



## The Role of Women in International Development

- 1 A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR  
YALIN XIN, WCIDJ SENIOR EDITOR
- 4 BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN  
JUNIA POKRIFKA
- 19 LEADING DEVELOPMENT AT HOME: DR. MABEL PING HUA  
LEE (1896 - 1966)  
GRACE MAY
- 29 MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE: AN AGENT OF CHANGE AND  
LEADERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF AMERICA  
NAMARR NEWSON
- 38 SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
YALIN XIN, CLARA CHENG, LOIS OOMS, LOIS SEMENYE, CAROLYN KLAUS

## A Note from the Editor

The editorial team of *William Carey International Development Journal* are pleased to publish the 2016 Fall issue on “The Role of Women in International Development.” We started out inviting papers in the areas of biblical/theological reflection of the role of women, case studies and biographies of women as agents of change in various historical and geographic contexts, and we got just what we wanted. This issue features three original articles that deal with the topic from these perspectives.

Reflecting from an “overarching biblical theological” perspective, Dr. Junia Pokrifka identifies prototypes of extraordinary women in the Bible and shows us how they serve as agents of God’s redemptive work and “evidence of the measure of shalom that God brought to women as members of his redeemed people.”

Dr. Grace May traces the life and ministry of Dr. Mabel Ping Hua Lee, immigrant to the US from Hong Kong in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who later became a

scholar activist and Christian leader, advocating women’s rights in China through her writing and teaching, and promoting educational and spiritual nurture to the congregation of the First Chinese Baptist Church in New York City.

Namarr Newson, WCIU Ph.D. associate, presents the extraordinary case of Dr. Mary Mcleod Bethune, descendant of former slaves, as an educator and agent of change. One of the most influential African American women in American history, she integrated her Christian faith with vocation, leaving a great legacy to the Christian community in America and beyond.

We are also including, from *Agents of International Development and Shalom*, a WCIU Press publication, some autobiographies of women in various roles and contexts, as well as an excerpt on Marie Monsen, a Norwegian cross-cultural worker to Henan, China in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of these together make a great issue that we wish to inform, encourage, and inspire.

As always, you are welcome to join in the dialogue, discussion, and debate through reading and commenting on the articles, and

sharing insights on your own social and professional networks.

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# Biblical Theological Reflection of the Role of Women

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By Junia Pokrifka

The identity and purpose of women has been one of much discussed topics in recent biblical interpretation and theology. But the interpretative community is deeply divided on the identity and purpose of women. Some believe the Bible itself upholds the full equality of women in identity and purpose. Others question whether the Bible on its own terms upholds such equality but turn to theological reformulations of Trinitarian theology and the *Imago Dei* to promote the freedom and equality of women. Many others, on the other hand, would reduce women's significance to certain roles,

defined in complementarity to men's roles. Others reject the Bible due to their conclusion that the God of the Bible embodies, legitimatizes, promotes, and perpetuates patriarchy, androcentricism, and the related oppression of women.<sup>1</sup> The diverse views on women in the Bible are understandable, given the wildly different presentation of women in the Bible, ranging from heroes and villains, leaders and victims, rescuers and oppressors, prophets and prostitutes, mistresses and exploited, and beloved and cheated, to name a few.

The crucial interpretative, hermeneutical

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<sup>1</sup> The Post-Christian feminists' conclusion that the Bible is thoroughly and irrevocably patriarchal is also shared by some conservative, anti-feminist evangelicals; e.g., Gunther Haas, "Patriarchy as an Evil that God Tolerated: Analysis and Implications

for Authority of Scripture." *JETS* 38/3 (1995): 321–336. The former however reject the Bible and its God (as oppressive), whereas the latter accept and seek to propagate patriarchy as God's eternal arrangement for humanity.

question is whether a given story of woman reflects the state of things in the fallen world or temporary divine accommodation or God's ideal intentions for woman or some combination thereof. The task of biblical theology of women, then, involves careful discernment between these options, not to draw facile conclusions about the identity and purpose of woman or about the nature of the sacred writings about them. This discernment is best done in relation to the overarching biblical theological theme of women in creation, the Fall, progressive redemption, and consummation. Women in creation would show the ideal woman as created by God, the Fall would show the corrupted woman, progressive redemption would show everything in the full spectrum of things, while pointing everything toward the culmination of God's redemptive work. Having protology and eschatology as the two theological "ends" that tightly hold the Fall of humanity and the redemptive work of God in a clear redemptive trajectory steers the interpreter from any rash conclusions based on isolated texts. In addition, the consideration of the ideal woman in the

image of God in creation and the glorified woman in the perfected image of Christ in consummation provides new interpretive insight for understanding woman in the Bible in terms of a type of Christ or an antitype of Christ or somewhere in between.

In our biblical theological reflection of the role of women in the Bible, we will focus on those women whose lives prefigure Christ. This approach can give us a redemptive hermeneutical lens with which to read the entire Bible (even the so-called "problem texts" in the Bible that are traditionally used to bar women from public or spiritual leadership) in ways that are freeing and empowering for women. The biblical theological study of women concerned with redemptive patterns places women place in God's kingdom in a particular light that breaks the back of patriarchy. In that light, patriarchy and androcentrism are no longer seen as normative, but as regrettable conditions that God and God's human agents are working to overcome.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the remarkable women of the Bible are not simply exceptions to the rule, but rather redemptive

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed defense of a grand narrative approach in respect to the issue of patriarchy in the Old Testament, see my article "Patriarchy, Biblical Authority and the Grand Narrative of the Old

Testament," in *Tamar's Tears: Evangelical Engagements with Feminist Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Andrew Sloane (Wipf & Stock Publications, 2011) 274-314.

prototypes for others to emulate, for woman's life has a mission or objective (Wright 2006, 65, 425–27). These prototypical women fall into a number of important roles in the life of Israel and church.

## **Mothers**

As society gradually deteriorated to an androcentric, patrilocal, and patriarchal society, woman and her reproductive capacities were largely treated as male property to ensure patrilineal descent. In the original creation, child-bearing is a God-given privilege, and fruitfulness is a divine blessing essential for having dominion. Accordingly, in redemptive history, women's role in childbearing is of paramount importance for the fulfillment of not only God's original mandate of fruitfulness (Gen 1:28) but also God's promises to Abraham of prosperity and blessings of all nations through Sarah's child.

It is therefore no surprise that the "serpent" would be hostile to woman and her childbearing (Gen 3:15-16). But the barrenness of the matriarchs of Israel (Sarah,

Rebekah, and Rachel) and other women (Samson's mother and Hannah) turned into an occasion for divine self-revelation, intervention, blessing, and victory over the hostile "serpent" that resisted God and his people.<sup>3</sup> Sarah's supernatural childbearing is especially significant as it established for Israel that women and reproduction belong to God and that covenant promises pass down through patterns of matrilineal descent (Gen 17:19-21).

Although some mothers in extreme circumstances resorted to cannibalism, possibly even eating even their own children in a paradigmatic act of evil (Lam 2:20; 4:10; cf. Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53–57; Jer 19:9; Ezek 5:10), the Old Testament affirms the utmost importance of mothers' unique role in God's redemptive work. Some mothers stand out for their extraordinary faith, courage, and sacrifice in bringing forth children who played a key role in the deliverance of Israel, such as Jochebed, Moses' mother (Exod 2:1-10), Ruth, king David's great grandmother (Ruth 4:13-17), and Hannah, Samuel's mother (1 Sam 1:24-28).

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<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Trible rightly asserts that the divine oracle of judgment in chapter 3 is descriptive in nature, rather than prescriptive; that is, God is describing

how things will be in general, rather than how things ought to be at all times in "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 41/1 (1974): 41.



Mothers played a critical role in Israel's covenant life. The commandment to honor both mother and father affirms both mother and father as primary teachers and interpreters of God's covenant laws (Deut 4:9-10; 6:7; 11:19; 32:36). The command to honor mother also implies mothers' God-given authority to bless their children and determine the general direction of their descendants' lives. The Book of Proverbs, although written from a male perspective to a male audience, also assumes that both fathers and mothers are teachers of Torah, and that both males and females learn from their mothers, with some mothers' words being recorded (Prov 31:1). Jewish tradition holds that Huldah was a prophet who taught publicly in a school. It also associates "the Gate of Huldah" in the Second Temple with Huldah's schoolhouse. Ultimately, the mothers' collective role as teachers of the law (Exod 20:12; Deut 6:7) would serve to guard the religion of Israel and determine the destiny of the nation.

The New Testament writers celebrate mothers as transmitters of faith and disciplers of effective ministers of the Gospel. Paul makes an honorable mention of Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice for their sincere faith (2 Tim 1:5)

and for raising up Timothy to be a worthy minister (despite his youth) through their example, instruction, encouragement, and prayers from his childhood (2 Tim 3:14-15).

Mothers played a central role in the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven in the New Testament. In fulfillment of God's word, Elizabeth miraculously gave birth to John the Baptist, the great forerunner who prepared the way for the Messiah. Most importantly, Mary whole-heartedly embraced God's call to be the mother of Jesus Christ, conceiving of him by the Holy Spirit and demonstrating her supreme faith in God and courage to pay the price of utterly surrendering her life to God's will. This woman's "seed" indeed subdued the ancient serpent, as prophesied in Genesis 3:15 (see 1 John 3:8b). Her faithfulness and sacrifice were instrumental in ushering in a new era, in which women and men alike are set free from the powers of sin and death (Rom 8:2), seated in heavenly places in and with Jesus Christ (Eph 2:6), and recreated for good works, which God prepared for them to do (Eph 2:10). Thus, all generations call her blessed (Luke 1:48).

## **Wives**

The unfulfilled call to subdue and have

dominion over creation appears to find its distorted outlet in human-to-human domination, epitomized in the typical post-fall patriarchal order predicted in the divine pronouncement “he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16b). However, there are cases in which mutual authority between wife and husband prevailed with wives sometimes taking the lead.<sup>4</sup> Abraham obeyed (*šema bēqōlāh*) Sarah (Gen 16:2; 21:12), Jacob obeyed his wives by taking their maidservants to produce more children for them (Gen 30:3-4, 9), Rachel and Leah negotiated their conjugal rights over Jacob, who submitted to their decision (Gen 30:15-16),<sup>5</sup> Jochebed successfully executed her rescue plan on her own (Exod 2:2-3), Zipporah (not Moses) performed priestly rites to deter death (Exod 4:24-26), Deborah judged Israel without her

husband’s supervision (Judg 4-5), and Hannah made and fulfilled a vow to the Lord (1 Sam 1:10ff.). Through her diplomatic gift of appeasement and prophetic endorsement of David’s kingship, Abigail deterred David from taking a personal vengeance upon her foolish husband Nabal and saved her own household (1 Sam 25).<sup>6</sup>

The Israelites’ legal system provided some protection of wife from unrestrained androcentric legal procedures, although it still shows the wife’s subordinate status under male authority and power. In a state of anarchy, some men deteriorated into utterly brutal treatment of a wife (*iššā*; Judg 19:1), possibly reflecting the general dehumanized status of a wife of that period.<sup>7</sup>

Other Old Testament texts recall the

<sup>4</sup> Carol Meyers (in *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. New York, NY/Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988) believes she has social scientific and historical evidence that early, pre-Monarchical Israel was basically non-hierarchical and egalitarian, without patriarchy in any strong sense (e.g., 180–181, 187–188). See also Meyers comments on the challenge of defining words like “patriarchy” appropriately for use in reference to the social realities of ancient Israel, which are so different from those in the modern West (24–46).

