



Women and the Church  
Affirming ♦ Campaigning ♦ Transforming

# FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Introductory  
Reading List

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## Introductory Reading List

Over the past four decades, there has been an explosion in literature exploring the interface between theology, gender, faith and culture. Feminist theory and theologies have expanded exponentially from the 1960s onwards and are now joined by gender theory and theologies, and a growing literature on masculinities. There are now specialist journals as well as thousands of books and websites, blogs and on-line resources. Material exists at every level from highly technical and academic to more popular and journalistic.

The aim of this short, introductory reading list is to suggest a range of recent, reliable, accessible and affordable texts and online resources that provide starting points for exploration and lead the reader on to other material.

## Introduction to Feminist Theology

There are a number of introductory texts aimed at students and those coming new to the field. These two, published in the same year, offer overviews of some of the key developments in Christian feminist theology in the modern period.

**Nicola Slee**, *Faith and Feminism: An Introduction to Christian Feminist Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003)

**Natalie K Watson**, *Feminist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003)

**Susan Frank Parsons (ed.)** *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) – a useful compendium of essays by leading theologians exploring feminist theology from a range of theoretical and thematic perspectives.

Several readers gather together classic and contemporary texts giving a flavour of the range of contexts and issues in feminist theology:

**Mary E Hunt & Diann L Neu (eds.)**, *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views* (Woodstock: Skylight, 2010)

**Janet Martin Soskice & Diana Lipton (eds.)** *Feminism and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

## Gender theory and theology

**Raewyn Connell**, *Gender: A short introduction* (London: Polity, 2002) – a readable overview of gender theory and research

**Raewyn Connell**, *Masculinities* (London: Polity, 2005) – similar to the above, but focusing specifically on masculinity studies and politics

**Elaine L Graham**, *Making the difference: gender, personhood and theology* (London: Mowbray, 1995)

**Elaine L Graham** *Words Made Flesh: Writings in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2009), especially part 2 – one of Britain's leading practical theologians writes incisively and insightfully about gender theory, offering useful starting points

**Fran Porter**, *Women and Men After Christendom: The disordering of gender relations* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015) – a careful historical and theological analysis of how Christendom was founded on imperialism and patriarchy and a proposal for alternative understandings of gender in a

post-Christendom era. This is also a good, basic introduction to issues of gender in Christianity.

**Adrian Thatcher**, *God, Sex and Gender: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) – highly readable and well-researched, Thatcher discusses both gender and sexuality in theological perspective.

## Religious language and models of God

**Jennie S Knight**, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (St Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 2011) – argues that it is not enough to change our thinking about God; prayer and spirituality as the sources of theology must be transformed. A wide-ranging discussion illustrated with case studies.

**Gail Ramshaw**, *God Beyond Gender: Feminist Christian God-Language* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) – a highly accessible and readable introduction to some of the key issues

**Brian Wren**, *What Language Shall I Borrow?* (London: SCM, 1989) – although this is now rather old, and some readers may find the approach via the notion of a visitor from outer space a bit quirky, it still makes for a thoughtful and creative study of religious language, particularly though not exclusively, in hymnody.

**Elizabeth Johnson**, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) – a comprehensive systematic theology that starts with the Spirit and the lived experience of God, exploring each person of the Trinity from the lens of Sophia. A big read, but Johnson is always clear and accessible, explaining carefully terminology and technical arguments.

## The Bible and gender, feminist biblical hermeneutics

This is now a vast discipline; as a starting point, there are three one-volume commentaries on the Bible that every preacher should have on their shelves and that represent very good value for money:

**Catherine Clark Kroeger & Mary J Evans (eds.)** *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2002)

**Carol A Newsome, Sharon H Ringe & Jacqueline E Lapsley (eds.)** *The Women's Bible Commentary* (4th edition, London: SPCK, 2014)

**Luise Schottroff & Marie-Theres Wacker (eds.)**, *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012)

It is more difficult to recommend a short, accessible guide to feminist biblical hermeneutics (obviously a job waiting to be done!), but one of the following may be helpful:

**Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984)

**Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) – although not a wholly easy read, Fiorenza is one of the leading feminist biblical scholars of our era, and offers an authoritative guide.

**Sarah Heaner Lancaster**, *Women and the Authority of Scripture: A Narrative Approach* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002)

## Women in Christian tradition

**Barbara J McHaffie**, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Augsberg, rev. edition, 2006) – an accessible romp through church history, highlighting the many roles and gifts of women.

**Barbara J McHaffie**, *Readings in Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) – an anthology of primary texts from women throughout Christian tradition.

**Rebecca Moore**, *Women in Christian Traditions* (New York: New York University Press, 2015)

## Sin, salvation and atonement

This is an area in which there has been a great deal of critique and debate. Any of the following make for useful starting points – perhaps Barbara Reid's book is the most systematic in terms of working through a range of understandings of the cross.

