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Women
in the
Church



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A publication of the theological community of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry.

EDITORIAL....

ELIZABETH MUIR

Nineteen hundred and eighty-one marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the ordination of the first woman in a Canadian mainline church - Lydia Gruchy in The United Church of Canada.

It seems fitting, therefore, to devote this issue of ARC to «women and religion», and especially appropriate to be able to include an article by the Rt. Rev. Lois Wilson, recently-elected moderator of The United Church of Canada, the first female head of a Canadian denomination and one of the first in the world.

This issue is not an inclusive or systematic presentation of the feminist question as it relates to religion, although it does contain an extensive bibliography of readable and readily-obtainable books and other resource material on women and the Christian tradition. Rather, it is an eclectic collection of articles, poetry and art by students, graduates and faculty members from McGill's religious communities, approaching the question at different levels and from different spaces.

Perhaps this method most accurately reflects the diversity of expressions and goals among advocates of male/female equality.

Some feminists believe that there are distinctively feminine and masculine characteristics and behaviours; Jungians work towards integration of the feminine and masculine in both men and women. Other feminists point to Margaret Mead's research in the South Seas Islands and argue that all female and male stereotypes are culturally conditioned; given an identical environment, men and women would behave the same, apart from their distinctive roles in the reproductive process. A recent article in the Canadian magazine *Saturday Night* (G. B. Sinclair, «Of Two Minds», September 1980, pp. 19-21) describes the latest research into the organization of the brain, and the controversy over the right/left brain theory: do the right and left hemispheres develop differently in males and females resulting in sex differences in spatial and verbal skills?

Some feminists choose to remain within the Judeo-Christian tradition, understanding its essential or idealistic character as consistent with feminist principles. Others have reluctantly opted for a radically new religious expression, believing the patriarchal symbolism of the Christian tradition to be non-reformable.

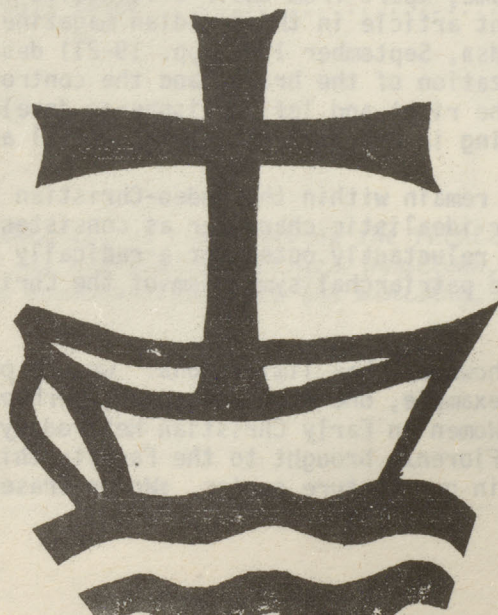
This eclectic approach, however, has limitations: we can present only one side of some arguments. For example, one should respond, perhaps, to Dr. Wisse's article, «The Status of Women in Early Christian Heterodoxy», with the theses Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza brought to the Faculty this spring when she was one of the key speakers in our lecture series, «Women Erased?: Power, Patriarchy and Religion».

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Dr. Fiorenza, a New Testament professor at Notre Dame University, Indiana, posited a «hermeneutics of suspicion». She noted that all «history» is subjective or unconsciously biased in selection and interpretation: «all historical reconstruction is a selective, contemporary analysis of the past in the present.» References to women in the Bible and the non-canonical writings have been filtered through patriarchal interpretation and redaction. As well, the linguistic expression of the Bible is androcentric, but exegetes tell us that masculine or exclusive language (e.g., saints, sons, brothers, men) is used generically or inclusively to include the women who were a major part of the early church. Since this is so, why, she asked, is it always assumed that leadership roles (e.g., teacher, apostle, bishop) are used exclusively to refer only to men? Should we not question this patriarchal interpretation? She also argued in favour of a high leadership status of the prophet, a position often held by women. And she presented evidence to show that there was a very live and extensive controversy over male/female leadership, especially in the second and third centuries. Her comments can be found in *Women of Spirit* (see Bibliography), and in an article, «You are not to be called Father», in *Cross Currents*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, Fall 1979, pp. 301-323.

Perhaps the one main area of agreement within the spectrum of feminist thought is that women today have not attained equality. Women are not allowed ordination in all churches, and in those denominations which do ordain women, no more than twelve per cent of the clergy are female. In the churches' head offices, where two-thirds of the total staff are women, only seven per cent are in senior executive positions.

This is the challenge, then, that we hold out to our readers: to work towards equality in our religious institutions in Canada, so that it may be fully realized that both male and female are made in God's image.



ROCKERS OF THE CRADLE/ROCKERS OF THE BOAT

LOIS M. WILSON

By far the liveliest gatherings for me since becoming Moderator of The United Church of Canada have been women's events. In contrast to the 1950's, when one was hard pressed to find any real involvement by church women in the social, theological or political issues of the day, the last few years have signalled a heightened awareness on the part of a significant number of women of the critical issues of our time. «Women's lib» used to be good for a laugh in church circles. Now there is a growing awareness that as the covenant between men and women is being re-negotiated, something vital is at stake. One must use strong Biblical words, like «righteousness», since a true relationship with God must be expressed in just relationships between persons, and «salvation», which is about the processes of liberation or domination implicit in these relationships.

A few months ago, the first all-Canadian gathering of ordained women clergy took place. About sixty women from three denominations shared personal histories, affirmed ministry, nursed their babies, shattered for each other stereotypes of women clergy, and assessed their multiple roles as ministers/singles/mothers/presbyters/aunts/prophets/grandmothers/priests/sisters/and preachers. There were stories of loneliness in ministry, of difficulties in working out collegial relationships with other clergy, of resistance to the use of inclusive language in liturgy, of the joy of ecumenical marriages and the difficulties of «placement», of the stresses and opportunities of combining career and parenting in co-operation with male partners. There was some pain expressed at the exclusion of the contribution of women in religious history. There were questions raised about exercising authority in the congregation in a style appropriate to women. And there was lots of visioning together about the future of the institutional church.

It was a far cry from forty-five years ago, when Lydia Gruchy was the lone ordinand of a mainline church in Canada! The sheer numbers of ordained women in Canada today are a significant new factor in the life of mainline churches. They represent a fresh opportunity for re-assessing ministry, for challenging stereotyped roles and expectations, and for risking shared experience to build community in new and creative ways.

There is, of course, no guarantee that any of this will happen. Women clergy may settle for cutting themselves a piece of the ecclesiastical pie, or for copying male models of ministry; but I doubt it, if for no other reason than that their brothers and sisters in ministry, the laity, will not allow it!

Talk at more informal gatherings of men and women was about the sexual stereotypes current in our culture.

Sugar and spice and everything nice;
 That's what little girls are made of.
 Snakes and snails and puppy dogs' tails,
 That's what little boys are made of.

The female's main function is to please, while the male is apparently under no cultural obligation to please anyone! There was talk of the historic responsibility of Christian churches for perpetuating patriarchal theology, and for underlining the image of the female Eve as temptress and seductress. There was a protest against the role of women as «little helpers» of ministers, as they licked stamps, raised the budget, or taught the children. And there was plenty of opposition to the stereotyped role of men in the congregation as fixers of the furnace and managers of the budget. Employment patterns of women by the church were questioned. Wonder was expressed that Catholics encourage the appointment of women as seminary professors but won't ordain them, and Protestants do the opposite! There was puzzlement as to why women who do not assume the service/supportive role in churches have a difficult time finding support for their ministries in the secular world. There was rejoicing in the victories of the «Squid Women» of Newfoundland in their struggle for equality in the fishing industry. There were questions of the eventual fate of Linda Lovelace who protests losing her status as an Indian because of her marriage to a white man. Underlying all the discussion was some bitterness and hostility to the organized church and its non-involvement with other than middle class women's issues.

But in my travels and my listening, I sense that women, now happily sharing the rocking of the cradle with their men, are confidently beginning to share also the rocking of the boat.

I think

- of *Rene*, who understands her ministry as advocate of the poor, who haunts City Hall, knows legislation, has developed expertise in cutting red tape, who stands *with* persons needing adequate housing;
- of *Ruth*, who heals the sick, and encourages preventive health measures among Indian people, who looks to effect structural changes in health delivery systems, who has to make decisions such as «who gets the heart monitor?» when there is one machine and three persons in dire need of it;
- of *Janice*, who consistently raises feminist issues in the institutional churches, and looks to effect structural changes which will allow other women to exercise significant ministries in the church today;
- of *Jean*, who raises her children to be «liberated», in the sense of sharing male/female role expectations in the home and community, who is able to be open and vulnerable to accepting her children when they reject her value systems and the authority of their home;
- of *Margaret*, who is working professionally to develop human support systems in our hospitals for those who are dying, who assists persons to cope with the ambiguities of human existence associated with death and dying;

of *Lenore*, whose commitment is to be in solidarity with human rights thrusts in this country and around the world; who bonds with the Pakistani corner store owners, whose stores get rocks through the windows on Saturday nights; who works with the Peoples' Food Commission, attempting to help persons see the connection between how the food industry is managed here in Canada and the economic world-wide implications - all of which is connected with human rights issues;

of *Josie*, who leads non-violent sit ins at proposed nuclear sites in Canada, who develops a theology of non-violence to complement her activism.

Some of these are rockers of the cradle; all are rockers of the boat!

They are all consciously acting out the love of God in very concrete situations. They live with the consciousness of participating in the saving drama of dead/alive, lost/found, which is the daily rhythm of Christian faith and life. Each is reflecting on the meaning of historical human existence in a particular context, yet not allowing that context to be unchangeable or beyond her control. But rather she is constantly challenging what is, assuming the time-honoured role of a «troubler of Israel», and becoming part of that ever hopeful Christian community which is a permanent source of unrest in any given society. These women see themselves as change agents, as always creating or exploring the tension that must exist between the people of God and any given human society.

Their life style is consistent with their ministries. Lenore, for example, spends next to nothing on furniture so that she has ready cash on hand should a plane fare from Argentina be necessary tomorrow morning. They are viewed by their friends and peers as «fools». Why, ask Ruth's peers, are you wasting all that medical training on a bunch of Indians, - and for peanuts too! Why, ask Rene's peers, are you not participating in the local church bazaar, but think those welfare bums are more important? Can we identify some of these women with Christians Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 4:13 as being as «refuse of the world»? Certainly «fools for Christ»!

Increasingly, women in the church today understand themselves as belonging to a community of believers who worship Him who defined His ministry as

preaching good news to the poor,
liberty to the captive,
recovery of sight to the blind,
setting the oppressed free,
announcing the Lord's jubilee.

Yet much remains to be done. Let me briefly suggest a few areas.

