

Mirjam van Veen, Piet Visser, and Gary K. Waite, eds. *Sisters: Myth and Reality of Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Doopsgezind Women, ca. 1525 to 1900*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

*Sisters: Myth and Reality of Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Doopsgezind Women, ca. 1525 to 1900* is a collection of papers initially presented at a 2007 conference on the same topic at the Free University (VU) of Amsterdam. The essays in the volume are well worth the wait. Together, they form a useful complement to previous scholarship on women in Radical Reformation traditions, which has often focused on biographies of individual women (see, for instance, C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht's 1996 ground-breaking edited volume, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*). The essays in *Sisters*, by contrast, deliberately focus less on individual Anabaptist women and seek instead to examine various images and ideas of these women, including those created by the women themselves, by their male co-religionists, or by their Catholic and Magisterial Protestant opponents.

The collection spans a wide range, both geographically and chronologically. About half the essays cover Netherlandish topics, while the other half examine Mennonite and other Anabaptist communities in the Tirol, modern-day Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and the Polish Vistula Delta. The essays also cover a broad range of themes related to gender: Marion Kobelt-Groch, Mirjam van Veen, Mark Jantzen, and John Staples's contributions discuss views and realities of Anabaptist marriage, while Marjan Blok's essay on the testament of Soetken van den Houte deals with Anabaptist motherhood.

Linda A. Huebert Hecht, Mary Sprunger, and Marcel Kremer examine aspects of the socioeconomic realities of Anabaptist women in Tirol, Amsterdam, and Groningen in the 16th to 18th centuries, while Anna Voolstra's essay deals specifically with the intersections between Doopsgezind history, gender history, and the history of aging in her chapter on the Amsterdam *Oude Vrouwenhuis* (elderly women's home). Lucinda Martin's chapter highlights the porous nature of confessional boundaries and examines the role of gender in the official response to Bern's pietists, whose focus on inner, private spirituality led them to display a religious affinity for

Bern's Anabaptist congregations even as they refused to identify fully with them. Michael Driedger's essay notes some of the gendered ways in which the rise of the Enlightenment affected Doopsgezind and Mennonite groups, such as increasing acceptance of confessionally mixed marriages.

Many of the chapters also deal with representations of Anabaptist women in contemporary writings and images, both by Anabaptists and by their religious opponents. Martina Bick examines the gendered aspects of Anabaptist hymns, and Nicole Grochowina details the ways in which the Dutch martyrology, *Het Offer des Herren* (*The Sacrifice Unto the Lord*) reinforced the established gender hierarchy. Piet Visser's chapter relates how a Dutch printer and translator reimagined a French work aimed at upper-class Roman Catholic women for a Dutch Doopsgezind audience. Mirjam den Baar's chapter looks at how a 17th-century poem gave the term "Menniste Zusje" (Mennonite sister) an unfavorable sexual connotation, and Gary Waite's chapter on iconography of Anabaptist women and witches highlights the various images of Anabaptist women in 16th-century polemics as sexually licentious on the one hand and pious but simple and easily misled on the other.

This volume is a great addition to the bookshelves of historians of early modern gender history and of the Radical Reformation alike. The Anabaptist women whose lives were notable enough to merit biographical treatments were *ipso facto* extraordinary women in some ways, and the essays in this volume help to illuminate new aspects of the lives of ordinary Anabaptist women, the environments in which they lived, and the challenges they faced both within and outside their religious communities. Lecturers on early modern gender and Anabaptist history will also appreciate the wealth of images and anecdotes throughout the book, which may prove useful in a classroom setting. The essays in *Sisters* are a welcome addition to the field of Anabaptist gender history, and I hope this volume will continue to spur further research on the topic.

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