

**A FOOTING ON THE PLAIN
BOOK 1**

GENERAL RELIGIOUS ESSAYS

Nancy M. Cross

Teach me Thy way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path.
Psalm 27:13

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1 SISTERS AND BROTHERS?

For the seven years of my elementary school life I was systematically discriminated against. There were five of us Nancys (it must have been a faddish name during the Great Depression) who began Kindergarten at Cook School in Flint, Michigan in 1934 on unequal tooting- Nancys Porter, Somers, Vercoe and Wills, and one whose last name I no longer remember except that it was ahead of mine in the alphabet. Whenever the roll was called, whenever seats were assigned, whenever a line was formed according to alphabetical order, Vercoe was the fourth Nancy, just one from the bottom. Slow to catch on, I never realized until I reached my sixtieth birthday in the “rights age” that this chronic ordering meant I was, in those bygone days, only a little less worthless than poor Nancy Wills. To have been fair, the teacher should have been scrambling the alphabet every day. So what if she had difficulty keeping records, or if it encouraged chaos in the class room? Having to wait till the end of the roll damaged my ego and was, according to modern standards, grossly unfair. If that filth Nancy’s name was Anderson - well, think of the advantage to her self-concept that she was consistently named first, and for all her school years!

This cries for investigation. Can I sue the Flint Public Schools? From the last I’ve seen of Flint in “Roger and Me” (sic - an example of English standards in Flint’s education system?), there isn’t much to be gained, but it could be a moral victory.

I have been brought to this conclusion about the inherent discrimination of alphabetical order by sitting in church on Sunday mornings. I honor our priest: he is a good man, a studious man, a man of great sensitivity. And for the past year he has become convinced that order, that is first, second, third, etc., signifies rank, like it does in the army. This is evident as he combs the

liturgical prayers to reverse the normal order; men and women, to women and men; brothers and sisters, to sisters and brothers; sons and daughters, to daughters and sons - consistently putting the feminine form first and the masculine second. A -B-C-D-E according to that reasoning, therefore, means “best, better, O.K., bad, and terrible” just like on a report card. And I was Nancy V , always nearly last- what degradation!

The Church and the Bible are strong on order, that is headship, but I’ve been led to believe even stronger on the equality of every person before God regardless of position. From the Genesis description of the creation of man and woman, emerges insight that woman is dependent on man in somewhat the same way that God the Son is dependent on God the Father. After all, male and female are created in God’s image - a triune image that includes a First Person and a Second whose role is to respond to the headship of the First. The secondary character thus described of the Respondent has nothing to do, I’ve always thought, with worth or value, but is simply essential order. Wrote Alexander Pope, “Order is heaven’s first law.”

I must have wrongly assumed that being a second, as my sex is, had nothing to do with my comparative value, but was merely an expression of this godly order. Father obviously has believed all along that my being second speaks of my inferiority. He has begun to rectify this in every way within his power - he will assiduously name my sex first - he perceives it to be an act of justice. This makes me very suspicious that he has truly believed until lately that women are less worthy than men, and that has been the reason they are normally named last. I must say, it has caused a reappraisal of the meaning of ABC. and the belittlement of having Vercoe consistently after Somers (but before Wills). How foolish of me to have once thought that alphabetical order was fair; I now begin to see all order as partiality.

Jesus, the Bible tells us, did establish order amongst his followers. He set one, Peter, as the head of the others in all his dealings with the twelve, and told him before his betrayal, “when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren”(Luke 22:32). Words given, I daresay to Number One. But he also made clear that headship did not mean superiority. “You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:25-28). This is the King speaking! But the kingship He demonstrates is a kingship of service, not of domination and dictatorship.

I thought till lately that Karl Barth, the Protestant theologian, had put the thing together neatly. Comprehending order as having nothing to do with significance in God's creation, he writes (*Dogmatics III,4,pp.150-181*): “ and woman] stand in a sequence. It is in this that man has his allotted place and woman hers. It is in this that they are orientated to each other. It is in this that they are individually and together the human creature as created by God. Man and woman are not an A and a second A whose being and relationship can be described like two halves of an hour glass. . . Man and woman are an A and a B, and cannot, therefore be equated. In inner dignity and right, and therefore in human dignity and right, A has not the slightest advantage over B, nor does it suffer the slightest disadvantage. What is more, when we say A we must with equal emphasis say B also, and when we say B we must with equal emphasis have said A.

Theologian Barth considers the equality of man and woman very carefully. The early part of his essay is well worth studying. It is in order or position that the two are not equal and cannot be exchanged. That is, that like the Persons of the Holy Trinity, they are equal in worth and value, and they share all the same attributes; yet, according to the Athanasian creed which early sorted out this relationship among the Persons of the Trinity, this must be understood as “neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance.” In other words, the Three are wholly One, but also irrevocably Three. Likewise, man and woman with the Holy Spirit as their unity, are one, but they too are irrevocably three. Edith Stein writes that woman is wholly singular even though sharing all the attributes of mankind. Thus, man is also wholly singular. She would go so far as to call woman “a separate species.”

Yet as singular as their positions make them, Barth goes on to demand we see them as equal in worth. “Man and woman are fully equal before God ... in respect of the meaning and determination, the imperiling, but also the promise, of their human existence. They are also equal in regard to the necessity of their mutual relationship and orientation. They stand or fall together. They become and are free or unfree together. . . Yet the fact remains - and in this respect there is no simple equality -that they are claimed and sanctified as man and woman. . . in such a way that A is not B but A, and B is not another A but B. It is here that we see the order outside which man cannot be man nor woman be woman, either in themselves or in their mutual orientation and relationship.”

In the rights age which has so confounded the meaning of order these words are very dangerous and liable to be misunderstood. Barth knew that well even though he wrote before the

intensity of the present clamor. There are few Catholic magazines today that would dare to print this reaffirmation of order. The very words used to characterize it from the Bible have become verboten from the lecterns and pulpits of our churches. Ignorance of Christian things has raised dictators.

“But [order] exists,” Barth bravely asserts. “And everything else is null and void if its existence is ignored, if we refuse to recognize it as an element in the divine command, if it is left to chance. If order does not prevail in the being and fellowship of man and woman - we refer to man and woman as such and in general, to the rule which is valid both in and outside love and marriage - the only alternative is disorder. All the misuse and misunderstanding to which the conception of order is liable must not prevent us from considering and asserting the aspect of reality to which it points. A precedes B, and B follows A. Order means succession. It means preceding and following. It means super- and sub-ordination. But when we say this we utter the very dangerous words which are unavoidable if we are to describe what is at issue in the being and fellowship of man and woman. Let us proceed at once to the very necessary explanation.”

The explanation has indeed been missing because order is no longer taught or defended. The Fallen realm has impressed its definitions upon “super” and “sub-ordination” - the first to mean prestige and domination, and the second to mean servility and worthlessness. Those within the Redeemed Order must not accept either of these attitudes, nor these concepts as definitions for words which in God’s original plan meant no such thing. In the Redeemed Order which is meant to return us to God’s original plan, the first means the service of authority; the second means the service of enjoying the creativity and ecstasy of cooperating with that Holy authority. Our models again are the First and Second Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Barth continues with his explanation, “When it is question of the true order which God the Creator has established, succession, and therefore precedence and following, super- and sub ordination, does not mean any inner inequality between those who stand in this succession and are subject to this order. It does indeed reveal their inequality. But it does not do so without immediately confirming their equality. In so far as it demands subjection and obedience, it affects equally all whom it concerns. It does not confer any privilege or do any injustice. It lays a duty on all, but it also gives to all their right. It does not deny honour to any, but gives to each his honour.”

Though our fallen world has impressed its fallen values upon the roles of man and woman, we who attempt to live in the Redeemed Order must finally take reorientation to authority seriously, both those who serve the body of Christ in the role of authority, and those who serve the body of Christ in the role of obedience. One is not easier or better than the other when they are observed in the light of Christ.

Barth explains this as it affects the basic common denominators of authority and obedience, man and woman, “Thus man does not enjoy any privilege or advantage over woman, nor is he entitled to any kind of self-glorification, simply because in respect of order he is man, and therefore A. . . This order simply points him to the position which, if he is obedient, he can occupy only in humility, or materially only as he is ordered, related and directed to woman . . . The exploitation of this order by man, in consequence of which he exalts himself over woman, making himself her lord and master and . . .page and conclusion missing.

2 ATHANASIUS VIEWS THE FEMINIST SCENE

We are not to “call up” Athanasius like the Witch of Endor called up Samuel from death; Scripture warns against even thinking of such a thing. But as a major member of the communion of saints, we can enlist his indomitable spirit in a struggle that goes on now little changed from the way it was in his day. His prayers for us might well turn the tide in our battle even as they did in his lifelong war with the heresy of Arianism.

Perhaps “war” seems like a strong term. St. Athanasius would hardly think so. Few men in the history of the Church have shown such courage and perseverance in the face of such overwhelming, persistent odds. His cry, “the whole world has gone Arian,” has echoed down the hall of the centuries. We are beginning to understand him better as we experience bishops, priests and laity swept with a feminism in much the same hysterical way, and over the same basic issue that was the crux of Arianism.

It seems that Christians along with the rest of mankind find that issue the most difficult concept of all to understand because it touches the fatal flaw in all of us. While we, tainted with the world’s inevitable values, continue to scramble for authority and its power and prestige, and shun with all our might submission to authority because of its servility and worthlessness, the Holy Trinity models and the Christian gospel insists on the exact opposite.

Athanasius stood in the breach with a few allies: St. Basil, St. Hilary and friends, to proclaim that the Father who was the Author and therefore The authority, was not on a higher plane than the Son who was “begotten” by the Father, and who was sent by Him - a dependent, obedient position. To Anius “being sent” meant inferiority, being obedient meant a lackey status - “degrading”, “demeaning”, therefore not suitable to full Godhead.

These catch words, so much the language of feminism, are dependent on the same value system. It is not to say that both men and women have not misunderstood the accommodating role of women, called “submissive” and “helpmeet” in the Bible. This is not to say that men have not been overbearing in their exercise of authority, assuming a power role in Church and home, or that women have not been demeaned both by their own belief in the bondage of their role and the highhandedness of the other. But, it is to say that that is not the Christian idea of the roles of authority and response, nor does it mean those roles should be abolished or made exchangeable.

The Persons of the Holy Trinity alone put the roles of authority and obedience in a context of total, pure equality of worth. With the Holy Spirit, Athanasius and his friends established it. The Father and the Son are Equals, they have all of the same attributes. Yet, the Father and the Son do not swap positions in the Trinity. Each has his non-exchangeable place. It is probably the most difficult belief in Christianity because it contradicts the common view that egalitarianism is somehow the essence of Christian community.

Athanasius struggled and suffered through castigation by bishops who could not differentiate along these lines. He was banished from his bishopric at least five times in order to keep the revelation of the Triune Unity inviolate. There was no God and demi-god. The relationship of Father and Son was not vertical, a God at the top of the spire, a sub-god down below. The relationship was horizontal. The Father and the Son hold equal poles on this horizontal. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love unites them.

Neither Arius nor the Christian feminist can believe that submission can possibly carry equality with authority. Neither can believe that in God’s sight the one who is sent and goes can be equal to the one who orders. Feminists cannot believe that sexuality (male and female made in God’s image) is a sign of non-exchangeable roles all along a continuum. Obedience, dependence, submission - all are terms which signify to both Arians and feminists gross inequality. These are words which define one superior, the one who initiates, and one inferior, the one who is responds.

Simone deBeauvoir, early leader of the sisterhood, has declared that the very posture of acceptance is humiliation for a woman. Feminine physiology, the core of the woman’s being, which must receive in order to be fruitful, suffers the ultimate devaluation by this judgment system, which is the feminist credo. The woman is, however, in good company; the Son was

devalued by Arius for the same reason; it was by the Father and (only) through the Son that all things came to be - a distinctly lower position in his eyes.

In these days when collegiality, a sound and orthodox idea in itself, has come to mean a democratic ordering of the Church for some, a spreading out horizontally of the now shunned model of the Church as a hierarchy, it well to analyze again what authority and submission mean in the Holy Trinity where all such relationship has its ultimate origin. Jesus explained his relationship to Father often, all the gospels record it, but the Gospel of John expounds on this relationship. Perhaps this is because John and Mary were given an intimate relationship by Jesus, to live together as mother and son. No one would be more interested in Jesus' relationship to God the Father than Mary who conceived him. Her profound insights into this relationship would find its way into John writing.

St. John records the words of Jesus which affirm his equality with the Father, and at the same time his utter dependence upon the Father. "I do what I see the Father doing," "I speak only what the Father tells me to speak," "I do not come of my own accord, but only in obedience to the Father." The gospel abounds in these declarations. Jesus, the equal of the Father, is on the same "level" with him. The Father's authority does not make the Father more powerful, nor give him prestige over the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity. There is collegiality - equals, but with different roles. Authority is resident in one more than the others. The Second and Third Persons are more to be said, "obedient" to that authority. Even in the horizontal model of the Trinity, one has authority upon which the others are dependent. It is not a "one Person, one vote" situation. Both the home and the Church are ordered to reflect this Divine Order, but who will dare to say so these days. Even the New Testament affirmation of this truth is black-lined out!

It may not be possible for the human being to ever grasp the whole implication of this within his being. It is so ingrained that authority means power over others, which in Scripture and the Church it does not, and must not. With the Holy Spirit, however, it is possible to overturn this ruinous value system, one whose origins are Satan, says Scripture.

St. Athanasius, enemy of pagan compromise, be with us in this struggle! You helped to bring to birth a doctrine of the Divine Persons, the One God, which the Church everlastingly affirms. Today we are in the pangs of another emerging doctrine; this one in terms of the human being, man and woman, and we need your fortitude, your faith, and your philosophy.

3 TOWARD A CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

The Bishops in writing a Pastoral on Woman¹ may be forced back to a deeper question, the answer to which may contribute toward development of a doctrine of mankind that will clarify all masculine and feminine nomenclature and role, and will thereby be the basis for our living more wholly as men and women.

With all the work of feminist theologians in the past ten years there is a question which they raised themselves which has not been adequately answered. At the Detroit Conference on Ordination in 1976, George Tarvard, a theologian sympathetic to the ordination of women, posed this question, “Does Christian anthropology see manhood and womanhood as distinct complementary ways of being that cannot be reduced to one or the other?” and continued, “If so, one can make a good case for two functions in the Church.”

This appears to be the ultimate question, and as the Bishops begin their work on the Pastoral on Women it will become evident to them, if it has not already, that they are faced with a much larger task than defining Christian women and their “every legitimate freedom that is consonant with their human nature and their womanhood,” as the pope instructed in his message to U.S. Bishops in September of 1983. In the end, it seems that that task necessarily means tackling the one posed by Tarvard.

