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BUT SHE SAID

FEMINIST PRACTICES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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story calls for a hermeneutics of suspicion even though this passage is usually hailed as one of the most positive biblical texts about women.

I.

A HERMENEUTICS OF SUSPICION

A *hermeneutics of suspicion* seeks to explore the liberating or oppressive values and visions inscribed in the text by identifying the androcentric-patriarchal character and dynamics of the text and its interpretations. Since biblical texts are written in androcentric language within patriarchal cultures, a hermeneutics of suspicion does not start with the assumption that the Martha and Mary story is a feminist liberating text just because its central characters are women. Rather it seeks to investigate how and why the text constructs the story of these two women as it does.¹³

The meaning of this passage is most difficult to establish because of the textual critical problems in verses 41 and 42.¹⁴ Jesus' pronouncement is the climax of the story and therefore key to the meaning of the story. The six textual variations indicate that the story was controverted very early on. The variations represent, basically, two different readings. The longer reading, on the one hand, assumes a meal setting: "Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things; few things are needful or one," could mean, as one commentator puts it, that a couple of olives, or even one, will suffice at present. Mary has the main course already. The shorter reading, on the other hand, which is preferred by most contemporary interpreters, reads: "Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things, one thing is needful." The "one thing" probably refers to the activities of the two protagonists. The climactic word of Jesus then asserts that Mary has chosen the one thing, the good part.

Since the text does not directly refer to a meal or explicitly to "serving at table" but uses the more general expressions *diakonian*, *diakonein* the longer reading's assumption that a meal is being served cannot be justified. Moreover, the climactic word of Jesus does not mention *diakonia* or *diakonein* but reproaches Martha because she is anxious and troubled about many things. The Greek expression for being anxious—*merimnan*—reminds one of Luke 12:22, 26, where the disciples are told not to worry about eating, drinking, and clothing, and not to be anxious about their lives. Instead they should seek G-d's *basileia*.

No consensus can be found among interpreters as to the story's basic meaning. A critical review of divergent interpretations can distinguish two

basic approaches, which highlight in different ways the text's dualistic character.¹⁵

An *abstractionist* interpretation reduces the two sisters to theological principles and types. It is supported by the form-critical classification of the text as a biographical apophthegm, that is, an ideal scene or construct for the climactic saying of Jesus in which the many worries of Martha are contrasted with the one thing needful chosen by Mary. Such abstractionist interpretations, for example, have understood Martha and Mary as ciphers for the theological principles of justification by works and justification by faith, alms-giving and prayer, Judaism and Christianity, synagogue and church, people who are preoccupied with worldly cares and those who listen to G-d's word and seek spiritual things.

According to traditional interpretations of the story, Martha and Mary symbolize either the labors of this world and the bliss of the world to come (Augustine) or the active and the contemplative life in this world, or life according to the flesh and according to the Spirit (Origen). The contemporary version of this traditional interpretation emphasizes the importance of love of G-d over and against the social activism that stresses the importance of love of neighbor. Such interpretations not only dehistoricize the narrative, but they also make women historically invisible. They obscure the androcentric dynamics of the text which uses *women* to make its point.

Those interpretations which acknowledge that Martha and Mary are two female characters, that is, that actual women are the protagonists of the story, work with a "good woman/bad woman" polarization. The traditional Catholic interpretation gives women the choice of two lifestyles in the church: active (Martha) and contemplative (Mary). There are those women who serve G-d and those women who serve men. Active women do the housework, rear the children or take care of the sick, and concern themselves with mundane business. Contemplative women do not allow worldly things to interfere with their quiet study, prayer, contemplation, and service to the Lord. Women are either laywomen or nunwomen, secular or religious, serving their husbands or serving the Lord, their heavenly bridegroom.

