The MAST Journal

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Women and the Future of Church and Society

Summer, 1993

ıl, we celebrate three years of publication and we are grateful for your
ny of you have written to tell us what you think about a particular article
ues coming up. Please continue to write and to let us know how the
ou and to those with whom we partner in community and ministry.

the realization that although our layout and printing costs are manage-
us from operating with a responsible bottom line. Therefore, note the
on page 11 of this issue. Of course, those subscribing or re-subscribing
ıbject to the previous lower rate. In addition, Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt,
diting the journal and I will become the executive director for the Mercy
ıgy. So, if you wish to write for the journal, please direct your ideas to
this issue.

s issue and the question resounding in my mind is, "what are we, who
ens of Catherine McAuley's life, about? What are we about in health
ıorate ministries? What are we about as women in our church? What are
deed, women in the cosmos? What are we about as we retell the myths
s for our parishes, our schools, our communities? Not only what are we
attempt to be faithful to our legacy of solidarity with the poor and
ıllness of life in church and society.

beit out of context, suffice for a word of hope here. "God has been act-
ation was born." Thank God. But the challenge also resounds. "What
l about?"

With great respect for your work and prayer,

Maryanne Stevens, RSM

Leading the Way: Women Religious in Healthcare

Ellen Greeley, RSM

I. THE HERITAGE

Pioneer Healers: The history of women religious in American Health Care tells the moving story of the beginnings and growth of Catholic healthcare ministry across the United States, the wonderful perseverance of those early sisters, and the significance of the healing ministry to the presence of the Church in this country. Through ministry to immigrants, the homeless, and the sick of every class and creed, through epidemics of cholera, influenza and typhoid, through war, women religious brought healing and comfort as best they could, in the name and with the compassion of Christ. Their bravery helped break down bigotry and earned the esteem and trust of church and state leaders.[1]

Alongside other Christian and public healthcare efforts of their time, and with the blessing of church authorities, the work of Catholic sisters took shape. As one physician described the development in his city, "Its growth has been steady and uniform, until we now lay the foundation of a magnificent structure which will remain for years . . . a perpetual monument to the liberality and charity of its founders, and an asylum for the suffering and afflicted of many generations."[2]

Since in the beginning Catholic facilities were staffed exclusively by sisters, who learned nursing skills from physicians and from their own experience, sisters realized the need to attract and prepare lay women as professional nurses. In this effort they led the way in the United States.[3] A new field thus opened for the development and leadership of lay women.

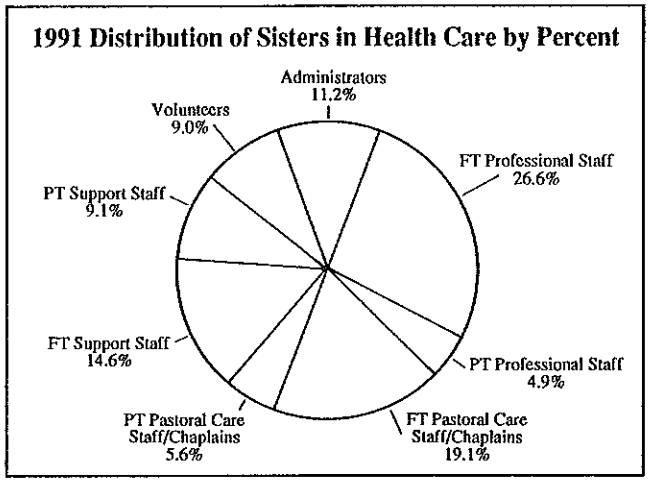
. . . women religious . . . have been identified with Catholic healthcare in this country for more than a hundred years.

With the assistance of physicians, trained lay women, nurses, and others, women religious administered and supervised every department of their institutions. For this reason they have been identified with Catholic healthcare in this country for more than a hundred years.

The Present

After a period of unprecedented growth in their own numbers and expansion of healthcare services, the religious and societal changes of the 1960's occurred. Research now demonstrates the present trend: a twenty-year decline in the number of religious available to staff healthcare institutions.

In a recently completed ministry study for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Anne Munley, IHM, analyzed data supplied by community leaders on the current distribution of women religious in eight categories of the healthcare ministry. The following graphic illustrates this distribution.[4]



When community leaders were asked to project whether the number of members in these ministries (which they reported as 7,087 in 1991) would be likely to change or remain the same by 1996, large percentages indicated that they anticipated decreases in full-time ministry and increases in part-time and volunteer ministry.[5]

Reflection

Heroic women religious, with faith and business acumen, brought into being the Catholic healthcare structures of the church in the United States. One measure of their service: the 47,635,520 patients who received care in Catholic hospitals in1991.[6]

It is clear, however, that diminished numbers and the aging of women religious are resulting in less visibility in healthcare institutions and determining sponsorship decisions for the future. It is, in fact, the time, already contemplated by Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, in her article, "Institutions Without Sisters" when "women religious are nearly invisible in Catholic institutions—diminished in number, reduced in prominence, and active chiefly through structures such as boards or mission-effectiveness offices."[7]

The following paragraphs briefly describe efforts toward mission effectiveness in Catholic healthcare,

efforts initiated in the late 1970's through the vision and leadership of Concilia Moran, RSM, and continued today with religious sponsorship and ways by which religious and laity walk and share together as lay persons assume increasing responsibility for the healing ministry of the church.

II. MISSION EFFECTIVENESS

Although the presence of women religious in Catholic healthcare institutions has dramatically declined, the spirituality of service that characterized their ministry from the beginning is being preserved and renewed.

Mission effectiveness, sometimes now called mission services, sponsorship assurance, philosophy implementation, values (or) mission integration, is an effort to continue the integration of Christian/ Catholic teachings, traditions and values into every facet of Catholic healthcare life. In the diversity and complexity of healthcare today the aim is that the healing presence of Christ be visible—through rituals, symbols, corporate policies, and conduct. As Sister Concilia recognized, the effectiveness of the mission remains intimately linked now as in the early foundations, and the early church, with the growth of faith community.[8]

In organizational terms, values rooted in the Judeo-Christian heritage and the traditions of the founding religious community, such as compassionate care, respect, excellence, stewardship and justice, are operationalized through a continuing cycle of 1) articulation, 2) education, 3) implementation, and 4) assessment. Initial formation or ongoing formation in Catholic teaching and in the challenges of one's own faith commitment, while directed mainly to senior and middle management, are intended to foster an atmosphere of hospitality and healing throughout the healthcare facility.[9] Whatever the organizational process used, leaders are expected to internalize and publicly model the values in their decisions and administrative style.

The Mission Role

The mission role or function is to assist, challenge and support healthcare leadership in its effort to keep gospel values in clear focus. Beyond awareness-building and mission statements, beyond mentoring, the individual appointed to the mission role must be involved in "mainstreaming" values.[10] Strategic planning, selection of leadership, ethics, outreach efforts for the poor are some areas of mission involvement.

By 1992, at least 85% of Catholic healthcare institutions which responded to a Catholic Health Association survey reported having a defined mission implementation function. At least three-fourths of these had a full, or in smaller facilities, a part-time position. Another 15% had mission committees.[11]

Although women religious remain heavily counted on for mission administrative work, (according to the CHA survey nearly 73% were either sponsoring group members or members of other religious congregations), a smooth transition is already underway. Except for the 1.7% who were clergy, over 23% of mission administrative positions were filled by Catholic or non-Catholic lay persons.[12]

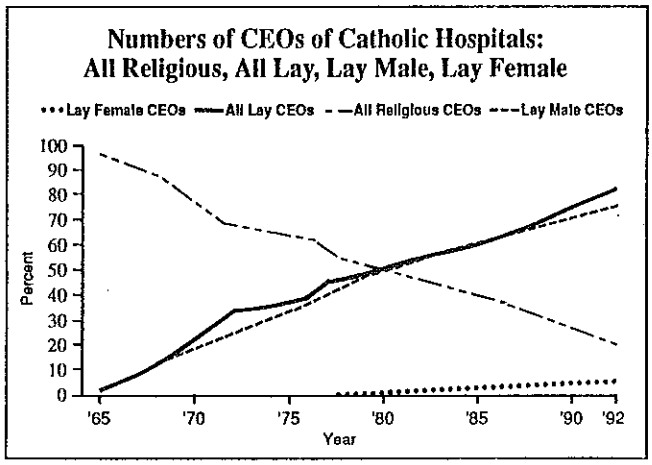
Reflection

Since the first housing, and then building of healthcare ministries, women religious have never imagined that they could accomplish the work alone. Under the banner of institutions named Mercy, Charity, St. Joseph, St. John, St. Elizabeth or St. Mary —millions of laity have been attracted to serve. Under the direction of or side-by-side with women religious, medical professionals, benefactors and volunteers have created sacred places where members of the Body of Christ suffer and heal, are born and die.

Catholic healthcare system leaders are now engaged in conversations and planning with all those committed to the continuance of the Catholic healthcare ministry. The forms of sponsorship that emerge, with God's grace, will extend this service of the church into the next century. As changes are made along the way, there are two corporate values in particular that women religious could emphasize. These values concern appropriate models for healthcare governance, and a need for a wider "selection pool" from which lay leaders could be drawn. Attention to these areas could do much to further a vision 2000 of Catholic healthcare.

III. THE LAY LEADERSHIP MODEL: A CORPORATE VALUE

As women religious relinquished their CEO roles in Catholic healthcare institutions, the administrative positions for the most part went to lay men who were already trained in various levels of management. Following is a diagram of the change by gender of CEOs since 1965.[13]



While lay men did gradually assume leadership of Catholic hospitals, women religious retained sponsor-

ship and remained a significant presence in their institutions. As the LCWR data implies, however, this model no longer can or should be maintained. Religious sponsors, in fact, were challenged by the Commission on Catholic Healthcare Ministry in 1988 to "plan now for a change to predominantly lay models of sponsorship" and further, "to develop and implement programs which identify, recruit, and prepare persons for leadership in the Catholic health ministry."[14]

What is the predominantly lay model for which we should be planning, and what persons should we already be preparing for leadership?

