PRISCILLA

"PRISCILLA AND AQUILA INSTRUCTED APOLLOS MORE PERFECTLY IN THE WAY OF THE LORD" (ACTS 18)

# Papers

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## In This Issue



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# Editor's Reflections

The recent premiere of news writer Emilio Herasme's documentary *La 40: Peor que el Infierno* celebrates the memory of the Dominican Republic's national heroes: Minerva, Patria, and María Teresa Mirabal. These three sisters stood up against the brutality of the dictator Rafael Trujillo at the cost of condemning themselves to execution at the hands of his death squad.

Faithful Roman Catholics, Minerva and Patria attended parochial high school, there encountering the children of families torn apart by political oppression. Minerva, moved by their stories, decided to study law and subsequently joined the anti-Trujillo underground. The first clash with the dictator resulted from what is often called popularly "an act of God"—a sudden downpour of rain at a party organized by Trujillo. The Mirabal family seized the opportunity to leave, deeply offending the dictator, who always insisted on leaving first. He had all of them arrested and forced letters of apology from them. Minerva refused and was interrogated for several days about her antagonistic attitude. The family was "well connected," however, and Trujillo's own brother interceded for them, securing their release.[1] When Minerva subsequently enrolled in the University of Santo Domingo, the dictator had her watched and soon blocked her progress because of her work on human rights and Dominican law.[2] A failed revolt by the Dominican Liberation Movement on June 14, 1959, led to the three Mirabal sisters, who were now all active in the underground and married to other anti-Trujillo patriots, forming the "Movimiento Clandestino 14 de Junio," the sisters being known by the code name "Las Mariposas" (The Butterflies).[3] Trujillo had all three of their husbands arrested and tortured. When the sympathetic Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt supported their cause, Trujillo attempted twice to assassinate him. In the meantime, on the domestic front, among other atrocities, Trujillo reportedly ordered 30,000 dark Haitians living in the Dominican Republic murdered in an attempt to lighten the complexion of the Dominicans.[4] The Mirabals stepped up their campaign, even reportedly enlisting the priest of their home church to join their movement and oppose the violence of the government.[5]

By the evening of November 25, 1960, Trujillo had had enough from the Mirabals. Dominicans claim that the fatal rebuff came when Minerva (and, according to many, her two sisters as well) refused to succumb to sexual demands that the dictator (known for his constant adulteries) was making upon them while their husbands languished in prison, an aspect emphasized in Julia Alvarez's award-winning novel and the subsequent film *In the Time of the Butterflies*.[6] Accosted on the way home from visiting their husbands in prison, the women were taken to a field of high cane and beaten to death. Their bodies were put back into their vehicle, which was then rolled off a cliff to simulate an accident, according to the recorded confession of one of the executioners.[7] Patria was 36, Minerva 34, María Teresa 24. Their sole surviving sister, Dedé, who was not involved politically, afterwards, with their mother, reared all of their children[8] and began the Mirabal Museum in their honor. According to the museum's Web site: "The public did





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not believe the government's story of an 'accident' claiming the lives of the Mirabals. Historians consider the murder of *las Mariposas* a turning point in the downfall of Trujillo: popular support of the dictator waned, the resistance movement gained momentum, and the Catholic Church became more openly critical of the regime."[9] Bishops began openly denouncing the dictator.[10] Six months later, Trujillo was assassinated by his own guards.

Today, the Mirabal sisters are honored as symbols of purity and courage in the face of frightening oppression. They are honored on a stamp and on the recently minted 200 peso bill. A number of books have recounted the story of the Mirabals, from their sister Dedé's *Vivas en su Jardín* to Jacob Kushner's children's book *How the Butterflies Grew their Wings*. Several films also recount their story, from documentaries such as *Nombre Secreto: Mariposas* by Chile's Cecilia Domeyko to fictionalized features such as Michelle Rodriguez's *Trópico de Sangre*. In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly designated November 25, the day of the murder of the Butterflies, as "the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women."[11] Global events in their honor are impressive. For example, in March 2008, the Icelandic National Committee for UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) held a "Butterfly week," culminating in a celebrity-served, butterfly-masked, fundraising dinner. Spokeswoman Hrund Gunnsteinsdóttir explained they were creating "a butterfly effect" to stop violence in honor of the "butterfly" sisters. The week raised $1.1 million to combat violence against women and children in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan.[12]

Honoring heroic women whose deeds have set a standard in such public ways keeps their example before a nation. When an example is such a moral one, it impresses a message upon a people that purity and courage and a love of justice are prized as nationally honored virtues; the significance cannot be minimized. When women are honored both for their achievements and their heroism, the right message is sent out to both genders.

God has given humanity gender for sacred reasons. Together, we make up an entire humanity. We are valued beyond understanding in God's sight—so greatly, in fact, that God, in the fullness of the Godhead (Col 1:19, 2:19), came to us in Jesus, God-Among-Us, to give up his life, as many years later the devoutly Christian Mirabal sisters sacrificed their lives, following Christ's example, to rescue the oppressed of this fallen world.

In this issue of *Priscilla Papers,* we examine issues of gender within the struggle for mutual freedom against varying degrees of repression and exploitation. Médine Moussounga Keener counts the cost of war specifically on women, as it exacts its toll in Congo Brazzaville, while Zablon Bundi Mutongu shows us the alternative option: the positive effects when women's gifts are utilized to help alleviate the problem of poverty in Kenya. CBE President Mimi Haddad then takes us back to the genesis of good and evil actions, exploring the fact that all action begins with ideas that have consequences.

Three pertinent book reviews follow. Twin reviews find John DelHousaye assessing the secular bestseller *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* and Cynthia Davis Lathrop exploring the Christian counterpart, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women.* Chip M. Anderson then analyzes Mae Elise Cannon's *Social Justice Handbook* as we match positive ideas with effective suggestions for action. Our poet, Joel Boehner, brings us back to the theme of marriage, warning us of the paradox of a hierarchal beginning with a poignant word picture for us to contemplate.

Applying godly sense to matters of gender creates a climate that allows men and women to work together in mutual support and cooperation, each having the opportunity to actualize the gifts God has given to edify the body of Christ and assist God in reconciling the world. Letting fallen attitudes of sexual domination dictate our relationships to one another, on the other hand, creates a climate that is perhaps only implicitly repressive at the outset, but may end in setting the context for a Trujillo to develop. We Christians should attempt to set our lives in symbiotic directions "beyond the curse," as my wife so aptly named her classic book,[13] not simply continuing the curse's ramifications. Our hope at CBE is that all our readers are able to thrive within the freedom won for us by Christ and will work with us to extend this freedom to those oppressed around the world.

Blessings,

## Notes

1. Las Hermanas Mirabal/The Mirabal Sisters, http://www.colonial-zone-dr.com/people_history-mirabal_sisters.html, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

2. See Mujer Palabra's Web site, http://www.talkingpeople.net, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

3. Las Hermanas Mirabal/The Mirabal Sisters, http://www.colonial-zone-dr.com/people_history-mirabel_sisters.html, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

4. The number is drawn from *In the Time of the Butterflies*, a film based on Julia Alvarez's novel. TMPman, "In the Time of the Butterflies," http://everything2.com/title/In+the+Time+of+the+Butterflies, accessed Jan. 27, 2010. My wife, who was born in the Dominican Republic under the regime of Rafael Trujillo, remembers as a small girl seeing him with his face powdered white to make himself appear lighter in skin color.

5. TMPman, "In the Time of the Butterflies."

6. Interview with Dr. Hilda Cabrera, Jan. 20, 2010, in Santo Domingo, R.D.

7. Ciriaco de la Rosa in the *Dominican Encyclopedia 1997* CD-ROM. See a transcription at Mujer Palabra's Web site for EOI Students, "The Mirabal Sisters: November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women," http://www.talkingpeople.net.

8. Ivette Romero, "New Book: Dedé Mirabal's Vivas en su jardín," Repeating Islands, http://repeatingislands.com/2009/08/20/new-book-dede-mirabal%C2%B4s-vivas-en-su-jardin, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

9. Mirabal Museo, http://semdom.50megs.com/mirabal_museo.htm, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

10. TMPman, "In the Time of the Butterflies."

11. "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women," http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/eliminate-violence-against-women-day, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

12. UNIFEM, News: "Icelandic National Committee for UNIFEM Donates US $1.1 Million to UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, http://www.unifem.org/new_events/story_detail.php?storyID+664, accessed Jan. 27, 2010.

13. Aída Besançon Spencer's *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker: 1985) is also available in French as *La Femme et le Service dans L'eglise* (Longueuil, Quebec, Canada: Diffusion Vie, 1996), and has just appeared in a Spanish edition: *Más Allá de la Maldición* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011).

# The Cost of War for Women

Médine Moussounga Keener

Africa has been the theater of many wars in the past decades, and the Congos are no exception. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Congo Brazzaville have been in war both simultaneously and at different times. Even though the DRC has garnered most of the publicity in the West because of its size, the length of the war periods, and its strategic economic position in Africa, Congo Brazzaville[1] has also experienced war and its many consequences.

War is by no means a reasonable event in the eyes of most of its innocent victims, and they are affected differently by it. Through a biographical sketch of Melanie[2] and her experiences in war, we will assess the ordeal of war for women.

## A dangerous journey

Melanie was born on May 14, 1968, in the Republic of the Congo. By the time war started in that nation in 1997, she was a senior at Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville. Conflicts were intermittent in the capital until December 1998, when Brazzaville fell into the hands of the Cobras.[3] Many left the capital city on foot, by train, or by plane (for those who could afford it), and Melanie was one of them. She came by train to live in Dolisie with her family—yet war came to that town, too.

On that fateful day (January 25, 1999) when war started in Dolisie, Melanie, one of her sisters, her ten-year-old niece, her two brothers, and a cousin woke up to the noise of shooting and bombing. Gripped with fear, Melanie was so traumatized that immediately she became ill. The noise and smell of the bombing took its toll on many people. It was not surprising to see women (especially) suffering from fever, diarrhea, and vomiting right at the beginning of the war.

One of the first things to happen during war is gripping fear. In the streets, panic-stricken people try to find safety. Questions like "Where do I go?" "How do I get there?" "What do I take?" and "Who comes with me?" come to mind frequently. To picture the scene, imagine people running in every direction, shouting names and crying; and, on the streets, throngs of people with loads on their heads, and women with children in their arms or on their backs, leaving their homes and going away to try to find shelter and safety somewhere else.

That morning, in the chaos of screams, shouts, and loud noises, Melanie's brothers and cousin woke up and ran for their lives. Even though her sister ran after them, she did not find them and came home exhausted. Melanie's mother, who was separated from her father, lived in a distant village, and Melanie knew that her brothers would try to find their way to the village. Her father spent most of his nights at the house of the one who later became his second wife. So, that morning, as the city of Dolisie was under fire, he came home, grabbed some personal effects, and fled for his life.

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Melanie, being sick, could not run with the others, and her sister and niece stayed with her. They survived for four days by eating the vegetables growing in their small garden. Then, it became too dangerous for them to remain in the city for lack of food, fear of being discovered by enemy soldiers, and the stench arising from decomposing bodies.

On Friday, Melanie, although weak with fever, left the city of Dolisie, urged by her sister and niece. They walked for miles, following the crowds in front of them. Walking is good exercise and it is recommended for healthy living. But, during war, walking becomes a compulsory exercise that has to be carried out under all weather conditions—scorching sun or pouring rain—and one faces many dangers: forest paths infested with ants and snakes, steep mountains, wood and rail bridges. People need to get to "safety," and most of them walk. Driving a personal car could get one killed, because soldiers from all sides will take a car after killing the owner. Children as young as three years old and senior citizens walk side by side, sometimes until their feet are unable to carry them. And those who can not walk are carried. As a war refugee myself, I have helped carry my dad in a wheelbarrow.[4]

Refugees and displaced persons do not have houses in the different places to which they flee, having left their own. So they sleep wherever they can: abandoned hospitals on the dirt floor full of germs, churches, abandoned schools, or outside in the open. There are neither beds nor mattresses, unless those fleeing carry a small mattress for a sick person. A piece of fabric or a mat on the dirt floor or concrete serves as a bed. Sometimes, kind people will take them in for a few days.

Even in those circumstances, it is the responsibility of the woman (as mother and wife) to take care of the little ones and protect them as best she can from mosquitoes, cold weather, and other dangers. Melanie, her sister, and niece slept twice in a church building as they fled.

When they reached a village called Diesse, Melanie was so weak from fever and an anemic condition that her feet refused to carry her. Like most displaced people, she had swollen and sore feet at the end of every walking day. Melanie collapsed on the road and asked her sister to go on with the little niece and not to worry about her. But her sister refused to abandon her and, instead, started to cry and wail. Melanie was weak because of lack of proper food, medication, good sanitation, and hygiene, but she was also weak because of malaria and other ailments caused by war.

During war, women are mostly in charge of getting and fixing food. Having left houses in a hurry, they borrow pots and pans

to prepare their meager food. Even when some male members of the family help, women are responsible to fetch water from the river or the well and fetch wood from the forest to cook the food. Most people eat once a day. Refugees eat rats, snakes (for those tribes that eat snakes), monkeys, and other wild meat to get some protein; fish are expensive and rare unless the refugees fish for themselves. They also eat ferns[5] and other local vegetables when they can afford them. Refugees drink water from polluted wells and rivers in which the corpses of dead animals and human beings and other filth are thrown. As a result, many suffer from dysentery and typhoid fever. Whatever food is available is given first to the husband/father, the sick, and the children. Only after they are fed can the mother/wife think about herself. Melanie, having the care of her sister and niece, certainly put them before herself; she thought they had a better chance to survive if they left her behind to die.

When Melanie collapsed, none of the people who were fleeing with them helped them, and she did not have any medication either. Hardship brings out who we really are deep inside; it can lead people to acts of meanness and heartlessness or acts of kindness.

When Melanie collapsed, none of the people who were fleeing with them helped them, and she did not have any medication either. Hardship brings out who we really are deep inside; it can lead people to acts of meanness and heartlessness or acts of kindness. In Melanie's case, even though she was abandoned by her co-travelers, a young woman from that village acted toward her like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–35. She made some herbal medicine out of tree bark and gave it to her to drink, which gave her strength to go on.

The next day, the person taking tickets for a truck ride was one of Melanie's classmates. He wrote down their names without charging them, and they were able to get to her mother's village with a little less difficulty. Because Melanie's health was so bad, her mother took her to the town of Mossendjo for medical assistance. In Mossendjo, Melanie and her family stayed with relatives. Just like hundreds of women in these dire conditions, Melanie had to find a way to provide for herself and help her family.

