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Journal Article

**Beckman, N. E. 1997. “Sophia: Symbol Of Christian and Feminist Wisdom?” *Feminist Theology* 6(16):32–54.**

Beckman utilizes her attendance at the week-long ecumenical European Women’s synod in 1996 as a framework for her article. 45 countries participated in the synod, which took place in a small mountain village in Germany. The main topic Beckham explores in this paper is the use of Sophia, Divine Wisdom, at the synod. According to Beckham, Sophia was a rallying point that served to unite all the women attending the synod, regardless of their divergent ideologies.

The work of theology scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza shows the active role women played in Early Christianity. Early Christian communities were inclusive, not just in terms of personal matters, but in their concepts of God and God’s gender. Sophia, as a Christian symbol, in early Christianity is imparted by Jesus and it is only later in history that it is replaced by the image of father and son.

Beckham states that the use of Sophia at the synod was an unplanned event. The concept of Sophia was integrated into the liturgies, writing the songs and lectures of the synod. Rituals and prayers utilized many names of God, both female and male. Sophia was the most prominent name of God spoken at the Synod. Immediately following the conference, critics published articles alleging goddess worship. This critique ignores the feminine aspect of God as Sophia and instead assumes an Eurocentric masculine exclusive nature of God. It is ironic that this Eurocentric view of God is exclusive, while Sophia as the feminine aspect of God served as a unifying force at the conference.