Protestant interpreters have a more difficult time with this story since the Reformation replaced the role of nuns with that of the "pastor's wife," and the ascetic lifestyle with the cult of domesticity. Therefore they insist that women must fulfill their duties as housekeepers. Nevertheless, they must not overdo it. In other words, they should be accomplished hostesses of dinner parties and church suppers, but they should take some time out to "listen, to pray and to learn." Martha is told that only "a few things" are needed. She must still be the hostess, yet she has to keep it simple so that she can also fulfill her religious obligations. To quote a widely read

work, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, Jesus' "remarks, however, are neither an attempt to devalue Martha's efforts at hospitality, nor an attempt to attack a woman's traditional role; rather Jesus defends Mary's right to learn from Him [sic] and says this is the crucial thing for those who wish to serve Him [sic]. Jesus makes clear that for women as well as men one's primary task is to be a disciple; only in that context can one be a proper hostess."¹⁶

Apologetic feminist interpretations in turn continue this dualistic interpretation. They focus on Mary's rejection of the traditional housewife role and stress her option for theology. They celebrate her vindication by Jesus without carefully analyzing the androcentric implications of Luke's story. Mary is compared to a student or disciple of a rabbi since she is seated at Jesus' feet. Just as Paul was the Pharisaic student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), so Mary is a disciple of Jesus, dedicated to listening to his word. Mary's role is characterized as very unusual in view of the place of women in Jewish culture whose work was to serve but not to study with a rabbi. Unlike any Jewish rabbi, it is then asserted, Jesus accepts women as disciples studying the Torah, while he rejects the role of housewife as women's proper role.

However, this interpretation highlights Christian women's role as disciples at the expense of Jewish women and their tradition. It assumes that Jewish women were relegated to the kitchen and excluded from the study of the Torah. Apologetic feminist interpretations have not invented such an anti-Jewish explanation; rather, they have uncritically taken it over from malestream exegesis. They do so in order to show that Christianity, far from being anti-women, has actually liberated women. Nevertheless, a feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation must reject such an anti-Jewish interpretation, because it seeks to eliminate the oppression and marginality of Christian women by historically perpetuating that of Jewish women. It overlooks that both Mary and Martha are Jewish women. ✱

Another way to "save the story" from its critics emerges in the interpretive attempt to psychologize and eroticize its protagonists. One psychological reading, for instance, stresses that Mary showed sympathetic understanding toward the anguish of Jesus, who was on his way to Jerusalem where he was to face death, whereas Martha could not meet his needs. Jesus expected such a sympathetic understanding, though it was almost unheard of that a woman would be sought out as a confidante or that a man would discuss matters of life and death with a woman.¹⁷ Other psychological readings understand the competition between Martha and Mary as either sibling rivalry or sexual jealousy. Martha, the older of the two sisters, expects Mary, the younger, to take over her share of work. Since John 11:5 states that Jesus "loved Mary and her sister," it is asked

what sort of love this was: "Could there indeed have been sexual jealousy between the sisters for the attention of Jesus? Or was it platonic, a friendly relationship? As lively, physical human beings we cannot discount the possibility that there was more than friendly interaction between the three, a factor which could have entered into the resentment Martha expresses."¹⁸

Such psychologizing readings of the story overlook the insight of historical-critical exegesis that biblical texts are not interested in the psychological attitudes and emotions of their protagonists. They also perpetuate the patriarchal cultural stereotype of women as rivals, as merely the emotional support or love object of a man, or as both. Finally, such an interpretation also relies on the negative contrast of Jewish society.

In short, a hermeneutics of suspicion indicates that in one way or another most interpretations of Luke 10:38-42 underline the dualistic antagonism either between the two women or between the timeless principles or lifestyles which they symbolize. One must therefore ask whether such an androcentric dualism is a projection of traditional and contemporary interpretations, or whether it is generated by the text itself.