## Skills for survival

Displaced women engage in different sorts of activities to help them find food for their loved ones. Many learn how to lead the life of peasant women to survive in the countryside. At daybreak, peasant women start out for their distant fields (farms) to get cassava (the staple food) and vegetables. The paths to and from the fields are narrow, full of swamps, scissor-like grass, little rocks, and army ants. The women walk from four to ten miles each way, almost every day. Snakes in the forest are an ever-present danger. They carry their food in big baskets on their heads or their backs. Once they have the food, they cook it and sell part, for the money will help with other needs. They eat the rest.

Some women, like Melanie, are too weak to walk long distances and carry heavy loads on their backs. They buy items in bulk and sell them at retail prices in the markets. Melanie sold vegetables, fish, and cassava flour in the market. Other women sell themselves into prostitution to the soldiers who can give them precious things like bread, soap, and sardines. Others still are forced into prostitution.

Melanie's health did not improve as she expected. After all, displaced war victims do not have access to medical care, a regular food supply, clothing, or, indeed, any international assistance. They are left to themselves to survive, and many die because of lack of hygiene, preventable diseases, and hunger. Very soon, some relatives started to gossip that Melanie had AIDS, which automatically put her in a situation where she could be conveniently shunned. Melanie reasoned that, if she stayed in Congo, especially in Mossendjo, with no medical help at all, she might lose her life. She knew that, if she could get into the neighboring country of Gabon, she might get help from the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). So, she moved to the small town of Mbinda on the Congolese border with Gabon, where she sold cooked food for a while to have some money for the "crossing."

Going into Gabon was a very challenging feat to undertake for a displaced person. Everyone crossing the borders was supposed to show an ID and other papers that, more often than not, they had forgotten to take with them in the rush to save their lives from bullets and bombs. The displaced also found out that they had to pay money to the Cocoyes[6] on the Congo side and to three different groups on the Gabonese soil: the Koubias,[7] the police, and the regular military. Because of that, only rich Congolese could afford to enter into Gabon as official refugees.

Many displaced people decided not to cross the borders at check points and preferred to cross on foot at other places. They ran higher risks: being bitten by snakes in the forest, being arrested in Gabon for lack of documentation, or being taken advantage of by the locals in unsafe areas.

Melanie decided to take her niece with her and go the legal way. She knew a Cocoye who would help them cross without asking for money. Since they did not have the required certificate to show on Gabonese soil, she found a Koubia to whom she paid 10,000 CFA francs (about 20 dollars). This fellow took them through the back route and put them in a truck he was supervising. When he had enough refugees, he got on the truck and ordered the driver to take them to a refugee camp. So, the next day, Melanie and her niece found themselves in the refugee camp of Mouanda, in Saint Dominique, the Catholic church where Father Guy Boulbin[8] (his real name) welcomed them.

## Living as a refugee

Once in the courtyard of the Catholic church, Melanie felt protected and already cared for. But that feeling lasted only for a few moments as she discovered that she had to register to benefit from the "privileges" of being a refugee. A Congolese doctor married to a Russian wife was in charge of the refugee registration process. When Melanie went to register herself and her niece, this man refused to register her, saying that it was a Sunday. In doing

so, he knew that Melanie and her niece would not have access to food and lodging. Just like the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23–34, he did not sympathize with another refugee, although he was a refugee himself, perhaps for ethnic, religious, or other reasons unknown to Melanie. This was the first incident of discrimination in refugee camps that Melanie faced.

In fact, she discovered that there was a distinction between Catholics and non-Catholics in the way refugees were treated. Catholics, especially those who presented their baptism cards upon arrival, were put in individual rooms, whereas the others were put in classrooms and slept on the floor. People with a higher social and economic standing had privileges that others did not have. They were given bedrooms and put in dormitories with beds and did not have to wait in line at mealtime.

Melanie went to the Protestant church that same Sunday, thinking that people from her own denomination would welcome her. But, when they saw her clothes and refugee aspect, they ignored her and did not reach out to her. They looked down on her because she was a refugee. She needed sympathy and instead received scorn. Catholics and Protestants alike rejected her for different reasons. She came back to the refugee camp very disappointed and hopeless.

She went to see Father Boulbin about her situation, only to be told that her name was not on the list, and, therefore, there was no room for them. Fortunately for her, while in Mbinda, she knew Father Georges (a Congolese priest) who told her that he could help. So she asked Father Boulbin if she could talk on the phone with Father Georges who was now serving in Gabon. Father Georges, after hearing her tale, begged Father Boulbin to take care of his "sister" Melanie. So, Father Boulbin gave her a mat and a blanket and showed her a place in one of the classrooms.

Melanie and her niece were still very hungry and did not qualify for food because of their lack of registration. So she left her niece to watch their meager belongings and went to talk to a friend whom she had spotted at the gate. She told her that they were hungry, could not register, and did not know what to do without money. As they were talking, two men stood by the gate listening. Melanie thought they were refugees too. Little did she know that they were like wolves ready to fall on their prey. As soon as she was done speaking with her friend, the two men told her that they would like to buy her something to eat. They pointed to a nearby restaurant. She told them that she had a child with her. Since they insisted, and she was hungry, she followed them to a small restaurant where they bought some soda and chicken for her. After eating, she saved a piece for her niece, which the two men threw away, assuring her that they would buy something for her niece as they went back.

Coming back, one of the men disappeared in the dark, pretending to take care of something, and the other one led her to a house where he retrieved a key and opened a door. Melanie could not have found her way back if she had tried, and she also realized that this man could hurt her. She sensed danger and said, "Why didn't you tell me your intentions? I could have taken precautions for the child who is now alone in the dark in the church's courtyard." So he agreed for them to go take care of the niece and come back. As they neared the refugee camp, a Congolese man who knew Melanie, walking toward the gate, scolded her for leaving her niece alone in this place. The Gabonese man, believing that the Congolese man was Melanie's husband (since he could not understand the language they were speaking), was so afraid that he gave her some money and ran into the dark.

God saved her from those who were clearly going to rape her. How many women have been abused by men they did not know because one person who had the authority to help them did not do so? Many fall prey to abuse because of injustice and discrimination in refugee camps.

If the good Father Georges had not sent some money to Melanie by other Congolese priests, she and her niece would have starved. For four days, the Congolese doctor refused to register them until, finally, on Thursday, two Congolese priests managed to persuade him.

Melanie was grateful to God for a shelter, a blanket, some food, and some used clothes. She was still sick, but could now go to the pharmacy for medication. Little did she know that she was going to be abused by someone beyond suspicion!

## A wolf in sheep's clothing

One evening, Melanie had a headache and was not feeling well. A Congolese priest who worked in the pharmacy saw her and asked her to follow him to the pharmacy where they kept medicine. Once in the pharmacy, he locked the door. Melanie did not suspect anything wrong because this was the same priest who was helping sick refugees—one of the priests who had pleaded for her registration. Maybe he was going to talk with her, give her medication, and pray for her to get well, she thought. But, suddenly he turned toward her and forced himself upon her. She was in a locked room, in a part of the building that was empty in the evening, so nobody heard her cries as she was weakened by sickness and disgust. Melanie had escaped rape by a seemingly barbarous Gabonese man only to be abused and raped by a Congolese priest, a man of the cloth. He used his position as "a man of God" to rape an innocent and helpless victim.

Melanie was so ashamed and sickened that she confided in a friend. To her dismay, the friend did not believe her and that made the priest's betrayal even more cruel. As days passed, she discovered that many priests had mistresses, and refugee women slept with priests for favors such as food, medication, and money.

During war, some men misuse their positions as soldiers, priests, friends of the family, enemies, strangers, and even peacekeepers to abuse defenseless women. In the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, the scale of horrific rape accompanied with monstrous mutilation of women's private parts has been called the "war on women." In the film *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*, Emmy-award winning filmmaker Lisa F. Jackson tells the story of the systematic rape of thousands of women and girls in the eastern DRC to give these women a place to voice their hurts and sorrows. This film is a must-see for whoever wants to understand the horror that war in the DRC has brought on its women.[9]

Even though Melanie's story did not match the magnitude of some of the horrible tales of the rape of women in the DRC, she suffered the same pangs as other rape survivors: helplessness, shame, terror, nightmares, guilt, and anger. She felt so insecure and afraid that the only way she found to protect herself was to yield to the courtship of a fellow Congolese who later became her husband. She saw this man as a refuge from potential rapes in the future.

## Perilous pregnancy

Melanie became pregnant and was very happy, despite her circumstances. In Congo, a child is a blessing; a sign of hope. Yet, a pregnant woman is not considered safe until she and her baby are safe after she delivers. We do not have baby showers; we celebrate when the baby is born and mother and child are safe at home. In Christian homes, the celebration happens around the baby's third month when he or she is brought to church to be blessed. A saying in my tribe goes like this: "A pregnant woman is a sick person." Giving birth in Africa is a life-and-death situation, because so many women die during childbirth.

Melanie's pregnancy went well, considering the circumstances. However, one Sunday morning, when she was seven months pregnant, she started to bleed and had cramping. The Gabonese hospital in Mouanda was not equipped with an ultrasound. She was sent to the refugee doctor who had one. This doctor,[10] who could perform the ultrasound, refused to help her at first, saying that it was a Sunday. Upon the intervention of a kind young man, he performed the ultrasound and gave his report. Melanie was then able to go to the Gabonese hospital for help.

The Gabonese doctor told her that the report clearly stated that her pregnancy was going well and there was nothing he could do, even though Melanie was now in a lot of pain and the bleeding had increased. They left her on a bed and did not take care of her until late in the afternoon—after her husband was told to give money to the Gabonese anesthetist and did so. By the time the doctor performed a caesarean section, it was too late; Melanie's son had died. For the days that followed, Melanie's life hung by a thread. The only hope that she had was in God, who did not abandon her, as the psalmist says: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."[11]

## Long-term impact of war on women

As she struggled with the physical and emotional pain of trying to understand people's hate-filled actions, Melanie found refuge and comfort in the living God. A few months later, Melanie, her husband, and niece were qualified for a relocation plan and found themselves in their new home in Canada. Even though her marriage proved to be short-lived because of abuse and deceit, today Melanie has a new life. But what she went through always comes back from time to time in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder. As she shares her story with others, she always says: "God is great; I should have died."

Melanie's story illustrates the hardships of life as a displaced and/or refugee woman. Many others were not as fortunate as Melanie; they did not survive to tell their stories. Others do not have a voice and/or a venue to share theirs. Yet, God knows our stories. Remember to pray for those women victims and/or survivors of different kinds of abuse; bring them to Jesus as the Holy Spirit leads you.

## Notes

1. Also known as the Republic of the Congo.
2. All names have been changed, except when stated otherwise.
3. The Cobras were a militia group loyal to former President Sassou Nguesso (at that time), and the Cocoyes were a militia group loyal to then-President Pascal Lissouba.
4. *Out of the Forest*, coauthored with Craig Keener, details some of my own experiences as a war refugee. The book has recently been submitted to several publishers for consideration.
5. Many refugees did not even know that ferns were a good source of vitamins A and C; they just used them because they grew by the river and were free. But ferns are bitter and difficult to swallow. In the war Melanie and I experienced, ferns were called "the displaced people's food."
6. Cocoyes used that money, and money they received from taxing people in the marketplaces, to finance the war effort.
7. Koubias were a different group of military men especially appointed by President Bongo to work at the border with refugees.
8. Father Guy Boulbin was a very kind priest who fought to let people know that there was a refugee problem in Gabon. Later on, the UNHCR in Franceville (Gabon) declared the state of *prima fascia* for Congolese refugees; that is, they were considered refugees at first sight and should be treated as such. Only after that were these refugees able to have access to food, medical attention, blankets, and a place to sleep.
9. Lisa F. Jackson, Jackson Films, 2007, thegreatestsilence.org.
10. This is the same doctor, married to a Russian wife, who refused to register Melanie as a refugee for four days when she first reached Gabon.
11. Ps 46:1.

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# Speakers

**David Kodia** (PhD) was born in 1963 in Siaya County in Kenya. He obtained a PhD in Christian Theology from Northwestern Christian University in the United States. Kodia has many publications to his credit including *Poverty in Grace: Social Responsibility of the Church and Society in War Against Poverty*. He has facilitated numerous seminars. Kodia has been the principal of Bishop Okullu College, a constituent college of the Great Lakes University of Kisumu since 2002. He is married to Janepher Kodia.

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# Gender and Authentic Biblical Leadership

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# Women's Participation in Community-Based Organizations' Development as a Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Kenya

Zablon Bundi Mutongu

## Introduction

Women's participation in development and leadership is not an imposition of our times. It is as old as creation itself. In the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1:26), the command of God to steward the earth is given to both women and men, meaning that they are both to take leadership in overseeing the wellbeing of the population in their care. Throughout the Bible, God gives gifts so that both women and men may lead; therefore, we should recognize those gifts as our "sons and daughters prophesy" to lead us. This is clearly seen in the book of Acts, where both women and men answer the call to ministry as community workers (9:36, 39), as teachers of the word (18:26), and as prophets (21:9). Both women and men were exhorted to use their spiritual gifts fully without restrictions on the basis of gender (Rom 12:14–20; 1 Cor 12:7, 11; Eph 4:6–8; 1 Pet 4:10–11). This shows that men and women participated equally in the service (1 Cor 11:5) as confirmed by the presence of active women such as Lydia (who appears to have bankrolled a church as well as Paul's ministry). The Proverbs 31 woman is commended for all her businesses (real estate, textiles, etc.). By the same token today, women's gifts should be utilized in the marketplace as well as men's, and equal participation in the development process should be encouraged as a biblical ideal.

Development begins with the release of people's God-given potential, which is only possible when they are free to use the gifts God has given them. Christians have a mandate for the release of human potential, as affirmed in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. As we increase in biblical attitudes about our potential to grow in ability, knowing the value and worth ascribed to us by God, we become better agents of positive change, resulting in transformed persons and structures. Development is a means to further the human potential we recognize in all people based on the teachings of Scripture, since development aims at strengthening the abilities of people and institutions as agents of great initiative to address their own problems in harmony with the natural environment. Issues of human rights and development also come together. This means that civil and political rights have a developmental dimension, and that, without fulfilling the development needs of the human person, one cannot ensure human rights. We have to think about integral development of individuals and the community where they live as well as their nation.

Our collective future and transformation depends on God's faithfulness, consistent with our commitment to God's purposes, as it transforms our behavior and our view of ecological and social realities. This transformation must address three basic needs of our global society: justice, sustainability, and inclusiveness. As God' s Spirit transforms self, changed behavior is the result. As James 1:22–24 tells us, hearing the word is not enough; we must "do what it says." Knowing something is an opportunity for *metanoia*, a deeper realization of one's meaning and purpose. The true meaning of development is to enable all human beings to reach their fullest potential individually and to build communities that provide resources they need.