He expanded that original question with these observations and questions: “It is easy to refute the belief that women are inferior, but this does not take us very far, for it is not the view that one finds in ecclesiastical circles. The view is that there exist providentially predetermined roles for man and woman. And this is more difficult to refute. The alternative question remains: does a

¹ This effort was abandoned in 1990, and was superseded by Pope John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

Christian anthropology see womanhood and manhood as abstractions which imperfectly fit the living being called women and men? Does it hold that in practice each human being is in some ways and varying degrees both male and female, so that it is up to each one to define, before God, one's one self and one's function in the Church and in Society? This I believe, should be the question before us. Until we have answered it, we cannot present a good case, whether for or against. . .”

Obviously answering these questions involves more than a scrutiny of women. The rise of consciousness in the past thirty years has pushed us beyond addressing one half of the human race without the other, and it is therefore impossible to think of making any determination about the meaning of one half without considering the meaning of the other.

Along with many others, Delores Leckey, Executive Director of the Bishop's Committee on the Laity has expressed this recently, commenting after testifying before the Committee concerned with writing the Women's Pastoral, "It is my feeling that the discussions should be widened to include men and their responsibilities. Perhaps a companion pastoral on men!"

It is not just women who are a puzzlement. What is the meaning of the male in Christian anthropology, what is his God-given role to which he must also be obedient?

In a recent article Tom Bethell, contributing editor of Harper's, notes that it has been the failure of the man who had traditional monopoly of the authority side of the coin to faithfully live out his role that has caused the eruption of anger on the feminine - obedience side. Quoting Michael Jones, he asks with him, "Is feminism in the church based on the experience of women who found men weak, either morally or pastorally?" And he answers, "Yes, it is possible. Looked at this way, feminism is not a revolt against patriarchal authority; it is a revolt against the breakdown of authority.

Has male authority in home and Church brought down the house upon itself? If so is it because the monopoly is not God's will, or is it because the monopoly that is God's will has been unfaithfully executed?

At a general audience in 1982 Pope John Paul began a teaching which could speak to this question. In an exegesis on Ephesians 5:21-23, he stressed the importance of the responsibilities of the husband in the marriage relationship - responsibilities of a *mutual submission* which on his part is often overlooked in stressing the submission required of the woman. A "subjection" is required, he insisted, of both of husband and wife. The relationship between them is of a double

dimension or degree: reciprocal and communitarian. One clarifies and characterizes the other. The mutual relations of husband and wife should flow from their common relationship with Christ.”

Again, this raises questions: what is the Christian anthropology that delineates the relationship of modern man and woman, as husband and wife, yes, but also in the Church community as priest and non-priest, and as the elemental human creature, male and female, which God created in the beginning? And related to it, in the terminology of Augustine, does the “city of man” make different requirements upon that relationship than the “city of God’?” If so how does a Christian move from the world to the Church and back to the world with faithfulness to God’s intent in creating his or her sexuality?

The whole picture seems to involve the merging of a theology and a scientific investigation toward a true Christian anthropology; a study with a factual, systematic base of the origin, and the physical, social and cultural development of mankind as it continues to be called into renewed being by God. Much different from merely a scientific study, the Christian dimension calls for grappling with revelation as held in Scripture and in Tradition. Not a grappling intent on proving the dysfunction of these sources of revelation, but a sincere wrestling like Jacob’s with the angel to jostle from the Word of God the truth that we have finally come of age to understand.

Jacques Maritain’s warning of our tendency in this day and age to avoid truth by our “epistemological time-worship” meaning that any truth of the past is *passee* just because it is of the past will need heeding in this investigation. The disease St. Paul foresaw of itching ears which in Maritain’s words is becoming “so general that no one will be able to hear the truth anymore,” must be seen as what it is, originating “from malnutrition and a serious vitamin deficiency” - lack of knowledge of both Scripture and Tradition. Scripture and Tradition are often presented as *passee*, leaving us with nothing but intellectual “kneeling before the world” whose “wisdom” will be really *passee* tomorrow. When these sources of truth are approached with a teachable frame of mind, we will find, I believe, a fully comprehensible and complete doctrine of mankind - the referent and sense of man and woman coherent to all further structures and meanings that rest upon them. The feminist has not been able to do this because of an allergy to basic scriptural and traditional principles.

A doctrine of mankind is already well rooted in Scripture and Tradition but has yet to appear as a sturdy entity recognizable by the faithful. Feminism, despite its own inability to frame it, has called it forth and is to be credited with the rise of consciousness that finds us ready for it and seeking it. We thank them for the courage to say, even to insist, “something is very wrong,” and to awaken us all to the need for expanded understanding of sexuality.

With all the fears and animosities the word “doctrine” rises in American Catholics these days, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the virtues of that idea. As Newman so amply demonstrated, doctrine is not static, nor does it cause atrophied, bound-up Christians. He saw doctrine as a living thing which grew and developed according to guiding principles that were as logical as those that governed the growth of any other living organism. And the final test was fruitfulness in the lives of believers. So we have no need to fear the idea of doctrine. Eventual settling down with a doctrine based on divine revelation, which is the base of all true doctrine, will be as spiritually refreshing to both men and women as the doctrine of the Trinity was to the Church when it was finally struck in indelible words.

However, we must be prepared for the resolution of the meaning of man and woman to take time. Father Charles Curran speaking at the National Association of Catholic Chaplains called the role of women “the greatest internal problem the Roman Catholic Church is going to suffer in the next decade.” A decade is probably far too short a time to see any general acceptance of resolving a controversy in a Church that has been stirred to its depths by a debate that has rivaled that from which the doctrine of the Trinity emerged in the fourth century.

A hundred years saw that baffle bring orthodoxy to the brink of extinction before the tide turned and the truth of the nature of Jesus as fully man and fully God vindicated. St. Athanasius’ famous cry, “The whole world has gone Arian” could be echoed in “the whole world has feministic” and the analogy would hold, not just in the initial successes of Arianism, but also in the subject matter - the equality and relationship of persons who shared the same nature but had different roles.

In the Arian controversy the idea of a second person co-equal to a first was a stumbling block. The role and place of the Second Person co-equal to the First Person in the Trinity may be found to hold a significant relationship to the role and place of the second person in mankind, the woman, in her particular union that makes up the creature mankind. The “second person” is a role and place that contemporary values find mystifying, but no more so than fourth century

values found them. How can one called primarily to a stance of obedience and submission be equal to one called primarily to a stance of ordering and authorizing? Such was the impossibility to the Arians of God the Son being a co-equal with God the Father. Such is the impossibility to the feminist of the woman being a co-equal with the man, that is, unless she concocts an anthropology that will “see womanhood and manhood as abstractions which imperfectly fit the living being called women and men.”

Such questions were laid to rest about the Trinity with the Athanasian creed which concluded that there was a “trinity in unity,” which “neither confound(ed) the persons nor divid(ed) the substance.” There are parallels to work on, as we might expect when pondering that mankind was made in God’s image. After all both mankind (explained in Genesis 1:27) and Godhead are in Christian belief the union of two persons. In both of these unions one is derivative from, dependent on, and obedient to the other; each is opposite to the other, both are held in perfect union by sharing of the same “substance” or being, and by the action of the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, who also shares that being. Perhaps because of the analogical relationship of God and mankind a similar authoritative statement may lay to rest the upheaval about male and female and the existential dimension of their morphology.

Will it take a hundred years to shape such a definition for mankind? Perhaps not to shape it, but acceptance might come slowly taking into consideration the temper of those who call themselves “post-Christian” feminists and claim the intent to cling to the form of faith even while emphatically denying the substance. We have all been affected with the allergy, and we all break out at words like derivative, obedient, dependent, and the like, even though the model is Him who we call Lord and Christ, who “though he was in the form of God did not count equality a thing to be grasped.” The servant mentality is something we need much help to accept even 2000 years after the requirement was given.

Any beginning made toward a Christian understanding of the questions about the meaning of sexuality will affect to the good both the Church and the home. These two institutions are patterned after the order of Godhead itself, we believe, and both are most agonizingly stressed in the current sexual revolution. Addressing this stress on the Church, Archbishop Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter, Archbishop of Toronto, points to the masculine/feminine confusion as the primary cause in a scholarly pastoral called, “Do This In Memory of Me.” The Church suffers from these errors, he says, which have eroded the

understanding in Catholic mentality of the marital union between God and His New Creation in two related ways, the first in the attack upon the sacramental life and the second in the attack upon the male priesthood and hierarchical governance. Both the sacraments and the priesthood rest upon the underlying reality of covenant. And covenant, the marital symbolism of which is basic, relies on the reality of the ‘qualitative differentiation of men and woman’ which is sacramental and liturgical.” Upon this differentiation the whole structure of the Church rests.

With these theological insights the Cardinal contributes solid stuff to a doctrine of mankind. Stuff which could strengthen the priest’s confidence and security eventually, possibly even increasing the trickle of priest vocations to a respectable river in the future. In some unfathomed sub-reason cubicle in the human mind there seems to be a potent archetype who reacts by diminishing men’s confidence in their ability and by draining their vitality to fulfill their mission when women seek and gain power. Is this something fundamental? Perhaps it is just cultural as the feminist says, or is it rooted in some as yet unfound “law” of being?

No one needs to write up a compendium of the sufferings of the Christian home under the impact of the woman’s movement. Even those instrumental in its beginnings are having second thoughts in view of the cataclysmic aftermath. Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan both have made a turn in their own way toward more traditional ideas of the roles of woman and men. I have before me a list of articles printed in current publications which presents the statistics of divorce, often brought on by the conflicting ideas about the roles in marriage; the toll of that divorce on older youth, the immense increase in suicide among them; the arrests and family violence which correlates with the dip in traditional families; the debilitation of men as women find power; the working mothers unintentional though unavoidable neglect of her family; the finding that violent children come from disordered homes; and the increasing phenomena of infertility related to delayed conception and abortion, to say nothing of the horrifying number of those abortions.

Certainly the world, “the city of man” is unable to unscramble the problems nor answer the questions that feminism has raised. The Church alone holds the key. Because feminism has not worked and seems to hold no intellectual, spiritual, or emotional answers to its own questions, does not mean that the questions are not good and timely. Now is the time for the Church through the teaching Magisterium to come forward with some resolution. It will not

mean regression, the feminist needn't fear, but a new vision that will be lifegiving to all who participate in the Catholic Church and who believe in and obey Jesus Christ who is her head.

In the despairing tones of the voice of Hester (*The Scarlet Letter*), who could not see this resolution, but only agonize over its need, Nathaniel Hawthorne has prophetic words to say, "As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down and built up anew. Then the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change, in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated."

Later in the book and again through Hester's eyes he continues his prophecy, "Women, especially in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion - or with the dreary burden of a heart unyielded, because unvalued and unsought - came to Hester's cottage, demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy! Hester comforted and counseled them, as best she might. She assured them too, of her firm belief that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."

We must be at that time. The world must be ripe for it, because the whole system of society has been torn down, there is the possibility of men's repentance, and there is still the possibility of women not losing her "ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest self" it is not too late for her to embrace a new and loving teaching that will balance the scales. It is a moment made for the Church through whom the truth may be established in a new doctrine of Christian anthropology so that the end of Hawthorne's prophecy will come to pass - "a whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."

4 A BEATIFIED FEMINIST AND EMBATTLED HIERARCHY

If I were drawing a cartoon about feminism and the American bishops instead of writing an article, the picture would be of a heavy-walled fortress, towers akimbo, deep moat round-about, covered as with ants on an anthill by tiny figures of women. Women on ladders scaling every wall, women leaning off the towers waving banners of victory, women blowing trumpets from the parapets, and women lowering the drawbridge for a phalanx of approaching women dressed not as conquering knights but as priests.

The Roman Catholic Church's granite opposition to women in any place beyond the altar rail seems overwhelmed by U.S. feminism's sheer persistence - or so it would seem from the first draft of the pastoral on women's concerns, "Partners in Redemption" issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. In it the bishops retell sympathetically all the grievous complaints they've heard about patriarchy in home and Church, ask for a more comprehensive Christian anthropology which might find ordination for women feasible, nod toward more openness to women's input on reproductive rights, and beg forgiveness for the "sins of sexism."

A remarkable document even for the way it came into being, data was gathered from 100 of the nearly 200 Catholic dioceses in "listening sessions"; as for its content, it promises to accelerate controversy over woman's role in the Church. Some, like an editor of the 450,000 circulation St. Anthony Messenger, lauds it as "unique in honesty," while the conservative National Catholic Register considers its method narrow and biased, its language feministic jargon and its theology hopelessly confused. When Time Magazine comments that the pastoral sounds like "a feminist tract," it heartens some, but confirms the suspicions of a good many others. The

Pope's faint praise for the document may well be considered a gesture of conciliation in light of his own strong Apostolic Letter, *On the Dignity of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem)*.

Breaching the walls of all-male leadership in the Church certainly has not happened. The Pope's letter has made that clear in reaffirming the ban on female priests. Said Helen Hitchcock who heads Woman for Faith and Family which lists 40,000 women opposed to the feministic leanings of the American Church, "My prayer is that when his statement is public, the bishops will go out and quietly bury this pastoral."

During the middle of the consultation and writing process a significant book appeared on the Catholic scene which seems to have gone unnoticed in Joliet, Illinois, the bishopric of Joseph Imesch who headed the committee who wrote *Partners*. This book may still have an important role in the sorting out that will happen before November, 1989, when, if the process is not delayed, the final document appears. (see footnote one on page 10)

Woman (ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 1987) is a collection of talks and essays written by Edith Stein, whom Pope John Paul I beatified a year ago last May on a pastoral visit to Germany. Certainly her work in Christian feminism was known to him, a phenomenologist himself. This preliminary step to canonization caused a stir in the Jewish community because convert Edith, gassed in one of the "cottages" of Auschwitz in 1942, was a Discalced Carmelite nun, but more significantly from their point of view, a Jew, and hardly more of Christian martyr than millions of other Jews. Edith Stein had had an exceptional educational career in her fifty-one years. A brilliant student in philosophy, she was an assistant to Husserl, a fellow student and colleague of Heidegger, a participant in a learned company among whom were Maritain, Koyre', Gilson, and Berdiaev, and a writer of several philosophical works, the greatest being, *Endliches und Ewiges* (Finite and Eternal Being) Her theological interest led her into a comparative study of phenomenology and the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas which was acclaimed as insightful into the interrelatedness of the two disciplines.

But it is her forthright but thoroughly Christian feminism which may in the end have the greatest impact on the Roman Church. The Pope's apostolic letter "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," (August 15, 1988), closely parallels many of Blessed Edith's insights. Together they add up to profound philosophical and theological work on behalf of women.

Like the feminists of the last half of the Twentieth Century, Edith Stein in the first half of that century believed that women had not been allowed their rightful state in either society or the

Church. Like them she had reservations about critical passages of the Pauline epistles: had St. Paul inadvertently slipped back into a pre-redemption frame of mind when with new freedom, women seemed to threaten the order of the infant church? She also surmises that there is nothing in dogma that prohibits priesthood for women, though she quickly reasons that it most probably is not to be.