Witnessing in the context of an interdependent world. Some women are already aware of the international context in which they exercise their localized ministries. High in their consciousness is the reality of the economic connections in our world, the relation of the haves and the have-nots, the realization

that a condition of our affluence is the poverty of others. High on the agenda is recognition that the mechanisms of commodity trade, sanctioned by international institutions, have reduced the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America to a state of dependency that restricts their development, deforms their economics, and increases the deterioration of the terms of trade for them. It also permits the pillage by consumer societies like Canada at the expense of misery and poverty in underdeveloped countries. And such a phenomenon may also be recognized and analyzed within Canadian society. Women in the church today are beginning to work for *structural* change in these areas.

The theological task. Christian theology has informed our culture. It seems mandatory, then, that any transformation of the culture will be partly through a renewed theological understanding of *Shalom*. A serious study of Biblical thought and history will help contemporary persons understand *who we are* as Christian community and what our *bias* has been historically. It will nurture our sense of identity, community and authority, and encourage a critical yet creative view of the institutional church, as well as of our society and its value systems. Such study will hopefully herald a theological mandate for women to be full partners in creation.

Engagement with the unfamiliar. There is a great deal to be learned from men and women around the world, and particularly from persons with whom we are unfamiliar or systems which threaten our value systems. I think of the fact of China, or of other living faiths and ideologies. Are we sufficiently centred in our own identities to risk engagement with the unfamiliar?

The task of renewing relationships. It will not be enough to work for equal rights between men and women. That is only propping up the *status quo*. We must probe more deeply and analyze what lies at the root of the alienation in relationships between persons, nature and the divine. The glory of the Old Testament prophets was their insistence on the moral imperatives of God, that authentic human community is based on *just* relationships. And without doubt, this will require structural changes in the way we do things-especially at the economic, social and political levels.

The challenge to the mainline churches today is to «act out» alternate models of authentic human community. It is to heal the yawning chasms between men and women, women and women, French and English, labourers and managers, native peoples and governments, etc.

And that is exactly what a growing number of Christian women are doing in Canada today. They are «wounded healers», standing with others in their pain and allowing the Holy Spirit to effect wholeness - or, conversely, allowing the Spirit to disturb, to make uncomfortable, and to pull them screaming and protesting, perhaps, into the world as it really is.

May that tribe of women increase!

DE ANIMA

MORNY JOY

«St. Catherine of Siena, pray for us.»

My thoughts return to my high school Latin class where this totally untutored, yet divinely inspired woman presided as patroness. It has been a long road from those convent days in Australia to my present tussles with philosophy, and there are times that I wish there was a benevolent and equally charismatic female philosopher whom I could invoke to enlighten me. And this is the problem. The history of philosophy, unlike hagiography, is not strewn with the names of learned virgins or angelic doctoresses. Of course there are the scattered references to those exceptions to the rule:

Hypatia of Alexandria - the 5th century A.D. Neoplatonist and mathematician.

Hildegarde of Bingen - ca. 1098-1179, instructress of popes, clergy, and lay people.

Héloise - ca. 1101 - 1164, prematurely diverted from a scholarly career by the wayward Abelard.

Margaret More Roper - 1505-1544, scholar and translator of works of Erasmus.

But there is no detailed analysis of their place and thought, and they appear merely as appendages to the star-studded male cast that adorns any history of Western philosophy. And so, in these days of female emancipation, the inevitable question arises: Is the female of the species deficient in intellect? - specifically, in those areas of analytical thought that pertain to the tradition of abstract reasoning which is accepted as the method of Western philosophy and theology?

A loaded question. One that is particularly difficult to address directly, overlaid as it is with centuries-old encrustations of biological, social and intellectual received custom and prejudice. The area is sorely in need of the application of that double-edged weapon of the modern intellectual arsenal - hermeneutics. Such a phenomenological analysis, involving an initial movement of «suspicion», followed by a restorative countermove, would accomplish two things. The first would be to defuse traditional value-laden symbols and models of their sexually biased (whether idealized or defamatory) charges. The second movement, essentially heuristic, would be to clarify current rhetoric. Both «strategies» would support the preliminary articulation in non-gender identified imagery of insights reached by contemporary empirical studies. (As an example of this research: M. Mead, «Why Do We Speak of Feminine Intuition», *Anima*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 1975.)

An essential part of such a programme is the drawing of a careful distinction between the various patterns of intellectual functioning that have been labelled «masculine», «feminine» and the actual gender identification of these traits.

Such literal applications have inevitably led to discrimination in social structures and attitudes. It is enlightening to read the historical literature, where apart from misogynic slurs, women's intellectual capacities are so slighted that the indictment inevitably became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This would appear to be a classic case of the chicken-egg syndrome. Was it the fact of their non-access to the means of education that stunted women's intellectual growth? Or was it rather the unfortunate uneducated simpering of women that produced the barred doors of educational institutions? At this stage it seems appropriate to quote certain examples of the barriers that women encountered:

...The search for abstract and speculative truths, for principles and axioms of science, for all that tends to wide generalisation, is beyond a woman's grasp...A woman's thoughts, beyond the range of her immediate duties, should be directed to the study of men, or the acquirement of that agreeable learning whose sole end is the formation of taste.

J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile* (i)

...It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilisation.

C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (ii)

...Women can, of course, be educated, but their minds are not adapted to the higher sciences, philosophy, or certain of the arts. These demand a universal faculty. Women may have happy inspiration, taste, elegance, but they have not the ideal...

G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (iii)

It would be boorish to continue. Yet such documentation is needed, for it is on this issue of education that I cannot agree with Karl Stern who states in *The Flight from Woman*:

... Since the rise of feminism, it has often been suggested that woman has been forcibly kept away from the peaks of creativeness in the arts only by cultural and social restrictions. One can easily see the fallacy here...Having been barred from the basic training is no argument. (iv)

Admittedly Stern refers to just the arts, but I believe that in the arts as well as philosophy and theology, the admittance to basic training is essential, and that the social pressures of perceived role within women themselves functioned just as efficiently as any external deterrents. The restraints were such that it would need divine intervention to succeed in spite of them. Which, incidentally, was supposedly the case with Catherine of Siena.



LINOCUT BY FLORENCE HAYES

It was not that women did not want to be educated. In *Four Guineas*, Virginia Woolf cites the discovery of the diaries of obscure governesses. This was the one avenue of work open to women who felt drawn, by some obscure impulse, to the world of ideas:

«Oh! how I have burned to learn Latin, French, the Arts, the Sciences, anything rather than the dog trot way of sewing, teaching, writing copies, and washing dishes everyday... Why are not females permitted to study physics, divinity, astronomy etc. etc. with all their attendants, chemistry, botany, logic, mathematics &c?» (v)

As Virginia Woolf observes: «That comment upon the lives of governesses, that question from the lips of governesses, reaches us from the Darkness.» (vi)

An observation has been made that the tide against women began to turn with the Romantic Movement - that nebulous title which refers to that movement of self-expression and awareness that had its roots in eighteenth-century German Idealism. But once again the stereotypes defied alteration. Robinson, in *Romantic Sexual Theory*, summarizes the typical development and decline:

... This is indeed what happens over and over with the Romantics: after struggling towards an affirmation of female equality and a new concept of sexual roles, they invariably fall back upon the old categories, emphasizing the essential differences between male and female postures, whether in bed, in interpersonal relations, or in society at large. (vii)

The Romantic feminine idealization, compounded of liberal doses of beauty and rapture, anguish and desolation, was soon unmasked for the false idol it was. It was in fact the projection of the poetic muse, hence «feminine» element of the prototypical Romantic hero. It is apparent that such female idealizations have always been token gestures. Barbara Harrison, a contemporary feminist, expresses the awareness that women are no longer willing to accept such spurious manoeuvres:

... I cannot describe here the incredible range of values in which women have been said to hold superiority. This value pantheon is so various that *almost* nothing human has been excluded! (Except parenthetically, full human rationality!) (viii)

In order to avoid accusations of merely undertaking an exercise in polemics I must now examine this issue of rationality. Rationally?

It was probably Freud who took the first steps towards breaking the impasse of gender identified modes of knowing with his model of a contra-sexual *Anlage* which depicted what he postulated as the latent masculinity in the female and the latent femininity in the male. Jung adopted this notion and developed it in his concepts of *anima* and *animus*. The *anima* symbolized the female in the male psyche and the *animus* the male in the female psyche. Within Jung's system they functioned as mediators between the conscious and unconscious levels of the psyche, differentiating between reality and fantasy as one worked towards

psychic wholeness. The underlying model would appear to be an androgynous psychic self where the psyche is understood as the totality of conscious and unconscious mental processes. Certain feminists have nonetheless reacted against this model. In an article, «Jung after Feminism», Naomi Goldenberg states:

On a practical level the anima/animus model and its goal of unification works better for men than for women. The model supports stereotyped notions of what «masculine» and «feminine» are by adding mystification to guard against change on the social sphere where women are at a huge disadvantage. In practice, men can keep control of all «logos» activities and appropriate just whatever «eros» they need from their women as a kind of psychological hobby. Women, on the other hand, are by no means as encouraged to develop «logos»... (ix)

The obstacle of the social structures would appear to be insurmountable and we are right back at square one. Yet not completely. There has been a definite breakthrough in the accustomed thinking patterns, and while the patriarchal paradigm remains, it is being questioned in a radical way by such thinkers as Beatrice Bruteau:

What do we mean by *feminine consciousness*? *Feminine* is a polar word, significant by its contrast with its complement, *masculine*. The axis of the polarity can be variously chosen, and its orientation makes a critical difference in how we conceive ourselves and our world. The more popular orientations have been along the lines weak/strong, passive/active, soft/hard, submissive/dominant, dark/light, feeling/thinking, domestic/worldly. (x)

Bruteau continues, and her observations are worth quoting in full:

... Obviously both members of each pair are equally vital to our conscious life, and if we trace the pairing to its ultimate metaphysical origin, the many and the one, we can also say that both members are essential to our very being. We all have masculine consciousness which is focused, analytical and specialized and we all have feminine consciousness which is general, synthetic and wholistic. Neither is stronger than the other, or more passive than the other, brighter or darker than the other. There is a complementarity, a life-producing difference, but if its axis is perceived to lie in this suggested orientation, rather than in the popular ones mentioned above, then we should derive a genuinely revolutionary vision of our relation to the world.