Development should be understood as a liberating process aimed at justice, self-reliance, and economic growth. It is essentially a people's initiative in which the poor and the oppressed are and should be both the active agents and the immediate beneficiaries. This means that we are called to find ways of empowering the marginalized so they can best utilize the opportunities at their disposal. We need also to unlock the ideological fetters that confine women to the domestic sphere and frustrate their free participation in community activities as well as in the larger society.

## Background to the problem

The concept of community-based organizations (CBOs) is not new to Kenya in particular or to Africa in general. In 1963, when Kenya became independent, the founder Mzee Jomo Kenyatta called on people to join together and go back to the farms in order to increase agricultural productivity and boost the gross national product. In African traditional societies, for example, it was not unusual for one to "call for help from his clan members and other relatives in paying for fines; in finding goods to exchange for a wife."[1] For an African, coming together was seen as the way to make work easier and more achievable. This implies that the success of an individual can be seen as the success of the community. This interdependent spirit is summarized by John Mbiti when he says; "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am."[2]

The need to come together stems from the fact that human beings are social by nature. But why would people want to come together in such a busy world today? Mulwa and Mala cite four reasons. The first is proximity; people from the same locality will tend to form groups. Second, people connect with groups because they gain something from them. Third, people come to groups because they share the same profession. And, fourth, people come to groups because they share the same ideals.[3] To these, I would add achievement, which is the driving force for joining CBOs.

So, growing out of a background where working together was cherished, CBOs are a conscious, modern expression of African togetherness. A CBO is an "organizational entity made up of

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people whose membership is defined by a specific common bond and who voluntarily come together to work for a common goal."[4] Ideally, a CBO is initiated, managed, and owned by the members themselves in a defined community. It is hoped that those who form the CBO will be able to enjoy the benefits of pulling their resources together and maximizing their outcomes for the betterment of the individuals and the whole community.

CBOs as vehicles for community development took root in Kenya in the 1960s. For example, in Kiambu District, people mobilized themselves in groups and formed CBOs (then known as coffee cooperatives) to increase their purchasing power for supplies and to market their produce more profitably. Many small-scale projects were completed, and, since then, CBOs have secured a place in community development in this area. The use of CBOs in community development is very important as it reduces the biases in rural development. These include spatial bias, where development is concentrated in places that are reachable; project bias, where projects are started for prestige purposes; person bias, where prominent people dominate and have their ideas imposed on the rest; dry season bias, where rural communities are visited only during the dry seasons because that is when vehicles can reach them; diplomatic bias, where development workers are ashamed to expose the poverty that the people face; and professional bias, where development workers only want to discuss issues in their area of expertise.[5] CBOs can address these biases because they operate within the context of the community, and, at the same time, they "are people's organizations and will attempt to articulate the members' needs."[6]

To be able to address the above biases, members of CBOs need to understand the biases' effects on development. Sadly, an understanding of gender has been lacking due to women's low literacy levels in our country and women's consequent absence in this conversation. A UNESCO survey in 1982 showed that 64 percent of Kenya's non-literate residents were women.[7] However, more recently in a 2004–2008 study, UNICEF reported a literacy rate of 93 for female youth (15 to 24 years of age).[8] This calls us to explore further the relationship between women's educational attainment and their participation in CBOs' development activities. Further, as well as making CBOs more effective in development, increasing women's participation will also make CBOs more attractive to aid agencies that are trying to reach as many people as possible with their services.

According to United Nations reports, "women are half the world's population, yet they do two-thirds of the world's work, earn one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property."[9] We can see this exemplified in Kenya, and especially Kiambu District. It is not uncommon to find women supporting very large families, although the majority of them are still very poor. Therefore, CBOs, which are usually formed with the aim of improving the living conditions of the poor, cannot be effective unless women participate in their projects' formulation and implementation as contributors as well as beneficiaries. In this area, women are the main providers of basic services such as housing, education for their children, clothing, and food. Most of the homes in the district are headed by single mothers and widows.

Women, however, are faced with many constraints in trying to participate in development activities such as CBO-initiated development projects largely dominated by males. If we want equitable distribution of CBOs' development benefits, we must remove these constraints. These include sociocultural barriers, religious bias against women's leadership, limitations on leadership, low educational level, and limitations stemming from women's reproductive role in the family. Being the principal laborers in many societies, women should also have a share in decision making, implementation, sharing benefits, and evaluation. This is what Bergdall calls "active participation."[10] Women's participation would help bring about equity in resource distribution.

In this article, I will use the term *authentic participation* to mean people becoming highly motivated to take part in the life of their organization. This includes actively taking part in decision making, taking responsibility for those decisions, developing a high sense of self-esteem, and regarding oneself as a valuable resource. If women acquire authentic participation, they can gain more control over their own lives and share in the divine mandate to care for the earth, to exercise dominion over it, and to be fruitful in it alongside males.

## Factors hindering women's participation in CBOs

*Educational level*

The major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable structure for human interaction. However, the education system in Kenya has not favored women. The way it was established has a lot to say about its current discriminatory practices. At first, women and girls were educated on taking care of their families, as, for example, in home science courses, and they were socialized to take a secondary place relative to men. Men were educated for jobs away from home and were seen as the main breadwinners of the family.

Today, with many families facing economic constraints, girls' education is usually sacrificed in favor of that of their brothers. Recently, I have observed cases where girls drop out of school and obtain household jobs to support their brothers in completing their studies. This creates an imbalance in society, as the educated people tend to dominate decision-making processes. The imbalance tends to confine women to their reproductive role, which is normally not valued in quantifiable terms as contributing to the economy.

This kind of system plays a key role in eliminating women from the economic activities of the society (even though women take a dominant role in subsistence economies) and creates a structure where women are made responsible solely for reproductive roles. In most cases, institutions, with their rules for achieving social or economic ends, specify how resources are allocated. Tasks, responsibilities, and value are assigned with the institution determining who gets what, who does what, and who decides. Because men have a better background in education, they dominate most of the social institutions, and women, in most cases, become passive recipients of male authority and preeminence.

In Kenya, women form more than half the population. Although literacy among young women is improving, a substan-

tial percentage of adult women are still illiterate. I witnessed this in December 2002, when I moved around the whole of Kiambu District supervising election monitors. All the reports I received showed that 30 percent of women needed assistance to vote, as they could not read or write. This was a shocking revelation to me as Kiambu is one of the most developed districts in Kenya.

Education and training should equip learners with skills that enable them to live and positively contribute toward the development of their society and environment. It is therefore expected that members of CBOs will have the necessary education and skills to contribute meaningfully to the life of the CBO. However, CBOs' women members are disadvantaged in an environment that is not conducive to women's education.

In most African societies, women are not expected to speak before men, an expectation that has kept many women's potential untapped or even unrealized.

*Internal and external politics*

Internal and external politics also affect women's participation in CBOs. In most church-based CBOs, women are reluctant to come out and be fully involved. Politics can result in distortion of priorities. It is very common to see external influences expressed in CBOs, especially if community leaders, such as chiefs, assistant chiefs, or even sometimes church leaders, have special interests. When something like a power struggle crops up, most women tend to withdraw, and this weakens their influence in decision making. In this way, unpopular leaders become the decision makers in CBOs.

In some cases, external politics takes the form of leaders nominated by people in government. I have witnessed a case where a district commissioner appoints a person whom he/she knows is in favor of his/her interests, especially so if the CBO is donor-funded. The godfather, therefore, dictates participation, and the godfather controls the benefits. In such circumstances, women have very little chance of participating in CBO development.

*Experience of leadership*

The problem challenging leadership in Africa in general is that it does not put people first. Most leaders are concerned more with their own personal gains than with how they can help the group attain its goals and objectives. Leadership can inhibit a free flow of ideas and restrict the number of options available. The kind of leadership I see in our CBOs is limiting, as it does not give women a chance to participate in CBO development. Sometimes, there is deliberate effort to frustrate women's participation by setting the meeting times at night while the leaders know very well that, in our area, not many women would attend due to a lack of security.

Another dimension of the problem is that the women themselves shy away from taking up leadership challenges. For example, in 1999, I appointed a woman to be the chairperson in one of the churches I was serving. She declined, citing the fear that it had never happened in their culture and area for a woman to be the leader with so many men available for leadership. I tried to explain to her that I was not looking for a man, but a leader. Still, she refused. This tells me that there is a great need for women to be empowered in our society.

*Sociocultural influences*

Sociocultural influences are very strong tools of group control. All people in a place share similar norms, values, relationship networks, and interactions. Such norms and values, although humanly designed, capture the mindset of people and become the determining factor in the behavior of the society. To transcend our limitations, we must acknowledge that our perceptions are related to our location and interests.

Culture mostly influences the context in which we operate, but, for development to take place, we need to transcend cultural barriers and limitations. In most African societies, women are not expected to speak before men, an expectation that has kept many women's potential untapped or even unrealized. Women are also not expected to own property or even share in the inheritance of their parents. This limits them from contributing to socioeconomic activities meant to bring about development of the whole society. So, if women are to participate in CBOs, there is a need to alter mindsets fundamentally in order to change practices in ways that result in greater equity between men and women, as well as the integration of work and personal life. Rao, Stuart, and Kelleher aptly state that, "given the stereotypic gender roles, the heroes tend to be men, as the organizational culture they have created has been unfriendly and uninviting to women. As such, women's interests are underrepresented; and therefore, there is no pressure or constituency for challenging existing gender-biased relations and ideologies."[11] This shows that cultural influences are a force to be reckoned with if there is to be a breakthrough in gender balance.

*Domestic and family responsibilities*

As a result of cultural dictates, women are expected to fulfill different roles from those of men in many African societies. The work/family split element of a culture's deep structure also devalues women's interests within organizations and women's work outside them. As women are still largely responsible for care of the family, this deeply held value largely limits women's participation in public organizations and does not support reorganizing responsibilities within families.[12]

As a result of these domestic and family responsibilities, many women are not prepared socially, intellectually, and even politically. This leads to low confidence levels and lack of self-esteem. This situation denies women the experience they need to be able to participate authentically in CBO development.

*Religious beliefs*

Religion as an integral part of society refers to that society's shared beliefs and practices legitimizing norms and values that are consistent with it and also condemning those norms and values that are not. Due to its power and influence in society, religion has often been used as a tool for social control. This can be seen in the political arena when some politicians use religion to assert themselves and their ideas. For example, submissiveness can be propagated by religion, creating a barrier to women's participation in development activities. For women to be able to participate fully in CBOs, such barriers must be broken, especial-

ly in rural areas where illiterate women are easily manipulated through repressive beliefs.[13]

## Importance of women's participation in CBOs

For sustainable development to be attained, women—who are the majority of the Kenyan population and the ones who mainly support the rural population—need to be empowered for active participation in CBOs' development. My working definition of sustainable development is that given by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED): "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the possibilities of future generations to meet their own needs."[14] The concept of sustainable development cannot be complete without the involvement of women. As the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) states, "women at all levels of responsibility have always been involved in activities for the improvement of the quality of life of their families and communities."[15]

But why involve women? Most often, communities involve themselves in various developmental programs without involving women, and most often such programs do not succeed in improving women's lot. The ECLAC report concurs:

> Development strategies, which attempt to improve the economic conditions of the whole community and to restructure the socio-economic relations between classes, have had very little effect on changing women's status. If they do succeed in integrating them into communities, they are locked into stereotypical and limited household roles. Project development by and for women is one of the ways of building self-confidence, improving skills, and fulfilling needs through collective action.[16]

There is also need to empower women for leadership, as this would give them the courage needed for participating in CBOs. The leader I am picturing here is not only a manager of the human and financial resources of an organization, but also an organizer, mobilizer, motivator, producer, communicator, and planner. Good planning means that everyone has to participate. To accomplish tasks effectively, responsibilities have to be shared, and for an organization to function effectively, effective channels and tools must be used. To effect a change in any community, the beneficiary's interests must be taken into account, and this will be achieved through a bottom-up process, not a top-down approach. The involvement of women in CBOs' development activities is one way of achieving this goal.

It is also necessary that women participate in CBOs' development activities because, as Saxena says, "the essence of participation is exercising voice and choice and developing the human, organizational and management capacity to solve problems as they arise in order to sustain the improvements."[17] Such a posture reflects God's intention in creating man and woman to oversee the garden together, equal agents of dominion actively caring for the earth. So, the kind of participation that will be transformative aims to bring about women's empowerment, strengthening women's ability to make decisions and to act for themselves and maximizing the outcomes of their efforts.

## Women's participation: enabling factors

*Empowering women politically*

Significant points can be raised in favor of women's equal participation in politics. For instance, women's underrepresentation distances elected representatives from part of their electorate and so can affect the legitimacy of political decisions resulting therefrom. This can lead to public mistrust of the representative system and a refusal by women to accept the laws and policies made without their participation. Another point is that political participation involves articulating, providing, and defending specific interests. Clearly, it is reasonable to believe that women are more aware than are men of their own needs and should, therefore, represent these needs in political bodies.[18]

Women's participation in politics is also likely to change the focus of politics. Women are more critical of traditional politics and add new issues and values (women's rights and equality) to political agendas, making politics more fully human-centered. Therefore, increased participation by women in politics is necessary for improved social, economic, legal, and cultural conditions for women and their families. When women's needs are ignored, the results include unaccountable population growth, high infant and child mortality, a weakened economy, ineffective agriculture, a deteriorating environment, and a poorer quality of life for all. Involving women in decision making will make a critical contribution toward ending poverty, remedying the gross inequalities among people, slowing the rate of population growth, rescuing the environment, and guaranteeing peace.[19] Since women, as noted, comprise more than half of Kenyan society, omitting their voice impoverishes all and stunts the growth of a truly democratic society.

