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Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation

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Within the last fifteen years, historians have begun to explore the impact of Reformation ideas and institutional changes on women and the family, and to evaluate women's roles in the Reformation. These studies make creative use of new methods and sources, but their findings are rarely integrated into general interpretations. This ghettoizing reinforces the idea that the "real" Reformation had nothing to do with women. We need to move beyond this, and integrate gender as a category of analysis as fully as we now integrate class. This will mean rethinking many political and intellectual issues, and analyzing basic terminology.

HISTORIANS OF THE REFORMATION have traditionally dealt with issues of gender in one of three ways. Most have simply ignored them, assuming either that women shared their fathers' and husbands' experience so that gender made no difference, or else that women played no significant part in the Reformation. A second group has focused on the few women for whom there are numerous sources, generally queens and noblewomen who supported or suppressed the Protestant Reformation.[1] These make comparisons with male rulers possible, but are limited to a very small group of extraordinary people.

A third type of study has examined male opinions about gender roles.[2] Law codes, sermons, church and school ordinances, tracts, and

[1]James Anderson, *Ladies of the Reformation* (London: Blackie and Sons, 1857); Nancy Lyman Roelker, "The Appeal of Calvinism to French Noblewomen in the Sixteenth Century," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971/1972): 391-418 and "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 63 (1972); Charmarie Blaisdell, "Renee de France Between Reform and Counter-Reform," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 63 (1972): 196-225; Gordon Griffiths, "Louise of Savoy and the Reform of the Church," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10/3 (1979): 29-36.

[2]Waldemar Kamerau, "Die Reformation und die Ehe," *Schriften des Verein für Reformationsgeschichte* 39 (1892); A. Bomer, "Die deutschen Humanisten und das weibliche Geschlecht," *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte* 4 (1897): 94-112; Sigmund Baranowski, *Luthers Lehre von der Ehe* (Münster: Heinrich Schöningh, 1913); Lilly Zarncke, "Die Naturhafte Eheanschauung Luthers," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 25 (1935): 281-305; Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Doctrine of Marriage in the Theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 34/7 (1953): 465-89, and "The Theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy on Polygamy, Celibacy, and Divorce," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35/4 (1954): 276-83; Olavi Lahteenmaki, *Sexus und Ehe bei Luther*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft, no. 10 (Turku: LutherAgricola Gesellschaft, 1955); Robert Stupperich, "Die Frau in der Publizistik der Reformation," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 37 (1957): 204-33; William Lazareth, *Luther on the Christian Home* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960); Elisabeth Ahme, "Wertung und Bedeutung der Frau bei Mertin Luther," *Luther*, 35: 61-68; Emmett W. Cocke, Jr., "Luther's View of Marriage and the Family," *Religion in Life 42 (Spring 1973): 103-16.*

other prescriptive sources give many clues to male opinions about the proper roles for men and women. The "debate about women," whether women were moral or immoral, good or bad, rational or emotional, sinful or saved, was a hot topic for humanists, theologians, and satirists during the early modern period. Both Protestant and Catholic reformers entered into this debate, adding their opinions about the nature of women. The various opinions are relatively easy to assess as the sources are often published, and the terms of discussion familiar to those who work with other philosophical and theological topics. Male attitudes formed the intellectual structures and institutions within which men and women operated, so such studies are a valuable starting point in analyzing how one group viewed gender differences. We must be wary of taking them too far, however, especially since part of the early modern "debate about women" was simply a rhetorical exercise.

Within the last fifteen years, the rise of women's history and family history has led to new ways of exploring issues of gender. Historians of women have evaluated the reformers' ideas about women more care-

