



12-1-2017

## Taylor and Weirs' "Women in the story of Jesus: The gospels through the eyes of nineteenth-century female Biblical interpreters" (Book Review)

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### Recommended Citation

Kempa, Kathleen (2017) "Taylor and Weirs' "Women in the story of Jesus: The gospels through the eyes of nineteenth-century female Biblical interpreters" (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 60 : Iss. 2 , Article 109.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol60/iss2/109>

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# Book Reviews

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Taylor, M. A. & Weir, H. E. (Eds.). (2016). *Women in the story of Jesus: The gospels through the eyes of nineteenth-century female Biblical interpreters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 276 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 9780802873033

This is an intriguing look at nineteenth century women voicing their spirituality. The book has been divided into three general categories: "...Christian piety or spirituality, women's public preaching,... and women as interpreters of the biblical texts." Each of the excerpts is preceded by a very short description of the life and writing of the author. The editors recognize the communication problems of trying to share ideas across more than 100 years of cultural change, so they suggest "... the excerpts in this book are best understood when carefully read and re-read with sympathy and humility."

Christian piety/spirituality is divided into two sections. The first section explores writings about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Most of the excerpts, while written in a style unlike current academic writing, are easy to read and understand. Biblical citations abound and attest to these authors' very scholarly study and knowledge of scripture.

The second section in the piety/spirituality section studies Mary and Martha. While some of the entries seem to use quite a bit of creativity in fleshing-out Lazarus' two sisters, providing insight into nineteenth-century women's culture, M.G. and Mary Ann Smith provide readings that have a more modern feel and offer some interesting insights.

In the Women Preaching section, the feeling of truly communicating with thinkers of the past comes across. The women's voices and thoughts are clearly and passionately expressed. Among the selections which are presented, are two women known for their literary accomplishments, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Effie Johnson (Euphemia Johnson Richmond). A study of the woman at the well in Samaria, offers writers the opportunity to support the appropriateness of women as preachers.

The editors point out in the section on hermeneutics, that women used the same sources that men of their day used, but that they often found insights and interpretations that were outside those generally espoused by men. For instance, in the story of the woman caught in adultery, several women noted the double standard of not also bringing the guilty man forward. And when the story was removed from the Revised Version of the New Testament (1881), Josephine Butler pointed out the sexual bias of male commentators.

This reviewer strongly recommends making *Women in the Story of Jesus* available to women scholars as well as men. The unique insights of the female authors make the volume worthy of a thoughtful study. But beyond that, it is valuable to learn somewhat of the history of biblical commentary done by women.

**Reviewer**

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