This revolutionary vision of the world has been getting some academic press lately - and the references are not to millenium cults or Aquarian Age visionaries. It has become evident in the work of Paul Ricoeur in the movement made in his latest work from method to *praxis*, or more specifically, from an essentialist to a participatory form of knowledge. In his analysis of the function of metaphor, as embodied in the tension model, he acknowledges the potential of poetic consciousness to «redescribe reality». A new meaning is sparked by the conflict of sameness and difference at work in a radical metaphor. So it is that this

redescription of reality does not refer to a simple change of nuance in outlook or a fleeting insight into a hitherto blindspot. In Ricoeur's version, this «redescription of reality» implies nothing less than a change of world-view. Such a vision implies that a poetically based consciousness, with all the accompanying baggage of image, myth, symbol and story, can and does have a significant role to play in both our structuring of and relating to the world. Its contribution is as vital as that of the rational, analytic component beloved of contemporary science and technology. In Ricoeur's tensive metaphor it is the very tenets of the scientific model that are flouted. New meaning is generated from the perceived paradoxes operating on different levels - psychological, semantic or logical - where the expected rules, such as that of Aristotelian non-contradiction, no longer apply. Neither does the notion of «falsibility», nor the «category mistake» dear to Gilbert Ryle.

Another testimony in support of the poetic consciousness appears in a recent work of Gordon Kaufman's *An Essay on Theological Method*. Kaufman acknowledges that what has been overlooked in most theological reflection and debate is the constructive element that is characteristic of all first order «theologizing».

As we have seen, the ideas of God and the world are constructed by the human imagination for essentially practical purposes: in order to live and act it is necessary to have some conception or picture of the overall context, the fundamental order, within which human life falls. The ideas and images of God and the world supply this. Thus they are created primarily to provide orientation to life... (xi)

It is only in second order theology that reflection and analysis occur. Yet it has been this second aspect of our mental processes that has comprised the force and weight of the theological enterprise. What Kaufman has come to appreciate, and Ricoeur has perceived also, is that all knowledge is a two-dimensional construct. Both procedures, the imaginative and reflective, are a necessary part of all our being and knowing. Theology and philosophy have always operated according to first and second order functions. The blindspot, however, has been the belief that the speculative first order formulations in models and metaphors were somehow distinct from the metaphors of poetic insight. The latter were relegated accordingly to the domain of aesthetics and reductively labelled as a «feminine» mode of consciousness.

If we were to take Beatrice Bruteau's axial model along which gender-free modes of speculative (formerly feminine) and analytical (formerly masculine) knowledge slide, and allow it to interact with Ricoeur's creative tension model, the result could be surprising. No more syntheses or *coincidentia oppositorum*, but perhaps a recovery of that world-view of fifth century Athens where poets, seers, sages and philosophers all contributed to the fabric of knowledge.

Except this time round women will be citizens.

Footnotes

- i. J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, quoted by E. Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 98.
- ii. C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, quoted by E. Figes, *ibid.* p. 114.
- iii. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, quoted by E. Figes, *ibid.* p. 123.
- iv. K. Stern, *The Flight from Woman* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 29.
- v. Miss Weeton, *Journal of a Governess*, ed. E. Hall, pp. 14, xviii, quoted by V. Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1938), pp. 75-76.
- vi. V. Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1938), p. 76.
- vii. P.A. Robinson, «Romantic Sexual Theory», unpublished article quoted by V. Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 293.
- viii. B.W. Harrison, «The New Consciousness of Women: a Socio-Political Resource», *Cross Currents*, Vol. xxiv, No. 4, 1975, p. 449.
- ix. N. Goldenberg, «Jung after Feminism», *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion*, ed. R. Gross (Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1977), p. 60.
- x. B. Bruteau, «Neo-Feminism and the Next Revolution in Consciousness», *Cross Currents*, Vol. xxvii, No. 2, Summer 1977, p. 171.
- xi. G.D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1975), p. 30.

ARC READERS

REMEMBER THE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES LIBRARY

WHEN DONATING TO MCGILL

GIFTS SO DESIGNATED WILL BE CAREFULLY

SPENT AND VERY APPRECIATED

WOMAN BY MANY ANOTHER NAME....

The Latins called her *femina*
 and left her in control;
 The Germans named her *Weib* or *Frau*
 which for some difference does allow.
 We English chaps shout out with glee,
 «Woman» or «girl» or simply «she».
 She is a lover, goddess, cook
 and when you've found yourself a nook
 she bears your children,
 one by one,
 while you are out to have some fun.
 Woe man,
 Hold on and give a care,
 and of your sexism beware.
 Don't cast her into roles YOU make,
 since all such guff she will not take.
 Today she may be kind and gentle,
 tomorrow cool as cubes of ice
 but rarely is she sentimental
 for she is active now and wise.
 Allow that she who was *your* all in all
 has now become a *femme fatale*.
 Live with this liberating notion,
 affirm her with renewed devotion.

e j furcha

SOLILOQUY OF A NOT-SO-YOUNG JUNGIAN

A liberated soul am I,
 have severed every erstwhile tie
 to find expression of my «self»
 as I into my psyche delve
 projecting shadow onto being
 to send the beast in me a-fleeing,
 or slay the dragon in my breast
 (oh pardon me, I meant my «chest»),
 which held in bondage me these years,
 stirring within me hellish fears
 that I might cause the milk to spill
 or expectations fail to fill.
 Such dread brought on profound depressions
 for which I needed scheduled sessions
 with some psychiatrist or other
 who served as surrogate for mother.
 But now I'm free of all these lies,
 because of Jung who made me wise.
 Now when I meet the world head-on
 I share what's new, forget what's gone.
 Don't you agree that I have found
 How my Prometheus is unbound?
 It's a grand feeling, I must say!
 I do indulge it every day.
 You, too, in searching, soon may find
 some blessed tie that does not bind
 yet holds together, nonetheless,
 your selfhood
 when in state of stress.

e j furcha

CAN A MAN BE A FEMINIST?

GEORGE JOHNSTON

In January of this year we witnessed a furore in Ottawa and throughout the country because of the alleged interference of Lloyd Axworthy in the affairs of the Advisory Council on the Rights of Woman (I hope I have that title correct!). Apparently he suggested that the federal Government might be embarrassed if the Council went ahead with a conference on women's rights at a time when the constitutional debate was in full swing.

One result was a proposal that women should create their own lobby, finance it themselves, run their own conference on the rights of women under a new Canadian constitution; and no men need expect to be included. At least, that is how the proposal came over to me as I listened to the woman leader on a C.B.C. programme.

Now that seems to me a very silly suggestion.

It keeps the discussion at the level of confrontation; it makes men and women adversaries, and no doubt would lump non-feminist women with men. We are not adversaries, but neighbours. We are fellow-citizens. The health of society depends on freedom for each citizen, whatever the sex or the status or the ethnic origin or the mother tongue. There has to be equal justice for all under the common law. And we may all share in the joy and the enrichment that comes when each person is allowed the opportunity to contribute to social well-being in every sphere of endeavour. It is clear that the topic of feminism is timely.

It would seem that since 1895 in the anglophone world of the *Oxford English Dictionary* a «feminist» means anyone who is an advocate of the claims and rights of women. Certainly a man may be such an advocate. Indeed it might be suggested that as a class men have failed women so badly that it is high time that they repented in dust and ashes, if only to create a situation that would make equality and friendship the norm, rather than opposition, campaigning, warfare and the like. Women can rightly claim that too long and in too many areas they have been treated as inferiors, as «the weaker sex». Think, for example, of property rights, family law, civic rights, medical care, and so on. Only within the last twenty years have the women of Québec been liberated in such matters and had their rights defined in statute law.

Some of the claims that are being made are:

Equality of opportunity in the professions and in the work place.

Equal pay for work of equal value.

Consideration for the special needs of women: not as if they were retarded or inferior; but as that half of mankind who share with menfolk (or should so

share) in procreation and in the nurture, education and care of the young.

Women like men ought to be assured of the Four Freedoms outlined by President F.D. Roosevelt forty years ago: namely, freedom of speech and expression; freedom to worship God in her own way; freedom from want and freedom from fear. That means that sexism will have to go and that reasonable ways must be found to get rid of language that offends the susceptibilities of women. Men can hardly help being rather insensitive to things like addresses to God that stick to «he» and «him» and hymns that never stray from the male reference: look up, for example, hymn 224 in the Anglican-United Hymn Book of 1971, «Jesus...lead us...Free our life from ill and war; what is good in man restore»!

If you are going to meet such feminine needs, you have to provide adequate day-care centres, give the necessary maternity leave, adjust working hours and supply family assistance funds to single women parents, make provision for other facilities to ensure that in our economy and in professional life women are not penalized simply because they are female.

The reality of the human situation is that woman is almost certainly the stronger sex that outlives the male. She may be different, but essentially she has the same intellectual, emotional and volitional equipment as a man. Her right to be regarded and loved as a person ought to be inalienable. Woman is the Other in whom Man finds his partner, complement and companion, the Mother of every boy as well as every girl.

Christians, however, cannot be satisfied to deduce women's rights and claims from biology alone or from the wisdom of society's making use of their talents and work. The feminine rights derive from the status and full equality of woman as a creature and child of God. She is his Eve, a living soul inhabited by his breath and destined to be spiritually his daughter.

Jesus, who has authority over us in such matters, seems to have rejoiced in the friendship of women. He is quoted as saying that «whoever does the will of God is...my sister, my mother» (Mark 3:35). He referred with approval to the creation stories of Genesis 1:27, 2:24, 5:2, and taught that the marriage union should not be dissolved (Mark 10:2-9),

Some traditions incorporated in our Gospels indicate that he was very tender and caring in his attitude to women, as much as to men, to the good as well as the sinful. You may wish to study the following passages:

Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11; Mark 5:34; 7:29; 12:44; 14:6-8; Luke 8:2-3; 10:41-2; 13:10-17; John 4:1-30, a passage that speaks truly about Jesus, whether it happened exactly like this or not; 11:5; 19:25-7, another special Johannine tradition like 20:11-18.

Disciples of Jesus are expected to follow his example and live as those who incarnate his way of caring love. How then could they try to excuse any mistreatment of women by denying their God-given rights, by refusing to let them

fulfil the responsibilities inherent in such rights under God, or by failing to love them as nearest neighbours? The awful fact is that the Church has contributed to the repression and exploitation of women and girls, and it has based this on texts like 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; Titus 2:3-5 and Ephesians 5:22-4 (none of which, in my judgement is an authentic statement from St. Paul!); Colossians 3:18 (probably Pauline) and 1 Peter 3:1-6 (an early second century document). It is easy to understand that those who took all these texts as «the inspired Word of God» felt themselves justified in keeping women in their place; and that women too accepted their place passively and without complaint...until eyes were opened in modern times and new interpretations of biblical ethics were taught.

