more palatable to its Chinese hearers, she asks, "Who can tell what weight a similar motive may have had with transcribers of the New Testament in the uncultivated ages of the early church?"²³

(3) More prominent is Willard's own version of source criticism, the identification of different sources within the text. She does not go so far as to discuss documents, as in the Documentary Hypothesis developed by Julius Wellhausen and others, but recognizes different voices in the text. Arguing that Jesus himself taught his followers to compare scriptural texts to battle error, she refers to Jesus's reply to Satan in Matt 4:7, "he answered Satan's 'it is written' by his divine '*Again* it is written,' thus teaching us to compare Scripture with Scripture."²⁴ She produces a chart with three

20. Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit: The Defense of Women's Rights to Ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (New York: Garland, 1987), 33.

21. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 26.

22. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 19.

23. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 32.

24. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 26.

columns. In the first column are Paul's (or pseudo-Paul's) statements in favor of women's subjection, in the second verses from other parts of the Bible that counter the statement, and in the third column a verse from elsewhere in Paul to counter the first statement. For example, column 1 contains, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (1 Tim 2:11), which is countered in column 2 by Joel 2:28–29, "And it shall come to pass afterward ... that your ... daughters shall prophesy ... and upon the handmaids will I pour out my spirit," and in column 3 by 1 Cor 11:5, "But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her own head."²⁵ She defeats Paul's negative statements by the number of verses that show the opposite view, or with verses that promote mutual subjection of male and female (1 Pet 5:5, Eph 5:21). In so doing, she goes against the idea of a timeless, unified text. Similarly, she notes the contradiction of statements of woman's subjection to her husband in Gen 2–3 with the egalitarian language of Gen 1:26, where male and female are created simultaneously, both in God's image. These are the same passages most teachers still use to introduce the Documentary Hypothesis.²⁶ With the Documentary Hypothesis severely hobbled today, and scholars polarized over its validity, many teachers end up doing the same thing as Willard, merely demonstrating the existence of different voices in the text.

She makes reference to "higher criticism," saying somewhat ambiguously that had her father known about it, he would not have had so much trouble with the idea of evolution:

Dear father! His Puritan back bone and loyalty were noble qualities but had he lived & studied on into the realm of "Higher Criticism," the geological revulsion would have seemed but a trifle. Yet his daughter has lived on & finds *Truth* in the Bible which is a higher thing than *fact* and reverences God in the Word as much as ever he did in the Word of God.²⁷

In other words, her relationship with Jesus, the Word, is primary, drawing from but not limited by the Bible.

While Willard's wording in this reference is a bit confusing, it is clear that she accepts biblical criticism, rejects literalism, and espouses

25. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 27–28.

26. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 20.

27. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 388–89.

progressive revelation, the idea that knowledge and moral clarity are improving over time. Willard elsewhere mentions “exegesis” and “the scientific interpretation of the Scriptures” but is not overly reverential toward the discipline. She understands its vulnerability to manipulation and bias, calling it “the most time-serving and man-made of all sciences and the most misleading of all arts,”²⁸ a set of methods that will develop as humanity develops.

(4) Willard engages in an early form of cultural criticism, providing evidence of the effect of the prevailing culture on translation, interpretation, and reception of the Bible. She provides one clear example of culture affecting translation. In Phil 4:2–3 Paul refers to two women, Euodia and Syntyche, as “true yokefellows” who joined him in struggling to preach the gospel. Willard’s fellow churchmen changed the verses in four different Chinese translations of the New Testament, leaving out the women. Asked for the reasons for this tampering, a male missionary explained to Willard, “Oh, it would not do, with the ideas of these Chinese, to mention women in this connection.”²⁹

She suggests an element of personal preference is a large part of the process of interpretation. Men ignore what they do not like in Scripture and amplify what they approve of. Cultural factors are sufficiently strong that they can hardly be aware of their biases.

I do not at all impugn the good intention of the good men who have been our exegetes, and I bow humbly in the presence of their scholarship; but while they turn their linguistic telescopes on truth, I may be allowed to make a correction for the “personal equation” in the results which they espy. Study the foregoing illustrations, and find in them one more proof of that “humanness of the saints,” which is a factor in all human results.... Given the charm that men find in stylish dress, carefully arranged hair, and beautiful jewelry [presumably forbidden in 1 Tim 2:9], as shown in the attire of women, and it becomes perfectly natural that they should not censure these manifestations, but expatiate, instead, upon the more pleasing theory of woman’s silence and subjection. Given the custom of being waited on, and slavery is readily seen to be of divine authority.³⁰

28. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 23.

29. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 31–32.

30. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 22.

Willard exposes many examples of cultural attitudes driving interpretation, what Catherine Booth, another suffrage supporter, calls “confounding nature with custom.”³¹ For example, Willard notes that the word *men* in 1 Tim 2:2 is understood as limiting Jesus’s successors to males: “commit thou to faithful *men*, who shall be able to teach others also.” Yet when the text says, “God commandeth *men* everywhere to repent [Acts 17:30],” even the literalists, she observes, “admit women of all people are commanded to repent.”³²

(5) Last, Willard excavates many of the women heroes of Scripture. She notes the presence of women prophets such as Miriam and Deborah in the Hebrew Bible, and Anna in the New Testament. Like twentieth-century feminist critics, she discovers women disciples in the women around Jesus. In one example,

It is stated (Luke 24:33) that the two disciples to whom Christ appeared on the way to Emmaus “returned to Jerusalem,” and found the eleven gathered together, and *them that were with them*, saying “The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” Be it understood that women used this language, the women “which came with him from Galilee.” It was “them that were with them” (i.e with the eleven), who were saying, “He is risen indeed.”³³

In other words, the women announced the empty tomb earlier in the chapter (Luke 24:22–24), so the companions of the eleven are the women. So women not only announce the resurrection but are among those to whom Jesus makes his first appearance.

Willard notes that Mary Magdalene is the first to see the risen Lord in John 20:19–23, and the women in the upper room also receive the spirit in Acts 1:13–14. Two women are commissioned specifically by Jesus to spread the word, the Samaritan woman in John 4 and Mary Magdalene in John 20.³⁴ Women showed initiative in coming without being called, Willard says, “being called” carrying a taint of clericalism.³⁵

31. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 104.

32. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 34.

33. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 42.

34. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 40–44.

35. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 40–41.

3. Willard and Historical-Critical Scholarship

To what extent were Willard's interpretations a product of her personal acuity and close reading of the biblical text? To what degree was she influenced by some of historical-critical methods coming out of Europe, making the rounds in abolitionist and free-thinker circles and the culture at large? Since she was not primarily interested in biblical interpretation but rather the reform of society, she does not explain the development of her thinking. She jettisoned literalism early in life and did not worry overmuch about the consequences of critical methods.

Willard was associated with virtually every progressive movement of the time. The abolitionist movement had been an incubator for nonliteral interpretation of the Bible. People such as Theodore Dwight Weld or Albert Barnes looked for ways to interpret the text that would save it as a moral exemplar while freeing it from its apparent support for slavery. J. Albert Harrill suggests that "anti-slavery exegesis constituted an early form of biblical criticism."³⁶ Willard notes as an example of the progress in interpretation that "Onesimus and Canaan are no longer quoted as the slaveholder's mainstay."³⁷ Theodore Parker was an abolitionist who also brought biblical criticism to the public awareness, translating an extensive summary of D. F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, an inaugural work in the early quest for the historical Jesus, and publishing it in the Unitarian newspaper *The Christian Examiner* in 1840. Three years later he translated Wilhelm de Wette's two-volume work of higher criticism on the Pentateuch. His ideas of distinguishing the permanent and transient in Christianity were part of his public preaching and influenced Stanton and other reformers. Willard was only twenty-one when Parker died in 1860 but would have been exposed to his ideas through her acquaintance with other reformers and reading of various church papers.

The popular press also contained references to critical scholarship, including two publications that Willard herself reports reading and for

36. J. Albert Harrill, "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy," *RAC* 10 (2000): 174.

37. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 23. Onesimus is the runaway slave whom Paul sends back to his owner with the order to receive him as a fellow believer in the Letter to Philemon, and Canaan is the son of Ham, one of the sons of Noah, who is ordered to be in permanent subjection to his brothers (Gen 9:26) and, by implication, his descendants to their descendants. Both were invoked by slavery's defenders.

which she wrote. *Harper's Weekly* contains references to higher criticism that assume readers will know what it is. These appeared, for example, in an article about the new University of Chicago president as an exponent of the discipline, an editorial about the American penchant for reading newspapers, which cover everything from "the latest divorce case, to the President's message, from higher criticism to baseball" or even a serialized story.³⁸ *The Independent*, which covered politics, art, and culture, was even more informative, publishing roughly fifty articles about higher criticism, both attacking and defending it, between 1880 and 1888. Some of these articles discuss the discipline in detail, explaining its arguments point by point. One by Briggs, whom Willard knew in Berlin, argues that the enemies of biblical criticism go against the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterian Church.³⁹ Some issues contain a special section called "Biblical Research," reporting on the latest scholarly results. One example is "The Method of Higher Criticism and Its Fruits" in 1888.

Willard read voraciously all her life, going into her father's study as a teenager to read his "political papers," which had been off-limits, finding them quite interesting. She read *The Democratic Standard* and *The Milwaukee Free Press* in addition to *Putnam's* and *Harper's* magazines, and *The Independent*.⁴⁰ When she became famous, she wrote for several church papers as well as the *Chicago Republican*, *Harper's*, the *New York Independent*, and *The Woman's Journal*, a suffrage publication.

Willard also traveled widely in both the United States and Europe. She spent two and a half years in Europe, which included three months in Berlin and six in Paris, where she took language lessons and courses of study at the College de France and attended lectures at the Sorbonne.⁴¹ In Berlin she lived in a rooming house with the Briggs family and became extremely fond of Julia Briggs, reading German with her and developing a passionate relationship. In her diary entry on 16 October 1868 Willard mentions going with Julia to hear her husband speak. Charles Augustus Briggs was an important biblical scholar who studied in Berlin from

38. S. Giffard Nelson, "The University of Chicago and Its President," *Harper's Weekly* 35 (1891): 410; "Our American Newspaper Habit," *Harper's Weekly* 37 (1893): 1219; William Black, "Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart," *Harper's Weekly* 20 (1876): 318–20.

39. C. A. Briggs, "The Westminster Confession," *The Independent* 41.2121 (1886): 2–3.

40. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 495–96.

41. Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart*, 272, 289.

1866–1869. He was a proponent of the emerging methods of critical biblical scholarship who studied with A. I. Dorner, a disciple of Wellhausen. Briggs's inaugural address as professor at Union Theological Seminary espoused the historical method, provoking the Presbyterian church to try him for heresy in 1893, bringing about Union Seminary's permanent split from the Presbyterian church. Unfortunately, Willard says nothing about the content of his talk, writing instead about her attachment to his wife.

The exposure to methods of higher criticism by way of the people Willard knew, including Briggs, the intellectual opportunities she partook of in Europe, and its thorough discussion in at least one of the newspapers she read regularly make it nearly certain that she was familiar with it. Add to that her passing references to criticism, and it seems clear she had digested the new approach and essentially accepted it. What is striking is how little historical-critical methods seemed to worry her one way or another. She loved the Bible and often looked to it for guidance, but she never seems to have been a literalist, as her remarks about Moody show. "When prejudice and literalism meet," she says "they produce a cyclone of absurdities."⁴² She seems to accept the conclusions of higher criticism but is not reverential toward the discipline, seeing it as a human tool that will be refined as humanity progresses.

4. Progressive Revelation

Because Willard spent more than two years in Europe attending lectures and courses, she was probably also quite aware of other academic trends of the time. Two currents of intellectual change particularly affected theological development. On the one hand, Westerners became fascinated with the East. Tourists, missionaries, and scholars traveled to the Orient, as they called it, in large numbers. Archaeologists came back with treasures from Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Palestine. Max Müller began a massive translation project of the religious texts of the East. Claude Welch places the birth of the academic discipline of the history of religions in the 1870s, with several developments, including a set of lectures by Müller in London in 1870.⁴³ Exposure to religions more ancient than Christianity, with radically different worldviews, could not

42. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 25.

43. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, 1870–1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 104.

fail to make believers wonder about Christianity's claims to absolute and unchanging truth.

At the same time, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) presented a challenge to traditional ideas of humanity while presenting a model of evolutionary progress. The model of evolution was transferred to other areas of thought, becoming "a master image for new ways of viewing all things religious and cultural."⁴⁴ Willard shows just such thinking on women's rights: "To the Orientalism that is passing off the stage, we oppose modern Christianity. In our day, the ministers of a great church have struck the word 'obey' out of the marriage service, have made women eligible to nearly every rank."⁴⁵

Coupling these ideas with their own faith, some nineteenth-century Christians were led to believe in progressive revelation, the unfolding of civilization from a more primitive to a more evolved religious morality over time. This included scholars of biblical criticism, for whom it gelled with ideas of a layered text. It was, according to Alan Richardson, a "care-taker" theory between early literalism and twentieth-century critical work⁴⁶ because it allowed the embrace of critical work on the text while retaining the special authority of the Bible. Biblical writers could be considered inspired, but their individual words or ideas could be relegated to a more primitive time. At times it went along with an Orientalism and anti-Judaism when it attributed all distasteful material in the Bible to a stratum of less developed Hebrews and Orientals. De Wette, for example, a major exponent of source criticism, says, "The shepherd only speaks in the soul of the shepherd, and the primitive Oriental only in the soul of another Oriental."⁴⁷

Willard, with her slogan of home protection and exaltation of women's virtue, applies a similar model to social morality. More developed societies accorded women higher status. Women's virtue was linked to the idea of progress in society, and she saw Christian society as a beacon to other

44. Welch, *Protestant Thought*, 183.

45. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 49.

46. Alan Richardson, "The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship," in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. Stanley L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 3:316.

47. Wilhelm de Wette, *A Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament*, trans. Theodore Parker (Boston: Little, Brown, 1843).

religions and societies. She characterizes Woman's Christian Temperance Union meetings as "the home going forth into the world."⁴⁸

Temperance and women's rights were signs of a more developed society: "Women will surpass men on the splendid highway of evolution."⁴⁹ Temperance in particular acts as an engine of moral progress, uniting north and south, black and white, men and women.⁵⁰ Willard paints an arresting picture of a Woman's Christian Temperance Union meeting in a southern state, where the platform included a Catholic priest and a rabbi along with the expected southern clergy.⁵¹ The battle cries of the movement are "no sectarianism in religion," "no sectionalism in politics," and "no sex in citizenship."⁵² Continued progress would come through teaching agreed-upon extracts of "those principals of ethics that are found in the Scriptures and questioned by no sane mind, whether Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant."⁵³

Willard's exegesis undermined literalism and incorporated biblical material into the argument for women's equality in the pulpit and at the ballot box. By employing a theory of mutual dependence, she argued women's voices were not only acceptable but necessary for a full understanding of biblical texts. Neither literalism nor extreme subjectivity is desirable in interpretation and must be remedied by women's participation: "we need women commentators to bring out the women's side of the book; we need the stereoscopic view of the truth in general, which can only be had when woman's eye and man's together shall discern the perspective of the Bible's full-orbed revelation."⁵⁴ Jesus himself was both male and female, she argues, and only chose men as his inner circle because the culture of the time demanded it. He had two natures, that of a correcting father who drove out the money changers and that of a loving mother who longed to gather Jerusalem under her wings.⁵⁵ Stanton had similarly argued that God had masculine and feminine natures.⁵⁶

48. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 471.

49. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 454.

50. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 373–78.

51. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 488.

52. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 474.

53. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, 463.

54. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 21.

55. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*, 45.

56. Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, 14–15.

Willard similarly undermined a theory of the two spheres, public and private, often used to argue for women's withdrawal from worldly pursuits, by presenting the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's work as protection of the home and projection of the home into the world. She made public activism in the pursuit of temperance and suffrage a noble and moral goal for her women audiences. Amy Slagell shows that Willard used biblical allusions to promote the idea that women were not violating propriety but were acting as "the army of the Prince of Peace."⁵⁷

Willard was not without flaw. She slipped into nativism in some remarks late in her career. She was also critiqued by Ida Wells and others for her tepid response to lynchings. On the other hand, she is remarkably free of the anti-Jewish remarks of some of the *Woman's Bible* commentators who lay antiwomen prejudice at the door of the Jews, perhaps because she believes in the ultimate liberationist message of the Old and New Testaments. Willard insisted, for example, that Jews and Catholics be admitted to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and she spoke lyrically about the overcoming of differences through temperance and progress. In her biblical interpretation especially, Willard shows the best of herself as a personally generous and intellectually keen purveyor of ideas and policy that would do everything to create a more humane society.

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Josephine Butler: Voice of the Outcast

Amanda Russell-Jones

1. Introduction

A pioneer for women's rights, Josephine Butler (1828–1906) was on committees for all the major feminist causes in the nineteenth century, and her biblical interpretation played the key role in her arguments and campaigns. We “have the word of God in our hands and the law of God in our consciences” was her ringing challenge as she became the first woman to address a Parliamentary Royal Commission.¹ The value Butler placed on the Bible can be seen by her description of it as “a book all quick with living fire and spirit,”² and biblical quotations occur throughout her speeches and writings for public or private reading. As she argued for greater educational and employment opportunities for women, for the rights of married women to own property, for women's suffrage, and as she led the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, she developed a powerful, innovative, gendered biblical interpretation and public theology.³

1. Report from the Great Britain Parliament, *Royal Commission upon the Administration and operation of the CD Acts*, vol. 1 (Parliamentary Papers, 1871).

2. “Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Harriet Meuricoffre and Fanny Smyttan, c. early June 1872,” in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, ed. Jane Jordan and Ingrid E. Sharp (London: Routledge, 2003), 2:368. Where possible, Butler's works will be cited from this collection for ease of reference.

3. Butler signed the 1866 petition of John Stuart Mill. See Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage: A Short History of a Great Movement* (London: Jack, 1912), 20. She was on a suffrage committee in Liverpool. See Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional History* (London: Routledge, 2006), 16–17. According to E. Moberly Bell, Butler wrote a paper on women's suffrage in 1855. See Bell, *Josephine Butler: Flame of Fire* (London: Constable, 1962), 199.

Passionate as Butler was about gaining greater opportunities for girls and women in the spheres of education and work,⁴ she was convinced that if the sexual double standard of morality were not tackled it would be like “building a beautiful house on top of a bad drain”: there would be a “fatal poison” in the foundations. Hence, despite the important work she had done in the field of education through writing and presenting the memorial that persuaded Cambridge University to authorize examinations to “test and attest” the abilities of women—thus paving the way for women’s colleges—Butler turned instead to an open attack on the sexual double standard. Butler believed others would carry on the work in the field of education, but “who would care to go down to the deeper and more hidden work and to encounter the special difficulties, the disgust and the sorrow which met us *there*?”⁵ Her Christian faith played a vital role in her espousal of the cause of the outcast woman since Butler believed that she was “called” by God “to walk side by side, hand in hand, with the outcast.”⁶ Furthermore she was convinced that “The soul of the most forlorn outcast was redeemed by Christ, and is dear to Him. Most certainly the souls of women are as precious to God as the souls of men.”⁷

Accepting the invitation to lead the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, Butler waged a sixteen-year battle until the British Parliament finally repealed the acts in 1886. By this time, her campaign had spread to several European countries through national organizations supported by the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice, which fought to end state-regulated prostitution. Concern about the prostitution of young girls and about trafficking led to a further campaign to expose the practice of selling girls into prostitution. The resulting “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” scandal in 1883 led to the change in the age of consent from twelve to sixteen in

Butler was on the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women. See Josephine E. Butler, *Memorial on Behalf of the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women* (Cambridge: UA Grace Book Sigma, 1868), 359.

4. See Josephine E. Butler, *The Education and Employment of Women* (Liverpool: Brakell, 1868).

5. Josephine E. Butler, *The Dawn* (London: Dyer Brothers, 1893), 17:2.

6. Josephine E. Butler, *Mrs. Butler’s Appeal to the Women of America* (New York: The Philanthropist, 1888), 7–8.

7. Josephine E. Butler, *The Hour before the Dawn: An Appeal to Men* (London: Trübner, 1876), 3:260.

Britain. A sustained campaign was also organized to oppose the practice of the British authorities setting up and regulating brothels in India patronized by the British armed forces.⁸

Butler addressed some of the most powerful men of the Victorian world and arguably had the greatest single impact of any woman of her day in advancing the cause of women's equality as she lectured politicians, campaigned in elections, and galvanized women to support their "sisters."⁹

Butler's fundamental belief, based on the Bible, was in a universal moral law that applies equally to all. Quoting Galatians, she went on to argue, "It has been the tendency of Christianity, gradually and slowly, to break down all unfriendly barriers between races, and to extinguish slavery; and last of all it will—this is our hope—remove disabilities imposed by the stronger portion of society upon the weaker" (see Gal 3:28).¹⁰ For her, justice meant "a pure and equal moral standard and equal laws."¹¹

Butler pointed out that the Contagious Diseases Acts were an unconstitutional breach of women's civil liberties, since they were being denied their rights under Magna Carta and habeas corpus, which decreed that the laws of Britain applied to all citizens and that "No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned ... unless by the lawful judgement of his peers."¹²

2. Jesus the Liberator: A Greater Than St. Paul Is Here

Significantly, it was Christ's own behavior toward women that Butler took to be the standard God required. John 8 was a key text for Butler: Jesus's encounter with the woman caught in adultery was her "sheet anchor." She drives home the point that the men—who were accusing the woman—left "scared by the searching presence of Him who admitted not for one moment that God's law of purity should be relaxed for the stronger, while imposed in its utmost severity on the weaker."¹³ Some

8. Jane Jordan and Ingrid E. Sharp, introduction to Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 5:1–10.

9. See Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 209; Josephine E. Butler, *Josephine E. Butler: An Autobiographical Memoir*, ed. George W. Johnson and Lucy A. Johnson (London: Arrowsmith, 1909), 109.

10. Butler, *Education and Employment of Women*, 18–19.

11. Butler, *Mrs. Butler's Appeal to the Women of America*, 3.

12. Josephine E. Butler, "The Constitution Violated (1871)," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 2:217.

13. Josephine E. Butler, *Social Purity* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1879), 3:310.

will argue, she continues, that treating “the female sinner as being the most deeply culpable, has marked every age and all teaching in which the moral standard was high. No!—not every age, nor all teaching! There stands on the page of history one marked exception; and, so far as I know, one only—that of Christ. I will ask you the question ... therefore ... ‘What think ye of Christ?’”

