War on Women: Roman Misogyny for Military Aim

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The Greco-Roman world of the first few centuries AD was no place of equality for women. Just as the perspective on women affected daily life in general, it also affected Greco-Roman military ambitions in particular. As Bertrand Russell states, "The circumstances of men's lives do much to determine their philosophy, but conversely their philosophy does much to determine their circumstances."[1] Let us consider the circumstances of women in a society utterly controlled by men, for by examining their philosophy, the truth of Russell's statement is evident.

This article will argue that by fostering a culture of vehement misogyny, Rome was able to further its military agenda. The example of Rome's expansion into Africa will provide a clear illustration. The article will also show that the toxic environment through which many early church fathers were writing skewed biblical studies and thus promoted hostility toward women, veiling Rome's inherent cultural chauvinism in Christian religion.

The importance of analyzing this history is two-fold: it allows us greater insight into the political endgame of the Roman Empire while also requiring us to more thoroughly examine our own Christian approach to justice. Clarity on the latter is essential for an ethical practice of Christianity or, as Traci West states, "in order to figure out how to make responsible contributions to the shared values of our pluralistic world."[2]

Greco-Roman Mythology

One of the most effective tools for promoting culture in any time or place is story; mythologies served as a belief system in ancient cultures and were used powerfully in political situations.[3] Rome was adept at this. Collective loyalty and thought were reinforced through carefully crafted characters and dilemmas, which were constructed to position an eager audience as both spectator and judge.

Versions of well-known legends come to mind, for the way female characters are presented represents cultural and political dichotomies. In the case of *Antigone*, for example, there is a wrestling with female agency. Sophocles's version depicts Antigone as a woman of independent, albeit helpless, voice. Whereas Euripides, although granting her a public appearance, chooses to highlight her as cowardly and reclusive.[4] In either depiction, the dramatic tension created is a direct result of the fact that the speaker is female.

For ancient Greco-Roman society, mythology was a vessel for securing and spreading misogyny. The term "Greco-Roman" is used intentionally here, for Rome largely adapted Greek mythology. As they did with any conquered civilization, Rome took the pieces of Greek culture they wanted—including their mythology—and made them Roman.[5] Rome possessed Greek mythology and used it as a tool.

Although the Greeks celebrated and revered many goddesses, care was taken to ensure that the goddesses did not rule the gods. In fact, many of the goddesses were not even birthed of a female—the role of giving life in each instance was usurped by a male god.[6] For example, the goddess Aphrodite was born of the castrated testicles of Kronos after his son threw them into the sea. Even Athena, the most powerful goddess in Greek mythology, was subjugated by Zeus when in a rage he swallowed her mother, Metas. As the one who essentially brought her into being, he declared her indebted to him for life. Even though he

killed her mother, her debt of servitude is one she took quite seriously. For example, in the *Eumenides* Athena sided with Orestes after he murdered his own mother.

Women, according to Greek mythology, are descendants of Pandora. They are termed "a beautiful evil" and by design are "unmanageable for men."[7] They are a kind of curse, and in Rome, women rarely were able to display agency unless by manipulation or coercion. With precious few exceptions, women were seen as either property or problem. As replete as their mythology is with instances of matricide and manipulation, so too is their history, once again proving that their circumstances align with their philosophy.[8]

Military Interests in Africa

Thus, the Greco-Roman world was fundamentally hostile toward women. Such a worldview could not accommodate a kingdom ruled by powerful women, which is where we see a particular clash with the matriarchal kingdoms of Africa. Although Rome had conquered Egypt and established a presence in ports such as Alexandria and Carthage, they had yet to make subject a rival African kingdom ruled by powerful queens. Of particular importance is the Nubian kingdom, whose territory was along the Nile in parts of modern-day southern Egypt and extending south to the region of Khartoum, Sudan.

The objection to these ruling females was not only gender-based, but also racially charged. In their exegetical attempts in the second through the fourth centuries AD, Hellenistic authors such as Irenaeus, Philo, and Origen drew inferences from race and skin color.[9] As David Goldenberg states, "Origen's exegesis, which, as we shall see, played a key role in the development of anti-Black racism, is based, at least partly, on a biblical text that is not found in the Hebrew."[10] Therefore, according to the philosophical worldview of Rome, not only was this region of the world ethnically inferior, but it was ruled by the inferior sex.