[3]Eleanor McLaughlin, "Male and Female in Christian Tradition: Was There a Reformation in the Sixteenth Century?" in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality*, ed. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York: Seabury, 1976); John H. Bratt "The Role and Status of Women in the Writings of John Calvin," in *Renaissance, Reformation, Resurgence*, ed. Peter de Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary 1976); and Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell "Response to 'The Role and Status of Women in the Writings of John Calvin' " in *Ibid*; John K. Yost, "The Value of Married Life for the Social Order in the Early English Renaissance," *Societas* 6 (1976): 25–39 and "Changing Attitudes toward Married Life in Civic and Christian Humanism," *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* 1 (1977): 151–66; Lowell Green, "The Education of Women in the Reformation," *History of Education Quarterly* 19/1 (1979): 93–116; Joyce Irwin, ed. *Womanhood in Radical Protestantism* (New York: E. Mellen, 1979); Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Kathleen Davies, "Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martins, 1981); Manfred P. Fleischer, "Are Women Human? The Debate of 1595 Between Valens Acidalius and Simon Gediccus," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12/2 (1981): 107–21; Charmarie Blaisdell, "Calvin's Letters to Women: The Courting of Ladies in High Places," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13/3 (1982): 67–84; Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475–1640* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntingdon Library, 1982); J. K. Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13/4 (1982): 77–89; Edmund Leites, "The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship and Sexuality in Some Puritan Theories of Marriage," *Journal of Social History* 15 (1983): 383–408; Carole Levin, "Advice on Women's Behavior in Three Tudor Homilies," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 6/2 (1983): 176–85; Paul Russell, " 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy': Common People and the Future of the Reformation in Pamphlet Literature of Southwestern Germany to 1525," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 74 (1983): 122–40; Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985); Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy About Women in England, 1540–1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Merry E. Wiesner "Luther and Women: The Death of Two Marys" in *Disciplines of Faith: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics*, ed. James Obelkevich, Raphael Samuel, and Lyndal Roper (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

fully, paying particular attention to the contradiction between female spiritual equality and wifely obedience, the end of the veneration of Mary and the saints, and the importance of female literacy. They are examining how these ideas were communicated through the use of plays, woodcuts, marriage and funeral sermons, pamphlets, letters, and popular stories.[3]

The institutional and political changes which accompanied the Reformation often affected women's lives more than changes in religious ideas alone. The closing of the convents, the secularization and centralization of public welfare and charitable institutions, changes in marriage and baptismal ordinances, the possibility of divorce, clerical marriage, the closing of public brothels, and the hardships created by the religious wars all had a particular impact on women, and have recently been the focus of local and regional studies.[4] Some of these political and institutional changes were the direct results of Protestant doctrine while some of them were unintended, though not unforeseen, consequences. Whatever the case, examining them has often required archival research, for the full records of such changes have not been published.

Historians of women have also begun to explore women's responses to the Reformation, responses of both words and actions.[5] Women were

[4]Natalie Davis, "City Women and Religious Change" and "Women on Top" in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1975); Sherrin Marshall Wyntges, "Women in the Reformation Era" in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History,* ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), and "Women and Religious Choices in the Sixteenth Century Netherlands," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 75 (1984): 276–89; Ruth Liebowitz, "Virgins in the Service of Christ: The Dispute over an Active Apostolate for Women During the CounterReformation," in *Women of Spirit,* ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 131–52; Dagmar Lorenz, "Vom Kloster zur Küche: Die Frau vor und nach der Reformation Dr. Martin Luthers," in *Die Frau von der Reformation zur Romantik: Die Situation der Frau vor dem Hintergrund der Literatur und Sozialgeschichte,* ed. Barbara Becker-Contarino (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1980), 7–35; E. W. Monter, "Women in Calvinist Geneva," *Signs* 6/2 (1980), 189–209; Susan Karant-Nunn, "Continuity and Change: Some Effects of the Reformation on the Women of Zwickau," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13/2 (1982): 17–42; R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535–1618* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Thomas Max Safley, *Let No Man Put Asunder: The Control of Marriage in the German Southwest: A Comparative Study 1550–1600* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1984); Lyndal Roper, "Going to Church and Street: Weddings in Reformation Augsburg," *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 62–101, and "Discipline and Respectability: Prostitution and the Reformation in Augsburg," *History Workshop* 19 (1985); 3–28.

[5]Most of the sources in the previous note also discuss women's activities. Additional sources may be found in: Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971), *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), and *Women of the Reformation: From Spain to Scandinavia* (Minneapolis; Augsburg, 1977); A. M. McGrath, *Women and the Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972); Patrick Collinson, "The Role of Women in the English Reformation, Illustrated by the Life and Friendships of Anne Locke," *Studies in Church History* 2 (1975): 258–75; Claire Cross, " 'Great reasoners in scripture': The Activities of Women Lollards, 1380–1530," in *Medieval Women,* ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Minna Wein-