The global picture of women's participation in political activities as contained in the 2003 report of the United Nations entity UNIFEM is not encouraging. Although the goal of increasing women's political participation is a longstanding one, only eleven nations had reached the 30-percent benchmark in 2002: Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Iceland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Costa Rica, Argentina, and Mozambique, all of which had used quotas.[20] Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM executive director, is correct when she points to the need for women's presence in political decision-making positions.[21]

But how do we enhance women's participation in politics? Governments can do this by changing policies. The Ugandan government, for example, has taken a clear stand in promoting women's advancement. When creating the Ministry of Women in Development, the president of Uganda stated, "Our policy aims at strengthening the position of women in the economy by raising the value and productivity of their labour and by giving them access to and control over productive resources. By productive resources I mean land, capital, credit, seeds, fertilizers, tools, water, energy, education and information."[22]

In Kenya, the situation is improving. If we compare the 1999 and 2002 elections, we see some notable improvements. In 1999, there were only 9 female members of parliament (MPs) in a house of 222 MPs. In 2003, there were 16 female MPs (six of them in the cabinet) in a house of 224 MPs. Although this may seem a very

low percentage (7.1 percent), it is a sign of hope. This result may be attributed to what happened just before the 2002 elections. UNIFEM partnered with local organizations such as the Kenya Women's Political Caucus to provide media advocacy, election monitoring, training, and capacity building for women running for election.[23] By December 2010, a young female lawyer, Claris Gatwiri Kariuki, winner of the 2010 youth essay contest of the Center for International Private Enterprise, was able to report, "Currently, the tenth Kenyan Parliament since independence has the highest number of female legislators. There are 16 elected and seven nominated female members of parliament, out of 222 members in total."[24] Such news is affirming to young women and instructive to young men.

To bring about such a result, many local CBOs were also involved in this process. If these CBOs were led by women, the results would have been influenced by women's participation and the vote even more in favor of women. This shows that advocacy and training are tools we can use to increase women's participation in CBOs and, hence, increase their power in decision-making positions related to development. To encourage more participation of women in CBOs, we have to help people understand that the low level of participation of women in politics and public policy decision making has led to the marginalization of and increased discrimination against women in African countries. It is imperative that women participate in policy making, particularly at a time when a fresh vision of gender-sensitive development is needed in African countries.

Participation can be encouraged if we motivate women by sharing with them success stories such as how the women pushed their agenda through during the World Summit of Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. At the summit, women lobbied for the adoption of the women's rights issues, especially regarding land ownership. The women used both negotiation and demonstration techniques while participating in the summit's activities. In Kenya, women can be trained to use these strategies to promote their ideas and to be more assertive. The Bible includes many examples of women who acted assertively and were commended for doing so, including the daughters of Zelophehad, who spoke up for their right to inherit land (Num 27:1–7); Deborah, who led Israel (Judg 4–5); Abigail, who took decisive action to mitigate the consequences of her husband's bad judgment (1 Sam 25:2–35); and the Canaanite woman who relentlessly pursued Jesus on her daughter's behalf (Matt 15:21–28). So, more emphasis needs to be laid on representation of women by women in positions of decision making, especially so in CBOs, where most of the development activities take place at the community level. As Margaret Lwanga points out, "In developing countries women are more involved in micro economy."[25] This is also true in Kenya. That is why involving women in CBOs will bring a big boost to the economic growth of the nation, as most CBOs are involved in microeconomic development in rural areas.

*Education and literacy issues*

Education is the tool that can break the structures of male dominance and, in so doing, bring women to a position where they are able to influence policy. To do this, we must address such issues as household socioeconomic status and constraints, sociocultural attitudes and the value attached to female education, delineation of labor at the household level (which, in the African context, overburdens the girl child), early marriage, teenage pregnancy, a lack of alternative forms of education or option for reentry after childbirth, labor market bias, and lack of motivation due to irrelevance, inappropriate organization of the curriculum, and poor teaching. Our role here is to train parents especially to realize the value of educating a girl child. If we start by training young mothers—who are the majority in our churches—we will be able to acquire quick results, as these women can have a great influence on their daughters. My experience in training women for empowerment also shows that young mothers have more influence on their husbands than older mothers do. For these reasons, our training will have a long-lasting effect, and women's empowerment will have taken root by the time these young women grow older.

This can be done by encouraging girls from early stages in life, that, given the same opportunities, facilities, and attention, they will perform as well as boys, or even sometimes better. There is also a great need to address the reasons that lead to low performance among girls, including poor motivation, teaching, learning environments, expectations, models, opportunities, and demanding domestic chores that limit study time. Here again, as a church, we have a role to play. We can organize courses for girls and teach them about the equality of human capabilities, especially intellectual capabilities, as created by God. We can also use appreciative inquiry to enable them to realize the potential they have and how they can use it to empower themselves by accepting challenges to improve their intellects.

Curriculum is another matter that needs to be addressed to favor women's education for better participation in development activities. For a curriculum to be effective in promoting change, it should be inclusive, building in role models for girls and sharing experiences, success stories, and case studies.

*Breaking sociocultural and religious barriers*

In Kenya, women are marginally represented at all policymaking levels; everywhere, the rules appear to be for men by men. Each time women try taking steps forward, we hear those against the advancement of women call upon the wrath of culture while forgetting that the same culture includes women. Sexual harassment, lack of day care services, and inflexible work hours hinder women from pursuing their careers and hence participating fully in development activities. These attitudes have their origin in traditional gender relations. In most cultures in Africa, women have never enjoyed equality with men; they have always been considered men's inferiors physically and intellectually and as property to be handed over from fathers to husbands.

Women are portrayed as lacking in originality and genius. There is a clear need to challenge these stereotypes, which drive African socialization systems. One way to do this is by using more credible depictions of the many positive roles of women, including profiles of positive role models. These should be documented and used as readers or background learning/teaching materials in local contexts.

Another way to encourage women's participation is bringing to their attention the biblical examples of women who broke the barriers imposed by their religion. A good example of this is the story of the woman with the bleeding disorder who, against all the requirements to stay indoors, went out and touched Jesus' garments (Mark 5:25–34) and was healed of her disease. This story is a clear demonstration that women have power and potential to act in empowering themselves. But they have to take the initiative and the risk involved. They should take all the advantages at their disposal to liberate themselves. The Christian faith offers many such examples to empower women.

*Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment*

Gender mainstreaming involves thinking through the impact of any law, policy change, or program on recipients of both genders. To enhance women's participation in CBOs requires that we advocate for gender mainstreaming in these organizations by advocating for gender balance and ensuring that institutional mandates, policies, and actions are shaped by a gender-inclusive perspective. This can be achieved through training on combining gender policy with a general institutional policy (mandate), as well as introducing clear policies and objectives with an implicit gender orientation. Organizations should also be equipped with good information and gender-disaggregated data. This integrated approach would have the effect of enhancing women's participation in CBOs' development activities, leading to a widened share of benefits by all.

Gender roles are learned and are changeable. Gender equality is a goal to ensure equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, and girls and boys. It is also a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

A closer look at the Kenyan situation may help to clarify this. The lack of a gender policy is clear evidence of our government's need for more commitment to gender equity. The absence of such a policy makes it difficult to monitor the impact of resource allocation on women and shows the government's lack of clear targets and strategies to eradicate the imbalances. While affirmative action can be a starting point, what women need in today's world is to be empowered to engage in active participation in all aspects of decision making, not simply stopping their progress when quotas or special reservations have been fulfilled. Leadership keeps on changing, and, if those who come to power are not in favor of women, they can easily change the policy and revert to a situation where women are not given any recognition at all.

My recommendation for gender mainstreaming in CBOs is training for women's capacity building at both the local and national levels. This should involve capacity building for women in various forms and contexts, including personal empowerment, beginning in the home. In Kenya, the home is valued, and positive changes in family and marriage institutions bring about gender-equity changes in societal institutions in government, religion, education, and the workplace.

*Issues of organizational change*

To enhance women's participation in CBOs' development activities, we must understand how institutional biases prevent women from participating in development. The major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable structure for human interaction. In most cases, institutions set the frameworks of rules while organizations provide the social structures within these frameworks and act either to reinforce them or to challenge them. We can use the CBOs as our entry point to ensure that organizational decisions, actions, structure, and function are founded in logic, efficiency, and rationality, where equity is given value at all levels. This would be one way of ensuring that gender-equitable outcomes are reached.

To achieve this, three organizational issues should be addressed: traditional power (the power to make and enforce decisions), agenda power (the power to decide what can be talked about or even considered in organizational discourse), and hidden power (power that shapes one's sense of one's place in society by orienting one's perceptions, cognition, and preferences). So, for change to be realized, women's perspectives must be brought into political access, accountability systems, cultural systems, and cognitive systems that have been internalized, resulting in changing assumptions about internal organizational dynamics and the work itself.

Changes are needed that build an organization's capacity to challenge gender-biased institutions in the society. These may include, among others, democratizing relations; making women's voices more powerful in the organization; finding ways to make the organization more accountable to women clients and more amenable to women's participation; and building relations with other organizations to further a gender-equality agenda. A

good example of this is Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC), a large rural development nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Bangladesh. The gender team was charged with leading a long-term effort to improve gender equality both within BRAC and in the provision of services to poor rural women in Bangladesh. Altering organizational norms, systems, and relationships was critical to the change effort. The process involved startup, needs assessment, knowledge building, strategic planning, training of trainers, micro-design of the program, and implementation. After two years, the most important outcomes were democratization of BRAC and changes in relationships between women and men and between people working at different levels in the organization.[26]

Aruna Rao and David Kelleher suggest that organizational change alone is not enough to bring about women's participation. There is need for institutional change, which involves changes in strategy and programs in order to challenge and alter institutional norms. Such an agenda will be driven as much by women clients or women at the grassroots as by the organization. This involvement of women is needed to achieve institutional and organizational changes that encourage policies that are gender-inclusive in decision making, in land ownership issues, and in leadership positions.[27]

This type of change will be needed to influence the church as an organization and to effect changes aimed at bringing about gender equality. Achieving these goals will have a direct reflection in CBOs' performance, as most CBO leaders come from our churches. To enhance women's participation in CBOs, we must focus on organizational change, as most of the hindering factors are tied to institutional structures.

*Leadership training and motivation*

Leadership training and motivation cut across all the factors discussed above and are needed in each one of them if success is to be achieved in enhancing women's participation in CBOs' development activities. Training is one way to centralize women's issues and to ensure the incorporation of their collective perspectives, experiences, and contributions to sustainable development. Such training should address the issues of good governance. Together with providing transparency, democracy, respect for human rights, institutional capacity, and resources, good governance should also include equal participation by women at all levels as well as their access to education, training, employment, and benefits. If a holistic training approach is not taken into account, of course, success will be limited.

Empowerment of women through capacity building is another way of enhancing women's participation in CBOs. Capacity building among communities and empowerment of local women should be aimed at giving voice to their concerns. One way of doing this is to share information on how policies function and how to influence them, as well as legal literacy training. Enhancing knowledge and strengthening skills such as public speaking and human relations can help local women's groups as well as individuals in strengthening their self-esteem and power in decision making.

Another area of training that can enhance women's participation in CBOs is on the aspects of peace building and conflict transformation. Conflicts and absence of security have a major impact on the lives, livelihoods, and development opportunities of communities, and have particular effects on women and children. Therefore, peace building and conflict prevention are of paramount importance. Women often play an important role in promoting these efforts. In fact, women play a very major role in the realm of development, and, for any development to succeed, they should not be ignored. If given the opportunity to participate, they bring the balance required in gender complementarity and widen the scope of benefits realized in development activities undertaken—especially so in CBOs, our main development agents at the community level.

## Lessons learned

- The position of CBOs is, in most cases, influenced by socio-economic and political realities, but, given a chance, women can help to broaden the vision of these CBOs and, hence, enhance efficiency and productivity.
- Education is a key issue in enhancing women's participation in CBOs as it has to do with empowerment in that it is a tool for skill development and trust and confidence building.
- Affirmative action and gender mainstreaming are necessary for enhancing women's participation in CBOs and empowering women at both personal and collective levels.
- Organizational changes in the form of structural and institutional changes are necessary to enhance women's participation in CBOs. This calls us to examine the current organizations and see where we can implement possible structural changes to accommodate women, thereby bringing in their perspectives in decision making.

## The way forward, recommendations, and conclusion

There is a need to incorporate more training programs for women's empowerment in our organizations. These programs should be aimed at bringing in gender balance by emphasizing the importance of women's participation in CBOs, as these are the main vehicles of development in our rural communities.

Introducing gender mainstreaming would help to bring about balance in decision making and sharing of benefits between males and females and in society at large.

Transformative capacity building for women could be achieved by enhancing their knowledge and skills with a view toward positively changing their condition and position in the society from being passive recipients of male-dominated decisions to being active participants. This would allow women to have access to and control over societal resources and enjoy equal opportunities with men at all levels.

To achieve empowerment, transformative gender training should integrate an analysis of issues of power, privilege, culture, and tradition with access and control over resources, as well as project-oriented gender training, which is limited to project implementation and aimed at achieving a more efficient delivery of gender equity. If this goal can be achieved, we will have overcome the factors that limit women's participation in CBOs and more participation would be realized, resulting in balanced community development and a step forward in poverty reduction in our com-

munities. As Tabitha's acts of service to the poor were acclaimed by her community (Acts 9:36–42), the actions of CBOs can demonstrate the love of Christ for all the people who bear God's image.

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# Ideas Have Consequences

Mimi Haddad

Plato said *ideas* rule the world. All action begins with an idea. Paul said, "Take every thought captive to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Why? Because ideas have consequences.

The most prominent indicator of whether a girl will be sold to a brothel, killed as a fetus, abused in her marriage or family, or denied a place of decision making in her church, community, or marriage is not based on her gender, but the value ascribed to the female gender. In study after study, research suggests that when a culture values females as much as males, we are more likely to see equal numbers of girls surviving to adulthood. Gender justice begins with an idea—that males and females are of equal value.

Thus, for every devaluation made of at the level of being, there is a consequence in the form of marginalization, abuse, or injustice. To say it another way, more positively, when communities give females equal authority and resources in decision making, not only are levels of abuse reduced, but economic stability also increases within families and communities. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) call this *the girl effect*.[1] Christians might call this phenomenon *the ezer effect* because *ezer* is the Hebrew word God used to describe the strong help females provide (Gen 2:18). *Ezer* is found twenty-one times in the Old Testament, and, of these, fourteen describe God's help. According to R. David Freedman, the Hebrew word used to describe woman's help (*ezer*) arises from two Hebrew roots that mean "to rescue, to save" and "to be strong."[2] Perhaps the most common use of the word is found in Psalm 121:1–2, where *ezer* is used for God's rescue of Israel: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." What stronger help is there apart from God's rescue?

Scripture suggests that females were created to provide a strong rescue, a fact NGOs now recognize. Support for women's leadership leads to significant social benefits, while denying them equal value places them at risk for abuse. As so many have observed, the wellbeing of whole communities is linked to the value we ascribe to females. In this article, we will explore how ontological devaluation of females—that is, seeing them as inferior with respect to their being—is linked to their marginalization and abuse. We shall then consider how the early evangelicals first observed this link and offered a biblical challenge to a devaluation of females. Next, we shall explore the parallels between slavery and the emancipation of women as it informs our interpretation of Scripture. Finally, we will consider how Scripture supports the ontological equality of females. We begin with several personal examples.