<sup>5</sup> See James Hamilton’s *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 82–83, for an account of “gender conflict” in Genesis (see also his preceding treatment of inter-human “seed conflict” between “the seed of the serpent” and “the seed of the women” in 80–81). Although I find much of

Hamilton’s work helpful, I disagree with his complementarian or hierarchical view of what ideal gender relations should be like, based upon the alleged “created order” (see 72–74).

<sup>6</sup> In Meyers’ view, the transition from early Israel to monarchical Israel marked a decline in the social power of women and an increase of a kind of patriarchy (*Discovering Eve*, 181–196). In her words, “The locus of power moved from the family household, with its gender parity, to a public world of male control” (190).

<sup>7</sup> Some helpful treatments of the rape and murder of the Levite’s concubine or wife are found in pieces by Jacqueline Lapsley (*Whispering the Word*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 35–68) and Trible (*Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984, 65–92).

fundamental unity, love, and honor between the wife and the husband expressed in the original man's exuberant praise of woman ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" in Gen 2:23). Song of Songs portrays a paradigmatic love relationship in which the lover and her beloved enjoy mutual love as it was meant to be. Their relationship is completely free of male domination or concerns for gender roles and honors the edenic matrilocal marital norm from Genesis 2:24, in which the man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife (Song 3:4; 8:1). Proverbs 31 also celebrates the wife of strength who is like wisdom personified. She is kind, generous, wise, favored, industrious, prosperous, strong, independent, courageous, valued, and praised in the private and the public spheres. On account of her excellence, the husband devotes himself to civic causes. The wife and her husband respect, value, trust, and bless each other, showcasing an ideal covenantal marriage as intended by God.

The New Testament upholds the dignity of woman as created in the image of God, recreated in the image of Christ, and as co-heirs with Christ. 1 Corinthians 11, in particular, upholds the woman's exalted status as the crown or "glory of man,"

echoing the first man's own praise of the first woman in the superlatives as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (2:23), recognizing the fact that she is essentially like him.

Ephesians 5:18 commands all disciples of Christ to be filled with the Holy Spirit, which will manifest itself, among other things, in mutual submission out of reverence of Christ (5:21) who dwells in each of them. What this mutual submission would look like in marriage is explicated in the verses that follow. Husbands are called to love and sacrifice their own lives for their wives, just as Christ has done for the church (5:25). The wives are called to submit to their husbands (5:22), which is a way of showing sacrificial love. While many have erroneously reduced this text into rigid roles, with husband as the ruler and wife as the submitter, mutual submission or mutual sacrificial love is an expression of the "most excellent way," namely, love, that 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 talks about. It is a way of life that emulates the person and ministry of Christ that transcends the ideal romantic love celebrated in Song of Songs.

## **Proprietors**

A census taken on the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the

exodus for the purpose of dividing the Promised Land among the tribes (and then by clans) indicates that the property was distributed to sons. Five unmarried young daughters of Zelophehad (Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah) boldly and effectively challenged this pre-Israelite law as being inadequate. Out of their honorable desires to keep alive their father's name among the Gileadites, they demanded a holding along with their five uncles and thus an implied amendment of the existing inheritance law. God granted their request and forever changed the Israelite property law. The new law allowed daughters to inherit the land in the absence of sons before the deceased's brothers or uncles were considered (Num 26). This law triggered another new law that prohibited an inheritance from being passed from one tribe to the other by limiting the inheritress' marriage within her tribal clan (Num 27:6-9). The daughters of Zelophehad then married their cousins on their father's side. Once in the land, the five daughters inherited their own lot (Josh 17:3-6) along with their father's five brothers on the

western side of Jordan River, while the Machirites received their lot on the eastern side (Josh 17:1-6). As a result, the tribe of Manasseh inherited the largest allotment.

Another notable proprietor is the woman of power in Proverbs 31. Although set in the context of a patriarchal culture in which public decision-makers (i.e., the elders at the city gate, Prov 31:23) were typically men, the woman of Proverbs 31 has significant domestic and social power and influence (31:16-20). Furthermore, the poem calls for public praise of the woman (31:31). The husband "in no way sees himself diminished," but is about to appreciate his good fortune and praise his wife's excellence and success in the city gates.<sup>8</sup> The daughters of Zelophehad and the woman of strength portray a glowingly redemptive portrait of women.

### **Authors/Composers**

There are two Old Testament books dedicated to heroic women, Ruth and Esther, composed after their time. There are other texts that were composed by extraordinary women. Proverbs 31, which

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<sup>8</sup> "The husband appreciates his good fortune, in no way sees himself diminished" and is able to praise his wife's excellence and success in the city gates

(Alison Le Cornu, "Proverbs," In *IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Catharine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002, 339).

includes an impressive acrostic poem, is attributed to the queen mother of king Lemuel (Prov 31:1). Deborah's song (Judg 5:1-31), which celebrates a military victory gained with the help of two women, mentions Deborah as the composer (5:7). Hannah celebrated her vindication and victory in her song (1 Sam 2:1-10), which is echoed in Mary's *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55).

Exodus 15:1-18 is a song that celebrates Yahweh's supreme power over creation and sovereign rule over political super powers. Because this song is introduced with Moses and the Israelites as singers (v 1), many have assumed Moses as the composer of the song and designated the song as "The Song of Moses" as shown in the headings of many translations. However, the text does not name Moses as the composer, which contrasts with Moses' song in Deuteronomy 31:19-22. There are compelling reasons for Miriam's authorship of this hymn. (1) Victory songs that celebrate and memorialize significant events of salvation belong to a genre associated with female rather than male musicians or singers (e.g., Deborah's song, Hannah's song, the women's song for David's triumphs in 1 Sam 18:7; see Judg 11:34, Jer 31:4). (2)

While some suggest that Miriam sang only the first line as a chorus, the expression "Miriam sang to them" (masculine plural; Exod 15:21) likely indicates that Miriam composed and sang the entire song to all the Israelites. Then Moses and the Israelites sang after her, committing the song to their memory (see Deborah's victory song, which she undoubtedly composed and sang as stated in Judg 5:7, but which is introduced with Deborah and Barak as singers in Judg 5:1). The first line in Exodus 15:21 probably serves as the title of the song, and Exodus 15:1 asynchronously reports the fact that Moses and the Israelites sang the song they learned from Miriam.

Song of Songs was traditionally attributed to Solomon as its author, but this position has been challenged for good reasons. The language and content of the Song strongly point to the Song being "for" or dedicated "to" Solomon. The language also points to a woman poet. She is the primary lover in the song, with the young man as the beloved. The Song is written from the woman's perspective. The "other" voice in the Song addresses her six times and both the lover and the beloved once (5:1). She gives the most powerful description of love (8:6-7). The Song opens (1:2-4) and

closes (8:14) with her voice, and she is the dominant speaker.

In the New Testament, some scholars identify Priscilla as the author of the Book of Hebrews. (1) Noted for its literary sophistication and theological depth, Hebrews is the only anonymous writing in the New Testament. The omission of the author's name likely was to conceal its female authorship and to protect its reception. (2) Priscilla and her husband Aquila were partners in marriage, business (tentmaking), and ministry of pastoring, teaching, and mission (Acts 18:1-4, 26; 1 Cor 16:19). Traditionally considered part of the seventy disciples/apostles (Luke 10:1, 17), Paul recognized them as his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom 16:3), honoring them as ministers of the Gospel equal to him. They were especially renowned for their wealth and depths of knowledge of the Scripture, being able to explicate "the way of God more perfectly" to Apollos, who was already thoroughly trained in the scriptures and effectively teaching others (Acts 19:24-25). (3) The author of the Hebrews sends greetings from Rome (Heb 13:24), and the fact that Priscilla and Aquila had lived in Rome lends support to Priscilla's authorship.

Although she may not have been directly engaged in writing, the Gospel of Luke indicates that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a major source of the stories of the annunciation, conception, birth, childhood, and perhaps also the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The things she had "treasured up" (Luke 2:19) in her heart all throughout Jesus' lifetime are passed down to us through Luke's writing.

While biblical texts are largely written and compiled by men, those written by women are highly sophisticated in their composition, contribute indispensable theological ideas, and/or celebrate significant historical events. Their inspired words about God, war, history, birth, life, death, and resurrection, love, or marriage have been transmitted, received, studied, and applied as God's timeless, authoritative, trustworthy, and transformative words to God's people.

## **Rescuers**

There were female rescuers mediating and foreshadowing God's character and acts, especially the deliverance of the vulnerable from oppression and death. These redemptive women fulfilled their roles as

“helpers”<sup>9</sup> (Gen 2:18) of the weak and oppressed and thwarters of the plans and powers of formidable enemies of God. Several stories from early in the book of Exodus stand out. The midwives who feared God more than the murderous Pharaoh, courageously upheld the sanctity of life and defied the powerful pagan king in their act of civil disobedience (Exod 1:15-21). Jochebed, in keeping with her son’s special destiny, devised and successfully carried out a risky, but brilliant rescue plan for her son (Exod 2:2-6). The Egyptian princess, moved by deep compassion and maternal tenderness and exercising her privilege to act independently of her father Pharaoh, saved and adopted an apparently abandoned Hebrew baby (Exod 2:5-10). Young Miriam, extremely discerning and bold, approached the Egyptian princess to suggest a wet-nurse and then bring the baby’s own mother.

Esther was a Jewish queen of Persia. When her people were faced with the threat of annihilation, she was willing to sacrifice

everything, even her own life, to intercede for and save her people. Whether in Exodus or Esther, the ruthless genocide campaigns against the people of God can be seen as an extension of the serpent’s hostility against the “seed” of the woman. By contrast, the Israelite women’s redemptive acts and God’s employment of God’s people in the judgment of their enemies can be seen as significant fulfillments of the “seed” of the woman “striking” the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15).

There also was a non-Israelite woman with historical understanding, spiritual insight, practical wisdom, and moral courage (Josh 2:1-16) who saved herself and her immediate and extended family from destruction (6:22-26) by saving two Israelite spies and defecting to Israel. Once prostitute or innkeeper (Josh 6:17, 25; cf. Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25), Rahab apparently was given favor and honor to be married into one of the prestigious families in the tribe of Judah. This woman with indecorous and foreign origin in turn became the mother of Boaz,

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<sup>9</sup> The term “helper” does not connote an inferior in the context of Genesis 2 or others. The term “helper” or “help” (*‘ezer*) is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament: twice for the woman in Genesis 2:18, 20; three times of a human (superior) “help” that is not forthcoming (Isa. 30:5, Ezek 12:14, Dan 11:34); and 16 times of God the “helper” or “help” (Ex 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Ps 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19;

115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9). That the woman is created to be a helper does not mean that she is superior to the man. She is created to be a helper who is like the man, which means they are equal. As Tribble puts it, “God is the helper superior to [humans]; woman is the helper equal to man” (“Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” 36).

an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matt 1:5), adding to the scandalous nature of God's grace.

## Prophets

Women served God-given purposes not only in private sectors, but sometimes in public and religious domains. One of prominent gifts and positions for women was prophet, who received, proclaimed, and interpreted divine revelation. This function is consistent with the fact that she is made in the image of God to commune with God and make God known to the people.

