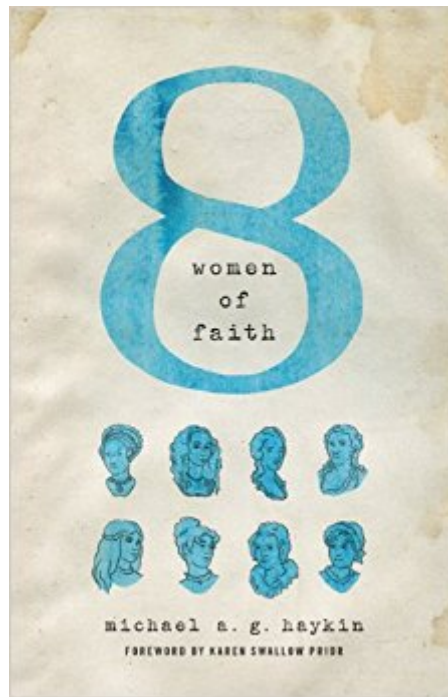


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Eight Women Of Faith



Synopsis

Read the Stories of Eight Remarkable Women and Their Vital Contributions to Church History

Throughout history, women have been crucial to the growth and flourishing of the church. Historian Michael A. G. Haykin highlights the lives of eight of these women who changed the course of history, showing how they lived out their unique callings despite challenges and oppositionâinspiring modern men and women to imitate their godly examples today. Jane Grey:Â The courageous Protestant martyr who held fast to her conviction that salvation is by faith alone even to the point of death. Anne Steele:Â The great hymn writer whose work continues to help the church worship in song today. Margaret Baxter:Â The faithful wife to pastor Richard Baxter who met persecution with grace and joy. Esther Edwards Burr:Â The daughter of Jonathan Edwards whose life modeled biblical friendship. Anne Dutton:Â The innovative author whose theological works left a significant literary legacy. Ann Judson:Â The wife of Adoniram Judson and pioneer missionary in the American evangelical missions movement. Sarah Edwards:Â The wife of Jonathan Edwards and model of sincere delight in Christ. Jane Austen:Â The prolific novelist with a deep and sincere Christian faith that she expressed in her stories.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Crossway (July 31, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1433548925

ISBN-13: 978-1433548925

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.4 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #77,877 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > History > Historical Theology #533 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious #1168 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Women

Customer Reviews

Back in June of this year, a friend messaged to tell me that she was reading a review copy of a forthcoming book and I was quoted in it! This is my mini-review of Michael Haykin's biographical sketches of eight historically significant Evangelical women, in one volume. Sir Stephen James,

writing of Richard Baxter, said, "Men of his size are not to be drawn in miniature." This is doubly true of women in history and, in the Evangelical world, it seems that we are only starting to turn the corner on giving the women within the movement their due. That's one of the reasons this book makes a modest, yet valuable contribution to the literature: the reader is introduced to some remarkable human beings we may hardly know, as well as a few most of us probably don't know at all. But, these are eight trailblazers we must meet if we are to understand where we are in the story of Evangelicalism and, for that matter, western civilization. Karen Swallow Prior, the author of *Fierce Convictions*, places Dr. Haykin's book in its context and setting, while underscoring his purpose in her Foreward. "the period [covered in the book] hinges on a significant turning point in both human history and church history: the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation's emphasis on faith alone and Scripture alone gave birth to the modern individual (and thus the evangelical tradition) "and it is the lives of women that most clearly reflect the dramatic historical shifts that took place as a result. It is women of faith, particularly evangelical faith (with its emphasis on individual salvation), who mirror most clearly this great shift in human history and culture that elevated human agency and equality." Tim Challies, in his review, points out that the way in which these women not only mirrored their culture, but changed human history was through faith. These daughters of the Reformation had one thing in common and it wasn't a husband or even an understanding community or supportive Church (they often didn't): "Haykin's goal is "to remind contemporary Christians, especially evangelicals, of the vital role that women have played in the history of our faith." He means to show the vital importance of women for the life and health of the Christian church. He does not merely describe these women in relation to their husbands as so many biographers have done (at least for those who had a husband), but shows that they were godly in their own right, that even apart from their husbands they had deep faith and a desire to serve the Lord and his people. They were, indeed, women of faith." These are Dr. Haykin's descriptions from the book summary in bold print on .com with an observation or two from me after reading *Eight Women*. Jane Grey: The courageous Protestant martyr who held fast to her conviction that salvation is by faith alone even to the point of death. Jane Grey is representative of all the women we meet in this book: they were intellectually interesting, engaging, and faithful (faith is not irrational or antithetical to clear, logical thought). And, no, I won't add "for women of that age" or any age. Men or women everywhere, imbued with the knowledge that they are created in the image of God and placing faith in Jesus can and will improve on their condition or lot in life. Lady Grey was not only an exceptional woman, but a stately and

courageous historical figure, worthy of imitation, regardless of gender. Jane Grey's conversation with John Feckenham after learning she would be executed is as fine a confession of faith as any I've heard and she moved me to consider my relationship to Christ and His Body. If you want to know how her story ends, I suggest you buy a copy!