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## Ontological ideas have daily consequences

Brenda and Scott, as we will call them, work at a secular university for a Christian ministry. They build relationships with college students. They lead Bible groups. They interpret Scripture in every possible context in working with students, both males and females. They laugh, cry, pray, and encourage students and help carry many burdens. Brenda is single, and Scott is married. Their campus work is funded, mostly, by a large Baptist church that invites Scott to preach (giving him an edge on fundraising with individuals). But, because of her gender, Brenda is never invited to speak from the platform. Brenda is not bitter, but one day she took me aside and said, "Mimi, giving Scott regular opportunities to preach and denying me the same tells me one thing: there is something wrong with being a female. This is not about my character, my devotion to Christ, or my tenacity and skill in working with students. It is telling me that being female is less than being male."

Consider Laticia (let's call her), whom I met in my workshop on Paul and women at a nationwide missions conference. Laticia was a lawyer working on a PhD. She wanted a private moment with me to tell me that she was thinking of leaving the church. When I asked her why, she said it was because she wanted to get married. When I asked for more information, she said that Christians from her community believe that males are to hold authority over women in church and marriage—not because they are more holy, more intelligent, better able to discern God's leading, or because they have leadership and logic skills, but simply because they are male. This is injustice, she said: to give a sector of humanity unilateral authority while denying the same benefit to another group based not on character, but on gender. She concluded that she would not be party to injustice and, therefore, could not marry and remain in the church.

A friend of mine—a pastor—was seated on a plane next to a person who could not stomach religion because there was not one that treated women as equal to men. Brenda, Laticia, and the man seated next to my friend are asking significant questions about gender and justice from an ontological perspective.

What do we mean by ontology? The term comes from two Greek words *ontos* ("being") and *logia* ("study"). Ontology, then, is the philosophical study of "being." It is historically a branch of philosophy known as metaphysics. Ontology is the study of being, nature, or essence, necessarily assessed through comparisons. To assume the ontological inferiority of any group is to assert that their being, nature, or essence is less moral, rational, or powerful compared to another group's being, nature, or essence. For example, it has often been assumed that men are more godlike than women because men are presumed to be more rational and morally able. Therefore, it follows that men should hold positions of authority over women because of their innate, unchangeable, ontological superiority. It was believed that royalty were ontologically superior to commoners, and that whites were ontologically superior to people of color.

The devaluation of people groups at an ontological level is deeply entrenched throughout history. Observe the ontological assump-

tions the Greeks made of women. Aristotle (384–322 BC) said, "The relationship between the male and the female is by nature such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled."[3] Plato (427–347 BC) concluded that "[woman's] native disposition is inferior to man's."[4] These ideas have consequences.

The daily lives of females reflect their ontological status. In ancient Roman culture, the domination of patriarchy and the *paterfamilias* was noted in the preeminence of males, the vast number of girl babies exposed and left to die after birth, the lack of women's participation in philosophy and politics, the absence of women in social gatherings with males, and the many sexual partners of males (including slaves, female prostitutes, and boys/men) in addition to their wives. Marriage was to ensure a man's legitimate heirs.[5]

Males in the early church shared leadership with females, as Scripture and archaeological evidence suggest. Unfortunately, the ontological and functional equality of male and female believers was short-lived.

## Gender and ontology in the early church

We notice a difference between Christians in the early church, who rescued girl babies, and the Romans who abandoned them. Christian women participated in the *agapē* meals. They served beside men as teachers, evangelists, missionaries, apostles, prophets, and coworkers with Paul. By doing so, they engaged with men in social and theological spheres. Women were also martyred beside men for advancing the gospel with equal influence. Christian marriages were monogamous, and Paul asks both husbands and wives to submit to and obey one another (Eph 5:21; 1 Cor 7:3–5). Marriage is viewed as a one-flesh relationship for the purposes of love, intimacy, and reflection of the mutual love and sacrifice within the Trinity.

Notice Paul's transformation from his life as a Jewish male who prayed daily, "Thank you [God] for not making me a Gentile, a woman, and a slave,"[6] a prayer that discloses the ontological devaluation of females that kept them from studying Torah or participating equally beside males in worship. Scholars suggest that Paul wrote Galatians 3:28—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—to reveal how the gospel redresses prejudice based on gender, ethnicity, and class.[7] Men and women, slaves and free, Greek and Jew constitute one body—the church, Christ's New Covenant community which, though diverse in gender, ethnicity, and class, yet functions without favoritism based on these attributes.[8] Thus, males in the early church shared leadership with females, as Scripture and archaeological evidence suggest.[9] Unfortunately, the ontological and functional equality of male and female believers was short-lived.

## Philosophical views close doors for women

Early church fathers—trained in Greek philosophy—retained the notion that women are inferior in their being and should therefore be excluded from authority and positions of leadership. As a result, the church no longer provided a counterpoint to the cultural devaluation of females. In this respect, the prejudices of these early church fathers resemble the teachings of Brahman and Muslim scholars. For example, Manu, a Brahman social commentator, argued that woman possesses a temper or nature that is "mutable" (inconstant) and since "women are destitute of strength and also of knowledge [they] are as impure as falsehood itself [and] that is a fixed rule. . . ."[10] Ideas have consequences.

Given such teachings, females were held under the authority of males: their father, husband, sons, and grandsons.[11] In India, for example, due to their presumed innate inferiority, women "were forbidden to read the sacred Scriptures," having "no right to pronounce a single syllable."[12] The ancient gods were rarely evoked for the birth of girls. For years, it was possible for a wife to be replaced if she did not give birth to a son after the eleventh year of marriage. In more recent times, the Indian government has tried to limit access to ultrasounds in selecting for gender. The devaluation of females is evident in the large number of girls taken to Hindu temples as prostitutes, *Devi Dasi* or the devil's whores, a problem persisting to this day. The subordination of women within Brahmanism has also led to a brutal patrilineal culture in which a female becomes part of her husband's household, where she is often isolated and easily devalued and abused. Notice how Christian Scriptures such as Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31 oppose this practice of subjecting a female to the authority of her husband's family.

Like Brahmanism, Islam also insists upon the inferiority of females at the level of their being. Islamic prophetic tradition says that "the character of women is likened to a rib, crooked. . . . This crookedness then is inherent and incurable."[13] Ahmad Zaky Tuffaha adds, ". . . the woman is not equal to the man . . . for how can the commanding and the commanded, the great and the small, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the sane and the mad, the unjust and the just, the honorable and the insignificant, the able and the unable, the working and the lazy, the strong and the weak be equal?"[14] The Qur'an reads: "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other. . . ."[15]

Do these ideas have consequences? In their chapter "Is Islam Mysogynistic?" in *Half the Sky*,[16] Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof make what they admit is a politically incorrect statement: "Of the countries where women are held back and subjected to systematic abuses such as honor killings and genital cutting, a very large proportion are predominantly Muslim."[17] Most Muslims worldwide, they write, "don't believe in such practices, and some Christians do—but the fact remains that the countries where girls are cut, killed for honor, or kept out of school or the workplace typically have large Muslim populations."[18]

## Perils of devaluation

A devaluation of individuals based on their being is noted throughout human history. For example, not long ago, Nazi Germany mounted an extensive campaign to devalue Jews at the level of being. Before they were able to convince Germans to round up Jews and send them to death camps, the Nazis first had to insist upon their innate and unchangeable inferiority. Triumphantly, Nazis noted their great success in "reeducating" Germans:

> . . . there are only a few people left in Germany who are not clear about the fact that the Jew is not, as previously thought, distinct from "Christians," "Protestants," or "Catholics" only in that he is of another religion, and is therefore a German like all of the rest of us, but rather that he belongs to a different race than we do. The Jew belongs to a different race; that is what is decisive.[19]

By suggesting that Jews comprise a different race, the Nazis were able to construct a distinct and inferior ontological category for Jews. The genocide of the Jews was made plausible by first positing that the Aryan Germans were the superior race and by showing that the Jews had no share in their blood line.

In a similar manner, the American institution of slavery was based on a perceived inferiority of African Americans at the level of being. The French scholar Compte A. de Gasparin said that slavery was centered on "a native and indestructible inferiority" of those of African descent.[20] This so-called innate inferiority was rooted not in one's moral choices, but in one's ancestry, and was, therefore, an unchangeable condition. It was African ethnicity, noted in skin color, that placed Africans under the permanent domination of those said to be their superiors—whites. The reason the Civil War failed to redress ethnic prejudice is that the so-called inferiority was associated not with slavery, but with ethnicity. Slavery was the consequence of an idea: that Africans were inferior. Slavery was not the root cause; an ethnic devaluation was. One can amend the United States Constitution and free the slaves, but new forms of ethnic abuse will emerge because the root problem—ethnic prejudice—has not been addressed.

Historian Mark Noll said it would take more than guns and blood to overcome the devaluation of African Americans, of which slavery was only *one manifestation*.[21] In fact, it would take many *years* before the United States even became conscious of its own philosophical constructs that fueled prejudice and oppression based on ethnicity.

Recently, an article appeared in the *Baptist News* that illustrates this point. It reads:

> Ethicsdaily.com has reported a social shift that may represent a larger leap than our recent election of an African-American president. Bob Jones University, perhaps the most fundamentalist and segregated Baptist school in the world,[22] has issued an apology for its practices and policies of racial segregation.
>
> In 1986, a member of the Bible department [at Bob Jones] had articulated the school's position. Separation of the races, this faculty member wrote, was God's design. The school was submitting to the authority of Scripture in its policies, it said.
>
> Now the school says something other than "biblical obedience" shaped its racial practices. The statement reports that policies were "characterized by the segregationist ethos of American Culture. Consequently, for far too long, we allowed institutional policies regarding race to be shaped more directly by that ethos than by the principles and precepts of the Scriptures. We conformed to the culture rather than provide a clear Christian counterpoint to it. In so doing, we failed to accurately represent the Lord and to fulfill the commandments to love others as ourselves. For these failures we are profoundly sorry."[23]

It was the inability to regard African Americans as equal members of the human family that made it possible for slavery advocates to ignore the profound ways in which slavery transgressed biblical values such as the sacredness of marriage and families, sexual purity, knowing and loving God through Scripture, and using one's spiritual gifts in advancing Christ's kingdom. Mark Noll observes, "So seriously fixed in the minds of white Americans, including most abolitionists, was the certainty of black racial inferiority that it overwhelmed biblical testimony about race, even though most Protestant Americans claimed that Scripture was in fact their supreme authority in adjudicating such matters."[24] Prejudice muddied their biblical clarity. Many individuals did not perceive their racial prejudice as an obstacle to interpreting Scripture consistently. There were prominent exceptions, however.

Missionaries working in Africa were vocal in denying the presumed inferiority of Africans upon which the system of slavery was defended. According to Noll, one missionary wrote that nowhere in his experience had he observed evidence of the so called "native inferiority which many good and learned men suppose to exist."[25] In fact, the deplorable ignorance ascribed to African culture was a myth created by the slave trade. If one can control for opportunity, one can also control for ability, because no group is, in their being, innately inferior to another group.

Like slavery, gender hierarchy is dependent upon an ontological devaluation of females. Therefore, the subjugation of women is made plausible by insisting that males are innately superior. There can be no question that Christians have advanced, uncritically, the inferiority of females as a whole. Here are a few examples:

- Irenaeus (AD 130–202): "Both *nature* and the law place the woman in a subordinate condition to the man."[26]
- Augustine (AD 354–430): "Nor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of *nature* that men should bear rule over women, than women over men."[27]
- Chrysostom (AD 347–407): "The woman taught once, and ruined all. On this account . . . let her not teach . . . for *the sex is weak and fickle*. . . ."[28]
- John Calvin (1509–1564), in his commentary on 1 Timothy, wrote that women are "*not to assume authority over the man*; . . . it is not permitted by their *condition*."[29]
- John Knox (1514–1572) said, "*Nature*, I say, does paint [women] forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience has declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel. . . . Since flesh is subordinate to spirit, a woman's place is beneath man's."[30]

Even today, one popular pastor of a megachurch writes:

> . . . when it comes to leading in the church, women are unfit because they are more gullible and easier to deceive than men. . . . [W]omen who fail to trust [Paul's] instruction . . . are much like their mother Eve. . . . Before you *get all emotional like a woman* in hearing this, please consider the content of the women's magazines at your local grocery store that encourage liberated women in our day to watch porno with their boyfriends, master oral sex for men who have no intention of marrying them

. . . and ask yourself if it doesn't look like the Serpent is still trolling the garden and that *the daughters of Eve aren't gullible* in pronouncing progress, liberation, and equality.[31]

## Women lead the modern missionary movement

Despite such disparaging assumptions made by Christians, females as a whole have not performed according to the devaluations made of them. In fact, throughout church history, we observe women providing enormous moral, spiritual, and intellectual leadership within the church even without official authority. This was never more the case than during the modern missionary movement, when women outnumbered men on mission fields around the world two to one. Their leadership combined evangelism with humanitarian service, and their work gave rise to new centers of spiritual vitality throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas—so much so that their leadership shifted the density of Christian faith from the West to broadly scatted locations in the global South and the East, as Dana Roberts of Boston University notes.[32] Without the vote, without a legal voice, and without the World Wide Web, these women established highly productive and just mission organizations, and they occupied all levels of service and leadership. Their leadership in organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the American Antislavery Society, and the Salvation Army gave enormous momentum to suffrage, abolition, and temperance because their humanitarian focus was inseparable from their evangelism. Moreover, as the early evangelicals worked to free females from sexual slavery, they also discovered a link between female abuse and a deprecation of females at the level of being.