Butler’s Christocentric focus as the hermeneutic with which she approached all Scripture can be clearly seen in her introduction to *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* as she foregrounds what she calls the “typical acts of Christ the dangerous leveller.”¹⁴ This book, which Butler edited and introduced in 1869, was highly unusual in being a factual book written mainly by women—women such as Frances Power Cobbe, Harriet Martineau, and Elisabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, who were to become very influential in the feminist movements of the nineteenth century, putting forward big ideas and original thinking on topics such as the employment of women and emigration.¹⁵ Making it clear that the views expressed were her own and not necessarily those of the other contributors, Butler boldly put forward theological arguments and emphasized the relative value of the words of Paul and the actions of Jesus as she discussed the influence of the Bible on the role and status of women.

That Butler believed it was important to address Paul’s statements about women in this secular book demonstrates that, as she said, both Christians and those who did not profess Christianity based their arguments against increasing educational and work experience for women on an appeal to Paul’s teaching. Butler’s response was to relativize the importance of Paul’s teaching in three ways. She primarily stressed the supremacy of Christ, his teaching, and example, saying, “My appeal is to Christ, and to Him alone, not to any Church, or traditions ... nor yet even to an Apostle,” and arguing, “A greater than St. Paul is here but we seem to have forgotten it.”¹⁶ Jesus’s “typical actions,” she argues, included his treatment of women, and she gives an impressive catalogue of these women over two pages, showing

14. Josephine E. Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London: Marshall & Son, 1896), 84.

15. See Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 121–29, for the overlap in personnel between feminism and repeal.

16. Josephine E. Butler, ed., *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1869), lii, xlvi.

for each one what Jesus liberated her from. For example, the woman taken in adultery is liberated from a one-sided application of the law (John 8:1–11), and another woman is emancipated from the position, which even she accepted, of being a “gentile dog” (Luke 7:24–30).

In ringing tones, Butler challenges her readers to look at Christ’s example: “Search throughout the gospel history, and observe his conduct in regard to women, and it will be found that the word liberation expresses, above all others, the act which changed the whole life and character and position of the women dealt with, and which ought to have changed the character of men’s treatment of women from that time forward.”¹⁷ In the second strand of her argument, Butler makes clear that Paul is an interpreter of Christ’s teaching, not the originator of it. Paul “spoke for the exigencies of a given period, and from the point of view of a man born under limitations of vision and judgement”; he taught how the principles of Christ were to be carried out in his historical setting, not how they apply to all times and all places. Butler’s contemporaries did not need to hold as necessary “the primitive form into which these principles were constrained by the circumstances of society.”¹⁸ Third, referring to Paul’s words “I speak this of permission and not of commandment,” Butler makes the point that some of Paul’s remarks did not carry the authority given to them by his subsequent interpreters.¹⁹

Butler does not often quote from Paul’s letters. When she speaks of the value of “the most precious book” in her own life, she writes of the Psalms: “O what a treasure they are! No difficult doctrine there, no conflict of apparent opposite truths, no long argumentative sentences like St Paul’s.”²⁰ Perhaps surprisingly, in the light of its reference to forbidding women to teach or have authority over men, Butler does, however, refer to “Paul’s beautiful letter to Timothy.” She does not amplify her remark, but the epistle is written to a young man urging him to “set an example for the believers in life ... in faith and in purity” (see 1 Tim 4:12), and values that Butler held dear can be traced in the epistle.²¹

17. Butler, *Woman’s Work*, lix.

18. Butler, *Woman’s Work*, xlix.

19. Butler, *Woman’s Work*, lii.

20. Unpublished diary entry from a handwritten copy in the Northumberland Record Office classified as “From June 1890–Sept 1897,” entry 1 at Berne.

21. Arthur Stanley George Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), 216. See, e.g., 1 Tim 1:10, 15; 5:2.

In considering the women who experienced a “distinct act of Liberation,” Butler specifically addresses Jesus’s attitude to outcast women when she discusses the Magdalene.²² Christ, she says, three times commended the Magdalene “to all who have any true love for Him”—the Magdalene in the person of the woman who washed his feet with her tears, the Samaritan woman at the well, and the woman caught in adultery. Importantly, Butler argues that thus Christ gave to the world “a key-note upon which to tune its voice to the Magdalene to the end of time.”²³ She saw Mary Magdalene not only as an outcast accepted by Jesus but also as the first witness of the resurrection (John 20:10–18), one commanded by Christ to go and tell others the good news.²⁴

Butler frequently employs the expression “the woman of the city who was a sinner,” and she amplifies Christ’s acceptance of her and his censure of her male accusers. Butler does not see herself as better than the outcast but rather says, “Who am I, a sinner, to speak to her of sin?” and, “Looking my Liberator in the face, can my friends wonder that I have taken my place, (I took it long ago) ... by the side of her, the ‘woman in the city which was a sinner.’”²⁵ So she was deeply critical of her fellow women, whom she regarded as complicit in oppressing their less fortunate sisters as she argued that women “of the higher classes, ‘women that are at ease,’ ... become capable ... of deep and positive cruelty towards their own sex through a cowardly subserviency to custom and masculine opinion.”²⁶

22. Butler, *Woman’s Work*, lviii. Throughout the history of the church—including in Butler’s day—readers tended to conflate the story of Mary Magdalene “out of whom were cast seven demons” according to Mark 16:9 with the narrative of the “woman of the city who was a sinner” of Luke 7:37; thus Mary Magdalene was characterized as a prostitute. This led to the common usage of “Magdalenes” to refer to prostitutes or penitent prostitutes.

23. Josephine E. Butler, *The Lovers of the Lost*, in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 1:96. See Amanda Russell-Jones, “The Voice of the Outcast: Josephine Butler’s Biblical Interpretation and Public Theology” (PhD diss., Birmingham University, 2014), 197–99, for a discussion of this quotation from William Edward Scudamore, *She Hath Done What She Could: A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the House of Mercy at Ditchingham, on S. Michael’s Day, 1859* (London: Parker, 1859).

24. Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (2007), 28.

25. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 15–16. The editors note that these memories were “recorded in 1900” (15).

26. Lucretia Flammang makes the point that Butler thus championed women that even the eighth-century prophets did not. See Flammang, “And Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy: The Voice and Vision of Josephine Butler,” in *Women’s Theology*

The Old Testament expression “at ease” and its application to women as a severe criticism would have been familiar to her readers. In Isa 32:9, 11, it is used to warn “careless women,” “women that are at ease,” of hard times of judgment ahead. To Victorian ears the language here is fairly graphic in saying these women need to strip naked and gird sackcloth on their loins.

3. Influences on Butler’s Reading of the Bible

Butler emphasized the importance of individuals reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible to contemporary society for themselves—something she learned from her family. Her father, John Grey (1785–1868), was converted through reading the Bible and made his first public address on behalf of the Bible Society—an organization whose stated aim was to place the Bible in the hands of as many people as possible.²⁷ Butler refers to “the open book” as being what guided Britain to make good laws, such as habeas corpus, and as being what moved the slaves to demand their freedom when they read it secretly.²⁸ Grey frequently read aloud from the family Bible and quoted Isa 58:6: “Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”²⁹

Butler’s biography of her father makes clear her admiration for the way he put Scripture into practice in “his fiery hatred of all injustice,” most notably in his antislavery campaigning. Her decision to assume a leadership role in challenging Parliament was influenced by Grey’s work for electoral reform and his expectation that all women should have an opinion on important matters.³⁰ Grey’s sisters Margaretta and Mary published spirited antislavery work, which must have been a powerful inspiration for Butler as they asserted the biblical imperative of equality and a firm

in *Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. Julie Melnyk, LSVB 3 (London: Garland, 1998), 151–52.

27. Josephine E. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1869), 18–21.

28. Butler, *Woman’s Work*, lvii.

29. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey*, 49. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture translations follow the KJV.

30. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey*, 327.

opposition to the sexual double standard.³¹ Butler's references to Aunt Margaretta having a strong "natural sense of injustice" and "great natural eloquence," and disguising herself as a boy to gain entry to Parliament to witness a debate, demonstrate her influence as a role model.³²

Butler saw the oppression of women under state-regulated prostitution as parallel to that of slaves; following her father, she argues that anyone denied their rights under habeas corpus is a slave, not a citizen.³³ Thus Butler uses the language of the antislavery campaigners to describe her own campaign, saying that what she is fighting for is abolition. As Alison Milbank says, the Bible had given Butler an interpretative tool with which to critique society, and she used biblical language to pursue abolition and to argue for a woman's right to do so.³⁴

Of the network of female antislavery campaigners who went on to support Butler, many shared her beliefs that the Bible was central to the argument they were making and that prayer was a necessary part of gaining an understanding of God's will and of seeking his help. Butler was encouraged by the example of American antislavery "martyrs ... who stretched out their strong arms to bring down Heaven upon our earth."³⁵ It is an important point that slave narratives also informed her thinking both in terms of hearing female voices telling of oppression and in terms of hearing enslaved women express faith in the God of the Bible but not of their masters.³⁶

31. M. Lundie Duncan, *America as I Found It* (New York: Carter & Bros., 1852); Mrs. Henry Grey, *Remarks Occasioned by Strictures in The Courier and New York Enquirer of December 1852...* (London: Hamilton, 1853). See Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), for an exploration of the importance of antislavery activity for women's subsequent campaigns for equal rights.

32. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey*, 15–16.

33. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey*, 63; see too Grey, *Remarks Occasioned by Strictures*, 15.

34. Alison Milbank, "Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. James Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 156.

35. Butler, *Social Purity*, in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 3:328. Butler is here quoting from Eliza Wigham, *The Anti-slavery Cause in America and Its Martyrs* (London: Bennett, 1863).

36. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 14; A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 31.

4. Women's Right to Speak

That women as well as men could proclaim God's word Butler bases on the fact that at Pentecost the promise of the prophet Joel had been fulfilled: "Upon the servants and the *hand-maidens* I will pour out my Spirit; and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy" (see Joel 2:28–29, Acts 2:17). Prophecy can encompass foretelling the future, she argues, but the word *prophecy* "is best translated by the learned, as 'to show forth the mind of God' on any matter." She places great value on this: "What a high gift! What a holy endowment this, to be enabled to show or set forth to man the mind or thought of God!"

Butler refers to one address as "my Croydon sermon" and uses the terms *preaching* and *prophesying* interchangeably. At the outset of her campaign, she told her mother-in-law, who had been raised a Quaker, that she had been going "about on a sort of a preaching tour," speaking "only to women," and "mostly in the Quakers' meeting houses or a Church Schoolroom."³⁷ Nevertheless, very soon she was addressing hundreds of working men and telling them to rebel like Wat Tyler. Clearly, from the very beginning of her public work on behalf of the outcast, she was a powerful preacher. Her cousin's husband, the Rev. Charles Birrell, using a biblical allusion, said that "Christ spoke to the lost woman in her words." Her biblical interpretation, thus shared with others, was a form of preaching or prophesying—a public theology.³⁸

Butler criticized the church, however, for acting as though the promise of Joel had not been fulfilled:

Is it possible that the Church has ever fully believed this, has ever truly heard or understood this mighty utterance from heaven, recorded ... in the Hebrew Scripture, and again at the great inauguration of the present Dispensation—a Dispensation of Life, Impartiality, Equality, and Jus-

37. Josephine E. Butler to Mr. Ryley en route to Scotland, Monday 10 July 1871; Josephine Butler, "Catherine Booth," *CR* 58 (1890): 650; Sarah Tooley, "The Sex Bias of the Commentators: An Interview with Mrs. Josephine Butler," *Hum* 5 (1894): 419–20; Josephine E. Butler, "Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Mrs. George Butler, 3 January 1870," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler* 1:91; Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: Murray, 2001), 43.

38. Josephine E. Butler, "Great Meeting of Working Men," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 2:68, 76.

tice, in which there is, or should be, “neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek?”³⁹

Memorably, she amplifies her trenchant criticism of the attitude of the Christian church toward women in her 1892 article, “Woman’s Place in Church Work”: “For too long a time women have been graciously permitted only to sweep out the church, or wash the ecclesiastical robes of the Catholic or Protestant popes and priests, to feed the poor under their supervision, and to read the Bible inside poor people’s houses.” When “the Church, or the Churches,” are more humble, she says, and recognize “their desperate need of the help of woman *as man’s equal, absolutely*, in her relation to spiritual things, good gifts will no longer languish in a prison-house of conventualities, and women’s energies will not have to be folded in napkins and buried under the church floor.”⁴⁰

Although Butler has often been described as an evangelical Anglican, the Christian group she most closely identified with was the Salvation Army. As far as Butler was concerned, “this new evangelizing force was a dream of my childhood, and has been at all times the desire of my heart.” The Salvationists were the “advanced guard of God’s great ‘company of preachers’ of the latter days by whom the gospel shall be announced to ‘every creature!’”⁴¹

In common with the Salvation Army, she places an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and Pentecostal gifts of healing and exorcism.⁴² Significantly, among the principles Butler lists for which the Salvation Army and her own movement contend is “equality between the sexes,” and she asserts that the “great question of the status of women has been in some degree solved by

39. Josephine E. Butler, *Prophets and Prophetesses: Some Thoughts for the Present Times* (Newcastle: Mawson, Swan, & Morgan, 1898), 5.

40. Mrs. Josephine Butler, Mrs. Sheldon Amos, and Mrs. Bramwell Booth, “Woman’s Place in Church Work,” *MCL* 6 (1892): 32.

41. Josephine E. Butler, *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (London, 1883), 9; see also “Letter from Josephine Butler to Catherine Booth of 1882,” quoted in Catherine Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), 287. See Russell-Jones, “Voice of the Outcast,” 112–62, for a full discussion of Butler’s church allegiance.

42. Copy of letter to Maurice Gregory Cheltenham, 16 March 1902; Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Butler, 26 March 1884. See also Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler*, 169; Josephine E. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1892), 434–35.

Mrs. Booth's existence," as she draws attention to "the influence which her life and work have had upon the question of the capabilities of women."⁴³

Butler criticizes other women who have been "very slavish," saying, "It is humiliating to see a gifted woman, with dignity enough for a Bishop or Prime Minister, putting herself willingly under the guidance of some inexperienced, *not* gifted clergyboy. The process is very injurious to the clergyboy."⁴⁴

Her book *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* details her work alongside the Salvation Army and her support for the right of William and Catherine Booth's daughter, Catherine Booth Clibborn (1858–1955), to preach in Switzerland. As far as the Salvation Army and Butler were concerned, the same principle of the equality of the moral law was threatened when women's right to preach was denied as when the sexual double standard was expressed in prostitution. As these two issues overlapped in the battle for the Salvation Army to minister in Switzerland, they powerfully reinforced each other. When Booth Clibborn was imprisoned, Butler reminded the Swiss that God delivered Paul and Silas from jail. Referring to Swiss brothel owners, she wrote of being opposed by "the temple of Diana who can foresee loss of financial gain."⁴⁵

Butler became convinced that if young, innocent women confronted the men who were supporting prostitution, it might be like Herod seeing the ghost of John the Baptist, whom he had had beheaded—the conscience of a man might trouble him if he were challenged by "the womanhood, the pure girlhood" whom he had "destroyed, or to whose destruction [he had] consented."⁴⁶ Butler encouraged young Salvationists to do this, and the method was adopted by the Salvation Army in marked contrast to the prevailing view that prostitution was not a fit topic for unmarried young women to address. Butler approved of the way the Salvation Army equipped women to become effective speakers and rescue workers, in contrast to Anglican penitentiaries, where perpetual penitence was emphasized, not future service.⁴⁷

43. Salvation Army Publication, "Friends and Helpers IX," *AW* (1895): 366–67.

44. Butler, Amos, and Booth, "Woman's Place in Church Work," 31.

45. Butler, *Salvation Army*, 5, 214–15, 32.

46. Butler, *Salvation Army*, 205; see 200–206 for Butler's full argument. See too Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 158, for an earlier reference to John the Baptist.

47. Salvation Army Publication, "Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview," *AW* (1891): 50; Walkowitz, *Prostitution in Victorian Society*, 120, 135; Jordan, *Josephine Butler*

It was the Salvation Army who recognized her as “ordained of God Himself no less truly than her husband” and campaigned alongside her.⁴⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that Butler declared, “The Salvation Army have led the way in ... spiritual equality and emancipation of women’s powers. May the Churches follow!”⁴⁹

5. Outcast

Butler’s chosen term *outcast*, which she used to describe any woman who fell afoul of the sexual double standard in Victorian society and was excluded whether she became a prostitute or not, gives a crucial insight into what she believed was God’s relationship to those whom others described as “sinners,” “fallen,” and “brazen harlots,”⁵⁰ and it sums up her genius as an innovative Bible interpreter. Butler took this word, which was in use in the culture of her day, linked it with its biblical usage, and in one stroke redefined the value and status of the women to whom it was applied and indicted those who condemned them.

Butler gave Fanny Forsaith, who acted as secretary to Butler and the campaign and thus often wrote material to be sent out to supporters, the emphatic instruction “never use the word prostitute if you can help it.” This underlines that, for Butler, the use of *outcast* was a vital aspect not only of her own thinking but also of her political strategy in conducting her campaign.⁵¹ *Outcast* defines a woman over against someone else and places the onus on that person for casting out the woman. The biblical use of *outcast* is significant given that all but one usage in the Old Testament is a positive message of hope.⁵² The outcasts are being included by God,

(2001), 217–35; Butler, “Catherine Booth,” 648; Josephine E. Butler to Miss Forsaith, 28 May 1897.

48. Salvation Army, “Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview,” 49.

49. Butler, Amos, and Booth, “Woman’s Place in Church Work,” 32.

50. See Josephine E. Butler, “Letter from Josephine E. Butler to the Misses Priestman, 27 February 1888,” in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 5:110. So Butler can describe Hagar, who was a second wife or concubine but not a prostitute, as the “typical outcast.” See Josephine E. Butler, *The Lady of Shunem* (London: Marshall, 1894), 71.

51. Josephine E. Butler, “Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Fanny Forsaith, 1905,” in Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (2001), 3.

52. One reference is rather different, since it refers to God “scattering the outcasts of Elam” (Jer 49:36).

and those who excluded them are being judged for the wrong they have done. Significantly, their wrongdoing includes by implication casting out the outcasts: "Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured.... For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, this is Zion, whom no man seeketh after" (Jer 30:16–17).

Butler seems to have been influenced by her father's reading of Isaiah to describe women as outcasts and champion their cause, since his favorite Isaiah passage continues, "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?" (Isa 58:7).⁵³ Using a related word and concept, Butler refers to God "gathering in" "outcast humanity" as she expounds Isa 54, and here she would seem to be including the whole of humankind, rather than only women, saying, "Outcast humanity is addressed by God, under the form of a woman despised and forsaken in the most marvellously tender and pathetic manner."⁵⁴

Butler chose to use the term *outcast* rather like people today might choose to refer to the enslaved rather than slaves, to the prostituted rather than prostitutes. For Butler, outcasts had something done to them to make them outcasts, but this was not the last word. *Outcast* did not sum them up and permanently define them.

Butler closely identifies Christ with the outcast by describing the outcasts with language used in Isaiah of the suffering servant and applied by Christians to Christ. So outcast women were "despised and rejected" and "driven like sheep to the slaughter."⁵⁵ She also applies "the low and despised estate of her" to the outcast woman, in an allusion to the Magnificat, where Mary says God "hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden" (Luke 1:48).⁵⁶

Referencing Jesus's words "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Butler paraphrases and applies the passage to the outcasts: "Who like these are hungry ..., who stripped as these, and robbed ... ? Who smitten to the soul ... ?"⁵⁷ Butler is saying that Jesus is identified with the outcast and that to help the outcast is to help him. This is a daring suggestion, since

53. Butler, *Education and Employment of Women*, 26.

54. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 40.

55. Butler, *The Hour before the Dawn*, in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 3:260.

56. Butler, *Salvation Army*, 5.

57. Butler, *The Lovers of the Lost*, 1:98. Jesus's words in Matt 25:42–45 parallel Isa 58, John Grey's favorite text. See Helen Mathers, "'Tis Dishonour Done to Me': Self-

Butler is not here speaking of the repentant Magdalene but of outcast women generally, those described as sinners by her contemporaries and by the Bible.

6. The Influence of Oxford and George Butler

Josephine's recognition of the imperative to tackle the sexual double standard of morality in order for reform for women to take place owed much to the years she spent in Oxford while newly wed to George Butler, who was a tutor and examiner in the university. She characterizes George's view of marriage as "a perfectly equal union with absolute freedom on both sides for personal initiative in thought and action and for individual development."⁵⁸ She describes theirs as a joint life and pays tribute to his support of her campaigns in the face of the disapproval of his friends and the negative impact on his career. Theirs was certainly an atypical marriage for the times, with George being left to look after the children while Josephine traveled and campaigned, yet he was absolutely clear that women must speak for themselves and joked proudly of being Mrs. Butler's husband.⁵⁹ By contrast, the men of Oxford did not regard her as their equal and condoned, or preferred not to oppose, the sexual double standard.⁶⁰ Her remembrances of Oxford are of receiving what have aptly been called her "first lessons in humiliation" through words spoken in her drawing room by a theologian who made it quite clear that he and his colleagues thought her approach to biblical interpretation woefully naive.⁶¹ Looking back on this, she said that she had had the convictions but had lacked the "dialectics" to defend "their truth."⁶² Oxford, she said somewhat obliquely, "had its shadow side," with "little leaven of family life." What she did not spell out was the extent of prostitution in Oxford and the university's role in regulating it.⁶³

Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler," in *Sex Gender and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited*, ed. Jenny Daggars and Diana Neal (New York: Lang, 2006), 48.

58. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler*, 56.

59. See Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (2001), 109–10, 142, 203.

60. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler*, 102.

61. Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past* (Oxford: Polity, 2001), 79.

62. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler*, 95.

63. For what the primary sources reveal about prostitution and the university's role in regulating it, see Arthur J. Engel, "Immoral Intentions: The University of Oxford and the Problem of Prostitution," *VS* 23 (1979): 79–108.

