

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.

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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

we call the hermeneutic circle; that every theologian works from within a particular interpretive circle; and that women theologians have helped men to realize some of the characteristics of the typical male circle from which most theology has come.)

My major work in the last several years has centered on the reality of Christian conversion. Here, in order to indicate how the work of women has influenced my own work, I would like to refer to three dimensions of Christian conversion: the cognitive, the affective, and the moral. In relation to the moral and affective dimensions, I will speak about the work of two specific women, Carol Gilligan and Rosemary Haughton. First, though, as context, I will make a few general remarks about feminist consciousness and the cognitive dimension of conversion.

I. COGNITIVE CONVERSION: FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

As I understand it, cognitive conversion is not just a matter of knowing something new: that, for example, women may have a special, distinctive contribution to make to the theological enterprise. Rather, cognitive conversion is a new way of knowing, a radical shift in understanding transformative of our lives. It is an insight into our concrete knowing that allows us to take clearer possession not only of it but also of our selves, our relationships, our world. Such conversion establishes a new perspective on everything.¹

Feminist consciousness, I suggest, is precisely this kind of new perspective that transforms our selves and our world, whether we be women or men. It is the result of cognitive conversion—a radical reorientation of our understanding and relating to the world. As a total perspective on everything, feminist theology is not just a part of theology, but a quality of the whole of theology.² Rather than attempt the impossible by trying to discuss all the varied aspects of this consciousness,³ I will focus briefly on

¹ In his seminal proposal of differentiated conversions in *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 238-43, Bernard Lonergan specified intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. By "intellectual conversion" Lonergan means the explicit, philosophical appropriation of oneself as a knower. I use the term "cognitive" to emphasize that the conversion transforms knowing in all its patterns and dimensions, not just the intellectual.

² See Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist, 1975), p. 195, for how his conception of "critical theology" does not designate a particular area of theology but "refers to a mode of theological reflection that is applicable to every area of theology. . . ." Baum also helps to see feminist consciousness as a conversion from patriarchal socialization.

³ Among the many important interpretations of feminist consciousness in theology and spirituality, see Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," *Theological Studies* 36, 4 (December 1975), 605-26; Joann Wolski Conn, "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction," *Cross Currents* 30, 3 (Fall 1980), 293-308; Anne Carr, "On Feminist Spirituality," *Horizons* 9, 1 (Spring 1982), 96-103; Anne Carr, "Is a Christian Feminist Theology Possible?" *Theological Studies* 43, 2 (June 1982), 279-97; and Denise Lardner Carmody, *Feminism and Christianity: A Two-Way Reflection* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982). Two collections of essays present a wide range of perspectives: Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) and Charlene Spretnak, ed., *The Politics of Women's Spirituality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1982).

that single feature psychologist Jerome Bruner has called "left-handed knowing."⁴ By the "left hand" Bruner wants to point to the creative dimension of knowing, distinct from the controlling "right hand." Art, of course, is touched at its very heart by the left hand's intuitive metaphors. But art is more than undisciplined fantasy, it is crafted by the technique and artifice of the right hand. Not so obviously, but just as surely, the right-handed scientific business of evidence and verification depends first of all for its interesting hypotheses on the left hand's intuitive guesses and metaphoric hunches. The left hand, then, is intuitive, metaphoric, poetic.

Feminist consciousness appreciates that fully human knowing is two-handed. It celebrates the left-hand because it realizes the extent to which Western culture has in one way or another tied its left hand behind its own back. Conversion to feminist consciousness cuts the cords from the left hand and raises it high. The theologian converted to feminist consciousness, now reveling in intuition and metaphor as well as in logic and coherence, shouts to God: "Look Mom, two hands!"

Let us see, now, how some of these hands are contributing to the theological enterprise—or, at least, to my theological enterprise.

II. MORAL CONVERSION: CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY

One of my main efforts has been to work out a critical understanding of the moral dimension of Christian conversion within the psychological context of moral development theory.⁵ Inevitably, my attempt at relating moral development and moral conversion has been dialectical from the beginning—with conversion theory expanding my understanding of moral development, just as developmental theory has contributed critically to my understanding of conversion. Of course, the principle theorist in the developmental area for a quarter century now has been Lawrence Kohlberg, whose work has concentrated on the development of moral reasoning.⁶

⁴ Jerome S. Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 2-8. For a basic statement of the bifunctional brain—right and left hemispheres, see Robert E. Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1972). Though theologians have always used metaphors, their use has often been reluctant, subordinated to a preference for the control of clear and distinct ideas. Women tend to appreciate the richness as well as the necessity of metaphorical language, and use it enthusiastically. Also, they have helped us to see how much of theological metaphor has been masculine.