Working in India among brothels established by the British government to attract and retain soldiers and officers, Katherine Bushnell (1856–1946), a medical doctor, infiltrated British garrisons to learn firsthand the abuses female prostitutes suffered. According to her findings, these abuses were justified not only to satisfy the sexual needs of the British military, but also because females were viewed as innately inferior. Bushnell eventually realized that the global abuse of women was inseparable from a devaluation of females as a whole. In response, Bushnell wrote *God's Word to Women*, one hundred lessons on scriptural teaching about gender to provide a whole-Bible approach to show that Scripture values males and females equally.[33] Her painstaking research on Greek and Hebrew words, archaeology, and ancient history is a death-blow to what philosophers call *ascriptivism*, a system that ascribes value, dignity, and worth to groups based on attributes such as gender, ethnicity, or class. Bushnell's arguments were biblical and systematic, adding momentum to the first wave of feminism—a deeply biblical movement that advanced suffrage, abolition, and the leadership of women in church work. Bushnell was joined by other early evangelicals such as Sojourner Truth, Catherine Booth, Fredrik Franson, Frances Willard, Amanda Smith, A. J. Gordon, Josephine Butler, and others who together published more than forty systematic biblical treatises supporting the ontological and functional equality of women and slaves.[34]

Consider Adoniram Judson Gordon, perhaps the most prominent Baptist pastor of his day, after whom Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary are named. Gordon was an outspoken advocate of missions, abolition, and women in ministry. Advancing a whole-Bible hermeneutic when considering gender and service, Gordon believed that Pentecost was the "*Magna Charta* of the Christian Church,"[35] as it demonstrated that women, as well as all ethnic groups, share equally in Christ's New Covenant community.[36] Under the New Covenant, those who had once been viewed as inferior by natural birth (their being and nature) attain a new spiritual status through the power of the Holy Spirit. For God's gifting no longer rests on a "favored few, but upon the many, without regard to race, or age, or sex."[37]

Yet, the earliest and most extensive challenge to women's ontological inferiority was published by Katharine Bushnell. Through an epistemological challenge, Bushnell engaged the whole of Scripture, particularly the early chapters of Genesis, to posit the ontological equality of males and females. She concluded that, according to Scripture, Adam and Eve were both created in the image of God,[38] that both were called to be fruitful and to exercise a shared dominion in Eden,[39] a dominion that did not place Adam over Eve. Eve was not the source of sin,[40] and God does not curse women because of Eve.[41] Rather, it was Satan, not God, who inspired the domination of men over women.[42] God bestows leadership on those who do what is right in God's sight regardless of their gender, birth order, nationality, or class.[43]

Bushnell located women's ontological status not in the fall, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary. Therefore, a consistent interpretation of Scripture as it relates to women's value[44] should be determined in the same manner as men's value, based on the atonement of Jesus Christ. "[We] cannot, for women, put the 'new wine' of the Gospel into the old wine-skins of 'condemnation.'"[45] Bushnell condemned the prejudice noted throughout church history which routinely aligned women's status with Eve's sin rather than through their full redemption and inheritance in Christ.

Katharine Bushnell recognized that female subjugation and abuse was often linked to poor methods of biblical interpretation—failing to differentiate what is descriptive in Scripture from that which is prescriptive. While patriarchy is part of the cultures depicted in the Bible, patriarchy does not constitute the moral teachings of Scripture. After years of working to free females from sex slavery around the world, Bushnell observed that the global abuse of women was inseparable from a devaluation of females promoted by religious and philosophical teachings justifying and codifying male dominance and female subservience. Bushnell argued that the abuse of women will not be overcome as long as "the subordination of woman to man was taught within the body of Christians."[46] Bushnell wrote:

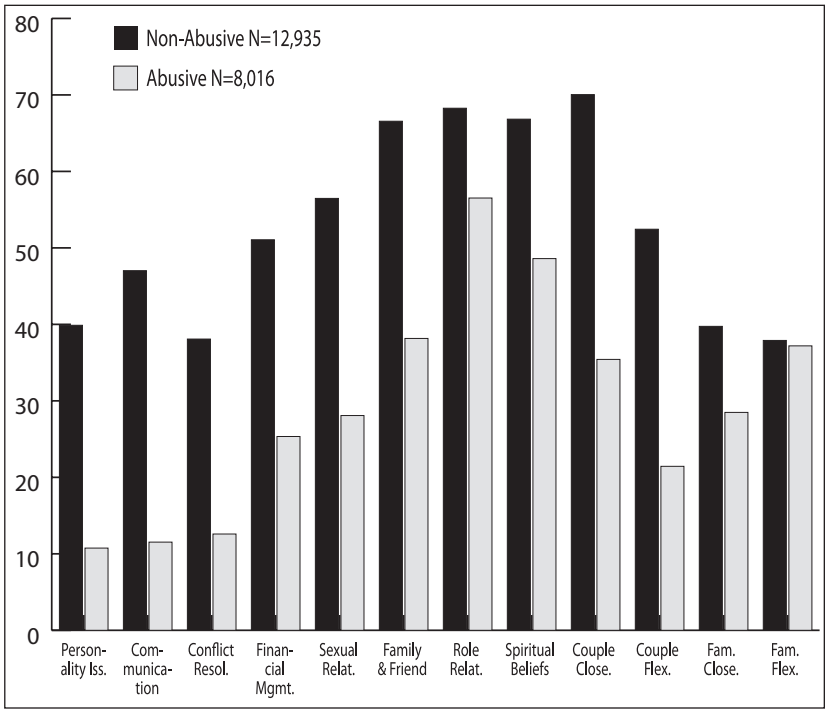
> [W]e must have the whole-hearted backing of the Christian church in our [work], and that we would not have it until men came to understand that a woman is of as much value as a man; and they will not believe this until they see it plainly taught in the Bible.
>
> Just so long as men imagine that a system of caste is taught in the Word of God, and that they belong to the upper caste while women are of the lower caste; and just so long as they believe that mere flesh—fate—determines the caste to which

one belongs; and just so long as they believe that . . . Genesis 3:16 [teaches] "thy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over you" . . . the destruction of young women into a prostitute class [will] continue.

But place Christian women where God intends them to stand, on a plane of full equality with men in the church and home, where their faculties, their will, their consciences are controlled only by the God who made man and woman equal by creation . . . then the world will become a much purer [place] than it is today. . . .[47]

Bushnell's work among abused women compelled her to challenge the ideas that drove the sex industry, and her work, as well as that of others, provides the first whole-Bible approach to gender equality at an ontological level, challenging the erroneous view that women are more gullible and inferior, and, therefore, in need of male authority.

*PCA mean scores on ENRICH between non-abusive and abusive couples*




## The egalitarian view gains strength

By the 1800s, two views on gender ontology were circulated. First, the patriarchal perspective views women as unequal in being and unequal in authority. This was the dominant view until the 1800s. Second, the egalitarian view sees women as equal in being and equal in authority. This view gained prominence in the 1800s. In the 1980s, a third view emerged depicting women as equal in being, but unequal in function or authority.

As the egalitarian position gained acceptance, suffrage was instituted, and immediate, rich social consequences ensued. For example, in the United States, maternal and child mortality decreased dramatically after women gained the vote. Prior to suffrage, more women died giving birth than did all men in United States wars combined to that date. Further, child mortality dropped by 72 percent.[48]

Not only do we observe less abuse and greater health for women and children as American culture became more egalitarian, but we also find that, when authority is shared, marriage relationships are less abusive. Couples who share decision making are less likely to experience abuse, according to research by the Prepare and Enrich Premarital Inventory—one of the most widely used population samples in the world. While other factors contribute to couple wellbeing, as this graph suggests, role relationships or gender role equality is one of the most significant elements determining abuse.[49] Couples with the highest levels of abuse are those where one partner is dominant, most often the male, and the other avoidant or submissive. Research by Prepare and Enrich also shows a statistical association between violence and unequal power in decision making.[50]

Similarly, studies by NGOs suggest that, when communities are more egalitarian, there is less gender abuse. Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize–winning economist, documented a correlation between a culture's devaluation of females and steep drops in their numbers.[51] By contrast, in those communities where gender equality is valued, the ratio of females to males resembles gender ratios in the United States.[52]

South Korea has turned the tide on male preference. In the 1990s, the nation had a gender ratio almost as skewed as China's. Now, it is heading toward normality, "because the culture changed. Female education, antidiscrimination suits, and equal rights rulings made son preference seem old-fashioned and unnecessary."[53]

Clearly, gains have been made as culture has become more egalitarian, yet there is still much work to be done. For example, women have not yet attained equal leadership politically or professionally. Though outnumbering men in medical school, law school, and many graduate programs, women lag behind men in income and in holding top positions in corporations, political parties, and organizations, because, in part, society has not dealt completely with the root problem—an idea—that women are not as able as men. The idea that God does not give women positions of leadership is also taught as a biblical principle by missionaries and churches around the world. There remains much work to do, and yet many significant strategies can be learned from reform movements throughout history, particularly abolition.

## Slavery and gender: a church under reform[54]

Throughout history, the church has undergone renewal and reform; it has changed its mind on key issues. To put it another way, the Holy Spirit "cleans house" in each generation, allowing the church to become a more authentic witness to Christ, more perfectly reflecting God's love and mission in the world.

Reform is often led by prophetic individuals who challenge indifference, ignorance, and theological and moral failings. Such reformers are often people who have been deeply renewed themselves. These leaders imagine an alternative future not yet realized and often have deep intellectual, moral, and spiritual roots sustaining their arduous work. For these reasons, reformers often possess an indomitable energy that comes from a spiritual source. Reformers and efforts share a number of similarities. These include:

*1. Reformers appeal to reason:* A scholarly exchange of ideas takes place among reformers. Reformers see, in profound ways, a biblical truth that has gone unnoticed, and they begin to write passionately about it. Their scholarship appears initially odd, though their logic eventually garners respect. Ultimately, their call to the entire body of Christ is, "Come, let's reason together."

*2. Reformers are deeply reformed themselves:* Their vibrant intellectual life is often shaped by a deep spiritual life. Through prayer, they unite themselves to God and God's reforming work.

*3. Popularization of abstract ideas:* After an intellectual basis is developed, artists, musicians, and writers make intellectual arguments not only popular, but compelling. Artists are able to infuse reformist ideas into hearts and lives. They help the average person *feel* the injustice that the reform addresses. A popularization of intellectual ideas was noted in such great literary works as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and the diaries of slaves such as Sojourner Truth. These masterpieces enable non-slaves to feel the injustice of slavery, helping the church to "cry with those who cry." Ultimately, the creative community imparts vision, passion, and the will to reform.

*4. Global dialogue among likeminded leaders:* Reformist ideas spread widely, engaging the body of Christ across the world in praying, writing, thinking, and discussing reform as a global church community. What began as a local dialogue becomes a global conversation among Christians from many different traditions and on many continents.

*5. A backpedaling of the position under critique:* Slavery advocates seek to correct abuses of slavery while retaining the institution. Within the gender reform movement, "soft male hierarchal complementarians" challenge gender abuse without abandoning male authority, favoring "headship with a heart" or servant leadership, thus retaining male authority over females.

*6. The church reforms its theology (ideas) and its practices:* Ultimately, reform movements bring needed change to theology and also practice.

## Theological foundations of slavery and gender reform[55]

There are a number of critical rhetorical and theological similarities between the abolitionist and gender reform movements. Both challenge a shallow reading of Scripture. Both insist upon taking into account the historical and cultural background of biblical passages for consistent interpretation. Both focus on the moral teachings of Scripture rather than particularities of the cultures depicted in the Bible. From the intense debate over slavery and women's subordination emerged principles of biblical interpretation that advanced abolition and gender reforms. These include:[56]

*1. A plain reading of the Bible must include the historical and cultural context.* Too often, the proslavery camp, like those opposed to women's leadership, relied upon a "plain reading" of Scripture without understanding the original author's intent and audience. But to avoid abusing Scripture for personal gain (after all, slaves and women provided an unpaid social service industry), passages that are said to deny authority to individuals—in this case, slaves and women—must be read within their historical and cultural contexts.

*2. The full testimony of Scripture must be considered.* The obscure portions of Scripture must be interpreted by those which are obvious. In considering the passages on Abraham, for example, the point is not that he had servants, possibly slaves, but that he trusted God's promise. Similarly, the point of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is not that Paul subjugates all women to silence and male authority, but that those who teach should be educated and should not domineer over others.

*3. A portion of Scripture should be viewed for its primary emphasis, not for its "attendant or cultural features."* Slavery and patriarchy are part of Bible culture. These are attendant or cultural features which do not constitute the moral teachings of Scripture.

*4. Be scrupulous in assessing selfish motives when reading the Bible* (Matt 20:25–28).

Forged through the pain of slavery and gender subjugation, reformers equipped the church with better methods of interpretation that offered biblical value, dignity, and equality to those who once had been viewed as ontologically inferior. It was a new idea with wholesome consequences. We can see how these ideas empowered the work of individuals such as former slave Amanda Smith.

A freed American slave who became one of the most successful missionaries of her day, Amanda Smith, while speaking at a revival in England in 1882, located her true identity in her relationship to God. She said: "You may not know it, but I am a princess in disguise. I am a child of the King."[57] Smith realized that, "if she was God's child, she was also an heir of God!"[58] Embracing her full inheritance in Christ, Smith declared herself an heir—despite her gender, ethnicity, or class—with full privileges to advance Christ's kingdom by fanning into flame the gift within her. What was the result? Many on the mission field recognized her as a leader. One man told her that he had learned more about Christian leadership from observing her lead than from any other life example. Smith's self-confidence was infectious, even as she pushed past a number of gatekeepers. She recognized that her truest identity rested not in her gender, but in her union with Christ.

Embracing their identity in Christ, leaders such as Amanda Smith allowed the fullest teachings of Scripture to inform more obscure passages like Paul's letters to Timothy. Rather than reading all of Scripture through the lens of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, the early evangelicals began to read 1 Timothy 2:11–15 through the whole of Scripture, particularly Paul's work with women. In doing so, they noticed that Paul built the church working beside women such as Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, Chloe, and Priscilla. The experiences of combating slavery and female subjugation enabled the early evangelicals to push past shallow interpretations to perceive, embrace, and celebrate those liberating messages of Scripture where the moral principles of the Bible prevail over the slavery and patriarchy that were part of the Bible's cultural milieu. Slaves and women were among the first to notice these liberating moments in Scripture, such as Paul's conversion—an experience so powerful that he abandoned and opposed the ethnic and gender segregation of the Jewish priesthood to replace it with the priesthood of all believers.

### *Jesus*

Katharine Bushnell observed that Jesus never devalued women. Christ assumed that women were fully human and equal to men, and he was strangely and authentically comfortable in

their presence. He approached them as he did men, in public, regardless of cultural taboos. He commissioned women to build God's kingdom (John 20:17–18), just as he commissioned men. He consistently challenged the cultural devaluation of women's bodies. Christ healed a hemorrhaging woman in public, fully understanding the cultural assumption that, if he touched her, he too would be unclean. He overturned this belief by allowing her to touch him in public, declaring that she had been healed of her disease. She was not unclean, but ill. Women were the first to notice the liberating message in Christ's words and deeds.

The new wine of Jesus would require a new wineskin where slaves and women can serve equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had called and gifted them.

