

## Editorial

by Dianne Bergant

Recently, the entertainment industry became the arena for publicizing the movement known as “#MeToo,” which spotlights sexual harassment of various forms and advocates gender equality. This is a very complicated issue, because it includes various forms and levels of disdain for women. In many cases there is a very thin line between flirting, harassment, and just plain adolescent behavior. However, at this point in history, the woman or man to whom the behavior is directed is the one who identifies the character of the behavior. In all cases there is a lack of respect for the fundamental dignity of the victim. While behavior must be corrected, it is really on this latter level that real change must take place.

In any liberation movement, and this is certainly a liberation movement, there are at least two major steps. The first is the recognition and critique of perceived discrimination; the second is the reform or reconstruction of the social group. The #MeToo movement is certainly a form of critique. Time will tell whether there will be social reform here, either on the level of behavior or on the deeper level of respect for human dignity.

The #MeToo movement is certainly a feminist movement. Though it might be the most obvious one today, it is not the first one that many of our readers observed or were participants in. In 1963 Betty Friedan published a groundbreaking book entitled *The Feminine Mystique*. Many such books by various authors followed. In the United States women theologians carried many of the same feminist principles into their study and teaching. Chief among them were Mary Daly with her pioneering book *Beyond God the Father* (1973); Rosemary Radford Ruether with *Sexism and God Talk* (1983), and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza with *In Memory of Her* (1983). It was Daly who coined the provocative statement: “If God is male, then the male is God.” She argues that such thinking is precisely the heart of the problem. The earliest work of feminist scholars was primarily critical, pointing out gender bias in many biblical stories and also in doctrinal statements. Gradually, such authors developed new ways of expressing the fundamental theological concepts in language and imagery that were gender neutral or alternating language specific to both genders.

Gender respect is not a trivial issue. Nor is it merely a social /political issue. It is also a profound theological issue, one to which this journal has been committed from its inception. In this issue, we have two columns that address this theme, as well as an article on the political theology of Dorothy Sölle.

Thanks to Anne for finding the cover image, one which is so expressive of women’s solidarity. The image, “Sunset United Women’s Rights,” is courtesy of [John Voo \(2015\) on Flickr](#).

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