

acknowledges its historical embeddedness. His book is thus an excellent example of wrestling with the text in both faith and humility.

One scholarly contribution that I appreciate especially for its practical implication is the extent to which Yoder Neufeld recovers the wisdom tradition of Israel as a formative background of both Jesus' ethic and Paul's teaching. Citing the Wisdom of Solomon (from the Apocrypha) at several points, he shows how Jesus' ethic of non-retaliation and Paul's teaching of subordination rely on trust in "a just and merciful God whose reign will be asserted in the end" (35). Wisdom's counsel that we entrust judgment, both vengeance and vindication, to God requires of us patience and hope, spiritual virtues sorely needed in a violent world.

While engaging critically with current scholarship, Yoder Neufeld has written a book that is accessible and useful to lay readers. It would make a good complement to Patricia M. McDonald, *God and Violence: Biblical Resources for Living in a Small World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2004), which focuses mostly on the Old Testament. Together they would comprise an ample basis for an edifying study that could be undertaken in congregations, colleges or seminaries.

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Linda Huebert Hecht. *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2009.

A welcome addition to the growing scholarship on the lives of women in early modern Europe, this work follows in the same vein as *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers* (1996), a collection of essays Linda Huebert Hecht edited with C. Arnold Snyder. *Profiles* introduced a new wave of scholarship that includes work from Hecht, Snyder, Mary C. Sprunger, Marion Kobelt-Groch, and others. Here, the author eschews martyrological literature and focuses on court records from the *Quellen zur*

*Geschichte der Täufer XIII Band Österreich II. Teil.* of 1972, edited by Grete Mecenseffy, a pioneer in Anabaptist studies.

Hecht explores the lives of Anabaptist women in the territory of Tirol between 1527 and 1531. These women, she notes, were not exceptional figures like the Strasbourg prophetess Ursula Jost, or Barbara Rebstock, or even the martyrs dramatized in the *Martyrs Mirror*. They were, however, faced with circumstances that forced them into action. Utilizing Max Weber's routinization thesis, she finds far more female leaders among these Anabaptists than Claus-Peter Clasen did in his social history from 1972, thus offering an important revision of older narratives. Many Anabaptist women left their children to follow their faith; evidence from their contemporaries indicates this was a particularly problematic issue.

Hecht examines the common assumption among interrogators that females were "simple-minded"—and how Anabaptist women could take advantage of it. She deals with the threat and use of torture, recantations and relapses, the treatment and special concerns of pregnant women, and other matters addressed in court documents. She also follows the persecutory strategies of the authorities, whose commitment to hunting Anabaptists ebbed and flowed depending on political expedience and mandates in different areas.

The book's treasures lie in the details of the author's narrative and in the records behind them. For example, she offers an account of an unnamed Anabaptist woman whom the authorities (falsely) believed may have baptized 800 new believers and carried a register of baptisms (101-102). She writes of maids and servants, rich and poor women, wives of leaders and single women, widows and pregnant women, all of whom made difficult choices to join or leave the movement. She follows their stories as far as the evidence allows, produces a detailed picture of what it was like to live as Anabaptist women in Tirol during the period, and masterfully articulates how these women negotiated their lives under persecution.

Hecht succeeds in sharing the concerns of early Austrian Anabaptist women despite how the material is presented and organized. For example, she points to a database she created to log her study of the women in court records, and she introduces a rubric to understand female involvement in the Anabaptist movement: Believers, Martyrs, Lay Missioners and Leaders,

and Indirect Participants. But these categories clearly warrant more than the half paragraph of explanation (11). Using these categories, she lists 419 women in an “Index of Women’s Names” (253-66). Yet aside from providing generalizations in her introduction about the relative involvement of married and single women, she leaves the reader to organize and analyze the numbers of women in each category. A summary chart or graph would have been far more helpful than a 14-page index.

Moreover, Hecht’s laudable choice to include translations at the end of every “Introduction to ...” chapter is marred by her desire to make the “stories more complete” by putting translations in italics and additional information in “block letters” (16). While this paratextual strategy may be helpful to some readers, it made the reading cumbersome for me.

Finally, I am critical of the conclusion to this otherwise excellent book, as the epilogue ends on a devotional note that undercuts the nuances of the historical analysis. In the final section, “The Legacy of Anabaptist Women,” the author asks, “What do the stories of Anabaptist women mean for us today?” (215). She contends that the women in her narrative were all leaders in the broadest sense of the term. For her, leadership is the ability to “influence other people” (presumably in a positive way) and applies to contemporary and future Anabaptist women as well. This meaningless definition does a grave disservice to an otherwise solid historical work. Instead of emphasizing the diversity of the hard choices and decisions made by Anabaptist women in the past, Hecht caricatures all early modern Anabaptist women as heroic leaders of the faith in order to support her theological vision about women in the Peace Church tradition today. In light of her “Indirect Participants” category and her accounts of recantations and hard decisions, the rest of the book argues for a far more realistic perspective on those early modern women.

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