There is little doubt about the model most needed in our time . . . a model of collaboration.

There is little doubt about the model most needed in our time. Journals and conferences stress its significance and experience attests to its effectiveness. Women religious know it well: a model of collaboration. A governing style that frees and empowers, the model employs a process of consensus-building, teamwork, and partnership. Examples abound: the Leadership Conference of Women Religious collaborating with the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and both of these leadership groups with bishops addressing concerns of Catholic ministry and retirement needs of religious communities. Local collaboration of lay and religious leaders with ecumenical and civic groups form, for example in St. Louis, the Archbishop's Commission on Community Health. The possibilities are endless and exciting. From the circle of a neighborhood-watch to environmental groups around the globe, a new way to live and work is being discovered. It is as if the earth itself calls forth a collaborative/ partnership model.[15]

We must ask our own healthcare institutions if the style of governing could be more collaborative, if all efforts possible are made to network with other groups in their area. There is a concern that Catholic healthcare groups in the U.S. are not yet fully collaborating with each other, and so not using a great power for good. Women religious still sponsor 57 health systems with several hundred facilities. Considering that "collaboration among Catholic providers of healthcare could help not only in providing healthcare but also lead to availability of healthcare for the poor and the possible emergence of new models of sponsorship," we know that we must find the way.[16]

Selection of Lay Leadership

Attention also must be directed to those being identified and prepared for leadership in Catholic healthcare. Healthcare policy analyst, Emily Friedman, assures us that an "inevitable change" is upon us. It involves a shift from a male-dominated physician profession to one dominated by women.[17] Many lay women feel that "Catholic healthcare hasn't caught up with the women's movement." We see the modest showing of women on the diagram included here, and this suggests another but related area for collaboration. How can Catholic healthcare institutions best make the transition from a largely women religious/lay men picture of governance to a gender and racially gender-inclusive one? How can the image of highly trained, freshly groomed young men in line for administrative succession be balanced with lay women of equal capabilities who would bring to the decision-making table some similar but also different, equally valuable, competencies?[18] What would a mentorship program for outstanding women, especially Catholic women, look like? Could such a program be expanded for both qualified women and men of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds? Women religious have the opportunity through the model of collaboration, through dialogue, cooperation and consensus-building, through the nitty-gritty of planning and perhaps the testing ground of financial commitment, to bring into being such a mentorship program.

Reflection

Ninety-five percent of all Catholic healthcare sponsors are still religious communities of women.[19] From these religious communities come nationally recognized leaders who have been helping to shape a new national healthcare policy for the United States. Among the pioneers on this new path into the future are the Mercy healthcare systems which have created a Leadership Development Pro-gram to develop leaders who will carry on the healing ministry of the church through Catholic healthcare.[20]

As present sponsors of numerous healthcare works and collaborators in many others, we pray for the success of all the transitioning, transforming efforts. We give thanks to God for our healthcare heritage and hold great hope for the future.

Footnotes

1. Ursula Stepsis, CSA and Dolores Liptak, RSM, eds, *Pioneer Healers, The History of Women Religious in American Health Care.* (New York: Crossroad,1989.) Note the trust of Abraham Lincoln in his note: To whom it May Concern: On application of the Sisters of Mercy in charge of the military hospital in Washington furnish such provisions as they desire to purchase, and charge same to the War Department." p. 43.
2. Kathleen Healy, RSM, *Sisters of Mercy, Spirituality in*

America, 1843-1900, (New York: Paulist Press, 1992.) Quote is from the cornerstone laying of a new Mercy Hospital, Chicago, 1849. p. 87. See also the tribute of Cardinal O'Connell about Sisters who served in the Civil War: "Some of these holy women, worn out with prolonged hardships, paid with their lives for their heroic devotion. They, as well as the soldiers fallen in the fight, gave all to the Republic." p. 147.

3. Mary Carol Conroy, SCL, "The Transition Years", *Pioneer Healers,* op. cit., p. 145-146.

4. Anne Munley, IHM, *Threads For The Loom, LCWR Planning and Ministry Studies,* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Leadership Conference of Women Religious.1992), p.144. According to the survey there were more than 1000 sponsored healthcare works in 1991: 460 acute care hospitals, 57 healthcare systems (some co-sponsored), 22 specialized infant or child healthcare facilities, 23 therapeutic rehabilitation facilities and 239 long-term care facilities. Included also as sponsored works were 109 free-standing outpatient clinics, 16 free-standing hospices, 40 free-standing home healthcare agencies and 33 "other" healthcare works. p. 168.

5. Ibid. p. 144. See also p. 169.

6. *The Official Catholic Directory,* (Wilmette, IL: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1992.)

7. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, "Institutions Without Sisters," *Review for Religious,* 50/4 (July/August, 1991), p. 564.

8. Concilia Moran, RSM, "Building a Faith Community: Proclamation and Performance," *Health Progress,* (June, 1986), p. 2.

9. *Mission Integration In Catholic Healthcare: A Guide To Assessment,* (The Catholic Health Association, 1991). Among various attempts to address mission effectiveness, or mission integration, in terms of preparation of persons to assume this position, is the two-week-long Mercy Health System Detroit semi-annual program at their corporate offices. This session is followed by a residency of three weeks and follow-up contacts. Sisters of Mercy Health System in St. Louis initiated a year-long (1992-1993) internship program, under the direction of Maureen Egan, RSM, Vice President for Mission Services. There is much energy around implementing and assessing values, especially through the services of the Human Resources and Quality Improvement areas of healthcare.

10. Mary Kathryn Grant, Vice-President for Mission, The Holy Cross System,"Mission Integration: Approaching 2000," a workshop given at the Sisters of Mercy Health System, St. Louis, February 25, 1993.

11. "Catholic Data Survey," (Catholic Health Association, 1991), pp. 1 and 4.

12. Ibid. p. 3.

13. "What is the Implication of the Gender Gap for Sponsorship? What is the Implication of the Gender Gap for CHA?", (December, 1992/January, 1993.) CHA used Guidebooks for 1968, 1978, and 1992 to determine that in 1968 no lay females were listed as CEOs; 1978 listed 5; and 1992 listed 38.

14. "Catholic Health Ministry: A New Vision for A New Century," Commission on Catholic Health Care Ministry, 1988, pp. 17-18. See also: CHA: "The Call to Collaborate: Responses from the Ministry Leadership. A Report Based on the Findings of the 1991 Catholic Healthcare Ministry Survey of Leaders' Opinions," 1992.

15. Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & The Blade: Our History, Our Future.* (1987) Ashley Montagu called this book, "the most important book since Darwin's *Origin of Species."* This writer agrees.

16. "Issues and Directions for the 1990's: Responses from the Ministry Leadership," a report based on the findings of the 1990 Catholic Healthcare Ministry Survey of Leaders' Opinions, CHA, p. 99.

17. Emily Friedman, "Health Care in Transition: Addressing Community Needs." Presentation at the 1992 Trustee, Administrative, and Medical Staff Education Conference, Sisters of Mercy Health System, St. Louis, at Sea Island, Georgia, October, 1992, Report, p. 2.

18. David J. Nygren, CM and Miriam D. Ukeritis, CSJ, "What Separates Outstanding from Average Leaders?", *Health Progress,* November, 1992, p. 33.

19. "A Profile of the Catholic Healthcare Ministry, 1992" CHA, p. 10.

20. Ginny Cunningham, "Values Link Healthcare Systems" *VITA,* The Newsletter of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, 2/2, (March, 1993), p. 3.

Why Corporate Ministry?

Patricia McCann, RSM

Last February the Omaha regional community invited me to reflect with sisters who serve on the boards of their sponsored ministries on the topic "Why Corporate Ministry?" Having served on a number of boards for the Pittsburgh regional community and aware of the complex realities of sponsorship in the 1990's, I welcomed the opportunity to pursue this question. The fruits of preparation for that workshop appear in synopsis form in this essay.

First, let me clarify my understanding of the term corporate ministry. Can the ministerial activity of a member of a religious congregation be anything but corporate? Whatever my current ministry, in that role my personal identity is necessarily integrated with my Sister of Mercy identity. It seems to me that the dichotomy between individual ministry (often "hands on" direct service) and institutional ministry is false and generates unnecessary tension. Gospel ministry in its inclusive nature embraces a both/and rather than the divisive either/or stance. Hence, we might say that Sisters of Mercy engage in corporate ministry in individual presence settings and in sponsored-institution settings. The challenge is to connect all of these areas enabling the resources of the haves to be shared with the have-nots. Catherine McAuley spoke of it as building bridges between the rich and the poor.

Sisters of Mercy engage in corporate ministry in individual presence settings and in sponsored-institution settings.

Our focus in this workshop is on the particular responsibilities of sister-board members and their role in regard to corporate ministry. Addressing the "why?" of corporate ministry in that context is critical and timely. Our institutions themselves and our sponsorship of them have never been more complex. The last few decades dramatically challenge institutional resources, administrative structures, and decision-making processes. Demographics which affect planning fluctuate with alarming rapidity. Major questions of health care and education reform, both significant ministry areas for women religious, move to the front burner. In the late 1980's everyone began to talk about "windows of opportunity" for change. The Nygren-Ukeritis study of the future of religious life in the United States released in 1992 uses similar language identifying a ten-year window for U.S. religious to either embrace transformation or die. All of this has clear implications for what Sisters of Mercy might anticipate in the next 5 to 10 years, especially if we are to be credible in claiming a prophetic stance.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines transformation as follows: To change markedly in form or appearance; to change the nature, function and condition of; to convert. Clearly, we are not talking about change for its own sake. Nor are we suggesting a marketing model which promotes change to "keep the competitive edge," "be innovative," "position yourself for the next century." Some of these elements may need to figure into our realistic planning for the future, but the challenge we currently face is a deeper, transformative conversion. Essentially an invigorating and animating concept, transformation is also a bit scary because of the depth of change it calls forth.