The same two women are also mentioned in John 11:1-44 and 12:1-11.¹⁹ In distinction to the Fourth Gospel, the writer of Luke-Acts mentions neither the name of the town, Bethany, nor the brother of the two sisters, Lazarus. We can no longer know with certainty whether this silence is due to redactional considerations, or whether Luke did not have the same information about the two sisters as the Fourth Evangelist had. Nevertheless, a comparison between the gospels of John and of Luke indicates that the dualistic opposition characterizing Luke's text is absent from that of the Fourth Gospel.

A form-critical analysis shows that Luke's story itself constructs this opposition between Martha and Mary. Bultmann therefore classifies this story form critically as a biographical apophthegm, rather than as a controversy dialogue that was composed as an ideal scene to illustrate the final word of Jesus.²⁰ Apophthegms or pronouncement stories generally utilize antagonistic characterization to make a point and to espouse behavioral norms. The narration tends to stylize and typify certain persons or situations so that readers can identify with them and imitate their behavior. What seems to be clear is that the Lukan account is not concerned with the two women as individuals; rather, it is interested in them as representatives of two competing types or roles of discipleship: *diakonia-service* and *listening to the word*.

A linguistic-structural analysis further underlines the text's dualistic-oppositional structure.²¹ In such an analysis, Mary functions as the positive figure to which the figure of Martha serves as a negative foil. The text itself inscribes the oppositions: rest/movement; lowliness/upright posture;

listen/speak. Martha's intervention as a speaking subject reinforces this contrasting opposition:

Mary	Martha
student	householder
listening	speaking
rest	movement
receptiveness	argument
openness	purposefulness
passivity	agency
better choice	rejection

In addition, a narrative analysis that charts the interventions of the characters can highlight the dualistic dynamics of the text. The three characters of the story are Martha, her sister Mary, and the *Kyrios*, the Lord. The relationship of Martha and the Lord in the beginning of the story is that of "equals": Martha welcomes Jesus into her house. Mary's relationship to the Lord is that of a "subordinate": she seats herself at his feet. Martha is absorbed in the preoccupations of *diakonia*; Mary gives her whole attention to the "word of the Lord." This opposition already hints at a conflict in which Martha becomes the protagonist. Martha's speech has two parts, one referring to the present and one pointing to the future, insofar as she aims to change the situation. Whereas the first part consists of a question which contains two accusations, the second is an imperative sentence which contains two demands. Martha's strong reference to her own person and needs contrasts with Mary's silence and passivity as she is focused on the *Kyrios* (v.39bc). Both parts of Martha's speech are directed explicitly to the *Kyrios* and only indirectly to Mary.

Martha does not speak to Mary directly but she appeals to Jesus²² as a little girl might run to her father to tell on a sibling who misbehaved. She complains to the Lord about her sister²³ and asks him to use his authority to tell Mary to share in the work. In doing so she relinquishes the more egalitarian relationship between hostess and guest in favor of the dependency relationship between child and parent. The Lord rejects Martha's appeal and sides with Mary. He approves of Mary's choice to listen to him but discredits Martha's choice of *diakonia*, which is not the "one thing necessary."

In the beginning, the emotional dynamics of the scene lead us to expect an intervention of the *Kyrios* in favor of Martha. Readers understand her impatience with Mary's self-absorption and sympathize with her. Yet, Martha's active intervention shifts the reader's sympathy against her. Whereas in the beginning the story opposes Martha's welcoming of Jesus

and attention to service to Mary's position at his feet and attention to his word, the end of the narrative stresses Martha's exaggerated service, anxiety, and worry in contrast with Mary's choice of the better part which will not be taken away from her. Martha's desire to change the situation is rejected as too much worrying and busybodiness. In the course of the narrative, Martha, the independent and outspoken woman, is rebuffed in favor of the dependent Mary, who chooses the posture of a subordinate student.