Origen (ca. AD 185 – ca. 253) drives this message home in his exegetical work on Song of Solomon. His allegorical interpretation of the bride, who calls herself "dark" (Song 1:5–6)[11] goes so far as to inhibit a historical reading of the text. Rather than viewing the bride as Solomon's betrothed, Origen instead characterizes her blackness as a metaphor for sin and ugliness.[12] Origen's voice nearly echoes the mythological Creon's words to his son Haemon, declaring women "a misery in your bed," going so far in his vitriol as to be averse to even marital intercourse.[13] "Generally, the church fathers conceived of the female gender as the origin of sin, 'lust', and rebellion. Women were frequently considered as a reminder of the shame of licentious lust. The church fathers thought that suppressing the thoughts, activities, and emotional expressions of the female gender was a divinely sanctioned undertaking."[14]

We do not have the breadth in this article to examine the corresponding religious developments that enhanced the tension and fueled the power struggle between the two empires; suffice it to say that their philosophical worldviews ensured there could be no compromise. One world was ruled by celebrated matriarchs, the other subjugated even their female deities.

In their article concerning the political influence of myth, Małgorzata Budzowska and Jadwiga Czerwińska state, "art, especially performing art, is the dangerous weapon in the hands of politicians because it has

the power to change social thinking."[15] We cannot underestimate the power of social consciousness in determining moral rightness. When a Roman emperor would declare war, the traditional expression was "for the glory of Rome." This expression is derived from the epic poem by Virgil, where Jupiter prophesies to Venus—once again solidifying the impact of popular culture and social understanding in driving behavior. In the same narrative, we see once again the connection between art and politics.

At the point in history we are considering, the Greco-Roman empire dominated much of the world known to them. As Virgil suggests was their right, they were well on their way to ruling "Earth's people."[16] They had demonstrated their military prowess and controlled the majority of available trade routes. However, they were as of yet unsuccessful in controlling the Nubian kingdom where vast amounts of wealth and precious natural resources, including gold, abounded. This empire included portions of the modern countries of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan and controlled many industrious ports along the Nile River.[17]

Although the Romans had conquered Egypt and many northern ports of Africa, the intrigue of what lay south continued to grow through the acquisition not only of practical goods like leather and crops but also extended even to exotic animals. The historian Ptolemy documents the trade of a two-horned rhinoceros that so impressed Emperor Domitian that he minted coins bearing its image between AD 83–85.[18] Even slaves from this region were considered a status symbol and preferred by the wealthy political elite of Rome.[19]

The ruling queens of Nubia, known as the Kandakē, were not only competent in governing, but they were also formidable warriors.[20] In fact, when the Kandakē Amanirenas defeated the Roman army in 21 BC, a rivalry emerged. This queen was infamously described by the Greek historian Strabo as "masculine" and having only one eye. This was undoubtedly a slight—his description intended to vulgarize a female ruler.

The Kandakē, however, represented more than a question of Rome's military capability. Rome's identity as a superpower was at stake; their philosophical worldview hinged on the superiority of men. These queens represented an alternative and opposing worldview, one that required redaction of this unique and powerful ruling authority from scores of histories. This was a kingdom whose Kandakē asked no permission and, in some cases, did not have a male counterpart with whom they ruled.[21] Their strength and stability of leadership could only be a threat to the patriarchy of Rome. Indeed, their notoriety was so well established that when Luke introduces the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27, rather than naming the man, Luke gives his position relative to "Queen Kandakē" ("Candace" in many English translations, "the Candace" in NRSVue). The Kandakē were so well-known that Luke uses them as a reference point for his audience.

Religious Veil

Christian authors emerging within the Greco-Roman world during this period are largely responsible for the foundation of Western Christianity. Caution must be taken for the way their inherent philosophical persuasions influenced their understanding of the biblical text. As David Wiesen writes, "The roots of the misogynous tradition can be found in Hesiod, who in his tale of Pandora sang of the evils brought forth upon the earth by the creation of woman."[22] The roots of misogyny ran deep in the Roman Empire and though a modern Christian may set aside the writings of Hesiod as secular and irrelevant, for the Greco-Roman world, philosophy was ingrained in everyday life. Its impact on these early writers cannot be overstated.

Furthermore, when evaluating early church doctrines, we would be remiss to ignore each author's sociopolitical setting.