The first woman named prophet (*nēbi'ā*) was Miriam (Exod 15:20), who is famously known for singing the victory song and leading (at age ninety or older!) all the women in dancing on the banks of the Red Sea (Exod 15:21). The words (proverbs and song; Prov 31:2-31) of queen mother of king Lemuel are called an "oracle" or "prophecy," indicating that she was a prophet (Prov 31:1). The excellent woman of her acrostic wisdom song (31:10-31) embodies the kind of wisdom the entire book promotes, thus forming a brilliant conclusion to the book. Deborah's commanding prophetic leadership provided military impetus,

strategy, and victory, ushering in a long period of *shalom* (*šālôm*) in Israel (Judg 4-5). At least two texts speak of a prophetic role for a larger number of women: "The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host" (Ps 68:11); "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28bc). Abigail, though not called a prophet, uttered a profound prophecy regarding David's integrity, kingship, divine protection and vengeance, and lasting dynasty (1 Sam 25:26-31). Her message foreshadows the prophet Nathan's prophecy (2 Sam 7:8-16).

Huldah's prophetic leadership should not be underestimated. It was instrumental in Josiah's massive religious reforms (1 Kgs 22 and 2 Chr 34). Even as her living quarters and the gate dedicated to her would indicate, Huldah probably was highly esteemed not only as a prophet, but also as an interpreter and teacher of the law. This would explain why the king's delegates sought her out with a document found in a temple, even above her prophetic contemporaries Jeremiah and Zephaniah, who also ministered during the reign of Josiah (Jer 1:2; Zeph 1:1). Huldah validated the authority of that document, making a



major contribution to the process of the formation and canonization of the Bible.

Women did not always use the prophetic gift for good. Miriam used her claims to prophetic powers to falsely question Moses' unique authority and wrongfully subject his wife to racial discrimination (Num 12:1-9). Noadiah apparently abused her prophetic gift and influence to conspire against Nehemiah (Neh 6:14). Their abuse of the prophetic gift does not negate the legitimacy of the gift or the calling. But it shows the gifts can be misused, whether by men or women, to oppose God and God's people, or used to serve God and build up God's people.

In the New Testament, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, stands out for her prophetic utterances to Mary concerning the identity of Mary's child (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth also knew, apparently by a revelation, that her son's name should be John (Luke 1:60). Anna is another prophet who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah. Giving thanks to God, she proclaimed the coming of the Messiah to "all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). The four daughters of Philip the evangelists are explicitly mentioned as prophetess (Acts 21:8-9).

There are various texts that point to the fact that men and women prophesying (whether preaching or giving words of encouragements, wisdom, or future directions) was not only not uncommon, but it was strongly encouraged. Acts 2 records the event of the coming of the Holy Spirit as prophesied in Joel 2, in which both women and men were filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaiming in different languages (tongues) the gospel message (Acts 2:8-11). First Corinthians 11:1-5 applauds women and men for praying and prophesying, while urging them to have the culturally appropriate hairstyle (long for women and short for men; see vv. 14-15).

### **Priestly Ministers**

A few texts testify to female Levites' participation in the ministry of the tabernacle. For example, Exodus 38:8 takes for granted that there were women Levites serving (*šārvā'*) at the tent of meeting. Accordingly, 1 Samuel 2:22 shows women serving at the tent of meeting during the time of the pre-Monarchical period (although the male priests' sexual abuse at the tabernacle may have occasioned termination of women priestly service). Thus, the commandments concerning the

consecration and service of the Levites given in Numbers 8:24-26 should be taken as applicable to both male and female Levites.

Levitical women who were priestly and prophetic ministers are also attested in other parts of Israel's history. Heman's three daughters during King David's time were renowned temple musicians (either in vocal or instrumental music or both; see 1 Chr 25:1, 5-6). Men and women temple singers are also noted during Josiah's time in 2 Chronicles 35:25 (see 2 Chr 23:13; 29:28) and until the return from exile (in 2 Chr 35:25; Ezra 2:65, 70; 7:7; Neh 7:67, 73). The roles women had in Tabernacle and temple worship offer parallels to the other better known Old Testament women who served in non-cultic leadership roles related to prophetic ministry, military exploits, and religious reform (e.g. Deborah and Huldah).

Through the installation of priests, God taught Israel about the distinction between the holy and the unholy. This was not so much to emphasize or to perpetuate the division between the sacred and profane, but to provoke all people to a life of holiness whereby they too might draw near to God and be consecrated unto God. Accordingly, a provision was made that non-Levitical women or men, if they so desired, could

consecrate themselves entirely to the Lord as Nazirites (Num 6:2-21). This provision foreshadows the expanded vision of priesthood in the new covenant in which women are included (1 Pet 2:5-9).

The New Testament names a few outstanding women ministers. Phoebe is called a "minister/deacon (*diakonos*) of the church" in Cenchrea, implying that she held an office of leadership in the church (Rom 16:1). Paul recognized her as a benefactor (*prostatis*) or "a patron of many and of [himself]" (Rom 16:2). Lydia, a seller of purple, a lucrative business owner, is named as the first proselyte in Europe, who apparently lead her entire household to conversion (Acts 16:14-15). The mention of the "brothers and sisters" in her household indicates an established house church (Acts 16:40). When Paul later addresses the "overseers/bishops (*episkopoi*)" and "minister/deacons (*diakonoi*)" in Philippi, it is highly likely that Lydia, being the head of her house church, is one of the overseers and ministers being addressed.

Paul recognized Junia, his relative ("kinsman") and fellow prisoner, as "outstanding among the apostles" (Rom 16:7), that is, distinguished as an apostle

herself.<sup>10</sup> Epiphanius (315 - 403 AD) noted that this apostle whom Paul mentioned became Bishop of Apameia of Syria.<sup>11</sup>

## Rulers

Although many may remember Eve as the uneducated gullible woman, she was created as the “queen” to rule over God’s creation on earth. Yahweh formed the woman as “the helper” (an epithet often used of God as the deliverer, e.g. Exod 18:4; Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9, 10, 11; Hos 13:9) equal to the man (Gen 2:18). She was to share the responsibility of subduing and having dominion on earth (Gen 1:26-28). While Eve failed to subdue the “serpent” who deceived her (Gen 3:13; 1 Tim 2:14) and the infamous Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:13; 21:9-16) and the Judean queen Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:1-16; 2 Chr 23:12-15) used their royal power to do great evil, there are others in Israel’s history who exercised their political power and spiritual authority to bring deliverance

to their people. Deborah was a prophet and a judge (or ruler), who governed Israel during the twenty years of the Canaanites’ cruel oppression and then for additional forty years after a decisive victory over them (Judg 5:31). Her rule is presented as an extension of Yahweh’s reign over Israel, as Moses’ leadership had been. Women who walk in a redemptive calling, position, and responsibility are not deviating from God’s overall purpose for women; rather, they are fulfilling God’s purposes for redeemed women as rulers (cf. Eph 2:4-6; Rev 20:4, 6), consistent with God’s original intention for women before the Fall. As such, they are types of Christ.

In the New Testament, women are exhorted to exercise her authority given by God. When translated straightforwardly and without added words, Paul’s word to the woman in 1 Corinthians 11:10 is that “the woman ought to have authority over her head,” which is “man” according to verse 3.

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<sup>10</sup> In the Greek literature of the first three centuries, there are two occurrences (besides Rom 16:7) of the name Junia that refers to woman and no occurrences of masculine variant of this name. According to J. D. Crossan & J. Reed in *Search of Paul, How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004, 115), all of the 250 occurrences of the name Junia in Latin literature in antiquity refers to woman. Chrysostom (349 – 407 AD, Archbishop of Constantinople) recognized Junia as a woman

apostle. Eldon Jay Epp’s research on the name Junia also shows that earlier, theologically unbiased Greek texts printed the name Junia as feminine, but dramatically changed to masculine from the 1927 Nestle edition (*Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 2005, 60-64).

<sup>11</sup> However, he changed Junia to Junias (a male name), perhaps unable to conceive of a woman apostle and bishop, just as many modern translations have done (see Epp, *Junia*, 65-68).

The main biblical reason for the woman's authority is given in verse 9, "neither was man created because (*dia*, preposition, indicating the reason) of woman, but woman because of man." We recall that in Genesis 2, the woman is made because the man is incomplete without an equal "helper" or partner. That is, the man needs the woman to help him to "serve" and "guard" the Garden. The woman was given equal authority with the man to help him serve and guard the Garden, especially from the threats of the tempter who was seeking to overthrow them (Gen 3). In a cultural context that otherwise suppressed the voice of women, Paul was appealing to the creational story to exhort the women of Corinth to reclaim their creational authority to pray and prophesy freely, not only over women, but also over men. In the Garden, the woman exercised her authority over the man negatively by aiding him in his rebellion. In redemption, the woman is called to exercise her authority positively as a

redeemed member of the Spirit-empowered Body of Christ, to exercise her authority over God's congregation (male and female) to build up the body of Christ.

If so, the clause "because of the angels (*dia tou angelous*)" may be understood as referring to demonic beings that the women are once again called to rule over and overcome (together with men), which she failed to do in the Garden.<sup>12</sup> Since such authority was controversial for women (especially for many Jews), Paul has to highlight it in verse 10.<sup>13</sup> Yet, in an apparent effort to curtail any overestimation or misapplication of the authority of woman or a misunderstanding of male/female differences, Paul reinforces the interdependence, mutuality, and complementarity of men and women and their ultimate dependence on God in verses 11-12: "Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman *came* from man, even so man

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<sup>12</sup> This point depends on a theological interpretation of Genesis 2-3 that understands the serpent as "possessed" by the devil, a demonic being. This fits not only with New Testament references to the devil as "that ancient Serpent" (12:9, 29:2), but also with Paul's point that believers "will judge angels" (1 Cor 6:3), which implies authority over angels, whether fallen or unfallen.

<sup>13</sup> However, two points from earlier in 1 Corinthians prepare for this apparently radical move on Paul's part. First, Paul already asserts that wives have authority (*exousia*) over their husband's bodies—just as their husband's do over theirs (1 Cor 7:3). These points also apply for those who believe that Paul is speaking for the women's right or authority over her own literal head (and hair), which also would be controversial for many in Paul's audience.

also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.” The mutuality and equality of woman and man in creation and in redemption are clearly affirmed here.

Women and men in the body of Christ are called to mutual submission and unity, which is a manifestation of the infilling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18-15), so that they may stand effectively “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12). Mutual submission and unity that flows out of unity with God the Father and God the Son through the Holy Spirit also leads to the world knowing that the Father God loved the world that he sent Jesus Christ to the world to save it (John 3:16; 17:23).

## **Disciples**

But since the fruitfulness of one’s life will be judged not so much by what role we played or what important position we held or how much power or authority we had, but by how well we loved, it seems appropriate to end this reflection on the role of women on the call to love well. There were women who passionately loved Jesus and faithfully followed and served him from the beginning

of his ministry until the end. Taking the four gospels as emphasizing different individuals and highlighting different parts of the whole story (rather than as giving contradictory reports), we can name those women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, the mother of Zebedee’s sons, Salome, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, and Susanna who followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs out of their own means (Matt 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; Luke 8:2-3). The same group of women remained faithful to him even to the cross. Women anointed and prepared him for his burial (Matt 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50). Women were present at and were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and burial; they went to the tomb and saw and heard the angel announce the good news of Jesus’ resurrection; they were commissioned to announce the good news to the other disciples; they were the first to be encountered by the resurrected Jesus (Matt 27:55-56, 60-61; Matt 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-41; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 23:49; Luke 24:4-10; John 19:25). Their love and unwavering devotion marked them as the most privileged of all disciples of Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

The numerous examples of redeemed women who are in turn redemptive agents in the Bible far outweigh a handful of texts that temporarily restricted women's role in the public or ecclesial contexts (such as in 1 Tim 2:11-15 due to inadequate education). Patriarchy and its effects do not represent God's ultimate purpose for women in the Bible. The lives of the extraordinary women of the Old Testament—mothers, wives, proprietors, composers, rescuers, prophets, ministers, and rulers—are evidence of the measure of *shalom* (*šālôm*) that God brought to women as members of his redeemed people (see Pss 96:10, 97:2, 99:4; Isa 54:1; 60:18). They demonstrate the restored image of God, living out whom they are created and redeemed to be. They offer a foretaste of the future messianic age, in which *all* evil effects of the Fall will be completely vanquished and all aspects of life lavishly blessed (cf. Isa 11:6–9; 65:17; 66:22).