Josephine describes the relief of being able to bring the ideas that were expressed by their male guests to the test of the Bible at the end of the evening, and the Butlers clearly made this a regular practice. Under “her husband’s guidance,” Josephine became “familiar with the Greek text.”⁶⁴ Intriguingly, George’s extant sermons from their time in Oxford reveal themes common in Josephine’s later publications. In a sermon titled “Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour,” George says,

Drive not the outcast to despair. Shut not the door of thy heart against an erring sister: that will not commend thy spotless purity to him who conversed with the woman at the well of Sychar: who said of another grievous offender—He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her—who allowed his feet to be bathed and his body to be anointed against his burial by one who was a Sinner.... Not so, Christian women: that is not the way to break the bands of wickedness, and let the oppressed go free.⁶⁵

Quite remarkably, George names all three women in the gospels who are identified as “women of the city who are sinners”: the woman at the well (John 4), the woman caught in adultery (John 8), and Mary Magdalene (Luke 9). Here George prefigures Josephine’s argument, present in both *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (1869) and in one of her first campaigning pamphlets titled “The Lovers of the Lost,” that, since the model for Christian behavior is Jesus, his treatment of the outcast woman must be implemented by the “followers of Jesus” as they open “a way for ... erring sisters to return to the paths of peace,” not by “coldly saying ‘She is a sinner.’” Notably, George calls them “sisters” and juxtaposes this with the term he refutes—“sinners.”⁶⁶ It is not possible to say who first recognized Jesus’s attitude to outcast women—Josephine or George, or whether it was a joint discovery—but it is clear that when she was in Oxford, Josephine was already familiar with key passages of Scripture she was to use in her campaigns. This gives content to her claim that she and George were calling Jesus “revolutionary” in these very early years of their marriage.⁶⁷

64. Tooley, “Sex Bias of the Commentators,” 413.

65. George Butler, *The Gospel Preached to the Poor a Sign of Christ’s Presence on Earth: Sermons Preached in 1857 in Dartmouth Place Chapel, Blackheath* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1858), 71–72.

66. Butler, *Gospel Preached to the Poor*, 73.

67. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler*, 102.

7. A Voice Crying in the Wilderness: "We Rebel"

In holding the upper classes responsible for legislation supporting state-regulated prostitution, Butler knew there was a trend whereby the men of Oxford and Cambridge became the clergy, bishops and archbishops, the elected members of Parliament, and the Lords. Butler's strong class association between the exploited and the exploiter, the honest working man and the immoral aristocracy, may not have begun in Oxford, but it may well have been strengthened there and taken on a personal aspect as she mixed socially with those who were to go on to rule Britain. She certainly expressed her opposition to this class divide forcefully at a later date: "The upper classes in Parliament desire & are resolved to obtain & keep a system of legal harlotry superintended by Government & paid for out of the taxes paid by the people."⁶⁸ Butler saw herself as a radical prophetic voice in the public sphere who deliberately and subversively interpreted Scripture into the culture of her day to demand inclusion of the outcast and challenge the standards of church and state. She says, "I sometimes think of my special call as, in a very humble manner, resembling that of John the Baptist. It is a stern preaching of a very practical repentance, a knocking down of the most abominable of the bastilles of the Modern Moloch, the Demon of Lust & Greed & of oppression."⁶⁹

The speeches she made in France and Italy attacking state-regulated prostitution were published as *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness*, and this is where the flourishing of her voice can be seen as she identifies herself as a female John the Baptist in "a vast wilderness of men," protesting against the "typical crime" or "typical sin" and, on behalf of women, declaring, "We Rebel."⁷⁰

Butler is directly challenging the political powers, stating that John's role was to prepare the way of the Lord and to bring about a time of repentance before the first coming of Christ. Now is the time, she says, for other

68. Josephine E. Butler, "Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Harriet Meuricoffre and Fanny Smyttan, c. early June 1872," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 2:370.

69. Josephine E. Butler, "Letter 3," Salvation Army Heritage Centre, London, folder labeled BC/1/1/65.

70. Josephine E. Butler, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Being Her First Appeal Made in 1874-5, to Continental Nations against the System of Regulated Vice*, originally published as *Une Voix dans le Desert*, 1874; English translation by Osmund Airy (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1913) in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 1:128-55.

prophets to prepare the way for Christ's second coming; God will raise up seers. Noting that John received only stern and ultimately violent opposition when he challenged the rulers and the powerful—in his case in the shape of King Herod—her challenge is aimed directly at the lawmakers through the words of Isa 10:1: "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people."⁷¹

Reminding her audience of John 8, she challenges their own morality: "What think you—you who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, cast stones at the woman of immoral life, while you pay the highest worldly honour to the man who sins with her." Acerbically, she continues, "Is the lesson of this fairly clear and complete?... Do you think that Jesus Christ would have given His sanction to the public registration of women as handmaids of shame?" The expression "handmaids of shame" is a neat juxtaposition to "handmaids of the LORD"; those who should have been prophesying were being enrolled in prostitution instead.⁷²

Her challenge is also to women. Using the language of the Paris commune, this remarkable woman, who visited Buckingham Palace and was married to an Anglican clergyman, declares that sisters are "solidaire," that degradation of outcasts is "dishonour done *to me*," and then she quotes Christ's words, "ye have done it unto Me."⁷³ Butler describes herself as republican and, echoing both Acts 17:6 and the English Revolution, says that "English women will ... turn the world upside down until impurity and injustice are expelled from our laws." Her frequent use of the expression *solidaire* demonstrates the influence of both French republicanism and the British radical tradition on her understanding of how the teaching and example of Christ "the dangerous leveller" should be applied.⁷⁴ Her application of the expression *solidaire* in a Christian context was innovative in the British theological thought of that period, but it is a concept

71. Butler, *Voice of One Crying*, 1:148.

72. Butler, *Voice of One Crying*, 1:140; Butler, *Prophets and Prophetesses*, 4.

73. Glen Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (New York: Viking, 1971), 30; Butler, *Voice of One Crying*, 1:137–38.

74. Butler, *Constitution Violated*, 2:211–303; Butler, "Truth before Everything (1897)," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 3:337; Butler, *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, lvii–lviii.

familiar to later liberation theologians.⁷⁵ This type of radical critique of the oppressive power of governments and landowners, and her expression of solidarity with French prostitutes, clearly was a fundamental aspect of Butler's outlook and rhetoric.

8. Mrs. Butler's Bible

Feminist biblical interpretation can be described as a kind of liberationist hermeneutics beginning in the experience of the oppressed with social transformation as its goal and which approaches the biblical text with the presupposition that there is no such thing as a neutral scholarship.⁷⁶ How far does Butler measure up to this, and what interpretative strategies did she employ? Her hermeneutic of suspicion is clearly seen in an 1894 interview titled "Mrs. Butler's Bible," where the mature Butler is hard-hitting in her call for women to become "profound students of Scripture, accomplished Hebrew and Greek scholars, and versed in the principles of true criticism ... really learned interpreters," since "Men have had it all their own way in that region for long enough."⁷⁷ Male interpretation of Scripture led to women being forbidden to speak in church, yet she says, "Judge the surprise of a modern intelligent woman when in looking up the word rendered 'speak' in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon ... —she finds it translated, 'to chatter like monkeys, to twitter like birds!'" This she takes to be a prohibition of chattering in church and not a prohibition of women preaching.

Butler is also critical of the sex bias of men in the formation of the canon, saying, "While I believe in a large sense in the inspiration of the Scriptures, I do not believe in the direct inspiration of the council of men who decided as to what should be canonical."⁷⁸ She asks, Why include the narrative of Joseph and Potiphar's wife but not that of Susanna and the

75. See, e.g., Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 287–306.

76. Sandra Schneiders, "Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Hearing the New Testament Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 349–69.

77. Tooley, *Sex Bias of the Commentators*, 413. For an example of a woman encouraged by Butler to take up biblical interpretation see Katharine Bushnell, *A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford: Rose & Sons, 1932).

78. Tooley, *Sex Bias of the Commentators*, 417.

elders? Why exclude Judith?⁷⁹ “Doubtless,” Butler says, “the learned council” decided the First Book of Esther was “an admirable example to set before women,” but why not also the Second Book of Esther? In all of these cases she speculates that sex bias led the men to exclude books that showed men in a bad light and women as their moral equals or superiors. Sex bias is still affecting contemporary translation of the Bible, she says, as Jesus’s encounter with the woman taken in adultery was placed in parentheses in the recent Revised Version (John 7:53–8:11).⁸⁰

Butler was deeply concerned that people were being deterred from reading the Old Testament by male theologians and commentators who “seem to be nervously afraid of blaming their own sex in their relations with women.” Men, she says, have “a tendency to excuse the Bible characters,” whereas a woman will “look with deeper horror upon the lapse of David, and would feel more strongly about the shabby conduct of even good men towards women.”⁸¹ In her own biblical interpretation, she clearly reads from the perspective of women, especially outcast women, and makes no excuses either for biblical characters who mistreated women or for her contemporaries who follow in their footsteps. She starts where women are, and the women she is beside are dying prostitutes—women who ask, “Is there any hope for us?”⁸²

Butler expounds two of the passages Phyllis Trible later described as “texts of terror,” or, as John L. Thompson describes them, “tales of terror with women as victims.”⁸³ A hundred years before Trible, Butler called the narrative of the Levite’s concubine in Judg 19 “The Typical Tragedy,” and told her audience, “We have slept too long; there is a prostrate figure at

79. Susannah and the elders, the Additions to Esther (Second Book of Esther), and Judith are deuterocanonical. Butler makes clear that she rejects some of the deuterocanonical books and does not want to exclude any books already in the canon (Tooley, *Sex Bias of the Commentators*, 416).

80. Tooley, *Sex Bias of the Commentators*, 418.

81. Tooley, *Sex Bias of the Commentators*, 415; see also Butler, *Voice of One Crying*, in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 1:136.

82. Josephine Butler, “Memories,” *SB* 23 (1900): 309.

83. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984); John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3. The narratives are Hagar (Gen 16:1–16, 21:9–21), Tamar (2 Sam 13:1–22), an unnamed woman usually referred to as the Levite’s concubine (Judg 19:1–30), and Jephthah’s daughter (Judg 11:29–40).

our door.”⁸⁴ As Marion Taylor comments, Butler “addresses the underlying assumptions of the Levite and his host regarding women’s nature, place, and value.”⁸⁵

Butler also powerfully introduces Jesus into the narrative by speculating as to whether he ever met the outcast woman on the doorstep, as in her dying fall she stole some virtue from the hem of his garment. In a further reference to Luke’s Gospel, Butler argues that more outcast women than Simon the Pharisee thought were welcomed by Jesus. Furthermore, she warns that the hands of such women raised in praise to God in heaven are a sign of judgment to their oppressors.⁸⁶ In this way, Butler not only, as Taylor says, “tried to redeem the horrors of the story by placing Jesus with the victim in her suffering and death,” but also through her Christocentric focus testifies to her belief that nothing in the accounts of Christ’s earthly ministry is more strikingly prominent than “His dealings with women whom society rejects.”⁸⁷

Notably, Butler utilizes the parable of the lost coin in conjunction with the Levite’s concubine, but with her own unique twist she asserts that the outcast woman is the lost coin and “she should be searched for diligently ... she should be pitied, and only her sin abhorred.” It may also be significant that the one searching in the parable is a woman and therefore perhaps bridges the gap between the text of Judg 19 and the women in Butler’s audience whom she is trying to motivate to go after the lost.

By publishing *The Lady of Shunem*, her only complete book of biblical studies, Butler implemented the ideas she had just put forward in “Mrs. Butler’s Bible,” for she sought to show through a study of various women in the Old Testament what “the God of families” can be to women. Trible,

84. Butler, “Lovers of the Lost,” 94.

85. Marion Ann Taylor, “‘Cold Dead Hands upon Our Threshold’: Josephine Butler’s Reading of the Story of the Levite’s Concubine, Judges 19–21,” in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions*, ed. Randall Heskett and Brian P. Irwin (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 269. See also Butler’s fourth article “Dead Hands,” in which she relates the recent death of a Burmese woman in India who had been raped by a number of soldiers within sight of a guard tower, for whose death no one had been found guilty. Josephine E. Butler, “Dead Hands on the Threshold,” *SB* (1899): 202–6.

86. Butler, “Dead Hands upon the Threshold,” 115; Josephine Butler, “Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes,” *JBSLP* 26 (1870): 124.

87. Taylor, “Cold Dead Hands,” 269; Josephine E. Butler, “Emancipation,” *SB* (1900): 257.

famously identifying Hagar's story as a text of terror, says Hagar was a woman used, abused, and rejected.⁸⁸ A century earlier, when confronted with the abusive treatment of women in Victorian society, Josephine Butler similarly searched in Scripture and made a daring, forceful, and consciously independent reading of Hagar as "The Typical Outcast." The case is well made by Amanda Benckhuysen that "Butler's unique ability to engage the text through the lens of her own experience unlocks the power of this ancient story as the word of God for modern society."⁸⁹

Against the prevailing Victorian view that Abraham and Sarah are patriarchal role models of faith and obedience, Butler declares that Abraham "fell" in his mistreatment of Hagar, who was "used for a time and a purpose," then cast out to die. Sarah too is severely criticized for playing the part that "heartless womanhood has played ever since." In contrast to this, Butler makes much of the fact that it is the "the ill-used slave," "the rejected Hagar, alone, in the wilderness," whom God addresses and not the "Princess" Sarah. This functions for Butler as the most important part of the narrative: it is this that has been her strength and consolation in her campaign, and it is this that "should wake up the whole Christian world to a truer and clearer view of life as it is around us."⁹⁰

Butler holds Paul responsible for the complacency of later Christians about the Hagers of their day. The result of his use of the story of Hagar's rejection without commenting on the morality of it is that the cry "cast out the bondswoman and her son' has lost its character of meanness."⁹¹ The Christian marriage service quoted 1 Pet 3:1 and held Sarah up as a role model of an obedient wife; however, faced with the "unlovely story" of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham, Butler is not going to remain silent just because the church and another apostle appear to be on the other side. "I prefer frankly to express my disgust," she says.⁹²

88. Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 1.

89. Amanda W. Benckhuysen, "Reading between the Lines: Josephine Butler's Socially Conscious Commentary on Hagar," in *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, ed. Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, SymS 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 136.

90. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 82.

91. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 82. Paul refers to Hagar and Sarah in Gal 4:21–31. The contrast between the "God of Families" and Paul is a clue to Butler's statement "he was not a father," which she deploys as she perhaps tries to justify how the apostle could have been so thoughtless.

92. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 74.

Benckhuysen's comparison between the interpretation of Butler and that of womanist theologian Delores Williams and *mujerista* theologian Elsa Támez is apt.⁹³ Butler's liberationist reading is on behalf of the oppressed, and she has a wide definition of oppression: "In the Bible I find the labourer deprived of just wages, the wronged widow, the neglected orphan, the leper driven out of society.... Their cry, it is said, enters into the ears of God."⁹⁴ She is concerned about the variety of ways in which the double standard could operate to make women outcasts from society: economic circumstances and lack of employment opportunities left women with little option but to sell themselves to support their families, single mothers could be driven to infanticide and imprisoned, and, as she discovered in Oxford, domestic workers could be made pregnant, then abandoned. So when Támez says of Hagar's treatment, "It is a scenario familiar to domestic servants today," Butler would have agreed.⁹⁵ Benckhuysen compares Harriet Beecher Stowe's interpretation of the Hagar story with Butler's, noting that Stowe maintains "a high view of Abraham as a model of faith, wisdom, and righteousness." Stowe, in line with the conventions of American slave-owning, goes on to support Sarah's treatment of her uppity maid and compliments her on her gracious care for her maid and her maid's child. Butler, from her abolitionist standpoint, excoriates Abraham and Sarah's treatment of Hagar and is much more in line with the assessment of Renita Weems, who labels this story "A mistress, a maid, and no mercy," before going on to say, "For black women, the story of Hagar

93. Amanda Benckhuysen, "Reading Hagar's Story from the Margins: Family Resemblances between Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Female Interpreters," in *Strangely Familiar: Protofeminist Interpretations of Patriarchal Biblical Texts*, ed. Nancy C. Calvert-Koyzis and Heather E. Weir (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 29–30. See Delores Williams, "Hagar in African American Biblical Appropriation," in *Hagar, Sarah and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 171–84; Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Elsa Támez, "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, ed. John S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone, 1987), 5–17; Támez, *Bible of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982).

94. Butler, *Woman's Work*, x.

95. Támez, "Woman Who Complicated the History," 10.

... is a haunting one.... Hagar's story is peculiarly familiar. It is as if we know it by heart."⁹⁶

When Butler says, "Here are two women—one the lawful; respected, and respectable wife; the other ... simply made use of for a time and purpose," from her abolitionist standpoint she is excoriating Abraham and Sarah's treatment of the slave Hagar. From the standpoint of opposition to the double standard, she is thundering against Abraham and Sarah's treatment of the abandoned mother and child.⁹⁷ When she says, "world came to be filled with Hagars,"⁹⁸ she has in mind the enslaved Black woman, the domestic worker, the Indian women in the state-regulated prostitution set up by the British Empire for the army in India, the women she knew of who were trafficked from Europe to New Orleans, and many others. This invites comparison with the theologies of other women reading from liberationist perspectives and global theologies that recognize oppression in many different forms, whether sexism, racism, or another.⁹⁹

Butler reveals hidden women in the text through reading against the grain from the perspective of outcast women, for she contrasts the prodigal son's treatment with that of the outcast woman, revealing the prodigal daughter. Butler says the prodigal son goes forth of his own free will and with his share of the inheritance; however, the outcast daughter is one of the most disinherited people on earth. In this way, Butler draws attention to the prostitutes who were there in the text all along—the prodigal son spends all he has on prostitutes, and the nineteenth-century reader would have condemned him and the prostitutes. But Butler is implicitly asking: If the prodigal son is welcomed back, why not the prostitutes, too? Are they also allowed to repent and return to the Father?

Marion Taylor says, "Butler read Scripture carefully ... from the victim's perspective, actually becoming the voice of the outcast."¹⁰⁰ Looking at the whole book, Butler does this par excellence in *The Lady of Shunem*, weaving together references to several women but not nec-

96. Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (New York: Lura Media, 1988), 5.

97. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 71.

98. Following Butler, Abraham and Sarah will be referred to by these names rather than by the names Abram and Sarai used at this point in the Genesis narratives.

99. See Benckhuysen, "Reading Hagar's Story," 17–32.

100. Taylor, "Cold Dead Hands," 271.

essarily the ones usually held up as exemplars. In a way foreshadowing Alice Bach, she brings women into the same room, but among them are those whom Victorian readers would have closed their doors and their Bibles on. The stories of Rahab, Rizpah, and Hagar, as well as the Shunemite woman and Jochebed the mother of Moses—all mothers facing the loss of their children—are skillfully juxtaposed to indict the “Sarabs” of this world.¹⁰¹

The “God of families” is revealed as being not only with the respectable Shunemite mother but also with the prostitute making a deal to secure her own survival and that of her family.¹⁰² The God who sees the ill-used slave alone in the wilderness—afflicted by her mistress, cast off by her master, unable to watch her son die—is the “God of families” who also sees the concubine left to other men when her master dies but who, as a mother, protects the bodies of her sons even when they are dead. The privileged position of the Shunemite son and heir invites comparison with Ishmael and Hagar, who are the disinherited, leading Butler’s reader, who, of course, sympathizes with the respectable, bereaved mother of Shunem, to discover sympathy for the slave of Sarah, the prostitute of Jericho, and the concubine whose sons become dispensable at the word of the next man controlling her life.

Not only does Butler critique male biblical interpretation in her publications and interviews, but her private correspondence also shows her disagreement with some male scholars: she corresponded with Benjamin Jowett, disagreeing with the way he read the Bible. Therefore, Butler needs to be included as one of the “few exceptions” to the rule that for nineteenth-century women Bible interpreters, “scholars were neither their dialogue partners nor their targeted readership.”¹⁰³

101. Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27; Rahab (Josh 2; 6:22–25), in Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 94–111; Rizpah (spelled Rizpeh by Butler), in Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 114; the Shunemite woman (2 Kgs 4:8–37), in Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 9–36, 115; and Jochebed the mother of Moses (Exod 2:1–10), in Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 88.

102. Butler, *Lady of Shunem*, 94.

103. “Copy of a letter to Mr. Jowett from Mrs. J. Butler,” n.d. For the argument that this was a response to “Essays and Reviews,” see Russell-Jones, “Voice of the Outcast,” 304–10; Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, “Recovering Women’s Voices in the History of Biblical Interpretation,” in *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, ed. Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, SymS 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 10.

There were important shifts over time in Butler's thought: she first focused on women's rights to education and employment, then turned to campaigning against the Contagious Diseases Acts and the sexual double standard, before, finally, urging that women needed to become highly skilled Bible interpreters or else equality under the moral law in church and society would never be achieved. Given the importance she placed on women's biblical interpretation, her public prominence, and trans-Atlantic links, it seems surprising that she did not contribute to Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*. However, Butler said that she was "once consulted with regard to the bringing out of a woman's Bible," but she did not endorse it since she believed "it might be just as pharisaical and one-sided" as a book written by men alone. She consistently asserts that men and women together have the best perspective on any matter.¹⁰⁴

9. Conclusion: Her Significance as a Biblical Interpreter

In her sixties, Butler lamented, "How I wish I had a vote. Fancy my not having one!!"¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, her extraordinary importance in terms of the progress of the women's movement in the nineteenth century is indisputable. Butler decisively widened the focus of the "woman question" from being narrowly concerned with legal and educational inequality to "a more radical and comprehensive view of women's oppression within a total economic, political, and sexual power relationship."¹⁰⁶ Through her biblical interpretation and the way she applied it, she influenced perceptions of the nature and role of women in both the political arena and in the church. She became regarded as the "great founding mother of modern feminism," inspiring other women to campaign for the vote and equal rights. Millicent Garrett Fawcett says,

104. Butler, *Woman's Work*, lvi. Priscilla Bright McLaren and Ursula Bright—two of Butler's colleagues in her campaigns and related to her close friends, the Priestman sisters—were British contributors to *The Woman's Bible*. This provides a likely scenario for Butler's opinion or involvement to be sought out. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Revising Committee," in *The Woman's Bible* (repr., Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974), 3. For the Bright, Priestman, and McLaren family tree, see Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866–1928* (London: UCL, 1999), 768.

105. "Letter to Stanley" 8, North View, The Common, Wimbledon, June 1892.

106. Jenny Uglow, "Josephine Butler: From Sympathy to Theory," in *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Dale Spender (London: Women's Press, 1983), 146; see too Flammang, "Your Sons and Daughters," 153.

