How to speak rightly about God? This is the task that theology sets for itself. The task embodies as well the desire to act rightly in light of what we say about God. Indeed, we can only know the truth about ourselves and our lives together when we know the truth about God. In the past twenty years, feminist theologians have been probing deeply into the mystery of God in their work of examination and reconstruction of traditional theology. Prominent theologian David Tracy recently said that the result of feminists’ encounter with religion would be “the next intellectual revolution.”

The purpose of this and a subsequent article is to probe this “next intellectual revolution,” to set out on a journey — a journey into a new theology. In this first article, Part I. Introduction to Feminist Theology, we will address the question “What is Feminist Theology?” A subsequent article, Part II. Discourse about God, will discuss Feminist Theology’s contribution to the task of speaking rightly about God.

2. These two articles come from lectures that were presented at Loyola House of Studies in Manila during the summer of 1993. I would like to express my gratitude to Fr. William Abbott, S.J., and Fr. Philip Calderone, S.J., for encouraging me to submit the works for publication. I would like to thank Fr. Gerdenio Manuel, S.J., and the California Province of the Society of Jesus for sending me to the Philippines and giving me the opportunity to present these ideas. Finally, I am in debt to my colleague Dr. Diane Jonte-Pace for both sharing with me her work in the area of feminist theology, and for giving valuable advice on this article.
What follows in these articles is an attempt to let feminist theologians speak for themselves. Thus, most of what is written of what follows is taken directly from their work. Furthermore, almost all of the theologians cited are North American. A great deal has been going on in feminism and in feminist theology in the Philippines. There is the work of Sr. Mary John Mananzan and Sr. Virginia Fabella and others; there are the feminist organizations Pilipina and Gabriela. But this article will be about what is going on in North America and will not venture far from there. We will draw from the work of theologians Elizabeth Johnson, Sandra Schneiders, Anne Carr, and others whose work has more directly addressed our theme.

PART I. INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEOLOGY

What is Feminist Theology? Following feminist theologian Sandra Schneiders, let us first map the linguistic terrain, that is, explain the basic vocabulary of feminist theology. This will give us some understanding of the feminist theological enterprise. And since feminist theology grew out of a larger women’s movement, it would be good to situate it in that movement by defining three terms: the Women’s Movement, Women’s Emancipation, and Women’s Liberation.

1. The Women’s Movement. The term “Women’s Movement” refers to a large number of movements in history that are best described by a realization — by the realization that throughout history, women have been disadvantaged in relation to men — in family, culture, before the law, and even in religious arenas. Women in this movement perceived that there were structures and systems in society that oppressed them. The women’s movement, then, begins with the realization of oppression. But it then moves on to a commitment to change society, toward justice and equality for women.

These movements began in Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth

3. This material has been taken almost verbatim from Sandra Schneiders, Beyond Patching (New York: Paulist, 1991) 6-9.
centuries. Gradually the women’s movement realized that the oppression they opposed was not merely a particular grievance that needed to be corrected, a one-time particular oppression or societal evil, but that it was systemic and structural in character. And so the movement advanced to what is now called “feminist consciousness” — that is, the realization that the oppression that women experienced was due to unjust structures and systems. Consequently, the commitment to change became a commitment to the structural transformation of society.

2. Women’s Emancipation. The term “Women’s Emancipation” refers to the movement for women’s political and legal equality that began in the first decade of the twentieth century. The so-called “first wave” of the women’s emancipation movement was the movement for women’s suffrage, the right for women to vote. In the United States, this first wave culminated in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution, which gave women the vote.

The “second wave” of the process of women’s emancipation began in the 1960’s and is still going on today. It was energized by the civil-rights movement and the anti-war effort to seek ratification for the Equal Rights Amendment. The Women’s Emancipation Movement, then, deals with women’s legal and political rights.