I fully grant that we must be fair to people in the early Church. They lived under very different conditions, so that sometimes it might not have been wise to push for a sexual revolution. They were debarred by patriarchal custom and the *mores* of many communities from perceiving just how seriously Paul's saying should be noted: That in the faith-community of Christians it does not matter whether one is a Jew or a Gentile (by race); a slave or a free person (by status); a male or a female (by sex). «For you are all one (humanity) in Christ Jesus» (Galatians 3:28, where «one» is masculine). The Church did accept women as members. It did not tolerate the exposure and death of girl babies. It insisted on chastity and fidelity in sexual relations. It had a disciplined family life. Many women played notable parts, even as prophets, teachers and deaconesses. They suffered martyrdom and became saints.

Where, if not in the Church, should not men become advocates of the claims and rights of women, *paracletes* of the divine grace that would bless all of us in the family of mankind?

IMAGES OF A WOMAN

Woman- Eve, Mary, goddess;
apex of creation
in one person.

She complements her husband,
not as his chattel
but as companion.

In giving birth
she chooses life-long caring
to nurture human growth.

Communities call women
to pattern new paths of
peace and wholeness.

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THE BUDDHA'S ATTITUDE TO WOMEN

KATHERINE YOUNG

The Buddha's reluctance to admit women into the *saṅgha* (order) is well known. It needed special pleading on the part of Ānanda for women to be allowed to join the Order, and even then the Buddha consented with misgivings. (i) This is one side of the picture. On the other hand, according to Mrs. Rhys Davids, there are more cases of *therīs* (nuns) declaring their attainment of arahantship (liberation) in the *Therīgāthā* than of monks declaring theirs in the *Theragāthā*. (ii) How is the Buddha's attitude to women to be assessed in the light of this: as one of «silence», ambiguity, or approval?

The Buddha's response toward the arahantship of women must be related to his initial stance regarding their entrance into the *saṅgha*. Was he reluctant to admit them because he felt that they were incapable of the eight-fold path? Or did the Buddha unconsciously share the opinion of Māra: that women possessed the «two-finger» intelligence (that is, their mental capacities were equal to the tiny pressure created when pinching rice to determine if it is done)? Or was the Buddha convinced that women did not have the spiritual capacity to attain *nibbāna*? (enlightenment)? If that was not the case, then was he suspicious that they did not have the spiritual tenacity requisite for this endeavour?

Dhammapāla, in his *paramatthadīpanī*, a commentary on the *Therīgāthā*, narrates the biographies of the *therīs*; he is especially interested in the circumstances that induced their experiences of enlightenment. Here we find described instances of the Buddha's interaction with the *therīs*. The accounts, which are striking testimony to the Buddha's positive appreciation of women, may be categorized into four types. (iii)

1. *The Buddha's compassion for the problems faced by women.*

The story of Paṭācārā best exemplifies this category, for she, through a series of tragic events, lost first her husband, and then her two-children. Maddened by grief she wandered about wailing, unaware that she was disrobed. The people mocked her and threw refuse at her. When the Buddha saw her, however, he contemplated the maturity of her knowledge, went to greet her, and gently urged her to recover her presence of mind. Suddenly Paṭācārā discerned her nakedness and with shame crouched near the earth until a man offered her a robe. Then she worshipped the Buddha's feet and begged his help. After she heard his preaching, she was ordained and eventually realized arahantship. The Buddha's compassionate action in this example is in counter-distinction to the animosity of the crowd; for him Paṭācārā's grief is a human problem and poignantly points to the dictum that all is suffering; that she is a woman is irrelevant.

2. *The Buddha's praise and ranking of the therīs' abilities.*

Dhammadinnā, for instance, answering the questions of Visākha «as one might cut a lotus-stalk with a knife», was praised by the Buddha for her great wisdom. Then he «ranked her foremost among the *therīs* who could preach.» Similar honours from the Buddha went to Bhaddā for her expertise in knowledge of her past lives, to Sakulā for her skill in the faculty of the «Heavenly Eye», to Sopā for her capacity of effort, to Pajāpatī for her foremost place in experience, and to Uppalavannā for her foremost rank in the mystic powers.

Here we note that the Buddha praises and ranks the abilities of the *therīs* in the same way that he judges the monks; in other words, it is accomplishment, not sex, that attracts the Buddha's attention.

3. *The Buddha's discernment of the therīs' maturity of knowledge.*

Sumanā, we are told, after hearing the Buddha teach, attained the fruit of the Path of No-return and asked for ordination: «And the Master, discerning the maturity of her knowledge, spake thus... when he had finished, she won arahantship.» In this category we find that the Buddha is attentive to the development of each woman and personally nurtures her growth toward the goal.

4. *darśana.*

The direct sight (*darśana*) of the Buddha may prompt a *therī* to realize arahantship; for example, after a woman was ordained by Pajāpatī and shown to the Master, she instantly achieved liberation. The commentator notes that the Buddha then emphasized «the visible basis whereby she had attained [enlightenment]» and uttered a verse to commemorate the occasion. A more common occurrence of such *darśana* is when the Buddha reveals himself to a *therī* when she meditates. Muttā, for instance, had begun to concentrate when «... the Master, sitting in the Fragrant Chamber of the Vihara, sent forth glory, and revealing himself as if seated before her, uttered the verse ...» This led to her arahantship. From such accounts we conclude that the Buddha shows no hesitation in revealing himself to women, directly or through Vision, to occasion their liberation. To put positively: he «appears» [to be] categorically for *nibbāna*.

In no recorded instance of the Buddha's interaction with women do we find an overt misogynous remark or a covert disapproval of their abilities and attainments. When they are suffering, he first soothes them and then preaches to them. When they are accomplished, he graciously praises them. And when they are mature in knowledge, he illumines them. Ever compassionate, the Buddha is depicted as the good doctor who knows how and when to offer the right

medicine. He never thinks that his women «patients» are unworthy. And it never occurs to them that the good doctor prefers men. In fact, no such issue is ever posed.

Any feeling of unworthiness is voiced only by the women themselves. Abhirūpa-Nandā, for instance, remained infatuated with her own beauty even after she entered the Order. We are told that she avoided the Buddha's presence because she feared his rebuke. The Buddha, however, knew that «she was ripe for knowledge» and insisted that all the *bhikkhūṇīs* (nuns) come to him for instruction; he thereby forced her attendance. On this occasion he conjured up a beautiful woman who then began to grow old. Beset by this apparition, Abhirūpa-Nandā understood the illusion of beauty and ego and the reality of the transitoriness of life. She attained arahantship. In the similar situation of Queen Khemā, the Buddha conjured up women like celestial nymphs and the conceited queen, seeing that the Enlightened One had around him women as lovely as goddesses, felt humiliated by her own ego. When she saw the heavenly damsel grow old, she received the Buddhist message, *sabbam aniccaṃ* (all is impermanent), entered the *saṅgha*, and became an arahant. Thus we see that according to these accounts the Buddha never rebukes or chides the display of such ego; rather, he sees it for what it is: only another type of bondage that must be removed. Consequently, he perceptively and subtly occasions the transformation of the individual from preoccupation with the self to awareness that all is without self (*sabbam anattaṃ*).

While it may be argued from the evidence of the *Therīgāthā* and its commentaries that the Buddha did not disparage women's intelligence, spiritual capacity, or tenacity, there are numerous accounts that Māra did. It is Māra whom we might call the male chauvinist of the Pāli Canon, for his attack against female aspirants typifies traditional aspersions cast against women: «With her two-finger consciousness *That* is no woman competent to gain!» Māra insinuates that women lack strength, discipline, concentration and independence. He compliments their beauty, attempts seduction and criticizes their sensualness. He then decries their incapacity for ethics.

But the *therīs* recognize Māra for what he is: The Tempter, Evil par excellence. It is Māra who vigilantly aspires and conspires to prevent *anyone's* enlightenment. He appeals to the human love of pleasure and company; he stirs up sensual desires in individuals; he distracts them from concentration; he mocks their teacher, the Buddha; he entices them to aspire to the realms of the gods; he argues that the ascetics lack acquaintance with the true Norm; and he spins dialectic webs around their views to ensnare them in false opinions. Because the *therīs* recognize Māra as the arch enemy of the Buddha's *dhamma* (teaching), they understand his attack against their woman's nature for what it ultimately is: universal obstruction to the goal of liberation. Against this they are vigilant: «How should the woman's nature hinder us? Whose hearts are firmly set, who ever more with growing knowledge onward in the Path?...»



Hayes

It is obvious that Buddha did not listen to Māra but rather to Ānanda, for after his initial doubt of whether or not to admit women to the *saṅgha*, he made a misogynous remark to them, according to the *Therīgāthā*, (iv) Yet we must still ask: what accounts for the Buddha's initial doubt? We suggest that at first the Buddha was afraid not of the ethical incapacity of women but of their potential ethical obstruction in that they might attract, intentionally or unintentionally, the monks. Likewise, if the monks had occasion to interact with the nuns, they too might enflame desire. Passion (*kāma*) is the foremost example of the Buddhist fundamental category *tāṇha* (thirst or desire) as that which binds one to existence and condemns one to suffering. No wonder the Buddha wanted to bypass any unnecessary opportunity for male-female attraction. Moreover, since the *saṅgha* had constantly to present a respectable, nay spiritual image, the Buddha must have realized that the least suggestion that his followers were not observing strict chastity of thought, word, and deed would be detrimental to recruitment. Finally, that women in Brahmanical society remained by and large in the home meant that any attraction for them to leave the domestic sphere might threaten the social foundation of the society. The Buddha no doubt was sensitive to the prevailing view that associated woman with the home and did not wish to invite rebuke or censure from the society. To conclude, we suggest that the Buddha was initially unwilling to admit women to the *saṅgha* because he desired an undefiled and speedy propagation of his *dhamma* (teaching). Hence his gut response, so characteristic of his temperament, was *pragmatic*. It was his missionary zeal and his due acknowledgement of societal values that made him cautious, not his reaction to women *per se*.

Now we are in a position to argue that once the Buddha promulgated sufficient *vinaya* rules to govern the interaction of the *theras* and *therīs* (his initial doubt being reflected in the greater number of rules for the *therīs*), he dismissed the issue altogether, compassionately related to the *therīs* in the same way as to the *theras*, and considered the «femininity» of the nuns as no greater hindrance to arahantship than the «masculinity» of the monks. For to the Buddha, it is *human nature* that is characterized by desire and ego; this alone is the human condition that must be transcended through right understanding.

This hermeneutic enables us to account for 1) the ease and naturalness with which the Buddha encouraged and supported female aspirants and 2) the lack of comparison of their feats with those of the monks. Might we not say that for the Buddha the eligibility of women for the *saṅgha* had really become a non-issue. Because he saw no reason to single them out either positively or negatively, he best expressed his *dhamma* of the universality of means (the eight-fold path) and the goal (*nibbāna*). As such, he was surely beyond ambiguity. Moreover, we think that he was beyond making a general statement about the soteriological equality of monks and nuns. For that would indicate that the sex of an individual and not the *humanness* was the primary distinction to be made prior to the consideration of *capacity* for *nibbāna*. Through silence the Buddha thus avoided even the slightest insinuation that women's nature might hamper them. Such silence, we surmise, was not a silent approval necessitated by Buddha's embarrassment over his initial fears nor a diplomatic silence masking his continued unease. Rather, it was a genuine silence reflecting his conviction that this was a non-issue.

