

## Consensus

---

Volume 18

Issue 2 *Word and Worship: Essays on Preaching and Liturgy*

Article 16

---

11-1-1992

# The Forgotten Followers

Pamela Ann Moeller

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

---

### Recommended Citation

Moeller, Pamela Ann (1992) "The Forgotten Followers," *Consensus*: Vol. 18 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol18/iss2/16>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

the relationship of the Catholic Church to that regime", to be paramount. Once again, she challenges a school of thought, that group of scholars who describe the regime as clerical. Although she does not deny the warm relationship and shared values between the Austrian regime and the Catholic Church, she gives a great deal of attention to those areas in Austrian life where church and authoritarian regime continually clashed: youth, mother and family organizations. Her evidence is clear; shared values and policy agreement do not preclude power conflict and control struggles.

Much is commendable in this work. Attention is so frequently given to inter-war Catholicism in other countries—Mexico, France, Spain, Italy, Germany—that it is a welcome addition to have such extensive material on authoritarian Austria. Her research is thorough, and her points are convincing. She adds to our knowledge important inner workings of such organizations as the Christian Social Party, the Fatherland Front and the various groups in both church and state that involve youth and women. Especially insightful are her dealings with active female and male militants in Catholic groups who are not simply echoes of the church's hierarchy.

In spite of these positive qualities the book is a letdown in important respects. It suffers from all the defects of a dissertation, though a very good one. Her polemics are dated, and though she is correct in her definitions, few would find them startling or new. Further, the work is tedious and repetitive, and instead of being carried along, the reader is engulfed in a quagmire of too much data. The book needs to be streamlined, and, at least, one chapter could be used to set the Austrian church-state struggles into the wider context of Vatican policy and church-government issues in other countries. It is to be regretted that such valuable research is contained in the ponderous style of a dissertation rather than the more compelling form of a book.

Oscar Cole Arnal  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

## **The Forgotten Followers**

Carol J. Schlueter, editor

Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, Inc., 1992

One can hardly read three pages of this book before the heart is racing—racing with pain, with rage, with celebration. "Why have we not heard?" Mary Malone asks in the first sermon. Why *have* we not heard the claim of the women disciples, the ones who did *not* abandon or betray Jesus, who were there through it all, ministry, death and resurrection? Why have we not heard? Indeed.

There is no excuse except our own sinfulness, our idolatry of all that is male, our denial of that idolatry—yes, I hear it even now. And there is even

less excuse with this book at hand. It sets before us the stories of women ranging from the inevitable mother Mary to the unexpected wife of Pilate. It is full of the preaching of women of half-a-dozen or more denominations, full of women's experience with gospel, converted into sermons, preached and now printed—and, we dare hope, finally and truly heard.

These sermons display a wide range in approach and style. Some are elegant in their immediate simplicity; others challenge us to attend to the complexity of realities shaped by irony and multivalency. Their content illumines us with insight, calls us to account, heals us with gospel, and frees us to become whole persons, rather than those crippled by the bonds of stereotypes and the expectations of those with limited vision.

All these sermons do not necessarily meet all my criteria for good preaching. And, no doubt, they will come under harsh judgment by some because, perhaps, they are deemed not to have enough law or enough gospel, or because the preachers are seen as having read feminist agendas into the text, or to be using the texts to endorse feminist ideology....

These sermons *are* lively with imagination and they are heavy with women's experiences. Yet it seems to me that rigorous second generation Lutheran, John Calvin, had it right when he understood that Scripture becomes the Word of God for us precisely when the Spirit brings the text into vigorous conversation with us in our reality.

Women's reality is by and large the reality of oppression under patriarchy, and when these texts come to us there under the guidance of the Spirit we see them and experience them as events of liberation and empowerment. It is this liberation and empowerment that these sermons proclaim and, I dare say, *do*. I know that because of my experience just in reading them: I am affirmed; I am released from my anguish and rage into celebration; I am empowered anew to carry on my ministry as a follower of Jesus. And that, I submit, is more important than whatever else the critics (including myself) might have to say.

God is gracious, and her power to move us to new understanding and experience is quite awesome. We see her moving in these preachers and in the women whose embodying of gospel gave rise to these sermons. Consequently, this book offers real hope that we will see even more divine movement in all who dare to read this book and to hear what has all too long and all too often been unheard.

Pamela Ann Moeller  
Emmanuel College  
Toronto, Ontario