

with feminist theological and educational perspectives.<sup>18</sup> He persuasively argues the thesis that we need to recover a sense of theology as sapiential knowledge (a believing understanding rooted in God) and as dialectical activity. This theological understanding, the ecclesial counterpart to an educational *paideia*, contrasts sharply with our present state of a "melange of sciences pertaining to the education of leaders."<sup>19</sup> His concern that theological education is an "atomism of subjects without a clear rationale, end, or unity" dominated by the "pragmatic, strategy-oriented ethos of theory-practice" and overseen by theologians caught in the "scholarly-guild mind set"<sup>20</sup> poses challenging questions about how to break theology out of the parochialism of its clerical paradigm which has led to "enormous problems of conceiving how theology has anything to do with institutions, human beings, or culture outside the leadership of the church."<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, the clarity with which Farley has posed the questions and situated them in historical contest—if not framed the answers—articulates what I believe is also at the heart of feminist, educational criticism of theology: how can theology be a way of wisdom in knowledge and action? His historical archaeology includes no women—an omission not without significance for his thesis. But when writers of a future generation write the history of theology of the late twentieth century, I believe they will recognize that the long-delayed visibility of women speaking "in a different voice" contributed indispensably to the recreation of theology as sapiential knowledge. May Lady Wisdom be our guide!

MARY C. BOYS  
*Boston College*

### WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Women in theological research are in some ways the subject and in other ways the object of this essay. As subjects, women are claiming their rightful place by practicing their discipline, and are creating a situation where their demand to be accepted as colleagues by men practicing theology and organized in groups such as the CTSA cannot be ignored. What it means to be "accepted as colleagues," neither patronized nor put down, is not entirely clear. After all, our gender colors all our relationships. The assumptions that come with long-nurtured and especially useful stereotypes are not easily laid aside, even when the stereotypes are declared to be unjust and are consciously rejected. (In some ways it helps that women, like men, are usually older by the time they make their mark in

<sup>18</sup> Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 19.

<sup>21</sup> E. Farley, "Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm," in D. S. Browning, ed., *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World* (New York: Harper, 1983), p. 27. See also his "The Reform of Theological Education as an Educational Task," *Theological Education* 15 (1981), 93-117.

theology. There are fewer, though not necessarily less damaging, stereotypes that older women have to contend with.)

In another way, women are (rightly) objects of concern by professional groups such as the CTSA. After all it is a new phenomenon that even ten percent of the membership is female. This is a phenomenon of interest to the press, who watch for what difference it will make; to bishops, who watch for positive examples of the legitimate expansion of women's work in the church; and, not least of all, to women like me who begin to feel at home in the field of theology.

When I was assigned this topic—women and theological research—my first inclination was to do some polling of the practitioners, asking questions like: How do you choose the questions you choose to research? Do you think that your method of doing the research or writing the conclusions is influenced by your being (your history as) a woman? What do you take to be your unique and specific contribution to theological research? Is it in any way specific to being a woman? And, finally, what obstacles have you encountered in your education for, or in the practice of, your profession? Do you interpret these as due in any way to your gender?

Since the time allotted us panel participants did not allow for a full discussion of such results, I have put the questionnaire on hold and will attempt to gather that information later. This evening I will be content with commenting on those questions under three subheadings, asking for a fuller forum in future deliberations and publications of the Society.

1. *A critical theology (The E.T. effect)*

One of the great contributions of feminist scholarship has been to uncover the hidden biases and vested interests—or, in less ideologically tinged rhetoric—the implicit assumptions of traditional theology. This work of producing a systematic critique and corrective to traditional theology has made great progress in biblical scholarship and significant progress in positive or historical theology. The hermeneutic applied to the doctrines of Christology and ecclesiology has bracketed and named assumptions and, most of all, refused to say “more than the truth” about these areas. However, with a few notable exceptions, the fundamental doctrine of God and areas of applied theology such as liturgy, morality, and spirituality remain basically untouched. Not that the critique has not been done and, on occasion, published, but it has continued to be regarded as marginal. It has not been taken into account in subsequent work done. My own primary research has been into the sources of religious and church-legitimated attitudes toward sexuality. It continues to amaze me that the powerful critique feminism implies of biblical “transcendence” and patristic soteriology does not rattle, to a greater extent, the mainstream of theory. The uncovering of political and social motivations for law and custom has not shaken, fundamentally, the discipline preached with such religious fervor and purveyed as doctrine. I believe that women's lives lead them to see the gap between traditional theological formulation and human experience, which in turn leads them to formulate research ques-

tions in terms of the factors other than revelation that have produced theology. The sociologists tell us that what is at one point adaptive tends at another point to become addictive. What was at one point theology tends to become ideology. It is the gift of the outsider, who has nothing to lose from overthrowing the ideology, to see it as such and challenge its right to claim consensus, even normativity.

