

**Influence of Divine Imagery on Patriarchal Leadership in the Church**

Molly A. Dycus

Area of Biblical Learning, Milligan University

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Dr. Jeff Miller

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## **Influence of Divine Imagery on Patriarchal Leadership in the Church**

Patriarchal hierarchies hold a long history dating back to the earliest of biblical texts as the authors and biblical figures remain influenced by the cultures around them. The foundations of Judaism and Christianity built on these oppressive ideals grant men the favor of power and control. Therefore, when describing the Deity who possesses omnipresent capabilities and reigns over all of creation, the images used typically contain masculine qualities. Furthermore, as the leadership for structures and institutions of Christianity has been developed, they continue to mirror the male God described. A broad view of leadership from Judaic rabbis to Catholic popes to evangelical pastors reveal that a large majority of those in positions of authority are male. My research focuses on the central idea as articulated by Mary Daly that “if God is male, then male is God.” To expand on this idea, I reflect on questions about the origin of patriarchy in Christianity, and whether there exists facets of the images unexplained due to language barriers as well as questions about how this has manifested into the religion of modern Western Christianity.

### **Patriarchal Understandings**

#### **Defining Patriarchy**

Carroll Saussy, author of *God Images and Self Esteem: Empowering Women in a Patriarchal Society*, analyzes the definition of patriarchy in the context of Western societies. Saussy explains that, “at the heart of patriarchy... is the hierarchical position of sovereign males over dependent women” (1991, p. 54). Attitudes such as these permeate every aspect of a society resulting in systemic, religious, and domestic oppression, which Beth Allison Barr, author of *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*, details in her section defining patriarchy. She adopts three main definitions of patriarchy from

historian Judith Bennett: “male ecclesiastical leaders, such as the patriarch (archbishop of Constantinople) in Greek Orthodoxy, legal power of male household heads (fathers/husbands), and a society that promotes male authority and female submission” (Barr, 2021, p. 13). While each definition Bennett defines plays a distinct role in the systemic roots of patriarchy in Christianity, the presence of an oppressive and male dominating society created the structure for the development of complementarism.

Barr explains how some evangelicals have proudly adopted the term *patriarchy* such as Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. She gathers that religious leaders such as Moore are so keen to keep the term because patriarchy has biblical origins; therefore, Christians should not be ashamed to promote it. Moore once argued that if the evangelicals excluded the term they would be giving into secular pressures (Barr, 2021, p. 12-13). Though Moore expressed disdain for the word *complementarianism*, he ultimately supports the theology even though it defends, “an interpretation that has been corrupted by our sinful human drive to dominate others and build hierarchies of power and oppression” (Barr, 2021, p. 7). The outright acceptance of the term, patriarchy, reveals an innate belief that men have the divine role of sovereignty over creation.

### **Early Beginnings**

Developing a basic knowledge to understand the inner workings of patriarchy in Christianity becomes essential for viewing how the system has influenced the religion. When discussing the shift from polytheism to monotheism, Saussy writes that Hebrew monotheism displaced goddesses of fertility and described a male Creator who has the ability to both design and procreate without a female counterpart. This especially can be seen with the creation story. Saussy writes, “the book of Genesis records that the monotheistic God who creates humankind

then gives the power of naming to man” (1991, p.58-59). The imagery of a female deity did not necessarily become obsolete as the Creator has been described as a mother many times, and the Hebrew term for *spirit*, *ruach*, has female connotations.

Sue Monk Kidd, author of *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman’s Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine*, discusses the manner in which the creation of Christianity has been by men for men. She exemplifies the quintessential title, “God of Abraham” and asks why not “God of Sarah” (2018, p. 62). The assumption of divine male power clearly had a grip on Jews at the time of the birth of Christianity, as well as on the Israelites before them. Kidd refers to Simone de Beauvoir, the author of *The Second Sex*, who suggests that men established a Creator represented primarily by male imagery in religion in order to validate their power. de Beauvoir says, “how fortunate for men... that their sovereign authority has been vested in them by the Supreme Being” (Kidd, 2018, p. 63). These are the foundations in which Judaism and then Christianity were created.