Jesus spoke with women unselfconsciously, in broad daylight, despite the disapproval of his disciples (John 4:4–42). Unlike the rabbis of his day, Jesus allowed women to sit at his feet and study his teachings (Luke 10:38–42), preparing them for service as disciples, evangelists, and teachers. In all ways, the equality of women was self-evident, implicit, and, most importantly, consistently part of Christ's teachings and practice. These passages were given new expanse and import by early evangelicals such as Katharine Bushnell.

When a woman called out to Jesus, saying, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," Jesus responded, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27–28). For Jesus, a woman's value resides not in her cultural roles, but in her response to God's revelation in her life. This becomes the standard for every member of Christ's New Covenant—male and female. Women are now daughters of Abraham (Luke 13:16), a phrase first used by Jesus to welcome God's daughters as heirs and full members of Christ's body, the church. The life and teachings of Jesus shattered the patriarchy of his culture by breaking these and other cultural and religious taboos related to gender.

*Pentecost*

Consider Pentecost—the birthday of the church (Acts 2:1–18)—mediated not through an elite group of Jewish males, but through God's Spirit poured out on many tribes and nations, on both men and women. Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17–18). There is no gender, ethnic, or age preference noted in the birth of the church or in the gifts expressed at Pentecost.

*Baptism*

In the New Covenant, baptism rather than circumcision became the outer expression of our union with Christ, and baptism was open to male and female, Jew, Greek, slave, and free. The significance of Christian baptism is cited in Galatians 3:2, a verse etched into early baptismal fonts celebrating the inclusivity of Christian faith. To be united with Christ in his death and resurrection constitutes a rebirth that redefines our value with respect to God and all other Christians.[59] Because Christ established satisfaction and reconciliation between sinners and God, we receive newness of life and power from the Holy Spirit to work for mutuality among the members of Christ's body—the church. To state it another way, our soteriology (our doctrine of salvation) shapes our ecclesiology (our doctrine of the church).[60]

The notion that Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28) was an affront to a culture where identity, value, and influence was established through class, gender, and ethnicity. Remember, more than half of the population were slaves and women in Paul's day. To this culture, Paul suggests that to be clothed in Christ is to be heirs of Christ's kingdom; what we inherit through our earthly parents cannot compare to our heritage through Christ. Galatians 3:28 redefines the ontological status of females, slaves, and ethnic minorities, an idea with daily consequences.

Paul continually places the ethos of the New Covenant above the gender and cultural norms of his day. For example, Paul asks Philemon to welcome Onesimus as a Christian brother (Philem 16). With these words, Paul allows kingdom values to take precedence over cultural expectations for slaves, pointing to the fact that the cross changes everything (1 Cor 2:6, 7:31). It is believed that, ultimately, Onesimus became bishop of Ephesus.[61]

*Ephesians 5*

In the same way, husbands and wives are called to submit to one another in marriage (1 Cor 7:3–4) just as all Christians submit to one another (Eph 5:21). Interestingly, Paul asks those with cultural authority—husbands—to love their wives as they love themselves, even to the point of death. Certainly, this request would have been radical to first-century husbands. As men and husbands held ultimate authority over their wives, Paul asks husbands to sacrifice themselves for their wives as Christ sacrificed himself for the church. This is a complete reframing of gender and authority in marriage. Christian authority in marriage reflects authority in ministry—it is the call to serve without self-regard: to lay down one's life for another.

Paul realized that God was building a new creation—the church—with each member born of the Spirit and joined equally to Jesus as head. The new wine of Jesus would require a new wineskin where slaves and women can serve equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had called and gifted them. That is why Paul did not hesitate to celebrate the woman Junia as an apostle. Nor was he reluctant to require respect for Phoebe as a deacon and *prostatēs*—that is, a leader in the church of Cenchreae. Nor do Paul and the other apostles shy away from celebrating the leadership of women teachers such as Priscilla and house church leaders such as Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, and Apphia. The new wine of Jesus' liberation would require a new wineskin where slaves and women leaders could participate equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had created, called, and gifted them.

*Spiritual gifts*

Slaves and women were quick to notice that spiritual gifts are not given along ethnic, class, or gender lines. Spiritual gifts are

first and foremost an equipping for service, and all believers are called to serve. In referring to the spiritual gifts, Paul reminds Christians in Rome not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but with sober judgment to count others as better than themselves, remembering that, though each person receives spiritual gifts, the gifts are for serving, and each of us is dependent upon the gifts we receive from other believers. For, as Paul said, "each member belongs to all the others" (Rom 12:5b). Likewise, Paul tells the Christians at Corinth that they are mutually dependent upon one another, for, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor 12:21). The eye needs the hands, just as the head needs the feet. The parts of the body are not divided from one another, but function best when they have equal concern for, and mutual submission toward, one another.

Service is not determined by gender or class, but arises from God's gifting and is established by one's character, moral choices, and intimacy with God. Here, Scripture deals a deathblow to any notion of ontological superiority presumed by one's gender or ethnicity or class. Here are just two examples:

Notice that, in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul limits women at Ephesus from teaching, not as a consequence of gender, but because of the type of authority these women exercised. While this passage is frequently used to limit women's authority as a whole, notice that the intention of Scripture is quite different. What is often missed by those unfamiliar with Greek is that Paul selects an unusual Greek word when speaking of authority in verse 12. Rather than using the most common Greek terms for healthy or proper authority or oversight (*exousia*), Paul selects the term *authentein*—a word that would have caught the attention of first-century readers!

*Authentein* implied a domineering, misappropriated, or usurped authority. *Authentein* can also mean to behave in violent ways. It can even imply murder! *Authentein* appears only once in Scripture, here in 1 Timothy 2:12, and it was used by Paul as well as extrabiblical authors to connote authority that was destructive. For this reason, various translations of Scripture rendered the special sense of this word as follows:

- Vulgate (fourth to fifth century AD) as, "I permit not a woman to teach, neither to *domineer* over a man."
- The Geneva Bible (1560 edition) as, "I permit not a woman to teach, neither to *usurp authority* over the man."
- King James Version (1611) as, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor *usurp authority* over a man."
- The New English Bible (1961) as, "I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman *domineer over* man."[62]

This unusual Greek verb makes it clear that what Paul is objecting to in 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is an ungodly, domineering usurpation of authority.

Leadership concerns character. Thus, in determining who may or may not serve as an elder, overseer, deacon, pastor, or church board member, it is not gender, ethnicity, education, wealth, age, experience, or a person's capacity to influence others that Scripture celebrates. Rather, it is one's moral choices tied clearly to one's intimacy with Christ. The following table shows the character qualities required in elders, overseers, deacons, and widows—who also served as leaders. These qualities are, interestingly, very similar to the fruit of the Spirit.

*Gifts of Spirit*

Biblical leadership is established not through gender, but through character and one's capacity to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. In contrast, those who display the fruit of the flesh (e.g., fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, etc. [Gal 5:19–21]) have disqualified themselves from leadership regardless of their gender, class, or ethnicity.

| | |
|---|---|
| Elders/ Overseers (1 Tim 3:2–3) | Temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money |
| Deacons (1 Tim 3:8) | Serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money |
| Widows (1 Tim 3:11) | Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things |
| Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–26) | Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control |

To follow the teachings of Scripture, our choice of leaders, deacons, pastors, elders, and teachers should be from individuals who best exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, regardless of gender.

## Conclusion

Through our rebirth in Christ, all people, including slaves and women, inherit a new identity—not of shame, marginalization, or abuse, but of dignity, equality, and shared authority and service because they are also born of the Spirit. Ethnicity, gender, or class no longer limit one's potential or service in Christ. As those who had once been subjugated began to read and interpret Scripture consistently, they brought a wealth of insight to the world, expanding our gratitude for Christ through whom all people receive their truest empowerment and identity, regardless of the circumstances of our birth.

## Notes

1. The term *the girl effect* is used by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in *Half the Sky* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2009), reviewed in this issue of *Priscilla Papers*. A portion of this article was published by Mimi Haddad, "Global Perspectives on Women in Leadership," *Zadok Perspectives* 109 (Summer 2010):4–9.

2. R. David Freedman, "Woman, a Power Equal to a Man," *Archaeology Review* 9 (1983): 56–58.

3. Aristotle, *Politica* 1.5.B4v, trans. Bejamin Jowett, vol. 10 in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English under the Editorship of W. D. Ross* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921).

4. Plato, *Laws* 6.781a, b, trans. A. E. Taylor, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 1356.

5. See Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1995), 79ff.

6. Menahoth 43b–44a; Talmud; Shabbath 86a–86b.

7. Gordon Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 58ff.

8. See Gordon Fee, *Commentary on Galatians* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2007) and Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

9. See *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon Fee (Carol Stream, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), and also Dorothy Irvin, *The Archaeology of Women's Traditional Ministries in the Church*, available through Christians for Biblical Equality's bookstore, http://equality depot.com/reboundcalendars2003-2007.aspx.

10. Manu IX:15–17. See the writings of Manu at http://www .hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/hinduism/dharma/manusmriti.asp, accessed June 2010.

11. Manu IX:2–3.

12. Manu IX:18. See also Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (New York, NY: Revell, 1902), 81ff.

13. *Sahih al-Bukhari,* Arabic-English translation, vol. 7, Hadith 113–14.

14. Ahmad Zaky Tuffaha, *Al-Mar'ah wal-Islam*, 1st ed., Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1985, 37.

15. *The Koran,* with notes by N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin, 1990), 64.

16. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149–60.

17. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149.

18. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149.

19. "Our Battle against Judah," German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College Web site, http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/rim3.htm.

20. Comte Agenor de Gasparin, *The Uprising of a Great People*, trans. Mary Booth (New York, NY: Scribners, 1862), 103–04.

21. See Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 159ff.

22. Bob Jones University did not permit interracial dating.

23. Robert Parham, "Bob Jones University Apologizes for Racial Policies," Nov. 4, 2008, Ethics Daily Web site, http://www.ethicsdaily .com/news.php?viewStory=13489, accessed June 1, 2010.

24. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 73.

25. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 118.

26. Irenaeus, fragment 32, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1:573. Emphasis mine.

27. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.10, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff [hereafter *NPNF*] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1886), 5:267. Emphasis mine.

28. John Chrysostom, "Homily IX," in *Homilies on 1 Timothy, NPNF* 13:436. Emphasis mine.

29. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon,* in *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1856), 37. Emphasis mine.

30. John Knox, "The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women 1558," in *The Political Writings of John Knox*, ed. Marvin A. Breslow (Cranbury, NY: Associate University Presses, 1985), 43. Emphasis mine.

31. Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church, Seattle, WA. Quoted at http:// www.dennyburk.com/mark-driscoll-on-women-in-ministry-2, accessed March 24, 2010.

32. Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), ix.

33. Katharine Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell: A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford, UK: Rose and Sons, Salisbury Square, 1930).

34. Charles O. Knowles, *Let Her Be: Right Relationships and the Southern Baptist Conundrum over Woman's Role* (Columbia, MO: KnoWell Publishing, 2002), 85.

35. A. J. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," *The Missionary Review of the World* 17 (1894): 911, http://xythos.gordon.edu/Archives/Gordon_ Herritage/Ministry%20of%20Women.pdf.

36. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," 911.

37. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," 912.

38. Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Church and Home* (Minneapolis, MN: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2003), 9ff.

39. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 10.

40. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 39ff.

41. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 43ff.

42. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 43ff.

43. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 66ff.

44. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.

45. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.

46. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell*, 13.

47. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell*, 13–14.

48. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 198.

49. Shuji G. Asai and David H. Olson, "Spouse Abuse and Marital System Based on ENRICH," University of Minnesota, https://www .prepare-enrich.com/pe_main_site_content/pdf/research/abuse.pdf.

50. Asai and Olson, "Spouse Abuse," 3–4, 11.

51. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, xiv–xv.

52. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, xiv–xv.

53. "Gendercide," *The Economist*, March 2010, 13.

54. For a complete discussion on gender equality as a reform movement, see chapter 1 in *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Serving Together in the Church*, ed. Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

55. Much of what follows in this section can be found in Willard Swartley's excellent book, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983).

56. The interpretive methods provided here are carefully noted in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, 58ff.

57. W. B. Sloan, *These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935), 91.

58. Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 91.

59. See Mimi Haddad's chapter, "Reading the Apostle Paul through Galatians 3:28," in *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*, ed. Curtiss Paul DeYoung (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2009), 73–93.

60. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, 59.

61. In a second-century document, Ignatius of Antioch cites Onesimus, a bishop of Ephesus, who offered him hospitality. See chapter 1, Praise of the Ephesians, at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm, accessed Jan. 5, 2012.

62. Linda Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Ronald Pierce, and Gordon Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 205–24.

# Book Review: Half the Sky

### By Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Vintage, 2009)

*Reviewed by* John DelHousaye

*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is intended for a broad readership with the aim of uniting those who might otherwise be divided because of their religious and political convictions. The authors, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, were the first married couple to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism on an earlier project. They use their expertise to cast a light on the global sex trafficking industry of young women. They claim the problem has increased greatly in the last two decades because of the collapse of communism, the rise of globalization, and the fear of AIDS (11–12). They estimate there are two to three million prostitutes in India and even more in China (5–6). The underlying premise of the book is that such oppression results from a pervasive undervaluing of women by society. The authors draw a direct analogy with the justifications given for the enslavement of Africans in earlier centuries. The book's title is based on a Chinese proverb: "Women hold up half the sky."

Kristof and WuDunn make their argument in fourteen chapters, with an introduction, "The Girl Effect," which seeks to explain why "107 million females are missing from the globe today" (xv). They claim "thirty-nine thousand baby girls die annually in China because parents don't give them the same medical care and attention that boys receive" (xiv). A "bride burning" happens approximately every two hours in India, where one- to five-year-old girls are 50 percent more likely to die than boys the same age (xiv, xvi). There are five thousand "honor killings" a year, mostly in the Muslim world (82). The chapters feature heartbreaking interviews with brutalized women, living and deceased, often with their pictures. Stories of women fighting back are also included (52–53). The final chapter gives readers four steps they can take in the next ten minutes, such as joining the CARE Action Network at www.can.care.org.

The authors make their argument in an evenhanded way. They allow women to speak for themselves, giving the reader just enough background to appreciate their courage. This is journalism at its best. Men are not solely to blame; mothers often kill their own daughters: "no group systematically abuses young women more cruelly than mothers-in-law" (68).