Anne Steele: The great hymn writer whose work continues to help the church worship in song today. I knew absolutely nothing about Anne Steele until I read this book, though I've heard or sung her hymns at one time or another. Who was her muse? Dr. Haykin concludes the chapter: 'The revelation of the beauty of Christ was, for Anne, deeply intertwined with the experience of reading and hearing: it was in the fairer, brighter lines of Holy Scripture that she saw her Lord and shared that glorious vision with the Church.'

Margaret Baxter: The faithful wife to pastor Richard Baxter who met persecution with grace and joy. I know a little bit about Margaret Baxter, so I was eager to see how Dr. Haykin portrayed her. He did a fine job and I was very pleased to see him go into greater detail about the events surrounding her marriage to Richard Baxter, as well as her conversion, than I was able to do in my book. Her awakening to the Gospel began with a series of sermons that Baxter preached on the doctrine of conversion and 'received on her heart as the seal on the wax.'

They went on to live out a Puritan love story that is full of pathos, humor, and heartbreak.

Esther Edwards Burr: The daughter of Jonathan Edwards whose life modeled biblical friendship. Again, Dr. Haykin's book introduced me (and, certainly others) to someone I may have never known: Jonathan Edwards' daughter, Esther. Factoid: She was the mother of Aaron Burr, the man who killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. But, Esther's contribution to this book and the Church is her provocative conviction that friendship is a means of grace God bestows upon His children: this was a welcome and unexpected gift!

Anne Dutton: The innovative author whose theological works left a significant literary legacy. Anne Dutton was writing theological tracts and treatises before it was fashionable. In fact, it was seriously frowned upon during her life in the late 17th and early 18th centuries! But, write she did and I think Dr. Haykin's decision to devote a considerable amount of this chapter to her writings on sinless perfection and the presence of Christ in Lord's Supper was timely and helpful for this reader.

Ann Judson: The wife of Adoniram Judson and pioneer missionary in the American evangelical missions movement. Ann Judson was simply an amazing person! This chapter is a great little introduction to a pioneering missionary and the chapter is a wonderful companion to this podcast: *How Few There Are Who Die So Hard!* She died on October 24, 1826, her last words being uttered in Burmese, the tongue of the people she had grown to love.

Sarah Edwards: The wife of Jonathan Edwards

and model of sincere delight in Christ. Sarah Edwards, like her more famous husband, sought and found God in the woods. I love reading his account of conversion and encountering the beauty of Christ in nature. I return to his writings over and over. Now, I've found another guide to meditation and contemplation in Sarah Edwards: "She loves to wander in the fields and on the mountains, and seems to have someone invisible always conversing with her." Thank you, Dr. Haykin, for pointing us beyond Jonathon Edwards to his companion and equal, Sarah. Jane Austen: The prolific novelist with a deep and sincere Christian faith that she expressed in her stories. Jane Austen. I've seen all her movies. Everyone knows who Jane Austen is! Or, do they? Dr. Haykin makes the case, convincingly, that Jane Austen was an Anglican who once disdained the Evangelicals, but went on to feel a certain kinship and express her faith in very Evangelical categories and convictions. She did it privately in her prayers and publicly in her novels. Dr. Haykin has done a fantastic job of celebrating the accomplishments of eight women and encouraging Christians to follow their examples of faith. And, what was most striking to me is that he's done it in a way that is generous, open-handed, and encouraging to everyone, female and male "created to bear the image of God throughout His creation."

A favorite Elisabeth Elliot quote comes to mind whenever I overhear fragments of the ongoing row about the role of women in the church: "I am not a different kind of Christian because I am a woman, but I am, most certainly, a different kind of woman because I am a Christian." Since ten of the twenty-seven believers commended by Paul for faithfulness in the early church at Rome were women, it is no surprise that women continued to fulfill roles of influence and responsibility throughout church history, whether recognized and appreciated or overlooked and unsung. The individuals featured in Michael Haykin's *Eight Women of Faith* span nearly three hundred of those years (1537-1817), and each of his subjects faced and overcame significant cultural obstacles. In his eight vignettes, Michael chronicles the way in which significant cultural changes in the 18th century impacted women of faith. Some were able to leave their own record of faith in their own words, while others are known to us only because they have been lauded in the writings of others. The Queen "Faith Only Justified" The great niece of Henry VIII, Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554) was Queen of England for a little over a week, and she also did time in the Tower of London like so many of her royal relatives of that era. Condemned to death for her Protestantism by her devoutly Catholic cousin, Mary I (with the less-flattering name, "Bloody Mary"), Jane stood firm in her belief that faith alone justifies, and this along with her view of the Lord's Supper show that she had clearly embraced the doctrines of the

