

Snyder, C. Arnold, and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, eds. *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*. Vol. 3, Studies in Women and Religion. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press/Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1996. 438 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

Nineteen Anabaptist scholars from North America and Europe contributed profiles of Anabaptist women to this volume. Such research presents a challenge because, at the time the Anabaptist movement began, the working classes relied mainly on oral forms of communication, leaving little trace of the daily lives of these people. The scattered documents which do exist—such as letters, testimonials, and hymns—tend to be mainly by and about men. Fortunately, a mass of court and prison records has been preserved in which scholars have found evidence of the equally active part which women played in the Anabaptist movement.

The earliest literature written about Anabaptist women is found in hagiographical writings about the martyrs of the Reformation. Closer attention to the lives and deaths of these women began in the twentieth century as part of the examination of women's roles in the history of the church. Some historians have sought to demonstrate that the radical Reformation brought women a religious equality with men, particularly through the idea of freedom of conscience and the turning away from celibacy, while others saw little or no change in the status of women. The editors of the current volume place their focus on presenting careful descriptions of a variety of women—well known and unknown, heroic and timid, nurturers and leaders—giving readers the opportunity to evaluate for themselves the answers to this complex debate. Through these profiles it becomes clear that, although the Reformation did not bring a radical change in status, Anabaptist women in many cases made their own decisions about their religious affiliation and about their involvement in the Anabaptist movement.

The book begins with a brief introduction to Anabaptism and then presents profiles of individual Anabaptist women in three sections—Swiss, South German/Austrian, and North German/Dutch—each with an introduction describing the unique characteristics of the movement in that area and the experiences of the women involved. These women engaged in a wide variety of activities within the movement. Some acted in more socially acceptable roles by supporting husbands who were church leaders (298), sharing food and shelter with itinerant pastors and refugees (167), opening their homes to meetings and baptisms (140), and acting as an underground communication network to alert other believers to secret meetings and other news (98). Other women, because of their convictions and the needs they saw around them, took the roles of teacher (66) and proselytizer (124), prophet (279), intellectual and student of theology (111), printer (258), and even assassin (288).

This is a very readable book that will be appreciated by historian and layperson alike. The authors do not bend to the temptation of hagiography but provide the reader with the opportunity to see these women as history sketches them, as complex characters with lives and minds of their own. Recanters and doomed visionaries are presented as they were, without apology. Further, the editors do not shape the stories of the women in order to support their own

favorite historical hypothesis. I can think of no better book to allow readers to "walk in the shoes" of the women of the radical Reformation.

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TERESA REEVE

Spencer, Aida Besancon, with Donna F. G. Hailson, Catherine Clark Kroeger, and William David Spencer. *The Goddess Revival*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995. 304 pp. \$11.99.

There seems to be no subject that is more charged with passion and prejudice than the relation between the sexes. This also is true of various and increasing attempts by numerous feminist approaches to such issues as God's nature, and gender identity in Scripture. The re-imagining of God as Mother which replaces the traditional understanding of God as Father with the revival of a new goddess religion is currently taking place with rapid speed. What is at stake in this new movement is nothing less than the proper understanding of the very nature of God. Who is God? Who is God not? How is God to be addressed, and how can we think and talk properly of God? This is the point of this book. Written by Aida Besancon Spencer with the help of her husband William David Spencer and Donna F. G. Hailson and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *The Goddess Revival* helpfully defines and analyzes a new movement in its diverse branches and offshoots, and plows through the growing literature, thereby giving an introduction to a newly emerging goddess spirituality as well as to its ancient and partly occult roots.

In the first chapter, "God as Female," Donna F. G. Hailson gives a broad overview of diverse goddess spirituality. William David Spencer authored chapter 2, on the male deities now being worshiped. Chapter three, by Catherine Clark Kroeger, addresses the perspective of deities worshiped during the first century in the Greco-Roman world. In the remaining chapters, Aida Besancon Spencer analyzes from a biblical perspective the writings on goddess feminism. Whereas chapters 1, 2, and 3 mainly describe and briefly analyze the worship of gods and goddesses, chapters 4 to 8 are an extended analysis, an apologetic, an appeal, a call to such crucial questions as: Who is God? How is God unique? Why is God neither a male nor a female god? How is God both transcendent and immanent? How may God be known? What is the place of general revelation? What is idolatry? What is the charge the church needs to hear? There are four appendixes, one written by Lupe Rosalez, a former witch and now devout Christian, giving a brief account of what enticed her about witchcraft; a second one by Peter King, on how he helped her to leave witchcraft; one on the term Father (Patēr) in the Bible; and last but not least, an eight-part Bible study on the nature of God, which amplifies earlier chapter content.

*Goddess Revival* not only gives a helpful overview of the diverse goddess spirituality but also deals much more with the classical doctrine of God than the title suggests at first sight. The challenge that this book seeks to meet is the difficulty of how to affirm that both men and women are made in the image of God, without embracing in any way a perception of God that is less than biblical, or even idolatrous. Their book contains many useful responses to common charges leveled by feminists against what is in reality a distorted perspective of God. *The*