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Summary

Religious Habitus in the Writings of Three German-Baltic Noblewomen: Elisa von der Recke, Barbara Juliane von Krüdener and Helene Marie von Kügelgen

This essay deals with the religiosity of three prominent Baltic-German noblewomen born in the second half of the 18th century: Elisa von der Recke, Barbara Juliane von Krüdener and Helene Marie von Kügelgen. The philosophical and religious beliefs of these women were shaped by the major intellectual movements of their time, such as the Enlightenment and late Pietism. A selective study of their texts will determine the religious orientation of the authors and their relationship to pietism. In addition, the question of whether and how their religiosity was influenced by their aristocratic status is examined. The analysis shows that, in contrast to Elisa von der Recke, whose religiousness led to a rational enlightenment with esoteric accents, Barbara Juliane von Krüdener's religious development led from an enlightened understanding to a mystical one, enriching her spirituality with Pietist and Moravian elements. Helene Marie von Kügelgen can be seen as a representative of the revivalist movement. Two of these ladies, Recke and Krüdener, recognised the concept of nobility achieved through virtue or rebirth. In their eyes, the aristocratising ideal of virtue or soul nobility complemented and 'ennobled' the hereditary nobility.