

3-2018

## SBL Annual Meeting Panel — Human Trafficking and the Bible, Linking the Past to the Present: A Response to the Panelists

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### Recommended Citation

McGinn, Sheila E., "SBL Annual Meeting Panel — Human Trafficking and the Bible, Linking the Past to the Present: A Response to the Panelists" (2018). *2018 Faculty Bibliography*. 12.

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# SBL Annual Meeting Panel — Human Trafficking and the Bible, Linking the Past to the Present: A Response to the Panelists

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SHEILA E. M<sup>c</sup>GINN

I would like to begin by thanking all five of our panelists for their contributions. The various ways they have approached the topic of “Human Trafficking and the Bible: Linking the Past to the Present” should provide us with rich grounds for conversation today. In the interests of promoting that conversation, I will try to keep my remarks relatively brief, and will explore each presentation in turn with the view of highlighting points of convergence and divergence among the speakers and what questions this panel might raise for a wider discussion of the contemporary reality of human trafficking.

## SYNOPSIS OF PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Diana M. Swancutt brings into conversation the New Testament materials about slavery and related realities with the contemporary dynamics of forced labor and human trafficking. Swancutt uses the United Nations International Labour

Organization (UNILO) category of “forced labor” as the overall aegis for discussing human trafficking for labor exploitation, a type of “modern slavery” that evinces numerous points of contact with the ancient reality. Even today, millions of people are forced into labor to feed the billion-dollar industry of human trafficking. All victims of human trafficking, no matter the circumstance, share a loss of freedom.

After defining human trafficking and providing some basic data concerning the severity and ubiquity of the contemporary problem, Swancutt shifts to a close reading of a variety of New Testament texts she finds pertinent to the topic. In response to the question of whether the biblical texts and related traditions provide any theological promise of redemption or hope, she answers with a conditional affirmative: reading the New Testament texts through a post-colonial interpretive lens can provide a way to recover a liberative tradition.

The power and economy of the Roman Empire was based in military conquest (which included the subjugation, enslavement, and forced migration of non-Roman populations as tools of labor) overlaid on a monopolistic market practices that led to high concentrations of land and wealth among very few aristocratic families and the constant threat of debt slavery for those on the lower echelons of society. New Testament texts such as the household codes (in Col 3:18–4:1 and Eph 5:22–6:9) reinscribe the very Roman social structures that promote the wealth and power disparities of the Roman *imperium*. But the New Testament gospels “reflect historical economic distress [that] impacted believers as subsistence-level people in Galilee and Judea” and critique the structures that caused impoverishment and debt slavery. The undisputed Pauline letters likewise provide an alternative vision of human society in the language of redemption, the community of believers as “one body,” divine adoption as sons/heirs (*huiiothesia*), solidarity, and reciprocity, which is enacted in Jesus’ open

commensality and imaged in the agape meals of the earliest churches.

The New Testament texts clearly illustrate the impact of slavery on multiple levels. Slavery was ubiquitous during the first century, not only in the Roman Empire but elsewhere as well. It supported the Roman economy—especially the agricultural, mining, and manufacturing sectors—and promoted the expansion of the Roman Empire. The legacy and reality of forced migration, enslavement, and violation of human beings as enslaved “talking tools” of empire had a significant effect on the incipient Pauline churches. Swancutt cites from the Gospels and the Pauline Letters to highlight some of the cultural dynamics of slavery evident in the NT materials. Key illustrations of this point include the “household codes” (e.g., in Col 3–4 and Eph 5–6); the language of “debt slavery” and remission of debts (e.g., Matt 6:12, 18:23–35; Phlm 18); and the routine evangelical resentment against leaders who impoverish the people (e.g., Mark 7:10–13), which causes debt slavery.