WuDunn and Kristof want to join forces with evangelicals and Pentecostals. Both traditions are praised and gently challenged. Women in Pentecostal churches "find themselves exercising leadership and declaring their positions on moral and religious matters" (143). But they criticize elements of faith-healing, specifically the claim that "Jesus will protect its followers from AIDS" (143). Evangelicals are given high marks for their generosity and intent to help. But they take issue with former President George W. Bush's religiously motivated decision to cut funding to healthcare organizations that provide abortions, such as UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund). In their view, this myopic policy faltered under the law of unintended consequences: "With the best of intentions, pro-life conservatives have taken some positions in reproductive health that actually hurt those whom they are trying to help—and that result in more abortions" (134). They note that UNFPA has prevented nearly 10 million abortions in China by providing broader healthcare for women.

Some evangelicals may also be challenged by the authors' evolutionary explanation for why women die in childbirth (113). They also give little credit to abstinence-only programs (137). Kristof and WuDunn cite Deuteronomy 22:13–21 at the head of chapter 5, which, in isolation, requires the men of a village to stone a girl whose virginity cannot be established. Those who hold a high view of Scripture may be frustrated with the lack of hermeneutical discussion.

*Half the Sky* offers a secular argument, which empirically supports and opens a door to CBE's unique mission: to show from Scripture and practice the equality of all human beings. I highly recommend the book for sensitizing Christians to the magnitude of this problem. Some talk in the church as if slavery is a matter of the past. Yet, the International Labour Organization estimates that, at any one time, there are 12.3 million human beings engaged in forced labor (9). Kristof and WuDunn offer an ambitious yet reasonable strategy: international cooperation, local leadership, economic opportunity, governmental reform, and education. Working toward the end of sex trafficking is a cause that all Christians, regardless of political or denominational affiliation, can support. My own community is beginning to stand with young women against the pimps and kidnappers (for more information, see streetlightphx.com).

JOHN DELHOUSAYE is Associate Professor of New Testament at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, Arizona. He is married to Tiffany, and they are blessed with two daughters and a son.

# *Book Review: Half the Church*

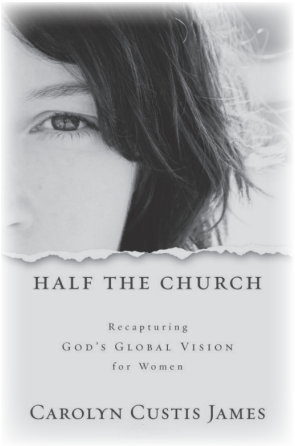
***By Carolyn Custis James (Zondervan, 2010)***

*Reviewed by* Cynthia Davis Lathrop

Carolyn Custis James is an established author; she has three previously published books, *When Life and Beliefs Collide*, *Lost Women of the Bible*, and *The Gospel of Ruth*. She holds an MA in biblical studies and is the founder and president of Synergy Women's Network. In this, her fourth book, *Half the Church*, James writes with passion and intensity to encourage women to fulfill God's call on their lives. She says that women make up at least half the church; in fact, she says that women make up 80 percent of the church in China and about 90 percent in Japan (27). James encourages women to be an active force in the world by stepping out and using the gifts and abilities that God has given them. She also maintains that, if women are held back from fulfilling God's call, the church suffers. Appealing to Paul's metaphor of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–27), she contends that, if women are not allowed to function in ministry, then half the body of Christ will not be operational, and Jesus wants a vigorous and healthy body (187). To become the church fully, women and men must work together, cooperating in kingdom living and kingdom purposes, as God desires.

James has added a new dimension in her writing—the global dimension. After having been challenged by Kristof and WuDunn's book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (2009), she now challenges women and men to action in justice issues: sex trafficking, female genocide, and more. Throughout the book, we are introduced to various young women in difficult and horrific circumstances. Is the gospel message universally applicable for women of all cultures (35)? Can it bring salvation, hope, and deliverance to women who suffer under oppression and injustice? James seeks to answer these questions through Scripture, biblical examples, and through the wisdom shared by justice workers, humanitarians, and in the examplary lives of missions workers past and present.

In chapters 2 through 5, James unpacks scriptural passages and concepts that prove God values both women and men. For example, in Genesis 1:26–28, the Lord identifies both the woman and the man as God's image bearers. God also gives the same responsibilities to both and commands them to be fruitful and multiply and to rule and subdue the whole earth (Gen 1:26, 28). The author suggests a bigger picture here: the strategic mission of being God's intermediaries (53). James also speaks of the "Ezer-Warrior" (113), given to the man by God so that man would have someone who corresponds to him and is equal to him, one who will engage with him in the conflict (111–13). In Genesis 1:26 and 28, the man and the woman share responsibility for the garden and work together; James cites this as a model of cooperation between men and women in the church today. This she calls the "Blessed Alliance."




As examples of this Blessed Alliance, she uses the Old Testament characters of Esther and Mordecai and the New Testament characters of Mary and Joseph. Both sets of characters become caught up in a bigger picture, and they must each step outside of traditional roles and expectations for the sake of God's kingdom (143–48).

James is exceptional at drawing out practical examples of men and women who step outside of cultural conditioning and patterns of behavior (89). I found myself gratefully meditating on her treatment of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz (83–93) and wanting more. The companion to this spiritual insight is her enthusiasm and support for women to become the leaders God gifted them to be (77). Other pluses in this book include her emphases on Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37 and 39 that we are to love God with all that we are and our neighbor as ourselves, and on Paul's words in Philippians 2 that we are not to operate out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but out of humility. These are the heart reasons we are image bearers, *ezer* warriors, and a Blessed Alliance, cooperating together as women and men in kingdom building.

There was only a small amount of information on justice and abuse issues in the book; I would like to have seen more. James does not like to engage in debate and controversy regarding women's ministry. She encourages women to be all that they can be for the Lord and to use all of their gifts, but, at the same time, she will not take a stand on the subject of women's ordination. I believe that, if she were to do this, she could be a stronger advocate for her sisters around the world. Even so, I think that this book will generate discussion and will challenge us all in our thinking and in our living. Certainly, classes on justice issues may find this appropriate, as well as classes on women in ministry.

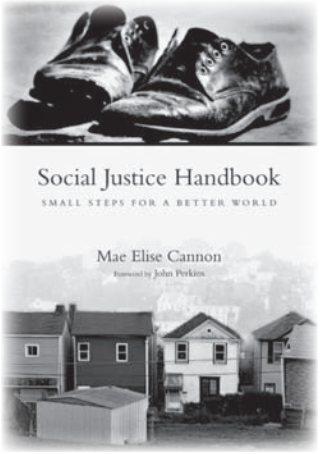

CYNTHIA DAVIS LATHROP is coeditor of *Some Men Are our Heroes: Stories by Women about the Men Who Have Greatly Influenced their Lives* (Wipf & Stock, 2010). She studied at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Center for Urban Ministerial Education in Boston.

# *Book Review: The Social Justice Handbook*

***By Mae Elise Cannon (InterVarsity, 2009)***

*Reviewed by* Chip M. Anderson

As the director of finance and planning services for a community action agency, I spend my working hours "engaging the community to end poverty." Yet, it is my belief that the Bible calls upon the Christian community to be associated with the economically vulnerable and, as part of church life and discipleship, to seek to address the issues of poverty. It is my passion to connect Christians to those affected by poverty and to help the Christian community to think about the ways they can engage the issues of social justice. In *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*, Mae Elise Cannon provides an invaluable resource for the Christian community, for both those who are committed to the issues of poverty and social justice and, as well, for those who need convincing. Cannon is senior director of advocacy and outreach, Middle East, for World Vision USA; an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church; and former executive pastor of Hillside Covenant Church in Walnut Creek, California. Through the *Handbook*, she presents a biblical basis for the Christian responsibility toward the issues of social justice and traces Christian engagement in social justice throughout church history, presenting examples from early colonial America, the Great Awakening, and through nineteenth- and twentieth-century social-justice movements. Cannon offers numerous individual examples that model how the Christian and the church can be engaged in the issues of social justice.




The *Social Justice Handbook* is divided into two parts. The first sets the "Foundations of Justice," that is, as God's "love is experienced and understood, Christ's followers will have a better sense how to put it into action in their immediate circles of influence and beyond" (18). This section of the book provides a biblical framework for justice, arguing that God's justice and righteousness "are inextricably linked throughout the Scriptures" (19) and that God's justice is strongly associated with his standards that determine our relationships to each other and to the world. Simply, the "gospel cannot be dichotomized into spiritual provision or material deliverance" (29). She writes that justice "is the right exercise of power—God is the ultimate power and authority in the universe, so justice occurs when power and authority [are] exercised in conformity with his standards" (39). Cannon focuses the center for expressing this conformity to God's standards in the community of faith, pointing out that "compassion was embodied in the local church, which was the primary place where benevolence was expressed" throughout history (44).

In part 2, Cannon presents an alphabetically arranged list of more than eighty "social justice issues," providing a reference guide for action. The topics range from abortion to education, healthcare to homelessness, politics to poverty, race to sex trafficking, and water to work. Each is joined to a short reflection exercise and "take action" steps to move the reader to engage the issue being described. Cannon adds a helpful, brief bibliography for further study on each topic.

Cannon includes, throughout both sections, numerous ministry profiles of individuals (e.g., William Wilberforce, 50), movements (e.g., New Monasticism, 140), and organizations (e.g., Salvation Army, 62). These profiles offer examples and motivating stories that not only provoke thought, but also inform how people have addressed injustice, poverty, and social problems. She provides a wonderful set of appendixes that include organizations, books, documentaries, and movies, linking the reader to more resources for connecting with the issues of social justice.

In the *Handbook*, Cannon moves the reader—more accurately, the local church body—from "Apathy to Advocacy" (ch. 4) to be the true advocates of justice. She rightly asserts that the "body of Christ must be mobilized to enter into heart-transforming relationships with all people" (79) and to "stand up for the poor and the oppressed" (100). It is an expression of faith, she argues, for Christians to be "intercessors and advocates for the least in society" (100) and, as part of the faith community, to be "change agents" who transform the unfortunate circumstances that the vulnerable face everyday.

In the *Social Justice Handbook*, I identified with the passion Cannon has for social justice and the burden she has for drawing others to engage in compassion and action to address the issues and causes of injustice and poverty. Cannon succeeds in connecting her readers to issues of social justice, providing them with resources to help them to engage their immediate spheres of influence as "change agents" on behalf of the least among us.

CHIP M. ANDERSON, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is ordained by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He authored a lay commentary on Philippians and serves as director of finance and planning services at NEON, Inc., a community action agency in Norwalk, Connecticut.

## Common Wedding Colors

by Joel Boehner

Another white bread and red wine wedding
walks the well-worn path down the white
petal-softened red carpet aisle.

The pastor on display charges the bride, pretty
in purity, with biblical submission from one
side of his mouth then, from the other, binds
the man to Christ's platelet-rich effusive love.

Hand in step, the pair tumbles into their new
life, dropping and starting like hobbled dancers
whose apparent otherness is blurred by
an occasionally pink orbit spun into being
upon the declaration of "man and wife."

Yet, they both
take the bread;
take the wine.

JOEL BOEHNER wears red, white, and pink; has been married to Anne for five years; attends Keller Park Missionary Church in South Bend, Indiana; and teaches writing at Bethel College.

Photo by Jason Hutchens via Wikimedia Commons

## Christians for Biblical Equality

Christians for Biblical Equality is an organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of believers of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scripture as reflected in Galatians 3:28.

### Mission Statement

CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home, and world.

### Core Values

We believe the Bible teaches:

- Believers are called to mutual submission, love, and service.
- God distributes spiritual gifts without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class.
- Believers must develop and exercise their God-given gifts in church, home, and world.
- Believers have equal authority and equal responsibility to exercise their gifts without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class and without the limits of culturally defined roles.
- Restricting believers from exercising their gifts—on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, or class—resists the work of the Spirit of God and is unjust.
- Believers must promote righteousness and oppose injustice in all its forms.

### Opposing Injustice

CBE recognizes that injustice is an abuse of power, taking from others what God has given them: their dignity, their freedom, their resources, and even their very lives. CBE also recognizes that prohibiting individuals from exercising their God-given gifts to further his kingdom constitutes injustice in a form that impoverishes the body of Christ and its ministry in the world at large. CBE accepts the call to be part of God's mission in opposing injustice as required in Scriptures such as Micah 6:8.

### Envisioned Future

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

### Statement of Faith

- *We believe* the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- *We believe* in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.
- *We believe* in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- *We believe* in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.
- *We believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- *We believe* in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.
- *We believe* in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all ethnicities, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.
- *We believe* that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.
- *We believe* in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design.
- *We believe* that, as mandated by the Bible, men and women are to oppose injustice.

### CBE Membership

CBE membership is available to those who support CBE's Statement of Faith. Members receive CBE's quarterly publications, *Mutuality* magazine and *Priscilla Papers* journal, as well as discounts to our bookstore and conferences. Visit our home page and click "Membership" for details.

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### Membership Fees *(all fees are in US dollars)*

| ***United States Members*** | ***1 Year*** | ***3 Years*** |
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| Individual | ☐ $49 | ☐ $129 |
| Household | ☐ $69 | ☐ $184 |
| Low Income* | ☐ $27 | ☐ N/A |
| Subscription Only** | ☐ $40 | ☐ $115 |

| ***International Members*** | ***1 Year*** | ***3 Years*** |
|---|---|---|
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| Household | ☐ $79 | ☐ $204 |
| Low Income* | ☐ $37 | ☐ N/A |
| Subscription Only** | ☐ $49 | ☐ $140 |

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|---|---|
| 1–100 people | ☐ $55 |
| 101–500 people | ☐ $85 |
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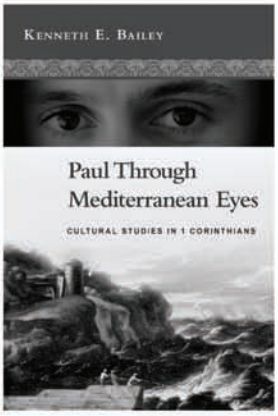
# *New* Resources from CBE

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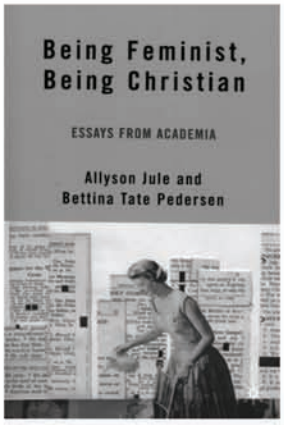


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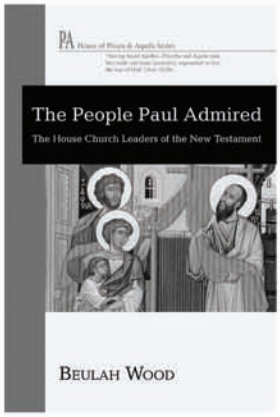


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*The House Church Leaders of the New Testament*
Beulah Wood

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