not simply passive recipients of the Reformation message, but left convents, refused to leave convents, preached, prophesied, discussed religion with friends and family, converted their husbands, left their husbands, wrote religious poems, hymns, and polemics, and were martyred on all sides of the religious controversy. Official sources, such as tax lists, city council minutes, and court documents, reveal some of these actions, as do occasional published and unpublished writings. Finding such sources can be very difficult, for fewer women than men recorded their thoughts, ideas, and reactions, and when they did, their writings were rarely saved, for they were not regarded as valuable. Many of Luther's letters to women, for instance, are still extant, though only a few of theirs to him are. None of his wife's numerous letters to him survive, though most of his to her do. Finding information about women in official sources also poses special problems, for sources are arranged by male names, occupations, and places of residence, with women recorded only sporadically and then often only when widowed or single. Despite these difficulties, a picture of women's responses to the Reformation is slowly emerging, enabling us to compare these across class, regional, and denominational lines and to the more familiar responses of men.

Historians of the family have frequently focused on the Reformation period, viewing it as a time of great change in both the structure and function of the family.[6] Like historians of women, they have explored

stein, "Reconstructing Our Past: Reflections on Tudor Women." *International Journal of Women's Studies* 1/2 (1978): 133-41; Carolyn Andre, "Some Selected Aspects of the Role of Women in 16th Century England," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 4/1 (1981): 76-88; Carole Levin, "Women in the Book of Martyrs as Models of Behavior in Tudor England," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 4 (1981): 196-207; Retha Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, Conn.; Westport Press, 1983); Lorna Jane Abray, *The People's Reformation: Magistrates, Commons, and Clergy in Strasbourg 1500-1598* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Hans-Christoph Rublack, "Martin Luther and the Urban Social Experience," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16/1 (1985): 15-32; Merry E. Wiesner, "Women's Defense of their Public Role" in *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,* ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 1-27; Mary Prior, "Reviled and Crucified Marriages: the Position of Tudor Bishops' Wives," and Marie B. Rowlands, "Recusant Women, 1560-1640," in *Women in England, 1500-1800,* ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 118-80; Heather M. Vose, "Marguerite of Navarre: that 'Righte English Woman,' " *Sixteenth Century Journal 16/3 (1985): 315#33.*

[6]J. L. Flandrin, "Repression and Change in the Sexual Life of Young People in Medieval and Early Modern Times," *Journal of Family History* 2/3 (1977): 196-210; Pierre Goubert, "Family and Province: A Contribution to the Knowledge of Family Structure in Early Modern France," *Journal of Family History* 2/3 (1977): 179-95; Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1977); Joel Berlatsky, "Marriage and Family in a Tudor Elite: Familial Patterns of Elizabethan Bishops," *Journal of Family History* 3/1 (1978): 6-22; Roger A. P. Finlay, "Population and Fertility in London, 1580-1650," *Journal of Family History* 4/1 (1979): 26-38; Hans-Christoph Rublack, "Zur Sozialstruktur der protestantische Minderheit in der geistlichen Residenz Bamberg an Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *The Urban Classes, the Nobility, and the Reformation: Studies on the Social History of the Reformation in England and Germany,* ed. Wolfgang Mommsen,

both the reformers' ideas about the family and the impact of legal and political changes on the family as an institution. The former has meant a concentration on the *Hausvaterliteratur* and other advice manuals for parents and children, and the latter has resulted in analyses of changes in divorce laws and inheritance and guardianship patterns. In addition, family historians have used demographic statistics to assess changes in marriage patterns, illegitimacy rates, number and spacing of children, and family size and constitution. They have combined demographic statistics and other sources to look at wetnursing, family strategies for maintaining and increasing wealth, patronage and godparenting patterns. Drawing on anthropology, they have explored generational conflict, the role of ritual in family life, and how kinship systems operated.

Family history has its own type of source problems in the Reformation period. Statistical evidence is spotty, and categories often arbitrarily assigned and changing; it is occasionally difficult to tell if an identity is a name or an occupation, especially for women, whose marital status is also often unclear. Children, particularly girls but in some instances also boys, were often left out of records until they reached a certain age. Written sources are heavily weighted toward the upper classes, or describe families that are in other ways atypical, such as those of prominent reformers or other intellectuals. Descriptions of both ideal and actual family life are almost all written by men, so there is a strong gender bias in the records of the one early modern institution in which women participated in equal numbers. Nevertheless, existing sources have occasionally been used very creatively and new sources discovered which shed more light on both internal family relationships and the relationship between changes in the family and wider political and economic changes.