Might we not conclude by stating that Ānanda's argument settled the issue once and for all? And *compassion to all* subsequently characterized the Buddha's every act.

Footnotes

- i. See I.B. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywoman and Almswoman* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp. 102-104.
- ii. See Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*, v.1: *Psalms of the Sisters*, v.2: *Psalms of the Brethren* (London: Pali Text Society, 1909, 1913).
- iii. All of the ensuing accounts of the *therīs* are from Mrs. Rhys Davids' translation of the *Therīgāthā*, with notes based on the *Paramatthadīpanī*, cited above. Any quotation is from this source.
- iv. However, there are misogynous statements attributed to the Buddha in other books of the Pāli Canon. The most famous one appears in *Cullavagga* X.256; we are told that if women had not entered the Order, then the true *dhamma* (teaching of the Buddha) would have endured for 1000 years rather than only 500. The question becomes: are these the words of the Buddha or some later misogynous editor of the Canon? It must be noted that the tone conflicts with the testimonies by the women themselves about their interaction with the Buddha as recorded in the *Therīgāthā*. The women's accounts should be taken as primary testimony. If such statements were the product of later male editors, then one must ask the question: why did they distort the Buddha's view of the nuns? Perhaps they deduced misogyny on the part of the Buddha from the account of Buddha's initial reluctance to allow women into the *saṅgha* (Order). Or perhaps their own misogynous attitude towards women was a prevalent view in the society, and this is why they attributed to Māra, a mythic figure, so many misogynous statements. Then too, as celibate monks, the editors may have blamed women for their own lack of discipline. Finally, in the example cited, one could argue that the source is late because of the reference to the decline of the *dhamma* 500 years after the Buddha. Any frustration on the part of the monks regarding the difficulty to preserve the *dhamma* might make them use the nuns as scapegoats. Or perhaps, by this time there was a lack of discipline by the nuns in the *saṅgha* and such criticism was legitimate.





TAKEN FROM AN EARLY 16TH CENTURY GERMAN WOODCUT, «FALL OF MAN»,
BY HANS BALDUNG GRIER.

GOD - GODDESS - GOD-US

PART OF ME

There is a part of me that wants
 your hand to hold me fast
 Turning me at your desire to meet
 your need - evoking my ownwomanness to match the man in you.

There is a part of me that wants
 your arms to enfold me tight
 Encircling me with your demands to answer
 your expectations - promising mywomanness protection by the man in you.

There is a part of me that wants
 your phallus to penetrate me hard
 Entering me for your pleasure to discover
 the energy that is us joining mywomanness forever to the man in you.

PART OF ME II

There is a part of me that wants
 your hand to stroke my face
 Turning me with your gentleness to meet
 your gaze - evoking my own man-ness to meet the woman in you.

There is a part of me that wants
 your arms to move with mine
 Discovering new rhythms which reveal
 my strength responding with my man-ness to the woman in you.

There is a part of me that wants
 your body to join with mine
 Exploring our vulnerability to discover
 the energy that is us revealing our wholeness,
 woman and man, in me, in you -
 God - Goddess - God-US

Rosemary Sullivan

A GUIDE FOR ENCOUNTERING BEAUTY

Do not presume on your innocence.
 Prepare for the onslaught of Beauty.
 Fast, practice silence,
 hope to be humble and pure of heart.
 Beauty will surprise you
 like a well-trained army.
 Beauty will disarm you
 with a guileless smile.
 Impose no conditions,
 entertain no expectations,
 Beauty is simply passing through.
 Your house, left behind,
 may burn to the ground.
 You must not protest
 nor hope to understand it.
 Beauty is a gift.

Florence M. Hayes



COMPASSION IS THE PRODUCT OF CREATION THEOLOGY.

ABOUT MEISTER ECKHART, WOMEN ERASED, AND BLESSED YAHWEH'S ONGOING ACT OF CREATION

FLORENCE HAYES

Meister Eckhart lived in the womb of God and the womb of God was a cosmic sea. He would stretch out his arms in love to all of God's creation and bless it as God blessed it, and then, sinking back into himself he would say, «But no, I don't know God at all». He would open his hands and let it all go. And then, in his emptiness, God would plant the seed of something new.

A man had a dream, a daydream: it seemed to him that he was big with nothingness as a woman is with child. In this nothingness God was born. He was the fruit of nothingness. God was born in nothingness. (i)

Meister Eckhart was a fourteenth century Dominican theologian and preacher from Thuringia. His thought was greatly influenced by religious thinkers of his time who were women. They were Beguines, lower class laywomen, self-supporting artisans, and women of God. Although they took no formal vows and were free of Church authority, they were not beyond the purview of Pope John XXII:

It has been repeatedly and reliably reported to us that some of them, as if possessed with madness, dispute and preach about the Highest Trinity and divine essence...Therefore...we must prohibit forever their status and abolish them completely from the church of God. (ii)

Meister Eckhart was condemned along with the Beguines, and the official church has been denied the richness of their God-talk for six hundred and fifty years.

Matthew Fox, a Dominican priest on the faculty of Mundelein College in Chicago, has translated a number of Eckhart's sermons and presented them with commentaries in a new volume entitled *Breakthrough*. We can pick up again the conversation of Meister Eckhart and his female friends.

Theirs was a creation theology, a biblical spirituality which celebrated God's creative word and his blessing. We are not original sinners; we are original blessings. To be holy is to create and bless as God does. The soul is that space where God's compassion dwells. We reach out to all of creation with compassion.

The logic is dialectic rather than dualistic. There are no «either-ors», only «both-and». Male/female, evil/good, life/death, empty/full - everything is in relationship and our one sin is the fracture of unity.

Eckhart's dialectic permits us to read old stories in a new way. Duality is our primal wound. Eve knew she could bear children. She might have thought she was God or getting close. Spiritual pride is a God/creature duality. Adam denied Eve. In the crunch, she was no longer «bone of my bone» but «the woman you put with me». The splitting off of male, female and God is a schizophrenia, a disintegration.

Two scriptural themes seem to provide a corrective to this fracture. God's creation continues in us when we accept our creaturehood. God creates new life through the barren woman. God continues His creation in history, but only through the youngest brother, the rejected, unimportant, somewhat womanish one.

I did know thee in the wilderness in the land of great drought.
(Hosea 13:5)

Sarah, Rebekah, Manoah's wife, Hannah, Elizabeth and Mary are dry-wombed and dry-breasted. Useless, unproductive, contributing little to society's demands, some of them live to see their slaves and more fruitful sisters take precedence over them.

In sorrow and humiliation, they turn to Yahweh, and Sarah gives birth to Isaac; Rebekah gives birth to Jacob and Esau; Rachel gives birth to Joseph and Benjamin; Samson, God's Nazirite, is born to Manoah's wife; Samuel the prophet is born to Hannah; John the Baptist is born to Elizabeth and Mary gives birth to Jesus.

The youngest son rejected brother lives in a situation comparable to that of the barren woman. He is the victim of nature or culture, and sometimes both. He expects no special blessing or inheritance from his father. He is not especially notable for his size or strength, but somehow, he seems to enjoy God's favour. Like Abel, he is the brother who is most likely to be killed. This youngest, least powerful, «unlegitimated» son must leave home and take a perilous journey before he can be reconciled with his brothers.

But the theme of the youngest son is not simply reiterated throughout scripture. The youngest son moves creatively through history with an ever expanding circle of brothers. Jacob and Esau were twins in contention from the womb. Esau was the first-born and favourite of his father, Isaac. His was «the smell of a fertile field blessed by Yahweh». But smooth-skinned Jacob had to leave home, endure trials and struggle with God before he could return home and embrace his brother (or reintegrate). Abel dies. Jacob survives to reconcile. Joseph will rescue those who never left home. Joseph's brothers are also the tribes of Israel, and beginning with his story, the least powerful brother is called to save his people.

Like Jacob, Joseph and Moses must live by their wits and the aid of Yahweh. They conquer in the court of the enemy and rescue their people. Gideon and David go unrecognized by their families until they are summoned from their common labour to be Yahweh's instruments of rescue in war. Jesus is unrecognized and rejected by his brothers (whose circle now extends to include everyone), and he must travel a *via dolorosa* before there can be rescue and reintegration between God and the female in a healing embrace.

The narrative makes us care about the seven barren women and powerless sons. They are the protagonists of our scripture. They are neither hero nor anti-hero. They are simply humiliated, the humus of creation. They are stand-ins for the reader.

Yahweh is the hero. He comes with His visions of gardens and freedom, just as it used to be. «I am like a cypress ever green. All your fruitfulness comes from me.» (Hosea 14:9). He makes promises of children and cattle and goats. He gives blessings that are more than words. He brings life when you least expect it. Sarah laughs. Hannah sings. Mary writes a poem. The men make a meal offering, a sacrifice.

God's magnificent seven are projections of the reader, but gender is no limitation. Everyone is invited to drop his persona, let go, be humus, conceive God, start a journey, create a future.

Saint Antony of the desert, Francis, the poverello of Assisi, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, all who live lives of poverty and celibacy have taken up the image of the barren woman and the dispensible younger brother. We are meant to question their lifestyles and be disturbed.

The objection that Yahweh seems to be a masculine god who denies women the power to conceive and bear children is cancelled out when the barren woman is seen as a parallel of the younger son. The barren woman and the younger son are simply God's holy ground. They have no illusions. Yahweh fashioned them of dust from the soil. Then He breathed into their nostrils a breath of life.

The barren woman and the younger son are life-bent prophets of hope because Yahweh has blessed them. Through the particularity of their flesh, God's compassion extends through history like water from the rock, like the river that flows out of Eden.

Looking through the eyes of Meister Eckhart and the Beguines, a new hermeneutic emerges. It could be the one we are looking for - the hermeneutic which will rescue and reintegrate our broken humanity.