This unlikelihood is based on an appreciation of scripture without parallel among the post-Vatican I feminists, and a comprehension of the feminine “ethos” which she finds delineated in scripture and in the nature of woman. Edith Stein does not find the Bible “permeated with the language, symbols, and ideas of female inferiority and subhumanity” (U.S. Catholic theologian Mary Ann Tolbert, PhD.); rather, she accepts its authority which she finds a reliable base for her feminism. Nor does she find patriarchy to be an “evil system” (Sandra Schneiders, Theology Professor at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, speaking for “Women in the Church,” 1987). She grapples with scriptural priority of males and finds priority in no sense implies superiority - a subtle but necessary distinction.

Because of these two dimensions to her feminism - respect for Scripture and patriarchy, and determined pursuit of equality for women, Edith Stein may well prove her sanctity, necessarily witnessed by two authenticated miracles, by two big ones. Is it possible she could provide a meeting ground for badly factionalized Catholic women while ultimately supplying a base true to Scripture and Tradition, and sensitive to Magisterium teaching upon which an orthodox, yet open-ended feminism may build.

What kind of feminism would that be? Surely not like the prevailing secular variety which is motivated by a good deal of anger and misogyny. But as with all Christian things, that dissimilarity rather than being an impediment would simply act to spotlight the sanity of faith.

A true Catholic feminism according to Edith Stein would incorporate these elements: 1) a scripture based equality of man and woman that would recognize their common call by their Creator; 2) an appreciation for woman’s “ethos” or “inner form” and its essential complementary relationship to the man; 3) a comprehension of the divine order of man and woman, first, as it was in the original creation, second, in the distortions of this fallen realm, and thirdly, as it is meant to be in the redeemed community; 4) the essential contribution of woman to the goal of Salvation History : union with God; and 5) woman’s necessary attachment to the source of her

strength, maturity and wholeness - the Eucharistic life. Review of these points impressively exposes the deep spiritual quality of such feminism.

The first point is explicated in her essay, "Vocations of Man and Woman." Here Edith Stein describes the first account of the creation of humans where, "the difference between male and female is immediately proclaimed. But *mutually* (a key word in the Apostolic Letter) "they are given the threefold vocation: they are to be the image of God, bring forth posterity, and be masters over the earth.. It is not said here that this threefold vocation is to be effected in different ways by man and woman; at best, this is implied in the quotation on the separation of the sexes." Yet man and woman have this threefold destiny that is both natural and supernatural, and is identical. And "for both a life of faith and union with the Redeemer is rewarded by eternal contemplation of God."

When it comes to the second passage concerning creation, "one can think here of a mirror in which man is able to look upon his own nature [the woman]. . One can also think of a counterpart . . . they do resemble each other, yet not entirely, but rather, that they complement each other as one hand does the other."

"A certain pre-eminence is indicated in that man was created first... But God is three in one; and just as the Son issues from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, so, too, the woman emanated from man and posterity from them both. . . It is not a question here of sovereignty of man over woman. She is named as companion and helpmate, and it is said of man that he will cling to her and that both are to become one flesh. This signifies that we are to consider the life of the initial human pair as the most intimate community of love. . . before the Fall, their faculties in perfect harmony, sense and spirit in right relation with no possibility of conflict."

Woman's ethos, that inner form that is unique to the feminine soul, is based on faculties that are different from the man. She embraces in her being the living, personal, and whole - in all her contacts with life she aspires to totality. Her vocation as wife is "from the Lord, carried out for his sake, and under his guidance ."

To be wife and mother is not the only way her ethos may be fully exercised. "There is no profession she cannot practice as well, as long as there is room for the truly feminine." In fact, solid objective work is a natural remedy for some of the excesses of feminine nature. But this

work beyond the home must wait until the primary responsibility of raising children is met, or if concurrent, the first interest and attention is due the home, children and husband.

The supernatural call to religious life fulfills feminine nature completely for it asks a total surrender which is “the deepest longing of woman - to give herself, to belong to another. . . Specifically wherever she is [religious, or secular life] she must be a handmaid of the Lord.” Mary is the complete model. “Perverted feminine nature is restored to purity only when fully surrendered to God no matter the worldly activity.”

Perversion of nature of both man and woman happened with the Fall. Before the collapse of human perfection, the holy and original ordering of man and woman found the woman in submission to man’s rule, but his rule meant only service to the woman and her children. The man’s responsibility as head was in total subordination to God’s guidance and could not, therefore, contribute anything but harmony and goodness to the perfect community of love.

With the Fall, God’s plan was altered. The man is punished by a loss of sovereignty over the earth; his efforts result in harsh struggle. The woman’s childbearing is met with pain, and her life becomes one of subjection. The relationship of the two becomes degenerate. Patriarchy is then marked by all the sin of the fallen order: brutal authority, greedy exploitation, and senseless acquisition. “All these defects are rooted in perverted relationship to God.”

Restoration in Christ brings man and woman back to the original order. In Christian marriage the man is to be concerned with its health - its livelihood and success, as well as its spiritual well-being. He is to aid “in the development of talents and energies of his wife and children.” To strengthen the spirituality of his wife” he encourages her creative work and independent activity.” With practice of personal self-denial, he brings order and harmony to family life.

The woman, as his helpmate, creates an ambiance of order and beauty in the environment conducive to the development of all individuals. She brings to the family a “singular sensitivity to moral values, and an abhorrence of all that is mean and low.” An attitude of self-less service will “develop the highest level of humanity” in her . It is “her supernatural vocation to enkindle sparks of love for God and fan them into greater brightness.” Patriarchy is a problem, then, only in the fallen order. In the redeemed community, it is wholly a service of the male without perverse attitudes of prestige, power or domination. Failures to live up to such an ideal have kept all the aspects of the Fall still apparent in the community - Church and home - which is meant to

reflect again “serene love.” Holy women and holy men never reach their goals by “battle against nature and denial of limitations, but only through humble submission.”

The “soul of woman” makes an essential contribution to the Christian community in her longing to give and receive love.” This raises the community “above day-to-day existence into the realm of higher being.” A life of faith and deep trust in union with the “redeemer will be rewarded by eternal contemplation of God.” Effected through grace, the woman becomes “expansive, quiet, empty of self, warm and clear.” This occurs only as she lays “whole soul into God’s hands.”

A good deal of Edith Stein’s thought is exercised over the formation that young women must have in order to develop these spiritual faculties. This must be concrete, individual, and personal. Senses, will, intellect and emotion need “definite motivation” of religious education.

Pope John Paul II asked a group of American bishops in 1983 not to promote priesthood for women in any way, but to begin to ‘leach cogently the design of Christ” and to clarify the “legitimate freedoms of women.” “Cogently” means “forcibly and convincingly.” The Pope has demonstrated this in *Mulieris Dignatatem*. Cogent teaching, at this point seems not to interest most bishops, but it must be undertaken in an inspired, serious way if Edith Stein’s type of feminism is ever to overtake the misguided Rosemary Radford Ruether variety.

5 REFLECTIONS ON THE LISTENING SESSIONS

This winter during November and December (1985), The Women's Commission in the St. Paul/Minneapolis Archdiocese sponsored eight "listening sessions" at which one of three auxiliary bishops or the Archbishop was present. The purpose was to gather data to be included in the archdiocesan summary to be forwarded to the National Bishops' Committee writing a Pastoral Letter on Women in Society and in the Church.

My husband and I bit the bullet and attended one these sessions held at St. Edward's in Bloomington where the "listener" was Archbishop John Roach, and I attended another with local women at St. Mary's of the Lake in White Bear where auxiliary bishop Robert Carlson heard the women talk about their experience in the Church. Since these experiences, I have questioned a number of men and women about them. Several things cry to be openly addressed.

First, the women attending these listening sessions are not proportionally representative of the people of our archdiocese. I have contact with three parishes, one inner city, one small city, and one semi-rural. The women of these parishes who would agree with the general views expressed at the listening sessions would be a very small minority. The few who supported traditional roles for women in both of the small groups I attended spoke of the emotional difficulty of attending and the special courage it took. Those who had not gone expressed the same reluctance to walk "into a lions den, and for what purpose? To be eaten alive?" There was some truth to that after all. The publicity given to the woman's movement in the Church - the conference lately at Mankato where the women professed worship of Wicca, the blatant disregard of Church teaching in the abortion ad of the New York Times, the perverse thinking of women 'Theologians' to be read in periodicals from *America* to *National Catholic Reporter*

(even our archdiocesan paper gives space to every feministic complaint)- has so scandalized women, that those who are fulfilled Catholic Christians hardly go out of their way to hear more.

I admit that even though I write on this subject and have some facts at hand, I dreaded to go to these meetings aware of the tongue-tiedness I would experience when faced with illogical passion. Of course, if vent for steam is necessary, some good may have been done - I consider even that questionable, but these meetings can hardly be considered to speak for a cross-section of Catholic women in the Archdiocese.

Preparation for these listening sessions was thorough. The members of the Woman's Commission of our Archdiocese were the organizers and many were present at both meetings which hosted at least a hundred and fifty women. The Archbishop's presence brought women (and about a dozen men including seven or eight priests) from all over the archdiocese while the White Bear meeting served mostly parishes adjacent to it.

Arriving in the large gym of the school, in both cases each person was given a "reflection piece" which had six questions with space for jotting notes. The Archbishop or Bishop addressed the meeting expressing hope that it would be helpful to participants and to him personally. The words were soft and reconciliatory if necessarily ambiguous. Then the six questions were answered privately by the participants with paper and pencil while the moderator clocked time allowed, moving the group from question to question. I found the questions hard to distinguish from each other, all asked for feelings, for experiences both good and bad in the Church, and finally what the person would like to see written in the Pastoral. These were collected at the end of the session as gold to be refined - the puree' to be sent on, we were told.

We were divided into small groups. Here we would listen to each other. The direction was specific - there would be no dialogue or commentary on another's observation. This time was to simply listen to what others had to say without any response. Again the time was clocked and we were moved from one question to the next, each person being allowed to contribute. Two nuns in our first group angrily complained that this format treated them like children.

At the Archbishop's session, I was in a group of twelve women; several were nuns (they were preponderant in attendance), one other than myself was at peace with the Church, three or so were on the fence, feeling sorry for those who had a 'call" and could not follow it, but expressing no such unhappiness for themselves, and the others were aggressively feministic. One

of these was a member of the Archdiocesan Woman's Commission. My second experience was very nearly parallel and stimulated the same questions in my mind.

Why does so much of what is said have a rote sound about it and is word for word like that in dissent literature? In both groups in which listened, similar stories were told. I had read them before, even the words in which the stories were told were the same. Nuns had been "kept from serving the poor by the hierarchy;" one in a South American slum. When asked to explain, nuns in two different sessions said they had prepared people for confession, then unable to absolve had had to turn the penitent over to "that man." This kept them from serving the poor? Some in both groups felt "kept from ministry" because they lacked a "certain organ." The word "pain" was mentioned in a dozen contexts. I was gaining a new respect for Freud.

It all sounded like brainwashing. Yes, there is some legitimate anger which needs to be addressed and the causes removed. Yes, the hierarchy has been remiss in practicing Christian values and has taken up attitudes not befitting servants - that much is clear. But the logic beyond that ceases; propaganda is hashed and rehashed instead. In one of my groups a nun began to read with eagerness a well-worn mimeographed paper containing all the pejorative statements about women made by Church fathers. I and another had heard these things many times and said so. Why don't we mimeograph the positive things said about women especially the Blessed Mother? As for these Church fathers, if we could be sure they were talking not of the fallen realm, but of men and women alive in Christ, there might be a point. The same nun commented that if she were to write a book, "it would be x-rated." Her elderly countenance had trouble carrying the teen-age, devil-may-care expression this announcement required. Many who went along with the proclamations of the "oppressed," did so out of pity for what they considered a genuine plight. Several in my group expressed their own happiness with the Church but their sorrow that others were so unhappy. Have they considered the possibility that "the call" these women claim may be similar to that of a duck who has "a call" to be a dog because that animal was the first it saw when it emerged from the shell (a circumstance that actually happens), and that the "call" is a psychological mix-up, not a real inner voice of the Creator presenting a new destiny?

The commission member stated that Jesus was a rebel and she was learning how to be rebellious. There was a relish and satisfaction in her expression that was too typical. Despite the rule not to respond, I found it necessary to say that I understood Jesus's whole mission on earth

was to bring us from a state of rebelliousness to a submitted heart. She appeared to be mystified at the idea.

We regathered in the large group after a break to record regarding the Pastoral itself each individual's desire on the large sheets of newsprint taped to the wall. At Bishop Carlson's meeting, there seemed to be a few anti-feminists who had come organized. They protested that it was against the law of the Church to promote women as priests, therefore they did not want the session in which they participated to give that input. At first they were treated with embarrassed silence by the leaders. Later they protested about the litany that was to be read by everyone as a closing prayer, and this time when they were ignored, they left.

The prayer litany used faithful women of the past who would disclaim the associations it connected to their names. Each was made to appear to be a foremother of the feminists. The litany's words are in quotes.

In the Old Testament, Judith "risked her life that her people might have freedom." The actual context was ignored. Holofernes and his hordes are a literary device for Satanic evil, and Judith, symbolic of the People of God (feminine in relation to Him) took careful steps to be the instrument of deliverance; she went out with the blessing of the elders. She was not rebelling against a righteous order for freedom from that order.

Esther did not "face her nation's oppressive rulers" in any way that feminists could applaud. She was wife and queen to the pagan ruler, pleased him despite her feelings, and recognized his legitimate authority. In humility, submission to his authority, and with complete dependence upon God, Esther brought her appeal for the people to him. He honored her integrity and allowed her to write the edict that kept the Israelites from destruction.

Thirdly, Miriam, "Who gave the prophets encouragement and hope during the desert time of God's people", is called a prophetess in scripture, but the story says she let her pride overcome her. God punished her for stepping beyond the limitations of her true call. She misinterpreted it to be the same as the prophetic mission of Aaron and Moses. Can we call her up as a witness for feminist's goals? These Old Testament women speak with consistent voices but they cannot be used to support the intentions of the liberation group - their stories need to be truthfully told; they would be helpful to illustrate the God-given role of woman.

"Mary the mother of Jesus whose yes called her to participate in changing the course of human history -" Amen. She did it by submitting the life she had planned for herself to the will

of God. Some women have trouble honoring her submission, wishing to see her instead as the model aggressive woman. The suggestion we pray the Memorarae instead of this litany at one session received an icy response.

The Samaritan woman and Veronica, saved by Christ were his unabashed promoters and servants; Mary Magdalene and other women “proclaimed the Risen Lord” - may all women do the same. Phoebe, Prisca and Lydia did everything in their power for the Church, but did they “lead it?” There is no such scriptural evidence. St. Paul with full apostolic authority forbid such a role to women. Did they thwart him then?

The use of Theresa of Avila in the litany “who believed in her own call to lead” is most misleading. Theresa did not believe in her own call. She put herself under strict disciplines devised by her confessor and the Provincial General of the Jesuits to authenticate her call. She gave leadership to her order of women to return them to the discipline of their original rules.