## **Leadership**

However, despite the patriarchal foundations, many female deacons played significant roles in the early church. Barr explains how Paul’s description of “Phoebe as a deacon wasn’t surprising to Chrysostom because some of his good fourth century friends were female deacons. Indeed, Madigan and Osiek have uncovered 107 references (inscriptions and literary) to women deacons” (2021, p. 68). Once again, women, though not entirely excluded from the picture of leadership, were a minority and had their position contested. The protests came from

ecclesiastical leaders declaring as early as the fifth century that female bodies were unfit for leadership... by the sixth century, while the church was moving across the European landscape and replacing the old secular seats of Roman power with the sacred offices of

bishop and priest, women were also on the move, back into their prior place under the authority of men. (Barr, 2021, p.68-69)

Women's limited positions of leadership in the church were short-lived, and women have struggled since then to hold significant positions.

A contributing factor to women's limitations to leadership can be tied to language of leadership positions, such as in the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Anglican, and Orthodox churches. Saussy reminds her audience that most of the church's priests or *clergymen* are referred to as *Father*. In the Episcopalian churches where female priests are more accepted, there is a lack of agreement on what to call them because neither members nor the female priests themselves would want to be called *Mother* (Saussy, 1991, p. 60). The hesitancy regarding *Mother* surfaces the question, why are members and female priests not comfortable with *Mother* when they are with *Father*? Language has powerful influences as a tool to encourage or discourage others to or from their potential, and enacting change around it can be uncomfortable. If changes are not made, resulting in women having appropriately titled positions, it can easily become an excuse as to why women cannot lead.

Barr provides a 2017 study on the perceptions of women in positions of power in the United States, which included demographics covering various religious affiliations (evangelical, Protestant, Catholic, and practicing Christian). The study revealed that evangelicals were the least likely to support women working outside the home and being a pastor, and they were the most uncomfortable with the idea of female CEOs. The historian Bennett points to male ecclesiastical and household authorities, which work to keep women subordinate to men, to explain why the study reflected these results (Barr, 2021, p. 14-15). Later, Barr writes about a previous president of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Paige Paterson, who

“preached that men were divinely created to lead and wield authority, women to follow and submit” (2021, p. 27). His influence along with other like-minded men resulted in the Southern Baptist Convention rewriting their faith statement in 1984 to emphasize “women’s secondary creation” and “submitting to their husbands” (Barr, 2021, p. 27). These complementarian messages continue to keep women from questioning the inequality and even supporting their divine submission.

### **Power of Divine Imagery**

#### **Masculine Imagery**

The Christian tradition agrees universally that Creator has no specified gender. As articulated by Sallie McFauge, a theologian at Vanderbilt, “God is she, he, and neither” (Kidd, 2018, p. 159). While the ubiquitous belief grounds itself in the famous words Creator said to Moses, “I Am Who I Am” (Common English Bible, Exodus 3:14), the primary language used for Creator has been masculine. Even the assumed neutral term *God* most commonly used for the Christian deity has masculine connotations as the feminine version of God is Goddess. Goddess generally has implications relating to polytheism and Greek mythology, but to put it starkly, Goddess is to God as Mother is to Father; yet, Christians also often steer away from mother imagery. Kidd connects the unsettled reaction to feminine language a result of

thousands of years of repression, hostility, and conditioning against Divine Mother have made a deep impression on us. We’ve been conditioned to shrink back from the Sacred Feminine, to fear it, to think of it as sinful, even to revile it.... Goddess is just a word. It simply means the divine in female form. (2018, p. 87)

With the perspective that patriarchal societies formed and continue sustaining Christianity, one could argue that the discomfort with the Divine feminine occurs because it displaces ultimate

authority from a man to a woman. Kidd quotes Mary Daly, “if God is male, then male is God,” supporting her claim that because feminine pronouns for Creator are suppressed, women are also suppressed (2018, p. 162). The masculine gendering of Creator places men above women.