The Bible is marked and shaped by a thematic pattern that emphasizes redemption from sin and its evil effects. God purposefully acts to ensure that the consequences of sin found in Genesis 3 are

overcome and the creational intentions found in Genesis 1–2 are restored through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This narrative framework of the Bible urges its readers to see patriarchy as a regrettable result of human sin and God as one who consistently, albeit gradually, resists patriarchy until it is ultimately overturned. God's sovereign grace overcomes what human effort could not, and women and men of God become the carriers of that divine grace, as we wholly surrender ourselves to the way of love of Jesus Christ.

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# Leading Development at Home: Dr. Mabel Ping Hua Lee (1896-1966)

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Grace May

## **A Bold and Bright Voice**

In the early 1900's "suffrage" was a word to be eschewed in polite company, much the way that "feminism" today would be looked upon askance in certain circles. Undaunted, a bright, Hong Kong-born Christian by the name of Mabel Ping Hua Lee championed the cause. While her name is often overlooked in the annals of the movement, she was a voice and model for women's empowerment in her adopted city of New York.

For Mabel Lee, women's rights flowed out of a Christian worldview that she viewed

as foundational for America's government and the key to China's reconstruction. With her doctorate from Columbia University in hand, Dr. Lee eagerly anticipated returning to China to use her background in economics, education and political science to support the building of the young Republic. A combination of forces, however, led her to a different decision. Instead of entering into development on the international scene, she chose to focus on the ministry at her doorsteps in Chinatown. As the director of the First Chinese Baptist Church of New



York City (1926-1966), she built up a church that also served as a community center for many Chinese immigrants.<sup>1</sup> Not only did the church cater to Chinese worshippers<sup>2</sup> but from the moment a person stepped through the doors, they could choose to take English classes, enroll their children in Sunday School in English, or attend a Bible study and prayer meetings in Chinese. In addition, annual Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts, cooked by church members, made people feel more than welcome, it made them feel at home.

### **The Making of a Scholar-Activist**

On January 1, 1912, Sun Yat-sen overthrew the last emperor of China, ushering in the Republic of China and bringing to an end over three thousand years of dynastic rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Like Mabel Lee, Donaldina Cameron at the age of twenty five became superintendent of the Presbyterian Home in San Francisco's Chinatown. Whereas Lee focused on young immigrant men, Cameron committed herself to rescuing young Chinese immigrant women from indentured servitude. Both Lee and Cameron's work could technically be considered "domestic missions" because their work, though rooted in American soil, was seen as cross-cultural work from an American missions stand point, and was funded by their respective denomination's mission societies. See Twelbeck 2012, 135-63.

Four months later, half way across the world, on May 6, 1912, Mary Louise Wright reports, "Chinese Girl to Ride at Head of Suffrage Parade." In a loose newspaper clipping found in the archives of the First Chinese Baptist Church, Wright details that a sixteen-year-old Mabel Lee, the daughter of a Chinese minister, led the suffrage parade in New York City. At the time Mabel was still a student at Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn, one of the special schools designed to accommodate the new influx of immigrant children.<sup>3</sup>

While many Americans avoided publically showing support for suffrage, the Lee family embraced the cause – Mabel's mother with her bound feet quietly participated, and her father was proud that he had invested in his

<sup>2</sup> Services were conducted in Cantonese, because the primary group of Chinese residing in the United States during Lee's lifetime were from Hong Kong and Guandong Province and spoke Cantonese.

<sup>3</sup> Between 1900 and 1904, student enrollment in NYC public schools increased by 132,000. By 1911, at Erasmus, a second phase of construction made space for an additional 1,451 students with much of the increase due to immigration. Accessed October 20, 2016.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmus\\_Hall\\_High\\_School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmus_Hall_High_School)

daughter's education as much as he would have any son. Consequently, Mabel was able to remain a filial daughter, honoring her parents, while adopting progressive ideals that were permeating cities across the nation and the world.<sup>4</sup>

In 1913, Lee applied to and was accepted at Barnard College, one of the Seven Sisters colleges, and was the first woman to receive a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship.<sup>5</sup> From the start, she threw

herself, heart and mind, into her studies and promoted women's rights. A confident and articulate leader, she defended her position in the *Chinese Student Monthly* (1914), gave an award-winning speech entitled "Chinese Patriotism" (1914), spoke on "China's Submerged Half" (c.1915), gave a speech at the Suffrage Workshop (1915), and even ran

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<sup>4</sup> On April 11, 1912 in the Portland Hotel, seven Chinese women attended a special luncheon sponsored by the College Women's Equal Suffrage association in Oregon. Racial lines were suspended for an afternoon while Chinese sat side by side with their American counterparts. Dr. S. K. Chan, a physician and the president of a local suffrage league, gave a brief address, "We Chinese women have much to be thankful for. You sent your missionaries . . . and they told us about the destiny and equality of man . . . But we have taken one step ahead of you. You have brought us the truths of the rights of man and we have put them into practice by granting our women the ballot" (*Oregonian* 1912, 16). Dr. Chan extolled China as surpassing the United States by granting the franchise to women earlier, apparently assuming that the new constitutional government, established in 1912, would immediately confer the right to vote on women, but China's daughters waited until 1947 before they could vote.

Meanwhile, in November 1912, Oregon's Equal Suffrage Proclamation was signed. Unfortunately, Dr. Chan, still could not vote, because according to U.S. law her race disqualified her from citizenship. How often race and gender have conspired against human rights.

<sup>5</sup> Inflamed by expanding foreign spheres of influence and the extraterritoriality rights of foreigners, a group known as the Righteous Harmonious Fists ("the Boxers") wanted to re-assert Chinese sovereignty by ridding China of foreign powers. European forces united and responded by bringing 20,000 armed soldiers to squash the "Rebellion" (1901) and exacted an indemnity of 450 million *taels* of silver—exceeding China's annual tax revenue. America used a portion of the payment to establish the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship to pay for the tuition of Chinese students who qualified to study in America. Since Lee was still a Chinese citizen, she was able to receive a scholarship for her studies at Barnard.

for president of the Chinese Students Association (1917).<sup>6</sup>

Majoring in history and philosophy at Barnard, Lee often cited examples of women's oppression in China and America in her writings and speeches. In her article on "The Meaning of Suffrage" (1914), she summarized the history of women's education as girls proving their mettle from the 3 R's to secondary school to university (Lee 1914, 3). By contrast in "China's Submerged Half," Lee compared the plight of China's daughters, remaining confined to their homes, subservient to their husbands, and often with bound feet. In 1700 years, rarely was any thought given to Chinese daughters receiving an education. Crediting Western cross-cultural workers with opening schools for girls and women in China for the first time, Lee now called on her Chinese classmates to help further empower their sisters in China who were "half free, half shackled," needing laws to be enforced to safeguard their rights (Lee 1915, 5).

## Addressing the Roots of Women's Rights

Lee saw suffrage as an outgrowth of democracy and both rights as expressions of Christian values. In describing the progression of democracy, she wrote, "true feminism" is "the extension of democracy or social justice and equality of opportunities to women" (Lee 1914, 531). If properly extended to women, democracy would demand that women receive the same opportunities as men and be held to the same standards as men. While acknowledging that independence for women in China would necessarily look different from independence in America, Lee nevertheless affirmed democracy in any country unfolding along common lines, a process involving "four stages": moral, legal, political and economic. The first stage is moral, which could also be characterized as spiritual or religious, and is "represented by the early Christian movement" with its call to treat the servant and the ruler as equals before God. The principal is embodied in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (1914, 527).

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<sup>6</sup> Lee was active in the Chinese Christian Students Association, but she apparently felt confident that her credentials merited recognition across the Chinese

student body. Although she lost to T.V. Soong, some believe he may have tampered with the ballots (Tseng 1996, 5).

The second stage is legal and refers to equality before the law, which originated with the Magna Carta (1914, 527). The third is political and entails the right to choose those who govern, a fundamental right established in the Declaration of Independence, which women were currently seeking and Lee noted was compromised by the “negro question” (1914, 527). Finally, the fourth is economic, which promises “full reward of labor” to all workers. In protest of the great disparities of income that she saw, Lee actually advocated for government ownership of the means of production. While the idea is borrowed from the Communist Manifesto, Lee still saw a socialist outworking of economic equality as integral to a truly democratic society (1914, 527). As the twentieth century unfolded, Lee’s vision of democracy paralleled the four stages of development in China more closely than it did in America.

Lee elaborated on the relevance of economics to women’s empowerment:

The history of this economic phase [of democracy] divides itself into three . . . conceptions. First, there is the old conception that woman, single or

married, should remain at home. Then there comes the industrial revolution, taking the industry out of the home and consequently taking the woman out with it. In order to meet this new condition, there arises a second conception, that woman must choose from the two prerogatives of either getting married or going out to business, and that as soon as a woman gets married she must leave her profession and stay at home. The second conception is the one we are living under, but there is a third conception on its way which says that woman whether married or not should have economic freedom. (1914, 529)

In direct rebuttal to anti-suffrage arguments in China that believed women’s nature and abilities made her predisposed to stay at home, Lee argued that educated, professional women offered far more to their families than homemakers, who focused exclusively on domestic chores. Rather than remaining “distinctly inferior to man intellectually,” a woman could actually gain from having employment outside the home (1914, 530). The mental stimulation would enrich her marriage and could make her

intellectually more compatible to her husband, lessening the chances of him “rush[ing] to his club or other congenial society (1914, 530). Lee contended that “if they [husband and wife] both can be self-supporting,” and a woman “does not marry for mercenary purposes,” there would be a greater degree of mutual respect in the marriage, which could only benefit both partners (1914, 530). Finally, Lee suggested that a child turns to a mother most for “sympathy and confidence” and if a mother “has some intellectual interest to occupy her for a part of the day,” she could then return to her childrearing duties “fresher” (1914, 530).

Implicit in Lee’s arguments is the fact that a woman is human; therefore, her growth and well being are important. Dr. Louise Edwards, a professor of modern Chinese history, has observed that the women’s movement in China prioritized the Enlightenment value of “natural rights” over “natural order.” Those who advocate for natural rights seek equality on the basis that men and women are created equal and therefore should have equal rights; whereas those who insist on “natural order” adhere to a social order based on the belief that men and women each have a different essence

and therefore their roles in society necessarily differ. Adherents of the natural order even occasionally argued that women were “equal but different” (Edwards 2005, 118-121). From a biblical worldview, however, what is our common humanity and equality rooted in, if not our being created in the divine image? As Lee clearly upholds a Christ-centered worldview, it would be fascinating to explore whether in her sermons or other writings, she develops the theme of *imago Dei* or another line of theological argumentation in support of women’s empowerment.