In short, the story places the *Kyrios* in the center of the action. Insofar as he is characterized in masculine terms, the story is clearly kyriocentric, i.e., master-centered. Moreover, Mary, who receives positive approval, is the *silent* woman, whereas Martha, who argues in her own interest, is *silenced*.²⁴ Those who praise Mary's extraordinary role as a disciple generally overlook the fact that Mary's discipleship only includes listening but not proclamation. Finally, the text is not descriptive of an actual situation. Rather the narrative is *prescriptive*, pitting sister against sister in order to make a point. But what is the point that Luke wanted to make in his own social-ecclesial situation?

II.

A HERMENEUTICS OF REMEMBRANCE

A *hermeneutics of remembrance*²⁵ seeks to move against the grain of the androcentric text to the life and struggles of women in the early churches. It seeks to reconstruct early Christian history as the history of men and women, as memory and heritage for women-church. Rather than taking the androcentric text or historical model of Luke-Acts at face value, a hermeneutics of remembrance seeks to uncover both the values inscribed in the text and the patriarchal or emancipatory interests of its historical contextualization. When discussing the role of women in early Christianity, exegetes usually affirm that women have a prominent place in the Lukan double-work. However, they generally situate Luke's stories about women in the life of the historical Jesus rather than in the situation of the early Christian communities to whom Luke writes. Such an interpretive move allows them to psychologize and historicize the characters in the text and to stress, for example, Mary's personal relationship to Jesus.

That Luke 10:38-42 was generated by and addressed to a situation in the life of the early church—rather than an episode in the life of Jesus—is linguistically signaled by the title *Kyrios*. The text appeals not to the authority of the historical Jesus but to that of the resurrected Lord. Thus it is important to explore the story's inscribed historical situation and rhetorical

function in order to identify the theological-pastoral interests of the author. Exegetes have pointed out that the inscribed historical situation is that of the early Christian missionary movement which gathered in house-churches.²⁶ Therefore, the householder Martha welcomes the Lord into her house. One reading of the story contextualizes it in terms of Gerhard Theissen's claim that the Jesus movement consisted of itinerant (male) missionaries and local households who supported the apostolic mission with material means.²⁷

The text supports such an interpretation insofar as the *diakonein* of Martha refers back to that of the women in Jesus' and the apostles' company (Luke 8:1-3). As such a local householder, Martha makes too much fuss about hosting Christian itinerant preachers. Just as the twelve apostles (Luke 9:1-6) and the seventy (Luke 10:1-24) are admonished to stay as officially authorized delegates at the same house, to eat and drink whatever is put before them (10:7-8, cf. 9:4), and not to worry about their sustenance (12:22-26), so Martha's worries about hosting such traveling missionaries are rejected in favor of listening to their words. Such a construction of the historical subtext not only presupposes Theissen's historical reconstructive model of the Jesus movement, but in so doing it relegates women householders to providing hospitality for male preachers. Ultimately, such an interpretive model colludes with and reinscribes Luke's editorial interests, which relegate the *diakonein* of the women disciples to wealthy women's patronage and support for the apostolic male leaders.

Luke 8:1-3 is best understood as a Lukan editorial summary account (see 4:14f; 6:17; 9:51) which changes the Markan tradition by distinguishing clearly between the circle of the twelve and that of their female supporters. By adding Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, he underlines that they are wealthy women who support Jesus and his male followers. They are not characterized as disciples *akolouthein* as in Mark, but they are motivated by gratitude because Jesus heals them.²⁸ That Luke intends to downplay women's equal discipleship comes to the fore not only in his attempt to subordinate women to the circle of the male disciples, but also in his characterization of them as wealthy benefactors. Studies of the social world of Luke have pointed out that he uses the Greco-Roman patron-client relationship as a model for his construction of the social world of Jesus, but that he insists on its modification.²⁹ Such patron-client relationships are characterized by inequality in status and power, as well as by exchange and reciprocity. "A patron has social and economic resources; in return a client can give expression of solidarity and loyalty. Generosity from the patron can be translated into honor and power."³⁰

The Greco-Roman patron-client exchange system was a significant opportunity for marginalized wealthy but low-status people, such as freeborn

women or freed persons, to achieve status and power. Are we then to understand that in exchange for their economic service the women who supported Jesus and the male apostles were to gain honor, status, and power equal to that of the male apostles? In fact, this is not the case, because the Lukan Jesus insists again and again that the expected behavior is the opposite of that produced by the patron-client relationship. The text insists that wealthy persons and leaders cannot expect to receive repayment in the form of honor and influence. Their only reward is from G-d, who is the only patron.