The Gospels and the Pauline Letters not only demonstrate the misery of the common people; they also offer a response. Swancutt argues that “Jubilee” practice (see Lev 25; Deut 15) was central to the Jesus Way (e.g., Mark 14:7). Understood in Isaiah 61 and repeated in Jesus’ sermon in Luke 4, Jubilee practice includes release of prisoners, remission of debts, and other strategies for fighting poverty. Using a series of texts (including 1 Cor 11:17–34; Philemon; Romans 3 and 8; and 2 Cor 8–9), Swancutt demonstrates that the New Testament teaches ideals of community sharing, community action (“forgive us our debts”), solidarity, and a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. These New Testament themes present show a consistent response to the mistreatment of people within Roman culture. The same matrix of themes provides a basis for a today’s audience to address the contemporary problem of human trafficking and forced labor. In the

face of these contemporary human-rights challenges, contemporary Christians should imitate this New Testament praxis of solidarity with and communal action in favor of the poor and vulnerable.

Tammi Schneider begins by establishing the premise that women in the Ancient Near East simply did not control their own bodies; hence, anytime the Hebrew Bible talks about a woman having sex, we are faced with a case of trafficking. While this initially might seem an overstatement, Schneider continues to provide details of a wide range of relationships to support this claim. Whether the woman has the status of a slave, a prostitute, or a wife, the sexual relationship involved some type of economic exchange (purchase, payment, or bridal gift), and the woman's consent was not required to that exchange. Schneider proceeds to examine legal and narrative materials to highlight the dynamics of ancient Israelite society; the narrative materials present how society was thought to work, at least some of the time, whereas the legal materials present the way society *ought* to work (in contrast to what actually did happen that gave rise to those legal restrictions).

Schneider establishes basic definitions of terms like “rape” and “marriage” to highlight the common anachronisms that arise when modern understandings of these terms are applied to ancient texts. She highlights the androcentric construction of each of these key concepts as applied to the Hebrew Bible texts (e.g., marriage being comparable to prostitution in that a man “takes” a wife in exchange for payment; rape being an offense against the woman's husband or father rather than against herself). The rape of the Levite's *pilegesh* in Judges 19 serves as an example of the way narrative in the Hebrew Bible is used to convey that something is seriously wrong with society, although the nature of that “wrongness” remains unspecified. The case of Tamar and Judah is used to undercut the typical interpretive assumption that the scene depicts prostitution: while the incident involves an exchange of

goods and services, the nature of the exchange is not money for sex but rather Jacob's seed for Tamar's son, who is the means by which Tamar fulfills her obligation to Jacob and his house.

Schneider concludes that the Hebrew Bible suggests “when women do not control with whom they can have sex, all sex becomes suspect; when every man does what is right in his own eyes, and anyone can be brutally raped, society is not safe; when women have no access to power, even over their own bodies, society is at risk.”<sup>1</sup> Prostitution is not a way for women to gain access to control over their own bodies; it relinquishes control over their bodies to men, who pay someone else for the privilege.

Hector Avalos concentrates his presentation on aspects of human trafficking by the Islamic group known as ISIS. Beginning from the premise that “most of biblical scholarship remains an apologetic enterprise despite its claims to be engaging in historico-critical scholarship,”<sup>2</sup> he aims to show that “at least some of [the trafficking practiced by ISIS] can be traced to ideas and principles evinced in the Bible and in the ancient Near East.”<sup>3</sup> He continues by presenting the following three claims as comprising the thesis of his presentation: “1) the Bible cannot be used as any sort of modern authority to either endorse or combat human trafficking; 2) there should be zero-tolerance for any sacred text that at any time endorses human trafficking; 3) no sacred text should be used as a moral authority today.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tammi J. Schneider, “Human Trafficking and Women in the Ancient Near East,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 36 (2016): 178.

<sup>2</sup> Hector Avalos, “The Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Roots of Human Trafficking by ISIS,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 36 (2016): 180.

<sup>3</sup> Avalos, “ANE and Biblical Roots of Human Trafficking,” 181.

<sup>4</sup> Avalos, “ANE and Biblical Roots of Human Trafficking,” 181.