Footnotes

- i. Matthew Fox, O.P., *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 309.
- ii. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HETERODOXY

FREDERIK WISSE

In her provocative book, *The Gnostic Gospels*,⁽ⁱ⁾ Elaine Pagels included a chapter called «God the Father/God the Mother» which contrasts the status of woman in Gnosticism with that in orthodox Christianity. Her argument runs basically as follows. Orthodox Christianity stands in the tradition of Judaism in rejecting any feminine symbolism with reference to the deity. A striking exception to this is found in early Christian heretical writings, especially gnostic ones, which freely use feminine and sexual imagery in their description of God. Pagels concludes that the reason such writings were not accepted into the canon was because orthodox Christians rejected the practical consequences that Gnostics derived from their doctrine of God. This involved the equal status with men which women enjoyed in the gnostic sects. In this the Gnostics continued the openness towards women which had characterized the first decades of the church. By the time of the second century, most Christian churches had abandoned the equality of women, and groups which still allowed women in leadership roles were considered heretical. The implication of Pagels' reconstruction of early Christian history is obvious. The contemporary demand to open up leadership functions in the church to women is really a return to early Christian practice which survived for some time among groups branded as heretical by emerging orthodoxy. However, the real heresy was the exclusion of women from leadership positions which was imposed on Christianity in the second century and which wrongly became the «orthodox» position. Only in recent years have scholars unmasked the subordination of women in the church for what it is: a deliberate falsification of the original teaching and practice of the Church.

Picturing the history of the Church this way has a long and hallowed tradition in Christian polemics. The claim is that the earliest period was a «golden age» characterized by true doctrine and practice and free from dissention. This period was followed by a serious corruption of the Church due to outside influences and compromises with the world. Consequently, the church reformer, whether ancient or modern, would argue that certain doctrines and practices of long standing are really a corruption and that his or her position is a return to the «golden age». This was the way the Reformers defended their discontinuation of Catholic ritual. It is also a favourite argument of Christian sects against main-line Christianity. We have a good example in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This church teaches that temple worship and priesthood were integral and essential parts of the original form of Christianity. During the great apostasy after the time of the apostles, temple worship was abandoned and the priesthood limited to the clergy. The church leaders of the apostasy tried to obliterate all evidence of the earlier practice. The restoration of the true temple worship was, of course, due to a direct revelation to Joseph Smith and not to a careful scholarly study of the ancient sources. However, recent Mormon apologists have now turned to the New Testament and early Christian literature and found quite a number of references and hints--missed by the apostate censors--which would prove that temple worship was central in

the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and that many Christians for several centuries longed for its restoration. New Testament and «Patristic» scholars who do not agree with this show themselves to be biased historians.

The modern black and women's liberation movements have tended to use a similar argument. In addition to the fully justified and urgent demands for equal rights, which enjoy wide acceptance in theory, there has been a development in these movements to see history dominated by a sinister plot which took away the equality that blacks and women once enjoyed, and that tried to obliterate all evidence of the original equality. During the turbulent days of the black power movement some ten years ago, one of my seminars was interrupted by a couple of black students who told the class that white scholarship had ignored and covered up the significant role that blacks had played in early Christianity, including the fact that several of the apostles were black. My students, including a number of blacks, were stunned. Many of my colleagues experienced similar confrontations. Here, for a just cause, history was being distorted. The question of the role of blacks or women in early Christianity as such is important and legitimate. But if the historian has a great stake in the answer, of if the inquiry becomes a part of a polemic against traditionalists, then there is a grave danger that the outcome is presupposed and probably invalid.

It is rather ironical that Pagels' book is heavily indebted to Walter Bauer who gave the death blow to the traditional picture of Christianity. (ii) He showed that there never was a golden age that was followed by a period during which «outsiders» tried to pervert the apostolic faith. Rather, Christian beginnings were highly pluralistic and the claims of later orthodoxy to originality were not necessarily better than those of the «heretics». Orthodoxy did not precede heresy, but like its rivals evolved from an ill-defined and fluid situation during which there was not yet an «orthodox» position on many important issues. Pagels uses Bauer to score many points against the orthodox «villains», but reverts back to the old scheme by assuming a golden age of male-female equality at the beginning of Christianity.

In spite of such misgivings about the framework of Pagels' argument, the details deserve to be taken seriously. I shall comment in turn on feminine and sexual imagery used for God in orthodox and heretical circles, the instances of women in leadership roles in Christian heterodoxy, the evidence for a «golden age» of male-female equality in earliest Christianity, and finally the view of femininity in the early Church, including heterodoxy.

I God the Mother

The clear dividing line which Pagels assumes between orthodox and gnostic circles on the use of feminine and sexual imagery for God is imaginary. On the one hand, the Old Testament and orthodox Christian sources are not without such imagery, even though it is less common and pronounced than in heterodoxy. On the other hand, much of the use of such imagery in Christian gnostic writings merely involves speculation on the divine attributes which have a feminine gender and are as such hardly heretical. The very elaborate cosmological schemes Pagels reports

are found in texts which basically represent a non-Christian Gnosticism that has been superficially and secondarily Christianized. These secret books, used only on the fringes of Christianity, were never considered for inclusion in the Christian canon, and as such never specifically excluded.

There is no evidence that the defenders of the orthodox faith were particularly sensitive about feminine imagery, used for the Godhead, and that they consciously tried to avoid it. They do not dwell on the issue in their polemics. The whole elaborate cosmology of the Gnostics, including the feminine imagery, was simply dismissed by them as ridiculous. Their concern was rather centred on the distinction made by the Gnostics between the perfect, supreme God and the imperfect creator. Pagels is quite correct in seeing a connection here with the orthodox insistence on the supremacy of the bishop. (iii) In contrast, Pagels' claim that the Gnostics drew practical consequences from the female aspect of God for the status of women, and that the orthodox opposed it because of this, is completely unfounded. Furthermore in light of the history of religions, any causal relationship between the prominence or absence of the feminine element in the divine and the status of women in religion and society is very improbable.

II Women in Leadership Roles in Christian Heterodoxy

To support her claim that Gnostic Christians drew social consequences from their peculiar conception of God, Pagels presents four examples of heretical groups in which women assumed leadership roles: the Marcosians, Marcionites, Montanists and Carpocratians. The impression she leaves is that these are only random examples; they are the tip of the iceberg, indicative of the 90% that remains under water. However, this impression is false; the visible «tip» is all there is, and is itself not what it seems to be. Under careful scrutiny it all but disappears. In this case, we cannot say that other evidence for the equal status of women in the sects was suppressed by the orthodox Church. The orthodox heresiologists were more than eager to bring the aberrant practices of their opponents into the open.

First one should note that three of the four instances given by Pagels disprove rather than support a connection between the doctrine of God and the status of women. As she knows, the Marcionites, Montanists and Carpocratians did not deviate significantly from the orthodox, masculine image of God. These are not just exceptions to the general rule but involve three out of four cases!

Secondly, the nature of the evidence needs to be considered. We are dealing not with sympathetic or objective reports, but with orthodox propaganda designed to discredit the heretical groups. Such polemical accounts tend to exaggerate and draw inferences for which there is no basis. For example, Gnostics were frequently accused of immoral behaviour by their orthodox opponents. Their own writings indicate the opposite; they were far more ascetic than the orthodox Church. The heresiologists based the libertine charge on the fact that the heretical books available to them did not reflect the theological basis which they considered essential for a virtuous life. The obviously ascetic life style of the sectarians was explained away as a false front. (iv)

Furthermore, the Church Fathers assumed that false teaching would of necessity lead to immoral practice, while true doctrine could not but issue into virtuous living. Thus the presence of false teaching was sufficient basis to attribute wrong practices to the adherents. Though every preacher longs for such a causal connection between theory and practice, history shows that this is exceptional. If there is a real connection between the two, then it is more likely that the theory has been constructed to defend an established practice. Pagels tries to have it both ways. For the heretics she assumes that they derived male-female equality from their doctrine of God, while she accuses the orthodox of eliminating the feminine element in the deity in order to support their practice of excluding women from church offices. The evidence does not support either case.

Pagels' first example is based on Irenaeus' report on Marcus the Magician. (v) Irenaeus assumes that this Marcus, a wandering preacher and miracle worker, was a follower of Valentinus, probably on the basis of certain similarities in their mythological terminology. This religious charlatan - the type is well-documented in recent history - preyed on Christians, especially on rich women, for the sake of money and sex. There is no evidence that he established a sect, and it is even very unlikely in view of the way he operated. Those who had been physically and/or spiritually seduced by him generally returned to the orthodox fold, according to Irenaeus, greatly regretting their error and folly.

Pagels' conclusion that Marcus invited women to act as priests in celebrating the eucharist goes well beyond Irenaeus' description. The eucharist involved was really a magician's show during which Marcus changed wine in a chalice into blood and miraculously multiplied wine in order to impress the audience, especially the women. He would invite a woman - a different one for each performance - to hold a small chalice filled with wine and asked her to speak the magical words of thanksgiving, the eucharistia. After this she would pour her cup into a much larger one held by Marcus. After some hocus-pocus he showed the audience that the large chalice had been filled to the brim by the small one. A similar magician's trick is still a favourite of children at birthday parties. The woman in question was only a foil for Marcus to convince her and others of his magical powers. There is no basis to pose here a Marcosian Church with female priests, or to take Marcus to be a typical representative of Valentinianism.

Much more significant, though Pagels does not refer to this, is the report that Marcus induced his women converts to prophesy. This indicates that Marcus was part of the charismatic movement which swept through the Church during the latter half of the second century, especially in Asia Minor, the area with the highest concentration of Christians. It is important to note that Irenaeus, the orthodox bishop of Lyon, who like Marcus came from Asia Minor, had no objection to the fact that women prophesied. (vi) Pagels' claim that this was strictly forbidden to women in the orthodox church (p. 59) is false. Prophecy appears to have been more common among women than men and it is attested in the Christian canon by such examples as the prophetess Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Anna (Lk. 2:36), the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9) and such texts as Joel

2:28 quoted in Acts 2:17 and I Cor. 11:5. The issue in the late second century was not whether women were allowed to prophesy but whether prophecy could be accepted at all.

The battle over prophecy focused on Montanism, the «New Prophecy», which spread from Asia Minor to other parts of the Roman empire. Montanus, the founder of this charismatic, apocalyptic and ascetic movement, claimed to be the mouthpiece of the Paraclete. Two of his female followers, Priscilla and Maximilla, left their husbands and came to share the gift of prophecy with Montanus. For some time the Church was at a loss how to deal with this popular movement. The «New prophecy» was quite orthodox in doctrine, radically ascetic in practice, and did not challenge the hierarchical structure of the Church. There is no evidence that women were part of the Montanist hierarchy; all the names we have refer to men. The gift of prophecy does not imply a leadership function. The authority of Priscilla and Maximilla was not in their person or position, but in the fact that the Montanists believed that the Spirit spoke through them. It is telling that Tertullian, who rejected any kind of leadership role for women in the Church, came to embrace Montanism.

Only much later, in the fourth century, do we have a comment by Epiphanius that the Quintillians in Asia Minor, supposedly an offshoot from the earlier Montanists, allowed women to be bishops and priests. Epiphanius mentions this as one of the differences between the Montanists and Quintillians. (vii) His description of this sect is so confused and questionable that we cannot arrive at a clear picture other than that it must have involved a small and local apocalyptic sect.