Similarly, Saussy speaks on the imagery of Creator and how institutionalized religions reflect the patriarchal world that they were created and thus further the discriminatory hierarchy. She then writes about how, when referring to Creator as powerful and authoritative, terms such as Father, Lord, Ruler, and King are used; however, when referring to Creator as nurturing, terms such as Life Giver, Comforter, and Wisdom are used (1991, p.17). Even the imagery which could have female connotations (as women are the primary source for life giving) are not direct female nouns like Goddess or Mother, but both the Hebrew and Greek words for wisdom are feminine nouns. There are practically no equal counterparts to Father (Mother), Lord (Lady), or King (Queen) in scripture. Though Christians have the universal understanding of a genderless Creator, the direct nouns only reflect the Divine masculine. When ideals such as patriarchy are intertwined with religion, the deity reflects that. Saussy connects this to the injustice that women face because they are expected to be men’s servants as they are inferior according to patriarchal beliefs. Saussy’s point is that even when nouns with feminine connotations are used describing Creator, they are not ones of strength or sovereignty, which continues the notion that women cannot be powerful or in places of authority.

In Jeff Miller’s article “Biblical Models for Gender Language in Worship,” he discusses the varying language of Creator in the Bible and how it is subsequently used in worship music. He explored the masculine language in John, Hebrews, James, and 2 Corinthians, finding that John uses *Father* around 120 times while the remaining books use *Father* significantly fewer times. Though John numerously uses Father, John also explores diverse gender neutral imagery

such as, “*logos, bread, light, door... resurrection, life, way, truth, vine, rabboni, and lamb*” (Miller, 2017, p. 2). Miller proposes that because the Bible has this diversity, that the language in the church can and should reflect this as well. He even gives examples of music with lyrics that have adopted this.

To challenge Miller’s point of diversity in imagery, the Bible and Christian worship music ultimately lack direct feminine imagery of Creator. Christians creatively produce a variety of imagery like “*Center of unbroken praise, Wellspring of the joy of living, and Ocean depth of happy rest*” (2017, p. 2) as noted in Miller’s article. The use of gender-free imagery certainly takes preference over entirely male or female language, but one cannot ignore the blatant avoidance of the feminine. Why have Christians produced bountiful gender-free language in both older hymns and contemporary praise songs before referring to Creator as a *Mother, Goddess, and Queen*? For some, the avoidance of terms such as those may be because they are associated with paganism, but if Christians applied the same creativity, lyrics could have the potential to have distinct diversity. This is not to say that all masculine language should be replaced with feminine, but instead they should be used in equal conjunction with one another.

### **Feminine Imagery**

While the masculine imagery and nouns overwhelm Christian scripture, it would be a disservice to this research’s validity to ignore where scripture does contain feminine language. In her book, Kidd spends time exploring lost female references in the Bible. She begins with the phrase *El Shaddai*,

an interesting name for God that occurs forty-eight times in the Bible. It has been traditionally translated as “the almighty” .... But *shad* is also a Hebrew word for *breast*.



The ending *ai* is an old feminine ending, therefore a probable ancient meaning of El Shaddai was “the breasted one.” (Kidd, 2018, p. 170)

When Christians refer to the Creator now as “almighty,” it does not have the same feminine connotations that it would have had in the Hebrew language. Another example that Kidd discusses pertains to Creator often being named as compassionate and merciful. Kidd quotes Rosemary Radford Ruether, an American feminist scholar and Catholic theologian, “the root word for the idea of compassion or mercy in Hebrew is *rechem*, or womb. In ascribing these qualities to Yahweh, Hebrew thought suggested that God has maternal or ‘womblike’ qualities” (2018, p. 170). Modern translations do not relay the same ancient connotations due to the English language lacking grammatical gender, which is not inherently negative, but translators have not compensated appropriately to convey the same meanings.

The previous feminine language discussed concerned the qualities of Creator; however, finding imagery that specifically portrays Creator as female is rare. Scholars have found that the prominent illustration of a female Creator is through the incarnations of spirit and wisdom as seen in both the Old and New Testament. The Hebrew term for spirit/Holy Spirit, *ruach*, occurs 378 times and has feminine connotations (Kidd, 2018, p.172). Because the Holy Spirit is part of the trinity (three in one), the significance that one-third of Creator has a female presence should not go unnoted. This presence also exists with Wisdom, *hokhmah* in Hebrew, who becomes personified as Sophia in Greek. She also has the name *Lady* or *Woman Wisdom* in Proverbs. In Proverbs 8:22-31, Wisdom speaks of her own creation:

the Lord created me at the beginning of his way, before his deeds long in the past. I was formed in ancient times, at the beginning, before the earth was... I was beside him as a

master of crafts. I was having fun, smiling before him all the time, frolicking with his inhabited earth and delighting in the human race. (CEB)

