

Zion,” although Okoye believes it belongs to the (post-)exilic period (110). Mount Zion becomes the center of attraction, with a moral and spiritual focus rather than a geographical one. The nations come to the mountain by their own volition, attracted by the Torah revealed there. This Torah offers peace and fulfillment, and responds to the deepest human need.

The last face of mission, centrifugal, is found in Isa 56:1-8, the earliest mention of Gentiles religiously converting to YHWH based on an inclusive covenant. As a result, Egypt, Israel, and Assyria stand as blessings for the rest of the nations. Israel reaches its goal only when the blessing to bless is shared. This remnant of nations is defined not in national or ethnic terms, but in confessional language. Okoye also sees the centrifugal aspect of mission in Isa 66:19, in the sending of Jonah, and in the activity of the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt.

Finally, Okoye proposes that we read mission in the OT from a diversity of angles and allow for at least the four faces of mission. Although the author works with historical-critical presuppositions, *Israel and the Nations* represents an attempt to read the OT from an ecumenical and postmodern perspective. This makes integration of the four themes difficult, each floating on its own. However, the book provides interesting insights and angles, thereby making it an attractive reading. I recommend the book for seminary students who previously studied mission theology in the OT and for professors of mission.

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CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Osiek, Carolyn, and Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch. *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. 345 pp. Paper, \$21.00.

In *A Woman's Place*, Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald combine their considerable knowledge of women and families in early Christianity and the Greco-Roman world to produce a fascinating work that pushes the boundaries of our consideration of women in early Christianity into new areas. Moving beyond more general important works such as *Women in Christian Origins* (Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo) and *Women and Christianity* (Mary T. Malone), *A Woman's Place* uses the growing insights of classicists about women and families in the Greco-Roman world to delve into the specific area of women in house churches in the earliest years of the church.

The authors refuse to assume earlier stereotypes such as the complete relegation of Greco-Roman women to a position of little influence who were hidden away in the private sphere of the home. Neither do they presume early Christianity's opposition to, or participation in, the treatment of women by the world. Instead, they produce a nuanced study that allows the primary documents to speak for themselves in conversation with the plethora of recent work on these subjects. In general, they deal carefully with the extensive gaps in historical data, creating hypotheses about what was likely the case, while pointing out the limited level of certainty available. Two aspects of

this study are particularly valuable. The first is the amount of material they have brought together and analyzed from Greco-Roman and early Christian primary sources. The second is the creative way in which they have framed and considered this material.

In the first three chapters, Osiek and McDonald examine the experience of women as wives, childbearers, and mothers within the house church and the way in which their presence and the presence of their children impacted the house church. The authors demonstrate how closely these primary Christian gatherings were linked to the life of the family in a sphere managed largely by women. Often these women found themselves in circumstances differing from the idealized Christian prescriptions. Thus the house churches seem to have been permeated by the presence of children and a wide variety of family concerns. Another chapter deals with the continuing practice of slavery in Christian households, discussing the slim evidence regarding the influence of Christian teaching on the treatment of female slaves. The first portion of the book concludes with a discussion of the idealized household code of Eph 5, showing how the counsel to husbands and wives reflects a desire to protect against a negative view of the church on the part of unbelievers, while at the same time inserting messages about Christian identity centered on the metaphor of wife as pure and holy *ekklēsia*.

The last portion of the book looks more specifically at how women were involved in leadership in the house churches. The generally accepted leadership of women within the home is placed alongside the evidence of women leading house churches to discuss the extent of women's influence on the Christian assemblies within their homes, particularly in the context of meals. One chapter considers the leadership of women at third-century Christian funerary banquets as depicted in a catacomb near Rome. Another discusses the widespread practice of woman as patrons in both the Greco-Roman world and the early church, which did not apparently differ much in practice between men and women. A final chapter looks at the way in which women were involved as agents of Christian expansion. For a few notable women, this is recognized to be through leadership, prophecy, and teaching, but evidence is given that most often it took place through the natural activities of caring for children and those in need, and social interactions in the neighborhood and marketplace.

There were places in the book where I found myself questioning a suggested interpretation, such as the liturgical interpretation of the words included in the Roman catacomb paintings, or the degree to which a woman's place as manager of household affairs would have automatically given her a leadership role in a church meeting in her home. But all in all I found it a well-written and stimulating work that enriched my understanding of women in the Greco-Roman world, and which helped to shine a helpful light upon a central aspect of the lives of women and of early Christians in general.