
Introduction

“The double message nurtures a dangerous remembrance.”

—TURID KARLSEN SEIM,
THE DOUBLE MESSAGE, p. 260

CONCLUDING HER GROUNDBREAKING BOOK on patterns of gender in Luke-Acts, this sentence may also summarize what Turid Karlsen Seim has initiated and contributed to a variety of fields and discourses for more than forty years. In international ecumenical work, as professor of Theology and New Testament Studies, and as Head of Department at the Norwegian Institute in Rome, she has looked critically for double messages hidden in ancient texts or revealed in present conversations. She has contributed with creative and innovative thinking, based on her exceptional gift of reading, ancient texts, or theological documents alike. Seim is herself a pioneer in her interdisciplinary and border-crossing movements, but also as the first woman to receive a doctoral degree in theology from a Norwegian university (in 1990). In this volume colleagues, former students, and friends honor her work and engage with some of the themes central to her scholarship.

This book, titled *Bodies, Borders, Believers*, represents a broad spectrum of issues. Contributors from different contexts with interest in text, history, and contemporary communities, all relate in one way or another to Seim's broad research interests. Among the contributors many scholarly traditions, theoretical orientations and methodological approaches are represented, making this book an interdisciplinary and border-crossing endeavor in itself. This cross-disciplinary collection includes biblical scholars, ecumenical theologians, archeologists, classicists, art historians, and church historians, working side by side to probe the past and its receptions in the present.

There are several reasons why **bodies** matter. In this book, concepts and ideas about bodies as they appear in ancient texts and as they exist in our world as concrete human beings are put under scrutiny. A variety of theories and methods are used in order to emphasize the importance of a critical perspective on the body. To pay attention to birth and lifegiving processes, gender and sexuality, enslaved bodies, life stages, bodily transformations, and metamorphoses reveals how complex human life is and always has been. In what way can we relate to the body? How can we use the body to think with? What kinds of bodies have been and are worth remembering? Is there any continuity between bodies of the past and bodies of the present and, if so, what about the future? To play with Seim's words: How may we reveal the double messages? How may we nurture a dangerous remembrance? How may we probe the complexities of human life?

Borders are there to organize and categorize reality, but they can also be crossed. They may change and many are surprisingly flexible. The distinction between life and not-life is not always fixed in ancient texts, where resurrection, transformation, and immortality disturb the order of such categories. Death is not always the opposite of life, especially if eschatology or metamorphosis is at the center of attention. There are also borders in human life, stable or flexible, between the different life stages, between childhood and adulthood, between being a boy and becoming a man, between children and parents. And there are borders between different groups, such as slave and free, men and women, "Greek and Jew," although the power to uphold them can be contested and negotiated. Some borders can be blurred or porous, for example between religious groups, ethnicities, or traditions, and representatives or members of such groups can meet in dialogue and constructive encounters—or in open conflict. Some transitions have rituals to help the person and its surroundings negotiate and give meaning to change, such as the Christian practice of baptism. To cross borders can be a way of opposing or protesting against status quo. To move between worlds culturally, mentally, or geographically can open up new spaces, but it can also be destabilizing and even threatening. To cross borders has been characteristic of Seim's career. She has crossed borders between research areas, traveled between countries, and challenged and defied norms related to gender and academic leadership.

A central way to categorize those who belong to a religious tradition, in particular the Christian communities, is to call them **believers**. But what do they believe and how are their lives influenced by what they believe? How do such believers relate to each other, how do they agree or disagree, how do they navigate each other's worlds when they do not share values or visions? How do believers from different faiths and religions relate to each

other, in particular the three traditions that share the destiny of being called “children of Abraham”?

The early Christian believers, from whom texts in different languages, genres, and shapes have survived, most certainly represented a rather diverse group, concerning background, social status, and the way they interpreted the role of Christ. But these Christ-believers produced documents that are considered canonical in many parts of the world today. Moreover, they are important texts not only as religious foundation but also as cultural memory. The ecumenical dialogue in which Seim has participated for many years represents one important place where these complex processes are discussed and strategies of coexistence and community are explored.

We have divided the various contributions in this volume into four parts. The first part is called *Visions across Time and Space*. Karen L. King contributes with a comparative study of Philo of Alexandria and a contemporary Korean-American Presbyterian Church and examines how they use, however differently, sex-gender strategies to represent and negotiate group boundaries. Outi Lehtipuu’s article “No Sex in Heaven—Nor on Earth?” follows, in which the early Christian discourse on resurrection and asceticism is contextualized and scrutinized, with Luke 20:27–38 as the point of departure. Hugo Lundhaug writes about the body of God and the corpus of historiography, related to the anthropomorphic controversy. Stories about Eve have changed as the myth traveled across time and space. Antti Marjanen looks at how the Eve tradition from Genesis is reworked in the *Apocryphon of John*. The ethereal substance of light in early renaissance paintings is the theme of Per Sigurd Tveitevåg Styve’s contribution. He shows how the context of medieval optics provided art theorists and artists with a concept of light.