In chapters one and nine of Proverbs, Solomon, son of David, designates Wisdom with she/her pronouns. Solomon advises his son to listen to Lady Wisdom and proceeds from her perspective,

How long will you clueless people love your naïveté, mockers hold their mocking dear, and fools hate knowledge? You should respond when I correct you. Look, I'll pour out my spirit on you. I'll reveal my words to you. I invited you, but you rejected me; I stretched out my hand to you, but you paid no attention. You ignored all my advice, and you didn't want me to correct you.... Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will seek me, but won't find me because they hated knowledge and didn't choose the fear of the Lord.... Those who obey me will dwell securely, untroubled by the dread of harm. (CEB, Proverbs 1:22-25, 28-29, 33)

From these verses, it seems as though Lady Wisdom is more than just a quality of Creator, but is one with Them. Wisdom has the ability to reveal herself to human beings, she is sought out for guidance, and has the authority to expect obedience.

Despite the spirit of Wisdom having a presence in the Bible, Christians now do not often recognize her as a personification of Creator in the feminine form. This begs the question, "what happened to Sophia?" Kidd discusses the progression of the masculine logos replacing Sophia, and the idea of Sophia essentially disappearing from Christian texts. Paul essentially concludes that Jesus and Sophia are one and the same; though in English, the translation of the Greek wisdom is not personified nor does it have a gendered connotation, so it loses some significance. This is also due to the church's eventual rejection of Sophia. Paul writes to a church in Corinth, "but to those who are called—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's power and God's

wisdom....It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus. He became wisdom from God for us” (CEB 1 Corinthians 1: 23, 30). From Paul’s letter, the early church clearly was comfortable enough with Sophia to equate Jesus to her.

At this time, the masculine *logos* was interchangeable with Sophia because they were considered to play similar roles. Kidd points to the theory that the shift from Sophia to logos was due to the separation from Gnostics in early Christianity. The Gnostics were a prominent faction of the early church who “didn’t fully acknowledge Jesus’ humanity and death. They believed it was the knowledge or gnosis of Jesus’ message that saved humanity, not the crucifixion,” (Kidd, 2018, p. 174). The opposing group, which became the orthodox Christian tradition that was canonized in the New Testament, emphasized Jesus’ death as the source of salvation. The group wanted to distinguish themselves from the Gnostics and one of their methods was “the deletion of Sophia from Christian tradition,” so they “referred to Sophia only in the most muted ways” (Kidd, 2018, p. 174-5). Kidd suggests that it could have been a decision made as a way to push male power, but whatever the decision was, Sophia ultimately disappeared. In Paul’s letter, he writes about wisdom, but wisdom is no longer personified as she was in Proverbs.

### **Translational Differences**

The following section provides various examples of translational differences between Bibles where versions such as New International Version (NIV) and English Standard Version (ESV) have altered wording that changed the feminine language and emphasizes male sovereignty. Barr shares an anecdote about a teenage girl at her church who was teaching from the ESV Bible proclaiming men as the leaders and women as the followers based on biblical truth. After hearing the sermon, Barr reflected on how the verses read had been altered over translations,

the picture of submissive wives and mothers, who sat under the leadership of their husbands and male leaders in the church, may have seemed crystal clear. But her translation, her very modern English Bible translation, made her believe that what she was teaching was a plain reading of Scripture, whereas as a historian, I know that all biblical translations are shaped by human hands. Translations matter. And for women, translations of the English Bible have mattered more than most modern evangelicals realize. (Barr, 2021, p. 129-30)

In personal experiences attending a Christian University that requires basic Bible classes, I have encountered the translational debate. My professors early on gave statistics that proved that the texts between various translations have a “insignificant” percentage of differences; however, these small differences become significant when the changes impact the treatment of vulnerable populations such as women. Barr’s anecdote makes this issue clear. The girl teaching from her translation resulted in her belief that women inherently have the role of being submissive to male leaders, and not only was this her understanding, but she taught to others as “gospel truth-” thus the cycle continues.