One prolific author is Jerome (ca. 345 – 420). Carrying a Greco-Roman literary tradition into his misogynistic renderings of biblical texts, Jerome in many ways synthesizes the sentiments of earlier writers—both secular and Christian. By examining the influences in his writing, we can deduce that aspects of his positioning result from social inculcation, further indicated by his repeated contradictions of his own antifeminist statements.[23] He can highly regard women in biblical history yet denigrate the entire gender in the same breath. In fact, his theological renderings of the female sex largely represent "stereotyped literary devices."[24]

Another fourth-century church father with similar views is Ambrosiaster (specific dates unknown). Widely read and studied, his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* goes so far as to claim that only men bear the image of God: "a man is formed in the image of God, and woman is not. But she is the image of God by virtue of the man"[25] Like the trope of a damsel in distress, the man may need a savior, but the woman needs a man. Ambrosiaster argues that the veil Paul refers to in 1 Cor 11 acts as a public mark of guilt, a Scarlett Letter to use a modern expression, signifying that the woman is responsible for bringing sin into the world.[26]

Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150 – ca. 215) argues that "it belongs to the man to be virtuous, and to the woman to be licentious and unjust."[27] Origen characterizes women as "unfaithful, weak, and lazy."[28] Chrysostom (ca. AD 347 – 407) refers to women as the most harmful of all "savage beasts."[29] Even those who would not concede the immoral nature of such commentary can readily see the empty stereotypes employed for eliciting religious principles such as restricting women from certain leadership positions. The manipulation of truth serves a political endgame, and as Hannelie Wood posits, "an insensitive and too early denunciation of the early church fathers as misogynists . . . is carried out without taking into consideration the church fathers' social context and the opinions that formed their opinions on women."[30]

It is important to note that these assertions made by early Christian writers are not biblically founded. The equal importance of women in the church is made clear at Pentecost when Peter cites the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17 CEB). Scripture is replete with women in both leading and symbolically significant roles, such as Mary anointing Jesus before his ultimate sacrifice (John 12:3) or women as the first witnesses to and proclaimers of the resurrection. Unfortunately, however, such examples do not influence all early Christian authors. In an article analyzing the notorious Tertullian (ca. AD 155 – 220) and his reference to women as "the devil's gateway,"[31] Nonna Harrison writes, "Tertullian has become famous for his misogyny, but he was not representative of all early Christians."[32] Let us proceed with caution in our criticisms lest we miss the lesson in their errant work and too readily moralize through our own social lens.

As much as our moral codes may be offended by the rhetoric presented, the idea of woman being the repository of all evil and thus to be resisted was deeply entrenched in Greco-Roman society through philosophy. In his NT letter, James cautions about keeping religion pure and urges the church to guard against being "polluted" or "stained" by the world (James 1:27). A polluted framework distorted the insights of many early church writers. And it is with the ideology of women characterized as "weak," "lazy," and "savage beasts" that the Roman Empire butted against an empire of powerful and dignified queens.

Queens of Africa: A Formidable Conquest

Considering the appetite of Rome's ever-expanding empire, Africa would seem a logical progression. The Kandakē Amantitere's kingdom was so well established that it drew the attention of virtually every other explorer or political ruler. As early as the first century AD, Emperor Nero and Pliny the Elder are both said to have paid her visits.[33] However, their reports stand in contrast to the flattering depictions excavated in more recent centuries. Amantitere herself is specifically praised for her prowess in battle. In Meroitic art, she is depicted as striking down enemies of the kingdom.[34]

Few kingdoms, and no other known matriarchs of the time, could boast of defeating enemies as formidable as Rome. The aforementioned Kandakē Amanirenas had even decapitated a statue of Augustus Caesar and buried its head at the foot of a local temple so that her people could physically trample their foe. A brazen and boastful display of power, this bronze head, known as the Meroe Head, was excavated in the early twentieth century and is now on display at the British Museum.

The power of these African queens is celebrated in the artwork of their kingdoms. Referring to sculptures of Kandakēs that date back centuries BC, Steffan Spencer comments: "These statues convey a royal air . . . rather than solely emphasizing their fertility."[35] In other words, these are not objectified women, such as ancient Greece was known for, but figures of power.[36] Whereas Greco-Roman artistic depictions of women typically focused on their sexual attributes, these African queens were showcased in strength and status. Their dignity was ensured through their strength of leadership.

