



## Gender and Theology

When gender is taken as a primary analytical category in theological interpretation and construction, theology comes out with a different look. There can be no doubt about that. In their analytical work, feminist theologians have shown that gender and value are firmly related to one another in the Christian theological heritage. The result has been that maleness has been taken to be the primary form of being human in theological anthropology (“the doctrine of man” as it has been called); male experience has been accepted as universal human experience; and “man” has been considered the coinage on which the image of God has been embossed.

Feminism has made an indelible imprint on theology and the church. Perhaps the most obvious impact is in the use of inclusive language, and a close second would be the consciousness of how male power, perspectives, and experiences have affected symbols, texts, theology, and gender roles in the Christian tradition and church.

But where now? Should “theology” replace “theology”? Can scripture—reflecting patriarchal and male orientations—still be considered canonical (i.e., the norm for faith and life)? Must sin be apportioned along the lines of gender, so that in the case of men it is essentially self-centeredness (*incurvatus in se*), and in the case of women it is self-denial (*animi moderatio*)? On the other hand, there are observers of culture who are starting to speak of our times as post-feminist.

Obviously the spectrum of feminist proposals is wide and variegated. *Marcia Bunge* introduces us to the sheer variety that can be found in feminist thought. She highlights important differences, showing that feminist theology cannot be caricatured as easily as some might think. She also shows how feminism can be a resource for the church in terms of its understanding of other persons and in its theological reflection (such as in its language about God and in biblical interpretation). *Mary Hull Mohr* provides an informative review of the feminist movement over time. She discusses its two main stages, the earlier “liberal feminism” and the later “cultural feminism.” She draws upon a wealth of literature in the field, and she goes on to show where the church seems to be in regard to these stages. *Daphne Hampson* discusses the concept of the self in Luther and the Lutheran theological tradition and then makes a critique of it from a feminist perspective. Essentially she contends that feminists, who emphasize the continuity of the self and its growth in relationship to others, will not think it helpful to accept the Lutheran view “that the self should be broken, that the person should learn to live from another who is God.” Although she affirms that one can be religious and feminist, she asserts that there

is “an incompatibility between being feminist and Christian,” especially in its Lutheran form. *Ann Taves* examines the relationship between theology, gender roles, and individualism in American culture. She draws primarily on nineteenth-century sources to account for realities in

the present, including the rise of religious individualism among feminists—a phenomenon that, in her view, should not be disparaged. *Lyman Lundeen* identifies points of decision which feminist theology has to face. These have to do with how Scripture serves theology as norm, the particularity (even maleness) of Jesus as Savior, and the range of metaphors for God which, when multiplied, can lead to less confidence in the character of God—since we “hang loose to all the metaphors.” He follows up his discussion with a call to partnership between men and women in theology, if theology is to serve the life and proclamation of the church. *Martha Long Ice* draws upon a study of the worldviews of a group of women clergy, and she compares these to the prescriptions of futurists. She describes the worldviews of these women and concludes that they coincide remarkably well with those favored by various social thinkers as appropriate for the future. *Stephanie Frey* and *Lawrence Wohlrabe* are co-pastors in parish ministry. They record in their essay how they put themselves together as a team prior to receiving their present calls, how they dealt with the call process, and how they implemented a team approach. This is followed by reflections on how it has worked professionally and personally.

The Resources section opens with Face to Face essays on the question: “Given Feminism, Does Theology Need a New Starting Point?” *Karen Bloomquist* and *Mary Knutsen* respond to the question in different ways. *Kent Johnson* deals with questions about continuing education for pastors. What do pastors want? Why? And what does that say about their views of ministry? He tests some hypotheses, interprets data, and—in doing so—displays before us how pastors view their ministries today. These essays are followed by the Texts in Context essay by *Gracia Grindal* concerning the lectionary texts from Luke’s Gospel for the Advent Season.

This issue marks a transition, since it is the last on which my name will appear as Editor. I served as Associate Editor during the first year of the journal’s existence and have been Editor since. The eight years I have served in these two positions have been extremely gratifying. It has been a joy to see each issue appear. It has been enjoyable working with other members of the editorial staff, the Editorial Board, the Advisory Council, authors of articles, and faculty colleagues. It has been a matter of deep satisfaction to see *Word & World* assume a leading place among theological journals in America, a journal whose articles are cited and sometimes reprinted for wider publics. Yet there comes a time when one’s own inner clock says that it’s time for a change. I sense that this is so in my case. The next issue will bear the name of Frederick J. Gaiser as Editor. He has served as Associate Editor since 1986 and was elected by the Editorial Board to become Editor at the expiration of my term. He brings to the position many strengths, and if I may be allowed one last “editorial we,” we wish for him and the rest of the staff the continued joys, support, associations, and satisfactions that have characterized life with the journal in the past.

A.J.H.