By undercutting the reciprocity of the patron-client system, the Lukan narrative produces the power-inequality between rich and poor men, male leaders and their subordinates. In doing so, it forecloses a significant social avenue to status and influence in the church for wealthy freeborn women and freedpersons. Thus the Lukan rhetoric of 8:1-3 undercuts women's equal discipleship on several levels: The women followers of Jesus are portrayed not only as serving Jesus and the male apostles with their possessions but also as owing gratitude to Jesus for having been healed. At the same time the text introduces "class" differences between women by turning the women disciples into elite married women and wealthy patrons. Ultimately, a historical reading that contextualizes the Martha and Mary story in terms of Luke's historical model as it has been theorized by G. Theissen is not able to break the hold of the androcentric texts but reinscribes it. Consequently, one must ask whether another reading is plausible.

It is important to note that the text itself does not directly place Martha in the kitchen preparing and serving a meal. In fact, the text merely states that she is preoccupied with too much "serving." *Diakonia* and *diakonein* had already become technical terms for ecclesial leadership in Luke's time. Traveling missionaries and house-churches were central to the early Christian mission, which depended on special mobility and hospitality. According to the Pauline literature, women as well as men were traveling missionaries and leaders of house-churches. The house-church provided space both for the preaching of the word and for eucharistic meal celebrations. Scholars project patriarchal bias onto the early Christian missionary movement, however, when they conclude that the *diakonia* of women consisted either in serving traveling male missionaries and doing housework for communal gatherings or that it was restricted to the house.

In early Christian usage, *diakonia* refers to eucharistic table service in the house-church. It was not, however, restricted to such service, since it also included the proclamation of the word. That this was the case comes to the fore in Acts 6-8 despite Luke's redactional interests to the contrary. Although the "seven" Hellenists are said to have been appointed to devote

themselves to the *diakonia* of the tables so that the twelve could dedicate themselves to the preaching of the word, they nevertheless become the initiators of the Christian missionary movement and are depicted as powerful preachers and founders of communities. They are characterized similarly to the rival missionaries, preachers, and apostles of Paul in Corinth.

The structural affinity of Acts 6:1–6 and Luke 10:38–42 has long been recognized.³¹ Just as Martha complains that Mary leaves (*katalipein*) the *diakonein* to her in order to listen to the word (*ton logon*) of the *kyrios*, so the twelve apostles maintain that they cannot leave (*katalipein*) the word (*ton logon*) of G-d in order to serve (*diakonein*) at tables. Luke's text not only distinguishes the *diakonia* of the word from that at table and restricts both to different groups, but, in so doing, Acts 6:1–6 subordinates one to the other. Lukan redactional interests seem remarkably similar to those of the Pastoral Epistles, which also distinguish between ministers who labor "in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17) and those who "serve" (1 Tim. 3:8ff).

Luke 10:38–42 stresses that the *diakonein* of Martha is not the "one thing needful" and hence must be subordinated to "listening to the word." However, it must not be overlooked that the "good portion" chosen by Mary is not the *diakonia* of the word: it is not the preaching but rather the listening to the word. The characterization of Mary as a listening disciple corresponds to the narrative's interests in playing down the leadership role of women.