"Her triumph helped us to believe that all things were possible."¹⁰⁷ The significance of her international impact has also increasingly been explored.¹⁰⁸

What is harder to quantify or fully appreciate is the personal impact she had both on those who expressed admiration for her and on those who disagreed with her role as the voice of the outcast on the public stage and in the church. Butler claimed that leading churchmen, including Charles Spurgeon, Lord Shaftesbury, and Francis Close, the dean of Carlisle, were won over to supporting her campaign after initially sending her "terrible letters of condemnation and censure." Canon Henry Scott Holland believed that the men who heard her speak were never the same again.¹⁰⁹

Wesleyan leader Rev. Hugh Price Hughes (1847–1902) was transformed by listening to Butler, and he declared that she demonstrated that "the Bible will never be properly understood until women as well as men expound it." Appreciating the political relevance of her biblical interpretation, he commended her work to "every minister of religion, every member of Parliament, and every judge."¹¹⁰ Convinced by her of the importance of female Bible interpreters, he urged women to study theology, and his wife, Katharine Price Hughes, who had been shocked the first time she heard a woman speak in public, went on to become the first woman to address the Methodist conference.¹¹¹ Quaker Elizabeth Pease Nichol (1807–1897)—who was the only woman apart from Butler prominent in the leadership of all the major feminist campaigns of the nineteenth century, and whose home, as Stanton said, rang with the voices of so many reformers—broke her lifetime habit of not speaking in public by speaking out against the Contagious Diseases Acts.¹¹² At Butler's suggestion, Dr. Katharine Bushnell gave up the important work she had done as "a mother

107. Walkowitz, *Prostitution in Victorian Society*, 255–56; M. G. Fawcett and E. M. Turner, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the Twentieth Century* (repr., Warrington: Portrayer, 2002), 128.

108. E.g., Annemieke Van Drenth and Francisca De Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999).

109. Butler, Amos, and Booth, "Woman's Place in Church Work," 32; Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (2001), 156–57; Henry Scott Holland, *A Bundle of Memories* (London: Gardner, Darton, 1915), 146, 288–89.

110. Hugh Price Hughes, "The Lady of Shunem," *MT* 10 (1894): 825.

111. Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 267.

112. Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, 173; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years*

in Israel” campaigning against government-regulated prostitution in order to engage in seven years study of the Bible before becoming an influential biblical teacher. Both women saw this as vital to ending the sexual double standard and the subjection of women in the churches.¹¹³ Thus commissioned, Bushnell commented that she felt “like a bird set free from long imprisonment.” Together Butler and the women of the Salvation Army contended for women’s right to be part of the “great company of preachers”—developing strategies for evangelism, acting as an enormous source of support for each other, and being important role models.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, Butler’s biblical interpretation is of particular importance because of the unique sphere in which her interpretation was molded and delivered. Writing about Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810), another female interpreter of the bible, Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor say, “Out of acceptable female roles such as mother and teacher of children, [she] wrote a commentary entitled *A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scripture* (1805).”¹¹⁵ In contrast, Butler was not speaking to a domestic audience and certainly not to children and young people. She was consciously addressing those who were far from regarding themselves as unlearned—least of all in the study of Scripture.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, in her unacceptable role as the voice of the outcast, she challenged them with her own original interpretations and uncomfortable applications. Butler stands out because of the public dimensions of her interpretation. Her biblical interpretation and application were ground-breaking in their day and peculiarly resonant with much later biblical interpretation—denouncing powerful men, “speaking truth to power,” and emphasizing solidarity.

Nancy Calvert-Koyzis and Heather Weir, following Kimberley Anne Coles, raise the interesting question of whether recovering women’s writings, which have been regarded as marginal to the history of biblical interpretation, may in fact “involve a rather drastic reassessment of the

and More: Reminiscences, 1815–1897 (repr., Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 297; Anna M. Stoddart, *Elizabeth Pease Nichol* (London: Dent, 1899), 270.

113. Bushnell, *Brief Sketch*.

114. See Russell-Jones, “Voice of the Outcast,” 187–208.

115. De Groot and Taylor, “Recovering Women’s Voices,” 10. For more on Trimmer, see Heather E. Weir, “Helping the Unlearned: Sarah Trimmer’s Commentary on the Bible,” in de Groot and Taylor, *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters*, 19–30.

116. See Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler*, 64, for a reference to the pope publishing a pamphlet at Josephine’s request.

terrain of the history of biblical interpretation.”¹¹⁷ This question is particularly pertinent with regard to Butler, since her biblical interpretation and its implementation influenced Parliament and certainly, as it issued in the case of the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” scandal, caused national debate.¹¹⁸ Thus, her biblical interpretation and resulting praxis influenced the mainstream rather than being simply marginal.

Butler’s lifetime covered an extraordinary period of change in the lives of women, and she was on the committees that argued for that change. However, she belonged to no committee, no organized body, for women Bible interpreters—though her contribution to *The Woman’s Bible* would have been interesting. At the time that Stanton was compiling that ground-breaking book of women’s biblical interpretation, Butler was prophesying on the public stage through her speeches, writings, correspondence, conversations, and praxis as she campaigned against the sexual double standard. Támez says, “For too long theology was a field cornered ... by learned Western men of the North,” and Butler knew many such men.¹¹⁹ Scholar Elisabeth Jay says that in the nineteenth century there was “a decisive shift in wresting the theological debate from the control of the clerisy.”¹²⁰ Butler was instrumental in challenging learned men and clergy as she developed her innovative gendered theology—a theology formulated not in the classroom or library but at the bedside of dying prostitutes, a theology of praxis. Expressing sympathy for a French woman who threw away the Bible given to her since she regarded it as a symbol of oppression, Butler sent her the message “I love you,” a message the woman later returned. What was needed, Butler said, was “living bibles.”¹²¹

117. Nancy C. Calvert-Koyzis and Heather E. Weir, “Assessing Their Place in History: Female Biblical Interpreters as Proto-Feminists,” in Calvert-Koyzis and Weir, *Strangely Familiar*, 5–6. See Kimberley Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writings in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

118. See Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (2001), 226.

119. Elsa Támez, *Struggles for Power in Early Christianity: A Study in the First Letter to Timothy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 7.

120. Elisabeth Jay, “Now and in England,” in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. Andrew W. Hass, David Jasper, and Elisabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5. Jay is writing of the role of art in doing this.

121. Josephine E. Butler, “A Dangerous Revolutionary,” *SB* 8 (1898): 85–87; Butler, “Brief Recollections of My Fellow-Workers. No. III: Pauline de Grandpre,” *SB* 12 (1899): 138.

Her contemporary Francis William Newman said of Butler, "She reads Scripture like a child and interprets it like an angel." Reading Butler's biblical interpretation and the use she made of it, it is not the angel in the house that is brought to mind. Butler was in the vanguard of those questioning the prevailing domestic ideology as, near to the beginning of her campaign, she alluded to "The Angel in the House" and characterized men as telling women, "You must make us good and keep us good, you ... must forgive our impurities and wash them away by your own secret tears ... and for your reward you shall be called angels, in many a pretty poem and essay."¹²² Butler was adamant that an angel "must keep and often use the wings which should lift her above the house and all things in it. God must be first, ... and her family second."¹²³ In her role as the voice of the outcast, Butler used those wings as she firmly located herself outside the home, indeed, outside the camp—beside the abandoned mother and child in the wilderness to whom she said God was revealing himself.

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122. Josephine E. Butler, "Sursum Corda 1871," in Jordan and Sharp, *Josephine Butler*, 2:189.

123. Josephine E. Butler, "Home," *SB* 20 (1900): 271.

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The Sermon on the Mount and the Natural Life Instinct of Men and Women: The Idiosyncratic Exegesis of the Eight Beatitudes by Liberal Early Feminist and Educator Josephine Stadlin (1806–1875)

Elisabeth Joris

Introduction

In 1856, at the age of fifty, Swiss educator Josephine Stadlin published a small-format book more than three hundred pages long titled *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* (Education in light of the Sermon on the Mount).¹ Although Stadlin did not exclude men as readers of her book, she addresses her “little book” explicitly toward reading women. It “would like to be of service especially to female teachers and to mothers,” in that it would stimulate them to constant reflection on their own practice. It claims that for each person “true fostering and satisfaction” is “connected with one’s own painstaking activity.”²

Stadlin refers in her *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* to only the eight Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12). She speaks of *Seligkeiten* (blessings), a familiar word in the nineteenth century and to this day a conventional designation in the Catholic Church, with which Jesus introduces his Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. Stadlin sees in this sermon a guide to the development of the life instinct defined as natural. For, she says, it coaxes human beings on the basis of their own nature to expand their knowledge and to empathize with their fellow human beings.

1. Josephine Stadlin, *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1856). It is unclear which Bible translation Stadlin used.

2. Stadlin, *Die Erziehung*, v, ix, x.

The idiosyncratic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount corresponds to Stadlin's positions regarding women's education, which she had been developing since the early 1840s. Her interpretation can be seen as a legacy of her many years of practice as a school director and publicist influenced by the ideas of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator still known worldwide today, was famous as a philanthropist, social reformer, and author. During his lifetime, the institute he founded in Yverdon, Canton Waadt, was visited by students from all of Europe. Less well-known was the institute for girls that he opened in parallel with his original institute. Pestalozzi assumed that the bond between mother and child was the basis for all other bonding in society, the nation, and religion. Many female educators in the nineteenth century employed this idea as a point of reference for their demands for educational opportunities specifically for girls. They proceeded on the assumption that women were human beings with both equal rights *and* special feminine tasks.³ In addition, Stadlin adhered to Pestalozzi's method of perception that understood concrete experiences to be the point of departure for learning and teaching. Included in this education is one's disposition as well as understanding. This philosophy is captured in the slogan "head, heart, and hand." This guiding idea has remained popular up to the present. As an author, Stadlin incorporated this idea into her concept of education. *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* is marked by her faith in progress, which is bound together with continual striving for what is better.

1. Stadlin's Position in the Context of Political and Confessional Confrontations

Josephine Stadlin was born in 1806 as the eldest daughter of a Catholic family in Zug, a small city in central Switzerland. Because of the family's liberal positions, which included being critical of the church, the family met with hostility from representatives of the Catholic clergy. As a result, daily life was marked by poverty and deprivation. Providing for schooling and the necessary gainful employment of the children was difficult. After the death of her father, Josephine Stadlin, in agreement with

3. Elisabeth Joris, "Profession und Geschlecht: Das Haus als ein Ort der Ausbildung und Berufstätigkeit im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Das Haus in der Geschichte Europas: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Joachim Eibach and Inken Schmidt-Voges (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 364.

her mother and at the personal invitation of Rosette Niederer-Kasthofer, the director of the former Pestalozzi Institute for Girls in Yverdon, was trained as a teacher. From 1834 on, she worked in Canton Aargau educating girls and female teachers. At first she was an employee, and then she became an independent entrepreneur with her own institute, which she later relocated to the immediate vicinity of Zurich. She attached a department for female teachers, including a model school, to this institute. She founded the first charitable association for women, female teachers, and female educators in Switzerland, as well as the journal *Die Erzieherin: Eine Zeitschrift für weibliche Erziehung* (The female teacher: a journal for female education). The recognition of her private school as a Swiss institute for female teachers, which she sought in the context of the liberal awakening, was denied her. In addition, the journal was discontinued after five years, and the association was dissolved. She also failed as a businesswoman and escaped bankruptcy in 1853 only through the sale of the institute's building. Afterward, she lived as a private scholar, consultant, and author.⁴

1.1. The Stance of the Church in the Area of Education

Stadlin's activity as an institute director and author was marked by the political confrontations associated with the liberal awakening in Switzerland and Europe that culminated in the revolutions of 1848. These were overlaid with profound confessional controversies. The position of the church in the state as well as in the area of scholastic education was disputed. The major issues in these controversies ran not only along but also within the boundaries of the Catholic and Protestant confessions. Even in cantons with a majority Catholic population, progressively oriented guiding ideas were received positively in the cities and in industrial regions, which resulted in the formation of liberal groups. Allied with these groups, the small portion of the Catholic clergy who were influenced by the Enlightenment rejected papal centralism and were in favor of the right of the state to control the church. Instead of a Baroque popular piety and the veneration of the saints, they advocated a theology centered on the Bible and Jesus Christ. Proponents of this theology included followers of German theologian and ex-Jesuit Johann Michael Sailer (1751–1832)

4. Elisabeth Joris, *Liberal und eigensinnig: Die Pädagogin Josephine Stadlin—Die Homöopathin Emilie Paravicini-Blumer* (Zürich: Chronos, 2011), 33–244.

and his student Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg (1774–1860), who maintained communication with Heinrich Pestalozzi.⁵ In 1832, they demanded codetermination within the church, advocated for the conversion of monasteries into educational establishments for youth, and opposed the calling of Jesuits to positions in secondary schools. However, they came under increasing pressure in most of the Catholic cantons from the beginning of the 1830s because of the new papal nuncio residing in Lucerne.⁶ They were able to maintain their influence almost exclusively in cities such as Lucerne, in already industrialized regions such as Canton Solothurn, and in confessionally mixed cantons such as Canton Aargau. Decades later, after the First Vatican Council of 1870, their followers formed their own ecclesiastical organization called the Christian Catholic Church.

However, in the cantons characterized by a Protestant majority, the old political elites in cities such as Basel, Berne, Neuenburg, and Geneva were hostile to the liberal awakening, especially in its radical form. Many of the traditionally aristocratic families did not want to impair their status-determined privileges or the influence of the Protestant church. Opposing them were representatives from business and from industry that was spreading into rural areas. They sought fundamental change not only on the level of the cantons but also in Switzerland as a whole. They supported the foundation of a national state.

Thus, the question whether the confederation of federal states with its twenty-two relatively autonomous cantons should be converted into a centrally governed national state was marked by conflicts among the religions. The majority, which included the Catholic and predominantly rural cantons, opposed any kind of change, and in the cantons already marked by industrialization many Protestant pastors, as well as also the members of the pietist revival movements, resisted constraints on church influence.

5. Martin Friedrich, *Kirche im gesellschaftlichen Umbruch: Das 19. Jahrhundert*, ZuK 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 149–51, 52–64; Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen, *Klerus und abweichendes Verhalten: Zur Sozialgeschichte katholischer Priester im 19. Jahrhundert: Die Erzdiözese Freiburg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 285–86.

6. Josef Lang, “‘Vernünftig und katholisch zugleich’: Katholische Radikale und anti-klerikale Dynamik,” in *Revolution und Innovation: Die konfliktreiche Entstehung des schweizerischen Bundesstaates von 1848*, ed. Andreas Ernst, Albert Tanner, and Matthias Weishaupt, SSGP 1 (Zürich: Chronos, 1998), 263; Götz von Olenhusen, *Klerus und abweichendes Verhalten*, 280.

They rejected fundamentally an educational philosophy that was secular and committed to the Enlightenment and the belief in progress.

These conflicts came to a head with the appointment of Jesuits, who advocated ultramontane positions in politics and education, as teachers in the Catholic canton of Lucerne and with the dissolutions of the monasteries by the radical liberals in the Canton of Aargau with its Reformed majority. This led in 1847 to a civil war that ended with the defeat of the Catholic cantons. The new Swiss Constitution of 1848 was oriented on the model of that in the United States: a federal state with a mixture of centralized state elements and also decentralized elements represented by the relative independence of the cantons. On the Swiss national level, the liberals dominated the political stage for the next decades. However, on the level of the cantons, the influence of the Catholic Church, after a brief slump, again showed its strength in the Catholic regions to be extremely far-reaching.⁷ In this period of consolidation of the new federal state, Stadlin, as a clear advocate of liberal educational concepts, published her *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* in 1856.

1.2. An Interdenominational Religion

Stadlin's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount was foundational to her educational ideas. With it, she indirectly answered the allegation made against her by Catholic as well as by Protestant conservatives that she lacked religion or that she had no faith or at least not the correct one.⁸ This charge had contributed to the failure of her institute just as much as the refusal in 1848 by radical liberals to authorize and therewith to finance higher education for girls. As a consequence, Stadlin lacked a sufficiently large number of pupils and also the financial means for the upkeep and further development of her project.

Stadlin's thought, marked by liberalism, was based on the notion of the freedom and equality of all human beings. For her, this implied an equal right to education for women and men. This conviction makes Stadlin a pioneer of the women's movement in Switzerland. The movement began in the last third of the nineteenth century and included in its ranks a majority of Protestants of the Christian social type and a significant

7. Thomas Maissen, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, 2nd ed. (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2010), 177–221.

8. Joris, *Liberal und eigensinnig*, 174–75.

number of Christian Catholics, but only a few Catholics.⁹ Influenced by the pietist revival movement, some of these female activists for women's rights claimed to understand the Bible as promoting emancipation.

In contrast to this younger generation of feminists, Stadlin located herself in the milieu of Catholic dissidence, a liberal movement defined in Switzerland as Reform Catholicism.¹⁰ Her reading of the Bible supported to an interpretation committed to nondenominationalism and anchored in this world.¹¹ Appealing to reason, she addressed herself equally to women of Catholic as well as Reformed confession who, like herself, assumed a responsibility anchored in Christianity for society and who interpreted the Bible freely. In her interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, she refers to Christ predominantly as a model and teacher. She distanced herself decidedly from the pietist revival movement. Above all, she criticized its female followers who, in their "enthusiastic" attitude toward Jesus as Savior and in their uncritical interpretation of the Gospels, knew how to inflame the hearts of young women. But she also distanced herself from the Catholic or Reformed advocates of an understanding of the church that conceded interpretational sovereignty only to the theologians and thus exclusively to men.

Stadlin's critical attitude toward the church was strongly influenced by the position taken by her father, Karl Franz Stadlin (1778–1829). As an enlightened doctor, author, and politician, he had vehemently fought against the hegemony of the Catholic Church in society in general and in school education in particular. Josephine Stadlin, in analogy with the Protestant bourgeoisie, understood religion above all as virtue, as reason-based, responsible, and conscientious behavior.¹² For, in the nineteenth

9. Anne-Marie Käppeli, "Religiosität und tätiges Leben: Protestantische Pädagoginnen der französisch-sprachigen Schweiz Ende des 19. und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Erziehung der Menschen-Geschlechter: Studien zur Religion, Sozialisation und Bildung in Europa seit der Aufklärung*, ed. Margret Kraul and Christoph Lüth, FGHP 1 (Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 1996), 121–37; Doris Brodbeck, *Hunger nach Gerechtigkeit: Helene von Mülinen (1850–1924)—Eine Wegbereiterin der Frauenemanzipation* (Zürich: Chronos, 2000).

10. Jürg Hagmann, "Keller und der Katholizismus—Eine Hassliebe," in *Pädagoge—Politiker—Reformer: Augustin Keller (1805–1883) und seine Zeit*, ed. Yvonne Leimgruber et al., BAG 14 (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2005), 111–14.

11. Joris, *Liberal und eigensinnig*, 33–244.

12. Joris, *Liberal und eigensinnig*, 69–72; Max Lemmenmeier, "Die Kirche zwischen Beharrung und Fortschritt," in *Sankt Galler Geschichte 5: Die Zeit des Kan-*

century, religiousness continued to exert its influence as a source of meaning in the circles of the politically liberal bourgeoisie who were critical of the church, even if under different auspices.¹³ Stadlin's reception of the Bible is an especially clear example of this changed understanding. She combined the belief in progress, to which her interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount was indebted, with notions about freedom and social solidarity. This type of secularization ran through the discourse of many representatives, male and female, of the generation of 1848. Like these, Stadlin knew how to use traditional religious notions to achieve her social goals.

1.3. Education as a Continual Process of Self-Perfection

Stadlin advocated the concept of identity formation through the progressive development of one's own abilities, which assumed continual self-improvement. This was intended to benefit the individual as well as society as a whole. Education acquired in the constant exchange with others as a process of self-perfection took over the role that had previously been ascribed to religion.¹⁴ The fulfillment of these demands on the individual's way of life was to be reviewed by a regular examination of one's conscience. This ethical-moral understanding of individual education was revealed in the correspondence between Stadlin and her female students. These letters often included the terms *aspiration*, *forward*, *perfection*, and *actions*. Stadlin fulfilled her position as a moral authority and responsible institute director in nondenominational instruction on

tons 1798–1861 (St. Gallen: Amt für Kultur des Kantons St. Gallen, 2003), 81; Marlis Betschart, "Religion tröstet und verbindet: Katharina Schmid—Eine Frau im Umfeld des Luzerner Sailerkreises," in *Mit Pfeffer und Pfiff: Luzernerinnen zwischen 1798 und 1848*, ed. Verein Frauenstadtrundgang Luzern (Lucerne: Rex, 1998), 60–71; Andreas Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, EDG 75 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 10–11.

13. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche, eds., *Nation und Religion in Europa: Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004).

14. Rebekka Habermas, "Rituale des Gefühls: Die Frömmigkeit des protestantischen Bürgertums," in *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 170.

Christian morality.¹⁵ It was especially evident in the daily evening assembly, in which she repeatedly referred to the Bible. In these gatherings her basic stance, which was critical of the church but nevertheless influenced by Christianity, became clear. But her rejection of Pietism as fanaticism became just as visible in her exchanges with her female students.

This attitude also runs through her publications. The concern in them is almost always education, psychology, philosophy, and/or nondenominational religious instruction. Stadlin links these subjects in every case with questions about the position of women in society. The key points of her argumentation include the notion that gender differences are defined as “natural,” which she seeks to bring into harmony with the idea of the equality of all human beings, an equality defined with the help of natural law. Even if her interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount does not focus primarily on gender questions, these distinguish her arguments in its central points.

2. The Sermon on the Mount as an Outline of Human Development

Stadlin understood the Sermon on the Mount as “an unprecedented word in its time. That, which was in general coveted and sought, what appeared hallowed through convention and was deep-rooted through custom, against this it spoke out: it wanted to assert valuations and efforts that downright opposed everything that one really esteemed and did.”¹⁶ According to this, *unprecedented* meant for her “obstructing,” that is, opposing, the general consensus. In this, Stadlin herself recognized that, in her notions about female education and in the right demanded by her of women’s participation in public life, she aroused strong opposition among men as well as among women, in conservative as well as in progressive circles.

2.1. Education for the Female Sex

Stadlin’s parents already had advocated the right of education for girls and women. In supporting this cause, her father had no fear either of personal

15. Staatsarchiv Zürich, U 55 b 1, Remission, N 64.1–64 c, documents concerning “Milde Anstalten,” Mädchenpension v. J. Stadlin 1841–1847, 5, Bericht von Josephine Stadlin über das Schuljahr 1844/45, 28 May 1845.

16. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 1.

animosities or of political confrontation. Her mother's sister, Elise Ruepp-Uttinger (1790–1873), already had been trained as a teacher in Yverdon and, as a widow, opened her own institute for girls at the same time as did her niece Josephine. Stadlin's own mentor at the former Pestalozzi institute in Yverdon, Rosette Niederer-Kasthofer (1779–1857), demanded in her writings the scholastic education and teaching of the female sex in an extremely assertive manner.¹⁷ For the Catholic Ruepp-Uttinger, her radical family environment was critical of the church, and for this reason she drew on the Bible in the moral instruction of her female students, following the strategy of her niece Stadlin. On the other hand, Niederer-Kasthofer was deeply involved in Protestantism and, because of her distinguished origins in the city of Bern, began with the assumption of a natural hierarchical order and the accompanying inequality of the classes and sexes. Subordination was, to be sure, inherent in this understanding, yet, in agreement with Stadlin's views, Niederer-Kasthofer claimed that what was common to all human beings was the duty to strive for virtue and perfection. Thereby, the woman was assigned her role in the family, as the housekeeper of the "germinating powers of humanity." Since human downfall started with the "renunciation of God," she said, the education of children must be "in its heart Christian."¹⁸ In spite of their different social-political positioning, both well-known institute directors Niederer-Kasthofer and Ruepp-Uttinger were in agreement in rejection of an active public role by women and in this were in agreement with many of the progressive-minded mothers and fathers of Stadlin's female students. Stadlin's affirmations on the position of women, however, were more outspoken: According to some, she was a "disturbing woman." Therein, Stadlin felt herself akin to Christ.

2.2. Education as Development of the Natural Life Instinct

According to Stadlin, Christ provides "a guideline for all of life" in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes are, accordingly, a concentrated

17. Yvonne Leimgruber, *In pädagogischer Mission: Das Wirken der Pädagogin Rosette Niederer-Kasthofer (1779–1857) für ein "frauengerechtes" Leben in Familie und Gesellschaft*, SHSE (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2006); Yvonne Leimgruber, "Vom 'Mutterli' zur Bildungspionierin: Lisette Ruepp-Uttingers pädagogisches Wirken für den Aargau," in *Das Grösste aber ist die Liebe—Lisette Ruepp 1790–1873: s Muetterli*, ed. Claudia Storz et al. (Baden-Dättwil: Baden-Verlag, 2006), 365–409.

18. Leimgruber, *In pädagogischer Mission*, 266–67.

“outline of human development.”¹⁹ She writes that from the first to the last, each builds on the others. In order to steer her readers’ attention in this direction, Stadlin prefixes to the text some fundamental assumptions about human development. According to her, development corresponds to an “original predisposition” laid down in the human individual that, however, can be influenced through education. Thus, the eight Beatitudes give indications about “what nature, what the mind, seeks: satisfaction, infinite fullness of life in its various respects.”²⁰

The first observation treats the fundamental assumption about “Human Nature and its Development as Such.”²¹ According to Stadlin, human beings are by nature driven to progress; development always involves active behavior. Education thus is intended to protect and to support “nature in its normal pursuits.”²² Another key idea is the “starting point,” from which the direction taken involves a never-ending process of development. This process is revealed in the constant gain in moral and religious power, which stands in opposition to the experience of the ephemeral. Educating thus also involves sensing and nurturing that which “presages what is right” among children, in order, first, to preserve them from influences that inhibit the conscience and, second, to strengthen in them “goodwill for their fellow human beings in harmony with nature.”²³

Then she links this first fundamental assumption to the Sermon on the Mount,²⁴ in which Christ shows human beings not just the goal but also the way to a never-completed quest for knowledge, to the infinite. The eight Beatitudes indicate in each case the purpose and the means for progressing in this direction. Thus, the statement “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt 5:3) is, for Stadlin, the means, and the next part of the sentence, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” the purpose and goal. Certainly, human beings normally do not conduct themselves according to the means defined by Christ, yet it is consistent with the nature of human beings to exert themselves in order to gain the recognition of others. Also, human beings perceive themselves to be exalted above the external world,

19. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 1.

20. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 22.

21. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 5–22.

22. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 7.

23. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 16.

24. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 22–39.

that is, “blessed,” only in the struggle against that world.²⁵ Accordingly, educating means supporting the child in its daily endeavors and helping them to acquire small, to be sure, but always new experiences. It is by overcoming obstacles that advancement corresponding to the natural human instinct is possible. Christ, in this way, demands in the Sermon on the Mount merely what nature itself demands.

3. The Eight Beatitudes as an Educational Program

In her eight observations, Stadlin articulates her understanding of the pedagogical application of the Beatitudes by citing numerous examples. To corroborate her claims, she refers to supporting New Testament passages.

3.1. Education for Independent and Empathetic Action

Stadlin understands “being poor in spirit,” in the observation on “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3), not as being simple but rather as the ability to act on one’s own terms.²⁶ Therefore, the child is to be encouraged not to conform to the opinion prevailing in their environment and to expect no praise for their action. The child should exert themselves on behalf of the well-being of others. Above and beyond this, the “aesthetic interests” of the child are to be developed through special stimuli, and emulation is encouraged. The goal is independent learning through visual perception.²⁷ This educational philosophy indicates that Stadlin was a student of Pestalozzi and that his views influenced her interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.

Stadlin interprets “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt 5:4) as a never-tiring will to stand up again and again in spite of the blows of fate.²⁸ In the constant struggle of life, human beings find comfort as well as sympathy directed toward them by others. The act of overcoming obstacles lends security, for “all comfort is only a finding of one’s own self again in, and for, a greater power.”²⁹ The educational application of the beatitude requires parents who bear their misery without

25. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 32.

26. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 40–49.

27. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 40–71.

28. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 72–93.

29. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 90.

complaint and who find a source of joy in the fulfillment of duty. It is demonstrated in parents who show sympathy when their child is in pain without coddling them. What is needed at these times is to show the child a way out of the painful situation. This demands effort and renunciation, but it makes it possible for the child to experience gratification and comfort in the pain.³⁰

Stadlin understands *Sanftmut* (meekness) in the beatitude “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5), in the somewhat punning sense as the *Mut* (courage) to oppose prejudices self-confidently and to insist on one’s own values. Christ set an example of this courage with his meek declamation of the truth. Since within humans action and feeling are reciprocal movements, the positive recognition by others of the action aiming at what is right has a beneficial effect retroactively on the meek person.³¹ The precondition for the “pedagogical application” of this beatitude is, accordingly, the frequent contact of the child with other children. Only so does the child learn to wait and nevertheless to be sure that they are not ignored. Only in this way does the child learn to obey, because they know that for this reason they will receive love. In such a way, the child has the experience of gratification in constantly doing what is right, and for this reason also experiences the right emotionally as the correct thing to do.³²

A special section illustrates this act of deference to others by using the example of the education of girls. The girl is not to direct attention to herself through “superficial femininity,” which is determined by social status and beauty, by dancing and being coquettish. Otherwise, as a married woman and mother, she will be frustrated because everything, including youth, is transitory. It is much more important that her resilience is to be strengthened so that later she is equal to every task.³³ This idea became widely disseminated in German-speaking regions from the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. It denounces the French way of educating girls, and the view that French women possess “esprit,” as superficial and rather espouses a morally based education and an idea of femininity not oriented on external appearances. This attitude runs through Stadlin’s interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount as soon as she deals with education for

30. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 93–107.

31. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 108–18.

32. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 118–40.

33. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 123–26.

girls. It also promoted through all her educational writings and is typical of Stadlin's justification of the necessity to have young girls instructed by female teachers. Thereby, among other things, the possibility of girls at a young age attempting to gain the attention of male teachers is prevented.³⁴

3.2. Hungering for Justice as a Guideline for the Education of Girls

Discourse about the education of girls is extensive in the observations made about the third beatitude: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt 5:6). Comprising almost seventy-four pages, it is by far the longest chapter. Fifty pages alone have the education of girls as their subject.³⁵ Here Stadlin interprets hungering for righteousness as seeking what is right, a pursuit that requires perseverance. She observes that the perception of what is right can diverge according to individuality. For example, while in Matthew love is described in rich detail as a constant striving, this striving in John ensues from love itself.³⁶ By employing this comparison, the Catholic Stadlin demonstrates her profound knowledge of the Bible. Her comparative argumentation can be understood as the fruit of her constant exchange of ideas with intellectuals from the Protestant world and of the great range of her reading.

As one of the first women to do so, Stadlin attended lectures at the University of Zurich, on subjects ranging from psychology and philosophy to physics and chemistry. In her pedagogical writings, she repeatedly links different subjects and approaches. Thus, in her observations, she links seeking for what is right with the Pauline understanding of love (1 Cor 13:5–8): "It does not present itself as unruly; it does not seek its own; it does not become embittered; it does not seek harm; it does not rejoice at unrighteousness; but, it rejoices at the truth. It hears all, believes all, hopes all, and endures all. Love never fails."³⁷ Such a love, according to Stadlin, bears no hypocrisy. At issue is one's inner being instead of external appearance. In support of this, she cites Matt 12:31–32 and Luke 11:52, both of which condemn the dissemination of false teaching as an unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit. In Stadlin's view this involves

34. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 93–95.

35. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 141–214.

36. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 147: "Thus, the right APPEARS in Matthew as corresponding to a beginning, and in John as a kind of perfection."

37. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 149.

consciously hindering the pursuit of knowledge, a pursuit that human nature seeks of its own accord.³⁸

When applied to professional activity, this means always pursuing the best in one's calling. Stadlin illustrates this by citing the profession of the housewife, which she understands to include the work of the mother and wife as such. According to Stadlin, the housewife must be clear about her work down to the smallest detail through observation and contemplation. She must ask herself whether its focus does justice to the needs of the children, her husband, and other household members. She identifies this carefully considered work through a constant process of seeking, thinking, reconsideration, and with praying: "The one who prays seeks, first of all, to understand, and then to purify himself, to liberate himself from that which keeps him away from the Highest; for, only in this freedom, in which the grace of the Highest is active, is found what is right."³⁹ Stadlin illustrates this act of seeking with examples for use in instruction, beginning with the significance of the Bible, the foundation for the teaching of the Christian religion. In using the Bible, what is to be supported is, namely, "what Christ demands," which is the constant search "for the right" and the never-ending "longing for the infinite."⁴⁰ This education for achieving independence is also applied to the act of praying. This involves praying not according to a formula but rather from the heart. This religiosity is intended to permeate all subjects. For Stadlin, this means starting from the act of perception in all subjects, whether languages, natural history, or history, and in this way taking self-directed education as the basis of every kind of instruction. According to this philosophy, the child's interest in things is the beginning of the act of seeking. The child wants to know more. This corresponds to the hunger of the sixth beatitude and is intrinsic to human nature.

3.3. Equality of Human Beings and Difference between the Sexes

In her other writings, Stadlin, with her detailed commentary on her concrete examples, shows herself to be a didactic expert and educator who claims as a woman to be equipped with the same competencies as the men involved in the profession of education, including questions of religion.

38. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 153.

39. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 159.

40. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 169.

Religion was considered, in the mid-nineteenth century, a masculine endeavor, but especially in the pietist milieu of the revival movement criticized by Stadlin, women produced exegeses of the Bible in their own words, and their interpretation gained credence within the framework of Sunday schools. This is one reason that research speaks about a “process of the feminization of religion.”⁴¹ However, Stadlin was not a part of this movement but rather understood herself as an intellectual and member of the progress-oriented, educated middle class. But since the study of theology and the ecclesiastical offices were reserved for men only, her claim to interpret the Bible according to her own convictions came across as disruptive. This disruptive effect was similar, in her understanding, to the disruption caused by the Sermon on the Mount.

Stadlin's didactic model for school instruction provides for three stages of teaching: first, visual perception as a sensual experience; second, the historical form of teaching in the sense of the narration and renarration of what is no longer current, so that the child is able to produce their own visual world; and, finally, the philosophical form of teaching in the sense of cultivating the ability of abstraction. The object of the latter is philosophy. But, since the path leads from sensual perception to narrative to abstraction, women are imperative for the education of girls, since it is women alone who can understand this process.

For this, the observation must associate itself with what concerns life at the moment.... Such an observation can be occasioned only by such people who live with the pupil in the midst of these concerns, who themselves earlier already have experienced in themselves the effect of them,

41. See on this Margret Kraul and Christoph Lüth, “Religion, Geschlechteranthropologie, Bildung: Zum Thema dieses Bandes,” in *Erziehung der Menschen-Geschlechter: Studien zur Religion, Sozialisation und Bildung in Europa seit der Aufklärung*, ed. Margret Kraul and Christoph Lüth, FGHP 1 (Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 1996), 16; Käppeli, “Religiosität und tätiges Leben,” 123; Elisabeth Joris and Heidi Witzig, *Brave Frauen—aufmüpfige Weiber: Wie sich die Industrialisierung auf Alltag und Lebenszusammenhänge von Frauen auswirkte (1820–1940)*, 2nd ed. (Zürich: Chronos, 1992), 292–301; Hugh McLeod, “Weibliche Frömmigkeit—Männlicher Unglaube? Religion und Kirchen im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Bürgerinnen und Bürger: Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ute Frevert, KSG 77 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 134–56; Barbara Welter, “‘Frauenwille ist Gottes Wille’: Die Feminisierung der Religion in Amerika 1800–1860,” in *Listen der Ohnmacht: Zur Sozialgeschichte weiblicher Widerstandsformen*, ed. Claudia Honegger and Bettina Heintz (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1981), 326–55.

and who are able to sympathize with the sentiment arising in the pupil in each case and in every situation and who themselves instinctively sense how these processes should be understood and handled accordingly in this special case of human nature and destiny.⁴²

Thus, Stadlin constantly alternates in her argumentation between human beings in general and the different tasks that are assigned women and men on the basis of their gender.

Stadlin follows the same gender-specific pattern, too, in her observation on the fifth beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt 5:7).⁴³ She claims that human volition by nature turns to other human beings with goodwill, but it is only through education that this natural goodwill is refined and becomes mercy. This form of compassion implies empathy, which requires an active interest in the other. Only thus can the latter's interests be made one's own interests.⁴⁴ At the same time, Stadlin embeds her understanding of mercy in the political discourse among the liberals. In this application, there cannot exist any subordination; it must be marked only by "equality and fraternization," the slightly modified slogans of the French Revolution.⁴⁵ Thus, goodwill also involves the perception of what is unjust. Therefore, it is the most human of all duties to exercise mercy. "And who should thirst after it more and practice it more than the woman?"⁴⁶ Even if woman and man as human beings have in equal measure the need for development and truth, the way to these is different for women and men because they are active in different spheres and because they differ in their organization. With these claims, Stadlin once again combines the idea of the equality of human beings with the notion of gender difference, without seeing a contradiction. She uses, rather, the oscillation between these two arguments as justification for women's right to employment in the area of female education.

Because the woman, in contrast to the man, cannot take on herself "the passion of thought" as a profession, the tendency to compassion in her is evidenced above all in her practical activity in the home and school, even if her "practical mission does not exclude thought. She, too, requires

42. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 203.

43. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 215–77.

44. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 217–23.

45. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 230.

46. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 440.

the hungering for knowledge,” albeit preferably as “contemplation” and “investigation,” whereby the woman is “gladly allowed the idea” as a deed, “but not gladly as a word.”⁴⁷ Thus, action is conceded to her, but not teaching. Since, for exactly this reason, the woman is measured according to her deeds, she gladly keeps her words to herself and thinks about what she has heard and read, in keeping with the conduct of Mary, the mother “of our divine teacher,” who, after the visit of twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, according to the Gospel of Luke, “kept the words in her heart” (2:51).⁴⁸

Stadlin at the same time subverts, with her reference to the Bible, the established demand for selfless subordination and sacrifice on the part of the woman. Much more, she demands, “that we love the neighbor as we love ourselves” (see Lev 19:18, Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31) and “that we love one another as He has loved us” (see John 15:12; 1 John 4:7, 19). Stadlin thus understands mercy not as a sacrifice, for what one does for the neighbor is done “not only for him—one does it truly for one’s self” (Matt 25:40).⁴⁹ Carried over to education, this understanding of mercy means using the examples of giving to generate the desire for giving. The examples specified by Stadlin refer, among others, to the model of the mother, on whose conduct the daughter orients herself. “So, even they, in themselves, lowest helping acts and the most unpleasant duties must be exercised by the girl, and without the slightest idea that one thereby foregoes something, but rather in the feeling that such activity behooves every girl.”⁵⁰ The reward for mercy is not gratitude, but rather the wish, strengthened through mercy itself, to become even more merciful.

3.4. Purity and Peaceableness: The Last Stage on the Path in the Direction of Infinity

Stadlin understands the Sermon on the Mount as a succession of eight Beatitudes, the application of which, in each case, marks a new stage in the ascension toward infinity. However, in her interpretation of the last three she also makes recourse repeatedly to several antecedent lines of argument. Thus, she connects “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” with being poor in the spirit, in the sense of the insistence on one’s own

47. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 241–42.

48. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 243.

49. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 243.

50. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 275.

needs.⁵¹ She refers here in encoded language also to sexuality: one's own desire is not to be denied, for the "human being also has sensual needs,"⁵² the gratification of which is to be judged according to human criteria. The issue at question here is not sin, for there are no general valid standards for it. "Impure" is what the conscience feels to be "unseemly." Impure, according to Stadlin, is just as much what is merely apparent, which is aligned to one's own advantage. This, for example, can be a piety that is emphasized all too much for the sake of praise, as well as the active concealment of one's own faults. Since there is, of course, no heart without blemish, every heart has something to regret and thus always has something to cleanse. This corresponds to Stadlin's premise of the human instinct for endless, ongoing development.

For the maintenance of original chastity, for example, Stadlin gives practical advice and recommends protecting children from contact with what is harmful in word and image and also educating them to have self-control. She understands protecting and preventing as the external guards, self-control as the inner one.⁵³

Stadlin also connects the observation "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"⁵⁴ (Matt 5:9) with the preservation of what is one's own. For conflict always includes conduct charged with an aspect of competition. To stand up for one's own truth, however, is never dogmatic. The pure heart seeks, rather, to do justice to others: recognition of the truth of the others is the recognition of the others. As a consequence, Stadlin holds the modern view that there are various truths, which are acknowledged as equal but still are not arbitrary. They need to prove themselves in "peaceful dispute" by overcoming injustice.⁵⁵ In its practical application, this involves teaching that yielding does not mean weakness but rather the recognition of others.

Stadlin does not connect the eighth and last beatitude, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:10), with the afterlife. She understands the kingdom of heaven rather as a high point of what is within reach in moving in the direction of infinitude. For the sake of the truth, humans

51. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 278–310.

52. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 281.

53. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 299, 309–10.

54. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 311–23.

55. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 312–17.

must bear persecution and hold fast to their own convictions, even at the price of ostracism. However, the truth is not unshakable but is developed in exchange with the world, with others. In the experience that, in spite of continual effort, not everything is within reach, the knowledge of one's own weaknesses leads to repentance and the beginning of improvement. Continual progress is based on the experience that, in the course of one's own life, human beings are able to bear and to accomplish more. According to Stadlin, this implies learning about and gaining understanding of infinity.⁵⁶ The pedagogical application derived from this claim is that development toward the goal of increasing knowledge is most appropriate for human beings.⁵⁷

In summary, Stadlin understands the eight beatitudes as an ascending stepladder: as a never-completed effort for improvement, as a never-ending search for truth and knowledge. This process is developed in engaging with others and is pedagogically integrated into the interaction of children with one another. Thus, Stadlin's *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* proves to be an understanding of religion applied to life in the world. It results in a socially oriented educational program that combines the development of individual abilities with the development of social abilities and thereby includes both the equality and difference of the sexes.

4. Stadlin's Argumentation in the Context of Reform Catholicism and Early Feminism

Stadlin combines her interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount with a critique of religious instruction in the Catholic as well as the Protestant church. The current practice, she claims, hinders independent thinking, that is, the "interest in searching" in the sense of the "hungering and thirsting for the right, and in the longing for the infinite."⁵⁸ She also claims that because women are assigned a central role in education, they, too, are obligated to pursue this search for the right.⁵⁹

56. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 324–55.

57. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 356–57.

58. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 169.

59. Stadlin, *Bergpredigt*, 204.

4.1. Belief in the Impact of Education

Stadlin was a significant leader in the context of the liberal educational offensive and of the accompanying confessionally influenced political tensions. In Switzerland, the confrontations increasingly displayed the features of a *Kulturkampf*, a conflict in the relationship between politics and religion and their institutions of the state and the church. As a representative of a radical liberalism, Stadlin advocated the secularization of the monasteries in the service of educating male and female youth. She had established her first institute for girls in the former Catholic foundation for women at Olsberg in Canton Aargau. As institute director, she undertook commissions for the training of female teachers from Catholic regions. Her intent was to counter the influence of the teaching nuns and the Catholic priests in the schoolrooms and replace it with a secular and liberal-minded competition. Thus, from the beginning of the 1840s, she worked closely with liberal Catholic politicians who wanted to break the primacy of the church in educational endeavors.⁶⁰ However, Stadlin offended colleagues in her own community with her views on the emancipation of the female sex. She saw the possibilities for attaining this goal in liberalism, but she felt alone with these concerns and was disappointed with the Constitution of 1848. The disappointment was all the greater as, in reaction to the liberal educational offensive, new institutes for higher education for girls were established in purely Catholic regions under the direction of new congregations of teaching nuns. They went on to distinguish themselves, similar to the development in many other European states and beyond, as long-term, successful educational institutions.⁶¹

Her unconditional belief in the impact of education linked Stadlin with Reform Catholicism. In Germany, it was called German Catholicism

60. See Hagmann, "Keller und der Katholizismus."

61. Marianne-Franziska Imhasly, "Aspekte zu den Anfängen der höheren Mädchen- und Frauenbildung im 19. Jahrhundert bei den Schwesternkongregationen Baldegg, Menzingen und Ingenbohl," *HF* 27 (1998): 283–321; Esther Vorburger-Bossart, "Theodosius Florentini und die pädagogische Idee: Das Beispiel von Ingenbohl," in *Theodosius Florentini (1808–1865): Vir formosus. Festschrift zum 200. Geburtstag*, ed. Christian Schweizer and Markus Ries, *HF* 38 (Lucerne: Provinzialat Schweizer Kapuziner, 2009), 191–220; Gisela Fleckenstein and Joachim Schmiedl, eds., *Ultramontanismus: Tendenzen der Forschung* (Paderborn: Bonifatius Buchverlag, 2005); Juliane Jacobi, *Mädchen- und Frauenbildung in Europa: Von 1500 bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), 175–234.

and had a considerable number of female proponents, including some early feminists.⁶² The German Catholic movement was formed in the mid-1840s as a liberal opposition to the dogmatism of the Catholic confessions. It rejected the primacy of the pope, private confession, celibacy, and the veneration of the saints as well as the belief in miracles connected with it. It elevated the critically interpreted Bible to the only acceptable standard. It supported endeavors undertaken after the foundation of a German national state and, as a consequence thereof, advocated the subordination of the church to the state. Analogous to the development of the Catholic reform movement in Switzerland, important representatives of political radicalism were associated with it. But in contrast to Switzerland, German Catholicism came increasingly under the repressive pressure of the reinvigorated conservative principalities after the failure of the Revolution of 1848.

