Wilken's "The Christian roots of religious freedom" (Book Review)

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Author and speaker, Kathy Collard Miller, has written over 50 books during her 30 year career. Her works include Bible studies, commentaries and Christian living.

*Choices of the heart* is an expanded and revised book from her *Daughters Of the King Bible Series* of twelve previously-published volumes. Originally published by David C. Cook, the series sold 100,000 books. This is the first volume in the series originally released in 1984. This updated book is a 10-lesson Bible study. Each chapter pairs the biblical accounts of two women as they address a common choice. For example, the first lesson examines how Rebekah and Rahab faced believing God’s sovereignty. The choices faced by Deborah, Naomi, Sarah, Lydia, and the unnamed forgiven, Samaritan, and Shunem women, amongst others, are choices that modern women continue to struggle with and face in our daily lives. Each pair of biblical examples examines issues like trust, obedience, power, prayer, honesty, temptation, jealousy, and discontent. The narrative of each chapter combines the biblical account with scripture citations and questions along with questions for the reader making application to contemporary context and daily life.

These lessons give examples of both good and bad decisions made by these women of the Bible. The author varies her lessons sometimes including fill-ins or tables. The pairings of biblical characters may surprise the reader. We may think of Rebecca, the Israelite, as the good girl and Rahab, the prostitute, as a bad girl. In the context of trusting the sovereignty of God, Rahab sets the example of faith. Each chapter ends with a letter from God, the King, to His princesses and daughters. The theme of each lesson is summarized in this letter format.

*Choices of the Heart* is suitable for individual or small group Bible study.

**Reviewer**
Noelle C. Keller, Adrian College

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The topic of “religious liberty” has recently inundated socio-political discourse. Although many assume that the notion is rooted in the Enlightenment, this small volume seeks to construct an alternative framework. “In truth the roots of religious freedom in the west are to be found centuries earlier in the writings of Christian
apologists, who, in the face of persecution, wrote to defend their right to practice
the religion they wished without coercion” (pp. 11-12). As a veteran patristic
scholar, Robert Louis Wilken is eminently qualified for this investigative task.
Wilken culls relevant quotations from Tertullian, who coined the phrase “religious
liberty.” He also highlights the role of Lactantius, a Christian author who influenced
the composition of the “Edict of Milan,” which promulgated religious toleration
throughout the Roman Empire in 313. After a sweeping overview of the Middle
Ages, Wilken focuses upon “religious liberty” within early modernity, including the
works of John Murton, Roger Williams, and William Penn. With this background in
place, Wilken builds a specific argument concerning John Locke’s Letter on Toleration
(1689). “Though the idiom of Locke’s thought is different from that of Penn and
Williams, his work is saturated with Christian assumptions drawn from the Scriptures
and Christian tradition” (pp. 38–39). The “Epilogue” relates a fascinating discovery.
Wilken found Tertullian’s Ad Scapulam 2 written out in Thomas Jefferson’s Notes on
the State of Virginia (1781) in the Special Collections Library of the University of
Virginia. Based on this evidence, Wilken requested access to Jefferson’s personal copy
of Tertullian’s writings at the Library of Congress. There he discovered that Jefferson
had underlined the passage on religious freedom in Ad Scapulam, and he had placed
an “X” in the margin. Thus library research in two special collections provided proof
that the church fathers influenced America’s founding fathers concerning “religious
liberty.”

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Zondervan. 264 pp. $ 27.99. ISBN 9780310516422

Marc Cortez, associate professor of theology at Wheaton College, wrote Christological
Anthropology in Historical Perspective to advance the discussion concerning the effect
of Christology on the vast field of anthropology. This collection of academic essays
on the subject highlights several historical church figures whose work displayed
their perspective answers to the questions posed by Christ’s incarnation, views
which radically shaped the outworking of their faith. In the author’s own words,
“a minimally Christological anthropology is one in which (1) Christology warrants
important claims about what it means to be human and (2) the scope of those claims
goes beyond issues like the image of God and ethics” (pp. 22); however, this does
not mean that every difference in anthropological perspective should be attributed
to a differing Christology (pp. 219). It is important to understand when reading
this work that the authorial intent is not to offer a precise answer to the above
mentioned fluctuating definition, nor to discuss their potential for application, but