FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Introductory Reading List
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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 online 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.

Feminist Theory and Theology


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.


**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.


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)


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 Schüessler 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.


**Women in Christian tradition**


**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.


Ecclesiology and ministry


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.


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.


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


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.


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) – Procter-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)


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)


Feminist spirituality and prayer


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.


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)


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)


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.

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

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

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

Websites

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

http://voicesofsoaphia.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