Traditionally, women religious engage in ministry because it is the Gospel imperative. Ministry is at the core of who we are as Christians and as Sisters of Mercy. The *New Testament* reveals Jesus as one who both lived and preached care of the neighbor, outreach to the poor and oppressed. This Gospel animated Catherine McAuley. It provides the historical, preferential foundation situating the Mercy fourth vow: service to the poor, sick and ignorant. (N.B. I am conscious of the complexities of the word ignorant, but uneducated simply does not work as a substitute. Many educated people are afflicted with forms of ignorance — prejudice, bias, sexism, classism, etc.)

Over the last century and a half Sisters of Mercy engaged in corporately sponsored institutional ministry because we found it an effective way to respond to the needs for which we were established. Our historical experience yields massive amounts of learning which validate this. Read, for example, the stories of the early sisters of the Omaha community who established hospitals in the mining towns of Colorado. They provide fascinating examples of how our forbearers plunged in and then found the resources to do what had to be done. Certainly 19th and early 20th century Catholic immigrants to the United States experienced that corporate ministry as effective. The schools, social services, and hospitals enabled them to deal with life, to assimilate, and to move into the mainstream. Through such institutions we pooled our resources and maximized their use. The question that comes to us now is how to reinterpret that history in terms of the present-institutions which have grown large and powerful, and upon which we have come to depend for our livelihood. A century and a half after our beginnings we find ourselves asking: Are we shaping (i.e. *really* sponsoring) our institutions or are they shaping us?

In addition to fundamental concerns about good management, financial stability, etc., sponsorship concerns focus on the values that shape us: The Gospel, Mercy charism, the *Constitutions*, and our tradition. "Institutions Without Sisters," an article by Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, in *Review for Religious*, July/August, 1991, addressed sponsorship in terms of the current milieu of religious orders (declining membership, aging, limited resources). Doris noted that we sponsor institutions to "have a significant influence on the service which they provide." She defined significant influence as a combination of legal control and a "deliberately cultivated corporate culture." I want to focus on those elements, a significant influence and a deliberately cultivated corporate culture, as the essential "why" of our involvement in corporate ministry. (N.B. Corporate is used here in the sense of collective, together, communal.)

We need to know what we are really about — not just what we have been about, but what we intend to be about now and in the future.

A deliberately cultivated corporate culture refers to clarity of mission. Mission effectiveness cannot be left to chance. Not only is it important that we transmit clarity about our mission to the public, but it is essential that we first have clarity about that mission ourselves. We need to know what we are really about — not just what we have been about, but what we intend to be about now and in the future. That may not be as easy as it sounds. I worry sometimes about whether talking a good line diverts us from reality. Our chapters, our mission statements, our prayers use language that is in harmony with our hopes, but the more challenging question is whether these words are in harmony with our lives.

The physical presence of Sisters in our institutions does not by itself constitute significant influence or indicate the deliberate cultivation of a corporate culture grounded in the Gospel. This presents some special challenges in the 1990's and beyond. Perhaps the dilemma is not simply the declining number of sisters, but the declining number of persons in touch with the founding spirit, the founding corporate culture. I think that founding spirit can most accurately be named as presence with the poor.

Doris' article suggests that rendering institutional ministry effective requires conscious, deliberate, ongoing choices and actions on the part of the sponsoring religious community. Sisters who serve on institutional boards are key persons in making these conscious choices. If we can't do or aren't doing what we want to do in our institutions, is it worth being there? If our systems can't be or aren't any more responsive to the poor than anyone else's, should we be there? If conforming, competing, and surviving require great amounts of money, personnel and corporate politicking, are our energies being well used?

The Institute Constitutions affirm our commitment to institutional ministry:

> *As Sisters of Mercy we sponsor institutions to address our enduring concerns and to witness to Christ's mission. Within these institutions, we, together with our co-workers and those we serve, endeavor to model Mercy and justice and to promote systemic change according to these ideals. (Paragraph 5)*

The fact that we sponsor institutions and our motives for doing so are inextricably linked. In language that speaks of a collaborative mode we make explicit our intent to address the enduring concerns which come out of our history and tradition. These were named again in the Institute Direction Statement at the Buffalo chapter in 1991: the economically poor, especially women and children, and the multi-cultural, multi-racial reality that is our world today. As in Catherine McAuley's time ministry through our institutions is not restricted to the poor, but it always relates to them. The measure of our authenticity is the degree to which we succeed in connecting the able and powerful with the weak and powerless, the degree to which we affect health education and social systems so that they benefit all.

We have to be diligent in evaluating ourselves on this. There are some dangerous traps. Institutionalization can become an end in itself. We can get preoccupied with self-preservation, survival, success. We can be caught up in the capitalist, corporate whirlwind, i.e., "If it is successful, it must be good." We had some glimpse of the devastating potential of that philosophy in the national rejoicing over high tech weaponry during the Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm. While hundreds of thousands of human lives were lost in the most antiseptically evil scenario one can imagine, the nation extolled the effectiveness of missiles, machines and planes. Human ability to deceive ourselves that what we are doing is worthy is blinding. We can also be lured into life in the fast lane. We give our projects and plans holy names and even demonstrate the noble ends toward which they are directed, yet lose sight of the people who are affected in the process. To avoid such traps we need to again and again visit the value base which roots us, doing a good old-fashioned examination of conscience about the "deliberate, ongoing choices and actions" we make in relation to ministry. The traceable commitments of Sisters of Mercy from Catherine McAuley's day to the present frame that value base.

Achieving board effectiveness in regard to mission also challenges us to take a hard look at the kinds of boards we create. Sometimes they are simply "old boys networks" with a few nuns sprinkled in the mix. That is shooting ourselves in the foot. I'm not suggesting simply replacing the "old boys" with "old girls" would be any more effective. What I am saying is that to further the mission, boards have to be made up of really creative women and men who are one hundred percent committed to the animating vision and willing to do the work involved to implement it. They cannot simply be prestige gatherings for local corporate executives who like to list it on their resumés.

While it is clear that sponsorship of institutions does have business dimensions and business implications, it is important to remind ourselves that our sponsorship of corporate ministry is not primarily a business decision. We cannot stay in hospitals, colleges, academies or whatever just because they support us. It's not even enough reason to stay just because we've done it well. The question before us is what needs to be done now? In a sense it would almost be easier to start from scratch, but that is not where we are historically. The transformative experience undoubtedly brings us to some new beginnings, but not without some painful partings with the past.

One of the things I am always acutely aware of in presenting this kind of reflection is how much easier it is to talk about than to do. We seem so much better able to process transformation intellectually than in behavior. In the past thirty years women religious lived through some major periods of renewal and change in religious life. We also lived through the scaling of the socio-economic ladder by the Catholic immigrant community and us with them. These were perhaps a prelude to or the beginnings of major transformation. While our focus today is on corporate ministry, it is clear that we need to situate that in relation to what is going on in the broader areas of religious life, the church and the society where we minister. I sense among sisters a feeling of being stuck, a tremendous desire to "break through," and great difficulty in knowing how we can do so. The question of "Why corporate ministry?" goes hand-in-hand with the struggle to understand anew and reaffirm our fundamental corporateness in community, and, through that, our relationship with the poor. We embraced corporate ministries because historically we found them effective ways to serve the needs of the poor. We are at a juncture where we need to face the new moment. What are the needs now? How do we want to be together? What can we do together? How can we best use the pool of resources that our history has brought us to in ways that will achieve the commitments we hold in our hearts, name in our documents and celebrate in our prayers?

Questions for Discussion

1. Is the mission cycle regarding institutional values: articulation, education, implementation, assessment/evaluation somehow at work in the formation and ongoing formation of those who work in your ministry setting?

2. If a mentorship program for lay women were to be put in place for Catholic healthcare facilities, what elements would you want to see in the program? How might it be funded? Is there such a program in place for lay women and for persons from diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds in your area of ministry?

3. Pat McCann questions whether we should be sponsoring institutions which are no more responsive to the poor than other institutions? What is the vision inspiring the institutions your regional community sponsors? Do you believe your institutions live this vision?

4. "It is time for us to concentrate all our energies on giving birth to a new church, one that will indeed pray, think, act and suffer in ways that lead to the flourishing of her daughters." Following Aquin O'Neill's lead, what can you name that is coming to birth in your own work or in groups with whom you minister?

5. Wainwright suggests a set of values that will reorient a patriarchal and dominative paradigm. Among them are reassessment of what progress means as opposed to process, and choosing an approach which honors power with/power within instead of power over. What expressions of these values do you see operative in the governance style of your regional community? In what organization structures can you make sure a discussion of these values will be put on the group's agenda?

An Apostleship of Equals

Mary Aquin O'Neill, RSM

In the fall of 1992, shortly after the National Council of Catholic Bishops' meeting, a group of women at the new Mount Saint Agnes Theological Center for Women in Baltimore began talking about the failure of the fourth draft of the pastoral letter, "One In Christ," to obtain a majority vote. I suggested designing a conference to be called something like, "What Went Wrong With the Pastoral on Women?" But Charlotte Rose Kerr, a Sister of Mercy who knows the thought forms of the orient, responded. "No, that's the old, negative thinking. Now we must engage in a new way. Think of the martial arts. They teach us that you waste your own energy trying to counter the force of the foe. Instead, the secret is to capture the energy in the other's movement and turn it in a new direction."

I write just as the Easter season begins, having once more lived through the liturgical participation in what Christians believe to be the central mysteries of our life. It is the perfect time to think anew about failure, faithfulness and the future of women in the church we call Catholic.

Continuing Revelation: The Fruits of Failure

Anyone who follows the trends of publications in the fields of theology and spirituality writings will recognize that there has been a great emphasis on the theme of discipleship lately. The image used with increasing frequency by those who long for an inclusive church is Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's felicitous term, "a discipleship of equals."[1]

. . . a discipleship of equals expresses the certainty that the Christian way is open to both women and men.