Reformation. A Woman of the Word to the end, she owned a Greek New Testament and recited Psalm 51 from memory before being executed. The Wife "Ruled by Her Prudent Love in Many Things" Surprisingly, many of the church fathers held a very low and utilitarian view of marriage. The Reformers and the Puritans did their bit to put an end to that by their example and by their words, and we find in the writings of Richard Baxter a glowing report of the blessings of marriage. His wife, Margaret Charlton Baxter (1636-1681), was clearly the one to whom he opened his mind and communicated his concerns. Although they were childless, they were comrades in ministry during a turbulent period of English history under Charles I in which, for a time, Richard was banned from preaching or leading worship because of his Puritan views. In a faith formed by persecution, Margaret's influence was formative for her husband and marked a turning point in the recognition that a husband and wife must take delight in the love, and company, and converse of each other. The Theologian "The Glory of God, and the Good of Souls" Disregard for female authors persisted well into the eighteenth century. Therefore, Anne Dutton (1692-1765) would naturally have felt that it was necessary to defend herself whenever she shared her gift in the form of books, tracts, treatises, and poems. In spite of her critics, she was the most prolific female Baptist author of her time, reminding her readers that she wrote only for the glory of God. At the same time, she boldly critiqued the theology of John Wesley (among others) in their view that it was possible to live without sin on this planet. Like Lady Jane Grey, Anne also pondered the nature of the elements in communion, beautifully expositing Calvin's view by describing the Supper as "communication. The Lord "gives Himself . . . with all the benefits of his death, to the worthy receivers, and so He is indeed present at the celebration of His Supper. Anne wrote and taught about her Lord until her death. The Friend of Revival "A Wonderful Sweetness" A key figure in the First Great Awakening of the 18th century in the United States, Jonathan Edwards addressed the topic of revival from various angles. In an era that minimized the input of women, he, nonetheless, shared (anonymously) the account of his wife, Sarah Edwards's (1710-1758), spiritual experience so that, although she was not a writer, we have rich insight into her life both from her husband and in the writings of Samuel Hopkins (who was tutored by Jonathan Edwards and lived in their home). Living with eleven children in the fishbowl of ministry during seasons of financial stress and her husband's professional ups and downs, Sarah experienced an encounter with God that Jonathan recorded as "the soul . . . being swallowed up with light and love, accompanied by an extraordinary sense of the awful majesty and greatness of God in which she lost all bodily strength. As a faithful wife and mother, Sarah had the additional honor of becoming a model of what

a true revival personality looks like. The Hymnist “ The Tuneful Tongue that Sang Her Great Redeemer’s Praise” Described as the Baptist equivalent of Isaac Watts, Anne Steele (1717-1778) began writing hymns simply to express her personal devotion to God. As the daughter of a pastor, her creations soon found their way into worship services, and eventually were included in a hymnal. “Father of Mercies, in Thy Word” is still in use today, and beautifully expresses the rich theology and high view of Scripture that sustained her through a life of continual suffering from various illnesses. Father of mercies, in Thy word What endless glory shines! For ever be thy name adored For these celestial lines. The Daughter “ One of the Best Helps to Keep Up Religion in the Soul” Recently, reading in the book of I Chronicles, I found a treasure in the midst of the lists. Hushai the Arkite was immortalized in the pages of Scripture because he was the king’s friend, (I Chron. 27:33 NIV). We don’t value friendship in that way today, but the Bible provides glorious examples of deep friendship, and church history is also a rich source of illustrations. Esther Edward Burr (1732-1758), daughter of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards, grew up during the Great Awakening and married a minister with the same evangelical cast of mind as her father. Homesick for New England, she began a correspondence with Sarah Prince which chronicles their deep devotion to one another, but, more importantly, serves as a record of a spiritual conversation from which we can learn much about Esther’s commitment to God. Thanks be to God that Jonathan Edwards saw the importance of educating his daughters! The Missionary “ Truth Compelled Us” Adoniram and Ann Judson (1789-1826), pioneer missionaries to Burma, were a key source of inspiration for the modern missionary movement. In addition to their stalwart service in a field that yielded much trouble and little fruit, the record of their commitment to expressing the truth of Scripture is inspiring. Ann’s letters document the struggle to learn Burmese, and her testimony of faithfulness ends with her final words on this earth begin spoken in Burmese. The Novelist “ The Value of that Holy Religion” With her books being made into movies, Jane Austen (1775-1817) has become a well-known literary figure, but few have documented the deep Christian convictions that lay behind her creative work. With a father, two brothers, and various other relatives employed as ministers, she was uniquely qualified to write with humor about the ridiculous Rev. Collins and to put words of wisdom about pastoral ministry into the mouth of Edmund of Mansfield Park who asserts that a minister: “has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind . . .” Jane did not consider herself an evangelical and was uncomfortable with overt displays of religion that characterized the ministry of Hannah More. Her private but sincere faith was expressed

in written prayers and in the Christian virtues that were lauded by the characters in her novels. No matter what role women choose today “with all our glorious freedom of choice and our comfortable lifestyle to make it so” there is inspiration in Eight Women of Faith. In her foreword, Karen Swallow Prior describes Haykin’s eight portraits as a demonstration of how their faith informed, shaped, and fulfilled their earthly callings. Women of Faith, may it be so of us today!//This book was provided by Crossway in exchange for my review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255 : Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.

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