⁵ See Walter E. Conn, "Moral Conversion: Development Towards Critical Self-Possession," *Thought* 58, 229 (June 1983).

⁶ For a summary statement of his theory, see Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach" in Thomas Lickona, ed., *Moral Development and Behavior* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 31-53; also see Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

Like all major theorists, Kohlberg has not wanted for colleagues eager to assist his growth in humility.⁷ One of his most helpful friends in this regard has been Carol Gilligan.⁸ A developmental psychologist at Harvard very familiar with Kohlberg's work, Gilligan became concerned (suspicious may be more accurate) that women, when interviewed and scored by researchers using Kohlberg's six-stage theory, typically tested out at Stage 3, while men typically were at Stage 4. Gilligan was quite aware, of course, that these stages—stages of moral reasoning that measure maturity in terms of justice and individual rights—had originally been developed from research with a group of boys and young men. She was less inclined, then, to regard women as morally deficient than to question the theory's presuppositions.

As powerful as she found Kohlberg's basic theory to be, Gilligan's feminist eye could not help noting the dominance of its right hand. In her own research, especially a study of twenty-nine women interviewed during the process of making real-life abortion decisions (in contrast to Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemma stories), she discerns a moral left hand, or what her imagery calls a different voice, the distinct moral language of care and responsibility. In this complementary voice Gilligan specifies a sequence of development which broadly parallels the three basic levels in which Kohlberg pairs off his six stages: 1) a pre-conventional care of self to ensure survival; 2) a conventional care of others identified with self-sacrifice; and, finally, 3) a post-conventional ethic of universal care which includes both self and others in its compass.

Gilligan disavows any absolute association of this different voice with women.⁹ Indeed, in distinguishing these voices of justice and caring, her basic point is that development "for both sexes would therefore seem to entail an integration of [both] rights and responsibilities through the

⁷ For a sampling, see W. Kurtines and E. C. Greif, "The Development of Moral Thought: Review and Evaluation of Kohlberg's Approach," *Psychological Bulletin* 81, 8 (August 1974), 453-70; E. L. Simpson, "Moral Development Research: A Case Study of Scientific Cultural Bias," *Human Development* 17 (1974), 81-106; P. J. Philibert, "Lawrence Kohlberg's Use of Virtue in His Theory of Moral Development," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (December 1975), 455-97; W. E. Conn, "Postconventional Morality: An Exposition and Critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's Analysis of Moral Development in the Adolescent and Adult," *Lumen Vitae* 30 (1975), 213-30; J. C. Gibbs, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development: A Constructive Critique," *Harvard Educational Review* 47, 1 (February 1977), 43-61; and Andre Guindon, "Moral Development: Form, Content and Self—A Critique of Kohlberg's Sequence," *Revue de l'Universite d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Quarterly* 48, 3 (1978), 232-63.

For an explication of the affective dimension in Kohlberg's work that is overlooked in interpretations which characterize his theory as rationalistic, see Walter E. Conn, "Affectivity in Kohlberg and Fowler," *Religious Education* 76, 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1981), 33-48; specifically, see relation of justice to empathy in Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization" in D. A. Goslin, ed., *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 347-480, at 393.

⁸ See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); for a critical perspective, see my review in *Horizons* 10, 1 (Spring 1983), 190-92.

⁹ Gilligan, p. 2.

discovery of the complementarity of these disparate views."¹⁰ Gilligan's distinctive contribution to my work on moral conversion, and, I should hope, to the entire theological enterprise, lies then in her insistence that to admit "the truth of women's perspective to the conception of moral development is to recognize for both sexes the importance throughout life of the connection between self and other, the universality of the need for compassion and care."¹¹

III. AFFECTIVE CONVERSION: PASSIONATE LOVE

Moral conversion may change the direction of a person's life, but one must still continue to pursue that new direction of value in every choice that presents itself, day after day, year after year. Moral conversion is a challenge to a life of value, not the achievement of one. The possibility of achieving such a life lies in that radical transformation of desire I call affective conversion: the thoroughgoing reorientation of our very beings from an egocentric concern with our own needs and interests to a generous, self-transcending regard for the needs and interests of others.