Insofar as the term "disciple" connotes one who is following because still in training or still under the direction of one who takes ultimate responsibility, a discipleship of equals expresses the certainty that the Christian way is open to both women and men. This term implies that the following of Christ knows no distinction at that level. But the debate over the proposed pastoral letter made it quite clear that discipleship is not really what is at stake.

While the bishops differed sharply on the extent to which the concerns of women had been adequately heard and addressed in the pastoral letter, the deeper and unacknowledged problem was that there was no one there with the authority to judge. There was neither voice nor vote for women in the debate. Had there been, one of us could have argued that the document had become a statement of some of the bishops' concerns about women, not a statement addressing women's concerns.

Bishop P. Francis Murphy of Baltimore has pointed out that this pastoral letter was not prepared as had been the others.[2] That is, there were no invited papers by experts to shape the issues before the writing committee set to work. To do this, however, would have been to acknowledge an authority in women, for no list of experts could have excluded the women who have done original work on the very questions being addressed.[3] It is remarkable, I think, that in all the exchanges over the pastoral letter at the fall, 1992, NCCB meeting, only one woman theologian was mentioned: Sara Butler. The other authorities cited by bishops in the debate were ecclesiastical documents, Popes, Bishops and male theologians. The list includes *Christifideles Laici, Gaudium et Spes, Inter Insigniores, Human Life in Our Day, Donum Vitae, Humanae Vitae, Pacem in Terris, Justice in the World;* Popes John Paul II and Paul VI; Cardinal Bernardin, the bishops of New Zealand and Bishop John Sheets; Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, David Powers and Henry Adams.[4]

A very telling moment in the debate occurred over the controversial use of the term "machismo." The bishops called on and deferred to Bishops Sevilla and Ramirez, who indicated that the term could be offensive to hispanic Catholics. On the other hand, when one bishop called the fourth draft sensitive and open to the concerns of women, no woman was invited to assess that judgment on behalf of women. Make no mistake: the real issue for the Catholic church now is an apostleship of equals and how to achieve it in a church where ecclesial polity demands that women and women's works always surrender to the headship of men.

But, some will say, isn't there already this equality in the church? Doesn't the teaching about complementarity mean that women and men have authority in different spheres, that each has a role in the church according to God's plan? It is certainly true in nature. Clearly, only the man can beget and only the woman can conceive the new life that sustains the human race. It sounds so logical, the claim that the complementarity of nature is replicated in the life of the church — until you begin to think about it. Name a role in the church that only a woman can fill. Name the "authority" that belongs to women in the Catholic ecclesiastical world. I think the effort to do so will lead to the realization that the language of complementarity,

when applied to life in the church, is totally misleading.

The hard truth is that the complementarity of nature is neither replicated nor transcended in Catholic Christian life. Bishop Vaughan, in his now famous phrase, said it all: he cannot bear a child and women cannot be ordained. This is not because he lacks maternal feelings nor because women are without pastoral qualities. It is because God decided how things would be. This, then, is the bishop's theological argument: ordination is to childbearing as man is to woman.

. . . there is no role comparable to ordination for women in the ecclesial order.

Such an argument overlooks the significance of begetting in the natural order and fails to recognize that there is no role comparable to ordination for women in the ecclesial order. The asymmetry is simply missed, while complementarity continues to be asserted. Another way of looking at it, and I take it to be the force of Michael Novak's argument in a recent essay, is that ordination, too, is bound by the laws of nature.[5] Bound to the male by nature, by Christ, by the church? It makes an enormous difference.

It is a great gift, I think, that such attitudes have been clearly and publicly articulated. Now it is possible to engage the argument without anyone denying that these opinions obtain among those who govern and teach the church. Perhaps it will be possible, as well, to develop an illuminating angle on why the church has nothing to say to single women. And, certainly, it underlines the need to scrutinize the use of sexual imagery to capture the meaning of life in the community called church.

One thing is sure: the current situation for women resembles nothing so much as the communications exercise called "telephone operator." In the heady days of the late 1960's and early 1970's, when women religious worked assiduously to develop new and healthier ways of interpersonal and organizational communication, experts would often put us through an experience in which we could only convey a message to another through a third party called the "telephone operator." The secret instructions to the operator were to change the message each time, so that the message actually given was substantially different from what was intended. Despite the fact that participants knew that it was an "exercise," the level of frustration quickly rose and signs of anger began to show as time after time someone tried to get a message through to another without having it garbled.

No other group in the church is restricted to this and only this experience; women are. In my own lifetime, two dramatic instances of this stand out: (1) the failed efforts of Theresa Kane, RSM, to get an opportunity to speak directly to the Pope and (2) the failed efforts of women to get their messages from the hearings held prior to the writing of the pastoral letter to the body of bishops gathered in deliberation. No matter how important, the messages of women must be passed along by others and, unhappily, they are most often garbled in the passing. The course of the pastoral letter is paradigmatic: the trail goes from the first draft where the (unidentified) voices of women sounded against the heavily documented and named citations from ecclesiastical writings, to the fourth draft in which even the anonymous quotations had been dropped and the voices of women were totally silenced.

At least since *Inter Insigniores* was published in 1976 until this year of 1993, women who are theologians have been writing private papers for bishops to read, offering theological criticism and guidance to those who would wage the struggle on behalf of women in the church. None of us, theologians or bishops, could have predicted, I think, that the issue of women in the church would turn out to be so different from the others. The profound conversion that the whole church needs to undergo with respect to the structures that perpetuate sexism and patriarchy is only now coming into view for the church in the United States, now that the debate over the pastoral letter has been accomplished. It is the great revelation of the nearly twenty-year engagement of the issues that now moves us to a new stage of development.

A New Consciousness About Faithfulness

In their very interesting book on feminine spirituality, Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins comment that the most frequently heard worry expressed by women in the course of their interviews was that women were somehow being "selfish" if they took time for themselves. But one woman had this enlightening angle on the question.

> *You know, doing something for yourself is like being pregnant. From the outside, being pregnant can look selfish. You take in all this extra food. You sleep more than usual. You are not as interested as you used to be in other people's lives, including the lives of your own family. But inside another life is growing. It needs quiet, nourishment, and rest. At first, no one can see this life, but that has absolutely no bearing on the matter. The inner life is growing and it demands your attention.*[6]

I would argue that it is time for Catholic women to heed the church's constant references to ourselves as ordained by God to bear new life. It is time for us to concentrate all our energies on giving birth to a new

church, one that will indeed pray, think, act and suffer in ways that lead to the flourishing of her daughters.

In every time of crisis for the church there have arisen groups of Christians who have presented the good news of the gospel in terms that spoke to the particular needs of those who felt misunderstood or neglected. Franciscans and Dominicans alike had their origins in such an effort. At our first chapter of the new Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, we, the daughters of Catherine McAuley, committed ourselves to stand in solidarity with women seeking the fullness of life and equality in church and society. If these are not to be empty words, they must be embodied in actions and in structures that will mean that we, too, have come that women might have life and have it more abundantly.

Not for ourselves alone but for the good of the whole human race, we must find ways to promote the real abilities and contributions of women.

There is much talk of death among us these days. Despite the new Institute and the possibilities it offers, thinking sisters with whom I have conversed reflect a resignation about the end of religious life as we have known it. Many seem to think that faithfulness means living out one's vows in service to the community and the church as it is. I say that we, no less than other women before us, are called to walk into that valley of death that is childbearing. The gospel demands that we affirm life in the face of death no less than our sisters who are caring for the next generation. We still have resources, we still own or have influence over important institutions. If they cannot be used to promote the total well being of women in this time of crisis for women of the church, in what sense are they Mercy? It is not the church as it is that we serve, but the coming great church that is aborning in the rising of women, and with us all, the persons and matters we care for. Who knows what communities will spring up from a bold, public and wise commitment to bear in our bodies this church, no matter the cost in suffering?

A New Apostolic Succession

In an *apologia* for the pastoral letter, Bishop Imesch said that, though the voices of women were not included, their concerns were expressed and those concerns can be identified as the contribution of women to the pastoral. Generations of women acting as spiritual guides, teachers, mystics, intellectuals, and leaders of communities working in the church have shaped the issues and carved out new theological approaches. Yet the bishop who chairs the writing committee speaks as if expressions of concern represent the contribution of women to the pastoral. Isn't that because the work women do in the church rarely bears our names or goes to our credit? Isn't it, furthermore, that we think it "selfish" to worry about such things? How many of you reading this have drafted materials that go out under a man's name? Is it any wonder that women remain invisible and the authority of women goes unrecognized?

Not for ourselves alone but for the good of the whole human race, we must find ways to promote the real abilities and contributions of women. But first, we need to believe in our own authority to do so.

In a splendid talk before the Catholic Theological Society of America, past president Anne E. Patrick drew an analogy between the first century Jewish attitude toward food and the contemporary Catholic Christian attitude toward sexuality. In order for Jews and Gentiles to come together in one body called the church, the approach to food had to be rethought. Similarly, Patrick argued, Catholic attitudes toward sexuality will now need to be seriously reworked in order to create a church where male and female are truly "one in Christ."[7] A surprising fruit of long meditation on Anne Patrick's provocative words is that I now think it is time for women to follow the example of St. Paul. He who met the risen Christ was filled with a zeal to shape the message of the gospel with the gentiles, convinced that they, too, were called to equality in the body of Christ. In full consciousness that there was another person who met the risen Christ and received a commission from him, Mary Magdalene, can we not now claim our own apostolic commission to develop a tradition of interpretation and practice as vibrant and strong as that developed among the gentiles?

This is how I suggest that we follow up on Charlotte Rose Kerr's wonderful insight about the martial arts. Let us make our homes places of feeding and being fed in the true meaning of eucharist. Let us develop there a language about God and a way of addressing God and each other that reflects our deepest experiences and insights. Let us come together to interpret the scriptures and to study the tradition. Let us imagine the church we long for through art, song, poetry and a recovery of the best traditions of women. Let us there not only express our concerns but carve out strategies for addressing them, strategies that will be faithful to the gospel and to the God who is wisdom as well as might. In whatever institutions we run, let us make sure that those who engage in the works of mercy with us know what women have done, read what women are writing, and learn what women are thinking.