The only hint about the status of women in the Marcionite church is the claim by the fourth-century heresiologist Epiphanius that «they permit women to baptize.» (viii) Whether this would have been true also for an earlier period is unknown. Marcionite Christianity survived over many centuries and it can be assumed that it underwent considerable change. The permission for women to baptize may be similar to orthodox teaching which insisted that the validity of baptism did not depend on the baptizer, whether male or female, Christian, heretic or pagan, but rather on whether the prescribed form was used. In any case, the right to baptize does not imply a leadership role.

Harnack in his famous monograph *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* concludes on the basis of a number of references that the Marcionites had some kind of hierarchy similar to the orthodox Church, but that the distinctions between the offices and between clergy and laity were much less pronounced. (ix) In this the Marcionites stand between Catholic Christianity and the anti-clerical sects. Furthermore, the strict asceticism maintained in Marcionite circles removed the factor of sexual differentiation between men and women. This might have made it possible for Marcionites to open up leadership functions to women. Since, however, we lack positive evidence, this remains pure speculation.



WOODCUT BY FLORENCE HAYES

The last group listed by Page1s in support of her thesis involves the Carpocratians. Our knowledge of them is much more limited than that of the Marcionites and Montanists. The relevant reference is actually not to this obscure sect but to a certain Marcellina whom Irenaeus associates with the Carpocratians. (x) Such relationships are often arbitrarily assigned by the heresiologists who were eager to prove the existence of a tradition of falsehood parallel to the apostolic tradition, and to suggest «guilt by association». Irenaeus does not suggest, as Page1s concludes, that Marcellina «travelled to Rome to represent the Carpocratian group» (p. 60). All we can glean from Irenaeus' brief account is that Marcellina came to Rome sometime after A.D. 155 and became the leader of a group of syncretistic Christians who called themselves «Gnostics.» They worshipped icons of Jesus, modelled after originals made by Pontius Pilate, and icons of some of the Greek philosophers. Thus on the fringes of second century Christianity it was possible for a woman to be the leader of a cult. This tells us little about the general status of women in early Christian heterodoxy and nothing at all about the social consequences heretics drew from their conception of God.

The closest we come to a general statement about the role of women in heretical circles is an oft-quoted observation by Tertullian to the effect that heretical women dare to teach, dispute, perform exorcisms and cures, and perhaps even baptize. (xi) Even though Tertullian may be generalizing on the basis of very limited evidence, the claim is not improbable. The Gnostic and other heterodox groups tended to be charismatic, anti-clerical and other worldly, which could open up possibilities for women which orthodoxy and society at large denied them. The unstructured and fluid relationship among believers characteristic of such groups and the emphasis on spiritual gifts could bring individual women to a position of prominence.

I have already mentioned the importance of prophetesses in earliest Christianity and Montanism. We can add to this the report of Hippolytus about a Gnostic leader called Apelles who followed the teaching of the prophetess Philumene. (xii) Also exorcism and healing were not as such forbidden to women. Even though such special gifts do not imply a leadership role, they would have given a woman a place of prominence and influence. It appears that where the church offices became well-defined and the charismata suppressed - the two tend to go hand in hand - the restrictions on women solidified.

III «The Golden Age»

The status of women during the early New Testament period has been treated numerous times in recent years because of its apparent relevance to the liberation of women in the Church. This makes a dispassionate interpretation very difficult. The wish becomes the father of the exegesis to have at least Jesus and Paul come out on the right side of the issue.

Inevitably Jesus' free relationship with women is taken to be evidence of his support for male-female equality. There is no evidence, however, that his behaviour was atypical for his time and place. The Jewish restrictions on male-

female relationships that are mentioned in this connection are derived from much later Rabbinic sources. According to the Gospels; Jesus' conflict with Jewish religious custom did not involve his attitude towards women. We do not know his views on the status of women and thus these cannot be brought into the discussion.

Our evidence for the first generation of Christians is limited to Paul and thus reflects only Hellenistic Christianity. In spite of gallant attempts by recent New Testament exegetes to rescue him, Paul's attitude to women remains an embarrassment. The modest request by the Corinthian Church that women be allowed to pray with their heads unveiled is rejected with a barrage of illogical arguments which close with an impatient appeal to the status quo in the other Churches (I Cor. 11:2-16).

The notorious and immoderate demand that women be silent in Church (I Cor. 14: 33b-36) is not out of character. The claim that these verses are a gloss, added by a later hand on the basis of the deutero-Pauline passage found in I Tim. 2: 11-15, has no serious textual basis. The transposition of verses 34-35 to the end of the chapter is attested in only a few manuscripts of which the fifth century *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis* is the oldest. Its text is uncontrolled and invariably rejected by textual critics when it reads against such major early witnesses as P. 46 and *Codices Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*, as is the case here. Also verse 36 makes no sense when 34-35 are removed. No one would have suggested a gloss here if the content had not offended our modern sensibilities. The supposed contradiction of these verses with I Cor. 11:5 and the references to prominent women in Paul's letters is imagined. If a woman prophesied in the congregation, it was not she who spoke but the Spirit through her. Prayer is not listed in I Cor. 14 as a public function in the congregation. Even if it was, it would be wrong to refer to it as a «leadership» role, as is often done in recent literature. There were no leadership functions at this time in the Pauline Churches other than the leading of the Spirit through the charismata. This had led to a disorderly situation which Paul tried to remedy by silencing the women, who formed, no doubt, the majority. Verses 34-35 indicate that the prohibition refers to teaching and discussion.

Much has been made of the women whom Paul mentions prominently in his greetings. Modern interpreters jump to the conclusion that they must have been Church leaders. What is clear is that such women as Chloe (I Cor. 1:11), Prisca (I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-5), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2) and Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) were patronesses who played a key role at this early stage. Most likely the Church would meet at their houses and the needy depended on their charity; this gave them a natural position of prominence. It is no surprise that Paul makes a special point of mentioning and praising them. There is no lack of examples from a later time of wealthy Christian women who exerted a great deal of influence in the Church.

These passages would never have led interpreters to the conclusion that Paul supports the equality of women if it were not for Gal. 3:28. This verse has become the starting point of the discussion and is used as the key to other

passages on women in Paul. After concluding that «in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith» (Gal. 3:26), Paul explains further: «For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus» (Gal. 3:27-28). The topic is divine sonship which the believer has through Christ. As an adopted «son of God», it makes no difference whether one is Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. Such human distinctions fall away in the relationship between God, the Father, and the believer. Clearly, Paul is not speaking here about human relationships but about the believer's relationship to God. Paul saw and intended no social consequences. As we see in I Cor. 7:20-23 and Philemon he did not want to abolish slavery. I Cor. 9:20 and Rom. 9-11 indicate that he did not do away with the distinction between Jew and Greek. And such passages as I Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33b-37 leave no doubt about his continuing belief in the subordination of women.

Whether we like it or not, there was no «golden age» of male-female equality in the early Church. The Paulinist who wrote I Timothy, perhaps early in the second century, is not a villain who stole away the freedom which Christian women once had. I Tim. 2:11-12 is simply a restatement of I Cor. 14:33b-37. The development towards a male hierarchy in early Catholicism is not a break with an early period in which women shared equally in Church leadership. At best it could be called a break with a charismatic past. The male hierarchy itself was most likely modelled after synagogical and secular Hellenistic structures of authority.

IV Femininity in the Early Church

Paul's view of women and that of the early Church in general were deeply rooted in a basic misunderstanding of maleness and femaleness current in the Hellenistic world. It was believed that males were characterized by reason and mind and females by emotion or passions. It is curious that this disastrous myth is still kept alive today. This is due to a radical value reversal. Reason is now commonly associated with insensitivity and dullness while the emotions are connected with creativity and humaneness. Not so for the ancients! Reason was a divine quality while the emotions belonged to man's animal nature.

In terms of sexual ethics this led to a mistake which seems strange to us today. It was thought that men did not have a natural sex drive. Sexuality was seen as essentially a part of femininity. It was because of women and their seductive beauty that men were brought into temptation. If femininity could be removed, man's thoughts would be pure and unencumbered. Male ascetics went to ridiculous lengths removing everything feminine from their environment. To no avail; Satan tempted them with dreams and visions of beautiful women. Such extreme feelings, which were typical for Christian heterodoxy, gave rise to encratism, i.e. the rejection of marriage, or a spiritual or sexless marriage, and different forms of monasticism.

The moderates in the Church shared this negative view of femininity, but shied away from the radical, ascetic implications. Thus Paul counselled the Corinthians who thought they should renounce sex and marriage that celibacy would indeed be best, but in view of the temptation to immorality facing the single person, marriage would be the lesser evil. Celibacy requires a special gift (I Cor. 7:1-8). Clement of Alexandria, who wrote late in the second century, shows how much moderates were put on the defensive. He claims that the advantage of the married state over celibacy is that it tests a man's dedication to continence. (xiii) He thought also that it was possible for a man to beget children by an act of will without passion. (xiv) No such claim is made for women.

In heterodox circles there were no such restraints. The following examples are typical. According to the encratic Gospel of the Egyptians, quoted by Clement, the Saviour «came to destroy the work of the female», meaning by «female», desire (xv) A Platonic-gnostic treatise urges: «Flee from the madness and bondage of femininity and choose for yourselves the salvation of masculinity». (xvi) The same sentiment is found in the encratic Gospel of Thomas where Jesus says about Mary (Magdalene) «I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of heaven.» (xvii) Only by denying her femininity and entering the «male» state of sexual neutrality is it possible for a woman to be saved. Such a powerful bias against women left no room for male-female equality. This makes leadership functions for women in Christian heterodoxy even less likely than in the orthodox Church. It did not strike the ancients as contradictory that women, although they were the embodiment of the passions, were more ready to renounce sex than men.

Postscript

In the polemic against the traditionalist position on women in the Church, the appeal to an original period of male-female equality which survived only in heretical circles is not only unhistorical but also futile. If the situation in the New Testament period is normative, as both sides would claim, the traditionalist will have the better argument. For them, the later New Testament writings, which are unambiguous on the issue, are just as authoritative as the earlier ones. The argument will never be won on the basis of exegetical and historical studies. Rather it should be admitted that Paul, no less than the early Church, was wrong in denying equality to women in the Church. Even traditionalists have silently admitted that Paul was wrong on such similar issues as slavery and sexuality. The demand for equal access to leadership functions for women in the Church is well enough grounded in our modern understanding of masculinity and femininity that we can allow Paul and the early Church to be what they were, whether we like it or not.

Footnotes

- i. New York: Random House, 1979.
- ii. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), (German edition 1934).