There is thus some cause for optimism when assessing recent developments in both women's and family history, but we stand at a particularly crucial point, and I am disturbed by two trends in this area of Refor-

with Peter Alter and Robert Scribner (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1979), 140–46; Jacques Dupâquier, "Naming Practices, Godparenthood and Kinship in Vexin 1540–1900," *Journal of Family History* 6/2 (1981): 135–55; Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); Thomas Robisheaux, "Peasants and Pastors: Rural Youth Control and the Reformation in Hohenlohe, 1540–1680," *Social History* 6 (1981): 281–300; Susan Brigden, "Youth and the English Reformation," *Past and Present* 95 (1982): 37–67; Barbara Harris, "Marriage 16th-century Style: Elizabeth Stafford and the Third Duke of Norfolk," *Journal of Social History* 15 (1982): 370–82; Michael Mitterauer, *The European Family: From Patriarchy to Partnership* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Miriam Chrisman, "Family and Religion in Two Noble Families: French Catholic and English Puritan," *Journal of Family History* 8/2 (1983): 190–210; Grant McCracken, "The Exchange of Children in Tudor England: An Anthropological Phenomena in Historical Context," *Journal of Family History* 8/4 (1983): 303–13; Stephen Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Safley, *Let No Man;* Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

mation scholarship. The first is a trend toward ghettoizing the history of women and the family, of making it simply a subset of social history, or a separate field altogether. This can be seen in something as simple—and yet profound—as the way in which new books are cross-listed in Library of Congress classifications. Rarely are books about women and the family cross-listed by geographic area or time period. Someone looking for Mary Prior's recent *Women in English Society, 1500–1800* would find it only under "women-history of" and not "England-history of"; Michael Mitterauer's *The European Family* is listed only under "family-history of." Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's new collection of articles, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, is not cross-listed under Renaissance, but only under women, family, and kinship. This reinforces the idea that there is a split between so-called real history and what women were doing, and that the history of the family is somehow independent of political, economic, and social history.

This joint ghettoizing also leads to viewing the history of women and the family as the same thing, seeing the family as the sole determinant of women's lives and only marginally important for men. It also ignores women's intellectual and political history while conversely ignoring male sexuality and familial roles and gender restrictions on men. This tendency sometimes comes from historians of women themselves, who leave out political questions because they feel they did not really matter to most women, or shy away from intellectual women because they were such a minority. We are often uncomfortable even to label ourselves "Reformation" historians because of the value content of that word, and prefer the more value-neutral "early modern." Intellectual and political historians then feel they don't have to address any of the issues raised by the new scholarship on women and the family because such issues are not relevant to their specialty. These historians remove the "partly" from Natalie Davis's comment that "the Reformation is partly a quarrel about paternal authority among adult men,"[7] and, also swayed by the mystique of the word Reformation, return to the idea that the real Reformation has nothing to do with women. As Jane Dempsey Douglass comments, "So often women's theological questions and women's history are marginalized as irrelevant to 'serious' theology."[8]

This trend not only reinforces a dichotomy between real history and women's history, but it also projects our idea of the split between public and private onto the sixteenth century. It makes the family part of a private realm, distinct from the public realm of politics and economic life. This is both ahistorical—viewing the privatized family we have inherited from the nineteenth century as somehow timeless—and particularly

[7]Quoted in *Versions of History*, ed. MARHO (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 109.
[8]Douglass, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin*, 8.

misleading for the sixteenth century, when in both political theory and economic reality the family was a public institution. It also masks the fact that the sixteenth century saw a sharper split between public and private than the Middle Ages, and so prevents questions about why this was happening.

One of the reasons for this kind of ghettoizing is that it makes things easier. It is certainly simpler to add new material to traditional courses, texts, and interpretations by just tacking it on—"add women and stir" as a sociologist friend of mine puts it, and in the case of history not even much stirring is done. The desire to avoid a tough job is also a factor in the second disturbing trend, the unwillingness to go beyond women's history and family history to gender history, to make gender "as integrated into historical work and teaching as class is now."[9]

Until very recently gender history would have been impossible, because we had so little information about the female half of the population or about the part of male lives being unearthed by family historians. Some may feel it is still too soon, but I don't think so. We who do this type of research cannot become exhausted or elated by bringing to light obscure sources and just be satisfied with that. We have to use our new information to completely rethink categories of analysis and ways of asking questions in order to integrate the new material and come up with a better understanding of the period. We need to develop a methodology of gender analysis now, before the whole story is in, to help structure future research and avoid research shaped solely by the availability of sources. We must overcome our resistance to theory, even though being more bold and addressing larger issues results in harsher criticism.