And St. Catherine of Sienna “whose courage and love for the Church caused her to challenge priest and pope” would hardly recognize herself in that statement. What she did she did for the love and obedience of her “bridegroom Christ,” and then under spiritual direction. In one of her letters to the pope she wrote, “You know too, how needful it is for you and for Holy Church to keep this people in obedience to Your Holiness, for here is the source and beginning of our faith.” Can either of these saints be used to bolster the claims of those who want to follow a call that has no proven scriptural or theological validity?

Of the others listed in the prayer litany, only one, a saint recognized by the Church, needs to be addressed; invoking the others was rightly protested. We do not know God’s verdict upon the lives of Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman, Dorothy Day, Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kasel, Ita Ford, or Maura Clarke, nor should we presume it. However, Elizabeth Seton, a model of longsuffering and obedience, could well be emulated by all women for her “generous love for family and Church.” After this prayer(?) the group was divided in half, each side to face the other, to give the final blessing. Is it appropriate for the persons gathered to finally bless themselves and each other when the apostolic presence of the bishop is there for just such an authentic blessing? Are we really to such a state that like children we thumb our noses at authority, even Godly authority? The Archbishop was snubbed as directly as was possible - he sat on a folding chair uncommittedly provided over at one side. As angry statements, confrontative statements, were filed on the newsprint, a roomful of faces would turn to look at

him to see his reaction. It reminded me of naughty children watching the response of an incapacitated parent as they acted-out just beyond his reach.

Bob and I left heart-sick, especially at the priests present who sat cheering the dissenting leaders on, and expressed their hope that “the pastoral would be prophetic and endorse priesthood for women and the use of contraception.” One, a dear friend, we talked to afterward. He was adamant about this stand and said he would be ashamed until the church treated women just the same as men. Was he trying to adjust a poor relationship to women, even to his own mother, by throwing himself into the feminist cause? Who knows the motivations that supersede reason?

Somehow the women who have found meaning in their femininity as equal but by no means the same as men, and contemplate their significant place at the heart of the gospel as a sign that would be lost to themselves and the Church if they ever assumed the role of authority - somehow these women, who far outnumber the others, must be given a voice and a forum. We have listened to the other and found it wanting in honesty, openness, and orthodoxy.

6 FEMINIST CONSCIENCE RAISING

Really Raised? And to what?

Under the disguise of utter simplicity the Bible opens with a story of such amazing depth and subtlety it can only be explained by origin in the Holy Spirit of God. Karol Wojtyla wrote in *Sign of Contradiction*:

A non Catholic philosopher once said to me, “You know, I just can’t stop myself reading and rereading and thinking over the first three chapters of Genesis.” And indeed it seems to me that unless one does so reflect upon that fundamental ensemble of facts and situations it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to understand men and the world. These are the key to understanding the world today.

Whether or not the future Pope John Paul II was thinking about the phenomenon of feminism and the dependence of feminists on “consciousness raising”, it remains true that without reflecting on those ‘fundamental facts and situations’ it is not possible to understand the threat to Christianity that is this peculiar development in our times.

The Genesis explanation of the state of the world as we find it resides in three figures, or four. A man, a woman, an Adversary and God Himself. The man and woman are created in the image of their Creator; that is, two of the very same nature, equal in worth yet mysteriously

polar, but wholly united in a Third. Their sexuality therefore means something. In such a configuration the Creator enabled man and woman to enjoy the creativity and ecstatic union of the Triune God, though not like Him subsistent, but as dependent creatures. In the Perfect Plan, the man and woman, together called Man, were to be united wholly to the Creator in the Holy Spirit, another three in one – the creature, forever His opposite, granted the gift of friendship in a kind of equality with his Creator. Love reigned. Into this Garden of Delight was inbuilt freedom - being blissfully One with God was not coerced. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil granted the man and woman freedom to turn away from wholehearted response to God, thinking His thoughts after Him and obeying His Holy will, to decide on their own what was good or bad for themselves.

Into the scene comes the Adversary. The first “consciousness raising” session is about to begin with an innocent and a facilitator who has an agenda to implant. Doubt will be seeded about the veracity of the God and man. “Did God say?” After all, the woman did not hear God say, because God worked through the man to govern creation. Perhaps these two, God and man, are gaining from this arrangement, and she is merely the lowest rung on the ladder that holds them up, and not the beneficiary of divine order as she thought?

What will be attacked now that trust has been destroyed? Hierarchy. God, it will be heavily implied, has only his own prestige in mind, and his heavy-handed authority is oppressive to those who are mere lackeys. “You will not die. God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.” God contrives to keep his creatures in the dark - “you are oppressed,” teaches the Temptor.

Also words and concepts first defined by Revelation are being redefined and recast. The Liar says, “you will not drop dead.” And of course, they don’t, not right then, but spiritually? That eternal dimension, *the* Death, is ignored. “Freedom” and “equality” sans-the eternal now mean “independence” and “the same as.” “Yes,” whispers the Enemy, “equality with God is being withheld, knowing (gnosis) good and evil will bring desired autonomy. You are oppressed, merely a pitiable victim.”

The first consciousness raising session in Eden (considered a rise by the gnostic Jungians - I have heard it taught so in a seminary classroom), resulted in The Fall, the indelible flaw in every human being called “original sin,” which is the unremitting propensity toward autonomy, self realization on one’s own terms, and disregard of *the* Authors ultimate claim on the human as

the author -ity. Within every person is a primal rage against all that would thwart or limit this determined drive for self, whether that obstacle is God or man. These characteristics make it impossible for fallen mankind to ever again experience the original blessing of union with God as his Beloved (a masculine to feminine relationship in human experience); that is, unless God Himself stoops to save by again offering Mankind union with Himself - which His Love does in sending His Son to die for each individual man and woman.

Today all the frightening elements of the Genesis story are resurfacing in the new Eden, the Christian Church. The figures are the same, man, woman, the Adversary, and the Holy Trinity. Consciousness raising is directed primarily toward woman, secondarily, through her, to the man. The agenda of the facilitator is the same. The gnostic consciousness-raising itself is relied on for a pseudo earth-bound wholeness, now called individuation, or self-realization. This is considered “progress” or “growth” as though transcending the Salvation of Christ.

Tools have been prepared for this Christian consciousness destruction; the book “Imaging God/Women’s Experience” is one written by seven nuns from various orders for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which is the official organization to coordinate relations with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican. The writers themselves have already had their consciousness about reality “raised,” and they write a booklet to spread this superior way to other women by means of six outlined small group sessions. The framework rests on an experiment with eleven small groups of eight to ten of a cross section of Catholic women who gathered to share their own spiritual experiences guided by a series of prepared questions.

The results of these small groups would not be particularly surprising to anyone - experiences of encounters with God common to men and women over the ages are shared from which comes a new sense of community and personal energizing. That these prayer experiences among women are most often centered in relationships with family and friends, would seem quite ordinary. To the writers, however, vast significance is found in these women’s cells. A new spirituality of women’s experience is being born that will revolutionize religion when it is finally freed from the oppressors - men and the patriarchal church.

There is an initial disappointment registered by these nuns, that these early experiments with women did not surface a lot of anger or frustration. These participants did not talk about spiritual experience as “empowering;” they did not connect sexual experience as spiritual, did

not speak much of sin, and were rather oblivious of their oppression. “Overall, the women favored a God-image reminiscent of the Father-creator who benevolently reigns over all” which suggests to the nuns that their groups “have appropriated the cultural bias (emphasis added) of overvaluing traditionally masculine attributes and undervaluing feminine ones.”

These lacks will be taken care of in future groups by the process outlined in the book. Women will be encouraged to get in touch with the “theology” of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Judith Plaskow, Carol Christ, and Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, whose caustic doubt will surely do its work. Jungian insights will “urge women toward the task of consciously integrating the masculine into their own feminine consciousness.” The women of the early groups displayed “prevalent cultural inhibitions and taboos” which hold up this “maturation.” Though “one rarely gets the sense that these women suffer from an inadequate self image,” future women will be guided into a “conversion process” which will reflect “a sense of self which includes autonomy as well as relationality, . . . - a transformational movement from dependence to independence to interdependence, . . . images of God which would certainly include female images, - - - global awareness, an alternative vision of society which is proclaimed in the Gospels, celebration of one another and the world, Incarnational theology and comfort with sensuality.” Whatever all that means, it is not the vision of the Gospels universally experienced through the Holy Spirit for two thousand years.

The sisters are puzzled. Perhaps a description in the questions given the groups” led women to consider it inappropriate to describe as spiritual experience a discovery of themselves as oppressed, or God as distant, or a time of wrestling with God or feeling rage at the condition of themselves or their sisters in the Church. Clearly, in the nuns’ minds, women should feel oppressed, God should seem distant, and they must be fiercely angry at the Church even though they don’t know it.

So, anger will be taught to be a ‘source of creative energy through which women can transcend other feelings and *become true selves* (emphasis added).’ ‘When women use words such as ‘total surrender,’ dependence,’ ‘acceptance’ or ‘letting go and letting God,’ as they did in the study, “it is time to ask some questions because of the tendency in women to consider it holy to be weak and dependent.”

Thus the ultimate feminine stance upon which union of Man and God depends - Response, is shot down. There will be ways presented future groups to be sure the women

“accept and identify as victim or dependent as the norm for them. Women in LCWR groups will be taught to remove obstacles (that they don’t even see in their “oppressed condition”) “of unjust structures and demeaning ideologies.

Sin is redefined in self-ist terms to be “self-hate, refusal of responsibility for our own lives, false humility . . . choosing helplessness, suppressing anger, . . . silence, passivity, submissiveness, etc.” From these attitudes and behaviors participants need personal conversion. They will be “invited” to consider when they were “pushed or pulled in ways that seemed to be destructive to life in them and others.” They will be shown how “very little” the Church has encouraged “women’s spirituality”- an amazing statement to Christians of either sex whose wholeness in Christ is a gift through His Church.

In a compelling book, The Reverend Dr. William Oddie, a Fellow of St. Cross College, Univeristy of Oxford, brilliantly contests all the assumptions that lie behind feminist consciousness raising. He cuts through the cant, the befuddled femspeak, the contorted “logic,” and negations of the very nature of Christianity to expose the bare bones of a serpent-like skeleton.

In this, Dr. Oddie does not say there is no problem for women in our times. He sees how “The domestic sphere has been devalued” by modern life and values, till the most crucial of all humanizing activities, that of the mother in the home, has been made to seem trivial and unimportant, thus sabotaging woman’s sense of worth and mission. This is the wound that feminism has used to implant its virulent germs infecting women and Christianity. It is an area that must be regained for woman’s own sake, as well as for the sake of the Church and society.

However, feminists, like the nuns in the LCRW booklet, will take women in small groups and systematically falsely identify the problem making room for their blatant call for autonomy and self- realization.

“The attainment of feminist consciousness is not merely a matter of accepting a particular analysis of women’s place in this or any other civilization. It is a new vision (for women), which excludes all others. . . through the process of ‘consciousness-raising’, . . . it is not merely her understanding of social relationships which has been changed, but her whole perception of reality. She has undergone a kind of metanoia, or conversion. Suddenly all the frustration and spiritual emptiness she felt

before has been a given a reason: patriarchy. . . It no longer occurs to her . . . that the agonized questions about her life, “is this all there is?” is one asked with equal pain by men too, a questioning inseparable from the human condition.. .”

That question is one with deep spiritual roots that go back to original sin manifested in primal anger in every human, and its answer, forthcoming in Christ, will eventually lift the questioner into the realm of salvation - anger at God and self, forgiven, resolved. However, if the feminist gets hold of the female questioner first, that quest will be perverted.

From a Christian perspective, then, the cardinal error of feminism is to ask an essentially religious question, “Is this all there is? And what is wrong with my life?” and give it a merely secular answer. The fact that the secular explanation is itself based on a misapprehension compounds the error. And the effect of this double error when applied by women to their religious faith is predictable. For the secular answer that emerges from the feminist consciousness is that the fundamental problem is not to be found within, but is to be laid at the door of certain external socio-political structures imposed by an identifiable external enemy. And at the point at which this answer is accepted, the journey of the soul towards God is halted, perhaps even reversed, since an essential impulse towards movement is now lacking: all the natural human instincts to resist personal change have received a fatal boost.”

7 WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BELIEVE ABOUT WOMEN?

With Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, "On The Dignity and Vocation of Women" (1988) offset by four failures by the American Catholic Bishops to posit a pastoral letter on women, the last two decades of the 20th Century will go down in Roman Catholic history as a time of birth pangs of a momentous new doctrine. Like all eras when the emergence of a new consciousness about being Christian raised havoc with unity in the institution which regards universal unity as one of the signs of its supernatural origins, these late years have seen the Roman Church torn by internal controversy of historic proportions.

Though generally affecting the European and North American Church most intensely, the meaning and role of the sexes in the economy of Christendom, is being argued world-wide. Mission magazines like those of the Columbian Fathers who serve in the Far East, and Maryknoll, whose priests, nuns and laity are active in Central and South America, monthly tell stories of native women under the guidance of American missionaries actively working to wrest authority from the male leadership of home, church, and society. Feminist consciousness-raising sessions are being reported even in India, the land of suttee. The African church alone shows less interest in the issue, partly because of the general acuity of their development and the pressures of racism, partly because of tensions with Islam, and the need of sensitive handling of polygamy, but at least partly because of an intrinsic moral sense that the West on this issue is wrong. The suspicion that it is American missionaries who are imperialistically planting feminist ideology and stimulating the change of customs in many countries gained credence at the Synod on the Laity (Rome 1987) when the American Bishops were perceived by the African Bishops as forcing their pro-feministic agenda upon the world Church. Journalist E. Michael Jones for

Fidelity (December 1987) reports that Nigeria's Francis Cardinal Arinze, President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, bridled when an American, Albina Aspell, closed a paper with a promise that she would pray for women in the Third World who hadn't reached equality with men and who were oppressed by sexist customs. Retorted Arinze, "If you mean by oppression, customs which sanction abortion and divorce then pray for the women in your own country."

Feminism is just one, but the most revolutionary of the "liberation" ideologies to find an opening in the Church since Vatican II Council loosed the 400 year old bindings applied by The Council of Trent to prevent the spreading infections of Protestantism. In relaxing restrictions on the sacramental, catechetical, and governmental life of the Church, the new freedom found expression among the faithful in ways that recall adolescents when car keys are first placed in their hands and the parent, uttering a prayer, turns and walks into the house. The more mature handles the opportunity with perspicuity, responsibly broadening his horizons; the insecure won't budge unless accompanied by an authority figure; the immature jumps at the chance to go off in four directions to the detriment of everything in sight; and the rebellious punish their former guardians by using their mobility to disclose to the wider world the extent of their prior childish servitude.