Like the German Catholic movement, Stadlin, too, rejected the influence of the church on educational institutions as well as the increasing dogmatism of the Roman Church, which she found to be a threat to the freedom of conscience and the rights of the individual. These rights, according to Johannes Ronge (1813–1887), were granted to women in the German Catholic Church, of which he was a founding member. Ronge, a former priest who had been excommunicated in 1844, was a central representative of Catholic dissidence. He integrated the emancipation of women into his struggle for social progress, equality, and harmony.⁶³

62. Christine Mayer, "Macht in Frauenhand: Fallbeispiele zur Berufsbildung im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Geschlecht und Macht: Analysen zum Spannungsfeld von Arbeit, Bildung und Familie*, ed. Martina Löw (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2009), 193–213; Ann Taylor Allen, "'Geistige Mütterlichkeit' als Bildungsprinzip: Die Kindergartenbewegung 1840–1870," in *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung 2: Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1996), 19–34. The terms *German Catholicism* or *Reform Catholicism* are employed in this chapter depending on the context. In its Swiss variant, Reform Catholicism was represented by Abbé Girard, among others. He also counted persons such as Josephine Stadlin or Augustin Keller, the nephew of her aunt and influential education politician from the Aargau, among his disciples and followers. Keller, like Ronge, studied in Breslau. For this reason, there also existed close bonds between Swiss Reform Catholicism and German Catholicism.

63. Germaine Goetzinger, "Soziale Reform der Geschlechterverhältnisse im Vormärz: Louise Dittmars Ehekritik," in *Rationale Beziehungen? Geschlechterverhältnisse im Rationalisierungsprozess*, ed. Dagmar Reese (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,

This outlook tied him to his life partner, activist for women's rights Bertha Traun-Meyer (1818–1863). Together with Emilie Wüstenfeld (1817–1874) and other women, she opened the Academy for the Female Sex in Hamburg. Both women, like a number of their fellow colleagues, were linked as practicing Christians with the German Catholic movement. They were attracted by the grassroots democratic form of organization of the dissident church congregations that granted women and men as members with equal rights.

The Academy for the Female Sex in Hamburg was geared above all to the training of elementary school and kindergarten teachers.⁶⁴ Like Stadlin's institute and college, this institution of professional female education had to close at the beginning of the 1850s.

4.2. The Right of Women to the Teaching Profession

Already in the 1840s, Stadlin understood the educational mandate of women in the school as a social mandate given by God. Education was a profession as well as a calling.

Stadlin's hope of seeing the education of girls defined as a national responsibility because of its social-political significance was frustrated. Her plan of a female teachers' college for all of Switzerland failed. This occurred in spite of her close relationships with well-known liberal education politicians such as Hans-Ulrich Zehnder, later her husband, who was a member of the Swiss Constitutional Council from 1848 and longtime president of the Swiss Society for the Common Good; Alfred Escher, initiator of the Swiss Technical University, known internationally as ETH, and founder of the contemporary bank Credit Suisse; and Augustin Keller, radical advocate of the closure of the monasteries in Canton Aargau and

1993), 41–42; Sylvia Paletschek, "Auszug der Emanzipierten aus der Kirche? Frauen in deutschkatholischen und freien Gemeinden 1844–1852," in *Frauen unter dem Patriarchat der Kirchen: Katholikinnen und Protestantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 61–62; Sylvia Paletschek, *Frauen und Dissens: Frauen im Deutschkatholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden 1841–1852* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

64. Joris, "Profession und Geschlecht," 366; Allen, "Geistige Mütterlichkeit"; Elke Kleinau, "Ein (hochschul-) praktischer Versuch: Die 'Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht' in Hamburg," in *Mädchen- und Frauenbildung 2: Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1996), 66–82.

influential member of the National Council, who was linked with her through common family relatives. With some bitterness, she noticed the gender-segregating character of the liberal state in the realization of its guiding ideas and in the accompanying assignment of women to the private sphere. But, instead of giving up all hope, Stadlin spread her ideas about the rights to be claimed by women through her publications, such as the brochure *Morgengedanken einer Frau*⁶⁵ (Morning thoughts of a woman), published in 1853 and reprinted three times in all up to 1862. She also published in Leipzig in 1863 a collection of articles under the title *Pädagogische Beiträge* (Educational articles). These also promote instruction oriented on Pestalozzi's ideas with their visual perception, combined with the very traditional social mandate given the woman as a maternal educator. At the same time, Stadlin resisted limiting woman's role in the task of the housewife but rather conceded to her much more the aspiration, like that of the man, to perfection and knowledge. She depicted the woman's sphere of action as broadly as possible in the nineteenth century, from the narrow context of the home to the public field of action as a citizen of the state and of the world.

4.3. Little Appeal in the Broader Society in Spite of Transnational Networking

Since her writings were not translated, Stadlin's readers were primarily women from the German-speaking area who advocated higher education for girls or understood themselves as teachers and educators. Stadlin maintained a network primarily with the female directors of institutes in Germany and the Habsburg Empire. She also had international connections through female teachers for whom she found employment in England and in Italian cities such as Milan and who taught in boarding schools and private households. She maintained indirect contact with circles of women who understood themselves as part of a transnational movement that demanded higher education for girls and public influence for the female sex. Her contacts included teacher, writer, and campaigner for women's rights Luise Büchner (1821–1877), sister of writer Georg Büchner, who visited Stadlin in the 1850s in Switzerland. At the time she was working on her most frequently quoted work *Die Frau und ihr Beruf* (The woman

65. Josephine Stadlin, *Morgengedanken einer Frau* (Zürich: Meyer und Zeller, 1853).

and her profession).⁶⁶ And it is to be assumed that, via these early feminist representatives, there existed an indirect relationship between Stadlin and Louise Otto-Peters, the most well-known campaigner for women's rights from the generation of the German 1848ers.

Stadlin cultivated intensive professional contacts with Doris Lützens (1793–1858). The latter had founded a school for girls in the 1840s that she, like Stadlin, wanted to combine with a female teachers' college. Associated with Stadlin since her teenage years was Marie Feierabend, who had been her student at the Pestalozzi institute in Yverdon. A stamp on the title page of the copy of *Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* that is deposited at the Swiss Social Archive and on which this essay is based identifies it as the former property of the married couple Marie and Vinzenz Ferrer Klun-Feierabend. Marie Feierabend had worked for a time as a teacher in Bologna and for several years was in charge of a school for girls in what is today Ljubljana before she moved with her husband, a prominent Slovenian historian and geographer, to Vienna. There she, through Klun, engaged with others in the university and liberal political environment. Yet, in spite of this evidence of transnational cross-connections, it is assumed that Stadlin's text *Die Erziehung im Lichte der Bergpredigt* did not develop significant appeal in the broader society, as did her other publications on the education of girls and their professional position. It was the generation of women's rights activists at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century that first created an organized movement in Switzerland and was able to achieve successes regarding woman's right to education and professional employment. Some of them, in the process, referred, like Stadlin, even if less explicitly, to the Bible.

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66. Joris, *Liberal und eigensinnig*, 127; 500 n. 70; Cordelia Scharpf, *Luiße Büchner: Eine evolutionäre Frauenrechtlerin des 19. Jahrhunderts*, WGL 13 (Oxford: Lang, 2013).

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The Role of Women in the Scientific Exploration of the Land(s) of the Bible (1800–1920)

Izaak J. de Hulster

This contribution dedicates itself to the important and neglected question: How did women travel, explore, and research the land(s) of the Bible during the long nineteenth century (ca. 1800–1920)? How did their publications and other activities contribute to the growth of knowledge concerning the Holy Land? Within the context of the present volume, this contribution focuses in particular on women who made such contributions because of their relation to the Bible and their spirituality.¹

1. The Sinai Sisters

Twin sisters from Scotland became famous as the “Sinai sisters”² because of their travels to Egypt and their contribution to codicology. Agnes and Margaret Smith, twins, were born in 1843, lost their mother two weeks after birth, and were raised by their father. They were Scottish and grew up Presbyterian, the Bible being central to their faith. Confident of the basics of their faith, they had an openness to “prove all things.” Their preacher was William Bruce Robertson, one of the most gifted preachers of his day, who in his sermons regularly referred to recent archaeological finds.

1. This focus leaves aside women who explored, excavated, and so on for other reasons. See Izaak J. de Hulster, “The Role of Women in the Archaeological Exploration of the Lands of the Bible 1800–1920,” in *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch: Bibelinterpretationen der Frauenemanzipationsbewegungen im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., FE 29 (Münster: LIT, 2020), 173–217.

2. Following the biography by Janet Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Found the Hidden Gospel* (London: Vintage, 2010). See this work for references, including their publications.

Their father encouraged them to travel by train, an increasingly popular means of transportation in the United Kingdom. They also traveled in Europe and learned the local languages: French, German, and Italian. In 1866 their father died. They were not married and very wealthy, and they decided to go to Egypt and also visit Palestine, although they did not speak Arabic at the time. On this 1868 trip their main companions were a friend and Murray's handbook for Egypt.³ As Protestants, they were skeptical about traditions and thus about pilgrimage in general. They were looking for Jesus's Jerusalem, "or at least as portrayed in the illustrated Bibles of their childhood."⁴

In 1883 Margaret married the retired Reverend James Gibson. The marriage lasted until his death three years later. Meanwhile Agnes made a trip to Cyprus in 1879, having started studying Greek. She had planned to visit Sinai as well, but her brother-in-law convinced her not to go. In Cyprus she became familiar with the life of Orthodox monks, an important experience for their later visit to St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai.

In 1887 Agnes married Samuel S. Lewis, dealer in Greco-Roman and Near Eastern antiquities. Together with Margaret Gibson they settled in a new house in Cambridge, "designed for scholarship and sociability,"⁵ hosting Lewis's friends, counting among them dignitaries and archaeologists. One of their Presbyterian friends was William Robertson Smith, professor of Arabic and university librarian, who also published his rather liberal ideas on the Bible. Through him, they became acquainted with Solomon Schechter, reader of rabbinics.

In 1891, after Samuel Lewis passed away, the twins decided to visit Sinai, in particular St. Catherine's Monastery. Constantin von Tischendorf's Codex Sinaiticus and their friend Rendel Harris's new discoveries inspired them, especially as Harris had told them about a closet with old manuscripts that he had not investigated. Meanwhile they had studied Arabic and Syriac. Early in 1892 they reached Cairo and prepared their trip to Sinai by getting permission from the archbishop to visit and study at the monastery. At the monastery, where Greek was the common lan-

3. John Gardner Wilkinson, *Hand-Book for Travellers in Egypt*, Murray's Handbook for Travellers (London: Murray, 1847). This book is a typical product of the English Egyptomania. See Amara Thornton, *Archaeologists in Print: Publishing for the People* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 34.

4. Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai*, 52.

5. Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai*, 97.

guage, Agnes Lewis discovered what turned out to be a palimpsest with an early Syriac version of the gospels. Well-prepared with a camera, they produced a thousand negatives of the palimpsest, Arabic gospels, and other books and of the desert scenery that impressed them more than the traditions about Moses and the Israelites or the Orthodox liturgy.

Studying the photographs from their trip that they developed at home led to the decision to make another expedition to Sinai, together with Professor Robert Bensly, his assistant Francis Burkitt, and both of their wives. Bensly and Burkitt worked on the manuscript, which was rendered readable with a reagent, while Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson cataloged Syriac and Arabic manuscripts for the monks, providing them with Greek translations. Despite personal relations deteriorating among the expedition party and Bensly passing away shortly after 1894, *The Four Gospels in Syriac* was published, with Agnes Lewis's scholarly introduction and translation. With Robertson Smith's help, the twins started contributing to a new Cambridge series, *Studia Sinaitica*.⁶

Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson had also started to collect manuscripts by photographing and purchasing them. They considered it providential that they were rich and could do so. On one of their trips, a manuscript containing Maccabees was offered to them, which they recognized as belonging to St. Catharine's Monastery. Among the fragments that they bought in Cairo was one that Schechter identified as a passage from Ben Sira in Hebrew. Until then it was known only in Greek. They planned to return together, but in the end Schechter went to Cairo alone, where he

6. Robert L. Bensly, J. Rendel Harris, and F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Four Gospels in Syriac: Transcribed from the Sinaitic Palimpsest by Robert L. Bensly and J. Rendel Harris and F. Crawford, with an Introd. by Agnes Smith Lewis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894); Agnes Smith Lewis, *A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest*, Testamentum novum (London: Macmillan, 1894). Also in the series: Agnes Smith Lewis, *Catalogue of the Syriac Mss. in the Convent of S. Catharine on Mount Sinai*, StSin 1 (London; Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894); Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians...* StSin 2 (London: Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894); Gibson, *Catalogue of the Arabic Mss. in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai*, StSin 3 (London: Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894); Gibson, *Apocrypha Sinaitica*, StSin 5 (London; Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896); Agnes Smith Lewis, *A Palestinian Syriac Lectionary: Containing Lessons from the Pentateuch, Job, Proverbs, Prophets, Acts and Epistles*, StSin 6 (London; Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897).

was able to get access to the treasure house of the Ben Ezra synagogue, the oldest in Cairo, where books were buried. He discovered the Cairo Genizah and managed to bring the manuscripts and fragments to Cambridge.

Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson continued collecting and studying manuscripts, also traveling to monasteries in the Nitrian Desert in West Egypt. Another achievement through their efforts and funding was the opening of the Presbyterian Westminster College in 1899. They also made a trip to the United States, where they lectured at the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, which had been recently transformed by Schechter. In 1906 they made their sixth and final trip to Sinai. Margaret Gibson passed away in 1920 and Agnes Lewis in 1926.

They are to be remembered for their traveling, their manuscript hunting, and their scholarly contributions. They acquired languages and academic skills, had an eye for photography, and had money and were interested in the Bible. They were able to study and collect manuscripts. Janet Soskice summarizes their lives as “wives, widows, and now scholars of repute”:⁷ “So many puzzling features of their lives now made sense. Their money, for instance—never unwelcome, but what was it for? Giving it all away, St. Francis-like, had never been a Presbyterian option. Riches (especially riches, like theirs, acquired almost accidentally) must be intended to play some part in the providential plan.”⁸

For the long nineteenth century, Lewis and Gibson with their codicological work were not the only women who, inspired by their spirituality and their interest in the Bible and biblical traditions, contributed to the exploration of the lands of the Bible, in particular in the Near East and Egypt.⁹ It is striking how little is known about these women, and further research would probably add more names and life stories to their ranks.¹⁰ Before turning to several of these women, a brief sketch of the nineteenth century seems in order, with a particular focus on the social, intellectual, and cultural history.

7. Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai*, 252.

8. Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai*, 252.

9. In light of the developments of the nineteenth century (see the following section on the historical context) and the limitations of this chapter, the focus is on the lands of the Bible outside Europe; thus, e.g., material on Malta, Italy, and Greece could not be incorporated.

10. For instance, when considering the role of women in the history of photography in the lands of the Bible.

2. The Sociohistorical Context of the Long Nineteenth Century

When speaking about Holy Lands, one needs to take into consideration that for the nineteenth century, Christians in countries such as the United States or England understood their countries as a holy land.¹¹ There was a growing interest in the “land of the Bible,” a reference to Palestine. While an attempt to verify natural theology through science was about to fail, orthodox American Protestants attempted to prove that the Bible was correct through geographical study. Edward Robinson was the leader of such research.¹² Probably even more important than the scientific claims to the land were, for the ruling classes in Europe, colonial interests and, for the majority of Christian believers, a familiarity with the land through reading the Bible and church traditions. This familiarity was fostered by reading books written by people who had traveled the land, such as the immensely popular *The Land and the Book* by William McClure Thomson.¹³

11. See, e.g., John Davis, *Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth Century American Art and Culture*, PSNCACS (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Davis remarks that nevertheless, during the nineteenth century the transatlantic promised land experienced a growing interest in the “old Israel” and traveling the Bible lands (see esp. 24–26). See also Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism*, OEM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pointing to the combination of historical geographical interest and empire politics. The frame of reference that leads to an identification of home countries as the Holy Land is also a sign of attachment to the Bible as the true word of God, with implications concerning the reading culture (see below).

12. The focus on geography was dictated by the controversies concerning the dating of events and biblical criticism’s reconstruction of *how* things would have happened. See Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America 1800–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 147–64.

13. William McClure Thomson, *The Land and the Book or Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1859); see also Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion*, 157–58. Remarkably, Hovenkamp does not refer to any woman in his account. Beyond the United States, one could mention Marie F. C. D. Corbaux, who is credited in the parallel volume on the nineteenth century and will not be discussed here; Marion Ann Taylor, “Women and Biblical Criticism in Nineteenth-Century England,” in *Faith and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Religious Communities*, ed. Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler and Ruth Albrecht, BW 8.2 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 35–36. Likewise, the only women Yehoshua Ben-Arieh mentions feature in the section on “through the eyes of its inhabitants” (expats, in this case) and not in the sections on “realistic writers” and “major contributions.” See Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in*

Following a growing interest in the classical world, indicated, for instance, by Johann J. Winckelmann's 1764 *Geschichte*, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Palestine (1798) extended this to a cultural-historical interest in the Near East, marked by the publication of his *Description* from 1809.¹⁴ In the course of the century, historical, geographical, cultural, and also archaeological research increased.¹⁵ Culturally, there was strong interest in a growing orientalism that idealized northern Africa and the Near East, not only in literature and painting but even in photography.¹⁶ This interest occurred in tandem with a political interest, which for the British extended to India. In contrast to the idealized picture, some travelers expressed their abhorrence of the reality of the Holy Land, complaining about hygiene, climate, and other things.¹⁷

Palestine, which was sometimes included in the name "Syria" during the nineteenth century, was under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans strove for more centrality, for example, changing its army of mercenaries for a standing army against local warlords and modernization, including state

the Nineteenth Century, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 162–88. For more on the nature of knowledge see below.

14. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Johann Winckelmanns Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, 2 vols. (Dresden: Walther, 1764); *Description de l'Égypte: Ou recueil des observations et des recherches, qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française, publié par les ordres de Sa Majesté l'empereur Napoléon le Grand*, 23 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1809–1828).

15. See Ben-Arieh, *Rediscovery of the Holy Land*.

16. See Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques and Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839–1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007); Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), esp. 19–59.

17. "Rather than an experience that combines the spirit and the flesh, the experience of Palestine provides only 'dust and ashes' for the flesh, with ambiguous results for the spirit." Brian Yothers, *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790–1876* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 119. See also, e.g., George Jager's statement "All thankful to leave the Holy Land" (because of the hard winter and other circumstances) from his unpublished diary (25 November 1874), quoted in Naomi Shepherd, *Zealous Intruders: The Western Rediscovery of Palestine* (London: Collins, 1987), 180. See also Barbara U. Brunnbauer, *Die Darstellung der Fremde im englischen Palästina-Reisebericht des 19. Jahrhunderts*, *Grenzüberschreitungen* 3 (Trier: WVT, 1995), 175–81; Mark Twain's parody, *The Innocents Abroad* (London: King, 1867), in *America with the subtitle The New Pilgrim's Progress*; Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). See also below how Ida Pfeiffer expresses her abhorrence concerning her experiences at the Dead Sea.

schools for women and debates about gender and family,¹⁸ and general improvement, especially in Palestine, that enjoyed a growing interest from the West. The infrastructure was improved in conjunction with internationalization through trade and tourism. In addition to the establishment of hotels and the building of roads, for instance, nineteenth-century developments such as the steamboat and the train need to be mentioned.¹⁹ For example, in 1892 a train connected Jaffa and Jerusalem for the first time. More travel guides were published. The first one on Syria-Palestine was by J. L. Porter, and his opening line reads: "The Bible is the best Handbook for Palestine; the present work is only intended to be a companion to it."²⁰ In 1869 Thomas Cook organized his first trip to include Palestine.

In our survey of women's contributions to archaeology, another new technology is important: photography. Early photography in Europe, starting with the French daguerreotype in 1839, led to pictures being produced from all around the world. Initially they were taken by travelers who brought their studios with them. The technology improved, and in 1841 Talbotypes cameras, which employ negatives, were patented, and this allowed one to travel with the camera and reproduce photographs later. In 1888 the Kodak camera initiated the popularization of photography.²¹ Photography has played a role in orientalism, documenting cultural

18. Mervat F. Hatem, "Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women's Studies," in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker, SHMME (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), 68–69.

19. See Gudrun Krämer, *Geschichte Palästinas: Von der osmanischen Eroberung bis zur Gründung des Staates Israels*, 6th ed. (München: Beck, 2015), 90–120; and, e.g., Shimon Gibson, *Tourists, Travellers and Hotels in Nineteenth-Century Jerusalem*, Palestine Exploration Fund Annual 11 (Leeds: Maney, 2013); and, for a more general background, Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East: 1792–1923* (London: Longman, 1987).

20. Josias L. Porter, *A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine*, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1858), xi.

21. E.g., Michel Frizot, ed., *Neue Geschichte der Fotografie* (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), esp. 9–242, 258–71, 410–29. The first photo taken in Jerusalem is probably Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey's (probably 1842). See Lindsey S. Stewart, "In Perfect Order: Antiquity in the Daguerreotypes of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey," in *Antiquity and Photography: Early Views of Ancient Mediterranean Sites*, ed. Claire L. Lyons et al. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 66–91; "The Northwestern Area of the Haram al-Sharif, Jerusalem," The J. Paul Getty Museum, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013b>. Girault de Prangey's daguerrotypes formed the basis for a publication with

and natural heritage, thus contributing to national unity as well as in war journalism and many other areas.²² The reproduction possibilities and the commercialization of photographs together with the changes in print media, especially the rise of the popular illustrated book and other possibilities for presentation, joined the continuing practice of Bible reading, especially in Protestant circles, thus enforcing familiarity with the land of the Bible.²³ Within the variety of media, formats, and themes, those photographs used for commercial purposes in the tourist industry and those used by travelers to illustrate the lands of the Bible have a special sense of

etching: Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, *Monuments Arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure: dessinés et mesurés de 1842 à 1845* (Paris, 1846).

22. André Rouillé, "Exploring the World by Photography in the Nineteenth Century," in *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 52–59; James Robert Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997). See also the rise of newspapers: Jessica Forbes Roberts, "Reading Slavery and the Civil War: 1861–1865," in *American Literature*, vol. 2 of *Cultural History of Reading*, ed. Sara E. Quay (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2009), 133–66. For other early applications of photography, see Andreas Baur et al., *Wozu Bilder? Gebrauchsweisen der Fotografie*, ECVMKJ (Cologne: Snoeck, 2013).