After identifying his stance toward religious texts, Avalos quotes the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime definition of human trafficking to provide the foundation for the remaining analysis. Several examples follow to argue that both the Bible and the Qur'an provide at best ambivalent traditions regarding slavery and other forms of human trafficking. In the case of Hagar (Gen 16), Avalos asserts that the biblical author portrays "a divine endorsement" of slavery and of "returning an escaped abused woman to the owner" (compare his treatment of Philemon).<sup>5</sup> *Sura* 9.5, Exod 21:16, and Deut 24:7 are used to engage the question of whether the prohibition of "manstealing" equates to a prohibition of the slave trade. Lev 24:22 and 31:15–18 are explored concerning expectations for treatment of foreigners, including the permissibility of sex with women captives. Avalos uses Matt 5:38–41, taken out of its socio-historical context, to argue that Jesus did not oppose forced labor. In every case, the barely contextualized biblical texts are found insufficiently restrictive of human trafficking.

Avalos concludes basically where he started, with the claim that "I advocate post-scripturalism—that is, I propose that we move beyond the use of any sacred texts to formulate modern policies concerning human trafficking or any other issue."<sup>6</sup> But the premise of the panel was not the formulation of "modern [political] policies." Rather, the purpose was to explore how in the biblical narratives and other Ancient Near Eastern traditions can help readers better understand the plight of the victims, and whether any promise of redemption or theological hope can be found through that exploration. Avalos concludes by insisting that "Fighting human trafficking must be based on empathy for the victims," which is what his presentation was supposed to help develop. His critique of the textual traditions deserves attention and fits well with the wider

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<sup>5</sup> Avalos, "ANE and Biblical Roots of Human Trafficking," 181.

<sup>6</sup> Avalos, "ANE and Biblical Roots of Human Trafficking," 204.

critical and deconstructionist analysis of these ancient texts. Still, his contention that religious texts ought never be used in addressing moral issues begs the question then of why he addresses them at all? Having expended all his energy on deconstruction, Avalos provides no re-construction that might indicate any positive content or strategies to be gained from engaging these religious texts. I would have liked to see a more nuanced approach to the texts, including a more self-critical and contextualized methodology, if not a positive re-construction of the wider textual evidence.

Shelley Long summarizes the U.N. definition of trafficking as “the commodification or exploitation of others for personal gain,”<sup>7</sup> and then continues the discussion of trafficking in the Ancient Near East by pointing to several cases of women the Hebrew Bible depicted being used as goods for barter or rewards for men’s conquests. Examples include Sarah, Merab, Michal, the daughters of Lot, the women of Jabesh-Gilead, and many others from Genesis–Judges. Her summary of this survey leads to a cry of anguish. “A reader of the first seven books of the Bible can only be left in a mystified stupor at the magnitude of devastation left in the wake of human trafficking. The repeated objectification and commercialization of women is mind-boggling and heart-wrenching.”<sup>8</sup>

What do we do about the ubiquity of this objectification and commodification of women, not only in the Hebrew Bible but in the contemporary world? Long suggests a three-stage response of listening, lamentation, and action. Before anything else, we must listen to the survivors, affirming their personhood “by giving ear to their trauma.”<sup>9</sup> Then we must respond to those heart-wrenching

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<sup>7</sup> Shelley Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking in the Bible and the Present,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 36 (2016): 207.

<sup>8</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 209.

<sup>9</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 210.

stories by entering into that brokenness, lamenting the depth of the pain and misery caused by this systemic injustice. Finally, we must “identify the causes of human trafficking and eliminate them.”<sup>10</sup> Long suggests that fear drives traffickers in the Hebrew Bible narratives, and their patriarchal power over women’s sexual rights enabled them to transform that fear into exploitation. She further suggests that similar dynamics drive trafficking today: poverty, abuse, and death, among other fearful realities, “compel individuals to take part in the exploitation of others.”<sup>11</sup> She suggests that “male privilege, physical control, or psychological and emotional intimidation” provide the power imbalance that makes such exploitation possible.<sup>12</sup> One wonders if this characterization does not understate the significance of the power dynamics themselves, attributing the sole motivation to “fear” rather than avarice, hybris, or multiple other possible motives in the current international economic environment.