### **Addressing the Roots of Nation Building**

Lee connected the full rights of women to nation building, which was strategic. By the 1920’s it was a foregone conclusion in China that to establish a constitutional form of government would require change, and much of the educated class regarded the change positively. In Lee’s own words, “the feministic movement is not one for privileges to women, but one for the requirement of women to be worthy citizens [who] contribute their share to the steady progress of our country towards prosperity

and national greatness” (1914, 531). To support women’s rights was a step to a brighter future.

In “China’s Submerged Half,” Lee opens with a personal plea.

I plead for a wider sphere of *usefulness* for the long submerged women of China. I ask for our girls the open door to the treasury of knowledge, the same opportunities for physical development as boys and the same rights of participation in all human activities of which they are individually capable [italics provided by author].

Lee’s allusion to education and even political engagement would not have been lost on her Chinese or American audience. Her appeal to “usefulness,” however, was a distinctly nineteenth century Protestant theme that appeared in correspondence and writings of Christian women working cross-culturally. Education, for instance, was not intended as

a reason for boasting or self-improvement, nor was it meant as an outward adornment to make one more attractive to a suitor,<sup>7</sup> but the goal of female education was to equip women with the skills to make them “useful” (Robert 1997, 33-35). Standing on the shoulders of a century of women cross-cultural workers, motivated by a deep desire to be “useful” in God’s vineyard, Lee was similarly calling on twentieth century Chinese Christian women to demonstrate their “usefulness” as both a sign of genuine conversion and a mark of Christian discipleship.

In the nineteenth century, there was not as sharp a divide between social reform and evangelism as a means of reaching the world for Christ. According to the religious historian Rev. Dr. Timothy Tseng, “[Lee’s] father’s generation never questioned the social usefulness of Protestant Christianity for modern China” (Tseng 1996, 3). Lee’s father, Rev. Towe Lee (1861-1924) benefitted from both the educational and

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<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the Mount Holyoke model represented a different cross-cultural strategy, where the preeminent goal of female education was to make women better wives, so that their husbands and children could be won over by their godly example.

The intent was to make women “useful” (Robert 2005, 110) in their given cultural context and not to introduce English, western clothing, foreign manners, or other potential barriers to the gospel (Robert 2005, 111).

evangelistic arms of the church. While at a school in China established by cross-cultural workers, Towe converted to Christianity and learned English. Building schools, establishing hospitals and training leaders as well as evangelizing the nation were all part of the Christian legacy of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, many Americans and Chinese assumed that in the diplomatic service as well as ministry, Christianity would continue to be useful in the as the new Republic embarked on the road to a more democratic form of government.

Part of what made women's empowerment appealing in the beginning of the twentieth century was that it was not couched in self-serving terms but as part of a larger discourse on nation building, as attested to by Dr. Edwards. "During these early decades of the twentieth century China's suffrage activists emerged as self-sacrificing, loyal political workers whose goal lay not in wresting power from men for selfish political gain. Rather, their goals were to modernize the nation, to rebuild the nation and to win international respectability for the nation" (Edwards 2005, 109). Identifying the motivation of pioneers in the women's rights movement as "self-sacrificing" was key, because it reflected

the traditional values of a virtuous Chinese wife, mother and daughter while simultaneously stretching their roles to include care for one's nation. To depict the transformation for women, not as a radical departure from tradition, but as part of a continuum, allowed a Confucian vision of womanhood to extend into the modern era insofar as "self-sacrifice" was simultaneously at the heart of the Confucian ethic and the core of Christianity (Edwards 2005, 109-110).

### **A Decisive Turn in Lee's Career**

During the 1920's and 30's, after years of study, preparing to contribute to the reform efforts in China, Lee yearned to return to China. In 1921, the same year she graduated with a doctoral degree from Columbia University, her dissertation *The Economic History of China, With Special Reference to Agriculture* was published. Her book provided a technical recounting of the agricultural policies from the beginnings of Chinese civilization through the establishment of the Republic of China. Her fluency in Chinese and English proved an enormous asset as she was able to read all

the Chinese sources in the original and provide her analysis adeptly in English.

Lee was part of an elite coterie of Western trained, Chinese scholars, many of whom would exert enormous influence on the world stage in the decades to come. Lee's friend Hu Shih (1891-1962), for example, had received a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and was sent to Cornell University as an undergraduate to study agriculture but in 1912 switched his major to literature and philosophy. He then pursued his doctoral studies in literature at Columbia University, where he graduated in 1917, just as Lee was beginning her doctoral program. Later Hu became the ambassador of the Republic of China to the United States (1938-42) and chancellor of Peking University (1946-48). In 1929, as she would later write in a letter, "It seems that China is run by my personal friends. One is head of this University and another of that; one is in charge of all the railroads in China, and another of Finance or Education" (as quoted in Tseng 1996, 5).

The October 1921 issue of the *Christian China* journal announced that, "Miss Mabel Lee received the degree of the doctorate of philosophy from Columbia University, New

York" and that she "is planning to return to China in the near future" (*Christian China* 1921, 89). In 1923, The *Metropolitan Baptist Bulletin* of New York City reported that in March of that year Lee set sail for France to study "European Economics, in fuller preparation for her life work, in her native land, China" and anticipated that "a position of great trust and signal honor awaits her arrival in China" (*Metropolitan Baptist Bulletin* 1923, 10). In fact, Lee was offered a position as the Dean of Women students at the Amoy University, but she declined, preferring to enter into business with an export firm in Hong Kong (Gee 2001, 14-15).

Although only blocks away from Wall Street and a short distance from the Upper East Side, the dilapidated streets of Chinatown seemed worlds away from the rich, gilded community of New York City. While a member of the privileged Chinese American upper class, Lee, was still a non-white immigrant who had to rely on the goodwill of American benefactors to travel abroad or even within the United States. Prejudice was a reality. She experienced blatant American affronts and endured the racist policies embodied in the Chinese



Exclusion Acts of 1882, prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering the country, and the Immigration Act of 1924, that outlawed all Asian immigration.

Then tragedy struck on Sunday, November 23, 1924, four days before Thanksgiving. Rev. Lee Towe, suddenly died while arbitrating in a *tong* (gang) war. The heart attack or stroke that took away Mabel's father's life interrupted her career path, but when duty called, she responded with alacrity. On the first day of the new year in 1925, Lee who was still in her twenties accepted the appointment to be the Superintendent and Minister in charge of the Morning Star Mission<sup>8</sup> by the New York City Baptist Mission Society and the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Galvanizing volunteers from her network of associates from Columbia University, Chinatown businesses and her denomination, she led a school for young immigrants, age fifteen to twenty, from Monday through Friday from seven o'clock to nine o'clock in the evenings, concluding with a daily devotional (Quan 2016, 6). Then on Sundays, she led worship services

and other special gatherings at the church. *The Metropolitan Baptist Bulletin* recorded Lee's reflections. "I can think of nothing more attractive than our work of shaping these young lives into the stature of Christian manhood. What a privilege to look into the face of a growing boy and have his faith and confidence and see him grow in Christ and Christ in him!" (as quoted in Quan 106, 6). Within a year's time, seventeen openly confessed Christ and were baptized. As Lee was not ordained, she invited a minister who was, to officiate (Quan 2016, 6).

Although Lee operated at a distinct disadvantage as an unordained, Chinese woman overseeing the church, she did not let these handicaps deter her. Her father had won the trust of Chinatown leaders and residents, becoming the president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the chairperson of the Lin Sing Welfare Society. Consequently, she did not hesitate to call upon these groups to donate to a memorial fund to honor her father, despite the fact that these organizations were dominated by male

in Chinatown under the New York City Baptist Mission Society.

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<sup>8</sup> The Morningstar Mission was started by the Woman's American Baptist Mission Society in 1892 and then merged in 1912 with the Methodist Work

leaders who probably did not share the same progressive ideas about women that her father did. Growing up under her father's tutelage would have nurtured Lee in a robust evangelical faith; at the same time, during her adult years, she would have been exposed to the Social Gospel that was emanating from bastions like Union Theological Seminary. Located across the street from Columbia, Union ordained its first woman in 1897. Regardless, Lee never expressed any interest in attending seminary, rather her goal remained to contribute her expertise in education and economics to China's reconstruction.

On July 3, 1925, the same year Lee assumed the leadership of the church in response to the anti-imperialism fomenting in China, she wrote a circular letter to her congregation, still preserved though not collated in the church's archives. She urged her hearers not to blame all of China's woes on foreign powers but to respond as Christians "by putting Christ within" their hearts.

It is not the nationality which counts.  
Not all Chinese are to be trusted, and  
not all foreigners are anxious to crush us.

We have many foreign friends who are very anxious to help us win our rights. The difference lies in the fact that they have Christianity in their hearts. . . Christianity is the salvation of China, and the salvation of the whole world.  
(Lee 1925)

She insisted that Christian faith and practice held the solutions to humanity's problems. It was not only doctrine, but principals put into practice that would bring about the necessary transformation of society. She saw Christian values as central in replacing imperial rule with democracy in China and no less so in bringing about the passage of the nineteenth amendment in the United States.

Lee's idealism and faith, however, did not shield her from conflict within her denomination or weariness from long days of ministry. The path began happily enough. In 1926, the congregation officially incorporated as the First Chinese Baptist Church. Congratulations poured in from the Consul General, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the Lin Sing Welfare Society, and Chinese churches throughout the United States and even

Canada. Gifts and donations were given both to celebrate the opening of the church and to commemorate the death of Rev. Lee Towe, the founder of the Baptist outreach in Chinatown. Lee and Dr. Charles H. Sears, the Superintendent of the New York City Baptist Mission Society, collaborated to collect monies to build her father a memorial (Tseng 1996, 6).

Initially the American Baptist Home Society purchased the building at 21 Pell Street in Chinatown (the current location of First Chinese Baptist Church), but afterwards it was deemed inadequate for the community center. Aided by a substantial contribution from an E.L. Ballard,<sup>9</sup> however, Lee was able to purchase a building around the block at 7-9 Mott Street, the location of the restaurant where Rev. Lee Towe was killed. The hope was then to use the money from the sale of 21 Pell Street to pay for renovations for the building on Mott Street, a decision for which Lee was able to gain Sears' support. After the Depression, however, when real estate prices plummeted, the New York City Baptist Mission Society desired to sell the Pell Street property. Knowing how essential

it was for the church to be free from denominational control, Lee was willing to invest all of her family's savings and business income to buy the property. Her only stipulation was that the title be transferred to the church. After successful negotiations, the mission society went back on its promise. For two decades Lee persisted in her efforts to try to obtain the title, so convinced was she of the importance of the church owning its own property and not being beholden to the denomination. But all she met with was frustration and disgust. The denomination refused to relinquish control. It was only in 1944 after the death of Sears, that Lee was able to seize the title, but it would take another ten years before the title was legally vested in the church (Tseng 1996, 8-11).

In truth Lee may have made her most important decision with respect to the church back in 1937, when she made her final trip to China, carrying a letter of endorsement from Sears. It was this trip that sealed her decision to remain in the U.S. China and Japan were at war, and Nanjing and Shanghai were in ruins. The level of violence, political turbulence and

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<sup>9</sup>The Moody's Manual of Railroads and Corporation Securities of 1918 records an E.L. Ballard as the

Treasurer of the Automatic Record Co., incorporated in Delaware in 1910.

hazardous road conditions made it unwise to relocate to China. In the end, she would not fulfill her dream to contribute to the modernization of her country of origin, but her long and arduous battle with her denomination had secured an independent identity for her congregation as a Chinese church. Finally, First Chinese Baptist Church would no longer be regarded as a denominational outpost.