Barr provides the example of Ephesians 5:22, the infamous verse about wives submitting to their husbands. She notes that a key verse before this one, Ephesians 5:21, “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,” alters the message of the following verse. With the mindset of verse 21 that submission should be a mutual event in a partnership, it can be understood that wives should submit to their husbands, but husbands too have a responsibility to submit to their wives. Paul would have been making a radical statement distinct in the Roman patrariacial culture, but the radical ideal has not been preserved in evangelical circles. The mindset discussed rarely is the one present in church discussions because in translations such as the ESV,

translators separate verses 21 and 22 from one another by establishing new sections. Through the separation, “the ESV chooses to highlight female submission in verse 22, literally separating it from Paul’s subversion of Roman patriarchy in verse 21” (Barr, 2021, p. 50). Barr then goes on establishing the argument that the emphasis on women to submit and not men, in addition, is “not because Paul meant it that way but because the complementarian translators of the ESV wanted it that way. With this particular translation, the ESV does not necessarily change the specific language of the verse, which supports my professor’s research that little alterations have been made in newer versions, but the mere separation of two verses has led to a persistent belief that wives are to submit to their husbands because the Bible says so.

For Christians who have grown up in evangelical churches, it may be difficult for them to recall any female leaders in the Bible. Barr found this to be a common encounter in her classroom as she had her students read aloud Romans 16 and requested them to write down all of the women’s names they heard in the chapter. The following women are mentioned in that chapter:

Phoebe, the deacon who carried the letter from Paul and read it aloud to her house church. Prisca, whose name is mentioned before her husband’s name... Mary, a hard worker for the gospel in Asia. Junia, prominent among the apostles. Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Paul’s fellow workers in the Lord. The beloved Persis, who also worked hard for the Lord. Rufus’s mother, Julia, and Nereus’s sister. Ten women recognized by Paul. (Barr, 2021, p. 64)

After acknowledging the leadership of prominent women in the chapter, Barr then relays to her students that in Romans 16, Paul recognizes more women for their ministry than men. Those of us who have not not grown up with the recognition of women in ministry in the Bible may be

astonished that Paul calls so many to his audience's attention. Many English Bible translations have worked to obscure these women's contributions and their ministry as a way to keep women from obtaining positions of power. An example of translations obscuring the influence of women can be seen with the deacon, Phoebe, in *The Ryrie Study Bible* which describes her instead as a "servant," which minimizes the reality of her role (Barr, 2021, p. 65). Junia, who historically was accepted as an apostle, had her name changed to "Junias," which is a man's name, by fairly modern translators. The explanation provided in *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* says, "'a major factor in twentieth century treatments of Romans 16:7 was the assumption that a woman could not have been an apostle.' Junia became Junias because modern Christians assumed that only a man could be an apostle" (Barr, 2021, p. 66-67). The deliberate choices to describe Phoebe as a servant and change the gender of Junia were to keep women out of leadership, which furthers my hypothesis that the removal of female leadership and monopolization of male leadership was partially due to the altering of language in translations to promote patriarchal ideals.

### **Evangelical Theological Society Membership and Leadership**

The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) categorizes their organization as, "a group of scholars, teachers, pastors, students, and others dedicated to the oral exchange and written expression of theological thought and research," who are "devoted to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ" (About the ETS, 2021). When examining the ETS official website, the exclusive nature of the society begins to become apparent. In order to even view the membership directory, one must be an official member, which as discovered, involves more than creating an account. The requirements to be a full member includes paying an annual fee of fifty USD and having a Masters of Theology or an

equivalent or higher degree. They allow for educational exceptions if someone has had significant writing, teaching, or administrative contributions in evangelical institutions. The ETS clarifies that only full members have voting privileges. There are also student and associate members that have similar requirements, but are considered to be non-voting members (Membership Requirements, 2021).

While having expert members in the field of theology certainly creates a knowledgeable population, the voting policies indicate that someone without this educational background cannot have relevant contributions. The elitist requirements exclude those of lower socioeconomic statuses who cannot afford an annual payment, a higher education, or to attend the annual meeting where voting and networking occur. This creates barriers for economically vulnerable populations such as people of color, resulting in a lack of diversity within the membership. Due to an inability to view the ETS membership directory and an absence of demographic information available, only inferences can be made about the general diversity based on who can apply. However, Emily Louise Zimbrick-Rogers, author of “A Question Mark Over my Head: Experience of ETS Members at the 2014 ETS Annual Meeting,” interviewed women ETS members and, together with an assistant, recorded qualitative data regarding ETS demographics.