3. Women’s Liberation. The third term is much broader, and is a form of the women’s movement that developed in the 1960s in the US. This is the movement that was derisively called the “women’s lib” movement. The women’s liberation movement differed from what went before in that it sought not merely liberation from marginalization, but freedom for self-definition and self-affirmation. In other words, it sought the effective recognition of the full humanity of women as persons.

Consequently, the women’s liberation movement went beyond the desire to change structures to the desire to transform the way people think about women — a re-imaging of what it is to be a woman. Feminist Theology grew out of the women’s liberation movement, and began as a liberation movement. But it seems to be developing into something even broader — a movement for redoing theology — re-constructing discourse about God.
FEMINIST THEOLOGY

This brings us to Feminist Theology itself and its discourse about God. At the start it is important not to give the impression that there is only one feminist theology, because that is not true. There are many. But feminist theologians do agree on a good number of things. Let us look first at areas of agreement, then move to some areas of disagreement. This will give us some idea of the depth and breadth of the movement. First of all, women doing feminist theology share one major project: all are engaged in a critique and an effort at re-construction of the tradition. Their speech about God aims at resistance and at transformation. Like the larger women’s movement out of which it grows, it begins with the experience of being marginalized — the experience of being systematically devalued as human beings. First let us sketch the critique. We begin again by defining terms.

Feminist theology sees society and the Church as pervaded by sexism with its twin faces of patriarchy and androcentrism. These have conspired to harm women socially, psychologically and religiously. Let us look at each of these in turn — sexism, patriarchy, androcentrism, and the harm that these social sins have done to women.

Sexism is the belief, as Mary Farley writes, “that persons are superior or inferior to one another on the basis of their sex. It includes attitudes, values, and social patterns which express or support this belief.” Historically sexism has maintained that males are inherently superior to females by nature — by the order of things, and has acted in discriminatory ways to enforce this order.

Patriarchy has to do with power. This is the name given to sexist social structures and is simply a form of social organization where power is in the hand of the dominant male or men, with others ranked below. Aristotle called this the natural rule of men.
over women. *Religious Patriarchy* is one of the strongest forms of this structure because it believes itself to be divinely established. Consequently, the power of ruling men is said to be delegated by God (and God is invariably spoken of in male terms), and thus this power to rule is exercised by divine mandate.

Traditional theology is patriarchal. That is, for most of its history, theology has both assumed male power and dominance and has been ruled by men. Men have been the arbiters of theological thought.

*Androcentrism* is the name commonly given to the personal pattern of thinking and acting that takes the characteristics of the ruling men to be normative for humanity. The adult ruling man is the paradigm for the humanity of all others. Women and children and those men who do not fit this standard are considered secondarily human — not fully human, or at least not human to the highest degree. The androcentric world view affirms the ruling male as normal and normative. Feminist theologians point to a *Religious Androcentrism*. In their view, traditional theology has been formulated, despite claims to universality, as though maleness were the normative form of humanity. And thus, theology has been primarily about men. When theology has been about women, it is usually about them in negative ways. Conversely, traditional theology has ignored or caricatured women and women’s experience. Women were not seen as subjects of theological anthropology. In theology, androcentrism ensures that ruling men will be the norm for language not only about human nature, but also about God, sin, redemption, and about the Church and its mission. Thus, feminist theology sees traditional theology as androcentric — written by men, for men, from a man’s point of view, and about men. Men have been the norm.

Let us give an example. One of the most influential androcentric syntheses in Catholic Theology is that of Thomas Aquinas. What lies at the heart of Aquinas’ estimation of women is illustrated by his understanding of how a female child comes to be conceived. Thomas writes:

Only as regards nature in the individual is the female something
defective and misbegotten. For the active power in the seed of the male tends to produce something like itself, perfect in masculinity; but the procreation of a female is the result either of the debility of the active power, of some unsuitability of the material, or of some change effected by external influences, like the south wind, for example, which is damp, as we are told by Aristotle.6

Following Aristotle, Aquinas accepts the male as the pinnacle of creation, and argues that females are produced only when something goes wrong — like the weather being too hot or humid. Of course Aquinas holds that women are created for a definite purpose — namely for reproduction — the only thing, he says, that the male cannot do better without her help. But he also sees this unfortunate situation as another case where God can marvelously work to bring good out of evil!

