

I couldn't place that affect on the spectrum of religious dissent ranging from atheism to Satanism: it was not atheism, since hostility to God obviously presumes the existence of God; and it wasn't Satanism either, since opposition to God doesn't automatically lead to reverence for God's adversary. (1)

Accordingly, Schweizer attempts to characterise this particular form of God-hatred, noting various pre-existing terms (*theostuges*, *passionate atheist*, *metaphysical rebel*) but expressing preference for his own neologism: *misotheist*.

Central to his dissatisfaction with the misuse of 'atheism' for postures of hatred towards God is that, 'To the atheist, both the loving and the cruel god are irrelevant since to her neither exists.' (10) As such, his book develops *misotheism* as a more accurate term to describe instances of God-hatred.

Schweizer first provides a helpful 'Brief History of Misotheism', beginning with Job's wife (Job 2:9), whom he describes as 'the original misotheist' (29). Following this, he moves to discuss Epicurus, Thomas Paine, James Mill, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Albert Camus, William Empson and Gore Vidal.

The remainder of the book provides six case studies in literary misotheism: four in what Schweizer labels 'agnostic misotheism', and two in 'absolute misotheism'. The decision to focus his study on God-hatred in literary works is grounded in the conviction that literature is perhaps the most natural context in which misotheism will be made manifest. According to Schweizer, the common feature found in misotheists is that, 'misotheism is a response to suffering, injustice, and disorder in a troubled world. Misotheists feel that humanity is the subject of divine carelessness or sadism, and they question God's love for humanity'. (8) To find exploration of those themes, he argues, one must turn to literary works. On that basis, Schweizer offers careful analyses of misotheistic themes in the writings of Zora Neale Hurston, Rebecca West, Elie Wiesel, Peter Shaffer and Philip Pullman.

Although this is not strictly a theological work, it is nonetheless very useful to theologians – particularly those in secular post-Christian contexts. It offers a subtle, nuanced set of tools with which one can be better equipped to interact with Pullman, Dawkins *et al.* Its central observation – that many of those assumed not to believe in God ('atheists') may be better understood as those who hate God ('misotheists', and that for a range of reasons) – also offers much stimulation for theological thought, particularly as one considers theological practice in secular contexts.

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Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches. International Perspectives

Ian Jones, Kirsty Thorpe and Janet Wootton
(eds)

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SUMMARY

This interesting and useful volume reflects on the current situation of women's ordination worldwide. Its stated aim is to fill a gap in the subject, that of 'extended comparative research'. Different chapters analyse the experience of ordained women in a wide selection of countries and denominations, including the continued existence of a 'stained glass ceiling' in denominations that have ordained women for many years. The beliefs of some churches that do not yet ordain women are also discussed. Whatever the readers' theological position on the topic, they will find this a thought-provoking publication.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser interessante und hilfreiche Band weist auf die gegenwärtige Situation zur Frauenordination weltweit hin. Sein erklärtes Ziel besteht darin eine Themenlücke zu schließen, nämlich jene einer „erweiterten vergleichenden Forschung“. Verschiedene Kapitel analysieren die Erfahrungen ordinierten Frauen aus einem breiten Spektrum von Nationen und Denominationen; sie untersuchen auch die fortwährende Existenz einer [durch männliche Hierarchie bedingten] „undurchlässigen Kirchendecke“ in Denominationen, die bereits seit vielen Jahren Frauenordination praktizieren. Ebenfalls diskutiert werden die Positionen einiger Kirchen, die noch keine Frauen ordinieren. Wie auch immer die theologische Meinung der Leserschaft aussehen mag, sie wird hier eine Ausgabe vorfinden, die weitere Denkanstöße gibt.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage intéressant et utile considère quel est l'état de choses dans les Églises chrétiennes dans le monde pour ce qui concerne l'ordination des femmes. Les auteurs visent à combler un manque en la matière par l'apport d'une recherche comparative très vaste. Divers chapitres analysent l'expérience des femmes ayant reçu l'ordination dans une large sélection de pays et de dénominations en notant aussi l'existence d'un plafond de verre dans certaines dénominations qui pratiquent l'ordination des femmes depuis de nombreuses années. Les points de vue d'Églises qui n'accordent pas l'ordination aux femmes sont aussi présentés. Quelle que soit la position théologique du lecteur sur le sujet, il trouvera ici matière à stimuler sa réflexion.

