

○ REVIEW OF ROLAND BOER AND JORUNN ØKLAND, EDS. *MARXIST FEMINIST CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE*

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Mark Sneed, Lubbock Christian University



Marxist Feminist Criticism of the Bible is an anthology of nine articles edited by Roland Boer and Jorunn Økland. It is introduced by an article from the editors. The book includes an index of biblical and ancient references and one on subjects.

In 'Towards a Marxist Feminist Biblical Criticism,' Boer and Økland begin this anthology by pointing out how their introduction to the essays differs from most. Instead of trying to whet the appetite of their readers for each essay by summarising it, they provide a much needed deeper introduction to the field itself and suggestions for future direction. They do, however, refer to the authors and articles as the opportunity arises during their discussion. In this introduction, they especially point out misconceptions about current Marxist theory. For example, there is no longer the old mono-causal Marxist perspective that everything can be reduced to the economic. Neo-Marxists today generally acknowledge that things are more complicated than the old Marxism had realised.

In the first essay, 'The Early Fathers of Marxist Feminism and the Holy Book,' Milena Kirova discusses the work of J. J. Bachofen, Lewis Henry Morgan, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and August Bebel. She sees both positive and negative in the work of these early Marxists on feminism. Positively, she sees them turning toward scientific naturalism versus traditional moralism to explain the development of gender differentiation. Thus, human sexuality stems from the animal world and is not to be explained via Scripture. Negatively, this transition was still entrenched in essentialism, i.e. being gendered is determined by nature and not social construction. But she also shows how this transition involves a return to the mythological notion of an egalitarian pre-history, which aligns this movement closely with biblical strategies of explanation.

In 'Schizoid Coitus: Christ and the Feminine,' Tamara Prosic argues that Christianity, as a spinoff of Judaism, represents a movement from monotheistic patriarchy to a more liberating

position in response to the competition of the more feminine embracing polytheistic religions of Hellenism. 'Schizoid' is a reference to the often neurotic response of religion to sexuality. In her theoretical discussion, she points out that feminism made its debut as an offshoot of Marxism. However, she criticises most Marxists for failing to conceive of sex as alienated labour in our bourgeois world. In a utopian gesture, she points to the work of Marxist Wilhelm Reich as a way for both men and women to transcend the sexual alienation involved in reified sex. She demonstrates how the Christ myth helps lead in this direction.

In "Old and New Wisdom Mix Admirably": Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*,' David Jobling argues that the chauvinistic tendency of early Marxists does not preclude the usefulness of their work for current feminist debate. 'Caucasian' refers to the setting of Soviet Georgia in a play by Brecht that Jobling discusses in the first part of the essay, 'Chalk Circle' to a test used in the play for determining a child custody case involving a governor's son (like Solomon's Judgment). The play is about a revolution in Soviet Georgia and how different social groups and classes reacted to it. Thus, it indirectly instructs on how to revolt appropriately. Jobling interprets the play and its versions and then demonstrates its resonance with the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Solomon. He ends by discussing how to recycle Brecht and his chauvinism for modern times, especially in view of the failed Soviet experience.

In 'The Other Woman in Proverbs: "My Man's Not Home ... He Took His Money Bag With Him"', Gale Yee argues that Woman Folly of Prov 1-9 represents the wrong woman for a Persian period elite Israelite young man to marry. Yee connects these chapters with Ezra's policy of endogamy. Woman Folly constitutes the seductive Other, represented by both foreigners and native 'people of the land' who are distinct from the *golab* immigrants who returned from Babylonian captivity. Yee shows how this exclusion of the non-*golab* for marriage by the returnees gets obfuscated by the notions of the empty land myth and a classless society.

In 'Solomon and the Two Prostitutes,' Avaren Ipsen examines the story in 1 Kgs 3 from a non-traditional Marxist and feminist perspective. Drawing on the work of standpoint theory (a feminist materialist method), indecent theology, and the experiences and thinking of real prostitutes, she shows this story to be a real parody of justice: Solomon's complicity in the existence of prostitution, his resort to violence, the real mother's giving up her rights to motherhood, etc. Ipsen's reading also questions the notion of prostitutes as merely victims, common among feminists today.

In 'The Markan/Marxist Struggle for the Household: Juliet Mitchell and the Challenge to Patriarchal/Familial Ideology,' Alan Cadwallader critiques Mk 10, using Juliet Mitchell's nuanced Marxist perspective on the role of the family. She extends the Marxist critique from a feminist perspective using the work of Althusser. Cadwallader distinguishes his approach from the traditional view that reads this chapter as dehistoricised dominical regulations for Christians. Cadwallader shows how the chapter is intricately linked to the imperial order, especially via Herod, and patriarchal authority, both of which Jesus radically subverts.

In 'Textual Reproductions as Surplus Value: Paul on Pleasing Christ and Spouses, in Light of Simone de Beauvoir,' Jorunn Økland examines 1 Cor 7 through the lens of the Marxist feminist Simone de Beauvoir. She points out that Paul is among the second generation of middle-class Christians who transformed Jesus' radical earthly kingdom of the poor into a spiritual one. She argues that Paul and de Beauvoir create surplus value in their notions of asceticism, which could only exist if non-ascetics continued to reproduce the world. She argues that though both

Paul and de Beauvoir argue for the superiority of the unmarried state, Paul's position is not egalitarian, and though de Beauvoir's is, both are problematic in that they replace one master (the home) with another (the Lord or a career).

In 'Julia Kristeva, Marx and the Singularity of Paul,' Roland Boer critiques Julia Kristeva's interpretation of Paul's doctrine of love or grace. Though Kristeva, the feministic psychoanalyst, is not usually viewed in predominantly Marxist terms, Boer seeks to uncover this repressed Marx in her. Boer shares Kristeva's wariness about Paul's chauvinism and imperialism but also her praise for his notion of a utopian community, the *ecclesia*, which she interprets in a collective sense. This represents her distance from individualistic and bourgeois feminism. A proper feminism, then, cannot be established within a capitalistic society. It must wait for its collapse.

In the final essay, 'Rosemary Hennessy and the Circumscribed Symptomatic Symbolism of 1 Peter's *Haustafel*,' Jennifer Bird uses the work of materialist feminist Rosemary Hennessy to examine irruptions in the text of household code in 1 Peter that reveal the hand of hegemony. While Paul advocates for the role of female leaders, 1 Peter seems to involve this liberating voice falling back under the control of hegemonic and imperial forces. While the males addressed enjoy their roles as part of a holy nation and royal priesthood, women's identity is primarily in suffering like Christ and marrying and bearing children.

This is a fine collection of articles that integrate Marxism, feminism, and biblical studies. All the articles demonstrate the difficulties involved in such an endeavour but also show its great value. The only criticism I have is one of intended audience. Some biblical scholars may be put off by the abstract nature of some of the articles and the fact that they are more theological and philosophical than biblical. The contributors that actually engaged biblical texts were Yee, Ipsen, Cadwallader, Økland, and Bird. Special mention needs to be made of the article by Cadwallader. It was difficult reading but profoundly illuminating, portraying Jesus as radically questioning the imperial hegemony of his day.