Patriarchal assumptions are also evident in Aquinas. He holds that because of woman’s defective physical state, her soul, her mind, and her will are also weak. So he concludes that she needs to be governed by others wiser than herself — namely men. As he writes “by such subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.”7 And it does not stop here! From what he sees as woman’s natural inferiority in the order of creation, Aquinas reasons that children should love their fathers more than their mothers, since the father is more eminent; women should not be ordained priests, since priesthood signifies the eminence of Christ and women do not signify what pertains to eminence; women should not preach since this requires wisdom and authority of which they are not capable — and so on.8 For Aquinas then, the subordination of woman to man is the God-given order of the world: patriarchy is divinely mandated.

The effective history of Aquinas’ theology in the Catholic Church illustrates how powerfully androcentric thought is used to give legitimacy to patriarchy. What androcentrism does is to construct an intellectual model in language, mindset, attitude,

7. ST I, q. 92, a. 2, ad. 2. Cited in ibid. 25.
8. It is also well-known, and shameful, that Aquinas held that masturbation is a greater sin than rape.
imagination and value in such a way as to marginalize women and to justify excluding them from full and equal participation.

Aquinas is but one example, and it is not ancient history. The full litany is long and painful. Throughout most of history, women have been denied political, economic, legal and educational rights, and in no country in the world are these yet equal in practice.

Feminists agree that sexism, patriarchy, and androcentrism have worked to the great harm of women. And there is concrete evidence of that everywhere in the world. According to United Nations' statistics, women form more than one half of the world's population. Yet they work two-thirds of the world's working hours; they own one tenth of the world’s wealth and one hundredth of the world’s land. They form two-third's of the world’s illiterate people. Over three-fourths of the starving people in the world are women and their dependant children. To make an already dark picture even worse, women are bodily and sexually exploited, physically abused, raped, battered and murdered. It is an indisputable fact that men do this to women in a way that women do not do it to men. And in situations where people suffer from poverty and racism, sexism makes women the underclass of the underclass — they become subordinate to men who are themselves already oppressed. Sexism is rampant in the world.

In the Christian Community, feminist theologians argue that sexism has harmed women in an analogous way. Again, for most of its history, women have been subordinated in theological theory and in Church practice. Until very recently they have been consistently defined as mentally, morally and physically inferior to men, created only partially in the image of God. They have even been considered a symbol of evil. Women's sexuality has been derided as unclean. On the other hand, they have been depersonalized as a romantic, unsexed ideal whose main fulfillment lies in motherhood. Women in the Catholic Church are, as we know, excluded from full participation in the sacramental system. As a girl questioned by the bishop during her confirmation answered, “There are six sacraments for girls; seven for boys!”

Not only have they been excluded from full-sacramental participation, women have also been excluded from ecclesial
centers of significant decision making, law making, and from official public leadership roles in both governance and in the liturgical assembly. Moreover, their femaleness is judged to be not suitable as a metaphor for speech about God. In a word, women occupy a marginal place in the official Church.

Most poignantly, feminists point out that women’s sense of themselves has suffered under sexism. They have been inculcated in a thousand subtle ways through familial socialization, education, the media and religious education and practice that women are not as capable as men — nor are they expected to be! They have internalized a sense of powerlessness — a sense of having a secondary status, and so go on to function in self-fulfilling prophecy, as if they are not as good as men.

Feminists note that this whole process is strongly aided by male-centered language. The problem is that language not only expresses the world, it helps to shape and create it. Learning a language where the female is subsumed grammatically under the male, as it is in most languages, gives the girl from the beginning the experience of a world where the male is the norm from which she herself deviates (of course, this is not the case in Filipino). As one feminist wrote, “Those of us who have grown up with a language that tells them they are at the same time men and not men are faced with ambivalence — not about their sex, but about their status as human beings.”9 In sexist civil and religious society the woman’s basic experience of uniqueness becomes an experience of otherness, of being alien and not fitting in, of being out of place and of little consequence.