It has often been pointed out that it is a major Lukan literary strategy to parallel a story about a woman with one about a man and vice versa.³² One of the earliest feminist articles has therefore argued that this male-female dualism reflects the "important constituency of women and men who shaped the missionary and catechetical movement."³³ Such an observation is correct in that it describes the audience of Luke's "catechetical" instruction as consisting of women and men. Yet the Lukan text represses the knowledge that women and men have *shaped* the missionary movement, insofar as the gospel does not parallel a single story about a leading male disciple, such as Peter, with that of a leading female disciple, such as Martha. By paralleling stories about male and female characters who are the objects of healing and instruction, the Lukan work genderizes membership in Jesus' community of disciples while simultaneously subordinating the women disciples to the male leaders.

This portrayal of women as *members* but not leaders of the Jesus movement corresponds to Luke's picture in Acts of the role of women. Acts tells us that women as well as men listen to the Christian message and become disciples.³⁴ However, the public speeches in Acts use the address "men, brothers" (*andres, adelphoi*) eleven times.³⁵ More importantly, Acts does

not tell us a single story of a woman preaching the word, leading a congregation, or presiding over a house-church.

While the Pastoral Epistles explicitly prohibit women to teach men, the Lukan work fails to tell us stories about women preachers, missionaries, prophets, and founders of house-churches. Thus while the Pastorals silence our speech, Acts deforms our historical consciousness. In addition, Luke plays down the ministry of those women leaders of the early church whom he has to mention because they were known to his audience. Martha and Mary are a case in point.

Such a critical feminist interpretation of the Lukan text has met with strong disagreement.³⁶ These objections assert that the above interpretation does not sufficiently take into account the story's contextualization in the so-called travel-narrative and the overall tendencies of the Lukan redaction that are widely held to be positive with regard to women.³⁷ Such objections insist that the story characterizes Mary as a disciple of Jesus contrary to contemporary religious-cultural expectations. My point, however, is not that Mary is not to be understood as a follower or disciple of Jesus, but rather that she is not seen as a "minister of the word."

Even a cursory review of the placement of the story in the Lukan macrotext can substantiate my argument. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (9:51) and the reader knows he will die there. Chapter 10 begins with the official commissioning of the seventy-two disciples. They are told to expect food and shelter and to eat and drink what is set before them when they are received into a house (10:7). The vignette of the Martha and Mary story explicitly directs readers back to the sending out of the seventy-two disciples in that it refers to the journey and to the reception of Jesus in Martha's house. In doing so it clearly distinguishes between the disciples, who, like Jesus, are sent to proclaim the good news, and those in the community, who receive the disciples and listen to their preaching. The Lukan contextualization of the story thus marks Mary's discipleship as being like that of the members of the Christian community.

In addition, the placement of the Martha and Mary story in the immediate context of instructions for Christian practice is telling. The story is sandwiched between the example story of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37) and Jesus' teaching on how to pray (11:1-4).³⁸ While the story of the Good Samaritan addresses the question, "Who is my neighbor?", the section 11:1-4 answers the disciples' request for Jesus to teach them how to pray. The Martha and Mary story in turn climaxes in the assertion that Mary has chosen "the good portion."

Finally, the Lukan travel narrative in which the Martha and Mary story is situated has three journey sections. These are marked in 9:51, 13:22, and 17:11. The first narrative complex (9:52 to 10:42) in the first journey

section (9:52 to 13:21) of the macrotext ends with the Mary-Martha story.³⁹ Whether the example story of the Good Samaritan and the pronouncement story of Martha and Mary are interrelated is debated. Yet both can be read as answering the question of the lawyer, "What am I to do to inherit eternal life?" Both are thus explications of the great commandment. They teach members of the Christian community what true discipleship is all about. They express the same message in narrative form as the blessing of Jesus in Luke 11:28, which praises those "who listen to the word of God and observe or do it (see 8:21)."⁴⁰ In short, the contextualization of the Martha/Mary story within Luke's macrotext of the travel narrative supports my argument that, although Luke's rhetorical strategy acknowledges women as members of the Christian movement,⁴¹ it downplays their apostolic leadership.