The second part, *Life Stages and Transformations* opens with an article about the transience of ethnic categories. John J. Collins reads the ancient novel *Joseph and Aseneth* as a story about a foreign woman who is transformed into a proper Jewish wife. The transformative idea of resurrection is the focus of Ingvild Sælid Gilhus’s article on the apologetic text *Octavius* by Minucius Felix. She discusses the conceptions of animals, human beings, and superhuman beings and their relation to change and permanence. Margaret Y. MacDonald discusses the role of education, socialization, and parenting in early Christian discourse related to Roman ideas about the family, with a special view to Ephesians. Marriage and birth are life stages that together with the concept of slavery were used as salvation metaphors in early Christianity. Anna Rebecca Solevåg asks in what way these salvation metaphors shaped early Christian ideas about slavery, marriage, and birth. Line Cecilie Engh’s article is an example of the versatile potential inherent in

biblical texts. Engh discusses how Ephesians 5 was used in pro-papal propaganda in the later Middle Ages.

The third part, *Contested Dynamics of Community*, starts with an article by Adela Yabro Collins, who examines ancient texts on female prophecy. Another female religious role is studied by Katariina Mustakallio. She shows how the special identity of the Vestal Virgins of Rome was created by means of rituals, legal and sacral privileges, and obligations and how their social bonds and emotional ties with their original families were regarded. Kari Elisabeth Børresen explores the Roman Catholic teachings on priesthood related to men and women in an *imago Dei* perspective, and relates this to the ecumenical challenge of women priests. Ecumenical dialogue is the focus in the remaining articles in this section. André Birmelé presents development and prospects in the dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans. Olav Fykse Tveit discusses the unity of the church in the light of WCC's general assembly 2014 in Busan. Stephanie Dietrich's contribution focuses on the discussion of the church's identity as a diaconal church and how this should be mirrored in church structures.

The last part, *Patterns of Ambiguity*, deals with texts and contexts in which complex categories like sexuality, gender, and ethnicity are addressed. These categories are often ambiguous, contested, and under constant negotiation. Halvor Moxnes builds on Seim's thesis from *The Double Message* and asks about the place of men and masculinities in Luke's Gospel. David L. Balch compares two Greco-Roman mother-and-son pairs in his article and finds patterns of similarity as well as difference. He reads Luke's portrayal of Jesus and Mary in light of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's portrayal of the Roman warrior Coriolanus and his mother, Veturia. Ursula King lifts up how religious traditions can contribute to the making of peace and how they can confront seeds of violence. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow uses present discussion on reproductive health, infertility, and surrogacy and theories of intersectionality to ask some new questions to various texts dealing with the slave girl Hagar, in particular in Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:21–31. David Hellholm rereads Rom 1:21–32 and discusses the role of same-sex relations related to the "heathens" Paul is constructing. In the final contribution of this volume Anne Hege Grung presents Muslim and Christian women's readings of sacred texts, looking for strategies and models to deal with complex texts and complex contexts.

All of these articles show the contributors' interest in engaging with Turid Karlsen Seim and her many areas of scholarship. Her outstanding career remains an inspiration. As several of the authors in this volume express, she is valued as colleague, teacher, and mentor. We believe that to continue the conversation, from the past to the present and into the future, and to

engage with the “dangerous remembrance” of bodies, borders, and believers is the best way to honor Turid Karlsen Seim.

We would like to end this introduction where we started: with *The Double Message*. Published more than twenty years ago, it still offers an important perspective on Luke-Acts. According to Seim, although Luke is unique in mentioning several women, in particular in the Gospel but also in Acts, there is a certain ideology telling them to be silent and stay out of leadership. It is not merely a question of whether Luke is good or bad news for women; said with the nuanced and complex analytical reasoning that always has characterized Seim’s way of reading and interpreting:

In his narrative Luke manages the extraordinary feat of preserving strong traditions about women and attributing a positive function to them, while at the same time harbouring an ironic dimension that reveals the reasons for the masculine preferences in Acts presentation of the organization of the Christian group, of the public missionary activity and legal defence before the authorities. (p. 259)

Yet, this double message still nurtures a dangerous remembrance.

*In honor of Turid Karlsen Seim on her seventieth birthday,
and with the hope that the conversation may continue.*