This rethinking cannot be limited solely to those whose primary research interests are the family or women, but must include all who work and teach in the Reformation period. It will mean analyzing all male-defined categories, such as social and economic class or occupation, to see which ones include women and how women fit into them. It will also mean examining the categories we have generally used only for women, such as marital status and number of children, to see how they determine men's experiences as well. It will mean examining not only power conflicts between families, but within them as well, looking at economic and ideological sources for the power of individual family members. It will mean viewing gender not as a physical or social fact, but as a way of organizing and discussing the social relations of power.

The changing importance of class and gender makes the picture even more complex. In medieval Europe, there were more restrictions by class than by sex, but the gap between men and women in education,

[9]Natalie Davis in *Visions of History*, 118.

political influence, and economic power grew wider in the Renaissance.[10] Women shared a great deal with the men of their own class, and identified with the aims and aspirations of their fathers and husbands, but could not themselves achieve the same aims. As sixteenth-century men debated women's nature, becoming more obsessed with women's sexuality and controlling unmarried women, gender became increasingly important as a determinant of human experience. Thus to our analyses of social mobility and class distinctions we must add analyses of the possibilities and consequences of stepping outside prescribed gender roles for both men and women.

To give an example of the kinds of questions integrating gender into an analysis can lead to, the Moeller thesis will be used. This is Bernd Moeller's idea of the relationship between the acceptance of the Reformation and ideas of urban community, first discussed in his essay, "Imperial Cities and the Reformation,"[11] which posits that imperial cities accepted the Reformation, particularly in its Zwinglian version, more readily than princely territories because the residents already felt a sense of communal responsibility before God, and wanted to create a perfect, holy city on earth. Moeller has already been criticized by Thomas Brady for ignoring class antagonisms as motivating forces, for creating a "romantic idealism" of unified urban communities.[12] What happens when we begin to ask questions relating to gender?

Even if civic consciousness was only an ideal, it was one which went back to the fourteenth century among both scholastics and humanists, and was based on ideals of public service. Since women were generally criticized, rather than praised, for public actions, they were never considered within the context of this new ideal, and were thus not members of this new *corpus mysticum*. In terms of actual politics, however, though women did not vote or hold major public offices in sixteenth-century German cities, they did pay taxes, provide soldiers for the city's defense, and were minor city officials such as market inspectors and gatekeepers.[13] Women were referred to as *Bürger* or *Nicht-bürger* in court cases, and their cases were handled differently depending on their status.[14] They had, as Christopher Friedrichs describes it, "passive citizenship," and he would say that female heads of household had a type of "active citizenship" as well.[15] Did women thus feel a part of this civic

[10]Joan Kelly Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance," in *Becoming Visible*, 137–64.

[11]*Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1972), 41–115.

[12]*Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520–1555* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

[13]Merry E. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

[14]Frankfurt, Stadtarchiv, Gerichtssachen: Bürger wieder Bürger Bürger wieder Fremde, Ugb. 51, 54, 57, 69, 72.

[15]*Urban Society in an Age of War: Nordlingen 1580–1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 39.

solidarity, even though the political theorists had not included them? Did sixteenth-century people sense an ambiguity in the concept of citizen (*Bürger*), i.e., that it was used sometimes to mean everyone born in a place, and sometimes only adult, married males, or is this ambiguity only the result of the imposition of modern ideas about what citizenship entails?[16] What did it mean for the status of women within a city when this corpus also became a religious entity, rather than one which was basically political, when the political *Gemeinde* also became a religious *Gemeinde*?

The reformers addressed many books of printed sermons to towns and groups within towns, but never specifically to a group of women. Does this mean they viewed women as part of male groups, never thought of women as sharing common concerns, or recognized that, after the closing of the convents, all-female groups would never gather to hear a sermon? Medieval guild statutes refer to "brothers and sisters" when there are female members and only "brothers" when there are not. Thus when Martin Bucer described the church as a "brotherhood" was he choosing to exclude women? Did women feel excluded? There were significantly more women than men in every major German city from the fourteenth century onward. This has often been linked with the rise of late medieval urban mystical and heretical movements, and with the rise of witchcraft accusations.[17] Was it also a factor in the cities' acceptance of the Reformation? If not, why not? In cities where both Lutheranism and Catholicism were tolerated, such as Bamberg, there were a large number of inter-faith couples.[18] What made a woman choose a faith different from that of her husband, particularly if that faith was also different from that of her parents? How did city rulers fit this religious diversity within the most basic urban institution into their ideas of civic solidarity?