In a vast amount of writings, then, feminist theologians have traced the history of how sexism, patriarchy and androcentrism have worked to the harm of women and to marginalize them in religion.

This then is part of the feminist critique of traditional theology. Critique is seen as the first task of feminist theology and it is still an ongoing process. Where does it go from here? What is

the next step? How do feminist theologians respond to the critique? Again they respond in different ways. But there is some agreement. Let us look at the agreement first. We will describe three areas of agreement: (1) the need for women’s participation in the theological enterprise; (2) agreement on the three part task of feminist theology; and (3) agreement on a common critical principle or touchstone for theological judgement.

In the first place, feminist theologians all agree that women must begin to be theologians. Women must write theology taking into account the history of women and women’s experience. Women must become equal partners in and shapers of the theological enterprise. Most also agree that they do not want to repeat what patriarchal theology has done by merely substituting a matriarchal theology for a patriarchal one. They are looking for a holistic theology — a new vision that is open to all of creation.

Secondly, feminist theologians generally agree on the three main tasks of feminist theology. Feminist theology engages in three interrelated tasks: critique or deconstruction, discovery, and reconstruction.

The first task is critique and deconstruction to unmask the hidden dynamic of male domination in tradition, language, history, sacred texts, ethics, symbols, and ritual. We have pointed to this above, and shortly we will see more of the critique which flows from the focus on women’s lived experience. Here feminist theologians have often asked the question: to whose advantage is this articulation or arrangement of reality? Most frequently in the past the arrangement has been more advantageous to men than to women.

The second task is discovery and involves searching for ignored, suppressed or alternative wisdom for bits and pieces that hint at the untold stories of the contributions of women to the Christian tradition. The hope here is to discover dormant theological themes and neglected history. They reflect for example on the creation of male and female in the divine image; how the sacrament of baptism recreates women and men in the image of Christ and initiates a new form of community; and they focus on the eschatological hope for a cosmos redeemed in all of its dimensions.
The third task is reconstruction, that is, finding new non-sexist ways to express the Christian faith. In light of its critique and glimpses of alternatives hidden in the tradition, feminist theology attempts a new articulation of the norms and methods of theology, and envisions Christian symbols and practice that would do justice to the full humanity of women as a key to the whole.

So feminist theologians generally agree on the need for women theologians, and they agree on the three tasks of deconstruction, discovery, and reconstruction.

Thirdly, they also agree that there is one touchstone or critical principle for testing the truth or falsity, the adequacy or inad- equacy, and the coherence or incoherence of theological state- ments. This criterion is variously stated. Most often it is simply called the criterion of women’s experience or the promotion of the full humanity of women. The criterion of women’s experience flows directly from the need for women theologians, and it forms a part of the first task of feminist theology, critique. The focus here is on what emancipates women — leads them toward human flourishing. The idea is this: if something consistently results in the denigration and subjugation of human beings, can this be religiously true? Clearly, as a neglected source of wisdom about the world, paying attention to the lived experience of women can generate insights much needed today. This principle is not new or unique to feminist theology. Classical theology’s principal doctrine of the human person as imago Dei, being made in the image of God, fallen and redeemed, also uses it. The difference here is that the principle is applied to women and to women’s experience by women themselves. Feminist theologians take the total personhood of women with utter seriousness. This focus has consequences in all areas of theology.

One example is Valerie Saiving’s classic article “The Human Situation: A Feminist View” where she shows how our constructions of sin and redemption are gender specific. In traditional theology, sin is seen as pride; and redemption is through self-sacrifice, self-forgetfulness. Saiving argues that this may be true for men, whose tendency is toward egoism and self-centeredness.

