Introduction

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In 2005–2006 Harvard Divinity School observed the fiftieth anniversary of the admission of women to the school, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Women's Studies in Religion Program. This special issue of the *Harvard Theological Review* extends the celebration of these two anniversaries by gathering highlights of their intellectual fruit. The year-long celebration began with a convocation at which Harvard President Lawrence Summers joined Divinity School Dean William Graham and the faculty, staff and students in marking the historic anniversary. The convocation address, "A Short Half-Century: Fifty Years of Women at Harvard Divinity School," is included as the first entry in this issue. Throughout the year, distinguished alumnae delivered prestigious named lectures, and panels recalled particularly salient outcomes of women's presence. The year concluded with a session at which the first women students who entered in 1955 returned to HDS to reflect on their experiences and careers.

Together, the essays collected here suggest some of the ways in which women's participation and the introduction of gender analysis and feminist perspectives have advanced theological inquiry. Indeed it is difficult to imagine the study of religion in the twenty-first century without the signal contributions of women scholars and women's studies. Yet the *Harvard Theological Review* itself is an example of the many ways in which women contributed to the project of theological inquiry long before they were admitted to HDS as students. The *Review* came into existence as a result of an endowment left by Mildred Everett, the daughter of the Rev. Charles Carroll Everett, an HDS graduate who eventually joined the faculty as Hussey Professor of Theology and served as dean from 1878 until his death in 1900. She left the residue of her assets as a trust for a journal of theology to be edited by the Harvard Divinity School faculty. While all concerned with theological scholarship will admire her vision in selecting a purpose that must have seemed remote in contrast to more obvious charitable objects, I suspect that even so farsighted a daughter of the Divinity School could not have foreseen the issue you hold in your

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hands, dedicated exclusively to contributions of those who, in her day and long after, were barred from sitting in HDS classes.

The admission of women in 1955 was not incidental to the direction theological scholarship would take. Rather their presence required significant changes in every field of education at the school. It required rethinking of the meaning of language, of translation practices, of biblical interpretation. It expanded the subject of the study of religious history and practice to include all rather than half the participants. It required rethinking of long accepted assumptions about the nature and meaning of ministry and ordination, of structures of polity and denominational governance.

The essays collected here also mark some of the historic moments that occurred during the anniversary year. In a particularly dramatic convergence, one of the first women students to enroll in 1955, Letty Mandeville Russell, professor emerita of theology at Yale Divinity School, delivered the 2006 Tillich lecture marking the 50th anniversary of Paul Tillich's arrival at Harvard in the same year. Indeed, the double jubilee was no coincidence. Both the admission of women and the presence of Paul Tillich signaled the movement of the Divinity School into the forefront of Protestant ecumenical engagement with contemporary social issues.

Other historic moments included the installation of the feminist scholar and former WSRP Research Associate Amy Hollywood in the newly endowed Elizabeth H. Monrad Professorship of Christian Studies. Her inaugural lecture, "Acute Melancholia," uses attention to texts of medieval women to provide trenchant insights into contemporary experience. Another signal event was the delivery by Susannah Heschel (MTS '76), Eli Black Associate Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, of the 2006 Dudleian Lecture, "From Jesus to Shylock: Christian Supersessionism and 'The Merchant of Venice.'"

Two essays included here began as lectures delivered by Research Associates in the Women's Studies in Religion Program. Rosemary Carbine's "*Ekklesial* Work: Toward a Feminist Public Theology" builds on the concept of an "*ekklesia* of wo/men" elaborated by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity, to explore its repercussions for discussions of civic life. Constance Furey's "The Selfe Undone: Individualism and Relationality in John Donne and Aemilia Lanyer" introduces her work on devotional poetry in Renaissance England.

This special issue also notes the ways theological scholarship has been enhanced and expanded by women's participation over the last 50 years by including a list of all the Harvard doctoral dissertations on religion completed by women. Perusal of the list indicates that while many of the early women doctorates would go on to be leaders in gender analysis, the first dissertation explicitly focused on gender was Polly Wynn Allen's "The Social Ethics of Charlotte Perkins Gillman" in 1978, followed by Dorothy Austin's "Breaking the Myth of the Generic Man: The Crisis of Feminist Consciousness" in 1981. The issue concludes with an essay from one of the most notable scholars appearing on the list, Elaine Pagels, Harrington Spear Paine Foundation Professor of Religion at Princeton University.

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