An apostolic spirituality takes responsibility for the gospel and for the church, in whatever ways are

possible and necessary. The nine years devoted to the pastoral letter proved definitively, I believe, that the body of bishops cannot do what needs to be done. It would be like asking the Jewish Christians to write a pastoral letter on the role of the gentiles in the church. Ah, but a Jewish Christian like Paul, convinced by a definitive encounter with Christ of the wrongness of his ways, who then identifies with the marginalized other: look what he can do. He can stand up to Peter when the time comes. But only if he has broken bread and prayed; discussed systematic, sacramental, pastoral and moral theology; confessed sins and even taken up a collection with those whose approach is very different from his own.

That was possible for Paul, of course, because as he moved on to other things. The gentile churches continued their life of worship and service, working out as they did so a theology that reflected their particular appropriation of the gospel message. Can we who are women of the church do less for our kind?

It is time to identify those among the bishops who have had the conversion experience necessary for the future. Then we ought to befriend them, invite them to the church in our homes, and interact with the best that is in them with all the honesty we can muster. The hour has come to turn the energy of opposition into a new direction for God's glory and the salvation of the world.

Footnotes

1. See Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her, A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).
2. See Bishop P. Francis Murphy, "Women's Pastoral, Let's Start Over" *Commonweal* (September 25, 1992) 11-15.
3. Agnes Cunningham, Mary Daly, Josephine Massyngbaerde Ford, Phyllis Trible, Anne Carr, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Elizabeth Johnson, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Sandra Schneiders, Barbara Andolson, Monika Hellwig, Margaret Farley, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Joann Wolski Conn, Alice Laffy, Susan A. Ross, Patricia Jung, and Mary Jo Weaver are only a few of the names that come to mind.
4. It is also remarkable that, by the time the fourth draft had been prepared, most of the citations of "authoritative" works by women had been dropped as well. Illustrative is the fact that Margaret Farley's definition of sexism from *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* is replaced by a definition from *Webster's Dictionary*. Compare Endnote #8 of the third draft to Endnote #5 in the fourth draft.
5. See Michael Novak, "Women, Ordination, and Angels." *First Things* (April, 1993) 25-32.
6. Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, *The Feminine Face of God, The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992) p. 204.
7. The written text appears as Anne E. Patrick, "The Linguistic Turn and Moral Theology," in *Current Issues in Theology 2, The Linguistic Turn and Contemporary Theology*, edited by George Kilcourse (CTSA, 1987), pp. 38-56. The analogy was more sharply drawn in the paper presented.

Singing a New Song of Woman and the Cosmos

Elaine Wainwright, RSM

Our myths can imprison as well as inspire us.
When they no longer reflect our deepest sense
of who we are
and who we can be,
It is up to us to transform them
by living our new vision,
and sharing it with others.
In doing this,
we cleanse the obstruction of the flow of life force within us
tapping deep roots which nourish the whole
in ways we may never even know.[1]

This reflection of Deborah Koff-Chapin captures well the situation which confronts us radically day by day. Our myths both secular and sacred seem no longer to be able to provide us with a perspective on truth and wholeness which can empower us to respond creatively to the imminent destruction of our planet which we as a human community seem to be engaged upon. There are many reasons for our seeming inertia in the face of such planetary annihilation, the failure of our myths being only one. It is towards this, however, which I wish to direct our attention in this essay. In doing so we will find ourselves dealing with two significant changes in our way of seeing and naming our world. They are the shift from a mechanistic to an ecological world-view and from a patriarchal to a feminist perspective and they have come together in our time.

. . . face the challenges of this day for the sake of women, for the sake of humanity, and for the sake of the planet itself.

Before exploring them, however, I will direct attention to the failure of our myth or, in terms of the title of this essay, the need for a new song or a new story. This call for a new myth or transformation of the myth is itself not new. There are many contemporary thinkers in the field of ecology and ecological survival who would suggest that we are in need of a "new story".[2]

For a significant time women have similarly been aware that the Judeo-Christian myth, especially in its traditional telling, no longer provides them with sustenance for their journey out of patriarchy. Many of these women share the awareness that is expressed by Berry and find that there is need for a new story to sustain not only their feminist but also their ecological journey. In this essay, therefore, I will explore the art of transforming our biblical myth so that it can enable us to sing a new song which will sustain us in our day to face the challenges of this day for the sake of women, for the sake of humanity, and for the sake of the planet itself.

The Art of Transforming the Myth

Koff-Chapin, as quoted in our opening reflection, speaks of transforming the myth by living a new vision and sharing it with others. Adrienne Rich offers us a way of coming to that new vision, especially for those of us who stand within a tradition, often times against that tradition, but nevertheless seek to transform that tradition. She speaks of "revisioning" and says:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.[3]

Later in the same article, she goes on to say:

We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us.[4]

In order to undertake such a revisioning of the biblical myth from what we could now call an ecofeminist perspective, it seems to me that three things are essential. First, we must have explored carefully our "new critical direction" or our *contemporary experience* in order to discover what is life-giving and what is death-dealing in that experience. What are the tension points which evoke for us the power and the presence of life, wholeness and newness at work in our universe?

Such an exploration then takes us to the biblical text with new questions, questions which will enable us to search for what is life-giving and what is death-dealing in our biblical myth. This approach is based on a belief that the biblical text is not innocent but has encoded within it images, attitudes and values which are in conflict with the revelatory and the life-giving in our day. Our concern will be with those images and stories which have shaped and serve now to legitimate many of the attitudes and values which have brought us and our world to the brink of destruction. Our first questions therefore take us to the text with a certain *suspicion.*

Having read against the grain of the text, however, in order to free our reading from the legitimating power of patriarchal and violent images and values, we then, as readers, are free ourselves to *reclaim* from the text those images, attitudes and values which can act powerfully in the reshaping of our myth. We can, indeed, tell a new story and sing a new song which can

empower us in our work of transformation and which can legitimate new values, new attitudes and new images bursting with new energy.

A New Spirit at Work in Our World[5]

Before undertaking our engagement with the old story, both to critique and to reclaim it, let us turn briefly to our contemporary experience analyzed from an ecofeminist perspective. In this, I would like to draw out four key aspects of our current world-view which I believe are contributing to the destruction of our earth and the human community. These will be juxtaposed with another set of values which are emerging in places all around our globe. They are contributing to what many name as a significant paradigm shift which is shaping an alternative future for humanity.

As we listen to politicians and economic advisers propose a "new world order" in our day, *progress* seems to be one of the most consistent underlying values in all their discussions. Such progress is generally centered on human needs, focused on high technology, often at the expense of the earth and the human community. It is measured by productivity, especially economic productivity. Globally it has led to destruction of many aspects of the ecosystem and a resulting break down of human networks that have supported life on the planet for centuries.

Inter-connections and inter-relations are not only emerging as significant within the human community but within the universe itself.

Currently, however, this principle of progress is being challenged by the emergence of new values. There is a recognition that the earth, the human creature and in fact all life belongs in a "living, interactive system comprised of interactive subsystems, interactive species, and complex, dynamic, interactive processes."[6] There is, therefore, an emerging sensitivity to *process* so that life-values and life-rhythms other than economic productivity are valued within the human and ecological community.

Progress, as described above, often goes hand in hand with a style of human interaction and relationship to all forms of life that we could call *power over.* It is operative when decisions are made by those in power without any prior consultation with those affected, without provision of available information and without consideration of the multiplicity of life and life-forms. As Starhawk observes, "The consciousness that underlies power-over sees the world as an object, made up of many separate, isolated parts that have no intrinsic life, awareness, or value."[7]

There is a new spirit arising, however, that sees the human community patterned on relationships that find expression in what I will call *power with.*[8] It is the type of power inherent in non-violent protest around the globe. It is available when people are working together, empowering one another and enhancing life in the cosmos. Closely allied to power-with is an understanding of power as *power-within.* This results from the emerging consciousness which understands the interactivity within a biocentric world. It is sensitive to patterns of both life and death. It draws on the deep spiritual and psychic forces within the human community and the energy fields within the natural world. It is the consciousness which has often times negatively been associated with women and which women can now draw on positively and powerfully for the sake of the future.

This new view of power characterized by interconnectedness and relationship makes us more conscious of the *separateness and territoriality* which would seem to aggravate much of our ecological crisis. We are currently witnessing some of the fruits of such separation within an ethos of progress and dominating power. Enormous foreign debts weighing on many developing nations are driving them to actions which are destructive of the world's ecosystems. Vast amounts of toxic waste from western industry are being dumped yearly within third world countries, Closer to home, industries pollute beaches and other water sources daily. We too know our own sense of separateness and territoriality. Boundaries, however, are also being broken down. Who would ever have believed that in our day we would have seen the end of the Berlin Wall as an active agent of division and separation? The work of the United Nations draws our attention to our *interdependence* in the technological, cultural, ecological and economic spheres. As Mische says, there are "new transboundary systems and dynamics symptomatic of an emerging, though still incipient, global civilization."[9] Inter-connections and inter-relations are not only emerging as significant within the human community but within the universe itself.[10]

It is this awareness of interconnections that has led many to link militarism, racism, colonialism, and capitalism to *patriarchalism.* In fact, many feminist scholars would suggest that it is the patriarchal world view which underpins all other forms of domination and oppression because of its hierarchy and dualism. Male is distinct from female, mind from body, subject from object, "man" from nature, spirit from matter, the rational from the emotional and all are placed within the hierarchy of superior and inferior. Women, therefore, like the earth, have been objectified, controlled, dominated, raped and plundered. This has led to a firm

conviction among many, especially women, that unless there are strong links between an ecological and feminist consciousness and an addressing of the need to dismantle patriarchal ideologies and structures, the ecological movement will not succeed in renewing the face of the earth.[11]

A new consciousness, however, which we have already called ecofeminism and which seeks a voice for the "other" as both ecosystem and woman, has many characteristics. At its heart, however, lies the principle of *inclusion*. This inclusivity enables the dynamic interaction between the various aspects of the new emerging consciousness already discussed. It also empowers a life-enriching dynamic within and between all members of the human community and their environment. It allows the spirit, the power and the energy vitalizing all creation to come to full expression.