**Rita Natashima Brock**, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) – this award-winning book offers a relational reading of atonement, including a fascinating reading of Mark's presentation of Jesus.

**Colleen Carpenter Cullinan**, *Redeeming the Story: Women, Suffering and Christ* (New York: Continuum, 2004) – a creative approach to understandings of redemption through analysis of fiction.

**Mary Grey**, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989) – this classic study offers another relational approach to redemption, drawing particularly on the theology of Carter Heyward and the poetry of Adrienne Rich.

**Barbara E Reid**, *Taking Up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations Through Latina and Feminist Eyes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007): a helpful consideration of different metaphors of atonement, beginning with biblical ones and moving onto others.

## Ecclesiology and ministry

Clare Amos, Rosalind Brown & Martyn Percy (eds.), *Apostolic Women, Apostolic Authority: Transfiguring Leadership in Today's Church* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010) – a wide-ranging collection of essays addressing scriptural, historical and contemporary aspects of women's leadership in the church.

**Ali Green**, *A Theology of Women's Priesthood* (London: SPCK, 2009) – Green argues for the profound significance of women's priesthood and its capacity to subvert the patriarchal symbolic order.

**Ali Green**, *A Priesthood of Both Sexes* (London: SPCK, 2011) - Green's second book is a more practical work, exploring how male and female clergy can work together to model a whole priesthood, with examples of good (and bad!) practice.

**Emma Percy**, *Mothering as a Metaphor for Ministry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) – based on her phd thesis, Percy explores the metaphor of mothering from a range of theoretical perspectives as a helpful model for ministry.

**Emma Percy**, *What Clergy Do – Especially When it Looks Like Nothing* (London: SPCK, 2014) – a more popular (and affordable!) version of Percy's phd thesis, exploring the nature of parish ministry and offering insights from feminist theory (as well as her own experience and a wide range of literature).

**Rosemary Radford Ruether**, *Womenchurch: Theology and Practice* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985) – although this is several decades old now,

it is still a defining text that outlines a radical feminist vision of church and provided some of the earliest feminist liturgies. They still pack a punch.

**Nicola Slee & Stephen Burns (eds.)** *Presiding Like a Woman* (London: SPCK, 2010) – a wide-ranging collection of essays and reflections on what it means to 'preside' as a woman, not only in the liturgical sphere and not only as ordained women (and men), but in a range of contexts and from a range of perspectives.

**Natalie Watson**, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiologies* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) – an excellent introduction to some of the key debates and issues in feminist approaches to the church.

**Janet Wootton (ed)** *This is Our Story: Free Church Women's Ministry* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007) – a series of personal testimonies and reflections from the free churches, useful to set a wider context for Anglican struggles.

## Feminist liturgy

**Jan Berry**, *Ritual Making Women: Shaping Rites for Changing Lives* (London: Equinox, 2009) – based on her doctoral thesis, a fascinating study of women who have designed their own rituals for significant times in their lives.

**Stephen Burns**, *Liturgy: SCM Study Guide* (London: SCM, 2006) – one of the best introductions to key developments and principles in liturgical studies which includes a strong commitment to feminist liturgy as well as other perspectives often ignored in scholarly study of liturgy.

**Dorothea McEwan, Pat Pinsent, Ianthe Pratt & Veronica Seddon (eds.)** *Making Liturgy: Creating Rituals for Worship and Life* (Canterbury Press, 2001) – a very practical 'how to' guide from a group of Roman Catholic lay women.

**Marjorie Proctor-Smith**, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990)

**Marjorie Proctor-Smith (1995)** *Praying with Our Eyes Open: Engendering Feminist Liturgical Prayer* (Nashville: Abingdon) – Proctor-Smith is one of the leading US feminist liturgists, along with Teresa Berger, and these two texts examine some of the key principles undergirding feminist liturgy.

**St Hilda Community**, *Women Included: A Book of Services and Prayers* (London: SPCK, 1990 & 1997) – an important document from the UK scene, charting the emergence and ecclesiology of the St Hilda community and offering liturgical resources from the community.

**Gail Ramshaw**, *Liturgical Language: Keeping it Metaphorical, Keeping it Inclusive* (Liturgical Press, 1996)

**Janet R Walton**, *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice* (Liturgical Press, 2000) – more of a pamphlet than a book, offering a helpful overview of key issues both theological and practical.

**Susan J White (2003)** *A History of Women in Christian Worship* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press) – a fascinating historical exploration of women's participation in worship, in the home as well as in the assembly, and through many neglected 'liturgical arts' such as singing, teaching, textile creation and adorning the building.

**Janet H. Wootton**, *Introducing a Practical Feminist Theology of Worship* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) – offers a broad, ecumenical perspective on women's contributions to worship, highlighting in particular women from the free church traditions.