In the Church the last group has brought an improbable word into the Catholic vocabulary, "dissent," more lately called, "loyal dissent," which means determination to stay within the Church but to work for radical change. The confabulative professor and feminist theologian (Garrett Theological Seminary) Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of the originators of the infamous New York Times pro- abortion ads, calls on those at variance with the Roman Catholic Church to "stay in the church and use whatever parts you can get your hands on" for any cause opposed to the traditional stance (America 3/1/86)." Perhaps with Ruether and company in mind, another whose relative stance on moral theology cost his teaching post at Catholic University, Fr. Charles Curran, spoke an obvious truth a few years ago declaring, "women are the greatest internal problem for Roman Catholics during the next decade."

Women have been considered something of a problem throughout the Church's two thousand year history, and certainly the solution to all they represent will not be settled in a decade. St Paul in his letter to the juvenile church at Corinth exploded in anger over the usurpation of authority by women. In a burst of enthusiasm over the charisms of tongue-speaking, prophecy, and healing powers bestowed on male and female alike, women had

misunderstood the import of the democratic actions of the Holy Spirit. On the basis of baptism and spiritual gifts they assumed that governance of the community was as much their bailiwick as it was the males'.

St. Paul considered women's takeover part of the overall problem of insubordination and antinomianism in Corinth, perhaps even the cause of it. Not always with logical argument - he gets tangled up with merely cultural things like women's hair length and veils while explaining underlying principles - in the end, he just lays down the law about male headship (I Corinthians 11), "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" And in a final tirade writes," It is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached? . . . I am writing you this as a command of the Lord."

Was he merely expressing his prejudices? Catholic feminists have put him at the head of their discard list. Yet, that last phrase, a startling apostolic interdict, has demanded the Church treat the passage seriously.

Men of the first eight centuries, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, among others whose meditations on the scriptures, and profound theological work in the formulation of doctrine have earned them the title 'Fathers of the Church," found women enigmatic too. Tertullian was not alone in preaching to female audiences, "You are the Devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first foresaker of the divine law, you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not brave enough to approach; you so lightly crushed the image of God, the man Adam; because of your punishment, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die." Wow! Among the Doctors of the Church, Thomas Aquinas, founder of the Scholastic philosophy that has dominated it until this century, expressed an ambivalence toward women that is documented from statements about "misbegotten males" to "the voice of a woman is an invitation to lust and therefore must not be heard in the Church."

On the positive side, the Fathers promoted the doctrine of Mary - a doctrine which the late Urs von Balthasar wrote, gave "Mary a place even higher than Peter. The Church is a feminine reality and has a place ahead of the male successors of the apostles. The Mary principle - thus the female principle - is more important than that of the very hierarchy which has been entrusted to men."

The honor the Church has given to the place of the Virgin Mother and uncounted female saints, to say nothing of the understanding of herself as the Bride of Christ, have not overcome the overall effect on women of negative words in the Fathers' writings; neither has the protection to the woman of an inviolable marriage vow based on the love between Christ and the Church, nor the guardianship and respect given to her fertility. She has been the object of deep admiration in the Church both as virgin and mother, but that of late is viewed sourly as a kind of inverse condescension, or even a deliberate plot. Popular consciousness raising processes like that promoted by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, turn to the activist women in their heritage, bold Catherine of Siena and intrepid Teresa of Avila (even Susan B. Anthony and Winnie Mandela appear in a prayer-litany), as models rather than Mary's self-negation. For such reasons, Rosemary Ruether has boasted that for years she has honored pagan goddesses rather than the Virgin Mary. Within this conundrum extending over two millennia, its deeper roots sunk in another two thousand years of Jewish history, lie all the untidy components that eventually must find arrangement in a developed doctrine of sexuality. That is, promulgation of the dogmatic meaning of man and woman in creation and in the salvific plan of God. About the importance of doctrine not only for the Church but for the world as well, no one writes (Orthodoxy, Dodd, Mead, 1936) so eloquently as O.K. Chesterton:

. . .if some small mistake were made in doctrine, huge blunders might be made in human happiness. Doctrines had to be defined within strict limits, even in order that man might enjoy general human liberties.

To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom - that would indeed have been simple . . . But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.

We are reluctant witnesses of the anything but humdrum, heavy or safe emerging doctrine, fraught as it is with intense polarity. The ordinary Catholic feels threatened by those intent on making feminism the status quo liturgically, catechetically and governmentally, regardless of the consequences - or as many express, in happy recognition of the consequences - total deconstruction of the Catholic Church.

Yet according to John Henry Cardinal Newman, the master teacher about the way doctrine develops in the Christian Church, this upheaval will be tremendously enriching in the end, even as laval soil is fruitful in its time. The giant theologian of the Nineteenth Century, Cardinal Newman's conclusion about doctrine was the prime motivator in his own unintended conversion to the Catholic Church. An apologist for the existence of the Anglican Church, to his consternation he found that what he thought were Roman Catholicism's corruptions of revealed truth rightly repulsed by the Anglicans, were instead the logical unfolding of what was inherent in the "true ideas of Christianity." In describing the historical development of the Church's consciousness of faith, Newman concerned himself both with how the content of faith grew and how faithfulness to the gospel was guaranteed in that growth. His criteria in brief: the outward form of the original idea must be preserved; there must be continuity of guiding principles; earlier stages of development must be assimilated in later stages; later stages must be discernible in 'the embryo' of the earlier stage; there must be logical interconnection; and the idea must be lasting without losing its vitality. These together proved the guidance of the Spirit, and were in Newman's opinion, decisive. It is these criteria that must ultimately be the judge of feminism's tenets which accordingly well may be discarded.

Such reasoning is spurned by those at feminism's forefront because they are judged to reflect only a male rationalism, not the experience of women. Herstory alone interests the revisionists. Constructs of men over the ages be damned. Admits Rosemary Ruether about the goal of priesthood for women, "the conservatives are correct in recognizing that the revolution represented by the ordination of women threatens the whole symbolic structure." In the femspeak of a reviewer in the liberal Jesuit magazine *America*, their goal is "nothing less than a revisioning of Christian truth through the careful criticism offered by self-conscious feminist experience. . . to understand the feminist experience not as something isolated and peripheral but as the lens through which all doctrine may be reevaluated, newly understood, and ultimately reformed . . . allowing them to suggest interpretative framework by which major symbols of

Christian faith may be reexamined.” Only a drastic overall change in the language of scripture, theology and liturgy, that is a total “inclusive language,” will expedite such revisionism.

To this self-important agenda, the Reverend Dr. William Oddie, Fellow of St. Cross College, Oxford, responds; (What Will Happen to God? Ignatius 1984)

We have observed again and again, how the Bible and Christian tradition may be misrepresented, suppressed and distorted in order to assist the propagation of the primary feminist theory of the existence of a patriarchal conspiracy. But we are no longer concerned merely with a simple misrepresentation of facts. Rather, we are caught up as spectators at the birth of a fantastic new world . . . Now seen through the intervening lens of feminist consciousness, dreams become nightmares, things which are honourable, things which are lovely, things which are of good report are suddenly, at a stroke, horribly changed, perceived by this ‘new mind-set’ as part of a vast tissue of lies and oppression.

Does Oddie exaggerate? The extreme pressure on the Church by the Woman’s Movement has forced recent moves made by theologians, bishops and the pope to begin a process of formulating just what the Church does believe about woman, and because of his radical complementariness, man as well. In the United States, appropriate to this stage of the Church’s growing understanding has been the inclusion of Catholic laity in the discussions.

There was widespread dissatisfaction, however, with the “listening sessions” which the bishops organized “to hear women” before their pastoral on woman began its fated course. Seized by the militant as the table to arm-wrestle their opponents, middle-of-the-road women were intimidated by the angry cries. Said one who braved her diocesan conclave, “ ... Jezebels! They put the Archbishop off to one side on a folding chair, and closed by ignoring his presence and arrogantly blessing themselves!” From a total of 53,000,000 U.S. Catholics, the 75,000 women, many of them silent, could hardly be considered bearing the “sensus fidelium” or “sense of the faithful”

which was the wide base of common belief that Newman looked for in the true development of doctrine.

This isn't the first time that the Catholic Church has seen the laity in a tug of war over a theological issue. The Arian controversy of the Fourth Century witnessed an intense struggle among ordinary folks to bring forth a dogma on the relationship and role of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Laying the present contention about the meaning and role of man and woman next to the emergence of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity there are some interesting parallels.

First, the issues than and now have to do with the relationship of persons - in the earlier doctrine, the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, chiefly the Father and the Son; in the present, the relationship of persons in the unity called mankind, the man and woman. (In the theology of sacramental matrimony the union is sealed by the Third Person - the Holy Spirit, completing a triune unity.) Second, a major stumbling block basic to both arguments is the persistent assumption of the human consciousness that the role of authority is superior to the role of response to that authority. In resolving the Arian errors in the Fourth Century, it was essential to understand just the opposite: that though the Son was sent and, therefore, had an obedient and responsive relationship to the Father, he was, nevertheless "of one substance" and equal to the Father.

In the struggle to understand man and woman, that perennial *non sequitur* must be corrected by the same Christian logic. "The Authority Problem," is succinctly expressed by Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*,:

Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.

To be solved, The Authority Problem, continually cropping up in every aspect of life, demands of Christians a peculiar understanding. In the Kingdom where Christians hold citizenship the strange fact is that the value and worth of the responsive role is wholly equal to and worthy of the same dignity enjoyed by the role of authority. This means that though the male has a position, scripturally in both Old and New Testaments, and traditionally through 2000 years of Church history as the authority in their mutual relationship, the dependent, responsive

woman, “of the same substance” or nature, has a role and meaning of equal worth and deserving of the same honor.

Can the role of response ever be thought so? Simone deBeauvoir, granddame of feminism, thought not! Speaking of woman she wrote, “Her very posture of receptivity means slavery.” That the responsive role is equal to the role of authority may be the one teaching of Jesus that turned the world upside-down. Servanthood is the highest Christian value.

How did this original idea get inverted and the opposite become imbedded in human consciousness? In Christian theology, it’s been expressed as the Tempter’s credo Milton expressed now imposed on Eden that destroys the original equality of male initiator and female responder, leaving instead, envy of authority and revulsion toward service - *he*, therefore, to rule by domination, and *she* to be ruled in subjection. This condition of sin ought not to be found among those who call themselves after the Christ.

Perhaps the maddest Catholic theologian of all, Mary Daly (Boston College) semantically castrates patriarchy that is “entrenched” world-wide. With gut-wrenching descriptions (Gyn/Ecology, Beacon 1978) of the “atrocities of phallocracy;” Indian suttee, Chinese footbinding, African genital mutilation, European witchburning, and American gynecology, she vividly paints a hell which Christians recognize as real enough. However, while they see it as the regretful effect of fallen human consciousness, Daly believes in neither hell nor the Fall. She lays all responsibility at the feet, not of Satan and sin, but of males! That within the Christian context the male who governs has no more personal power than those who receive that governance is inconceivable for Daly’s sisterhood.

Through the great doctrinal battle of the 4th Century, songs rather than consciousness raising sessions were used to disseminate the heretical theology among the laity. It seemed that Arianism was invincible; and indeed, at one time, to all appearances, the Church was Arian. Were it not for the clear head and thoroughly Christian heart of St. Athanasius, the cause of true Christianity would have been lost. Jean Guitton (Great Heresies and Church Councils, Harper and Row 1965) reports,

“In the teeth of the seeming success of the powers and of seemingly unanimous false decisions, in the teeth of the seeming ‘dialectic of history’ he stood up to defend ‘pure quality’, the truth. His voice was clear and steady and

never dismayed, though he was condemned again and again by pseudo-councils. . . . Despite the excessive caution of Pope Liberius, the Nicene faith was saved by the convergence of the faith of the people with that of a few clear-headed and courageous bishops. It was saved against the power and the friends of power, against the clever, the cunning and the submissive. The like of it has not been seen again on the same scale - though it is not perhaps ruled out in the future of the Church.”

Written in 1963, one wonders if Guitton recognizes that that future is here in the battle of feminism to take over the “reformulation of all Church doctrine in light of women’s experience.” Today in the United States, the Church is engulfed by feminism. Like the rise of feminism, Arianism developed into a threat to Christian belief because as Jean Guitton comments, “in some respects it had the full weight of probability on its side.” The rationality of the equality of man and woman, especially in the grace of baptism, also leads to what seems an inevitable conclusion - no distinctions are to be made in the community of faith between persons because of sex. On that presumed basis, 1600 years post-Arius, recitals from the misogynist past led by aging nuns, in popular consciousness-raising seminars in local dioceses have become common employment of women. An observer in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Archdiocese, the author had no sooner joined a small group at a local meeting, than a white-haired, habit-clad nun pulled out from her satchel a tattered, mimeographed sheet and began to read from a list of the misogynist texts of the Fathers’. It was sensitivity training 1980’s-Catholic style. Relying on touching a layer of anger in every woman, the guided reflection was towards blaming that not exclusively female emotion on an external cause - patriarchy. If the woman wavered, standing there blindfolded and dizzy, she was firmly guided to pin the tail on the male hierarchy donkey.

Additions to the phalanx of activists at such groups are small potatoes in the overall scheme which has seen the priorities of the secular NOW (National Organization of Women) - reproductive rights and women held the same as men in all regards - upstaged by radical Catholic women from several different sponsoring organizations who in 1983 founded “WomanChurch.” One of the founders, a nun who also founded a free-store for the poor in Minneapolis, explained,

“A lot of people were tired of the liturgies in the church. They felt stifled. Women weren’t recognized for their priestliness. All of us are priests. We all have the power to minister, to act, to express our full personhood, to heal, to reconcile.”

Such an expression is modest when compared with statements of later spokeswomen, dubiously labeled “prophetic,” as more anger was vented against the Church now charged with every kind of female degradation. Alla Bozarth-Campbell’s “The Rape Poem” appeared in the St. Paul/Minneapolis Archdiocesan Women’s periodical, “Rising Dawn:” “Trickle of blood across a thigh, of semen on blood trickling. . .” The staid League of Catholic Women became an agent of feministic change with seminars like, “Blessed Woman Self,” “Awakening the Feminine,” and silenced-by-Rome, Dominican priest, Matthew Fox’s “Spirituality of Creation and Blessing.”² Promotional phrases sounded like run-downs of ancient Gnosticism, “finding your inner vision,” “listening for body wisdom,” “heart speaking to heart,” “the importance of unveiling.”

At Woman-Church Convergence in 1987, Donna Steichen (who later wrote *Ungodly Rage*, Ignatius 1991) reported on a workshop, “Sexuality: Healthy, Good, Holy.” Two lesbian women spoke of “experiencing our bodies as manifestations of the goddess,” and the “transforming experience” of being part of a Woman’s Music Festival in Hart, Michigan, where “7200 women wandered 92 acres - some in the nude. It was the beautiful variations in the female body that were so wonderful to behold!”