10. See Johnson, SHE WHO IS, 30 ff.
But this is not at all true for women — whose sin is being too self-sacrificing — too submissive — too diffuse.\textsuperscript{11}

Another example of the focus on women’s experience is how differently feminist theologians view the ideology of “complementarity.” Some Church documents and some male theologians speak of the experience and role and consequently the rights of women as “complementary” to those of men. This language usually focuses on the unique contribution of women to procreation, and characteristically leads to the romantic exaltation of womanhood in the “feminine mystique.” However, feminist theologians find this inadequate to women’s lived experience. Let us cite Sandra Schneiders on the issue of complementarity:

\ldots whatever may be said for complementarity as a theoretical position, it is politically non-viable. While it may be argued that women and men “complete” one another, at least in the area of reproduction, the term complete has never meant the same thing for women as for men. Women have been seen to complete men the way a second coat of paint completes a house, whereas men have been seen to complete women the way a motor completes a car. In other words, completion can be accidental or essential, and there is probably no way to rescue the category of complementarity from its historical bias toward seeing women as decorations or adjuncts to the essentially self-sufficient male considered as the normative human being.\textsuperscript{12}

Simply put, using the language of complementarity to speak about the difference between men and women is neither adequate nor acceptable for feminist theologians. The focus on women’s lived experience has led us back to critique — the critique of the language of complementarity.

Directly related to this critique and also flowing out of women’s lived experience is the critique of dualistic thinking. Here we come to a major contribution of feminist theological reflection. One of the clearest insights emerging to date is that women tend to experience themselves as a self in fundamental embodied

\textsuperscript{11} See ibid. 64 for an excellent analysis of this article.
\textsuperscript{12} Schneiders, Beyond Patching, 13.
connection with others.\textsuperscript{13} The young girl sees herself in direct relation to her mother. She matures and establishes her identity, not by becoming totally different from her mother, but by a dialectic of identification and differentiation, becoming distinct through interconnection. Thus, women experience relations with others as reciprocal or mutual. Mutuality is a form of relation marked by equivalence between persons. The boy, on the other hand, needs to differentiate himself from his mother by some measure of separation from or opposition to her, as being very other than her. This dualistic stance can lead to the ideal of the solitary self, the model of self-identity that defines power in adversarial relations over against others. Recognizing these facts has far-reaching implications for the theological enterprise.

Traditional theology, as a male preserve, has largely assumed that the self is best defined over against the other, and thus has led to hierarchical dualistic thinking. Working from the criterion of women's experience, feminist theology deconstructs this hierarchical dualism. The deconstruction began at Yale in 1970, when Professor Rosemary Ruether outlined the important theory that sexism is rooted in the dualistic world view, whereby woman and man, nature and culture, body and spirit, Goddess and God are split off from each other and ordered hierarchically. According to Ruether, a patriarchal dualistic way of thinking emerged where women were identified with nature, body, and the material realm, all of which were considered distinctly inferior to the male which was linked with culture, the mind, and the spirit. This dualism of thinking led to a language of female subordination that was eventually applied to other groups — such as the carnal Jew and the sexual Negro, and was used to justify exploitation and domination of the despised group.\textsuperscript{14} It has also led to conceiving God on the model of the male self as standing over


against others. Consequently, the being of God stands over against the world, solitary, superior, untouched by contingency and its pain, and able to best all comers. Feminist theology, working from women’s experience of mutuality, sees relation at the heart of the universe and God as freely drawing near and being connected in mutual relation.\(^\text{15}\)

Feminist theologians agree in their critique of dualistic patriarchal arrangement of reality that perceives everything in terms of higher-lower, good-evil, male-female. The theological implications of this important principle will be discussed further in the second article.

We have seen that feminist theologians agree on the need for feminist theologians, they agree on the three-part task of feminist theology, and they agree on the criterion of women’s experience. But it would be a mistake to think that feminist theologians are in agreement on all aspects of critique, discovery, and reconstruction. There has been much productive debate and discussion on almost every theological topic. Let us turn to one area where they disagree with each other: in biblical interpretation.