Early on in my reflections on Christian conversion I was able to tease this much from the work of Bernard Lonergan.¹² And Lonergan's image of religious conversion as an unqualified "falling-in-love" with God led me to search in various nooks and crannies of theological as well as psychological and philosophical literature for clues on how to transpose the image of "falling-in-love" into a critical explication of the more general and basic notion of affective conversion. As you doubtless can imagine, I found in the theological literature a rich multitude of right-handed ways to distinguish various types of love—enough in some cases to warm the heart of even Sesame Street's Count! But one author helped me in this area more than all the others taken together: Rosemary Haughton.

In a series of works over the past two decades, in which she has regularly returned to the theme of love, Haughton has unwaveringly followed her theological star without ever losing direct touch with concrete experience.¹³ Whatever the theme, hers has deliberately and explicitly been an experiential theology of the "hands-on" variety—both hands! Central to the theological analysis of her latest book, *The Passionate God*, is the self-transforming power of romantic love. Haughton's thesis is that we can make sense of how God loves by looking at the way people love, particularly the way of love we call passionate. By "passionate" she means to evoke something "in motion—strong, wanting, needy, concentrated towards a very deep encounter." For her, "passion" also means a certain

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹² On affective conversion, see Walter E. Conn, "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," *Angelicum* 53, 3 (1976), 362-404, at 389-90; also see Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 51 (1977), 132-43, at 140.

¹³ See esp. *The Transformation of Man* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1967); *Love* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971); and *The Passionate God* (New York: Paulist, 1981).

"helplessness, a suffering and undergoing for the sake of what is desired and, implicitly, the possibility of a tragic outcome."¹⁴

Romantic love is bodily, sexual (though not necessarily genital) love; it is concentrated on the experience of passion; it is not platonically "spiritual." But as fully human love, it is a radical realization of spirit in the flesh. Romantic love is experienced as a breakthrough that smashes ordinary awareness and creates an exchange of spiritual power. In this passionate love lovers come to self-awareness in the awareness of the beloved; they are defined in the very exchange of life that is love.

But romantic love, Haughton insists, is not just passion, it is also commitment. Romantic love might seize one unawares, but, as the poets of courtly love maintained, only a commitment to love—absolute, unconditional, permanent—can count as a proper response to the revelation of love.

It is impossible to do justice to this notion of passionate commitment in a few paragraphs, but I hope I have been able to give at least some hint of the way Haughton has enriched our understanding of affective conversion by retrieving the doctrine of romantic love with both her theological hands.

The work of Rosemary Haughton and Carol Gilligan are just two examples of how women colleagues have helped in distinctive ways to make my own work—and, increasingly, the entire theological enterprise—more fully human. I have not yet figured out the sound of one-hand clapping, but for the time being I am delighted to hear both my hands joining the growing applause in appreciation of this invaluable contribution. From the rhythm of applause, perhaps we can all move to the poetic meter of two-handed theology.

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TOWARD A CONTEMPLATIVE THEOLOGY

What is distinctive of women's theological reflection? I believe it has unique potential for being theology in a genuinely contemplative mode because it demonstrates characteristics of the profound religious transformation, imaged as the dark night, which makes contemplation possible.¹ Contemplation means here a deep experience of God's empowering presence, a communion with God effected through a transformation of one's desire and understanding that opens one to ever greater care for everyone

¹⁴ Haughton, *The Passionate God*, p. 6. For critical reviews of this book, see the Review Symposium with essays by Joan Wolski Conn, Lawrence S. Cunningham, PHEME PERKINS, and Brian O. McDermott, and Haughton's response in *Horizons* 10,1 (Spring 1983), 124-40.

¹ I am completely indebted to Constance Fitzgerald, O.C.D., "Impasse and the Dark Night," in *Living with Apocalypse: Resources for Compassion*, ed. Tilden Edwards (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) for this approach to the issue, and for the signs of the dark night.