The whole thing had become so extreme it could have been waved off had not the very persons personifying the hated patriarchal structure capitulated without so much as a defending word. Helen Hull Hitchcock, journalist and founder of the 40,000 member Women for Faith and Family, observed, “That the work of feminists to discredit Christianity was often made far easier by the enthusiastic collaboration from within is one of the more curious phenomena of our lime. When it comes to beating the Church any stick will do. In fact, . . . only those who approach the Church with club in hand have credibility with the bishop’s pastoral apparatus.”

Accepting that masculine prerogatives as heads of the Church meant just what the feminists decried, “that males were hogging the prestigious, and honorable roles in the Church to the detriment of the under-class of women, who were dominated, manipulated, ignored, and destroyed,” the men in those positions betrayed that they did, indeed, hold un-Christian views.

² Father Fox left his order and became an Anglican priest

My word! They did believe in the advantages of being male, and that they sinfully were appropriating power-over-others that had been expressly condemned by their Lord! Too many bishops and priests stood exposed and ashamed. The mea culpae have taken the form of Pastoral Letters begun by Bishops Lucker and Balke of Minnesota in 1981, followed by Archbishop Mahoney and others, and finally by the aborted attempt of the American Bishops. Fr. Richard John Neuhaus wrote of the latter's work on their first draft, (National Review, Nov. 25, '88), "It bears the marks of having been written in the woodshed where Catholic feminists spanked committee members for the Church's sin of sexism."

Bewildering to those who never thought males superior, Balke and Lucker now threaten the faithful with all the penalties of sin if they are found to be "sexist" too. Guilt has made the bishops easily intimidated, susceptible to an heretical doctrine based on total miscomprehension of Christian things. Luther's little parable about the drunk comes to mind. After he had fallen off the horse on one side, he remounted only to fall off on the other. This befuddlement has certainly complicated the development of the emerging doctrine.

Where is the Athanasius of our age? Pope John Paul II needs a compatriot with such a clear head in the doctrinal struggle ahead. Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is a dependable theologian on the issues, but perhaps, this time, appropriately, it will be a woman. Edith Stein, present to us only in her scholarly writings, is a likely candidate. A self-avowed feminist, though hardly of the present stripe, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II six years ago. Spending much of her life exploring all the facets of woman's being with deep philosophical, psychological perception, she maintained a thoughtful acceptance of Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church. Her fascinating pilgrimage from Judaism to Catholicism has the additional electrifying dimension of having ended in one of Hitler's Auschwitz "cottages." In time, no doubt to be beatified saint and martyr, she stands to contribute singularly to the woman debate in the Church. The book of her writings, *Woman* (ICS, 1989) deserves careful study.

Parallel to her insights in his "meditation" "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," Pope John Paul II has taken a first step in aiding the cause of the emerging doctrine. He has also warned against "radical feminism," yet it remains to be seen if he will continue to elucidate all the subtleties necessary. Pope Liberius was ineffective when faced with Arianism, it remains to be seen if this pope recognizes the ramifications of feminism's threat in time to effectively

contribute to a doctrine on the meaning and role of man and woman. There are some things we conservatives are concerned about.

First, the Pope for now has labeled all masculine language about God in the Bible as “anthropomorphic,” and with that in mind, to be modified by feminine characteristics of God. “Generating” which belongs to the inner life of God, says the Pope, must not be considered “masculine” because it is purely divine.

This is a crucial matter to the meaning of sexuality in the emerging doctrine. In the first place, “anthropomorphic” is the only language we humans know. One assumes that the Creator knows what he has made and exactly what words will mean to that creature. Yet God presents himself as consistently throughout scripture. The Church declares this to be “revelation” directly inspired by the Spirit of God and not mere cultural hang-ups of the writers. In analogic ways in which other choices surely are possible, God presents himself as lover, husband and father without ever presenting himself as beloved, wife or mother.

This is not to say, in the need for fine distinctions, that God who is neither male nor female does not have feminine qualities - he is himself all possible positive qualities, yet he continues to present himself to the human being as masculine to feminine, in other words, the Initiator of the creature who can only *receive* regardless of sex. In words Blessed Edith Stein would endorse, CS. Lewis describes this through the mouth of a fictional character (That Hideous Strength, MacMillan, 1965);

“There is no escape, if it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. .What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly.”

Secondly, the Pope declares that there are scriptural references that refer to God’s feminine qualities. It is hoped that his meaning can be clarified. Throughout the debate it has been a common misrepresentation of scripture that God is sometimes called “mother.” Upon examination, none of the references hold up; never is God presented in the Bible by a female analogue, though sometimes by looser metaphors like “mother hen”.

Thirdly, John Paul II, for obvious reasons, down-plays the submission of wife to husband that is a notorious teaching of the apostles. Instead, the Pope draws attention to the context of the whole - the mutual subjection of husband to wife and wife to husband. This emphasis is understandable faced with the perversions attached to authority in a fallen world. Unfortunately, the Pope's emphasis is also necessary in a Church which has never really grasped the Founder's rejection of authority as a base for personal power over others. Were it otherwise, obedience and submission would be the honored role in the Church, and women's traditional role would be envied.

Bishop Joseph L. Imesch (Joliet, Illinois) who held chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Pastoral on Woman, exposed his non-comprehension about the respect due to any obedient role. When asked by a reporter whether the pastoral had not begun to yield out of obedience (to Rome), he replied, "*Obedience is a pejorative word. I would rather say we have the responsibility.*" Is he capable of leading the framers of the bishop's statement on women when it is precisely this concept of respect for the role of obedience that puts Christian womanhood at stake?

Shied away from by Pope and bishop, "submission" is perhaps the most hated concept in the democra-centric English language. In typical antithesis to ordinary ways of thinking, it may be, nevertheless, the key to opening the Christian gospel's core. When rightly understood, not as the indignity of unwilling servitude, but as a free, intelligent choice to trust and love, Edith Stein supports submission of women as a highly honorable role, "Then will she like a good spirit spread blessing everywhere." (Woman, ICS Publications, 1987)

What does the Catholic Church believe about woman, and of what will the Doctrine of Mankind comprise? Following Newman's guidelines for legitimate development, it will proceed on a straight course from what is already apparent in scripture and tradition, the earlier beliefs discernible in expanded form in the later, and will be consistent with the principles of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. That much is sure. The rest is merely speculative, but these things might be noted:

First, there is meaning in sexuality that lies at the heart of things. Language that describes it must be carefully guarded. Second, when this doctrine is promulgated in the Twenty-first Century, its effects will be dramatic. The cleavage between the Roman Church and those of other Christian denominations will become deeper despite other attempts at ecumenism. Liberal

Protestantism is even now finalizing the indifferenciation of male and female. Female ordination is already widening the gap between Rome and Canterbury. Evangelicals and Charismatic sects have long ordained women, though not in a sacramental sense, which may actually make ecumenical cooperation with them more possible. Within the Roman Church when the final resolution comes, those who have entered the theological isolation of feminism will have to make a choice - many more will leave Catholicism. However, within it there may be a saint or two in formation, now suffering onus for a correctly perceived intransigence to inclusive language or female priests.

We can count on it, when the dust settles the resolution for believers will not be theoretical, but concrete and applicable to the daily life of man, woman and child. What Germain Greer, no longer persona grata at feminist lecture halls, has unwittingly written for them in *Madwoman's Underclothes* [Hill 1988) will express the consciously chosen Catholic view of family which is intimately linked to the meaning of women. Then women, comfortably supported by promulgated doctrine, without confusion and tearing dissension, to the eternal gratitude of the men who love and care for them and the children dependent upon them, will pick up their intended role in the Twenty-first Century because,

The quality of daily life is what matters, the taste of the food on the table, the light in the room, the peace and wholeness of the moment. Perfect love casteth out fear. The only perfect love to be found on earth is not sexual love, but the wordless commitment of families, which takes as its model mother love.

8 WHAT'S CHRISTIAN ABOUT CHRISTIAN FEMINISM?

A few decades ago, Jacques Maritain told us that we were living in “cockeyed times” - times when St. Paul’s prophecy about a future when no one would listen to the truth anymore, but everyone’s itching ears would be tuned to the latest fad would reach its zenith of fulfillment. Perhaps the best example of the cockeyedness of the times is the woman’s movement in the Catholic Church. Representative of all of them, Maria Riley, OP’s “Women, Church and Patriarchy,” (America, May 5, 1984) demonstrates how Sacred Scripture, Christian tradition and the Teaching Magisterium, those sure guides to faith and unity have quite surely gone passe’ even as Maritain warned. Catholic logic thus bypassed, Maritain’s further comment that when everyone starts scorning these things, it means “everyone is beginning to lose his head,” is also apropos. (Pardon Jacques, please, his/her heads!)

It’s all very reminiscent of another period of Church history seventeen hundred years ago when militant and widespread error suddenly blazed into flame in the consciousness of the Christian body. It was called Arianism and its basic problem is the same as the basic problem of feminism. Not coincidentally both reflect the same old problem that is profoundly if mythologically presented in the first three chapters of Genesis; even the dramatis personae in feminism are the same; God, male, female and the Adversary (though the feminists do not recognize him).

The problem is then the age old one of authority. Those who are called to serve that authority, even if it is God’s Himself, hate the role. They consider it inferior to the prestigious role of the one who orders and authorizes. The Arian, therefore, could not accept the Christ as equal to God. After all, didn’t he come as a servant? Wasn’t he sent? Well, that’s distinctly an

inferior role. Therefore, they said, God was monolithic, and Jesus was not part of any Triune Unity of equal Persons. Does it sound familiar? It is the same argument that is at the root of feminism - a hatred of serving and an envy of authority. And where did all this originate? Scripture has it as a touchstone for all that is wrong with the world, the intrusion of an enemy consciousness which overturned the proper order of things. That order rested on a service to God's will and obedience to His ordering which was bliss to his creature, mankind.

Those few who tried to stamp out the wild fire sweeping through the Church became desperate. Bishops and priests were swept away with an immediate certitude of the new theology and for a hundred and more years it looked as though the "old reactionaries" were whipped. The fire even came close to burning the ecclesial chair of the Holy Father himself but providentially died out before damage was done.

Where was the Holy Spirit in all this upheaval? Well, not with the Arians. But one thing is sure then and now. He answers the big questions very slowly. Perhaps it is a form of his everlasting love which allows even his enemies full expression, or perhaps it is just part of the necessary process of revealing error, or even more probably it is the way he uses all ideas, even those perverse to the Catholic faith, to bring about the true and sound development of Christian doctrine.

Anyway, the Spirit now is very slowly bringing truth into focus because of the "Christian" feminists challenge. There has been a too ready acceptance and uncritical espousal of the new thinking by what seems to be a large number of bishops, priest and laity, though probably fewer than those claimed - many people are very charitable and good listeners and wouldn't think of being contradictory. In three churches where I have contacts, one rural and two urban, you could count the feminists on the fingers of your hand, but the dissenters make a disproportionate noise).

Those who sense something terribly awry with the whole scene find it very difficult to state to the satisfaction of anyone what is so jarring and discordant, because new rules of the debate have been made up as the feminist goes along. One feels like a person presented with a large ball of knotted twine to unravel, but there is no visible end to the string, the rules mandate that the fingernails of both hands be cut to the quick, and there is to be no instrument used that either picks or cuts. Because we hold no big conference on anti-feminism, force no rushed meetings with bishops, write no papers quoting only ourselves, our stuff is unusable because it

comes from passe' things like Scripture, the saints, and Church documents. Dissenters and publishers alike shrug and say, "Oh, that again. Give us something new."

However, Sister Riley has perhaps given us a place to start when in her declaration about the radical conversion of women who have participated in the woman's movement, she quotes one of them as saying, "We women have begun to own our own souls." And adds. "This woman's movement has helped to mediate a truth, a sense of God, and a sense of reality not available to women in previous decades. This new vision is leading women to a great sense of freedom and confidence, to a mature and responsible autonomy and markedly personal individualization." This conversion process is then called, "A push to an adult faith" and a "challenge to the church to become more mature."

If this is the fruit of Christian feminism here described, then we have a clearer idea of why it cannot be considered Christian and has nothing to ultimately contribute to the Church in and of itself. The pressure it causes will, of course, be used to clarify and purify the Church's real vision of herself, and her real identity - that much will be positive. But autonomy and individuation are not goals of the Christian life whose paradigm is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A Christian is defined even by impartial Webster, as "one whose inward and outward life is conformed to the doctrines of Christ." And "conformed" is defined as being "in accord or in harmony, to comply, to be obedient, to submit, to become the same form." Autonomy and individuation, owning our own souls, is foreign, alien, to the "not I who live, but Christ" - Christ crucified, heart of the Christian faith.

No wonder those who experience this kind of "conversion" feel alienated. They espouse the antithesis of any Scriptural or traditional understanding of "Christian." Unless we do away with Salvation History as it is known, both in its origins in the Gospel of Christ, and its development over 2000 years since the birth of the Church in the Holy Spirit, we cannot find any basis for these ideas in Christianity. Taking autonomy and individuation as the goals for any person's life, either male or female, results in independence, selfishness, egalitarianism, which anti-values end in the eventual isolation of individuals, the destruction of community life and of love. If anyone doubts these things, let him look around closely at the effects of feminism on the family and the Church.

The “new creation” theology of Matthew Fox, which embraces feminism, and other current pagan ideologies as well, rejects the Fall and original sin, naming them poor starting places for the development of good self-understanding, even as the Genesis description of both has become the best explicator of “Christian” feminism. We may not see a snake wound around a tree and a mesmerized young woman, but Satan speaks as of old to plant his anti-Word values in us. “Claim yourself as your own.” “Pursue your own good in your own way.” “Answer only to yourself.” It is an archaic and boring agenda; I wish that was all the punch it had, but it is damning as well.

Sister Riley’s “sense of reality” is a figment of the Adversary’s bitter imagination and has nothing to do with the reality of the living God of history who has revealed himself in the complete analogy of an overarching, impregnating masculinity to his creation-mankind’s dependent, overwhelmed femininity. From that encounter, analogically, but powerfully sexual, comes fruit, spiritual fruit begun in the nitty-gritty reality of the conception of biological fruit. If “by their fruits you will know them” is Jesus’ only criteria for those in the Kingdom (and that word the feminist would change to *kinshipdom*) then the ideology of the “converted” woman in the feminist movement raises a question in the mind of any thinking Christian, “conversion to what?”

These same kind of converts meeting in the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St.Paul , held a gathering they called “Church Women and Men Relating.” The conference did not celebrate the Eucharist because priests are male. All the oft-repeated complaints about patriarchy, hierarchy and clericalism were aired again and again. All was shrouded in purple “pain” which the bishops must hear *ad nauseum*. In fifty-five years of living the Christian life in community with others, I have not know a time free from spiritual pain, nor have I seen a time in the lives of my believing friends free from pain. Somehow, the embrace of the One who Suffers manages to bring to each of us a suffering. Fruits are not born without it.