It is important to note that what we understand regarding this world region is limited, largely because the Meroitic language in which it is recorded is mostly undeciphered. We rely on the records of conquering kingdoms, which are notoriously biased.

The Villainization of African Queens

Traditionally, it would have been absurd to suggest that women had influence in Roman military zones. Wives were seen as having no value to military operations and were viewed as an impediment.[37] Though more recent studies have begun to question this, proposing that soldiers could possibly have had families in base-style housing,[38] there is still no supporting evidence that Roman women participated in military service. Women were expected to be submissive in their roles, such as virgin or mother, and to foster allegiance to the empire. This hierarchy, or ideology of female placement in society, was of course not original to Rome, but Rome configured the ideology of the political exclusion of women.[39]

It can hardly be controversial to state that Rome villainized African queens or viewed eastern influences with contempt. This goes back hundreds of years BC, and in the late first century BC is expressed in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Though unnamed in the epic poem, our villain is none other than Cleopatra, who is described as a plotting schemer, "Resolved on death,"[40] and fully intent on overthrowing the Roman Empire. Later, the author recounts tales of eastern women corrupting patriarchal order by turning Roman women into traitors in a frenzied burning of ships.[41] As historian Hans Volkmann points out, "Octavian's propaganda brought Cleopatra into the foreground and made her the real adversary."[42] Volkmann shows how Anthony is depicted in political narratives as the quintessential victim of the evil African queen.

By villainizing women in positions of authority and, in particular, the Kandakē, Rome proclaimed itself the hero in its quest for world domination. Even though these African queens had been victorious over Rome in the past, they were depicted as inferior and simultaneously as the aggressor. They were the villain, Rome the Savior.

Rome's failed attempts to dominate Africa south of Egypt did not diminish their will to dominate. Toward the end of the second century AD, it had become clear that Rome's power in Egypt was unstable at best and in order to press further into Africa, reforms were necessary to ensure allegiance to Rome over previously established Egyptian culture. It was necessary to more clearly delineate between who belonged to Rome and those who were still loyal to traditional African culture.[43] This movement was carefully accompanied by additional villainization and a fostering of mistrust with women—especially foreign women.

Ultimately, Rome failed in its attempted conquest. Scholars are divided as to what ultimately ended the Kandakē.[44] Curiously, the kingdom declined and was subsequently conquered by Ezana, king of Aksum (overlapping present-day Ethiopia) in the fourth century AD.[45] It is worth noting, however, that the Nobatian empire would take over much of this region in the fifth century AD, led by King Silko who professed Christianity.[46] Christianity would boast a thousand-year history in the region and notably fight off Arab Muslim invaders until eventually succumbing in the sixteenth century.

What lives on, however, is Greco-Roman philosophy. As Loren Cunningham and David Hamilton write, "The deadly virus of Greek thinking would spread and infect religious teaching throughout Western civilization."[47] In many ways, this philosophical school of thought is still controlling the circumstances of women today. The lesson in the resistance of these African queens is perhaps not purely militant strength, but also social consciousness. It forces us to reexamine our own social scripts and to ask who is controlling the narrative.

As Nijay Gupta points out when referring to the apostles' structuring of the church, "they appeared to have borrowed social systems from already existing organizations and systems in their world."[48] A seemingly sensible approach, in the hands of the politically astute it is one that ultimately demands reciprocity. In the case of Rome, the glory of an empire became synonymous with the glory of heavenly favor. This is a dangerous misappropriation we see modeled by nationalist political groups today and one that Augustine (AD 354 – 430) cautioned against on numerous occasions, declaring that as Christians our ultimate allegiance must always be to a heavenly city and authority.[49] The Scriptures make clear that our ultimate battle is not with flesh and blood—the power and authority given us as the church is not one of world domination, but rather over the unseen realm.