By the mid-1950's, Lee was the uncontested leader of the church. No longer embroiled in the fight over the property, she could turn her attention to building up the congregation. Unfortunately, at age sixty, her energies were limited and the membership of the church had declined, but she nonetheless focused on the educational and spiritual empowerment of her congregation. She taught English to immigrants and mentored a younger generation of Chinese American students. Deacon Steven Gee (1925-2001) who grew up under her mentorship graduated with a degree in engineering and was the first Chinese American to be hired by AT&T. Mrs. Rose Eng, who remained active in the City College of Chinese Alumni Association, remembered Lee taking her

family and her to visit the campus of Columbia University. Similarly, Deacon Gary Quan, who is currently still active in the church's leadership, recalls how Lee drove him up to Columbia University when he was still a youth and how she quipped that he could go through the school in one day while it took her years. Lee invested in so many young lives, helping them to apply to college and to aspire for more for themselves (Quan 2016, 5-6).

Lee endured the fall out of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and the changing demographics of Chinese immigration. With more relaxed immigration policies in the 1950's and 1960's, Mandarin-speaking Chinese and Taiwanese started entering New York City. While Lee never joined the ranks of liberal Christians, like many Protestants in her generation, she adhered to an evangelicalism that valued and encouraged civic involvement. The church was intended to be a place of nurture, which included assisting immigrants to adopt to their new home, whether that was by helping them acquire fluency in English or insuring that their children received an excellent education. In contrast, a new breed of

independent Chinese pastors who focused almost exclusively on piety and evangelism were reaching America's shores. Converted through revivalist preaching by independent Christian preachers, they represented a separatist stream of evangelicalism that tended to be more theologically conservative than mainstream, denominational Protestantism. As a result, those seeking a more theological conservative church left the congregation while other younger members of First Chinese Baptist chose to go to congregations with more people their age. Deacon Quan captured the essence of Lee's beliefs: "Dr. Mabel Lee espoused the godly virtue of being faithful or doing one's duty on the personal level individually and on the corporate level to society" (Quan 2016, 5). Civic responsibility was elevated to a sacred duty, or as Hu Shih elegantly put it, Lee's goal was to build a church with a vision to promote justice courageously (captured in the four-word Chinese proverb *jian yi yong wei*).

During Lee's last years of ministry, Lee chose to preach on different hymns of the church and their authors. Three of her favorite hymns embodied her convictions: "Rise Up, O Men of God," written by William Pierson Merrill; "I Would Be

True," written by Howard Arnold Walter; and "This Is My Father's World," written by Maltie B. Babcock (Quan 2016, 5). Rev. Merrill (1867-1951) was a Presbyterian minister, a graduate from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, a pacifist and the pastor of the prestigious Brick Presbyterian Church on the Upper East Side of New York City. In the very first stanza of "Rise Up, O Men of God," Merrill calls for undivided devotion, "Give heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the King of Kings." Then with confidence he calls for "the men of God" to "bring in the day of brotherhood and end the night of wrong," for "the church doth wait . . . rise up and make her great." The call for an elite corp of Christian leaders echoes Lee's belief that democracy is actually a meritocracy, where those who have made the most of their opportunities and talents earn the right to govern (Lee 1914, 528). The belief in progress and the ability to usher in a better world, rings true in the hymn "I Would Be Strong," especially in the line, "I would be brave, for there is much to dare." The future envisioned by both of these hymns reflected a post-millennial belief that God would usher in a reign of peace and harmony before Christ's return. In light of a glorious

future, it was the Christian's duty to be "true," "pure," "strong," "brave," "giving," "humble," and "faithful." In keeping with the optimistic spirit of these hymns, many Protestant congregations in the 1950's enjoyed numerical growth and participated in expansive building campaigns. Rev. Walter (1883-1918) actually wrote "I Would Be True" as a poem for his mother while teaching as a YMCA missionary at the esteemed Forman Christian College in India (now relocated to Punjab, Pakistan). His sacrificial life, cut short by a bout with influenza, would not have been lost on Lee, who journeyed to a far off land and invested her life in planting a community center in Chinatown. Finally, despite extolling the beauty of the created order "This Is My Father's World," Rev. Babcock (1858-1901) had to remind himself "O let me ne'er forget that, though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet" and reassure himself, in lines that are most often left out in today's hymnals, "Why should my heart be sad? The Lord is king; let the heavens ring!" Lauded as a great orator, the young pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, nevertheless, struggled with depression and ultimately succumbed to suicide. During Lee's long,

drawn out struggle with the denomination while she was single-handedly shouldering the burden of the church, the hope is that the lives of these hymnists might have comforted her, letting her know that she was not alone in her suffering or devotion.

Lee passed quietly from the scene in 1966, but not without leaving a legacy. She had fought and won on so many fronts. As a college student she advocated for women's rights and participated in the move to extend the suffrage to women in 1920. She earned a doctorate in political science at Columbia University, leaving an inspiring example for a younger generation of Chinese American men and women. The daughter of a beloved pastor, she led the congregation of the First Chinese Baptist Church for over forty years despite the lack of support from her denomination. Her commitment to education as a means of social advancement continues to the present through the summer youth program led by Deacon Robert Gee, the son of the Deacon Steven Gee, while her mission to the Chinese community is embodied in programs led by the current pastor, Rev. Bayer Lee (Quan 2016, 5). In recent years, the church continues to open her doors for Sunday

worship services and Sunday meals; showcases films, concerts and exhibits by Asian Americans; and serves as meeting place for a Christian women's empowerment group. Like his predecessor, Rev. Lee is a graduate of Columbia University, a Fulbright scholar, fluent in Cantonese and English who values the independence of the Chinese church. A simple commemorative stone with the words "Memorial" inscribed in Chinese by Dr. Hu Shih still adorns the front entrance. While the original intention was to honor Rev. Lee Towe, it is also a fitting testament to Dr. Mabel Lee. For it was her conviction that Christian faith leads to service that provided a unifying vision of development that applies as much to the world around the corner as it does to distant lands.

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# Mary McLeod Bethune: An Agent of Change and Leadership in the Christian Community of America

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Namarr Newson

## **Introduction of this Lady**

Considering the universal Christian church, it is very important for us members of the Christendom to recognize and acknowledge our great servant and contributor. This is a lady that should not only be remembered for her work in the social/economic development within the United States of America, the African American community/civil rights, or women's rights, but also for her heroics and inspirational advancements as a vocational minister. Her groundbreaking achievements are a cornerstone of how a person can use Christian faith as the foundation of using vocational trades to share the Gospel. This research will highlight this lady that is also

known as "The Black Rose" and her contribution to the Christian community in America and her inspiration for people across the world, especially women.

Between 1933 and 1945, Mary McLeod Bethune was arguably the most powerful African American person in America. According to her own testimony, this was due largely to the exercise of her religious faith. Her devout Christian faith was a faith planted within the environment of a devout Christian home and nurtured during its early stages within the fellowship of an all-African American Methodist Church. However, she would not officially affiliate with Methodism until she was nearly fifty

years old. For the better part of her life she practiced her faith under the banner of Presbyterianism. Mary Bethune emerged as one of the nation's foremost leaders, barring race and gender, during the first half of the twentieth century (Newsome 1992, 7-8).

She was the first African American lady to establish a four-year institution of higher learning--in the world. As Bethune-Cookman College. She is the first African American lady to found a national organization to lobby the federal government primarily on behalf of black women and children, the National Council of Negro Women; and, as director of the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration (NYA) during the Franklin D. Roosevelt presidency, she was the first African American lady, and also the first African American person to hold such a high-level federal appointment. Over the course of her career she was an advisor to three presidents (Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman) and the recipient of many of the nation's most coveted awards, including the NAACP's prestigious Spingarn Medal (Newsome 1992, 7-8).

Mary McLeod Bethune was born in a farming environment of Mayesville, South

Carolina, on July 10, 1875. As the fifteenth of seventeen children, her parents were freed slaves who depended upon employment from their former owners for financial stability. Her parents converted to Christianity during the period of their enslavement. Both her father and her mother, Samuel McLeod and Patsy McIntosh, belonged to men who were regarded throughout the community as being God-fearing, Christian, church-going gentlemen. During their enslavement Bethune's parents were often forced to attend church with their owners. The McLeods were serious about their faith as they felt entirely the racial discrimination, political disfranchisement, and economic deprivation that damaged the environment. Despite all the disadvantages one could endure, including being of female gender, Bethune overcame the odds and credited the Lord for this.

### **An Agent of Change**

Historically, it has been a phenomenon for many years that African Americans were largely excluded from American history. This doesn't mean that they were not officially mentioned in American history. Rather, they were mentioned, but not so

much as agents and contributors but more so as objects and as an annoying population that should have only been serviceable for laboring and pleasing the White American majority in whatever way possible. We should also remember that there were several laws placed against African Americans, and those laws denied them the equality with their White American contemporaries.

Usually, African Americans' presentation from the White American majority excluded their origin in Africa. It was also not usually emphasized that they greatly contributed something productive or productive enough to American customs. For example, an elder African American lady once told me that she didn't know that African Americans had such inventions to their credit or accomplished such great achievements until she studied in college. This was a late study for her because she claimed that she wasn't taught this historical information as a student in grade school. Currently, this elder lady is barely over the age of 60. Imagine how much more historical information was excluded during Mary McLeod Bethune's generation.

Historically Black Colleges were important in developing the study of African

American history, not only by introducing courses in the subject but also by having faculty members that devoted themselves to teaching the subject matter (Early 2004, 30-32). We recognize Bethune-Cookman College, now known as Bethune-Cookman University, as a Historically Black College because it was founded by an African American person, Bethune. We also recognize it as a college/university affiliated with the United Methodist Church (Hawkins 2012, 14-15). As founder and president of Bethune Cookman-College, Bethune gave many African Americans an opportunity to learn how to read & write and definitely a chance to learn how to read the Bible. Interestingly, while attending college, even though Bethune wanted to become a cross-cultural worker in Africa, she never became one. Instead, she established a school for African American young ladies in Florida. Eventually, this school would partner with an African American boys' school. As a result, Bethune-Cookman School was established. It became the first fully accredited four-year college for African Americans in Florida (Hanson 2003, 35). Bethune would have many opportunities ministering to her students on her own college campus.

Before Bethune established Bethune-Cookman College, she relocated to Palatka, Florida with her husband Albertus, and gave birth to a son, Albert. In Palatka, she opened a Christian school, where she taught for five years. She later moved to Daytona, where crime, prejudice, ignorance, and inadequate educational facilities prompted her to make a difference. Thus, opening the Daytona Normal and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904. Beginning with five young students, these young ladies were instructed in Christian piety and self-reliance. The young ladies were to rise early in the morning for Bible study. In 1905, Bethune campaigned to outlaw the local sale of liquor. This launched an evangelical campaign for restraining alcoholic drinks among African Americans that lived in the lumber companies' work camps near Daytona. Over time, this offered academic subjects and expanded to include a farm, high school, and nursing school. By its second year of enrollment, the school consisted of 250 students (Gates 2000, 42-45).

Bethune was known to be deeply religious, firmly believing in the power of prayer. Whenever there was difficulty, she would say, "Let's go have prayer." While in

her office, she would pray out loud, prompting others to get on their knees and bow their heads. She also repeated hymns, "Oh what a fellowship, leaning on the everlasting arms." Her faith gave her confidence and direction (Height 1994, 102).

