

*Emma Newman: A Frontier Woman Minister*, by Randi Jones Walker. *Women and Gender in North American Religions*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000. xxi, 200 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, references, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Carol K. Coburn is associate professor of religion and history at Avila University, Kansas City, Missouri. Her research and publications have focused on American religious history, women's history, and educational history.

American historians and scholars of religion have only recently begun to explore the history of women clergy in Judeo-Christian traditions. Randi Jones Walker, associate professor of church history at Pacific School of Religion, takes her readers into the life of a fascinating woman minister who battled sexism, primitive conditions, cultural tensions, and limited finances as she worked as an itinerant preacher and at times healer in the late nineteenth-century Midwest. Born in New England and educated at Andover Seminary, Emma Newman took her Yankee middle-class ideals along with her religious convictions and found that life in the trans-Mississippi West modified both. Using Newman's extensive diaries, professional papers, and correspondence, Walker traces the professional and transient career of the determined minister who, although she was the first woman "licensed" to preach in the Congregational Church in 1883, never achieved her goal of ordination. Walker, an ordained minister in the Congregational Church's denominational successor, the United Church of Christ, is sympathetic to Newman's plight. At the same time, she skillfully places Newman's biography in the larger context of religious history, women's history, and the history of the American West.

According to Walker, Newman never questioned her own "call" or a woman's right to preach, but she struggled with outside forces, most notably the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS), which blocked her path to ordination even as it continued to send her to pastor rural outposts in the Midwest—places where no male preacher would go. After her mother's death, the 33-year-old Newman began pursuing her call to the ministry, hoping to be part of the Protestant "army" leaving New England to instill the Christian (read Protestant) virtues thought necessary to protect the trans-Mississippi West from atheists, Catholics, Jews, and other "uncivilizing" influences. She faced financial hardships and indifference from many of the townspeople who had little interest in New England culture or church attendance. Beginning in 1873, and continuing until 1887, she continued to pastor for weeks, months, or even years in communities across Illinois and Kansas.

Walker successfully documents how the AHMS tolerated Newman, particularly when they needed her services, but adamantly refused or-

dination even when the local congregations requested it. Walker frames the narrative within the context of gender and western scholarship, demonstrating how women's roles often expanded in rural western settings where farm families battled isolation, unpredictable weather, and economic downturns in order to survive. Focusing on Newman's "pragmatic work rather than theology," Walker writes, "The similarities of women's work and that of clergy are remarkable. Both concern themselves with nurturing and maintaining relationships and the physical and spiritual well-being of those in their care" (xx).

Newman's role as a healer is a fascinating one. I agree with Walker that the fluid interaction between mainstream religious thought and alternative healing methods (such as homeopathy and animal magnetism) was a recurring phenomenon in nineteenth-century America and one that women particularly embraced. Speaking to her contemporaries in the final chapter, Walker asks the churches to "rethink [their] models of ministry," and invites her peers to view Newman's work "as a sketch for recovering a more whole way of working," suggesting that "as we became distanced religiously from our bodies, we lost our connections to our souls" (177).

Far from being resolved in the twenty-first century, the issue of women's ordination remains a highly controversial topic in many conservative Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Jewish traditions. Although she died in 1921, Emma Newman would recognize the rhetoric, if not the behavior, of a variety of denominations that continue to bar women from the pulpit by citing both theological and cultural prohibitions. In this engaging biography, Walker gives readers a nuanced perspective on how gender and geography shape our past (and present), providing richness and texture to individual and group experience.

*How Women Saved the City*, by Daphne Spain. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. xvii, 311 pp. Illustrations, notes, references, appendixes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Maureen A. Flanagan is associate professor of history at Michigan State University. Her book, *Seeing with Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933*, is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

Daphne Spain's purpose in *How Women Saved the City* is to explore how groups of women were "active agents of the city's construction" (xi) and to show how they "saved the American city" through their concrete building efforts (2). She correctly points out that urban planning history has largely ignored the contributions of women to the built environment of U.S. cities in the critical city-building period at

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