This book presents the reader with a collection of 12 essays by North American feminist theologians on being human from the perspective of the diversity of women's experience. The authors claim to seek understanding of themselves in the context of their commitment to the Christian faith (theos) and their connectedness to the self, society and other living and nonliving things (anthropos). Within this broadened view of theological anthropology, women's experience is analysed with regard to traditional categories such as creation, the image of God, suffering, sin, grace, ecology, and eschatology.

The book is organised into four parts: The framework; Foundations in experience; Explorations in experience, and Experience and specific theological issues.

In part I, Mary Ann Zimmer opens with a historical overview of the array of theoretical streams in current feminist thought, ranging from liberal, existentialist, gynocentric, socialist to postmodernist. This essay, along with the subsequent one by Mary Ann Hinsdale on current hermeneutical approaches in feminist theology, demonstrate the illegitimacy of labelling feminism (often negatively) as if it were a monolithic movement, speaking a common language from shared experience. If only for these two excellent research histories of feminist scholarship, the book is worth reading and having on one's shelf as a reference work.

In part II, Maria Aquino and Ada Isasi-Diaz open the reader's eyes to the struggle of mujerista (Latin American feminism) women to become visible and heard in their particular contexts. Regretfully, womanist perspectives are absent.

Parts III and IV contain essays dealing with the way specific theological categories are critiqued and reconstructed through explorations of women's experience. The following essays are particularly notable:

- 'Women's bodies and sexuality' are re-evaluated by Susan Ross in the light of the 'difficulty to be on equally good terms with God and your body'. The author pleads with women to take control of their own bodies on issues like eroticism, sexual preference and the still-prevailing menstrual taboos and abortion, which she treats with great sensitivity and sensibility.
- In her theological reflection on 'Pain and suffering', Patricia Wismer chooses eight women as conversation partners who experienced pain due to (among others) alcoholism, the loss of a child, cancer, rape and rejection because of being lesbian. Traditional Christian responses such as 'God never sends you more than you can handle' contributed to their pain, instead of alleviating it. Wismer suggests an alternative approach to the theodicy problem that builds on the tension between two positions: 'that suffering can never be justified and that suffering must be accepted as part of life'. This contribution features both pathos and relentless soberness, which makes it my personal favourite.
- Sally Anne McReynolds approaches the problem of 'Women and sin' from the...
identification of women with 'sinful Eve, bodied, sexual and irrational' and her mythic counterpart, the Virgin Mary as 'pure womanhood, unsullied by the bodily life of earthly women ... idealized, submissive and sexless virgin/mother, free from sin'. Neither symbol reflects the reality of women's lives, but they create unreal expectations for both men and women.

- 'Ecofeminism' recognises that the domination of women and nonhuman nature are connected and mutually reinforcing. Anne Clifford outlines an ecofeminist ethic of solidarity of humans with all of creation: 'and then both women and men will become truly earthly knowing that not only we humans, but all of creation lives and moves and has its being in God'.

- Understandably, the concept of 'Imago Dei' is a problematic and much-debated one in feminist theological scholarship because of the doctrine being a source of oppression and discrimination against women in the church tradition. Mary Hilbert deconstructs the symbol and presents it in eschatological terms: 'the image of God describes not a primordial state ... but the destiny toward which the human community is called'. Many feminist theologians would not agree to this 'easy solution'.

- The subject of 'eschatology' has largely been ignored by feminist theologians, although Rosemary Ruether and Sally McFague subscribe to an ecological eschatology which shifts the focus from a future utopia to the reconstruction of the present world. In a most enlightening essay, Peter Phan summarises the two theologians' viewpoints and gives credit to the fact that their perspectives enriched our traditional theology of death and the hereafter, but they are critiqued for disregarding 'what has been revealed to us in the resurrection of Christ'. Is the notion of 'revelation' not precisely the target of feminist hermeneutics of suspicion?

The essays in *In the embrace of God* represent a new way of doing theology. They are therefore written for all who feel uneasy about the old way of doing theology, women and men alike. Because they are contextual and woven around experiences and events, these essays make for easy and gripping reading as opposed to the abstract, divorced-from-real-life language of traditional theologies. They deal with the perennial human questions about undeserved suffering, heaven and hell, sin and sexuality, creation and ecology from the perspective of women's experience which is nothing but human experience. I sincerely recommend the book for those who counsel, preach or teach strategies for coping with life — and for those who are uninformed about the sophisticated level of feminist scholarship.

Christina Landman

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_What does it mean today to be a feminist theologian?_ Yearbook of the European Society of Women in Theological Research. Kampen: Kok Pharos.

What does it mean to be a feminist theologian in Europe today? The 1996 conference of the European Society of Women in Theological Research according to their publication has answered this question in a variety of ways. In the first place, it seems that feminist