It is obvious that Bethune was a very busy person as president of the school. She did not stop there. Bethune also served as an overseer of local women's organizations. This work peaked into her founding of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1935. The NCNW would eventually aid the African American community in social welfare programs. After joining Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration, she served on FDR's "Black Cabinet" advising the president on race matters from 1936-1945. From 1939-1943, she was director of Negro Affairs for the National Youth Administration. Bethune fought towards securing state and local government positions for African Americans. Bethune's heroic commitments reflected her religious sensibilities, combining her faith with shrewd intelligence (Gates Jr. & West 2000, 42-45).

It is clear that she resented racism, sexism, chauvinism, and cared for the people

that shared her ethnicity. Through her lifestyle, Bethune was even more distinct that her motives and intentions reflected her faith in the Lord. With all of these accomplishments mentioned, it is safe to presume that she would not have embodied such diligence and sincerity if she did not remember the Lord first. Dr. James Melvin Washington writes that the absurdities of racism insinuate themselves in conscious and unconscious ways in the lives of Black people. Religion has been a central way for us to maintain our sanity (Washington 1994, xxviii).

Bethune served in vocational ministry for decades. These decades of her service consisted of some of the worst ordeals in American history. Ordeals that involved too much negativity both inside and towards the African American community. Dr. James Melvin Washington also wrote that demons thrive best in the dark intervening time periods of human history, and the parentage of real power lies in the sinister womb of negativity (Washington 1994, xxxvii-xxxviii). Bethune was not only a fighter, but a champion. A hero of the faith. Why would she not be considered as An Agent of Change in International Development?

## Legacy

We understand Christendom as the worldwide Christian community. Mary McLeod Bethune's legacy in the Christendom is vast. As mentioned earlier, she was the first African American lady to establish a four-year institution of higher learning in the world, and this institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Today, there are several Historically Black Colleges that are affiliated with the United Methodist Church. This is not to say that Bethune is the main reason for the development of Historically Black Colleges' affiliation with the UMC, but it is to say that she might be the first woman to lead a higher education institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It can be agreed that Bethune's faith, leadership as a woman, and partnership with UMC carried over to other Historically Black Colleges and colleges for women.

Currently, Bethune-Cookman University, Bennet College for Women, Claflin University, Clark Atlanta University, Dillard University, Huston-Tillotson University, Meharry Medical College, Paine College, Philander Smith College, Rust College, and Wiley College are affiliated

with the United Methodist Church (Hawkins 2012, 14). As mentioned earlier, in 1904 Bethune opened the Daytona Normal and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904. Beginning with five young students, these young ladies were instructed in Christian piety and self-reliance. A similar establishment happened in 1915, when Katharine Drexel, a Philadelphia heiress turned Catholic Nun and later honored as a saint, used her inheritance to open a high school for Black and Native American children in an American southern state. Drexel wanted to give Black and Native American children the Catholic-oriented education she thought they lacked. Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament added Xavier University of New Orleans, a four-year college, in 1925. It remains the country's only Black Catholic University (Hawkins 2012, 15).

While gender inequality exists in the United States between men and women in nearly almost all social classes and all racial and ethnic groups, the form and meaning of this inequality varies among different groups and classes. The challenges and problems faced by working-class women are different from the challenges and problems faced by middle-class women. African American and

Latina Women are confronted with different problems and different forms of gender inequality from those faced by White American, Non-Hispanic women. Considering gender, ethnicity, and labor force participation, one way these experiences have been different is the extent to which the role of women has been linked to the home as opposed to work outside the home. Middle-class women brought about the housewife role. The expectation was that the husband would be the one that earns the money to support the family, while the wife remained at home, raised the children and cared for the house (Farley 2000, 436).

Bethune overcame the odds of being a woman, being African American, and being a descendent of slaves. She was not a typical housewife; she was not a working-class woman. Yet, she's considerably one of the hardest-working women in American history and an outstanding, recognizable contributor in the Christian community. Bethune died on May 18, 1955. As we remember women as agents of change in international development, let's remember Mary Mcleod Bethune.

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# Short Biographies of Women in International Development<sup>1</sup>

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## **Marie Monsen: Norwegian Cross-Cultural Worker to Henan**

*Yalin Xin, Associate Professor, William Carey International University*

One of the cultural tendencies of the Chinese is the emphasis on the past—historical figures and events. The experience and wisdom of an authoritative person in the past often serve as great reference for the present. This is naturally reflected in how Christians in Henan remember Marie Monsen. Obviously the Spirit of God can make use of the cultural traits for his own purposes when we look at Marie's life and ministry in perspective of the dynamic Word of Life (WOL) movement. In conversation with

believers about the history of the WOL church, Marie Monsen is often and commonly mentioned with appreciation and respect, as someone who dedicated herself to cross-cultural Christian service in central China as well as a role model in ministry that has had significant impact on the WOL movement. She is part of the story, and continues to be remembered as the spiritual mother of the Christian faith tradition in Henan.

Who was Marie Monsen? The Norwegian Journal of Gender Research has this to say about Monsen,

One prominent Scandinavian woman missionary who became a successful religious authority in her own right was Marie Monsen (1872–1962) in the Norwegian

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<sup>1</sup> These short biographies and an excerpt on Marie Monsen were originally published in *Agents of International Development and Shalom* (WCIU Press, 2015).

Lutheran Mission. Her Christian calling and personal religious experience legitimized her own roles as a preacher for men as well as for women and children in China, and as spiritual counselor for male Christian leaders. (Okkenhaug 2004)

Marie Monsen was born and grew up in Bergen, Norway. Her mother was among the advocates in the popular movement led by Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824), which inspired women in ministry and a movement of evangelical cross-cultural service (see Soltvedt 1999, 1–4). Marie responded to the call and joined Norwegian Lutheran Mission (Det norske lutherske Kinamisjonsforbund, later called Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband) (Mikaelsson 2003, 121). She went to China in 1901 and was stationed in Nanyang, Henan Province. She engaged in educational ministry there, running a girl's school and training Chinese Bible women. In the later part of her time in China, because of evacuation of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) from Henan due to social and political instability, Marie Monsen travelled extensively in

Northern China, preaching in churches and organizations, instrumental in “instigating a religious awakening among missionaries and Chinese church leaders” (Mikaelsson 2003, 125).

Marie Monsen was regarded as the catalyst for the famous Shantung Revival that swept multiple cities and counties in Shantung Province and sent its ripples back to Henan Province where she had served in the previous years. She was known for her insistence on confession of sins and born-again spirituality, which left a long-lasting mark on the spirituality of Christians to whom she ministered. Leslie Lyall acknowledges the spirit-empowered role Marie played in the revival,

The pioneer of the spiritual ‘new life movement’, the handmaiden upon whom the Spirit was first poured out was Marie Monsen of Norway. Her surgical skill in exposing the sins hidden within the Church and lurking behind the smiling exterior of many trusted Christian—even many a trusted Christian leader—and her quiet insistence on a clear-cut experience

of the new birth set the pattern for others to follow. (Lyll 1961, 21)

According to Deborah Hsu, a leader of the WOL movement, one of her great aunts came to faith through Marie's ministry. She would often share with Deborah about how Maria Monsen, empowered by the Spirit of God, led revival meetings and ministered among women in Nanyang. In her ministry, Maria placed great emphasis on the confession of sins from the people to whom she ministered. After each revival meeting she would talk with members of the congregation one by one, checking to make sure that he/she was saved and finding out those who only pretended to be saved by imitating others in their confessions. Marie stressed what she called the experience of "suffering from the disease of sin," that someone, on hearing the message of the gospel, felt it spoke to the heart and became troubled by it, which led to confessions, repentance and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Hsu 2009).

Marie Monsen's influence went beyond the Chinese Christians she ministered to in the early part of the twentieth century. Her spiritual DNA

was passed on to generations of Christians in central and north-eastern part of China. What's more, Marie was recognized as one of the most important female figures among the cross-cultural Christian workers in Norway. Her ministry embodied "an unusual blend of feminist commitment, religious fervor and educational zeal ... Marie Monsen's career is a demonstration that spirituality is a sphere open to be negotiated by women, provided they have the charisma or the type of religious experience that is acknowledged as valid and reliable also by the powerful men in their organization" (Mikaelsson 2003, 123).

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## **My Journey as an Agent of International Development and Shalom**

*May Nor Clara Cheng, Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies, William Carey International University*

I would like to share with you the story of what led to my ministry in person-formation. When I was studying at my first seminary, I was trained to be a local pastor. I was not equipped to be a cross-

cultural worker. After having pastored a local church for four years, I joined an international agency and was sent overseas cross-culturally for five years. By the end of my first term of service, I was badly burned out.

My personal experience in this first cross-cultural assignment was like a bottle of water with a layer of mud at the bottom. The layer of mud was the damaged emotions I carried from my past to the country where I was serving. It handicapped my cross-cultural adjustment and also my social wholeness in dealing with my assigned roommate. When the bottle was standing still, the water was clear. As it was shaken up from being transported, from challenges and frustrations, the water became muddy. It took much pain and time to filter the muddied water.

It is out of this background that I was motivated to devote myself to advocating preventive care for cross-cultural workers. Ten years after the burn-out, I underwent a thorough process of personal counseling during doctoral studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. When one of my professors, Dr. Edgar Elliston, and I were

discussing what I would like to focus on in my doctoral research, we coined the term “person-formation.” A definition for person-formation, extracted from my dissertation, states that “person-formation” is the development of people, in this case [cross cultural workers], in the well-being and wholeness of their hearts. It is the process by which people gain spiritual, emotional, and social strength and maturity.

To enhance the process of the ... students’ person- formation ... trainers incorporate in their training program a deliberate effort of spiritual formation in the students’ development of intimacy with God and sound spiritual wholeness. They aim at equipping prospective [workers] to lead their social life with cross-cultural skills and personal security by enhancing the awareness of their own national character and integrating spiritual and emotional wholeness in their social life. (Cheng 2001, 12)

After doing these studies I rejoined the agency I had worked with before and I was assigned first to the Philippines and then to Taiwan. In both countries, I

taught person formation to national and international students who were engaged in cross- cultural work. I also observed how my sending agency conducted international development in those two countries. I continued to grow in maturity in my spiritual life, as an international worker who had to adjust to various living environments. From time to time, I offered an intensive course on the subject in my home city of Hong Kong. Eventually my health condition did not allow me to be on the front lines anymore. I started to be concerned about who would continue to teach my material in person-formation. I returned to the U.S. and joined the faculty of William Carey International University. I am very privileged to have this unique opportunity in contributing to the nourishment of international development workers in a much more permanent form through the university. It is my aspiration to help students mature in their spiritual, emotional, and social wholeness (Cheng 2001, 6).

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## **God’s Image-Bearers as Agents of Transformation: How God Shaped my Thinking**

*Lois Ooms, Consultant and Trainer for  
MTW*

Many people have asked me how I came to the thinking in my workshops in which people from over 20 countries are discovering a biblical worldview that offers them the hope and dignity to find for themselves solutions to their problems. It has been a process spanning over 25 years as the Holy Spirit has shaped the thoughts of people who have interacted with me during the workshops or individually. The process continues on as each time I lead a workshop or class I find new insights to add.

This process has deep roots in my early years being taught a biblical world and life view, even though I didn’t “understand” what it meant in the messy reality of life. The roots began to grow

while I was working in the inner city in the mid 60’s during the race riots—seeing people respond to the Gospel as we built relationships with their children—giving them an opportunity to enjoy and hope for something more than the dangerous streets of the city.