2. *The constructive theology (The Elliot factor)*

I think it is important that women are recognized as doing their research in theology without being forced to justify their performance as different from what men would do or as exemplifying something specific to women: "Are you a feminist theologian? Is this a feminist course or program?" I see feminist theology as a stage, a critical, corrective theology, in danger of becoming an ideology along side patriarchal ideology. Theology done by women is necessarily critical and constructive, proposing formulations that are in synch with Scripture, history, tradition, as well as experience. I remember when the debate was raging at Marquette University on what made that a specifically Jesuit University. Light broke through the tangled underbrush of argument when someone proposed that the question should not be what is unique but what is appropriate to Jesuit education, that is, not defined in opposition to other kinds. We may be the opposite sex, but we're not about to be pigeonholed as the opposite theology. I would like to recommend that we avoid a long detour and focus our discussions not on what is unique to women, but what is appropriate to women's experience and history. For some period of time that will certainly resemble a liberation theology and a body theology, but not necessarily forever.

3. *The power question*

Theological formulations survive and are escalated into doctrines more because of political and pedagogical reasons than because they represent the most or only true or accurate position. The question of women's role in theology, as formulators and as raw material, is a power question. Making this point gives me an opportunity to raise for your consideration a few further concerns, presented in no order of importance and without sufficient discussion.

Probably more Roman Catholic women have entered the theological profession than Protestant women because the priesthood remains closed to Catholic women. I believe that policy-making is a place of greater power in our church at present than ministry, and a woman has easier access to policy-making through theological work. Still, a woman in theology is likely to be asked, even by pastors with far less education than she, if she likes church work!

Theological answers really grow teeth, still and only, in meetings and synods where women's input is admissable only in the earliest stages of the deliberation, or only in regard to "women's" and family life issues. This is nothing but a means of marginalizing our input along with these "domestic" issues. Sexuality questions are still discussed under this rubric. Before

conception control and the moral agency of women, they were necessarily "women's issues"; now they are responsibility issues.

I am concerned that as women are being integrated into church ministries and theological societies, they are not being successful in reforming the liturgy to represent a non-sexist, participative assembly of Christians. Rather, what is happening more and more is that non-eucharistic liturgies are being substituted for eucharistic liturgies. That affirms, by implication and with great irony, that one still has to choose between women and the sacred.

Finally, I think the power question must be addressed in terms of a caution to women in theology. Because of the need, even desire, for women's participation in every team and workshop, they are in danger of being pressed into service before their theological thought (work) is mature. The best that could come of this would be lush but shallow growth followed by burn-out. The worst would be the presentation of less than quality work, along with the generalizations that would certainly follow: She had nothing to say, but it was good to hear a woman's point of view!

I want to see women's research published and discussed, when it is quality scholarship, no matter what or how inadmissible the topic: even Joan Morris on Pope Joan needs to be taken into account. Such scholarship should be hardy enough to withstand the rigorous critique of equals, and the Society should facilitate the discussion, but it ought not to be consigned to oblivion or heretical status without a full hearing. What is presently inadmissible is more likely so because of political considerations than the consideration of truth.

JOAN TIMMERMAN  
*College of Saint Catherine*

### **TWO-HANDED THEOLOGY**

When I was asked to present some thoughts on how the doing of theology has been modified by the presence of women theological colleagues, it was suggested that I might approach the question autobiographically: how has the work of women theologians changed the way I do theology? My first reaction was: are they serious; are they really suggesting that I be personal, that I talk about how I have changed, maybe even how I feel about how I have changed? Where was I making this presentation—the CTSA convention or the Phil Donahue show? Do they not realize that a macho-theologian never gets personal in his work, never deals with his own experience, therefore never acknowledges personal change, and certainly never discusses how he feels about it? We do not even talk about those things in confession! But there was no way out. If you are married to a woman theologian, and if you still have any of the horse sense you were born with, you do not turn this kind of request down—you finesse it. So I accepted, figuring I could hide behind a discussion of my work, using an occasional "I" or "my" to make it sound personal. Let us see if it works. (What I have just been speaking about really is the fact of interpretation