Earth and sky, air and water, vegetation, animal and human life— all share in life itself.

From this analysis of our contemporary society arising out of the stories which are told to us or by us daily, our attention has been directed to certain principles which have shaped and are shaping our world views and constructions of reality which are in tension. This tension constitutes a dynamic groaning either towards new life or imminent death. Conscious of the power images have to shape our world constructs and of the power of the biblical story in that shaping process within western society, we turn now to an examination of some of these images.

The Act of Transforming the Myth
1. The Myth of Creation

The first image encountered in the biblical myth is that of interrelationship between creator, universe and human creature in the opening chapter of Genesis. At a first reading of Genesis 1, it is clear that one of the primary emphases is the dependence of all created reality on God as creator, established by way of the framing of each section of the great poem with the words, "God said....and so it was." The universe is ordered according to divine determination and that order is hierarchical, and anthropocentric or homocentric, culminating in the creation of the earth creature as male and female [Genesis 1:26-27]. In fact, of all the work of the creator, only the human creature is addressed [1:28-30], emphasizing the homocentricity of the text.[12]

Aspects of this text, however, may provide us with images which will assist the development of a new religious consciousness adequate for our world and its concerns. First, the word repeated throughout the entire text of Gen 1:1 - 2:4 is the verb *bara*. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it generally refers to the creative work of the divine power. We are invited to consider the energy or sacred power active in the coming into being of the earth and its creatures, including the human creature. If we explore the numinous quality of this aspect of creative power, we may be led beyond domination and subjugation models. We might pause before the incredible power at work within the universe and see our human vocation both with and within that power. Both humanity, divinity and the entire life system are joined in the extraordinary creative activity in which we are all involved.

When we bring a feminist perspective to the word *bara* we discover it can also mean "to birth". If we take up this meaning then we decenter any reading which legitimates divine power as domination in a hierarchical mode. A different image claims the center. It is that of giving life from and in deep connection with one's own life. There is separation and distinction but only in the context of a primary and fundamental grounding in profound interconnectedness. All of reality, including humanity, shares this same origin. All is birthed from the very womb of divinity, shares in this very life force and therefore is connected in the very ground of its being. Earth and sky, air and water, vegetation, animal and human life—all share in life itself. This is a vision that is ancient and yet new and a vision which may enable us to save our planet.

Just as our reading of the relationship between divinity, humanity and the universe can and must be different from that of the original author[s], so too will our reading of the human vocation differ in the light of our critical questions. According to a traditional reading of the Genesis text with its hierarchical ordering, the earth creature is given dominion over the other creatures, and the earth is put under subjection.[13] Lynn White has instructively demonstrated how such images could be and indeed have been evoked to support a model of God or of divinity which is that of power over. The pattern followed by humanity in the world is an extension of that model. Humanity is made in the image of God and its rule over creation is a direct result of that image.[14]

An alternative reading of this text, however, opens up for us new perspectives and indeed new challenges. It is clear that the notion of domination in Gen 1:26 is that of royal power. Humanity's vocation was to share in God's rule within the universe. Israel's prophets critiqued the negative connotations of such power and our ecological perspective today continues that critique. Psalm 72, on the other hand, gives us an insight into another perspective on the power given to humanity. In that prayer for the king and the king's offspring, the psalmist asks for the gift of "righteousness" and

for "justice". The true authority given to the king is that which is a share in divine authority and that authority is such that it shapes or orders a universe where right relationships exist and/or are continually re-established. These right relationships concern the universe and all its resources, the human community and divinity. It is a prayer that there be an abundance of resources, that these be available to all in need, that oppression and violence cease and that peace be established on earth. We could almost call it a prayer shaped by an ecological vision, except for the image of kingship, which would have little or no meaning for a psalmist today. Seen from this perspective, the human vocation celebrated in Genesis can be reclaimed not as one of "power over" but of "power with and within," sharing with life on the planet in the ongoing creative process.

The words of power call us to remember the movement from birth to life and through death to regeneration.

2. A New Style of Wisdom

The transformation of our myth of creation so that it no longer supports "power over" or "separation from" in hierarchical ordering can be supported and supplemented by another source within the biblical story, namely the wisdom tradition. I can only point briefly to some aspects of this tradition which may contribute to our new story, our new song of women and the cosmos. I want to turn our attention to a woman's song, the Song of Songs. In it we hear indeed a new song of woman and the cosmos. In the opening stanza, the woman of song declares:

Yes, I am black! and radiant—
... As black as Kedar's goathair tents
Or Solomon's fine tapestries.
Will you disrobe me with your stares?
The eyes of many morning suns
Have pierced my skin, and now I shine
Black as the light before the dawn.[15]
[Song of Songs 1:5-6]

The pride and self-esteem of this woman's proclamation and the juxtaposition of that within a particular consciousness, does not characterize many of our sisters. They are considered extremes—black and beautiful, black and radiant—but they provoke us into a transformation of our own myth. This powerful juxtaposition, together with its reaffirmation in a number of ways in the short section quoted above, challenges all our neat categories and draws us into interconnectedness.

The black of the light before dawn reminds us to sing of cycles and seasons, process and transitions, mysteries which women know in their own bodies. The words of power call us to remember the movement from birth to life and through death to regeneration. No one movement can stand alone. All are inextricably linked, just as the virgin, the mother and the crone are contained within each woman. Perhaps this very proclamation of the woman of song invites and challenges women in our world today to claim our womanhood, all that has been rendered other, shameful, or hidden in the process of patriarchy, all that has been "disrobed" by demeaning stares. In doing this, we may then be empowered to allow a new voice, a new song to emerge from all people and all things that have been similarly rendered "other," worthless, or disposable in patriarchy's forward thrust. I use this word very deliberately as it captures a rather frightening patriarchal perspective which Yaakov Jerome Garb describes thus:

Should man fall back from his destiny, a NASA official warns us, the confines of this planet will destroy him. Notice the three actors here: man, his destiny, and the Earth. The whole drama is enacted along an axis of verticality (up = growth = destiny = future = space [=man]; down = regression = failure = Earth [= woman]), and the Earth's role is seen as destructive, confining, pulling man back from his destiny. Indeed the whole patriarchal cultural project has been seen as an enormous extraterrestrial enterprise through which man acquires a soul distinct from his body, and a superorganic culture which perpetuates the revolt against organic dependence on the mother.[16]

The ancient Song, on the other hand, rejoices in creation, finding that it provides most fitting imagery to describe woman and man and the love they share. The interpenetration of all things, the sharing in the same earth, the same light, water and air is evoked:

In sandy earth or deep
In valley soil
I grow, a wildflower thriving
On your love . . . .
Sweet fruit tree growing wild
Within the thickets—
I blossom in your shade
And taste your love.
... Your voice clear as water
Your beautiful body. [2:1-3]

The conclusion to the song celebrates this connectedness in a way which can provide us with a new song as women, as humanity in mutuality, and as persons who experience interrelationship with the cosmos:

Stamp me in your heart,
Upon your limbs
Sear my emblem deep
Into your skin.

For love is strong as death,
Harsh as the grave.
Its tongues are flames, a fierce
And holy blaze.
Endless seas and floods,
Torrents and rivers
Never put out love's
Infinite fires.
Those who think that wealth
Can buy them love
Only play the fool
And meet with scorn. [8:6-7]

This song with its power, its imagery and its eroticism has the capacity to shape a new mind and a new imagination in those who sing it. It is a reminder to us that our commitment to ecological transformation of the world will only be supported by a spirituality which compels us to sing and to dance and to make new music, new songs, new pleas or prayers for the sake of our universe. Our biblical tradition, along with many rich human traditions of Gaia, Sophia, Athena, and the many female manifestations of the divine, take us back to a time prior to patriarchy when humanity and the earth were in partnership . These traditions can provide us with new songs and dances and rituals. Starhawk addresses this need for a new spirituality, recognizing that it must be earth-based, and have within it three basic components: immanence, interconnection, and community.[17] It will draw on the old and will shape the new as is evidenced in one of her songs which she calls her "vision" of what is possible to reverse in the destruction of the Earth.[18] It needs to be heard in its entirety but here is a small portion:

Hear the earth sing
of her own loveliness
her hillock lands, her valleys
her furrows well-watered
her untamed wild places
She arises in you
as you in her
Your voice becomes her voice
Sing!
Your dance is her dance
of the circling stars
and the ever-renewing flame
As your labor has become her labor
Out of the bone, ash
Out of the ash, pain
Out of the pain, the swelling
Out of the swelling, the opening
Out of the opening the labor
Out of the labor, the birth
Out of the birth, the turning wheel
the turning tide.

A Gospel Story

As we draw together these fine threads that we have woven in the making of the new song of women and the cosmos, I would like to turn to a gospel story which may also provide us with sustaining power in the transformation of our myth. It is only one story among many possibilities, the story of the woman who anoints Jesus in Matt. 26:6-13.19

This story is set in a context of time running out. The reader has heard Jesus say just three verses before the opening of this story: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Human One will be delivered up to be crucified." (Matt 26:2). Our story opens with Jesus in the house of Simon the leper. This reminds us of all the territorial lines and boundaries which separate and confine, which Jesus crossed. As the story ends, Jesus, the wisdom of God among God's people, has broken boundaries, has crossed territorial lines, whether ethnic or religious, to shape a human community based on inclusion and interrelation.

Our love, not just for humanity but for all life on our planet, must empower us to pour out our resources lavishly.