Notes

1. C. E. M. Joad, "Bertrand Russell's 'History of Western Philosophy,'" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 47 (1946) 85–104.
2. Traci C. West, *Disruptive Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* (Westminster John Knox, 2006) xiv.
3. Małgorzata Budzowska and Jadwiga Czerwińska, "The Political Involvement of Myth in its Stage Adaptations," *Collectanea Philologica* 19 (2016) 63–75.
4. Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Another Antigone: The Emergence of the Female Political Actor in Euripides' 'Phoenician Women,'" *Political Theory* 33/4 (2005) 472–94.
5. Gregory Aldete, "The Roman Empire," *The Great Courses* (The Teaching Company, Jan 11, 2019). Even the gods of conquered civilizations were not off-limits, as Rome frequently added to their pantheon from the Persians, the Medians, and the Egyptians. Certain rulers were great admirers of Greek mythology and culture. Flaminius, in the third century BC, is a notable instance of a Roman consul who had no intention of eradicating Greek culture but rather possessing it. See also Ben

Kane, "Rome vs Greece: A Little-known Clash of Empires; The Fate of Greek City States which had Aided the Roman Invasion Was Most Ironic," *The Irish Times* (July 11, 2018).

6. John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan, *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, SUNY Series in Classical Studies (SUNY Press, 1984).

7. Kathryn McClymond, "Complex Goddesses: Athena, Aphrodite, Hera," *The Great Courses; Great Mythologies of the World*.

8. Elizabeth Kolbert, "Such a Stoic," *The New Yorker* (Jan 26, 2015).

9. Jillian Stinchcomb, "Race, Racism, and the Hebrew Bible: The Case of the Queen of Sheba," *Religions* 12/10 (2021) 795. The symbolism of light vs. dark—holy vs. evil—is misappropriated when applied to skin color. Consider the Greek practice of sacrificing white animals to heavenly gods and black to animals of the underworld. See Aldete, "The Roman Empire."

10. David Goldenberg, "Racism, Color Symbolism and Color Prejudice," in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge University Press, 2009) 97. Origen drew inferences from the "curse of Ham" which led to an ideology of superior and inferior races (*First Principles* 2.9.5). This ideology was also based on geographic philosophical thought—that those who live in particularly hot, dry climates such as southern Africa were driven there because they are particularly sinful. See Matthijs den Dulk, "Origen of Alexandria and the History of Racism as a Theological Problem," *JTS* 71/1 (Apr 2020) 164–95.

11. "Dark am I, and lovely, daughters of Jerusalem—like the black tents of the Kedar nomads, like the curtains of Solomon's palace. 6 Don't stare at me because I'm darkened by the sun's gaze" (Song 1:5–6a CEB).

12. Rowan A Greer, *Origen* (Paulist, 1979).

13. Mark S. M. Scott, "Shades of Grace: Origen and Gregory of Nyssa's Soteriological Exegesis of the 'Black and Beautiful' Bride in Song of Songs 1:5," *HTR* 99/1 (2006) 65–83.

14. Clifford Owusu-Gyamfi and Daniel Dei, "Tertullian's Moral Theology on Women and the Accusation of Misogyny," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43/1 (Apr 22, 2022) 4, make a strong case for Tertullian being misunderstood and advocate for a more specific definition of misogyny. The authors also point to relevant imagery and social practices that Tertullian is advising against that are specific to women. See also Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for Heaven: Catholic Church and Sexuality* (Doubleday, 1990) 185; Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel* (Brazos, 2021).

15. Budzowska and Czerwińska, "The Political Involvement of Myth in its Stage Adaptations," 63–75.

16. Virgil, *Aeneid* 1151–52, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Vintage Classics, 1990) 190.

17. Mahmoud Suliman Bashir and Geoff Emberling, "Trade in Ancient Nubia: Routes, Goods, and Structures," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, ed. Geoff Emberling and Bruce Beyer Williams (Oxford University Press, 2021) ad loc.

18. Arienne King, "The Roman Empire in West Africa," *World History Encyclopedia*.

19. William Blair, *An Inquiry into the State of Slavery amongst the Romans* (James Clarke & Co., 1833).

20. See Heather Preston, "The Kandake: A Missing History," *Priscilla Papers* 37/4 (Autumn 2023) 16–19.

21. Ahmed M. Ali Hakem, "The Matriarchs of Meroe: A Powerful Line of Queens Who Ruled the Kushite Empire," *The UNESCO Courier* 32/8 (1979) 58.

22. David S. Wiesen, "Women and Marriage," in *St. Jerome as a Satirist: A Study in Christian Latin Thought and Letters* (Cornell University Press, 1964) 113–65.