Long recommends combating trafficking by fighting “the fear and power imbalances that fuel [it]” on several fronts: by educating students in ways that enhance their self-worth and hope; by engaging in feminist- and liberation-critical scholarship that empowers the disenfranchised, including reflecting critically on the contemporary impact of the kinds of “texts of terror” that she surveyed in the first part of her remarks; and by becoming educated consumers channel their purchases in ways that avoid complicity in the exploitation we renounce.<sup>13</sup>

Long agrees with Avalos that, while the biblical stories she surveyed do not comprise redemptive texts; however, Long believes

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<sup>10</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 210.

<sup>11</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 210.

<sup>12</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 210.

<sup>13</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 211.

these texts “can *provoke* redemption”<sup>14</sup> if readers are moved—by these stories and those of contemporary victims—to care more deeply and work to end human trafficking and the other myriad forms of economic exploitation in our own communities and around the globe.

Carole R. Fontaine focuses on the issue of forced migration in the Ancient Near East and today, comparing the situation in contemporary regions like Kurdistan with those in the ancient Levant and environs. She defines forced migration as the coerced depopulation of a particular region due to armed conflict, social destabilization, and/or environmental degradation. While natural disasters sometimes may play a role in forced migration, conflict and social destabilization arise from intentional choices on the part of a powerful group who wants to control the persons and resources of those less powerful. Conflict can result in the conquered peoples being killed, taken captive, or enslaved. The last two possibilities constitute trafficking and highlight war as a means to economic gain. Fontaine uses a series of compelling images to highlight the kinds of forced migration one finds discussed in the Ancient Near Eastern texts and compare them with the contemporary migrations being forced on people affected by regional conflicts.

Admitting that “the Bible is a mixed bag as a source of support for Human Rights,”<sup>15</sup> Fontaine suggests that one must watch both what the Bible *says* and what it *does*. Even this interpretive strategy, however, will not uncover the kind of univocal testimony that would establish “blanket warrants for human dignity and equal treatment before the law of every nation and religion.”<sup>16</sup> Still, the Bible

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<sup>14</sup> Long, “Responding to Human Trafficking,” 212.

<sup>15</sup> Carole R. Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact on Women and Children from the Documentary Evidence of the Ancient Near East & Today,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 36 (2016): 214.

<sup>16</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 214.

“knows our questions” and so can be a fruitful companion in our quest for contemporary answers.<sup>17</sup>

Before outlining exactly how that quest might be pursued, Fontaine turns to the details of the contemporary occurrence of forced migration. Reviewing statistics from such sources as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, she observes that over half the victims of displacement are children and, on average, twenty more people are displaced every minute. She notes the diverse levels of commitment from the nations of the world, whose varied responses may compound rather than alleviate the crisis of forced migrations.

Fontaine uses the case of the Rohingya of Myanmar to explore the contemporary socio-political dynamics of forced migration. The U.N has called the repression of the Rohingya a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”<sup>18</sup> Fontaine identifies the toxic combination of “ideologies, national anxieties, and power-hungry leaders”<sup>19</sup> that has provoked the Myanmar regime to “full-scale pogroms against villages, and wholesale slaughter.”<sup>20</sup> While international aid agencies are responding to the crisis, few governments have welcomed the refugees or taken diplomatic measures to halt the genocide. To redress issues like these, Fontaine recommends that readers support aid groups like UNICEF, WHO, and NGOs that focus on women and children, “who always suffer the most in such situations of forced migration.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 215.

<sup>18</sup> Nick Cumming-Bruce, “Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar Is ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’ U.N. Rights Chief Says,” *New York Times* (11 Sept 2017), quoting Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/11/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-ethnic-cleansing.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 220.

<sup>20</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 221.

<sup>21</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 221.

Fontaine also highlights the forced migration taking place in the USA today, including those displaced by the California wildfires, the hurricane in Puerto Rico, and the changes in immigration policy that threaten to expel thousands of “Dreamers” while preventing acceptance of Muslim refugees. While not hopeful for an adequate U.S. commitment to generate creative resettlement options and other viable solutions to the forced migration crisis, she asserts that “The Bible, studied critically, and the international Human Rights/Development communities are sources for an alliance that takes up the moral imperatives we often used to seek in organized religion, liberal democracies, and treaty alliances.”<sup>22</sup>