It is in this setting that an extraordinary event takes place. A woman comes up to Jesus with a beautiful alabaster flask containing very expensive ointment, and she pours it lavishly over the head of Jesus. In a gospel story that has been concerned about the redistribution of resources in the new household of God, the community of the Earth, as Starhawk calls our universe, this woman uses her resources lavishly. She recognizes the imminence of the death of her friend and companion, Jesus. Her action has layers and layers of significance. It is an action of absolutely self-abandoning love as was celebrated in the Song of Songs. It is focused on the loved one offering the strengthening and healing anointing that will enable Jesus Sophia to face the crisis ahead. It acknowledges relationship and interconnection, her pain in relation to his pain. It epitomizes the reordering of relationships and resources which Jesus has lived and proclaimed during his life and ministry.

Such action symbolizes the new vision Jesus Sophia proclaimed, a new vision which seeks the interconnectedness of humanity and resources in a new Earth community. Expectedly, it provoked opposition. Even those who had been closest to that vision failed to recognize the significance of the woman's reaction and exclaimed,"Why this waste!"

Just as the woman's action functioned symbolically in the gospel story, so too her story can function symbolically for us today in a world where time is running out. Women together with men are being called upon to reorder relationships and resources at

this crucial time. Our love, not just for humanity but for all life on our planet, must empower us to pour out our resources lavishly. The healing anointing of that planet and its people needs this action. Jesus associated himself specifically with the poor who are always in need of compassion. So too, our healing anointing must focus on those areas of most imminent need while we do not forget the many other needs which will always be among us. We will have to develop a discerning heart that the woman of our story demonstrates.

We must remember and retell the story of the Earth in its fullness of interconnectedness and interrelations, a community of inclusion in the total sense of that term.

The woman's action is celebrated by Jesus in a most extraordinary way." Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (26:13). This story is a significant aspect of the preaching of the gospel. It symbolizes the gospel message itself, not in the person of Jesus, but in the person of a woman whose actions are to be remembered. They are remembered in the telling, the celebrating, but also in the enacting. Her story provides us with a model for action as women and men who seek to liberate not just ourselves as centers of the cosmos but seek to liberate the cosmos from its impending crucifixion.

Conclusion

This story of a woman from the Christian myth is perhaps a fitting place to end our beginning steps toward the transformation of not only that myth but the entire human-biblical myth. The affirmation of her story reminds us as we were reminded at the end of the Song of Songs that transformation of the myth must be accompanied by celebration of the myth. We must remember and retell the story of the Earth in its fullness of interconnectedness and interrelations, a community of inclusion in the total sense of that term. We must remember and retell the stories of women, our foremothers who have undertaken the process of re-ordering relationships and resources toward a true Earth community. I am reminded here of Hildegaard of Bingen whose vision of *viriditas* or greening power, creative power in the entire universe, is maybe even more vital for us today than it was in twelfth-century Rhineland Germany. I am reminded too of Rosemary Bell, an Australian aboriginal who speaks in the latest edition of *Women-Church* of the creative wisdom and earth relationship which she and her aboriginal sisters and brothers share.[20] The naming of those we wish to remember and retell in our new story, our new song could go on and on. These women, their stories and the story of the Earth are at the heart of our new myth, which we are indeed seeking to live and share with others. Returning to where we began these reflections:

In doing this,
we cleanse the obstruction of the flow of life force within us
tapping deep roots which nourish the whole in ways we may never even know.[21]

Footnotes

1. Deborah Koff-Chapin, "Transforming the Myth" *Context* (Spring, 1984) quoted in *The WomanSpirit Sourcebook*, Patrice Wynne (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 54.
2. See Thomas Berry, "The New Story: Comments on the Origin, Identification and Transmission of Values," *Cross Currents* 37 (1987): 187.
3. Adrienne Rich, "When we Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," *College English* 34 (1972): 18.
4. Ibid., 19.
5. A similar but more detailed analysis has been undertaken by this author in "A Metaphorical Walk through Scripture in an Ecological Age," *Pacifica* 4 (1991): 278-282.
6. Patricia M. Mische, "Ecological Security in an Interdependent World," *Breakthrough* 10.4 (1989): 10-11. Frijof Capra, *Uncommon Wisdom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 213, speaks of the world view emerging from the new physics as placing emphasis on "interconnectedness, relationship, dynamic patterns, and continual change and transformation."
7. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mastery* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 14.
8. Rollo May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins), 109-112, calls this type of power "Integrative." The terms I have used are taken from Starhawk, *Truth or Dare*, 14-16.
9. Mische, "Ecological Security," 9.
10. This understanding would seem to form the basis of Deep Ecology, see Freya Mathews, "Deep Ecology: Where All Things Are Connected," *Habitat* (October, 1988): 9-12. It also finds expression in the words of the American Indian leader, Chief Seattle: "What are humans without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, humans would die soon from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to humankind. All things are connected... Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. If humans spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves. This we know; the earth does not belong to humanity—humanity belongs to the earth. This we know...All things are connected like the blood that unites one family. All things are connected."
11. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983). See also Judith Plant, ed., *Healing*

the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism (Philadelphia/ Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1989).
12. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation Series (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 30.
13. Phyllis Bird, "'Male and Female He Created Them': Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *HTR* 74:2 (1981): 138, n. 20, says that "the intention is to describe a resemblance of adam to God which distinguishes adam from all other creatures—and has consequence for adam's relationship to them." Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1974), 158.
14. Note Lynn White's now famous critique of Christianity's view of nature, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155.3767 (10 March, 1967): 1203-1207.
15. The translation has been taken from Marcia Falk, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990).
16. Yaakov Jerome Garb, "Perspective or Escape? Ecofeminist Musings on Contemporary Earth Imagery," in *Weaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism.*, ed. by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 272.
17. This is developed in her essay "Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality," in *Weaving the World* 73-86.
18. Ibid., 85-86.
19. I have already undertaking some aspects of this in "A Metaphorical Walk," 290-292.
20. Rosemary Bell, "A Spiritlife called Country," *Women-Church* 11 (1992): 47-54.
21. Koff-Chapin, "Transforming the Myth," 54.

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Review Essay:
Evaluative Survey of Seven Current Bible Study Programs

By Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, RSM

Early this year, I was invited by an editor of *Modern Liturgy* magazine, Kenneth E. Guentert, to be one of three reviewers for seven bible study programs. Very brief excerpts from my observations about the strengths and weaknesses of these programs are cited in the review article in *Modern Liturgy* 20 (April, 1993). Here, however, I would like to offer a more comprehensive reflection on the materials I surveyed. Recent bible study programs are designed with basically similar audiences in mind: adult believers who are interested in knowing more about scripture, yet who are not taking formal courses in an academic institution. Depending on the author or program planners, this parish-based audience is assumed to have several other concerns: connecting scripture to life, getting training for diocesan or parish ministry, personal spiritual growth in prayer, sharing faith with others, and building community based on a common reading of scripture. Against the presentation of scriptural material, the programs "mix" the other components (application to experience, prayer, sharing) in greater or lesser proportions.

Text-Only Programs

The Friendship Bible Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress), for example, emphasizes everyday family and work experience of the participants, who are forming community based on sharing their reflections. The scriptural texts are occasions for sharing application to life, not material to be studied. Small groups, ecumenical or denominational, collegiate or high school retreat groups, with or without facilitators, can engage these themes. Booklets treat various text or thematic material, e.g.,"Parables," "Prayer," "Sermon on the Mount," and "Isaiah." Half the booklets in the program are written by laywomen. The format of the thin booklets is pleasing. "Clumps" of text and spacing make for easy reading in a paperback book size with formatting that reflects the ease of reading magazines.

The New Testament Study Series (Mission Hills, CA: Benziger) is just the opposite. Written by a practical-minded Catholic priest (William A. Anderson), no assumption is made that readers have time to meet in groups or share with others. This series offers a systematic reading of each gospel, broken into short sections, with readable, non-technical commentary and paraphrasing of the scripture. Reading questions after each section call attention to main points of the scripture. This "program" is best understood as a set of personal study manuals, paper-back size, with the focus on comprehension of the scriptural text. It only minimally attempts to tie the reader's experience to the reading and learning project. Type is standard book print. No-nonsense printing has little aesthetic appeal, other than lines to divide sections, like a newspaper.

. . . the integrated approach . . . replicates what happens at the Roman Catholic liturgy, with texts from both OT and NT being read.

Harper's New American Bible Study Program (San Francisco: Harper and Row) is another text-only program, a manual-size book that features ten themes based on God's relationship to believers, with a possible thirty-three sessions. A special feature of this program is its integration of OT and NT material, though the strength of the program is its introduction of OT books. This program presumes that the NT is read in light of the scriptural canon. A study group using this program would really benefit from a coordinator or teacher with some initial academic training in scriptural studies. The Leader's Guide is quite thorough, in an exemplary way, with overviews and usable teaching/leading suggestions to enhance participation.

One benefit of the integrated approach is that it replicates what happens at the Roman Catholic liturgy, with texts from both OT and NT being read. The assumption seems to be that most participants would be more familiar with the gospels but lack a broader biblical context to understand theological, spiritual, and homiletic themes rooted in OT. "Assignments" are offered after each section, at the discretion of the leader.

Programs with Video and Audio Components

In acknowledgment of the media age, the programs also vary in their use of videos and tapes; some programs do not. The videos and audio tapes can be distinguished by their varying levels of sophistication in such areas as camera work, posing of presenters, creativity in presenting material, and tie-in to the text of the manuals used by the program participants. Recently produced programs in wide use include *The Paulist Bible Study Program* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press) and *Little Rock Scripture Study* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press). Both include video

accompaniments to their series.

The video portion of Paulist's program is a lesson presented by male and female narrators (Lawrence Boadt, CSP, and Dr. Maria Harris). The 15-minute segments feature narration and visuals which emphasize the scriptural text itself, with scholarly, historical and archeological data relevant to the period of composition. Professionally polished camera work, with variation from "armchair teaching" to charted breaks, to dramatic presentation to stills to footage from archeological sites all make the Paulist video the most sophisticated of the media components in the programs reviewed here. Some of my students who viewed portions of this video were unimpressed, nevertheless. These are not music videos, one must concede.

