

society. Second, it enables us to be inclusive in our care; to include ourselves in our range of concern; to discern that genuinely self-donating love requires a strong, differentiated self who can freely move beyond autonomy to authentic collaborative relationships and to adult religious surrender.¹² Already this dark night has functioned as a hermeneutic of the nature of God and of ourselves. It has purified our knowledge and affectivity, energizing a prophetic, action-oriented theology.¹³

The third characteristic of the dark night has two phases and moves from anxiety about one's mistakes and one's culpability for them to a new appreciation of God and others in peaceful attentiveness.¹⁴ One's usual support systems are gone; one's limitations are embarrassingly apparent. The only way to break free of incessant self-doubt is to go beyond self-justification and whatever formerly gave meaning and value and freely embrace finitude, admit paradox, give one's weakness over to the spirit of God. Then a new vision can break through, a new sense of affirmation, self-esteem, compassion, and solidarity with others.

What enables this new vision, this new experience to happen? When a theologian appropriates in her own person the pain of human limitations with conscious and free consent and hands it over, in herself, to God's spirit in the contemplative process a new, deeper experience of integration can gradually take over. Then re-visioning of every single aspect of theology can slowly become her pervasive horizon,¹⁵ and practical actions and attitudes of mutuality can be her ordinary life-style.

These manifestations of the dark night of religious transformation indicate that women's theological reflection has unique potential for contemplative theology. How shall we support it and benefit from the fruits of this contemplation?

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SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Twelve groups returned notes on their discussions. I shall condense their data and then summarize the main import (topics with implications for future research) the data seem to carry:

1) No work is better than premature work. Hiring women theologians is not just a matter of justice but also a matter of achieving a fuller theology. How can we get at least two women on every seminary faculty?

¹² Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn, "Self-Transcendence in Christian Life," *Human Development* (Fall 1982), 25-28.

¹³ For example, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*.

¹⁴ John of the Cross, *Ascent*, II, 13, 4; *Dark Night*, I, 9, 3.

¹⁵ For development of the issue see Joann Wolski Conn, "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction," *Cross Currents* (Fall 1980), 293-308.

2) Is the scholarship on women's roles in the Old and New Testaments adequate? Have we sufficiently studied the hermeneutics (regarding women) applied to the biblical data through the centuries? What are the feminist Christological implications of the New Adam theme? How can theologians address the real injustices against both men and women in the church today? What is the connection between women's liberation theology and the other liberation theologies? We need more scientific information to back our statements about maleness and femaleness.

3) How can exclusion generate contemplation? How does the "other voice" now influencing the CTSA relate to theology's sources? Why are women more likely to be asked about sexuality and the family than men? We should review the question of women's roles in theology regularly or ongoingly.

4) How might the feminine perspective transform our understanding of the human person, community, God, and thus the whole theological enterprise?

5) Are feminists saying both that there are no differences between the sexes and that there are real differences? Isn't the identification of rationality with men and intuition with women an historical oversimplification?

6) The outsider's critique has a special importance. The gap between theology and the arts, and the lack of appreciation for theological teaching, seem related to women's marginality. What do we mean by a "body theology?" What role would casuistry play in a developmental theology? Would a feminist perspective avoid or neglect casuistry?

7) Candidates for episcopal appointment now must respond to the question of women's ordination. This should be removed as a test of orthodoxy.

8) Feminist theology depends upon the relation of theology and society. How can the CTSA include growth and education in the theology it sponsors? How can we foster a more inclusive liturgical theology and practice? Can we study women's issues along cross-cultural lines? How can we help empower women's ministries?

9) Women bring to theology a different or "outside" lived experience. Women's marginalization means that their theologies will be a species of liberation theology.

10) There should be a continued expression of concern by the CTSA about movements within the Roman Catholic educational community that restrict or prohibit the roles of women theologians, especially in seminaries.

11) Women tend to promote collaboration as a theological method. The CTSA should solicit women's views and give them a full hearing. We should ask ourselves how much our academic standards and structures have been infected with male bias.

12) In some seminaries today women want to be evaluated on their

thought, men on their piety—a reversal of stereotypes. The false model of theology that excludes affectivity and religious living seems parallel to the false model of physics that excludes creativity and excitement. Greater attention to the “feminine” side of both disciplines would produce more adequate models.

If we step back from the groups' data and ask what implications they hold for future work, generalizations like the following emerge. a) The CTSA membership rather generally appreciates the past marginalization of women and the future dividends that a fuller incorporation of women into the theological enterprise would pay. Thus efforts to solicit women's views, invite women's collaboration, and support women's theological work ought to continue, even grow. b) The membership is leery of sexual stereotypes and any simplistic assignment of intellectual or emotional characteristics, but it tends to agree that women usually stress collaboration, wholeness, affectivity, and personalism. Insofar as these stresses suggest therapies for present-day theology, their support or encouragement would advance the adequacy of both our academic discipline and our ecclesiastical contribution. c) Feminist insights bear on all the central theological topics—God, Jesus, church, piety—so women's theological work is relevant to all areas of theology. d) The outsider status that women have suffered suggests that much of their theological work is for some time likely to be critical or liberationist. e) While all areas need more research regarding women, the Society should move now to support women's full equality in both theological work and church life.

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