According to Zimbrick-Rogers’ research, ETS has “a membership of approximately 4,500 members (2,600 full, voting members) and 2014 conference attendance of just over 2,600. Women make up approximately six percent of ETS membership” (2015). Though this society does not have any formally stated policies against women in leadership, there have been no female representatives among the previous seventy-one presidents since 1941. This is comparable to the presidential history of the United States, in which there are no legalities preventing women from achieving this position, but no woman ever has been elected due to

patriarchal systems. When systems are built off white, misogynistic ideals, the leadership will reflect that, making it difficult to dismantle and hurting those under influence of power.

In one of the interviews conducted, an unmarried woman of color described her experience at the annual meeting as “a very, very difficult and painful place to be in many ways, because it tends to be a replay of being treated as if invisible, because of male privilege compounded by white privilege” (2015). Of the ETS’ seventy-one presidents, two have been nonwhite. The 1997 president, Moisés Silva, is Cuban-American and the 2006 president, Edwin M. Yamauchi, is Japanese-American (*ETS Past Presidents*, 2020). These exceptions notwithstanding, this trend manifests the white, misogynistic ideals in place. Zimbrick-Rogers’ study demonstrated that many women experience “an atmosphere of hostility, marginalization, and exclusion” (2015); however, her study did not serve the purpose of explaining why the leadership is dominated by men.

### **Conclusion**

Without deconstructing colonized, Western Christianity, white men will continue to be the face of Christianity and will further pursue uplifting masculine divine images as a means of propagating that men are ordained to be leaders. The circulation of this theology continues to keep women out of leadership, which does not allow them to have a voice to seek change. Though modifications need to be made on the individual level about attitudes regarding women in leadership, this is a systemic issue. As I have discussed, Christianity was influenced by the patriarchal culture surrounding them, which influenced the institutions built. While they were developed based on Christian ideals, the systems benefit men in power and disadvantage women.

In Miller’s article on gendered language in worship, he references author and professor Marianne Meye Thompson who has three suggestions for egalitarian adaptations in Christianity



(2017, p.1-2). Of the three approaches: reformist, revolutionary, and rejectionist, Thompson favors the reformist approach while Miller creates his own approach with both reformist and restorative properties. He explains that “ (Miller, 2017, p. 1). With this approach, one can acknowledge the context and intentions of the religion, while allowing space to challenge irrelevant and even harmful principles. Applying this to my research can be extremely beneficial moving forward in the Christian tradition. I find value in upholding masculine images of Creator and having men in positions of power; however, I also cannot ignore the loss of the feminine.

From my experiences, I believe both growing up in the church and now that having constant images of Creator as feminine would be spiritually changing. Perhaps involving Her in common worship would inspire more institutions to consider the worth that women can bring in positions of power. When I think of Bithia, Moses’ savior and the pharaoh’s daughter, I consider her to be a prime example of how women can rescue the oppressive tendencies in some denominations such as the evangelicals. Though Bithia was intertwined with the Egyptian systems enslaving the Israelites, she could not resist saving someone incredibly helpless despite her country’s mandate to kill all Hebrew baby boys. She showed love and compassion despite what messages had been indoctrinated about Moses and his family. By means of Bithia’s care, Moses was able to safely grow up and eventually lead the Israelites to liberation just as his adopted mother had done for him. She was brave and defiant. Women in leadership offer righteous defiance to advocate for compassion and love of those who are helpless.

I began my research several months before the Evangelical Theological Society 2021 Annual Meeting at which, which, according to a recent article, “Come Let Us Reason Together: ETS 2021 Annual Meeting Recap,” encounters were somewhat different than the overall negative experiences recorded in according to the earlier article, “A Question Mark over my

Head.” The ETS hosts a “women’s gathering” at their annual meeting and this year had their largest gathering of women yet with a growing percentage of women of color from previous years. Article author, Mimi Haddad, reported that the space was safe and welcoming where the vast majority of women scholars enjoyed the time they had to support one another. The final day of the ETS meeting, members gathered to vote on new leaders and, in a euphoric moment, they announced the vice president, Dr. Karen Jobes. Her election means that she will become the society’s first female president the following year. With this, there can be increased hope that other religious organizations will find value in female leadership and there can be a gradual reintegration of female imagery for Creator and recognition of important and influential women of the gospel.

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