- iii. Chapter II, «One God, One Bishop: The Politics of Monotheism.»
- iv. I have elaborated this point in «Die Sextus-Sprüche und das problem der gnostischen Ethik,» in *Zun Hellenismus in den Schriften von Nag Hammadi* by A. Böhlig and F. Wisse (GOF VI.2, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 55-86.
- v. *Adv. haer.* I, 13.
- vi. *Adv. haer.* I, 13.4; III, 11.9; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 88.
- vii. *Pan.* 49
- viii. *Pan.* 42, 4.5.
- ix. *TU* 45 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), pp. 146f.
- x. *Adv. haer.* I, 25, 6.
- xi. *Praescr.* 41, 5, quoted by Pagels on p. 60.
- xii. *Ref.* 8, 38.
- xiii. *Strom.* VII, 70.
- xiv. *Strom.* III, 58.
- xv. *Strom.* III, 63.
- xvi. *Zostrianus*, NH VIII 131, 5-8.
- xvii. NH II 51, 22-26.

The blessing of the God of Sarah
as of Abraham,

The blessing of the Son, born of
the woman Mary,

The blessing of the Holy Spirit,
who broods over us as a mother with
her children

Be with you all.

Benediction used at the
General Council of the
United Church of Canada, 1980,
by the Rt. Reverend Lois Wilson,
Moderator.

The following poem was translated for Dr. Sölle's use in her lecture in the series «Women Erased?--Power, Patriarchy and Religion» held at the Faculty of Religious Studies this Spring. The reader will recognize the contemporary Polish struggles as the immediate background of the poem. Dr. Sölle is the Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

PLEASE! SING ABOUT ROSA ANNA AND ROSA

Ach! don't tell me about your identity crisis
put an end to this psychostrumming on your guitar
sing something else
sing about peace
sing about resistance

Well sing about anna walentinowic
crane-driver in danzig
sing about the great strike and why it broke out
and don't forget rosa parks
never never forget that she kept her seat
on the bus in alabama where blacks weren't supposed to sit
she did it for all her sisters
white though we be

Yes sing about the women
whom to see makes me stronger
whom to behold makes me grin
as broadly as anna the crane-driver
they were so scared of her
they fired her before it all began
a preventive dismissal from her place on the crane

And don't forget the great sister rosa luxemburg
she came from anna's country
the freedom-addicted little land
divided and gagged, occupied and possessed
beaten and raped
but they couldn't throttle it
ach! do sing about rosa
and of the spontaneity of the people
in whom she believed
like anna the crane-driver

Have you seen her photo
Please! sing again about anna
and the great hope of the dock workers
for meat and the right to fight back
for bread and roses, you know

anna walentinowic
 the newspapers aren't talking about you
 because in this land it is unknown
 what it means to be a woman
ein Mensch
 a crane-driver
 who makes strikes possible
 because we always gape at these sweet playboy bunnies
 not at a woman with a grin like anna
 four children and fired from her job

Put an end to this psychostrumming on your guitar
 sing about peace
 sing about resistance
 i'm fed up with this whining self-concern
 sing about anna and the two rosas
 sing about real people
 strong and vulnerable women
 caring for others yet independent
 fighting also for you at the counter of the chase manhattan bank
 for all the sisters
 sing about bread and roses
 sing about the price of meat and a free union
 sing about steel-helmets and what's underneath them
 sing against nuclear weapons and what's behind them

you can't arrest the sun
 --it shines
 you can't censor the roses
 --they bloom
 you can't put down the women
 --they grin

Yes sing about rosa luxemburg
 sing about rosa parks
 sing about anna walentinowic
 sing about our sisters
 sing about ourselves

- Dorothee Sölle

[trans. Douglas John Hall]

SEXUALITY AND MINISTRY

MAUREEN KABWE

Human sexuality: the words conjure up so many meanings for all of us as we become more aware of our own bodies, our femaleness and maleness, our emotions and our relationships.

For the past two years, the Montreal Institute for Ministry has organized a workshop to help people explore the link between sexuality and ministry. Leadership this year was given by the staff of MIM, Pierre Goldberger, and the Reverend Shelley Finson of Toronto. Shelley is Director of Field Education at the Centre for Christian Studies, and she was able to bring a deep and caring commitment to ministering to people struggling with these issues.

The five-day workshop, which took place last November, was designed to address the attitudes to and changes in our society of the roles and life situations of men and women. We were helped to get in touch with our own attitudes towards our sexuality and that of others, and to see how these views inevitably affect our ministry. The changes and tensions which have been occurring in the fabric of church life - from the changing roles of men and women to language issues and theology - were discussed. The increasing number of women in theological education and ministry training programmes make this aspect of the topic especially important.

The learning model we used was appropriate to the context. We worked on our own and in small groups to discover our attitudes and feelings and to work through the material provided. There was a good balance between content, personal reflection and systemic analysis, as well as a chance to deal directly with our «pastoring» responses to specific case studies. The presentations and analysis were given from a feminist perspective, sometimes forcing us to experience the tensions produced by painful male/female relationships. We were helped to recognize the ways we have all been culturally conditioned in masculine and feminine roles, and to begin to seek ways of freeing ourselves from limiting patterns.

We also spent time on scriptural study, especially Genesis, considering our humanness in creation; and we looked at a paper by Shiela D. Collins, «The Familial Economy of God» which examines the institutions of patriarchy, western Christianity, and capitalism in order to understand the social and economic roots of our unconscious behaviour. We viewed a film, «Men's Lives», which dealt with the ways men and boys are stereotyped in our society, and which also pointed out how women's lives are affected by this.

An article by Peggy Wey, which discussed a pastoral ministry to homosexual people, provided a stepping stone for dealing with our society's fear of homosexuality. Many other patterns of fear and repression/rejection were faced as the week progressed.

The workshop was able to provide a focus on a crucial issue. The final responses indicated that it was both a painful experience and a cutting edge that led to growth.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Professor George Johnston has been appointed to the Committee of International Affairs of the United Church of Canada and serves on its Executive. He is also active on the Selection Committee to recommend a new Dean of Medicine at McGill.

He has recently completed two major articles:

1. «Christ as Archegos» to be published in *New Testament Studies*, vol. 27.
2. «Jesus as Deacon of God and Man» to appear in *Christological Perspectives* (Essays in Honour of Harvey K. McArthur), ed. by R.F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards, with the Pilgrim Press.

Professor Douglas J. Hall has been guest lecturer in San Antonio, at Mo-Ranch Presbyterian Retreat Centre, Texas. He will lecture at Rutgers University in April.

In addition to preaching engagements and local workshops, he is busy preparing for his Sabbatical year to be spent in Strasbourg, France. He received a Leave Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to complete the writing of a systematic theology.

Professors Katherine Young and Alaka Hejib are publishing a joint project in the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, India (vol. 61), entitled, «A Kitba (hermaphrodite) on the Battlefield: Towards a Reinterpretation of Arjuna's Dependency.» They have also written a joint chapter, «Yoga: A Hermeneutical Clue to the Understanding of the Hindu widow and *satī*» for a publication edited by Arvind Sharma of the University of Sydney, Australia. The book is to be released in February 1981.

Professor Hejib was guest lecturer at Cambridge, Massachusetts, during a seminar on «Women and Religion», and appeared in a local TV interview on Hindu Festivals (Channel 17, March 15th at 6:30 p.m.).

Professor Fred Wisse presented a paper on «Pope Liberius in Coptic Literature» during the Second International Congress of Coptology in Rome (September 1980). Two further articles of his appeared in professional journals:

1. «Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism» in *Enchoria*, IX (1980).
2. «Textual Restorations in *On the Origin of the World*» (CG 11, 5), in *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 17. 1-2 (1980).

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Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1971).

Merlin Stone, *When God Was A Woman* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978).

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George H. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). (A feminist hermeneutic of Old Testament scriptures.)

Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

Women's Concerns Newsletter, United Church of Canada. (Free. To be placed on the mailing list, write Division of Mission in Canada, 85 St. Clair Avenue, E., Toronto, ON M4T 1M8.)

Elizabeth Muir

I am.

I am woman.

I am freed by Christ and I am claiming
that freedom, that space to live, now.

I stretch out my hands to you, my sisters
and my brothers.

You may dance with me in celebration.

You may walk beside me in unity.

I will no longer walk behind you.

From «Women in a Changing World» - an address to the Nairobi Assembly of the
World Council of Churches
by Dorothy McMahon

RECONCILED

Come with me to a quiet place
we will become one
in our memories of the past.

Come with me to the beach
at sunset.

We'll watch the high grass
blow in the wind
as we did
many years ago.

We'll enjoy silliness
of coming together again
after so many final ends.

We won't remember the hurts
and the wrongs that were done.

We'll just talk and care
for how things are now.

David Côté

BIRKS LECTURES 1981

William Sloane Coffin

5 - 6 October, 1981



OUR CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE....

David Côté, a Torontonion, is an undergraduate at McGill, majoring in English. He is a member of the Newman Centre and enjoys writing poetry and sports.

Ed Furcha is Associate Professor of Church History at the Faculty of Religious Studies. Among his many interests are music and the writing of poetry.

Florence Hayes is a graduate of Marymount, New York (Music), McGill (Theology) and is a graduate student in the Faculty of Religious Studies. She works as a part-time chaplain at the Newman Centre.

George Johnston is Professor of New Testament in the Faculty of Religious Studies. He is a former Dean of the Faculty (1970-1975) and a regular contributor to ARC.

Morny Joy is a Canada Council fellow studying for a doctorate in Philosophy and Religion. She holds a B.A. from the University of Sydney, Australia, and an M.A. from the University of Ottawa.

Maureen Kabwe was recently appointed as Special Staff part-time for the Montreal Institute for Ministry. A former teacher, she is Resource and Planning Officer for the Montreal Presbytery of the United Church.

Elizabeth Muir is doing graduate work in the Faculty as a McConnell fellow. She is a graduate of Queen's University (English), Harvard (Business Administration) and McGill (Theology).

Rosemary Sullivan holds an M.A. from the Faculty specializing in psychosynthesis. She is Pastoral Animator at Champlain College and a member of a co-operative community in Pigeon Hill, Québec.

Lois Wilson, pastoral minister in Kingston, Ontario, was recently elected Moderator of the United Church of Canada. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by United Theological College in 1978.

Frederik Wisse is Associate Professor of New Testament at the Faculty of Religious Studies. He has been involved in the editing and study of the gnostic codices from Nag Hammadi since 1966.

Katherine Young is Associate Professor of Comparative Religion in the Faculty. Her numerous articles reflect her special interest in women in Hinduism and Buddhism in India.

ARC is an attempt to provide a means of maintaining the ties that exist between the academic community and its Alumni/Alumnae. To aid in this continuing theological education, we are publishing two issues per year which are distributed to almost 1500 graduates and friends of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry. Rather than charge a fee for what we feel is an important service, we are asking donations to offset the printing and distribution costs which amount to approximately \$3.00 per person per year.

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