

BOOK REVIEW

Jorunn Økland, *Women in their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (JSNTSup, 269; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004). x + 328 pp. Hbk. US\$160.00. Pbk. US\$96.00.

Jorunn Økland presents her first monograph, derived from her doctoral thesis, which analyses the likely reception of Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 11–14 based on Corinthian perceptions of gender and ritual space. Her arguments rely on an eclectic blend of 'discourses', which include historical and philosophical written texts, physical/archaeological ideas of *ναός* and *οἰκία*, as well as inscriptions and pottery. She claims that Paul, recognizing that *oikiai* are the physical meeting places for the church, creates an ordered ritual which transforms *oikia* into *ekklesia*. This *ekklesia* space exists only for the Christian gathering and is distinguished from ordinary household space. Through ordered ritual the *ekklesia* is made into the image of God, which is the masculine (in both gender and sex) body of Christ. Økland then endeavours to communicate the rigid set of ritual guidelines that transform female worshippers into male worshippers or hides their feminine presence in the masculine space. This is accomplished by limiting female worshippers to feminine/chaotic modes of worship, namely *glossolalia*, and by the veiling of women in the ritual space. This thesis is developed over seven chapters, which begin with the author's philosophical assumptions, then explore Corinthian sanctuary spaces, apply these models to the Corinthian church and, finally, apply these models to the ordering of Corinthian worship in Paul's first letter.

After a summative introductory chapter, Økland attempts to set her research apart from the majority of scholarship by renouncing any connection between first-century and modern concepts of woman. Leaning heavily on Cartesian philosophy, she draws a line between the modern woman and ancient suppositions of the term *γυνή*. According to her philosophical construct, the one ceased to exist with its language and

culture and, due to differences in frames of reference, cannot be reconciled with a modern understanding of gender. By marking this boundary, she frees herself to reconstruct Paul's understanding of gender with carefully selected sources in a later chapter. In the same vein, she dissects a modern understanding of church and gathering so that she can carefully reconstruct it as a temporally defined 'sanctuary space'.

It is not until the third chapter that Økland elaborates on those gender aetiologies which she feels are most influential on Paul's gender discourses. She recognizes four predominant influences: (1) The 'Adam and Eve' model presupposes that creation produced the perfect man, and women are a derivative result. In this model, man is considered incomplete without woman. In contrast, woman's incompleteness is irrelevant because she is secondary, and defined in relation to the man. (2) The 'woman as fertile soil' model presents woman as *Gaia*. In contrast, all things masculine emanate from *Ouranos* and all space is divided by gender between these two poles. Harmony between the poles is contingent on *Gaia's* servitude. (3) The woman as 'Pandora' model corresponds to the *Gaia*/fertile soil model. In this model, however, it is not subservient woman, but her counterpart *Chaos* who is in focus. Where *Gaia* is sexually subservient, and thus pleasurable and fertile, *Chaos* is sexually unbound, and thus destructive and dangerous. (4) The final model, the 'one-sex-model', depends on an Aristotelian understanding of gender in which the male is representative of the whole, perfect human. In contrast, female is imperfect, undeveloped and sub-human. The 'one-sex' in question is male, and female is seen as something below sex. Hope for the feminine is found in somehow becoming male.

The fourth chapter concerns 'ritual space', and suggests that cultic architecture is formed chiefly by the ritual that it houses, and that gender is intrinsic in its formation. The sanctuaries of Demeter and Kore, when compared to masculine space such as the altar to Apollo, show a distinct place for feminine priesthood in the Corinthian cult, which is typically isolated or lower hierarchically. In the cult of Medea, which is reflective of the *Pandora/Chaos* model, the 'frenzied female' priestess has some degree of authority. However, her sacred space is isolated from male public space.

In Chapters 5 through 7 Økland applies the ideological web of the first four chapters to Pauline thought. She claims that in 1 Corinthians

11–14 Paul is concerned with differentiating between the order and function of the household, and that of the ritually constructed *ekklesia* space. This discourse is bracketed on both ends by passages that subject women to male authority and identity through veiling. These passages simultaneously indicate that the image of God is male, and draw a strict contrast between *oikia* and *ekklesia*. Økland proceeds to define *ekklesia* as a strictly male entity defined in male terms, and as a male body. The body is male in name (Christ) and by physical features (Økland draws a connection between the ‘necessary parts’ in 1 Corinthians 12 and the male penis). Therefore, in order for females to have a part in *ekklesia*, they must be silent and hide themselves behind a veil. Otherwise they may enact inferior feminine roles, such as *glossolalia*, which associate them closely with the ‘frenzied female’ priestess.

In sum, Økland admits that those ideas rooted in Corinthian temple space and Greek myth are more likely indicative of Corinthian perception, rather than Pauline intention. Yet other aspects, such as his insistence on veiling, are firmly rooted in Paul’s Jewish understanding of gender roles. That is, Paul draws on the gendered discourse of the Jerusalem temple where the hierarchy is masculine and women are veiled and subservient.

There are several issues to be taken with Økland’s conclusions. As a point of departure, one should note the dependence of her conclusions on the deconstructed and reconstructed social foundation she carefully builds in the first half of her book. That is, the validity of her arguments about Paul rest on the assumption that Paul and the Corinthians were constrained by Aristotelian and mythological notions of masculinity and femininity. It is necessary, for Økland’s arguments to hold, that Paul intended for the Corinthian gathering to conform entirely to the models of worship already at work philosophically (though even Økland admits they are not always adhered to in practice) in pagan worship. There is no room in these theories for a contrarian Paul, who is writing in opposition to these presuppositions, if they are indeed as prevalent in Corinthian thought as Økland supposes.

It is troubling that Økland insists on measuring Paul by pagan liturgical practice. However, it is more troubling that he should be measured by twenty-first century grammatical convention. According to Økland, Paul’s exhortation for Corinthian unity and his use of the masculine pronoun εἷς to describe the church is evidence that he is enslaved to phallogocentric language. Such implications measure Paul

by modern standards of gendered language convention, though she has attempted to separate the two earlier. This double standard is exacerbated in her failure to indicate that the *ekklesia*, her term of choice for the body of Christ, is a feminine word! Furthermore, in calling the body of Christ male and limiting it to male membership because of a possible phallic reference, Økland is placing the local colour of the body metaphor before its intended meaning. That is, even if 1 Corinthians 12 contains reference to a phallus as an honoured part of the body, it is a ridiculous application to the question whether female membership in Christ's body makes it hermaphroditic!

It is also troubling that, after emphasizing repeatedly the role of ritual practice in the formation of sacred space, Økland is adamant that the lack of dividing walls and the apparent gender mixing that the household *ekklesia* space affords is in no way indicative of a less rigid gender hierarchy in Christian worship. Furthermore, even those passages in Paul that hint at some degree of equality (e.g. Gal. 3.26-28), when subjected to Økland's Aristotelian structure, hint at the disappearance of the female into a one-gendered male.

To some degree, Økland has made a significant contribution to our understanding of Greco-Roman gendered space, though I am not sure this understanding is co-incident with Paul. She has pointed towards interesting structural elements in Paul's discussion of ritual space and liturgical order. It is significant that Paul's discussion of peace and unity in Corinthian worship is begun and ended with a discussion of female roles in worship and the relationship between temporal space and sacred space. Perhaps, with the weight of Aristotle removed from Paul's shoulders, further insight can be found from the implications of this particular blend of sacred space, gender roles and unified worship.

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