By profession I am an “antique” Biology and Chemistry teacher—studying as DNA was being discovered. After teaching in rural Kenya for 8 years, I began working with young people. Later, when a health center was started in 1980, I found that the women with whom I had worked as young people were spending scarce finances on health care for preventable sickness in their children. I began leading a small group, teaching them the importance of washing their hands, building pit latrines, and using safe drinking water to prevent 70% of the sickness with available resources. As I taught I discovered that many of the “unhealthy” practices were not the result of “ignorance” but were deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and worldview that had to be dealt with before seeing real change. The neighboring villages began to ask that I come to teach their women

and by 1985 I was committed to community development.

I took a few seminars on Community Health Evangelism from MAP (Medical Assistance Program) and Life Ministries, learning some of the basic principles. As I tried to implement, I found some things didn't always work so well. One of my mentors, Dr. Roy Shaffer, said, "Change it so it works." I enjoyed creatively modifying programs to fit the situation as well as holistically integrating Scripture and health lessons. I continued learning with summer courses at Wheaton College Grad School and a multicultural one that was held in Nairobi.

My biblical understanding of holism and development deepened as I began to see the implications of man created and crowned with honor and dignity (Psalm 8) and how that affected my approach to change—focusing on people and their resources rather than "needs" and programs. I continued learning how to give people dignity by involving them in making their own decisions, designing their own programs, and implementing them in their own way.

Slowly, I put together some simple

lessons to train Kenyans to carry on the work. In 1995 the pieces were in place, and I left Kenya and moved to Eritrea to begin again in a community that had more than doubled in size with refugee camps of those returning after Eritrea won the war for independence from Ethiopia. In that context, I found that training for Reproductive Health Assistants (formerly Traditional Birth Attendants) was crucial among women with very low self-esteem.

After two years the government asked us to leave Eritrea but I was invited by Litein Hospital (an all-Kenyan Hospital of the Africa Inland Church) to pick up the pieces of four community programs that "died" when the finances and leaders left. They asked me to design a program that they could carry on without outside resources. Joshua Tonui, the Kenyan hospital director, became a mentor to me on sustainability. After five years of trying, adjusting, changing, seeing how at the end of the day "incentives" greatly hinder sustainability, etc. Joshua was confident they could carry on the programs on their own. After that, the Africa Inland Church Kenya asked me to be the



director of community development with the goal of multiplying what had happened at Litein to health units all over Kenya. As HIV/AIDS issues rapidly increased, the program shifted to HIV/AIDS prevention, and home care for the sick, orphans, and widows. In the process, Kenyan church planters discovered transformational development was a great tool for planting churches. I continued to learn. The Chalmers Center in Chattanooga Tennessee taught me about micro finance from the same biblical perspective I had. Micro finance savings groups became a powerful tool in giving hope to the hopeless. Attending the consultation on Health and Wholeness for the 21st Century in Thailand in 2003, I met nationals and ex-pats from more than 15 countries using the same approach.

Reflecting on Darrow Miller's and Vinay Samuel's talks on the biblical basis for holism, implications of being created as image bearers of God, and the challenge to deal with worldview, I adapted my teaching to these new insights. I found people responding and implementing on a deeper level.

As cross-cultural Christian workers saw what self-sustaining programs looked like, I began receiving requests to travel to neighboring countries. At the same time a team of Kenyans began taking "ownership" of the material, growing in facilitation skills as they taught the basic training material to others.

In December 2007, the time came for me to leave Africa, with the blessing of my Kenyan colleagues, to explore multiplying the model to other countries in Africa. As I write this there are people trained in more than 17 countries of Africa, as well as S.E. Asia, and Central America. A new challenge is emerging – how to apply the principles in North America on Native American reservations, in deteriorating and changing neighborhoods, refugee resettlement programs and among upper middle class people. Each place has a unique story of how the Lord opened the door.

The Kingdom continues to grow in ways that I never imagined. My thinking has been profoundly molded by my African colleagues as well as learning from mistakes. I am deeply grateful for

the Lord's forgiveness. The Kenyan team has adapted the workshop material to work toward peace and reconciliation between warring factions of the post-election violence and between tribes that are traditional enemies. A colleague is exploring palliative care and transformational development in a sensitive area. Kenyan cross-cultural workers are adapting the principles to church planting. In Lesotho pastors/farmers are incorporating biblical concepts in their sermons about farmers. Their people have filled in huge gullies and found ways to prevent erosion with "Farming God's Way." In Madagascar a team is working with University students of the Christian Union, broadcasting lessons on the radio, training groups to go into unreached areas. A team in a creative access country is exploring teaching English using the principles of transformational development. A couple of churches in the U.S. are asking the question, how can this material help in dealing with an entitlement mentality?

My thinking continues to be shaped by interacting with people in new areas of the world: discussing the theological foundations with Gerrit and Judy

Veenstra; reflecting on the challenging "how's" of John Rollo, my supervisor at MTW; learning from Margaret LeMaire, who kindly volunteered to help with editing and insights from her experience in Africa and the U.S.; being challenged by Eleanor Protheroe who helped to clarify thinking for those who are beginning to understand the concepts and got me focused on teaching others to facilitate; gaining insights from Judi Troutman and her passion to see dependency unraveled and transformation thinking applied to institutions like Bible Schools, hospitals etc. People like August Basson and his Basotho pastors taught me how to integrate transformational thinking with "Farming God's Way." Brian Fikkert and those at the Chalmers Institute taught me micro finance. Then there are the whole "cloud of witnesses" that are not aware how a small remark or question has opened new reflections.

All glory and honor belong to the Lord as we are all His Image Bearers, reconciled to Him through the blood of Christ and led by His Holy Spirit who molds our thinking.

## **An Autobiographical Sketch of my Works as an Agent of International Development and Shalom**

*Lois Semenyee, Kenyan Scholar and Educator; Board member, International Council for Higher Education*

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

Immediately after coming to know the Lord while I was in high school, I became interested in teaching Sunday School. In the process, I noticed the need for relevant and authentic Christian materials that would address the needs of my Kenyan students. Specifically, the illustrations in the materials were foreign and difficult to understand. Sometimes it was easier to just explain the Bible passage without the foreign illustrations. I knew I needed more education to be able to help in this.

I was very fortunate that some cross-cultural Christian colleagues decided to invest in my education and helped me

secure a sponsor who paid my way to a Christian University in the USA. At Covenant College, I further developed my love for teaching felt a strong desire to promote Christian education in my home country. Upon my return to Kenya, I helped set up a Christian Education department in a local church. The more I taught and train others the more I felt the need to further my education. In 1980, I joined the Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson Mississippi through the help of a Christian organization. I was awarded MCE in CE in 1982. This opened up more opportunities for me in Kenya. I was not only serving in a local church but also I was asked to help in developing a Christian University in Kenya.

At the University, I was able to promote Christian education and particularly the integration of faith and learning and living. Again, I felt the need to pursue further education, so between 1987 and 1990 I attended Biola University and I was awarded PhD. Upon my return in Kenya, I continued to teach at Daystar University. As the head of Education Department, I was

able to conduct seminars for faculty that encouraged integrative teaching of faith, knowledge, and living. However, the need to develop relevant Christian curriculum for our churches was still there.

In 1997, Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC) invited me to head the organization and oversee the development of Christian materials across Africa. CLMC is a project of Association of Evangelicals in Africa that produces Christian materials that are relevant to the African culture.

Besides production of materials, there was also a great need to train the teachers on how to use them. This made me trek across Africa training teachers and holding seminars for Sunday School teachers and pastors to challenge them to take children's ministry seriously. I wrote a book targeting the pastors on children ministry-Let the Children Come. The book included the following chapters:

1. Introduction
2. What the Bible says about Children Importance of Children's Ministry Defining the Child
3. Social Factors Influencing Children Characteristics and Needs of Children Organizing a Children's Ministry in Church Teacher Commitment
4. How to Teach the Children Who should Teach Children Teaching Methods Teaching Aids
5. Recruitment of Children's Teachers How to Lead a Child to Christ Discipline
6. Characteristic of Children Living in Poverty Characteristic of Children Living in Affluence

I was able to hold seminars in different churches and denominations and in some of these churches the ministry to children increased dramatically. In 2003 I joined the faculty of International Leadership University where I taught in the department of Christian Education and Formation. God was able to use me to influence a number of pastors to invest in children's ministry. I can think of one who started a ministry to children in a slum in Nairobi. This pastor was so motivated that he did not only improve in teaching children on Sunday in the Sunday school

but also started a primary school where he engaged Christian teachers to teach the pupils. The ministry is growing and the children are learning to fear the Lord.

I have been presenting papers and writing articles in the area of Christian education including, “The Theological Context of Children in Africa Today,” “Christian Worldview: Implication for Educational Curricula,” “The Challenges of Christian Higher Education in African Context,” “Spiritual Formation of Christian Leaders,” “The Challenge of Literature in Africa: Analytical Study of the Production, Distribution,” and Effective Use of the Written Word in Evangelism and Missions in Africa.” I was among the 72 African Theologians to contribute to the African Bible Commentary. I wrote an article on Christian Education in Africa and wrote a commentary of the Book of Esther.

These papers and articles have given me platform to speak to various leaders and consequently influencing them and in return they influence their own constituents to the glory of God. I have been discipling, mentoring, and

coaching many young people throughout my Christian faith. Some of those I have mentored have even named their children after me. Wherever I am I believe I should have a young Timothy that I am mentoring in the importance and methods of Christian education.

### **Alem’s Story**

*Carolyn Klaus, M.D., Hope in View, Ethiopia*

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

Alem is a volunteer in our child sponsorship program here in Addis Ababa. By day Alem sweeps streets with a broom and picks up garbage, 7 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is a job for which she gets paid the equivalent of \$40 per month. With this and a bit more when her husband can get work as a day laborer, she and he support two children. She is not exactly on the highest rung on the social status ladder.

By night she mentors a group of 21 people, all living with HIV, all of whom must attend the group as a requirement for their children to be sponsored in our program. It is a job for which Alem has never been paid a birr. She began working with some of them more than 10 years ago when Genet, the leader of her basic discipleship group and our child sponsorship social worker, taught her and her friends that to follow Jesus is to serve people in need. Little by little, thanks to Genet's example as minister to people living with HIV and her personal mentoring, Alem has picked up leadership skills. For the last 4 years she has met with this group every other week, coaching them on how to parent well, how to stay healthy, how to maintain good hygiene, how to handle money, and how to love each other. Though they are all from non-Protestant backgrounds, she has also taught them to learn from the Bible together and pray for one another. Between meetings she walks to visit up to 9 of these families every week in their homes to see how they are really doing and encourage them personally. When she has left-over cleaning supplies from her job she breaks

them down into small parcels and shares them with the group members.

Following her example, the group members now visit one another regularly, providing food or money or childcare or transportation to the hospital or simple camaraderie when one of them is in difficulties.

In 2013, under Genet's tutoring, she began to teach her group to save money together. Each time they met, every person would contribute five birr towards their group savings plus one birr to meet social needs of the group. Gradually the money accumulated. Over the past year six of the group members have taken small loans from this fund, from which all six have started profitable small businesses. All of these loans have been or are being paid back on time with interest. The others all want their turn to get loans now. She told us today that their attitudes toward work have changed drastically. "They want to work hard and produce their own income, rather than get handouts—and they believe they can do it!"

They have also become healthier. Alem attributes this to five things (none of them, I notice, medical): Their

previously dirty homes are now clean. They know and are practicing good health habits. They are far less stressed, knowing that if they die, their children will continue to be sponsored. They love one another deeply. And they pray for one another.

And oh yes, Alem has a third job: in her spare time she's attending a distance-education program to enable her to complete 9th grade.