23. On the illustrated book, see Amos Mar-Haim, "Jerusalem by the Brush," in *Enduring Images—Nineteenth Century Jerusalem through Lens and Brush*, ed. Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, 2002), 13–15. Mar-Heim underlines this by stating, "In the second half of the nineteenth century, books that were richly illustrated began to be published alongside the monumental limited-edition photograph albums. The list of these works is long and impressive, but the most outstanding is *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt*, published in 1880 by Colonel Charles William Wilson (1836–1905), one of the directors of the Palestine Exploration Fund" (15). On Bible reading in Protestant circles, see, e.g., Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women, 1766–1925: Marys, Marthas, Mothers in Israel*, SWR 10 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2005), 63–73 on Bible reading and 118–29 on Sunday schools. Among Roman Catholic women, Bible reading was less usual, through the liturgy the Bible was not unfamiliar. See Bernhard Schneider, "Reading among German-Speaking Catholic Women and the Significance of the Bible between 1850 and 1914," in Sohn-Kronthaler and Albrecht, *Faith and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Religious Communities*, 341–84; see also Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), esp. 28–32. Krämer formulates: "Bild, Ton und Wort ließen die biblischen Stätten in einer Weise 'vertraut' erschienen wie wenige Orte jenseits des eigenen Lebensumfelde" (*Geschichte Palästinas*, 42).

orientalism, usually void of political, military, and technological features, only showing landscapes, buildings, people, ancient trades, and so on.²⁴

Beyond reading the Bible, during the long nineteenth century there was a growing interest in print media, available through libraries, including magazines and newspapers, as well as personal accounts such as biographies, memoirs, and travel reports.²⁵ Next to economic, technological, and social developments, the growing level of education and in particular the so-called library revolution allowed the lower classes of society access to reading material.²⁶ An example of a best-selling illustrated work on the

24. Commercial photography has this focus. For collected examples, see slightly later from the 1920s, e.g., Kevork Kahvedjian, *Jerusalem through My Father's Eyes* (Jerusalem: Elia Photo Service, 1998). Photos dating back to 1924 for the tourist market are still available today. The shop still sells roughly the same repertoire as before. In the 1850s: Alistair Crawford, "Graham, James (1806–1869): Scottish Itinerant Photographer," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography 1: A–I*, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Routledge, 2008), 605–6, speaking about "desired realities" (605); and the Speelman collection, used for public lectures in the Netherlands: Richard Hardiman and Helen Speelman, *In the Footsteps of Abraham: The Holy Land in Hand-Painted Photographs* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2008). Thanks to Margreet Steiner for pointing out the one-sidedness of this work. With a few modernisms and some photos on (Jewish and Christian) religious life, see Tim N. Gidal, *Das Heilige Land: Photographien aus Palästina von 1850–1948* (München: Bucher, 1985). For a broader scope, including steamers, cars, soldiers, and local governors, with many biblical, rabbinic, and qur'anic quotations: François Scholten, *La Palestine illustrée*, 2 vols. (Paris: Budry, 1929). On depicting Muslims, see Malcolm Warner, "The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam," in *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse—European Painters in North Africa and the Near East*, ed. Mary Anne Stevens (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1984), 32–39. See also Simon Goldhill, "Photography and the Real: The Biblical Gaze and the Professional Album in the Holy Land," in *Travel Writing, Visual Culture and Form, 1760–1900*, ed. Mary Henes and Brian H. Murray, PSNCWC (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2016), 87–111. This work discusses the biblical gaze and points to a collection of 51 photograph albums on the modern Ottoman Empire, prepared by sultan Abdul-Hamid II in 1893 and sent to the British Museum in 1894, where the package with almost 100,000 photos was finally opened and cataloged in 1983.

25. David Bordelon, "Reading and the Growth of a Nation: 1865–1913," in Quay, *American Literature*, 167–202. See also Andrew King and John Plunkett, eds., *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Matthew Bradley, ed., *Reading and the Victorians*, NCS (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015); Manuela Günter, *Im Vorhof der Kunst: Mediengeschichten der Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2008).

26. Werner Telesko, *Das 19. Jahrhundert: Eine Epoche und ihre Medien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 248; see also Diana Chlebek, "Romanticism and the Nineteenth Century,"

Holy Land is Wilson's edited *Picturesque Palestine*.²⁷ Burke O. Long calls this work "a consummate example of armchair journeys into the manufactured spaces of the Holy Land."²⁸ One contributor to these volumes was Mary Eliza Rogers (see below).

These developments show that a growing interest in history and traveling, a longing for far away, and increasing visualization inspired one another. These were accompanied by new dynamics between individuals and masses as well as between science and what had not been researched. These changes occurred within the context of larger developments in the long nineteenth century that cannot be thoroughly discussed here, namely, the rise of middle classes and civil society, sometimes leading to democracy, as well as nationalism.²⁹ In terms of the social history of knowledge, this resulted in national museums, fostering an awareness of national history, vernacular literature, and geography, including colonies, and also the aspiration of bigger nations to "establish hegemonies over the world of learning."³⁰

in *World Literature*, vol. 1 of *Cultural History of Reading*, ed. Gabrielle Watling (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2009), 201, 221; and Thornton, *Archaeologists in Print*.

27. Charles Wilson, *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt*, 4 vols. (London: Virtue, 1880–1884).

28. Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 137; see also Mar-Haim, "Jerusalem by the Brush," 15.

29. See, e.g., the series *Synthesen: Probleme europäischer Geschichte*, ed. Manfred Hildermeier et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht); see also the notion of a "holy (home)land," e.g., in Matthew D. Brown, "Reading and National Identity: 1820–1860," in Quay, *American Literature*, 97–131.

30. Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopaedia to Wikipedia* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 198. However, one should not forget the Syrian Scientific Society, established by Syrians, Palestinians, and Lebanese in 1857. See Klaus Polkehn, *Palästina: Reisen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1986), 199. See also Telesko, *Das 19. Jahrhundert*; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: Beck, 2009). For Western reception of the ancient Near East (until today), see Kevin M. McGeough, *The Ancient Near East in the Nineteenth Century: Appreciations and Appropriations*, 3 vols., HBM 67–69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015).

Margaret Cool Root, "Introduction: Women of the Field, Defining the Gendered Experience," in *Breaking Ground: Pioneering Women Archaeologists*, ed. Getzel M. Cohen and Martha Sharp Joukowsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 8. For examples subverting patriarchy, see Ruth Y. Jenkins, *Reclaiming Myths of Power: Women Writers and the Victorian Spiritual Crisis* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell

How were women affected by these developments in the long nineteenth century? Significant for our study is the Victorian role model for women, which involved a life in service of family, husband, and offspring, in the domestic sphere. Consequently, Margaret Cool Root describes the Victorian age as promoting a “notorious harnessing of women to a crippling intellectual, sexual, and economic dependency on man.”³¹ Despite the nationalistic nature of this statement, similar attitudes hold—*mutatis mutandis*—for other European countries and North America. Meanwhile, this was the period of a growing women’s suffrage movement, as well as the abolitionist movement, with the observation that there were still slaves in the Near East during the nineteenth century.³² Moreover, the influence of women in their homes, in shaping spirituality, should not be underestimated.³³ The long nineteenth century also marked possibilities for women in education and research, especially in medicine, botany, literature, sociology, anthropology, and archaeology.³⁴

Archaeology as a developing discipline and the Orient were outside the established world, and this provided women with special opportunities.³⁵ Nevertheless, their historical contributions are not always correctly

University Press, 1995); Sarah C. Williams, “Is There a Bible in the House? Gender, Religion and Family Culture,” in *Women, Gender, and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940*, ed. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (London: Routledge, 2010), 11–31.

31. On the broader context, see, e.g., Beatrix Schmaußer, *Blaustrumpf und Kurtsiane: Bilder der Frau im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1991); Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, eds., *19. Jahrhundert*, GF 4 (Frankfurt: Campus, 1994).

32. Elizabeth Finn recalls being offered an African slave girl while living in Jerusalem, ca. 1849. See Elizabeth Anne Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1926), 86.

33. See, among others, Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler and Andreas Sohn, *Frauen im kirchlichen Leben: Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute*, TT 672 (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2008), esp. 19–21.

34. Burke, *Knowledge II*, 237–39; next to women as one of the “six types of amateur knowledge workers,” including gentlemen, doctors, clergymen, soldiers, and diplomats (232).

35. For Ella Ferris Pell, a rare example of a female painter within Orientalism, “the Orient provided a welcome respite from social expectations at home.” See Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams—Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 144. Note that Orientalism is usually a brand marked by the male, patriarchal gaze. For differentiation see Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, “Der kolonisierende, männliche Blick: Dominique Vivant Denons *Voyage d’Égypte*,” in *Orte der Sehnsucht: Mit Künstlern auf Reisen*, ed. Hermann Arnholt

recognized and have slowly been included in the Western canon of history writing.³⁶ Cool Root explains: “Women do not have a natural place in these masculine narratives born of the Victorian mind-set.”³⁷ Many women did not get the attention they deserved.³⁸

3. Women and Their Travel Reports as Insight into the Holy Land(s)

Similar to how photography allows for traveling the world, so do travel reports.³⁹ For Cool Root, “early Western women travellers in the Orient” are “the direct ancestors of our women archaeological pioneers.”⁴⁰ A larger historical context is marked by a long tradition of Christian pilgrims, such as Egeria, Helena, and a number of other women who had traveled to the Holy Land since the fourth century CE. In the nineteenth century these travels resulted in publications, in line with the growing interest in personal accounts.⁴¹

What distinguishes a travel report from another type, say, an ethnological or anthropological study about the land(s) of the Bible? To some extent, the title of a book can be an indication, but still the nineteenth-century travel reports were a mixed bag, often with basic observations of a large variety. Elizabeth Anne Finn’s distinction between her own work and that of Mary E. Rogers is illuminating: “Miss Rogers afterwards wrote a charming book called *Domestic Life in Palestine*. I was then writing mine of

(Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2008), 45–50; Thomas Schmuck, “Die Vielfalt der Orientbilder: Österreichische Orientreisende und ihre Berichte in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Orient & Okzident: Österreichische Maler des 19. Jahrhundert auf Reisen*, ed. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Sabine Grabner (Vienna: Belvedere, 2012), 19–27.

36. Note also the non-Western archaeologists here since the early twentieth century (Burke, *Knowledge II*, 206).

37. Cool Root, “Introduction: Women of the Field,” 9.

38. Yvette Deseyve and Ralph Gleis, eds., *Kampf um Sichtbarkeit: Künstlerinnen der Nationalgalerie vor 1919* (Berlin: Reimer, 2019). On archaeology see de Hulster, “Role of Women.” Next to women, also non-Western archaeologists; see Burke, *Knowledge II*, 206.

39. See Arnd Bauerkämper, Hans Erich Bödeker, and Bernhard Struck, eds., *Die Welt erfahren: Reisen als kulturelle Begegnung von 1780 bis heute* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004), esp. 23–26.

40. Cool Root, “Introduction: Women of the Field,” 28.

41. Bordelon, “Reading and the Growth of a Nation,” 196.

Home in the Holy Land, and we were neither of us aware that the other was writing. Miss Rogers' book dealt more with the life of Orientals, whereas mine dealt also with the life of Europeans living in Jerusalem as home."⁴²

The reason for writing and publishing are diverse. The Dutch Maria J. E. Versfelt was among the early nineteenth-century travelers to the land(s) of the Bible. She went to Egypt, returning through Malta and Algiers, with an interest in antiquity and a commercial goal. In 1831 she published her six-volume report under the pseudonym Ida Saint-Elme in French.⁴³ Faith, in addition to an inclination to travel, motivated Austrian Ida Pfeiffer.⁴⁴ In 1841–1842 she visited Palestine and Egypt. A publisher urged her to publish her travel report to share it with a broader public. In her report,⁴⁵ Pfeiffer shares her impressions of a variety of things: traveling itself by donkey, camel caravan, or ship, including quarantines, people, meetings, holy places, politics, and so on. She regularly complains about quarrels between different confessional communities.⁴⁶ Observing the variety of people in Cairo, she remarks: "Thanks to the mighty arm of Muhammad Ali Pasha, all people live together peacefully."⁴⁷ She had a variety of experiences. On leaving the Dead Sea, she comments: "I was glad that, after resting for one hour, we left this sad, devastated place."⁴⁸ Of course, Jerusalem, with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was a highlight. After a whole night alone in the church, she concludes: "These were the most beautiful moments of my life—whoever experiences these, this person has lived a

42. Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 136–37. It should be noted that a study of expats in nineteenth-century Jerusalem can also be anthropological in nature.

43. See Adeline Bats, "Ida Saint-Elme: *La contemporaine en Égypte*. Regard sur un récit de voyage," *RE* 69 (2013): 43–46; Gé Ostendorf-Reinders, "Versfelt, Maria Elseina Johanna (1776–1845)," <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013c>.

44. After her tour to the Holy Lands, she became a world traveler. See Luisa Rossi, *L'Altra mappa: esploratrici, viaggiatrici, geografie*, Passages 4 (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2005), 211–34.

45. Without any literary pretensions, she simply but authentically (*ungeschmückt*) reports her experiences; it is a "narrative in which I describe everything as I have experienced it" (my trans.). See Ida Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land* (Vienna: Dirnböck, 1846), 2:202.

46. E.g., "What might those people, whom we call unbelievers, think of Christians when they see the hatred and envy with which one Christian group persecutes another?" (Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin* 1:107, my trans.).

47. Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin*, 2:98, my trans.

48. Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin*, 1:133, my trans.

full life.”⁴⁹ Despite this fulfillment, she closes her account with, “I have seen much and also endured much—and the least, I found, was how I had imagined it.”⁵⁰

Whereas Versfelt and Pfeiffer went on their own, Sarah Belzoni traveled as the wife of an Egyptologist, Giovanni Belzoni. She accompanied him, sometimes dressed as a local youth. She knew a little Arabic and made contact with local women, whom she appreciated, resulting in a book chapter on “Women of Egypt, Nubia and Syria.”⁵¹ In this chapter she shares her experiences in Egypt and tells about her visit to Palestine, including Jordan, Jerusalem, and Nazareth, in 1818. She also managed to visit the Temple Mount, in disguise. She tried to enter first as a pilgrim, but her group did not get permission, and so she tried as a Turkish boy.⁵² She also states, “Unfortunately, the Christians are very treacherous, and betray each other to the Turks; which makes those people dislike and despise Christians so much.”⁵³ However, based on her conversations with Muslims, she writes, “From my small experience, there is not an easier people than the Turks to be converted to Christianity; and though I may be condemned for my opinion there is no religion [that] would suit them so well as the protestant church of England, on account of its simplicity; for they cannot bear any kind of figure or images.”⁵⁴ However, her aim was not to convert people. She also sold Bibles to Christians. Her account rounds off with a botanic description of what she calls the “oshour plant.”⁵⁵

Contrary to Belzoni, most Western women in the Near East deplored the fate of their local sisters. They point to their lack of literacy or present themselves as miracle workers or nurses. This was the case for Cristina di Belgiojoso⁵⁶ but also Isabel Burton, who traveled with her husband

49. Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin*, 1:108, my trans.

50. Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin*, 2:202, my trans.

51. Sarah Belzoni, ‘Short Account of the Women of Egypt, Nubia and Syria,’ in *Narrative of the Pperations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia...*, 3rd ed. (London: Murray, 1822), 2:243–327.

52. William H. Peck, “Sarah Belzoni (1783–1870),” <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013d>.

53. Belzoni, “Short Account,” 290.

54. Belzoni, “Short Account,” 312–13.

55. Belzoni, “Short Account,” 325–27; for the plant, see “Tropical Plants. The Plant Named Oshour by Burckardt; Basillah; Suvaroe; Debbo; Egley,” New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013e>.

56. Princesse [Cristina] Belgiojoso, *Asie mineure et Syrie: Souvenirs de voyages* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1858), 351.

and established herself as an amateur healer. Her “organization of tinctures and tablets reflects the new science of domestic management that was guided by Victorian domestic manuals.”⁵⁷ Sarah Barclay Johnson, who lived in Jerusalem from 1855 to 1857 with her father, a doctor-missionary, is a prime example of pity for Near Eastern women. She describes herself as a “Bible Christian.”⁵⁸ “Of her book *Hadji in Syria; or, Three Years in Jerusalem*, Titus Tobler remarks, “Accurate and accomplished, it is the best book about Palestine written by a woman.”⁵⁹ Her description is faithful to the Bible, such as: “The manner of burying the dead, to which reference is made throughout the Bible, corresponds exactly with the sepulchres which are found in the East at the present day.”⁶⁰ She closes her book with “An appeal in behalf of oriental females.” She addresses Western women: “Ah! You have little conception of woman’s sad condition in the Orient!... For these poor creatures’ husband, if indeed *he* can be called *husband*, whose conjugal affection is divided amongst so many, or rather bestowed on none ... compelled to labor for their own support and his!”⁶¹

Criticizing the veil, she exclaims: “Lady, sympathize with your sister,” closing with the call to pray for the sisters in the Orient and to “evinced more gratitude to the ‘Author and Giver of all good,’ than we ever yet have done, for the distinguishing privileges we enjoy in the western world.”⁶²

One might wonder what comparisons Tobler made before drawing his conclusion that there were many more traveling women, and some wrote in a different reflective manner, some more objective accounts, and some books testifying to their greater awareness of their historical-cultural context.⁶³

57. Narin Hassan, *Diagnosing Empire: Women, Medical Knowledge, and Colonial Mobility* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 48.

58. Sarah Barclay Johnson, *Hadji in Syria; or, Three Years in Jerusalem* (Philadelphia: Challen, 1858). On the same page she outlines her *theologia religionum*: “Whatever of truth is found in Mohammedanism existed already in Christianity; and the remaining doctrines of the Koran are as the dark clouds which obscure the sun, and cast a shade and gloom upon the earth. Mohammedanism recognises the God of the Jew; but so far as Christ’s claims to Divinity, and the existence of the Holy Spirit, are concerned, it is Unitarianism.”

59. Ben-Arieh, *Rediscovery of the Holy Land*, 163.

60. Barclay Johnson, *Hadji in Syria*, 88–89.

61. Barclay Johnson, *Hadji in Syria*, 299–300, emphasis original.

62. Barclay Johnson, *Hadji in Syria*, 301, 303.

63. This is phrased as a comparison because in different measures the abovementioned

4. Women and Other Interests in Exploring the Holy Land(s)

In addition to the travel reports discussed above are the publications to be discussed here. The ones mentioned here are more reflective. These women show an awareness that in the land of the Bible one does not encounter biblical figures (Belzoni is an exception). Such a claim, however, could be made for (the land of) the Bible's flora, and maybe this fostered the interest in botany.

4.1. Ethnology

The position of women is also a topic in introductions to the Holy Land by male authors.⁶⁴ Near Eastern women intrigued Western men. Their interest ranged from the male gaze of erotic desire to an interest in biblical culture

in Palestine. There the women have continued to be the depositories of old memories which you would vainly seek for among the men. They are indeed behind their husbands by several centuries.... It would be extremely interesting to examine closely these daughters of Canaan, to study their special customs, their funeral dances, their marriage and mourning songs, their prejudices, their peculiar legends, their habitual

tioned authors show such awareness concerning their Western, Christian background and their gender. See Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918; Sexuality, Religion and Work*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1995). This work is a great resource in its comprehensiveness but less so in its accuracy. See also James Ross-Nazzari, "The Women of Palestine in American Women's Travel Writing" (with a list of female travelers), in *Crossing the Atlantic: Travel and Travel Writing in Modern Times*, ed. Thomas Adam and Nils H. Roemer, WPWML 42 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 210–47. More broadly on women traveling, exploring, and doing archaeology, see Julia Keay, *With Passport and Parasol: The Adventures of Seven Victorian Ladies* (London: BBC Books, 1990); Annette Deeken and Monika Bösel, *"An den süßen Wassern Asiens": Frauenreisen in den Orient* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996); Milbry Polk and Mary Tiegreen, *Women of Discovery: A Celebration of Intrepid Women Who Explored the World* (London: Scriptum, 2001); Barbara Hodgson, *Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2005); Amanda Adams, *Ladies of the Field: Early Women Archaeologists and Their Search for Adventure* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2010).

64. E.g., Leonhard Bauer, *Volksleben im Lande der Bibel* (Leipzig: Wallmann, 1903), esp. 96–103; Max Löhr, *Volksleben im Lande der Bibel*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1918), 51–65.

forms of expression, and a variety of other matters, down to the details of their toilet, which Isaiah denounces as the arsenal of idolatry.... The explorer has to encounter the almost insurmountable obstacle of sex.... It requires a woman to approach this wild flock; and a European woman prepared to penetrate, without the aid of an interpreter, into the—what shall I say?—the harem of their ideas and their traditions.⁶⁵

Charles Clermont-Ganneau identifies gender as a main problem for research of local women, whom he designates as “daughters of Canaan,” concluding that a woman should *penetrate* the harem. Princess Cristina di Belgioioso wrote about the harem: “where the woman rules. The harem, this Muslim sanctuary, is off limits for men, but it was open to me. I could freely enter here.”⁶⁶ She lived for a while in northern Syria and traveled also to Palestine (1852).⁶⁷ Her low opinion of harems concerned hygiene, unfortunate application of makeup due to the lack of mirrors, not changing clothes, and so on,⁶⁸ but also bad relations within the harems of Syria and the attitudes of the women. “Not only did Belgioioso’s orientalist works break with the traditional erotic perception of the Orient, they also implicitly challenged western patriarchal values.”⁶⁹ Thus, in her travel report, she points to the importance of not only education but also upbringing and several years after her trip published an article about “women’s present condition and their future.”⁷⁰

Although she shared with Clermont-Ganneau the notion that life in the land of the Bible recalls biblical scenes, she questions Christian traditions and explicitly denies that people in the Near East are direct descendants of the people from biblical times: “I doubt that Job exists today in the Near East. If many centuries separate us from the biblical characters, can we say that the

65. Charles Clermont-Ganneau, “The Arabs in Palestine,” *MM* 32 (1875): 372.

66. Belgioioso, *Asie mineure et Syrie*, 2, my trans. See on the metaphor of penetrating Barbara Spackman, “Hygiene in the Harem: The Orientalism of Cristina di Belgioioso,” *MLN* 124 (2009): 158–76.

67. See Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 102.

68. See also Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin* 2:12.

69. Paola Giuli, “Cristina di Belgioioso (Alberica Trivulzio) (1808–1871),” in *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies A–J*, ed. Gaetana Marrone (New York: Routledge, 2007), 151. For the first half of the statement, see also Spackman, “Hygiene in the Harem.”