23. Wiesen, "Women and Marriage," 117.

24. Wiesen, "Women and Marriage," 148.

25. Gerald Lewis Bray, *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians: Ambrosiaster* (IVP Academic, 2009), *Comm. I Cor.*, 11:5–7. 2: "vir enim ad imaginem dei factus est, non mulier. haec est autem imago dei in viro, quia unus deus unum fecit hominem, ut sicut ab uno deo sunt omnia, ita essent et ab uno homine omnes homines, ut unius dei invisibilis unus homo visibilis imaginem haberet in terris, ut unus deus in uno homine videretur auctoritatem unius principii conservare ad confusionem diaboli." See also Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

26. Theodore S. De Bruyn, David G. Hunter, and Stephen A. Cooper, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary on the Pauline Epistles: Romans*

27. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* (Aeterna, 2016).

28. Hannelie Wood, "Feminists and Their Perspectives on the Church Fathers' Beliefs regarding Women: An Inquiry," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38 (2017) 5.

29. Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response*, 2nd ed. (Fortress, 2012) 72.

30. Cooper-White, *Cry of Tamar*, 2.

31. *ANF* 4:24.

32. Nonna Verna Harrison, "Eve, the Mother of God and Other Women," *The Ecumenical Review* 60/1 (Jan 2008) 71–81.

33. Randi Haaland, "The Meroitic Empire: Trade and Cultural Influences in an Indian Ocean Context," *The African Archaeological Review* 31/4 (2014) 654.

34. Hakem, "The Matriarchs of Meroe," 59. Whereas historians and writers from Rome impugned the queens or made subtle jabs to diminish them, the relics, sculptures, and other deciphered work we have recalling their reign is quite the contrary. These queens are lauded and revered by their subjects.

35. Steffan A. Spencer, "Matrifocal Retentions in Ethiopian Orthodox Traditions: The Madonna as Ark and Queen Makeda as Prefiguration of Mary; with Egyptian Queen Tiye & Pharaoh Hatshepsut as Reference," *African Identities* (2021) 12. Spencer provides many notable examples of sculptures depicting dignified female rulers, now featured in museums worldwide, including the National Museum of Ethiopia and the The Neues Museum in Berlin, Germany. The statues themselves date as far back as 1470 BC.

36. Consider Athena, who is said to have "popped out" of Zeus' mind. Literally a figment of his imagination. Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (Grand Central, 1942) 24–25.

37. Herodian, *Histories*, transl. C. R. Whittaker, LCL (1969).

38. Penelope M. Allison, "Mapping for Gender: Interpreting Artefact Distribution Inside 1st- and 2nd-Century A.D. Forts in Roman Germany," *Archaeological Dialogues* 13/1 (2006) 1–20.

39. Tatiana Tsakiropoulou-Summers and Katerina Kitsē-Mytakou, eds., *Women and the Ideology of Political Exclusion: From Classical Antiquity to the Modern Era* (Routledge, 2019). This book makes a compelling case regarding Greek historians who documented the surrounding cultures. Though detailed and thorough, they were hardly unbiased, which gives us greater insight into their philosophical worldview.

40. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV, Line 784 (Random House, 1983) 116.

41. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV, Lines 1034–35, 153.

42. Hans Volkmann, *Cleopatra: A Study in Politics and Propaganda* (Sagamore, 1958) 158.

43. Alan K. Bowmen, "Roman and Byzantine Egypt (30 BCE– 642 CE)," *Encyclopedia Brittanica* (2020).

44. Joshua Rapp Learn, "The Rise, Fall and Underestimated Rule of Kush," *Discover Magazine* (June 17, 2022).

45. George Hatke, *Aksum and Nubia: Warfare, Commerce, and Political Fictions in Ancient Northeast Africa* (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, 2013). For an assessment of the authenticity of Ezana's conversion as well as the origins of Ethiopian Christianity, see Rugare Rukuni, "Negus Ezana: Revisiting the Christianisation of Aksum," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42/1 (Feb 3, 2021).

46. Vince Bantu, "Early African Christianity: Nubia," *The Jude 3 Project* (Sept 29, 2016).

47. Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, with Janice Rogers, *Why Not Women: A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (YWAM, 2000) 107.

48. Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story; How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (IVP Academic, 2023) 75.

49. E. M. Atkins and R. J. Dodaro, eds., *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), letters 90, 91, 103, 104.

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