



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 29, 2018

## “Women’s Bible” Challenges Traditional Interpretations

“While some say that you have to throw out the Bible to be a feminist, we believe the opposite,” said Elisabeth Parmentier, one of the feminist professors behind the newly published *A Women’s Bible*.

Parmentier and Laurianne Savoy, a theology professor at the University of Geneva (founded by the noted Protestant reformer John Calvin) are among 20 women theologians, both Protestant and Catholic, who have joined forces to produce the *Une Bible des Femmes*, designed to challenge the view that the Bible justifies the subjugation of women.



The women professors argue that it is not necessary to abandon Christianity to be a feminist. Instead, they contend that the Bible has simply been misinterpreted concerning the status of women. Savoy told Agence France-Presse (AFP), “A lot of people thought they [the biblical texts] were completely outdated with no relevance to today’s values of equality.”

This is not the first time that this point of view has been expressed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and 26 other women drafted “The Woman’s Bible” in 1898, with the goal of challenging religious orthodoxy that men should be over women.

“We wanted to work in an ecumenical way,” Parmentier said, in explaining that half the women who worked on the Bible are Protestants, while the other half are Catholics.

Savoy argued that, in many cases, traditions have sprung up about certain biblical women that are not supported by the biblical text. She offered the example of Mary Magdalene, “the female character who appears the most in the Gospels.” She noted of Mary Magdalene, “She stood by Jesus, including as he was dying on the cross, when all of the male disciples were afraid. She was the first one to go to his tomb and to discover his resurrection.”

Unfortunately, despite no biblical text to support it, “she is described as a prostitute ... and even as Jesus’ lover in recent fiction,” Savoy said.

Savoy and the other female scholars certainly have a point. But it is not only some traditionalists who have created the idea that the Bible places women in a subservient role, but it is the conclusion of most radical feminists who largely reject the Bible and the Christian faith altogether.

Some of this is what is known as presentism, which means that many today judge the past by today’s Middle East, where women are often treated very badly. But, if one reads the Bible, while the role of women would not satisfy modern feminists (for example, Israel fought wars with men, not women), women did not wear Burkas, they did not have to be accompanied by a male relative to leave their homes, and they could have normal everyday conversations with men. They even were known to disagree with men(!).



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For example, Jesus talked to the woman at the well in the fourth chapter of John's gospel. She was not surprised so much that he spoke to her because she was a woman, but rather because she was a Samaritan. The apostle Paul is recorded as speaking to women on a regular basis, and no one thought anything of it. Jesus' mother told the male servants at a wedding reception she and Jesus attended to fill jars up with water, while Mary and Martha boldly rebuked Jesus for not arriving in time to save their brother Lazarus from death. (They probably changed their tune when Jesus raised him from the dead.) In the Book of Acts and the Epistles, some of the early leaders in the church were women, and at least one influential woman even hosted church gatherings in her home.

And it was not just the New Testament in which we see women freely speaking their minds. Abraham's wife told him to take her handmaiden, Moses' wife scolded him for circumcising their son, and it was Rebekah's free will choice to marry Isaac. Multiple examples abound in Scripture of women persuading their husbands to take a contrary action.

And not always to the good, of course. Jezebel told her husband, Ahab, the king of Israel, that if he wanted a vineyard from one of his subjects, that he should just take it (there not being a Fifth Amendment in those days). Job's wife was certainly not bashful in her opinion, either.

Some of the greatest and most heroic figures of the Bible were women, such as Esther, Rahab, and Deborah. The modern interpretation that Christianity has been an anti-woman religion is just ignorance or intentional slander.

But, changing the Bible to fit modern feminist interpretations is, of course, a different matter. Parmentier said, "We are fighting against a literal reading of the texts" in some cases. While challenging interpretations of the Bible is one thing, it is quite another to change the wording of the texts, at least in the view of those who consider the Bible not just the words of the men who penned the books, but rather the divinely inspired Word of God.

If these women are sincerely desirous of extracting the proper interpretation of the biblical text, they will probably have the support of most Christians. But if they impose feminist beliefs on a text when that meaning is simply not there, they can expect opposition.

Unfortunately, dividing people into competing groups, arguing that one group is oppressing another, has been the method of the Left since at least the time of Karl Marx. Why would the Left do this? The game plan is always the same: Create or exacerbate a conflict (rich vs. poor, black vs. white, young vs. old, men vs. women, etc.), and then offer the predictable solution — more government.



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