70. Cristina Belgioioso, “Della presente condizione delle Donne e del loro avvenire,” *NA* 1 (1866): 96–113.

great Arab families, to which these characters would belong, basically kept their physiognomy intact and that the transformations common to other peoples did not occur among them?”⁷¹

Likewise, Barbara Spackman summarizes that Belgiojoso distinguishes “an Arab Orient, a Turkish Orient, and a Christian Orient, as well as a multiplicity of harems whose internal differences go against the ‘ideal stereotype’ of *the* Oriental harem.”⁷² One could also add, not a “biblical Orient.”

Being Western allowed women to write about harems.⁷³ Due to space constraints, this essay will not discuss all examples but will note two women who published concerning harems early on. They are Amalia Nizzoli, who knew Arabic and traveled with her husband, a diplomat in Egypt and excavator of Saqqara; and Sophia Lane Poole, who published *The Englishwoman in Egypt* (1844), a companion volume to her brother Edward Lane’s *Customs and Manners of the Modern Egyptians*.⁷⁴

Two other women should be mentioned here as writing about the land and local women: Isabel Burton and Mary Eliza Rogers, referred to above. For Burton the Bible came to life in the Holy Land. While traveling, she used three books as reference works. With these three books she was able to listen to three religious perspectives and had three learned men around; in her own words: “Three books always rode in my saddle pocket wherever I went—the Bible for the ancient history, for the truth of our Saviour’s life

71. Belgiojoso, *Asie mineure et Syrie*, 72. See 71: “I felt happy to be living at last in this old land of palm trees and cedars, among people whose Arab characteristics and customs evoked for me the splendid pictures of the Bible. It is under an Eastern sky that the pages of the Old Testament should be read”; 188–89: “This whole landscape enthalls the eyes. But alas! It was in vain that I sought among the Arab women of Nazareth the characteristics that my imagination had created. It was in vain that I recalled the great events of the Bible and the gospel.... I will not discuss the authenticity of the monuments of Nazareth; I will only say what they consist of” (all trans. mine).

72. Spackman, “Hygiene in the Harem,” 174, emphasis original.

73. Claudia Grzonka, *Weibliche Blicke auf den Mittleren Osten im 19. Jahrhundert: die Erfahrung der Fremde und des Selbst bei Lucie Duff Gordon, Isabel Burton und Anne Blunt*, GSER 7 (Trier: WVT, 1997), 17.

74. Amalia Nizzoli, *Memorie sull’Egitto e specialmente sui costumi delle donne orientali e gli harem: scritte durante il suo soggiorno in quel paese (1819–1828)* (Milan: Pirotta, 1841); Sophia Lane Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters from Cairo—Written during a Residence There in 1842–1843* (Philadelphia: Zeiber, 1845); Gabrielle Elissa Popoff, “Nizzoli, Amalia, (1806–1845?),” 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013f>; Melman, *Women’s Orient*, 332.

and doings, and the manners and customs of the people; Tancred [leader in the first crusade] for the sublime; and the 'New Pilgrim's Progress' [by Mark Twain] for the ridiculous."⁷⁵

The second is Rogers, who in 1855 joined her brother, a British consul in Haifa and other places. They traveled in the Levant, and she made friends among local women. According to Billie Melman, "Rogers is unsurpassable on women's life in mid nineteenth-century Palestine, described in *Domestic Life in Palestine* (1863)."⁷⁶ Like Belgiojoso, she viewed the land through a Bible lens, but not the people. This makes it all the more striking to read the—most probably male—publisher's introduction to the American edition of her book:

In no department of eastern exploration does the Bible student acquire more instructive lessons than in that pertaining to the domestic habits of the people. The Scripture narrative enters largely into the details of social life. The old customs have not changed materially, and one can to-day reproduce the incidents of social life so graphically described in the Bible. Abraham still sits in the door of his tent; Ruth gleanes after the reapers on the plains of Bethlehem, and on these plains shepherds keep watch over their flocks by night. Isaac meditates at eventide. Rachel descends from her camel and covers her beautiful face with the ample vail before she meets her lord. The marriage feast is still kept in Cana. The mourners with wailing follow the bier to the grave. Salutations are exchanged among the people as in the days of Abraham and Christ.... With special pleasure do I call the attention of the American public to this unpretentious and entertaining volume, believing that it will not only furnish pleasure to every reader, but that it must contribute to the clearer understanding of the Scriptures, and serve as another bulwark in defending historic Christianity against the vain speculations and unholy plottings of rationalism and infidelity.⁷⁷

Despite this apparent difference in approach, Charles Wilson counts Rogers among "the most eminent Palestine explorers." This explains why

75. Isabel Burton, *The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land: From My Private Journal* (London: King, 1875), 1:48 (see also 2:50, 196).

76. Melman, *Women's Orient*, 332; Mary Eliza Rogers, *Domestic Life in Palestine* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862).

77. John H. Vincent, "Introduction," in *Domestic Life in Palestine*, by Mary Eliza Rogers (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1865), 13–14.

she is the only female contributor listed on the title page of his *Picturesque Palestine* (1880–1884).⁷⁸

5.2. Botany

As alluded to already with Belzoni's description of the "oshour plant," botany is one part of the landscape that receives attention in travel description, although the weather and topography are more frequent. Still, among women, only botany seemed a topic for monographs. This essay will mention two women who paid special attention to this area of exploration. Unfortunately, little research on these women is available. The background to women's interest in botany in the second half of the long nineteenth century involves the popular practice of collecting wildflowers. They were used, among other reasons, for postcards.⁷⁹ Such cards were made, for instance, by the girls of the school run by the sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion at the Ecce Homo arch in Jerusalem.⁸⁰

Artist Frederic Church traveled from January until April 1868 in Egypt and the Levant, together with his wife, their son, and her mother. Palestine was especially important for them, even though history writing mainly focused on *his* travel; John Davis contextualizes their trip as follows:

A look at some of Church's Palestine travel books indicates that this was one direction in which he could turn for solace. Church's trip to the Holy Land can be seen as an integral part of his reaction against Darwinism's implicit separation of science and orthodox faith. In Church's time, the exploration of biblical lands was beginning to be approached in a new scientific manner.⁸¹

Many of Church's drawings and paintings witness to the importance of his encounter with the Holy Land. The Churches traveled the land with

78. See her contributions on Samaria and Damascus in volume 2 and on Carmel, Acre, and other coastal cities in volume 3. See also Brunnbauer, *Die Darstellung der Fremde*, 67–82.

79. They were also collected in books, e.g., Arthur Hastings Kelk, *Flowers Plucked in "Those Holy Fields"* (Jerusalem: London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, [ca. 1900]), <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013g>. Note that every copy contains dried flowers.

80. I thank Beth Alpert Nakhai for this reference. See James Kean, *Among the Holy Places: A Pilgrimage through Palestine*, 5th ed. (London: Fisher Unwin, 1895), 46.

81. John Davis, "Frederic Church's 'Sacred Geography,'" *SSAA* 1 (1987): 81–82.

the Bible as their reference point, with a critical stance toward the traditions, as Isabel Church wrote in her diary: “I could not but feel deeply impressed, and awed; even though I do not really believe that it is where our Savior was laid.”⁸² Parallel to how conservative scientists resorted to topography rather than history, the Churches discovered that nature was even more important than the assumed historical places, and thus they collected rocks and flowers:

Rocks he collected derived their dignity solely from their provenance as relics of the Holy Land (cat. no. 36B). Bringing them home enabled Church to recall and relive his pilgrim experience despite his distance from sacred topography. Similarly, he and his wife Isabel assembled a reliquary herbarium, Wildflowers of the Holy Land (cat. no. 36C), which contains samples of various grasses, reeds, and modest flowers arranged artfully and labeled by place, not by flower type.⁸³

The album was probably made by Isabel Church, even though there are a few flowers from places that Frederic Church visited without her.⁸⁴ “Wildflowers of the Holy Land” is an unpublished diary with dried flowers, the pages marked by places of provenance.⁸⁵

A book with wildflowers from the Holy Land was published a few years later by Hanna(h) Zeller. Her father was Samuel Gobat, bishop of Jerusalem.⁸⁶ On 23 June 1859, she married missionary Johannes Zeller, whom her father had persuaded to come to the Holy Land two years before.⁸⁷ Later they moved to Nazareth, where Hanna(h) Gobat started

82. Unpublished diary, quoted in Davis, “Frederic Church’s ‘Sacred Geography,’” 88.

83. Edwards, *Noble Dreams*, 177–78; see also Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 168–207.

84. Edwards, *Noble Dreams*, 177–79.

85. Another attestation of a flower as souvenir is Matilde Serao’s rose of Jericho that she took to Naples. See her *In the Country of Jesus* (London: Heinemann, 1905), 175–77.

86. Duane Alexander Miller, “Anglican Mission in the Middle East up to 1910,” in *Partisan Anglicanism and Its Global Expansion 1829–c.1914*, vol. 3 of *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, ed. Rowan Strong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 276–95, esp. 285–87.

87. See Arnold Blumberg, *A View from Jerusalem, 1849–1858: The Consular Diary of James and Elizabeth Anne Finn* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 252, 254, 274. Not to be confused with Johann L. Schneller, organist at the Anglican church and leader of an orphanage school close to Jerusalem (men-

a girls' school.⁸⁸ There she made drawings of flora that led to the book. The pages include the name of the plant in English, Latin, German, and French, and likewise the book was published in three modern languages. Whereas her pages do not link the flowers with the Bible, two introductions to the English edition by male authors underline the importance of the everyday flowers that Jesus saw in his childhood and how these "are silent witnesses to the truth of Scripture."⁸⁹ In the *British Quarterly Review* of 1876 her book is praised: "To many purchasers of gift-books this will be the most attractive volume of the year." The review concludes with, "It is a book that all Bible-loving people will be glad to possess. While to travellers in the Holy Land it will be a souvenir full of tender interest."⁹⁰

This chapter concentrates on women who wrote about the Holy Land (the lands of the Bible, in particular in the East), its population and botany, because of the relation of their faith with the Bible. Versfelt, who had commercial interests, is mentioned as an exception. Pfeiffer encountered a landscape and places familiar to her because of the Christian tradition. Barclay Johnson experienced the country as a confirmation of biblical truths; however, she did not regard the women she meets as the "daughters of Canaan" but as her sisters, despite the cultural differences. Burton fully trusted her reading of the biblical record, despite being challenged by her husband's opinions. Isabel Church experienced how the flora of Palestine strengthened her spirituality. For Hanna(h) Zeller as well, botany provided a way to express her faith. The

tioned in the diary 256, 276; Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 168). See also Meindert Dijkstra, *Palestina en Israël: Een verzwegen geschiedenis* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2018), 300; available as *Palestine and Israel: A Concealed History*, trans. Thomas S. B. Johnston (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023).

88. Nancy L. Stockdale, "An Imperialist Failure: English Missionary Women and Palestinian Orphan Girls in Nazareth, 1864–1899," in *Christian Witness between Continuity and New Beginnings: Modern Historical Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Martin Tamcke and Michael Marten, SOK 39 (Münster: LIT, 2006), 216 n. 7.

89. Hannah Zeller, *Wild Flowers of the Holy Land*, 2nd ed. (London: Nisbet, 1876), x. For the present research only the English edition was available. On botany one could also mention Alexandrine P. F. Tinne's work on Egyptian botany; however, there is no connection with Egypt as a holy land. Her work was recognized and partly published posthumously (after her untimely death by Touaregs; see Melman, *Women's Orient*, 334).

90. *British Quarterly Review* (1876): 558.

relationship between the Bible and the Holy Land was more complex for Belgiojoso and Rogers.

5. Elizabeth Anne Finn, née McCaul (1825–1921)

Elizabeth Anne Finn concludes this section. She was active in many areas relevant for this study, but often unlike other women mentioned here.

Elizabeth Anne McCaul was born in Warsaw in a missionary family seeking to convert Jews and spent most of her youth in London in a similar context. She began studying Hebrew at the age of four and mastered other languages, including Arabic. She married James Finn in 1846, accompanying him to Jerusalem, where he became the British consul.⁹¹ In the quote above concerning the difference between her work and Rogers's, she indicates how most of her writings show her perspective on expat life in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Finn's contributions extend beyond this and include her work among the poor Jewish population of Jerusalem. She was unlike other women in her engagement with the poor.⁹² One of her projects was Abraham's vineyard in the Valley of Urtas,⁹³ which created a way to provide poor Jews with working opportunities. Furthermore, the position of her husband connected her with a considerable network. For example, see the many references to Finn's *Reminiscences* in the footnotes above, listing among her guests of Jerusalem royalty from Britain, Austria, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and academics,

91. John James Moscrow even states: "If he had not married her as a second wife [she was about twenty years younger than him] he would probably never have been considered for the post." See Moscrow, *Measuring Jerusalem: The Palestine Exploration Fund and British Interests in the Holy Land* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 37.

92. For a broader context, e.g., the premillennialist expectation of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem/Palestine, see also Yaakov S. Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), on Finn 100–101. During Finn's years of office, British foreign policy in Palestine, the protection of stateless Jews (mainly from Russia), and conversion of Jews could be combined (see Moscrow, *Measuring Jerusalem*, 38–40).

93. Also known as Artas. This is the village where Swedish-speaking Finnish Hilma Granqvist did her anthropological research (and took many photographs) in the 1920s: "She had gone to Palestine 'in order to find the Jewish ancestors of Scripture.' Instead, she found Palestinian peoples with a distinct culture and way of life." See "Hilma Granqvist," British Museum, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL6013h>.

such as cartographers Edward Robinson, Eli Smith, Charles W. M. van de Velde, and others.⁹⁴ Whereas no other women seem to have made a contribution to cartography during the nineteenth century, Finn did, albeit modestly. In 1857 she identified Urtas as Emmaus, mentioned in Luke 24.⁹⁵ Moreover, this hypothesis led to an excavation under her direction in 1861, during which she discovered baths, confirming the etymology of Emmaus as “baths.”⁹⁶ Unfortunately, she published only one article about her excavation, and it lacked maps and drawings.

Like Rogers, Finn wrote about the local population, even when limited to several articles about the “ploughmen” (*fellaheen*) of Palestine. She describes some of their recent history; their customs, including some songs; their nominal profession of Islam; and their vices and, less extensively, their virtues. Among their vices she writes of their belligerent nature and their inclination to tell lies. For their virtues she enumerates their “resignation to the will of God and bravery in battle,”⁹⁷ as well as hospitality. Strikingly, she seems to be one of the few writing women during the nineteenth century who saw these ploughmen as “direct descendants of the Canaanitish nations who had occupied the country before Abraham’s day.”⁹⁸ Melman adds that Finn and other “proselytisers were not, could not be, ‘ethnographers.’... For their vision of the ‘other’ is pre-determined.... Spaces are framed in the millennial, philosemite ideology and are utilised for missionary propaganda.”⁹⁹

94. Princess Belgiojoso is an example of a royal guest (Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 102). Interestingly, she mentions these cartographers together. See Haim Goren, Bruno Schelhaas, and Jutta Faehndrich, *Mapping the Holy Land: The Origins of Cartography in Palestine* (London: Tauris, 2017).

95. Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 231–32.

96. These baths, lined with marble (not alabaster, *pace* Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 232), were taken by her Jewish friends as *miqvaot*. See [E. A.] Finn, “Emmaus Identified,” *PEQ* 15 (1883): 53–64.

97. [E. A.] Finn, “Fellaheen of Palestine: Notes on the Chief Traits in Their Character, Their Faults, and Their Virtues,” *PEQ* 11 (1879): 87; Finn, “Fellaheen of Palestine: Notes on Their Clans, Warfare, Religion, and Laws,” *PEQ* 11 (1879): 33–48. She also published on the same topic in the Religious Tract Society’s *Leisure Hour*. These contributions were gathered in [E. A.] Finn, *Fellaheen of Palestine: Notes on Their Clans, Warfare, Religion, and Laws* (London: Marshall, [1923]).

98. Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 48. Her son, Arthur Henry Finn, states in the introduction of *Fellaheen of Palestine* (6) that her view has been adopted by authorities, such as Colonel Conder.

99. Melman, *Women’s Orient*, 231.

Finn was also among the first women to recognize the potential of photography.¹⁰⁰ In her reminiscences she relates, "He [Rev. Bridges] was the first to take anything like photographic views in Jerusalem. These were called 'talbottypes,' invented by his friend Mr. Fox Talbot, and he explained to me as much as he could about photography. I therefore wrote to my friends, and photographic apparatus was sent out to me."¹⁰¹

This apparatus arrived, and in 1853 bankrupt banker James Graham followed. He was familiar with calotype photography and contributed to Finn's missionary work by making photos to illustrate the context of the Bible. He did so as a member of the Jerusalem Literary Society (see below), and the photographs were sold to travelers and sent to England. Whereas Graham was Jerusalem's first resident photographer, his assistant Mendel John Diness, a Christian convert, is regarded as the first photographer with Jewish roots.¹⁰²

In 1849, a year after their arrival, the Finns were founding members of the Jerusalem Literary Society, which had a library and a little museum.¹⁰³

100. Yeshayahu Nir states: "Mrs. Gray Hill, Madame Lucien Gautier (significantly not identified by their own first names), and possibly Marion Harland (pseudonym for Mary Terhune) were the first women photographers to arrive in the country." See Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land 1839–1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 208. Madame Gautier published her photographs in the book *Souvenirs de la Terre Sainte*, by Lucien Gautier (Lausanne: Bridel, 1898). Nir comments: "Not a single picture of Jerusalem or any of the well-known historical sites is included"—the book reproduces "unpretentious landscapes" (*Bible and the Image*, 209), more focused on people than on buildings. Compare Scholten's broad scope.

101. Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 90. Apparently, she was not aware of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey's daguerreotypes, made shortly before her arrival to Jerusalem. See also Gillian Webster, "Elizabeth Anne Finn," *BAR* (1985): 183–84.

102. Crawford, "Graham, James (1806–1869)"; Vgl. Dror Wahrman, Carney Gavin, and Nitza Rosovsky, *Capturing the Holy Land: M. J. Diness and the Beginnings of Photography in Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Harvard Semitic Museum, 1993), esp. 8–25. Finn's photographs are said to be in the archive of the Palestine Exploration Fund; this material awaits further study (see Webster, "Elizabeth Anne Finn," 181–85).

103. Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, 93: "At the first meeting there were four gentlemen and three ladies, the objects being the study of all the subjects of interest connected with the Holy Land, including antiquities, natural history and investigations of all kinds; the only subject excluded was religious controversy." I did not find the names of these participants. That there were more women actively involved in exploring the land(s) of the Bible is clear. One of them would have been the mother of Clermont-Ganneau, as she is mentioned by Burton, *Inner Life of Syria* 2:187.

Out of this society grew the Palestine Exploration Fund, established 1865. Another supporter was the Jerusalem Water Relief Fund, founded among others by Finn's father, as an initiative of the London Jews' Society. The relief fund looked for water supplies to prepare Jewish resettlement, and its work also included a photographic survey of the city.¹⁰⁴ This combination led to an archaeological survey of Jerusalem by Charles Warren in 1867. The Palestine Exploration Fund had as scientific aims topography, that is, the identification of biblical sites, and *Landeskunde*.¹⁰⁵

After their return to England in 1863, Finn started lecturing in drawing-room meetings, and soon after the founding of the Palestine Exploration Fund she focused her fundraising activities on this society. For instance, one note in the 1876 *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* of October reads: "Sept. 30, at the Palace, Chichester, when Mrs. Finn, through whose exertions all the summer meetings were arranged, gave an account from her own experience of recent and and [sic] early research in the Holy Land [i.e., the work of Wilson, Warren, Conder, Clermont-Ganneau]."¹⁰⁶ In 1875 Finn founded the Ladies' Association in aid of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and since then there was a regular announcement: "Ladies desirous of joining the Ladies' Association are requested to communicate with Mrs. Finn, The Elms, Brook Green, London, W."¹⁰⁷

Thus, Finn's unique contribution to the exploration of the Holy Land comprised publications on the people of the land, whom, unlike other women authors, she identified as Canaanite descendants; direction of an excavation for the identification of a biblical site; and her recognition of the importance of photography for documenting. Moreover, she stood at the beginning of the Palestine Exploration Fund, was an important fundraiser, and lectured on life in Jerusalem/Palestine after returning to England.

Despite being a woman in Victorian England, her contribution benefited from her personality and her impressive network. Her ideas are

104. Moscrow, *Measuring Jerusalem*, 53.

105. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 195–96.

106. See *PEQ* 6 (1876): 64.

107. *PEQ* 5 (1875): 108, 187; *PEQ* 6 (1876): 3; etc. Since 1876 there are regularly reports from the Ladies' Associations: *PEQ* 6 (1876): 4–6, 64–65, 116–19, etc. Since the first issue of *PEQ* there is a regular line among the donations reading: "Newark: Ladies' Committee"; e.g., "List of Subscriptions June 30th to September 30th," *PEQ* 1 (1869–1870): 396. This report is not bound into all copies of the journal. It is possible that this is a ladies' committee of another kind and not a forerunner of the Ladies' Association.

sometimes striking from a gender perspective, as they often overlap with those of her male rather than her female contemporaries. One wonders whether this is a reason why her Christian name and the otherwise frequent “Mrs.” is lacking when she is mentioned as an author in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*.

6. Conclusion

Within the long tradition of interest in the land(s) of the Bible, the present chapter focuses on several women in the period between 1840 to 1900.¹⁰⁸ This period witnessed growing possibilities for visiting the Holy Land(s), either through literature and pictures or by being physically present. Especially since the second half of the nineteenth century, technical developments made it possible to disseminate knowledge more efficiently, through museums, illustrated books, and libraries. New means of travel also encouraged visits and further exploration of Palestine and Egypt. The women presented here wrote articles that allow deeper insights into the Holy Land of this epoch. Women wrote scientific contributions in codicology, social geography and botany, archaeology and ethnology. With their descriptions, drawings, and photographs, these women offer interesting insights into the life of the local population and the country. Women such as the Smith sisters also helped through fundraising as well as using their own inheritance for travel, photography, and manuscript purchases. However, women’s publications were often not received as equal to their male counterparts, and their names were largely forgotten. This chapter¹⁰⁹ seeks to honor their memories and their contribution to the history of the land of the Bible.

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108. Sarah Belzoni is the earliest example; the latest travels are those by Agnes and Margaret Smith, although their activities, like Elizabeth Finn’s, who returned to England in 1863, continued into the early twentieth century.

109. Together with de Hulster, “Role of Women.”

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