There is marked disagreement among feminist theologians on the re-examination and re-interpretation of the Bible. But they can be roughly divided into three different groups: (1) Traditionalist or Mainstream Christian Feminists; (2) Liberal or Reformist Christian Feminists; and (3) Radical Feminist Theologians.\(^\text{16}\) We should note that these categories serve as an heuristic model, and are not hard and fast. The three categories are used here to describe how particular feminist theologians stand regarding the mainstream of the theological tradition. They might stand in a different group if we were to consider their view of theological discourse, or the social structure of the Church, or any number of other issues. Indeed feminist theologians themselves might not choose to belong to a particular group. But the groupings themselves do help to show the spectrum of feminist

\(^{15}\) For the most part, this material has been taken from Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 25-28.

\(^{16}\) I am in debt to my colleague Dr. Diane Jonte-Pace for this breakdown. I have expanded and modified it somewhat.
positions on interpretation of the Bible. 17

1. **Traditionalist or Mainstream Christian Feminists.** Those who share this view hold that the Christian faith is a non-sexist vision that becomes clear through proper interpretation. What these feminists reject is traditional, patriarchal and androcentric sexist exegesis of the Bible. The Bible itself functions to liberate, not to enslave. What is needed is a critical feminist interpretation of the Bible.

Rosemary Ruether, Anne Carr, Elizabeth Johnson, Letty M. Russell, Phyllis Trible, and Pamela Dickey Young, can be listed in this group. These theologians do not want to abandon the tradition. They realize that we must situate ourselves in our history. But they do not want to romanticize the tradition as if it could be taken on approvingly as it is. What feminist theology does is to correct the androcentrism of Scripture. As Rosemary Ruether writes:

> I identify myself as a Christian in terms of what I would call the "prophetic-messianic core" of biblical faith. This I see as the norm for judging both Scripture and tradition. 18

In other words, to the extent that the Bible reflects this prophetic, liberating message, it can be seen to be authoritative for feminist theology because this message can be used to promote the full humanity of women. The prophetic-liberating tradition in the Bible takes the side of those who are disadvantaged or oppressed. 19

These theologians note that the Jesus movement was egalitarian and liberationist. Rosemary Radford Ruether points out that the Jesus story of the gospels is radically free of sexism. An early article titled "Jesus was a feminist" stresses Jesus' constant

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critique of the social stereotypes of the time that said women and men must be divided into strictly segregated gender groups.20 Jesus also was a critic of the view that valued women primarily for giving birth. Jesus, for example, rejected the statement "blessed be the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you." Hearing and doing the Word of God is the measure of a person and not anything else.

2. Liberal or Reformist Christian Feminist. Feminist theologians who can be grouped under this category affirm that Christianity itself has both sexist and non-sexist elements. The non-sexist material is the core of "true Christianity," while the sexist material was later patriarchal addition. From them, the non-sexist must be discovered and affirmed, and the sexist must be repudiated.

For example the New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza maintains that only those parts of scripture that are free of sexism can be considered authentic revelation. For her, the core of Christianity must be reclaimed by using a new magisterium called "woman-church." That is, the "movement of self-identified women and women-identified men in biblical religion."21 This group functions as the magisterium for feminist theology by judging theological claims according to whether or not they oppress women. Schüssler Fiorenza writes:

The locus of divine revelation and grace is therefore not the Bible or the tradition of a patriarchal church but the ekklesia of women and the lives of women who live the 'option for our women selves'.22

While Schüssler Fiorenza does not want to abandon the biblical witness completely, it is considerably relativized in her theology. Other Liberal or Reformist Feminist Theologians are Sheila Collins, Sharon Ringe, and Delores S. Williams.