The workbooks reflect attention to format, with good quality paper and readable type. Each unit includes several passages of scripture, and review sections for taking notes on major points of material in the videos. Prayer services are printed in the book, not just suggested, together with questions for journaling and faith sharing, and suggested time frames. Connection of scripture with experiences of the participants is not overdrawn, but presumably emerges from the sharing. Parts of this program can be a bit "heady" and content-oriented. This survey does not attempt to be exhaustive about every book of scripture, but gives a comprehensive overview of themes, major texts, and historical-critical background of the books of OT and NT. It makes use of Boadt's *Reading the Old Testament,* and Pheme Perkins' *Reading the New Testament,* plus references to recent, popularly-written work of scripture scholars. All sessions presume a group meeting.

The Little Rock Scripture Study program takes a more comprehensive and thorough approach to the text of each book of the bible. Study booklets break down the scripture into daily, continuous portions, with reflection-study questions on each day's reading. Each study booklet has a leader's guide and a booklet with answers to the study questions. There is also the relevant volume of the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* series (Liturgical Press), each commentary written by a different scholar. The booklets for participants are paper-back size, with emphasis on the printed questions; learning manuals include simple directions for reading scripture reflectively. This approach presumes that participants want not just an introduction or comprehensive overview, but intend to go systematically through each book. There isn't an inclusion of prayer services, journaling or faith sharing exercises. Emphasis is on private reading and reflection with a group meeting once a week or so.

Reviewed for this survey, the video lectures #1-8 for the NT, featuring Rev. Stephen Binz, S.S.L., are a somewhat unrelieved, solo presentation by a priest speaking from an armchair instead of a pulpit or podium. The main variation is the setting in which Binz speaks. Sometimes it is "directed" outside, other times inside a Church, or against lovely brick architecture. The content of these lectures is not the scriptural text, but important shifts in biblical theology since Vatican II. 25-minute segments break into manageable units the principles and application of Vatican II's *Dei Verbum.* While the camera work is professional, the presentation is basically a "softened" classroom lecture, helped by breaks of charts outlining main topics. My university students who viewed one of these Little Rock video lectures preferred the Paulist presentation they saw later. Another class who saw the Paulist presentation first preferred the Little Rock lecture they viewed afterwards. Whether reactions within a college classroom indicate anything significantly applicable to adult responses in parishes—I must leave the conclusion to those with more experience of parish life than I have!

Mary Mauren's *Scripture Share and Prayer* (Seattle, WA) offers both videos and audio tapes, along with two 3-hole notebooks of materials which include input for the leader/instructor, and some hand-drawn and typed handouts. This friendly lay-woman's program on the Pentateuch, which evolved since 1974, is somewhat dated in parts. Minor notes which distract: her non-inclusive language, and the publication of popularized biblical resources which seem to stop at 1983. One section offers helpful suggestions for dealing with Pentateuchal themes for pre-schoolers. This entire program, though, is a "home grown" affair, and has little sophistication or professional re-casting to it. This may or may not be an advantage for some settings. The videos are essentially what took place in her classroom; an earlier one records her giving a lecture from notes at a podium; a later one has better camera work, and she is delivering the lesson in a classroom without notes in front of the charts she has drawn. For typical parish settings, the videos would not be useful. For someone who wanted to do an in-depth study of the Pentateuch but couldn't take a course at a college or seminary, this could be a workable alternative, however. The audio tapes are essentially her classroom presentations.

For those beginning small group facilitation, Mauren's *Creating Communities of Good News* (Sheed and Ward, 1992) may be a valuable resource, its suggestions for sharing applicable to adolescents, young adults, or simple, unsophisticated groups. *Scripture Foundations,* a set of materials on revelation, church, overview of NT and overview of OT, is quite diffuse and therefore of questionable use in its present form for most adult groups. This entire program is one that cannot easily be separated from its creator.

Questions of Christians (ACTA Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago) makes a very creative use of audio tapes for supplemental input on the four

gospels. Audio tapes reflect radio presentation at its best—a truly unusual feature when joined with a bible study program. As an alternative to costly videos, this media "solution" of first-rate audio tapes keeps the price of this program an attractive feature. For Mark, the resonant voice of the narrator who gives scriptural commentary, alternates with that of the program creators, a Catholic priest (John C. Massion) and a laywoman (Helen Reichert Lambin) who give directions to the facilitator on group management. The set of tapes on Mark, however, is somewhat distracting; it seemed to this reviewer that the group facilitation material should have been written or given on a separate tape. But a valuable modeling is collaboration between a laywoman and priest. It is difficult to find the sections the facilitator is supposed to "play" to the group, i.e. when and where to "turn on" the "guest lecturer." Participants have booklets with group exercises, personal reflection questions, commentary to read at home, material to read along with the narrator on the tape, and points when they listen to the taped input.

. . . most programs do not yet acknowledge the distinction of women's spiritual experience from men's.

This program emphasizes real-life experience of the participants, which is presumed to incarnate the same questions about Jesus, life, and suffering that arose in the hearts of the first Christians. Gradually, the texts of scripture seem to be overtaken by the "application to real life" of the commentary on the audio supplement via anecdote, personal testimony, newspaper feature summary, short story, and memoir. Men's resonant voices dominate the narration on all tapes. The set on Luke features a rather long reading of Dickens' "A Christmas Story." Luke's gospel is broken down into themes, such as "Spirit," "Journey" and "Forgiveness." The tapes on John provide moving, contemporary autobiographical accounts of loss and love, light and darkness. The academically strongest presentation, most closely and creatively tied to the gospel, is the program on Matthew. The booklets are missalette size. Printed on the same sort of paper, they are best used soon after ordering, before the pages yellow. Emphasis in this program is on personal reflection, personal experience and contemporary application of themes to modern life.

Summary Reflections

There is a civilized struggle going on among these programs, which compete with one another on several courts. It is no secret that women will form the primary audience for these programs and be the participants in them. As the Church undergoes change from clerically dominated to laity-inclusive, some programs reflect this transition, in token gestures or in an attempt at a more fully collaborative style. How much a part of the program should women assume? The consensus seems to be that after women's voices are heard, we are still at a stage when the final and ultimate authority only "sounds right" when it's a masculine voice. While some programs feature women's voices and women's scholarship, most programs do not yet acknowledge the distinction of women's spiritual experience from men's. It seems presumed by most programs that women and men are no different when it comes to "application" of scripture to life. The applications tend to grow out of a virtue-based spirituality, which is already gender-defined in its presumption about the way Jesus "models" ideal Christian attitudes and behavior.

Another tension lies in the perceived divide between institutional "academics" who deal with historical data external to the scripture itself, and "real life folks" who are in touch with everyday experience. The *Paulist Bible Study Program,* the *Little Rock Scripture Study Program,* Mauren's *Scripture Prayer and Share,* and Harper's *New American Bible Study Program* give varying degrees of emphasis to the historical context, and the meaning of the scripture as text, as a prelude to exercises which "apply" scripture to life. ACTA's *Questions of Christians* and Augsburg-Fortress' *Friendship Bible Series* represent the opposite pole: experience of the participants and building community based on sharing take precedence over historical data, and even the particularities of the scripture text itself. The Benziger *New Testament Study* series avoids both poles: just read the text and commentary and interpret accurately what the words and phrases mean. There are quite a number of M.A. and M.Div.'s involved in these programs. With the exception of the Paulist series (serious academic material adapted, narrators are both Ph.D.'s, reference books by those with doctorates) and Little Rock series (the inclusion of the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* written by Ph.D.'s) the bias of the program developers seems to be against getting too many Ph.D.-and D.Min.- credentialed authorities involved, as though they "don't speak to ordinary people."

A third tension lies in the concept of adult education and the pedagogy appropriate for adults: should they read and study on their own, or should they talk and share as a source of learning about the text? Is personal prayer and reflection on scripture a greater source of learning, or is talking to others and hearing from others their responses? Is writing in a journal or talking to a group, reading or praying the best source for understanding? While all programs would say "all," each program reflects its own resolution of this

pedagogical question. There is also no doubt a bias in each program which reflects the introversion or extroversion of its creators.

A fourth issue lies in the concept of parish ministry and the "future of the Church." All programs presume that scripture has an essential place in this trajectory, but the question becomes, "What do you need to know?" on one hand, and on the other, "What should you be doing with what you know?" Those who consider a combination of programs, or emphasis on a single one, would be well advised to consider the distinction of scripture-training needed for various sorts of ministry.

One great need in Roman Catholic communities in the next decade will be teachers of scripture and preachers of the gospel. There is a current, irreversible decline in numbers of ordained priests who will be available to preach and teach scripture. There is the authorization of ordained deacons to preach, but they are male. The number of laity engaged in academic programs related to scripture, overall, is on a slow freight train. Some current bible study programs resolve this demographic problem by creating leaderless groups or conceive personal programs which don't depend on a teacher or facilitator educated in scripture. Essential basic knowledge is transmitted by "substitute teachers, " via video or audio tapes. The fact is, that most of these programs will work much better when someone with scriptural training is the facilitator/teacher. With the tension between experience-oriented and history-oriented approaches to scripture, there is a tendency to put a "cap" on the amount of training in scripture a facilitator of a parish or diocesan study group should have in order to qualify as a leader. In other words, if you have too many academic credentials, you may be disqualified. This tends to alienate practitioners from academics in the field of scripture.

I see this uncertainty and tension as a "sign of the times," but also a stop-gap and transitional stage. My own bias, understandably, endorses a direction that encourages more people to become enrolled in degree programs at academic institutions which provide in-depth training in scripture. The tension of these bible study programs lies in their attempt to reconcile the current situation of more laity interested (and needing to be interested in scripture) with recognition that more people with in-depth academic training in scripture are not available as leaders and facilitators and teachers. The danger is that without such training, we will become a de-historicized Church which is drowning in the unstoppable high-tide of our own experience, feelings, reflections and responses. A de-historicized and de-contextualized scripture will then be nothing but an occasion for "applying" a theme to our current life situation. Salvation history, on the other hand, presumes that God has been acting for a long time before this generation was born.

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