

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

*John Calvin's theological teachings were most influential in 16th-century Holland, Germany, Scotland, and France.*



advice they could have expected from a Catholic confessor. He "seems to have reserved no more sympathy for women than for men," Blaisdell says, and virtually ignored their special concerns.

Calvin held many orthodox 16th-century beliefs about the inferiority of women, but his letters show that he regarded them as the equal of men in spiritual matters. In one, he noted that it was a woman who brought the news of the Resurrection to the Apostles, who at first refused to believe her. Nor did women's "weakness" excuse them from religious responsibility in Calvin's eyes. When Jesuit priests persuaded Renée de France not to join Calvin's cause, he announced that "the devil himself could celebrate his triumph."

It was common for ambitious men of the time like Calvin to seek help from women in high places, Blaisdell notes, suggesting that in those days, "class differences were more significant than sex differences."

### *Is the Fetus a Patient?*

"Operating on the Fetus" by William Ruddick and William Wilcox, in *The Hastings Center Report* (Oct. 1982), 360 Broadway, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10706.

Technological innovations during the 1970s make it possible today for surgeons to operate on fetuses in and outside the womb. They also raise potential ethical problems for physicians, parents, and society.

---

**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


---

Surgeons in at least six U.S. hospitals can now perform nine different operations on fetuses, from repairing lesions to correcting nutritional problems. In one case, a fetus was removed from the uterus, treated for a urinary tract obstruction, and returned to its mother's womb.

"The fetus now begins to make serious claims for a right to nutrition, to protection, to therapy," Catholic theologian Richard McCormick argued in 1982. "How can tolerance of abortion be morally reconciled with those claims?" But according to Ruddick and Wilcox, both New York University philosophers, the new procedures will make little difference in the debate over abortion. "Liberals" are unlikely to change their views, since they already favor permitting abortions of healthy fetuses; "conservatives" have always believed that fetuses have a right to life regardless of their condition.

But for "moderates" and physicians, who seek a balance between the rights of the mother and of the fetus, the moral questions do become stickier. To a "moderate," the authors say, "abortion is justifiable to prevent the birth of a severely defective child." But should a mother be required to submit to surgery if her fetus has a treatable ailment? Is abortion justified if she refuses? For their part, the authors dismiss such worries, arguing that since fathers are not required to donate blood, bone marrow, or kidneys to spare their children suffering, women should not be required to undergo surgery.

The dilemma for doctors is similar: Who is the patient, the mother or the fetus? To avoid this conflict, the authors propose using "therapeutic contracts." A "gynecological" contract would leave all decisions to the woman; the "pediatric" would make the interests of the fetus paramount; the "obstetrical" would seek a balance between the two. Allowing "pediatric" contracts suggests that the fetus is a patient, and thus a person. But citing patients in extremis who are "brain dead," Ruddick and Wilcox argue that *all* patients are not necessarily persons.

They conclude that the possibility of fetal therapy will not create a moral bind for physicians. Such procedures are essentially gynecological, they argue, and the mother remains the principal decision-maker.

---

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**


---

*Discovering Pluto*

"The Ice Planet" by Derral Mulholland, in *Science* 82 (Dec. 1982), P.O. Box 10790, Des Moines, Iowa 50340.

After Pluto, the sun's ninth planet, was discovered only 53 years ago, scientists set to work estimating its size, mass, and composition. Yet all of their best guesses about the planet have been disproved by recent research, writes Mulholland, a University of Texas astronomer.

Four billion miles from the sun, Pluto is barely visible even with powerful telescopes. It was discovered in 1930 by a 22-year-old amateur