

Taylor, Marion Ann, and Heather E. Weir, eds. *Women in the Story of Jesus: The Gospels through the Eyes of Nineteenth-Century Female Biblical Interpreters*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. xii + 276 pp. Softcover. USD 35.00.

Marion Ann Taylor (professor of Old Testament, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, and co-editor of *Women of War, Women of Woe: Joshua and Judges through the Eyes of Nineteenth-Century Female Biblical Interpreters* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016]), along with Heather E. Weir (pastoral theologian working in Toronto, Canada) have organized a valuable anthology of thirty-one, nineteenth-century, previously ignored women scholars who have published various commentaries and biblical studies on eight women found in the four Gospels. These include Mary (the mother of Jesus), the woman at the Samaritan well, Herodias and her daughter, Mary and Martha, Anna the prophetess, plus more. The book is arranged with selected nineteenth century female writers quoted under each of the eight women in the Gospels. Mary the mother of Jesus has the most contributors (8), with Mary Magdalene next (7).

The selected materials are helpfully prefaced with a biography, some historical context, and textual analysis for each chapter. According to the editors, the collection is not exhaustive, but only representative, since they mention that they have found hundreds of nineteenth-century women who published on subjects related to the Bible.

The various women selected from two centuries ago include female preachers, educators, biblical interpreters, suffragists, social activists, poets, and daughters of clergy who encouraged their study and may have provided their daughters with access to their personal theological libraries. Several of the women even taught themselves Hebrew and Greek! For example, Mary Anne Schimmel Penninck (1778–1856), encouraged women to take up serious study of the Bible and biblical languages, particularly Hebrew, so that they could give their daughters a thorough religious education. Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840–1932) taught herself Greek from her younger brother's schoolbooks, and published twenty-seven books on diverse topics.

As formal theological education was not readily allowed women in the nineteenth century, the female writers in the book obviously schooled themselves on the prominent theological issues that their academic male contemporaries were dealing with. For example, some women drew on harmonies of the Gospels published by male scholars, but others prepared their own. Some of the quoted material is taken from lessons for children. Other writers were quoted from sermons they had written, though there is no included notation on whether the sermons were preached in church. A few writers were quoted from their prepared Bible study lessons for study groups. Many times the different writers analyzed the gospel narratives.

Some of the quoted selections are granted two to three pages in the book, others just a couple of paragraphs. This left me wishing that more surrounding paragraphs had been included in order to provide more context and thus

more adequate appreciation. A few of the selections are more devotional than scholarly. However, at that time women were denied entrance into formal theological studies, thus this book draws attention to, and applauds the skills of, these self-taught female writers.

The footnotes are also informative and rich including a letter written by Harriet Beecher Stowe to her scholar/husband:

If you studied Christ with half the energy that you have studied Luther— . . . If you were drawn toward him and loved him as much as you loved your study and your books then would be formed in you, the hope of glory—But you fancy that you have *other* things to do . . . you *must* write courses of lectures— . . . you must keep up with the current literature—& read new German books—all these things you *must* do then if there is any time, any odds and ends of strength & mental capability left, why they are to be given occasionally brushing up matters within, & keeping a kind of Christian character. (Letter to Calvin E. Stowe, cited in Gail Smith, “Reading the Word: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Interpretation,” [PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1993], 58; [12n33, emphasis Stowe’s]).

There is also a valuable eleven-page Appendix and Bibliography for anyone drawn to further study in this area.

This reviewer did wonder whether there was other substantive material that could have been included from the hundreds of nineteenth-century female writers mentioned by the editor and whether other biblical women in the gospels could have been given a chapter as well. Also, whether more direct evidence might be included of the women who had taught themselves biblical languages. But such is the nature of any anthology. One has to trust the judgment of the two experienced editors which left only a few minor lingering questions. Biblical scholars and church historians of either gender will find this collection all important in its attempt to restore nineteenth-century women to their rightful place in New Testament interpretation.

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Toom, Tarmo, ed. *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation: The Latin Fathers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xvi + 262 pp. Hardcover. USD 99.99.

This is a great resource for those seeking a stimulating collection of essays on ancient Christian views of biblical interpretation. It is important, however, for the reader to be attentive to the book’s purpose, as indicated through its title. Although it may not be immediately obvious, this work describes how elected Latin Fathers, from the fourth to the seventh century, articulated their *theories* of biblical interpretation. Words on Tertullian’s or Cyprian’s actual perspectives of the Bible are to be found elsewhere, because of the nuanced objective of the book. Toom explains the goal of the book in the introduction, stating, “This volume provides an in-depth analysis of patristic hermeneutics” focusing on authors “whose writings contain substantial discussion of