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This book consists of fifteen articles, the majority of which were first given as papers at a conference in 2006 on Women and Ordination. They are divided into three main subject areas of theological, historical and socio-

logical perspectives that between them offer 'a range of different windows onto the past and present experience of women in ordained ministry'. The (female) contributors include a Swedish bishop, more than one Professor of Theology, and several women involved in training within their denominations, including a college Principal, all of whom can speak with some authority on their subject. Before this reviewer finished the introduction she was wishing she had been at the conference, and been able to talk to some of these women; by the time I had read the many different articles, that inclination only grew. However, readers will, like me, have to be content with the stimulating variety of papers, and the glimpses they give of some of the very different worlds in which women are increasingly taking ordained roles.

The articles both provide a thorough investigation of situations some readers might already be familiar with, and insights into other countries and denominations which are new, as well as the challenges and issues that have been, and are still, involved in these pioneering situations. It is interesting, but not surprising, to discover that migration played a significant part in the development of ministry opportunities for Congregationalist women in Australia, or that despite the influence of Catherine Booth, women do not have complete equality in practice in the Salvation Army. More surprising was the realisation that in 1996 the first women were ordained into the Old Catholic Church of Germany. It was fascinating to realise the significance of women's role in the New Generation Churches of Nigeria. Other countries and regions discussed include French Polynesia, the Caribbean and Sweden. The spread of churches covered and topics discussed is thus considerable; even so, as the editors acknowledge, it is only a sample: it is simply not possible to have a comprehensive study. Many countries and several denominations are thus necessarily missing from these explorations, including Baptists and the 'new' charismatic churches in the UK, my own tradition.

The different sections work well, and all the articles add a useful contribution to the mix, shedding light on each other. Together they build a mosaic of the situation, past and present, relating to women's ordination, and draw a picture of the many challenges to be faced before such ministry is generally accepted, even in denominations which now have women as priests or pastors. Indeed, it is a sad fact that, although most denomi-

nations now ordain women, there is still both a 'stained glass ceiling' in many denominations and continuing suspicion of women's ministry among Christians of various persuasions, including within some of the congregations within which women are serving. Thus when Ellen Blue suggests in her chapter on theological education that 'the primary task of a pastor is to stay sane in the pastorate' and that this guarding of sanity, for the sake of continued ministry to a congregation, has to be even more intentional for women than for men, she is communicating some much-needed practical wisdom. Another valuable observation is Christina Odenberg's point that women's ordination also changes the nature of the priesthood for men, and that it is only one expression of the changing nature of the church. As well as some capable research and analysis, many such insightful comments are to be found in this selection of papers.

Theological arguments about the ministry of women are largely absent, apart from a thought-provoking first paper on the misuse of typology in the arguments against women's ordination. Similarly, some other important issues are intentionally not engaged with. In the foreword, the editors comment that these papers confine themselves largely to the current situation, and do not engage with more fundamental questions such as whether women are simply buying in to largely male-constructed systems of leadership, or indeed whether ordination is desirable at all. Whilst reasons of space clearly preclude extensive discussion, I would have been interested in more engagement with some of these crucial issues. For instance, Esther Mombo raises the question as to whether ordination makes women into 'pseudo men' but decides not to address the problem at this stage. Perhaps another conference or volume could explore some of the aspects and denominations not covered here. In the meantime, this book stands as a celebration of all that has been achieved so far regarding the ordination and continuing ministry of women, and how much more has yet to be done. As Odenberg comments: 'it should be in the Church's very nature to be the place where the Spirit of God may soar freely and find new ways to reach people by God's call'. This volume encourages those possibilities, especially for women.

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