What exactly might this “alliance” comprise or what might be its general outlines? Fontaine does not provide an explicit answer to this question. Instead, she provides a reprise of recent news on this front, good and bad, including the release of the Yazidi women taken as sex slaves; increasing danger to the Peshmurga women since the Kurdish referendum for independence; the successful evacuation of the women of the Iranian Resistance, illegally detained at Camp Liberty in Baghdad, Iraq; and recent lawsuits seeking redress for the deleterious effects of the toxic “burn pits” at Camp Liberty. One assumes that the positive initiatives she cites represent something of what she intends by this conjunction between the Bible and the international human rights communities.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS PANEL FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Most of us probably knew, before these panel presentations, that the phenomenon of human trafficking has a long and shameful

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<sup>22</sup> Fontaine, “Forced Migration’s Impact,” 222.

history that continues to this very day. I dare say most of us also knew that the Bible includes several “texts of terror” that highlight different types of human trafficking. Nevertheless, bringing the Biblical texts into conversation with the current situation provides a unique opportunity to explore the kinds of assumptions and ideologies that justify human trafficking, whether in the Ancient Near East or the contemporary world.

The panelists repeatedly identified several social dynamics as providing fertile soil in which human trafficking can thrive: patriarchy, with its constitutive rejection of the value of women and girls; fear and hatred of the “other” that manifest in systemic racism; military aggression and land grabs; all coupled with callous political indolence in the face of injustice. Oddly less emphasized, although clearly implicated in the definition of trafficking, are the economic dynamics that support such worldwide violation of human rights and exploitation of human suffering for personal gain. The Bible does not escape unscathed in this analysis, for we find these kinds of stories there, too. The refrain “There was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6; and 21:25; *cf.* 18:1 and 19:1) constitutes an *inclusio* for a section of Judges that narrates repeated rights violations. The refrain implies that the stories provide negative examples, not to be emulated; yet, as more than one panelist observed, the narrative details do not provide a clear rejection of the controlling patriarchal ideology that “justified” the human rights violations named in the texts.

Does this mean the Biblical texts (and, by extension, other religious texts from the Ancient Near East) are of no use whatsoever for addressing contemporary moral challenges like human trafficking? I would argue this depends upon *how* and *why* one is reading the text. None of the panelists self-identified as “feminist,” but I will frame their responses in the light of feminist theory since that is my point of engagement and the panelists’ approaches share the two fundamental bases of a feminist approach to the Bible:

(a) the rejection of kyriarchy and (b) the assumption that, in the immortal words of Betty Friedan, “women [and girls] are people, too!”<sup>23</sup>

Several scholars have undertaken the task of sketching the spectrum of feminist approaches to the Bible.<sup>24</sup> A basic threefold schema includes radical/rejectionist, reformist/revisionist, and conservative (sometimes called “biblical egalitarian”) approaches.<sup>25</sup>

The “radical or rejectionist” approach asserts that the biblical texts are irretrievably patriarchal and misogynist and so must be rejected. Avalos objects to various aspects of the biblical texts, including their patriarchal character. His deconstructionist reading of the text includes no attempt to construct a “usable past.” In addition, he identifies his approach as “post-scripturalist.” Thus, I would characterize his approach as fitting this first category.

The “conservative” or “biblical egalitarian” approach asserts that the Bible itself is not inherently patriarchal. Rather the Bible,

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<sup>23</sup> Betty Friedan, “I say: Women are people too!,” *Good Housekeeping* (Sept. 1960): 59–61.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., David M. Scholer, “Feminist Hermeneutics and Evangelical Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30, No. 4 (Dec 1987): 407–20; Sandra M. Schneiders, “Scripture: Tool of Patriarchy or Resource for Transformation?,” *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991), 37–71. Cf. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, “Feminist Uses of Biblical Materials, 55–64 in Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), whose three emphases (outlined on p. 56) all are strategies of the reformist/revisionist approach. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s fourfold hermeneutical model (hermeneutics of suspicion, remembrance, proclamation, and creative actualization) provides one of the more sophisticated expositions of this reformist/revisionist approach; see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 15–22; cf. her later expansion in *Idem, But She Said: Feminist Practice of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 20–50, especially 40–48.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Margaret Elizabeth Köstenberger, *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 216–18.

properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of all human persons, male and female, and of all races and ethnicities. Given all the panelists' assertions of the underlying patriarchal character of the biblical text, none of our presenters represent this approach to the Bible.

