The gospel is indeed good news for women. However, as Dr. Amanda W. Benckhuysen observes, it also “tends to come to women with strings attached.” Men may be free in Christ, yet “women assume the yoke of a new law—restrictions and requirements assigned to them” by virtue of their gendered status as the “weaker vessel.” To depart from this gender ideology “is to reject God’s divine commands and undermine the authority of God’s Word, the Bible” (1–2).

Yet not everyone, and certainly not the female interpreters this book surveys, agrees that the Bible teaches that women are the weaker vessel. The strengths of *The Gospel According to Eve* are that it makes the interpretive insights of numerous women accessible and gives attention to how women have challenged the way Eve has been viewed as archetypal for all women. Although Eve has predominantly been interpreted as a negative representative for all women, this has not been without dissent.

This book provides a sampling of female interpreters, primarily from the Christian West, ranging from the fourth to the twenty-first century and, secondarily, interacts with some of the influential interpreters or interpretations from their time. While not all interpretations presented are uniform or “feminist,” reading about centuries of interpretation makes it evident that each generation of women interpreters has had to reinvent the interpretive wheel, arriving at many similar, yet independent, female-friendly conclusions. Toward the end of the book, readers are presented with a woman’s representation of Eve and an “alternative reading of Scripture, reflected in the voices of women and their interaction with Genesis 1–3” (2).

*The Gospel According to Eve*, as well as works such as the *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*,¹ are necessary in the quest to overcome the neglect of female voices in biblical interpretation. One cannot help but wonder what further interpretive and theological reflective insights could have been possible if each generation were aware of the women who came before them. And one can only consider what sorts of reflection could have been possible if others also shared the keen awareness that these women were indeed approaching the Bible with particular lenses, a human phenomenon that is not unique to women (231).

However, despite what one might expect from the title, this work gives only minimal attention to two major historical interpretive trends regarding Eve: 1) her perceived typological connection to Mary,² and 2) the influence of the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11–15 on the figure of Eve and women generally. The latter is a dominant interpretive influence that is not merely confined to a few churches in the present (109), yet there is sparse focus on how women have interpreted the Eve of 1 Timothy in relation to Genesis. When there is coverage, it is frequently incidental.

Eve’s typological connection with Mary has served as a crucial counterbalance to otherwise thoroughly negative interpretations of Eve (and women) throughout the centuries.³ Without Mary also informing how predecessors, both male and female, perceived female nature, one is left with a picture that is not altogether complete or accurate for interpretations of the time. “The rehabilitation of Eve in light of her virtuous counterpart, Mary, is one way of redressing what many have thought to be the worst effect of the story of the Fall: the preponderance of blame was pinned on a woman.”⁴ The Mary-Eve parallel functioned to further illuminate and expand the identity of Eve⁵ in ways similar to, yet perhaps somewhat disjointed from,⁶ how a Christ-Adam parallel furthered the identity of what a person could be in light of the work of Christ.

Further, there is disparity throughout the book; some interpreters receive notably more detailed treatment than others do. There is also more attention given to female interpreters in the nineteenth century (though perhaps they were more numerous at that time) than, say, the Renaissance or Reformation. Still, the strength of this book is its readable syntheses of various female interpreters and, by extension, the resulting questioning of some of our own interpretive assumptions.

Critiques aside, *The Gospel According to Eve* is a valuable resource for any egalitarian to have in their library. I also recommend it as assigned reading as part of a larger treatment or course on the history of interpretation.

**Notes**

2. There is a brief mention of this from Sojourner Truth on p. 189.
By bringing to light long-forgotten women's voices, Benckhuysen recovers a fascinating history of female biblical interpretation—one that reveals complex, creative, and often empowering visions of Christian womanhood. The Gospel According to Eve is a gift to scholars, pastors, and laypeople and perhaps especially to Christian women.” -- Kristin Kobes Du Mez, professor of history at Calvin College, author of A New Gospel for Women. "The Gospel According to Eve is a must-read for anyone interested in how the story of Eve has impacted women's and men's lives throughout history. It allows Over the centuries, women have read and interpreted the story of Eve, scrutinizing the details of the text to discern God's word for them. Biblical scholar Amanda Benckhuysen traces the history of women's interpretation of Genesis 1-3, allowing the voices of women to speak of Eve's story and its implications for life today. Product Identifiers. Publisher. AcknowledgementsIntroduction1. Interpreting Eve2. Defending Women's Worth3. Promoting Women's Education4. Supporting Women as Wives and Mothers5. Empowering Women to Preach and Teach6. Forming the Character of Children7. Advocating for Social Reform8. Influencing Gender Ideology9. The Legacy of EvePostscriptDiscussionQuestionsBiographiesInternet Sources by ChapterAuthor IndexScripture Index. A single bite of fruit forever heaved the entirety of a fallen and sinful creation onto the shoulders of Eve; through the lens of millennia of patriarchal interpretations of the scriptures, women throughout history have had to shoulder the blame and consequences. Eve is a complex character. Has she been adjusted to fit societal views and affirm the oppression of women, or does the biblical Eve truly demonstrate that women are made of "inferior stock? To learn of the different interpretations of Eve by women, read Amanda W. Benckhuysen's full article "The Gospel According to Eve," published in the Spring 2020 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review. 