

Mulder-Bakker, A. B., Wogan-Browne, J., ed., *Household, Women and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts XIV; Turnhout: Brepols, 2005, 260 blz., €60,-, ISBN 2 503 51778 1).

This volume of essays is the outcome of a series of conferences on ‘Women in the Christian Tradition from late Antiquity to the Reformation’ held during 1992-1998. This is not the standard conference volume, however, for these articles were selected from the many contributions to those discussions because each bears on a single theme not anticipated by the series itself – the household. This issue gives the volume special interest and originality, and manages to unify a collection of essays that move from the third century to the sixteenth, from England to Byzantium, and from law code to prayer book.

As the editors point out, historians of women have generally treated the household as a socioeconomic institution rather than a site of religious experience and institutionalization. Although taken individually the essays do not fully succeed in connecting the three terms – women, Christianity, and household – in clearly patterned ways and although they are not uniformly well argued, taken as a whole they convinced this reader that we cannot understand Christianity, womanhood, or the relationship between the two in those centuries unless we examine the household both as social arena for religious experience and metaphor for Christian virtue. This review thus takes the articles as a group, regrettably but necessarily (given the constraints of space) at the expense of discussing them individually.

The volume is divided into two chronological sections, the first focusing on the late antique and early medieval period and the second on the later Middle Ages. The division is justified, the editors explain, by the fact that in the latter period the nuclear household, with the conjugal pair as its center and head, had become the dominant form. In contrast to the *domus* of antiquity, which was organized under the principle of *patria potestas* and thus gave fathers authority over their children until death, the nuclear household was relatively independent of the previous generation and more egalitarian both in social structure and in ethic. Although some of the essays argue that the latter household form held traditionally feminine values in higher regard and provided a social arena in which women could more easily take leadership in religion and social reproduction (as opposed to biological reproduction), the volume left this reader persuaded that the evidence we have does not allow us to quantify the relative extent of women’s ‘power,’ ‘authority,’ ‘influence,’ ‘contribution’ or whatever word we might use to indicate agency. The sources treat specific social milieu, not “women” as such but particular kinds of women in particular settings. They are also generically distinct; a law code, for example, provides information that is not comparable to the kind of insight provided by devotional literature, a painting, or a moralist’s tract, and it can be used alongside such sources only with great care, especially when the evidence comes from different periods and different places.

If the volume does not yield a neat narrative about progressive change over time, it does, however, offer a powerful tool for understanding how women, qua women, were positioned in Christianity throughout the long period under consideration. Christian teaching itself, several of the authors explain, offered a message about spiritual equality, and it valorized peace instead of war, arbitration and compromise instead of martial valor and contest, contemplation and reasoned discourse instead of aggressive action. These teachings easily mapped onto a discourse about good household governance, and it was that link which positioned those women who headed households, either alone or with their spouses, as embodiments of virtue. It was thus that women, although excluded from public authority, although technically under the power of fathers during the antique period and of husbands during the latter medieval period, and although consistently damned in learned and popular literature as irrational, sensual, untrustworthy, vain, and constitutionally weak, could stand for public or Christian values (which were discursively conflated), be positioned to govern families and monasteries, and even to extend that authority into other realms.

By studying women and Christianity through this lens, we thus gain a better understanding of how women acquired their roles in Christianity. More usefully still, we learn that the most jarring contradiction of this culture's gender system, which could simultaneously condemn women and honor them, exclude them from public authority and grant them leadership roles, or hide them and display them, was not simply a psychological splitting, born of a collision of fear and desire. Because Christian teachings were commensurate with the principles of good household management ('economy' in its original sense) and because Christianity was institutionalized on household models, those women who governed or helped to govern households were simultaneously positioned to exercise leadership in what one author evocatively labeled 'the economy of salvation.' It was a precarious position, to be sure, and it made them vulnerable even as it granted agency. Although the authors did not acknowledge or explore these dangers as they might have, they allow us to more clearly see how the possibilities produced the dangers.

Martha Howell

Cockshaw, P., *Prosopographie des secrétaires de la cour de Bourgogne (1384-1477)* (Instrumenta XVI; Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2006, 182 blz., €49,-, ISBN 3 7995 7916 8).

Een kwarteeuw te laat. Met deze eenvoudige opmerking kan je de recensie van dit boek betitelen. 25 Jaar na de publicatie van het eerste deel van het proefschrift van Pierre Cockshaw (1937-2008) uit 1975 over de kanselarij van de Bourgondische hertogen in de late Middeleeuwen volgde vorig jaar het tweede, namelijk de bijlagen. Het eerste deel is getiteld *Le personnel de la chancellerie de Bourgogne-Flandre sous les ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois (1384-1477)*, en werd in 1982 uitgegeven in de serie 'Standen en Landen' (volume 79). Dit onderzoek bracht het administratieve niveau van de Bourgondische staat op een treffende wijze in kaart en het vormde en vormt de basis voor menig studie naar de concrete werking ervan. De monografie besloot dat persoonlijke loyaliteit een fundamentele basispijler was van de macht van de Bourgondische hertogen in de Nederlanden, en zij hielp, in haar tijd, het onderzoek naar de vorming van de moderne staat ver vooruit.

Het rijke archiefwerk waarop de studie gebaseerd is, werd nu in de reeks van het Duitse historische instituut te Parijs uitgegeven. Het ambitieuze onderzoeksproject van de voorzitter van dit instituut, Werner Paravicini, dat onder de naam *Prosopographica Burgundica* bekendstaat, heeft als doel de proposografie van Bourgondische staatsambtenaren, edelen, en ander hofpersoneel onder het wetenschappelijke publiek te verspreiden. Uit vrees dat het archiefwerk van Pierre Cockshaw verloren zou gaan, nam Paravicini diens bijlagen van het proefschrift over de kanselarij in 'zijn' serie op. Het was inderdaad een zonde dat de talloze referenties naar archiefbronnen over 413 secretarissen van het Bourgondische staatsapparaat enkel voor intimi consulteerbaar waren. Cockshaw doorpluisde een indrukwekkende reeks bronnen uit het staatsarchief van de hertogen en verzamelde de gegevens per secretaris. Meer dan een uitgegeven database van hertogelijke secretarissen is het boek niet, maar dan wel een waardevolle – althans voor het wetenschappelijke publiek. Het verzamelt namelijk het bewijsmateriaal bij de publicatie *Le personnel de la chancellerie* en de opgenomen fiches verschaffen voor onderzoekers een grondige kennismaking met de personen in kwestie.

Maar de databank is voorbijgestreefd. In het laatste kwarteeuw vulde Cockshaw zijn onderzoeksfiches niet meer aan. Het boek negeert elk onderzoek dat sinds 1975 over het onderwerp verscheen, en dat is er nogal wat. Weliswaar zijn een aantal titels van recente (en reeds minder recente) werken over Bourgondische secretarissen in de bibliografie opgenomen (zoals van Jan Dumolyn, Mario Damen en Holger Krüse), maar de gegevens uit deze publicaties werden niet in de databank verwerkt. Bovendien ontbreken sommige werken die evenzeer informatie over de onderzoekspopulatie bevatten in de bibliografie (zoals Tim Soens' *De rentmeesters van de Raad van Vlaanderen*, uit 2002). Nieuwe biografieën over hertogelijke secretarissen werden evenmin geconsulteerd. De fiches over bijvoorbeeld Guilbert de Ruple,