3. **Radical Feminist Theology.** We say very little about this group since when we arrived here, we have left the Christian tradition behind. For lack of a better term, these are called the Radical Feminist Theologians.23 Many of these theologians or rather we should say, *theologians,* see no hope for Christianity. It is irredeemably misogynist. For them, we must move beyond Christianity and create new religious traditions, or even return to old pre-Christian traditions of goddess worship. They say we need a new religion that will affirm women's experience. This is neo-paganism. Carol Christ, Merlin Stone, and Christine Downing are in this group. The most famous radical feminist "theologian" is, of course, Mary Daly, who was also the first Catholic feminist theologian.24 She has since left Christianity.

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**

No introduction to feminist theology would be sufficient without mentioning a relatively new and vibrant group of feminist theologians. These are the voices of non-white women, called in the United States, women of color. Many women of color point out that feminist theology has largely been a white woman's movement. Women who do not consider themselves white call for the need to listen particularly to the experiences of women of color.25 In the context of the United States, these are especially the voices of the African-American, the Hispanic-American, and the Asian-Americans. The result of this call has been profound. There is now enormous interest in the United States in feminist theology informed by ethnicity. The *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* recently devoted an entire issue to this topic, and the new journal on Hispanic-American Studies devotes most of

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23. We must note that Sandra Schneiders calls herself a radical feminist theologian. She uses the term to describe those who hold that patriarchy is the "basic dominative social system which is the ground and paradigm for all forms of social domination." See Schneiders, *Beyond Patching,* 22. One could be a radical feminist theologian in this sense and a more mainstream feminist theologian in the sense used in this article.

24. Mary Daly objects to the subtle androcentrism in the term "theologian."

25. This and the following is adapted from the work of my colleague, Dr. Diane Jonte-Pace.
its first issue to feminist theology. Let us briefly sketch the main outlines and areas of these feminist theologians.

First of all, African-American feminist theologians speak of Womanist Theology, which claims roots in black history and culture. The term “Womanist” comes from a black expression made famous by novelist Alice Walker — “you actin’ womanish” — which according to Walker means, “wanting to know more and in greater depth than is good for one,” “outrageous, audacious, courageous.” It means “responsible, in-charge seriousness.” Womanist Theology puts emphasis on liturgy, mothering and nurturing, and black women’s literary tradition. Delores S. Williams and Katie Geneva Cannon are prominent womanist theologians.

Secondly, Hispanic Women have begun mujerista theology. The concern of mujerista theology is not with orthodoxy or right belief, but with orthopraxis — concrete right behavior and action in the struggle for survival and liberation. Unlike white feminist theologians, they are not concerned with patriarchy and androcentrism. They emphasize rather their own culture’s experience of family and community, and their deep sense of existential interconnection between themselves and the divine that motivates their struggle. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango are in this group.

Finally, Asian-American women have begun to contribute to the dialogue. For Asian women, theology is not just talking or thinking about God; it is living the liberation and wholeness here and now. According to Elizabeth Tapia, a Filipina, “Human liberation, not God talk, is the primary focus of theology.” Thus, Asian women too emphasize theology in action. They also stress inculturation of faith expressions in the different Asian experiences. Chung Hyun Kyong, Kwak Pui-lan, and Rita Nakashima Brock are in this group.

28. Chung Hyun Kyong, Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introduction to Asian Women’s Theology (New York: Orbis, 1990) 100.
The voices of women of color have been joined with the voices of white women to give new perspectives on the human experience and on theological discourse. The dialogue has been productive and fruitful and contributed to a deepening of feminist theology.

CONCLUSION

We have set out on a journey — the intellectual journey into a new theology. We have tried to present an introduction to feminist theology — how it grows out of an experience of oppression and a realization that oppression comes from unjust structures and systems and especially ways of thinking that have consequences not just for women, but for the truth about God.

How to rightly speak about God? Feminist Theology, the “new intellectual revolution,” helps us to find clearer, more inclusive and holistic ways of understanding the mystery of God. What this article has tried to do is to introduce the question. A subsequent article will ponder some of the answers.