



Woman, Women, and the Priesthood in the Trinitarian Theology of Elisabeth Behr-Sigel

By Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

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Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (1907-2005), a convert to Orthodoxy in her early twenties and a central figure of Orthodox theology among Russian émigrés in Paris, first began to reflect on the question of women in the priesthood in 1976. Initially supporting the general consensus that priesthood would be impossible for the Orthodox, she came to retract this view, finding a basis for female ordination in women's distinct spiritual charisms. Behr-Sigel later shifted the foundation of her case to personhood, inspired by the work of fellow Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky, and arrived at the conclusion that all the Orthodox arguments against the ordination of women were, in fact, heretical at root.

In this volume, Wilson analyzes all of Behr-Sigel's writings about women and the priesthood across the whole sweep of her career, demonstrating the development of her thought on women over the last thirty years of her life. She evaluates her relationship to feminism, Protestantism and movements within Orthodoxy, finally drawing conclusions about this much-contested matter for the ongoing debate in both the East and the West.

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- Rank: #3135157 in Books
- Brand: Wilson Sarah Hinlicky
- Published on: 2015-02-26
- Released on: 2015-02-26
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 233.93" h x .44" w x 6.14" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

This is an important book ... Sarah Hinlicky Wilson has produced a book which presents an intriguing picture of a woman who was a bridge between East and West, as well as offering a profound account of the complex issues raised by the question of the ordination of women in the context of Trinitarian ecclesiology. (*Ecclesiology* 2016-05-24)

Elisabeth Behr-Sigel is perhaps best known for her lifelong concern for the place of women in the ministry of the Church, which led finally to her advocacy of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The depth of the author's learning makes this book not only a critical analysis of the thought of one very brave and exceptional woman, but also an illuminating introduction to the exciting theological world of Russian theology in the West both in Paris and in America. The growing interest among Western theologians nowadays in the contribution of Eastern Orthodox theology to theological reflection makes this work very timely. (*Andrew Louth FBA, University of Durham, UK*)

This concise yet comprehensive study of one of modern Orthodoxy's most creative minds is required reading for anyone interested in Orthodox theology, Christian feminism or modern ecumenism. (*Paul Vallerie, Butler University, USA*)

[The work provides] a comprehensive picture of Behr-Sigel's reflections on what Orthodox Church theology is all about. (*Finnish Journal of Theology (Bloomsbury Translation)*.)

About the Author

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson is Assistant Research Professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the editor of Lutheran Forum.

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