That Martha and Mary were well-known apostolic figures in the early churches can be seen from the Fourth Gospel. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are characterized as Jesus' friends whom he loved (11:5). They are his true disciples and he is their teacher. After expressing her faith in Jesus' word, Martha goes and calls Mary (11:20), just as Andrew and Philip called Peter and Nathanael. According to the Fourth Evangelist, Jesus' public ministry climaxes in the revelation that he is the resurrection and the life (11:1-54). While in the original miracle source the resurrection of Lazarus was the heart of the story, in the gospel the climax is the christological confession and dialogue of Martha and Jesus.

As a "beloved disciple," Martha becomes the spokeswoman for the messianic faith of the community. Her confession parallels that of Peter (6:66-71), but hers is a christological confession in the fuller Johannine sense: Jesus is the revealer who has come down from heaven. Indeed, Martha's confession has the full sense of the Petrine confession at Caesarea Philippi in the Synoptics, especially in Matthew 16:15-19. Thus Martha represents the full apostolic faith of the Johannine community, just as Peter does for the Matthean community.

While Martha of Bethany is responsible for articulating the community's christological faith, Mary of Bethany exemplifies the right praxis of discipleship. She is explicitly characterized as the "beloved disciple" whom the teacher has specifically called. She has many followers among her people who came to believe in Jesus (11:45). Though in the narrative of John 11 Mary plays a subordinate role to Martha, in 12:1-8 she is the center of the action. That Martha "served at table" could be an allusion to Luke 10:40, but in John 11 and 12 she is characterized as fulfilling both the ministry of the word and of the table.

Moreover, in John the two sisters are not seen in competition with each other or played out against each other as they are in Luke. Mary is not

portrayed as Martha's opposite but as Judas' counterpart. The centrality of Judas both in the anointing and in the footwashing scene emphasizes the evangelistic intention to portray the true female disciple, Mary of Bethany, as the alternative to the unfaithful male disciple, Judas, who was one of the twelve. This opposition lends itself to an anti-Jewish reading if it is overlooked that Mary is portrayed as a leading Jewish woman. Whereas according to Mark 14:4, "some," and according to Matthew 26:8, "the disciples," protest the waste of precious oil, in John it is Judas who objects.⁴² The male objection to Mary's ministry is discredited and rejected by Jesus' harsh rebuke: "Let her alone." Mary not only prepares Jesus for his hour of "glory," she also anticipates Jesus' command for each to wash the feet of the other as a sign of the agape praxis of true discipleship.

To sum up: A hermeneutics of remembrance can show that both Luke and the Fourth Gospel repress but nevertheless inscribe the struggle of early Christian women against the patriarchal restrictions of their leadership and ministry at the turn of the first century.⁴³ The Fourth Gospel indicates how women might have told stories which portrayed women as leaders in the Jesus movement to legitimate their own ministry and authority. By contrast, the rhetorical construction of Luke 10:38-40 pits the apostolic women of the Jesus movement against each other and appeals to a revelatory word of the resurrected Lord in order to restrict women's ministry and authority. The rhetorical interests of the Lukan text are to silence women leaders of house-churches who, like Martha, might have protested, and to simultaneously extol Mary's "silent" and subordinate behavior. Such a reconstruction of women's struggles in the early church also indicates why women have always identified more with Martha than with Mary. That is, it confirms women's "suspicion" that in the Lukan account Martha received a "raw deal." Yet it is not the *Kyrios* but the writer of Luke 10:38-40 who promotes such patriarchal restrictions.

III.

A HERMENEUTICS OF EVALUATION AND PROCLAMATION

The preceding critical feminist theological exploration of this Lukan text has important implications for contemporary feminist readings, for preaching, counseling, and individual Bible study. Such a hermeneutics has two significant interfaces: first, a critical assessment of the text, and, second, a critical assessment of the reading situation or context.⁴⁴

First, instead of reinscribing the dualistic, oppositional, and kyriocentric dynamics of the biblical texts, a hermeneutics of proclamation must criti-