Women, by their very God-given nature, are meant to suffer pain gladly. It is not masochism in Christians; it is part of the redemptive process in which they participate. Helen Hull wrote for the National Catholic Register analyzing the chronic pain of the feminist, “This pain argument is both a dreadful cliché and phony. The pain of the inability to serve God can be alleviated quite readily by actually serving God in the countless ways available to the majority of Christians who are not ordained priests.”

Any parent who has helped rear a family recognizes that the dynamics that motivate a child who turns away from the family are complex. No family is perfect, and no father or mother in his or her right mind would claim to be so. But regardless of the error in a human institution that genuinely attempts to order itself by God's command, there is more error with the one who rebels against that institution and goes off to experiment with all kinds of self-punishment and self-pity to prove how wronged he is. These dynamics are apparent in these complaining women - the resentment, the anger, and the dripping self-pity. No family suffering over such a child can do anything to appease the child.

Alienation, so evidently grieved over by our fatherly bishops, is a matter of the individual's choice. And, in the long run, perhaps alienation is the best course for both the child or the feminist, and the family or the Church. It allows him to really live out his choice with the possibility of plain, old life opening his eyes. (Sorry, but the use of non-exclusive pronouns befuddles me). If the Church does anything more than a family would under these circumstances - that is, keeping the door open, the warm fires lit, and the good food available, then she is unnecessarily afflicting all the faithful members with confusion, and ends up confirming the rebellious one in his rebellion. Alienation would be a good thing if there was something inherently evil in the institution, if patriarchy and hierarchy were blasphemous, which is the position the feminists take, but they are entirely wrong about this. Patriarchy and hierarchy are not social by-products of an evil society. They are, despite all their undeniable abuses by human beings, a part of the ordering of God, reflective of the order in the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. There is no room here to wholly defend that statement theologically and Scripturally even though it is completely defensible. Anyone interested in a profound defense should read Archbishop Cardinal Carter's Pastoral, *Do This in Remembrance of Me* (ordered from The Archbishop's Office, 355 Church St., Toronto, M5B, 178, Canada. \$2.00). Reading the Bible and the writings of the saints will provide inescapable evidence, too.

It is enough to say here that all the words which the feminist has redefined, "justice," "equality," "authority," etc. have only one definition for any Christian, and that is the definition which lies in the relationship of Persons in the Trinity. Here we have the relationship of Persons upon which mankind's created form, male and female, is based. Here we have the ultimate Initiator, the Father; a Responder to Him, the Son; and the Holy Spirit, in whom these two role- opposites are united. These two, Father and Son, are not interchangeable, even though they share all the

same attributes and qualities. It is upon this basic and ultimate relationship that male and female find their meaning and role, and upon which the covenantal, marital continuum begins that brings meaning to all of Salvation History. It is from this understanding that we have patriarchy and hierarchy in the Church and the family, and they are the closest thing on earth to the order in heaven.

As for the feminist worship expressed by Sister Riley, what is the difference between the celebration she describes - the feminist prayer, song, mime, dance, and ritual meal, with the women "Celebrating and blessing all of life and life's symbols; the earth, water, air, light, darkness, bread and wine", and the typical witches coven? From the description in the St. Paul Dispatch of October 30, 1982, where witch Mary George is quoted, they might well be describing the same thing: "There are a growing number of women who feel uncomfortable worshiping in a male setting. Many women are turning to witchcraft. On some of the important holidays, equinoxes, and so we have up to 150 women celebrating the rituals. I'm finding a real hunger among women to celebrate female imagery and experience. . . We are equal. We celebrate in a circle which is the symbol of our equality." George celebrates spells for "self-blessing." "It only asks that the Goddess bless me in specific ways. Bless my voice that I may speak the truth, bless my womb that I may be fruitful. Feminist witchcraft offers a woman a new definition of power. The patriarchal definition of power is to have power over someone else. But in feminist witchcraft power is from within myself, a power to change my life and myself."

Sadly, it seems that our alienated Catholic sisters have many place where they can go and not feel alienated at all. We may grieve; I do, but we must let them go. All adolescents must be given their freedom. We'll pray a substitutionary pray for them till they return, the one Mother Teresa and her sisters pray every day, a prayer of loyalty to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

We firmly promise the more your mysteries are
 blasphemed,
 the more firmly we shall believe them;
 the more hearts resist your divine attractions, the more
 we shall love you;
 the more your divinity is attacked,
 the more we shall adore you;

the more your laws are transgressed and forgotten,
the more we shall observe them;
the more your sacraments are abandoned,
the more we shall receive them with love and
respect.

AMEN

9 CATHOLIC WOMEN LEADERS REFLECT ON FEMINISM IN THE CHURCH

“The justice of the cause of feminism is evidenced by the singular fact that a woman of such holiness as Edith Stein was a feminist.” Freda Mary Oben, her translator, makes this statement in her book about Edith Stein³, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1987. It is a statement that, with all due respect to Dr. Oben, would be contended by many women today. This, not because of any lack of appreciation for Blessed Edith and her beautiful, powerful work on the role and meaning of woman, but because of the twisted values that have clustered about the word “feminism” in the last half of the Twentieth Century.

“The word ‘feminism’ carries a lot of baggage these days,” says Helen Hull Hitchcock, foundress of Women for Faith and Family, when asked with several other leaders in the Catholic Church to respond to three questions⁴: 1). What is true Christian feminism? 2) What modern day Catholic woman that you know exemplifies that feminism for you? (Probably we all put Mother Teresa at the top of our list - but this needn’t be a well known person). 3) Then, something about your own prayer and work in the Church.

The questions were not pejorative; in fact the responses were a surprise, because I expected to hear about women, who though participating in the rise of consciousness experienced by women everywhere, still held the Church and the sacraments in esteem; who if they were married put husband, home, and family first, yet had a second vocation in which their talents were used for the larger Christian community; and who believed that equality between

³ Oben, Dr. Freda Mary, *Edith Stein: Scholar. Feminist. Saint.* Alba House, New York, 80 pages, 1988 p. 23

⁴ All quotes from Sister Sara Butler, Dr. Ronda Chervin, Dr. Janet E. Smith, Dr. Joyce A. Little, Helen Hull Hitchcock, and Anne Roche Muggeridge are from correspondence with the author in the fall of 1988.

men and women meant complementarity not identicalness - all exactly expressing the point of view of Edith Stein. The article I planned to weave from their responses would have brought out again the profound understanding of woman that exemplified Blessed Edith's work - an understanding that I hope will someday provide a meeting place for the factionalized camps of American Catholic Women.

Instead, though there was that heartening agreement with Edith Stein's tenets that I had anticipated, there was a general balk at the word "feminism." Something has definitely happened to the meaning of the word between the time Edith Stein used it in the twenties and thirties and the late eighties. What goes for "feminism" today may not be a "just cause," and Edith herself very well may not have espoused it - that is the awakening I experienced in thinking over the clear responses of my correspondents.

Even though, with one exception, the women are not in contact with one another, they used some of the same words to describe their sense of offense at "feminism." It is worth considering what this antipathy to the term means because these women are leaders in the Catholic Christian community. Those religious, priests, and pastoral workers who believe feminism as we know it today to be an wholly accepted *modus operandi* a modern day "given", may need to reconsider that assumption. At the very least, women who have a sense of what it means to be a Christian woman of dignity (to use Pope John Paul's term) who believe that dignity incompatible with "feminism" need to be heard, and they rarely are. Helen Hitchcock continues, "Actually, I think that 'Christian Feminist' is an oxymoron, as 'Christian Marxist'."

Anne Muggeridge author of *The Desolate City* replied along the same lines, "What is true Christian Feminism? I don't think there is such a thing. I disagree with every feminist assumption about human nature and human society."

A professor of liberal studies at the University of Notre Dame who writes and works for pro-life, Janet E. Smith, answered, "I do not think feminism in any of its present forms can be wedded to Christianity. 'Feminism' would have to be too radically redefined to be legitimately used in this context. I think to speak of 'Christian feminism' is much like speaking of 'Christian Marxism'; it can't really be done without completely violating the accepted meaning of each term."

Ronda Chervin, author of many books on the feminine, and consultant for the American Bishops on their pastoral, “Partners in the Mystery of Redemption,” agreed. “Problem: the word ‘feminism’ is so tarnished by abortion I don’t use it in any form.”

A theologian “working to understand what the faith has to say about the respective roles of men and women in the Church and in the world,” Joyce A. Little, Assistant Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas, states, “I actually try to avoid use of the word ‘feminism’ in my own work.”

Only one respondent successfully got by the word “feminism”: Sr. Sara Butler of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Trinity, who also worked in the consultative process for the bishop’s pastoral letter, hopes to enter the dialogue among Catholic feminists where she will work to clarify some of the ambiguities that create these problems for the others: “True Christian feminism is marked by a conviction that the full expression and protection of the equal dignity of women with men require a respect for the difference between the sexes. The explanation of precisely what constitutes this difference and how respect of difference is compatible with equality is an important task for our time.”

What accounts for the general antipathy toward the term? Janet Smith outlines her objections: “The more benign forms of feminism place too much emphasis on the equality of men and women to the detriment of considering their inequality or complementarity [which seems to be the problem that Sr. Sara will attempt to clarify in her work] and the more radical forms of feminism are closely allied with witchcraft and satanism.’

“Feminism has done men and women a great disservice by concentrating on the equality of men and women. But males and females need to understand that they differ a great deal and that the talents of both are needed and need to be respected. For fear of being labeled sexist my students are loathe to speculate about what the differences might be between men and women. Consequently I think they are impeded in their ability to understand the opposite sex.”

Ann Muggeridge understands the problems similarly, “I think there are Christian women and Christian men, and that both live their lives on a different plane from non-Christian men and women, but I don’t think an ideology, an -ism, is involved in the Christian life. Is there a Christian masculinism? Surely not. I am alarmed at the Pope’s using the term ‘Christian feminism,’ I realize that he often adopts the vocabulary of modern intellectual trends, such as feminism and liberation theology, in an attempt to baptize secular movements in which he sees,

in which there is, some good. We all do this to some extent, but when I catch myself at it, I stop and recant. I think, for example, that all the ‘rights’ talk does more harm than good in the long run, and that very much of that language is based on questionably honest intentions. Therefore as to what modern day Catholic woman exemplifies Christian feminism for me, none does, as feminism is, in my opinion, unbaptizable.”

Though Anne Muggeridge could not name a woman exemplifying Christian feminism because of her rejection of the concept, Janet Smith named Anne herself as a woman who exemplifies Christian womanhood. “I have known her for over ten years now and have admired her from the start. She is one of the most intelligent women I know and has a fierce loyalty to the Church. She has written two books and at great personal sacrifice (she hates public speaking) has done a great deal of public speaking. But her family comes first. Her children are beautiful, well-balanced, courteous, and pious. Her husband clearly and rightly adores her. And she is a terrific hostess and conversationalist. She does this all on a shoe-string budget and lives in the most modest of circumstances.

“Now I don’t want it to be taken that I think women who stay at home should expect to write books and to become internationally known in addition to raising their children. I know many others like her, without her intellectual talents, who have talents of many different kinds and who make terrific contributions to the Church and community - - they work to ensure that the sex education in the schools does not violate human dignity, they work to save the lives of unborn babies and to help women with problem pregnancies, they help the poor and handicapped in many ways. These women have active spiritual lives, many of them have active intellectual lives, and all of these interests nourish their home life.

“‘Staying home,’ of course, does not mean staying at home. It means that one’s home is where one’s heart is and that one works in a multitude of ways to protect the values of the home. It does a woman who is planning to stay at home a great deal of good to receive a good education because such an education will assist her in acquiring the understanding, the intellectual skills, the self-confidence, the discipline, and the ability to work with people she will need in order to understand and defend the values of the home. I think very few can combine family and career, though some women will be called to pursue careers after their families are grown.”

“Women must learn to live their lives in service of Christ. I stress the role of married women in this regard since most women will get married. We certainly have a desperate need for

women, single or religious, who answer vocations to be doctors and teachers and social workers, etc. But they should not be seeking to compete with men, or to prove what women can do; they should not be seeking self-fulfillment; they should be seeking to advance the kingdom of God.”

The woman Sister Sara names as exemplary meets all Janet’s Smith’s criteria. “ would name a Sister in my congregation, Sister Mary Sheridan, M.S.B.T., as one who stands out in a particular way. (She is not a well-known public figure.) Sister Mary has devoted her self to developing a ‘preventive’ approach to social service delivery. Her research (in pursuit of a Ph.D. in Developmental Health) and practical experience led her to design a tool for detecting high-risk mother-infant relationships. . . Sisters work has been with poor women, mostly single women, and their infants. . .Countless poor women who would otherwise have lost their children to foster care and suffered further erosion of already low self-esteem are now functioning well as mothers. Sister Mary combined insight, ingenuity, compassion, persistent political involvement and personal faith to bring about this goal, and for me she is an outstanding example of a true Christian feminist. A symbol of this is that her co-workers in a Jewish Hospital Center in the Bronx gave her a statue of the Madonna as a parting gift when she moved on to attempt a similar project in Boston.”

Joyce Little would avoid naming a nun, even Mother Teresa, as a person who best exemplifies Christian femininity for two reasons. “First, we have in the past all too often held up nuns as the ideal women in the Church. Second, to name her might suggest that the true (woman) must be judged in some way as ‘successful’ and well-known in the world. I suspect the primary work of women is largely anonymous, and by the standards of the world, thankless, being bound up so much with motherhood and all of the hard work which accompanies that vocation.”

“True Christian femininity,” writes Ronda Chervin, “comes when a woman who is happy to have been created by God as a female, rejoices in her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual gifts using them to serve the Kingdom of Christ, in obedience and freedom in the Holy Spirit. “I wrote *Feminine Free and Faithful* (Ignatius Press) as an alternative to the false type of feminism which rejects creational values and/or refuses obedience to Christ in the Church in the use of our gifts (by means of contraception, abortion, lesbianism, etc.)

“The women saints all exemplify true Catholic femininity - some holy women (not yet canonized) of our present day include Mother Teresa, Mother Angelica, Conchita, Adrienne Von Speyr, and Caryl Houselander.”

It is the replies to the third question that gives us insight into how women who vision true Christian womanhood incorporate that vision into their daily lives. All begin with disclaimers - their work and prayer in the Church “is feeble” to quote Ann Muggeridge.

“I try to sound the alarm (about the theological revolution entrenched in the structures of the Church at every level), and I pray for the Church and the Faith of my five children and two grandchildren all the time, and I work to preserve the traditional liturgy of the Church for what will be left of Catholicism.”

“As a woman of the Church,” writes Ronda Chervin, “I rejoice in and struggle with many roles as wife, mother, grandmother, seminary professor, lecturer, and writer. In all these roles I am eager to be freely myself - not the fallen self, but the redeemed woman - a woman not of resentment, but of love.”