What happens when we add questions of gender to those of class? Though Moeller uses male language to describe citizens, well-to-do widows or single women moving into a city often took an oath of citizenship; did this group of women consider itself part of the urban community? Were these women more likely to promote the Reformation? Did the wives of urban patricians interpret the Reformation as if they were members of a dominant or subordinant group? Lower-class married women often participated in iconoclastic riots and heckled preachers while their husbands remained at home. If such actions were inspired by class antagonisms, why were women the active ones?

[16]See e.g. David Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 13.

[17]Karl Bücher, *Die Frauenfrage im Mittelalter* (Tübingen, 1910); H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witchhunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562–1684* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

[18]Rublack, "Sozialstruktur."

The term common man (*gemeiner Mann*) has become a commonplace to describe the peasant and lower-class supporters of the Reformation, and was frequently used in a very positive way by sixteenth-century polemicists. As Lyndal Roper has pointed out, the term common woman (*gemeine Frau*) was never used positively, and in fact means prostitute. While the common man is common because he represents the community, the common woman is such because she belongs to the whole male community and not to an individual man.[19] Since 'common' women were decidedly not part of a civic community—they were required to be foreigners in most towns—how could other, what we might call ordinary, women fit in? Was there a "revolution of the ordinary woman" corresponding to the "revolution of the common man"?

Most of these questions cannot yet—or perhaps even—be answered, but they demonstrate the challenge that simply thinking about gender differences can post to accepted theories.

For another example we can use the issue of dowries. The dowry was the most significant factor in a young woman's marriageability and a major method of transferring wealth and building economic alliances between families. Recently a few studies have been made of the dowry during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the topic is briefly mentioned in some of the works on family history in the early modern period, but Reformation scholarship is strangely silent on the issue.[20] Since Luther has often been praised for raising the status of women within the family, and a large dowry clearly increased a woman's standing vis-à-vis her husband and in-laws, did he thus support the growth in dowries which has been found in many areas in the sixteenth century? Or did he, like many other commentators, view dowries as a hindrance to marriage, and thus oppose them, given his ideas that marriage was the proper state for all? What happened to dowry funds for pool girls in Protestant cities, i.e., which was stronger, the idea that all women should be married or that good works, such as contributing to a dowry fund, were not efficacious? Could a woman's large dowry make up for her being of a different faith than her husband? Or, conversely, could being of the correct faith make up for a lack of dowry? Were parents willing to dower daughters who changed faiths, though they frequently disinherited sons who did? What happened to the dowry in cases of divorce? As

[19]" 'The common man,' 'the common good,' 'common women': Reflections on Gender and Meaning in the Reformation German Commune," *Social History*, forthcoming.

[20]Stanley Chojnacki, "Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4 (1975): 571–600; Susan Mosher Stuard, "Dowry Increase and Increments of Wealth in Medieval Ragusa (Dubrovnik)," *Journal of Economic History* 16/4 (1981): 795–812; Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," and Eleanor S. Riemer, "Women, Dowries and Capital Investment in 13th-century Siena," both in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan (Binghamton, N.Y.: Harrington Park Press, 1985).

these questions indicate, research on dowries can provide new ways of exploring the practical impact of the Reformation, the relationship between theological change and economic and political structures, power relationships between generations and genders, affection between family members, the weight given to religious and economic concerns in making important family decisions, and no doubt many other things.

This article has primarily been questions, rather than answers, but that seems to be the point we have reached now. We have slowly learned where sources on women and the family are to be found, and have a few models for doing further research in other geographic areas, time periods, occupational groups, and confessions. That research must continue, for there is much more information waiting to be dug up from archives and libraries, but we must at the same time go beyond case studies. We have to ask the large questions, the ones that make us rethink all that has been learned until now, the ones that, perhaps, cannot be answered. Family and women's history have not provided us solely with new fields, but with a new lens to view the entire Reformation.