

### **530-587 SAINT RADEGUND AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW**

The life span of St. Radegund was 530 to 587, CE. In mid-life, after a rather disastrous marriage, she escaped, became a religious and started the Monastery of St. Croix, in France. This Monastery of St. Croix became an educational center for girls and nuns. A discussion will follow on her prior marriage, and later contributions as a nun plus the Merovingian nuns during this period. This discussion will include the work of Suzanne Fonay Wemple's book, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister*, 181-88. (WIFS.) (COFC, 25-6, 249-50.)

Later in the Seventh Century, c. 609-14, St. Radegund's life was documented by nun Baudovinia of the Abbey of Chelles who wrote her historical biography, *The Life of St. Radegund*. Gerda Lerner believes this biography to be the first of its kind, and adds that the documentation of women's lives first happened in cloistered convents. (COFC, 249-50.)

As educational opportunities opened increasingly for boys and men, the exact opposite was true for girls and women. Males were prioritized whereas females were viewed as a sort of sub-species that lacked rational capabilities and intellectual potential. As a result, females were excluded from the educational process, with the exception of convents and some female royalty. Beyond these two exceptions, illiteracy was exceptionally high among females and female authorship was all but unheard of. Notwithstanding the limited books that were written by women, were rarely available to women.

Gerda Lerner suggests that; "women's progress into historical consciousness was doubly delayed--by educational disadvantaging and by a lack of knowledge of the work of predecessors. ... women had to rediscover their history over and over again" (COFC, 249). Although from the Seventh Century onwards, women frequently attempted to write women's history, headway was more often circular rather than linear. It can be safely said that for thousands of years, men have been writing the history of man kind; the history of men, by men and for men. Up until the 18th Century, that same opportunity was not true for women.

As a result of educational opportunities in the 18th Century, women's authorship slowly began to come forward. Examples of the modest emancipation are noted in the *Re-Genesis*, 1946 and 1952 CE entries. In 1946, the first woman was admitted to Harvard (WAS, 99, 146), but by 1952, women were still not permitted to study or teach Catholic theology (OT, 50). (COFC, 25-6, 249.) Also Harvard's full time matriculated female students were not permitted to enter nor use Harvard's Library until the mid 1970's.

For further information on women and education, see CE entries: 932-1002, Hrosvitha of Gandersheim; 1098-1178, Hildegard of Bingen; 11, 12, 13, Century Middle Ages and the Beguines; 1342-1423, Dame Julian of Norwich; 1365-1430, Christine de Pizan; 1469-1499, Laura Ceret; 1474-1540, Angela Merici; 1483-1546, Martin Luther, German Reformer; 1534, Henry VIII Closed all Convent

Schools For Females; 1585-1645, Mary Ward; 1600-1731, Mary Astell; 1607-1678, Anna Maria von Schurman; 1608-1674, Bathsua Pell Makin; 1614-1702, Margaret Fell and the Quakers; 1623-1704, John Locke; 1637, Rene Descartes and Theory; 1640-1689, Aphra Ben; 1684, Catholic Inquisition in England; 18 Century, Female Educational Summary; 1736-1784, Ann Lee Founder of the Shakers; 1763, Emile, and Jean Jacques Rousseau; 1800-1900, Women Authors; 1946, First Woman Admitted to Harvard School of Arts and Sciences; 1950, First Woman Admitted to Harvard Law School; 1952, Women and Catholic Theology; 1970, Harvard and Female Faculty; 1997, Doctoral Degrees Earned by Women; and 1999, Women in Education.

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