According to the threefold schema outlined above, then, Swancutt's, Schneider's, Fontaine's, and Long's interpretive approaches fall under the reformist-revisionist heading. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes the dialectical assumptions behind this approach.

Feminist interpretation engages two seemingly contradictory insights. The bible is written in kyriocentric (*i.e.*, lord/master/father/husband-elite male) language, originated in the patri-kyriarchal cultures of antiquity, and has functioned to inculcate misogynist mindsets and oppressive values. The bible also has functioned to inspire and authorise wo/men in their struggles against dehumanising oppression.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, while all of our panelists have identified the products of kyriarchy in the various biblical examples of trafficking and related human rights violations, four of them also imply that the Bible can be used to authorize the struggle for human rights and against such travesties as human trafficking. By intertwining their readings of the Biblical texts with narratives of contemporary victims of trafficking, they create a synergy between the two worlds of the ancient text and contemporary life, thereby illuminating not just the general dynamics of the problem but also the particular costs in individual human lives.

Although none of the panelists explicitly named this process, it strikes me that they are following Rosemary Radford Ruether's

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<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Biblical Studies, Feminist," 42–43 in Lorraine Code, ed., *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 42.

method of correlation, which makes “the critical naming of women's experience of androcentric culture” the interpretive key for feminist theology.<sup>27</sup> We certainly have seen the members of this panel “get in touch with, name, and judge [women’s] experiences of sexism in patriarchal society.”<sup>28</sup> They have advanced the discussion of “Human Trafficking and the Bible, Linking the Past to the Present” by naming “the experience of sexism as an unjustified assault upon [human] beings, rather than accepting it as the norm.”<sup>29</sup>

Whether viewing the Ancient Near East or the contemporary world, all our panelists have denounced the commodification and exploitation of human life—including the lives of women and girls—inherent to the practice of trafficking and forced migration. In the process, they have told the stories of victims, many previously voiceless and invisible, and have stormed the walls of complacency that has marked much of biblical scholarship. They have suggested practical interventions to combat the systems of economic and sexual exploitation that make human trafficking both possible and profitable. Such moves again go beyond the traditions of “disinterested” academic biblical scholarship. Does this make the Bible irrelevant to such contemporary moral debates? On the contrary, the convergence the panelists have highlighted between the biblical texts and contemporary stories inspires a welcome outrage to overcome the inertia of past “unbiased” and un-engaged readings of the Bible.

Linking the biblical past to the present world is no sterile academic enterprise done from the heights of an ivory tower. The process requires co-relating the ancient stories with the testimonies

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<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation,” 111–24 in Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 114; reprinted online at <http://www.womenpriests.org/classic/Ruether.asp>.

<sup>28</sup> Ruether, “Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation,” 115.

<sup>29</sup> Ruether, “Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation,” 115.

of the present to highlight the injustices in both “worlds” and raise the demand for justice in the present. Such a process of interpretation is itself an act of resistance to the “principalities and powers” that may look unassailable. Yet inspired by outrage and by hope, the interpretation gains “legs”—and hands and mouths—to speak out and work for the justice currently denied. I again thank all the panelists for helping to provoke such inspired outrage and hope-filled action to make human trafficking and forced migration into realities of the dusty and distant past.

*Sheila E. McGinn, PhD (Northwestern University, 1989), Professor and Chair in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at John Carroll University, is a frequent lecturer and author of numerous articles and books. Her research focuses on the development of the earliest churches (including “dissenting” movements) and of the early Christian writings in their social and cultural environments. Her published works include commentaries on the Gospel According to Matthew, the Montanist Oracles, and the apocryphal Acts of Thecla; a comprehensive bibliography of studies on the Book of Revelation; essays on several letters in the Pauline corpus; and two recent books: The Jesus Movement and the World of the Early Church (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2015) and By Bread Alone: The Bible through the Eyes of the Hungry (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).*