## Feminist preaching

**Susan Durber**, *Preaching Like a Woman* (London: SPCK, 2007) – largely a collection of Durber's excellent sermons, but the introduction and concluding chapter provide useful discussions of how to preach and prepare for preaching in a way that takes women's experiences seriously.

**Cleophus James LaRue**, *This is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry* (Westminster John Knox, 2005)

**Lee McGee**, *Wrestling with the Patriarchs: Retrieving Women's Voices in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996)

**Carole M. Norén**, *The Woman in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992)

**Christine M. Smith**, *Weaving the Sermon: Preaching in a Feminist Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989)

**Heather Walton & Susan Durber (eds.)**, *Silence in Heaven: A Book of Women's Preaching* (London: SCM, 1994)

## Feminist spirituality and prayer

**M.P. Aquino & E Schüssler Fiorenza (eds.)** *In The Power of Wisdom: Feminist Spiritualities of Struggle* (London: SCM, 2000)

**Lavinia Byrne (ed.)**, *The Hidden Tradition: Women's spiritual writings rediscovered* (London: SPCK, 1991) – a useful anthology of short extracts by women of faith across the centuries.

**Joan Chittister**, *Heart of Flesh: Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) – a wise and insightful exploration of a feminist spirituality that is relevant and apposite for both women and men, although in different ways.

**Kathleen Fischer**, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction* (London: SPCK, 1989)

**Jennie S Knight**, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (St Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 2011)

**Nicola Slee**, *Praying Like a Woman* (London: SPCK, 2004)

**Katherine Zappone**, *The Hope for Wholeness: A Spirituality for Feminists* (Mystic, Conn: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991)

## Masculinities and male spirituality

**Philip L Culbertson (ed.)** *The Spirituality of Men: Sixteen Christians Write About their Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002)

**Matthew Fox**, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*. (Novato: New World Library, 2008)

**Joseph Gelfer**, *Numen, Old Men: Contemporary Masculine Spiritualities and the Problem of Patriarchy* (Equinox, 2009)

**Nick Harding**, *Boys, God and the Church: How Churches Can Help Boys Grow in Faith and Why They Do Not!* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2007)

**Bjorn Krondorfer (ed.)** *Men and Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader*. (London: SCM Press, 2009) – this is a massive reader bringing together many key texts on every aspect of masculinity studies.

**Roy McCloughry**, *Men and Masculinity: From Power to Love* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992)



**James Nelson**, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1992)

**Mark Pryce**, *Finding a Voice: Men, Women and the Community of the Church*. (London: SCM, 1996) – although a little old now, this is one of the best introductions to masculinity studies and their implications for faith, beautifully written and earthed in case studies.

**Richard Rohr**, *Adam's Return*. (New York: Crossroads, 2004)

**James and Evelyn Whitehead**, 'Re-Imagining the Masculine', *The Way* 32 (2), pp.113-122.

## Journals

*Feminist Theology* (published and edited in the UK) and the *Journal for the Study of Women and Religion* (US) are two key journals, but relevant articles on feminist and related perspectives appear in many other journals.

There is research into men and masculinities in many disciplines; the most relevant journal for a theological approach is: *The Journal of men, masculinities and spirituality*: [www.jmmsweb.org](http://www.jmmsweb.org)

## Websites

There are many relevant websites, many of them from north America but others too. See for example

<http://voicesofsophia.wordpress.com/>

<http://feministtheology.blogspot.com/>

<http://feminismandreligion.com/>

<http://www.waterwomensalliance.org> - Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, a network co-founded and run by Mary E Hunt and Diann L Neu, feminist liberation theologians.

<http://www.women-churchconvergence.org/home> - a coalition of Catholic feminist movements and groups

<http://www.womensordination.org> - working for women's ordination in the Roman Catholic church

[http://ustpaul.ca/en/centre-for-women-and-christian-traditions-home\\_362\\_122.htm](http://ustpaul.ca/en/centre-for-women-and-christian-traditions-home_362_122.htm)

There is a range of websites connected to organisations working with men and masculinities from a Christian perspective, e.g.

<http://www.cvmen.org.uk/>

[www.promisekeepers.org](http://www.promisekeepers.org)

More broadly, there are many campaigning websites addressing issues of gender (especially sexual and other kinds of violence against women) which don't have a specifically Christian/religious remit, but could be useful to Christians and also benefit from contributions by Christians (and others of religious faith). For example

<http://everydaysexism.com> - a website cataloguing instances of sexism experienced by women on an everyday basis.

Counting Dead Women at <http://kareningalasmith.com/counting-dead-women/> does what it says on the lid: a catalogue of women who have died through domestic and sexual violence

<http://www.reclaimthenight.co.uk> - a website supporting the London-based annual Reclaim the Night march

<http://www.millionwomenrise.com> - campaigning to end male violence

<http://www.millionwomenrise.com> - campaign to get sexual consent taught in schools



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Nicola Slee, July 2015