Janet Smith credits “good Christian companionship” along with prayer as “essential to my attempt to be faithful to whatever it is God is calling me to do. I have wonderful Christian friends who assist in unimaginable ways. I find it to be an enormous blessing to live under the pontificate of John Paul II. I am euphoric about the many instances of Christian heroism and Christian enterprises I see around me. Father Fessio, Joan Andrews, Bishop Vaughan, Catholics United for the Faith, Catholics United for Life, Bruce Ritter, Opus Dei, the Charismatic Renewal, etc.; all serve to show that God gives grace in abundance to those who strive to do his will. It is inspiring and humbling to live in the time of such great witnesses to Christ.” Sister Sara Butler’s prayer is “to become meek and humble of heart in my conversations and dealings with others who are interested in women’s questions. I find these are inevitably questions that bear personally sensitive meaning of some kind for each of us, and I hope to listen with the heart and not be too quick to evaluate what others say. Also, I pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially wisdom and fortitude!”

It is a moot question what Blessed Edith herself would have thought about the developments in a movement that she was instrumental in starting in the Catholic Church in Germany in the late twenties and early thirties. But one wonders if she could have continued to think of herself as a feminist with the queer quirks that mark feminism in these last years. Though she might have had to drop the word ‘feminism,’ it is clear that she is of one heart and mind with my correspondents as her following quote attests:

“Whether she is a mother in the home, or occupies a place in the limelight of public life, or lives behind quiet cloister walls, she must be a handmaid of the Lord everywhere. So had the Mother of God been in all circumstances of her life. . . Were each woman an image of the Mother of God, a Spouse of Christ, an apostle of the divine Heart, then would each fulfill her feminine vocation no matter what conditions she lived in and what worldly activity absorbed her life.”

10 MUTUAL SUBMISSION ANSWERS FOR A MULTITUDE OF SINS

It is doubtful that any Christian idea has been more thoroughly discredited than “submission.” A horror story printed in the Minneapolis Star several years ago encapsulates what most people have come to believe is the real picture of the archaic notion of wives submit, husbands rule. An independent-type church group in Eden Prairie (interesting name in the context), believing in Biblical submission of wife to husband, disciplined a rebellious and perhaps mentally disturbed woman member by allowing a spanking to be administered by her husband while the attendant Christians held her hands. In the mid-seventies when this happened, journalists were captivated by every aspect of female liberation and this sad tale received a detailed coverage that exceeded its newsworthiness. With such help, accusations were developing that the Judeo/Christian tradition had been the great misogynistic oppressor of the western world. This wife beating under the very roof of a Christian church was exceptionally well-timed from a certain point of view. It seemed to reveal the complicity of Church and Scripture in the humiliation and subjection of women.

There was a strong move to counter this attempt to discredit the Bible and the Church as viable authorities on the relationship of man and woman. Several years saw a flurry of interest in and promotion of books like *Fascinating Womanhood* and *Total Woman* which held up the submissive woman as the happy proto-type for all women. The bubble-headed, frothy women these books presented were embarrassing to those who still honored the Biblical model of man and woman’s respective authority and submission roles. We found ourselves between the devil and the deep- blue sea. We were unable to counter those who scorned the whole idea or defend those who promoted it.

Since that time the mighty wave of revulsion at the idea of submission has swept on powered by the winds of the women's movement. And we who have glimpsed something of value there have simply had to hang on to whatever floated by. While all around the Scriptures and Church Tradition are being blamed for the shipwreck of persons and relationships - Mary Ann Tolbert is representative when she writes in the National Catholic Reporter, "The Bible is permeated with the language, symbols, and ideas of female inferiority and subhumanity"- some of us continue to believe the Scriptures, when rightly read, are ultimately the only map capable of leading men and women to wholeness. We have hoped for a calm in the storm when we could raise our few wobbly voices and perhaps try to say so.

To come to the defense of "submission" seems crazy. Where is the wholesome practice by either men or women to point to for an example? There is no doubt that the role of authority has been greatly abused by many of those exercising it in home and Church. High-handedness, prestigious attitudes, and the prevalent but mistaken notion that authority's exercise is more worthy than the role of response to it, doesn't need the proof of outrageous news stories or feminist rhetoric. On the other hand, everyone has seen, as exhibit one, this mouse-like woman, whether friend or relative, and recoiled at her claim that she was living out God's command by submission to her husband. One look at that arrogant man capped the total impression as being anything but inspired by God. In the home and in religious societies which experienced the same abuse of authority/obedience dynamics the cry has gone out for a egalitarian, "I'm as good as you are," reordering of Christian society.

The democratic thrust of feminism had reason then to pointedly upset the domestic applecart of order in marriage and the home that was based on sex. The anger toward that traditional authority structure and its genotype, the Church, has peaked in the (usually "former") Catholic nun who has become preeminently quotable. Rosemary Ruether's statement that she has, for years, honored pagan goddesses in preference to the Blessed Virgin, and that she would like nothing better than a repeal of Christianity itself as fundamentally patriarchal has been eagerly quoted both by those who agree and those who disagree with her perspective. Such anger targets the Church because it supplies the apples for the applecart. That hierarchical institution uses sexual imagery, and worse, sexual identity, to establish order and discipline. It must be exposed for what it is, says Ruether, "the fallen disorder of injustice created by sinful humans."

Submission and authority once so neatly marked with “his” and “hers” must be, say the feminists, scrambled irrevocably.

What argument can those of us on the flotsam attempt? (There really are quite a few of us. If we seem unnoticeable it's because we don't have the paddles - the theological training and writing skills, that would bring us into the mainstream of the discussion. Besides, most of us aren't good at protests, being very involved with what we are good at - raising families.) Questions about authority and obedience are directly related to order and justice and therefore to the terms “disorder” and “injustice” that Ms. Ruether and others use so freely. The matter of submission and authority, or governance and obedience (or another set of opposites, initiative and response) is after all a matter of order - and no one, not even psychologist Stanley Milgram, who has thoroughly investigated the aberrational behavior of both those in authority and those who obey that authority⁵ would suggest that the answer to abusive practice in both roles is to reject governance and its necessary ordering of social groupings.

Right ordering, Plato reasoned, is justice. It is essential then that if right order has to do with some irrevocable relationship of man and woman ordained by God, that it be so established. Until the last half of the Twentieth Century this was not seriously questioned. The male/authorize, female/submit equation was considered apparent in natural law (the morphology of male initiator and female receiver) and further, was part of revealed justice (the Holy Scripture's patriarchy and male episcopacy). Well then, if it has anything to do with God's will, say its critics, why is so much abuse fostered by this so-called “right ordering”?

Of course it is not unusual for any idea close to the heart of the Christian Gospel to get diabolically confused. Look what has happened to “love” and “suffering.” Submission has many dark associations, not because there is something wrong with the ideal as it is offered to us human beings, but because there is something wrong with our way of perceiving it. As with all holy things we try to subvert “love,” “suffering,” and “submission,” to further our narcissistic love, and are unknowingly aided by the enemy of our souls. From this ancient double root, human evil and supernatural evil, comes the doormat “submissive” woman on the one hand and the bullying, authoritarian man on the other. For this we turn around and blame “submission?”

Rather than reforming our understanding, it is easier to eliminate the troublesome idea of submission and begin stressing its opposite - self-determination. In so doing, how do the

⁵ Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View Harper and Row, 1972)

feminists avoid the psychological observation; “your neurosis has become your religion?” As psychiatrist, Dr. Scott Peck points out in his best seller, *People of the Lie* submission is necessary for a balanced personality, even before its necessity for a holy soul.

Can it be established that God has ordained a governance for Christendom’s two institutions, the home and the Church, that is sexually proscribed? Or as feminist theologian, George Tarvard, phrased it at the Detroit Conference in 1976, “Does Christian anthropology see manhood and womanhood as distinct complementary ways of being that cannot be reduced to one or the other?” “The question remains unanswered. We wait for the Pastoral on Women to address it.”⁷

The Church right up to that Pastoral continues to say “yes.” It teaches that there is male headship in both St. Peter’s and St Paul’s ordering of the Christian home, and that governance of the Catholic Church rests on the sexual identities of Jesus and the twelve apostles. It thus bases its belief in the sexual nature of order on the revelation of God that governance is a male function.

The feminist symposium has fired the Old Testament as revelatory about anything. It thereby puts itself in the odd position of judge, as long as it lives, of the eternal Word of God. Its judgment just possibly may not hold, so it may be tolerable for us to review the sexual imagery which uses the feminine-masculine as the best analogy of the relationship of God’s People to himself. No place in Scripture, regardless of the numerous assertions to the contrary, supports the argument that God may just as well be Goddess. Scripture consistently regards the People as feminine and God as masculine. This is a wholesome masculinity which manifests a beautiful mothering side, but it is asserted to be masculine even then. God’s people are His Beloved spouse. Sometimes they are faithful, obedient and responsive, but more often faithless, heedless and distracted, they “play the harlot.” In the Divine Myth, Eve, The basic common denominator of the feminine, symbolizes the same both before and after the Fall. This does not denigrate women, nor is it based on a cultural loathing of woman. That chronic bitterness seems to stem from feminism’s struggle with its self-concept. Scripture actually presents the female as the first exemplar of Divine order; her feminine attitudes of responsiveness and acceptance are found at the heart of the Gospel. These feminine attitudes are to be manifested in the converted lives of all men and women who follow Christ.

The New Testament is no less dependent than the Old for its basic ideas on the procreative act and the roles of man and woman in it. The Person of the New Testament is the fruit of such a miracle in woman that the Old Testament women foreshadowed. He is called

“Bridegroom’ with all that title implies for us who both collectively and individually are the “Bride.” He retrieves all the distinctly feminine attributes of receiving, responding, abiding, serving, and obeying (mostly obeying) from the refuse of the world’s discarded attitudes.

Jesus came to turn rightside-up a philosophic inversion that is set like concrete in the human spirit. He, the author of both poles, authority and submission, embraced the second to show us how. “I have come to do the Fathers will,” is repeated in some form at least two dozen times in the Gospel of John alone. He acted out this submission in the sacrifice of himself for our sakes so we would have the power to follow in his steps.

After Pentecost the apostles, realizing that the woman in her wife -to-husband relationship was the primary sign of the redeemed community’s relationship to God, reaffirmed that the wife was to be “submissive to her husband, as to the Lord.” These same apostles had readily cast away their bondage to culture and religion whenever the Holy Spirit had pointed it out. Peter cut free from the dietary law and the prohibition of associating with Gentiles; and the Pharisee Paul ditched circumcision without an argument. But in the authority/submission equation of husband and wife the Holy Spirit gave no such directive . Instead of being viewed as a cultural accretion, this relationship of woman to man was steadily upheld as a sign of the Kingdom.

Scriptural assertion about the meaning of sexuality is consistent. The feminist challenges it because of what seems to her a flagrant bias that favors men and debases women. That appraisal, however, assumes that authority roles are superior and obedience roles inferior - a reality in the world, but a value that must not be found in home and Church.

Is the one who submits equal to, of the same worth, but non-exchangeable with, the one who authorizes? That question, though never addressed, underlies the feminist struggle in the Church as it responds to that initiation; Arius declared that obviously the Father and the Son were not equals. To his point of view, the One who is sent is without doubt an inferior servant to the One who does the sending; the One who initiates all creation superior to the one “through whom” all things came to be.

It took two centuries, a great deal of personal suffering, and a fight in the Church that tore its seamless garment almost to the hem before the work of Saints Athanasius, Hilary, Basil, and others were able to sew it up again. The Holy Spirit through their efforts established the Father and Son as irrevocably non-interchangeable, one the First, the other the Second Person, but

equals. The Second Person though “sent” and submitted in will to the First was acclaimed once and for all to be an equal to the First Person upon whom he was dependent. Mankind, male and female, is created in this image. Will mankind be seen, then, to have the same order, a first and a second person with like roles of authority and submission, but thoroughly equal in worth?

The essential core of truth, man/authority, woman/submitted is attested to by a worthy string of saintly and sane Christians. Some from several modern disciplines come to mind. Their writing on this subject deserves to be reappraised: Karl Barth’s theological essay *Man and Woman*, CS. Lewis’ fantasy trilogy, especially *Perelandra*. and *That Hideous Strength*, Dr. Karl Stern’s psychological- philosophical work, *Flight From Woman* and Elizabeth Elliott’s personal observations, *The Mark of a Man* and *Let Me Be Woman* . These Christians look into the whole scene with an insightful eye that sees woman in her role to be existential key to all Salvation History.

In an exegesis on Ephesians, where much of the scriptural basis for male headship is found, Pope John Paul II emphasizes the word mutual. If it had been heeded by our misguided friends in the New Testament Church, or by the pompous prelates, or the domineering husbands, or for that matter, the feminist reformers, the problems would not have arisen.

The Pope in his short but far from simple explanation, brings out the context of headship and obedience to be the love of Christ. That love asks for the mutual subjection of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband. Aware of the awful conclusions this passage has allowed in the past, the Pope veils and underplays the woman’s submissive role. He concentrates on rectifying any prestigious, powerful interpretation the husband might place on the passage. . . “the wife can and should find in her relationship with Christ . . . the motivation of that relationship with her husband *which flows from the very essence of marriage and of the family.*” (italics mine) Reflect on that essence and you will find it embodied in male and female morphology. (Simone deBeauvoir, foundress of the neo-feminist movement, loathed the idea, in *The Second Sex* , but how can it be avoided?) The fruitfulness of the union of man and woman is begun by an act of sexual submission that encompasses the whole woman and is the beginning of the Christian continuum of the spiritual understanding of fruitfulness culminating in Jesus’ words, “You will know them by their fruits.”

For the woman to insist that “I am as good as you” or “I am the same as you are” by some egalitarian philosophy brings to mind old Screwtape as he gloats over the possibilities of

that particular philosophy from the point of view of hell, “*I’m as good as you*” is a useful means for the destruction of democratic societies. But it has a far deeper value as an end in itself, as a state of mind which, necessarily excluding humility, charity, contentment, and all the pleasures of gratitude or admiration, turns a human being away from almost every road which might finally lead him to Heaven.” (CS. Lewis’ essay “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” *The World’s Last Night*)

Mutual subjection of husband to wife and wife to husband does not mean that each sex can exercise headship, alternating or exchanging the position of headship and the responsive role by insisting *I’m as good, the same, as you*. What it does mean is that, to quote the Pope, “such a relationship . . . is not one of one-sided domination”. . . love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or slave of the husband, an object of unilateral domination. Love makes the husband simultaneously subject to the wife and thereby subject to the Lord himself, just like the wife to the husband.”

If the husband does not give up headship to the woman, how does he submit to her? The text is clear; he submits to her by exercising headship in the same way that Christ does for the Church. He submits to her needs for provision, order, love, and care when it is convenient and inconvenient, in season and out of season, morning, noon, and night. He becomes a lackey in keeping her and their children fed, sheltered, protected, well-ordered, and spiritually led. Thus, he provides justice, with all that implies, for her and for those he has fathered.

And the authority figures in the Church likewise. We can see this in the Ephesians passage where the stand-in on the earthly scene for Christ is the ordained clergy. Attitudes of laity toward ordained governance (bishop, priest, and deacon) parallel the attitudes of a godly woman toward her husband; attitudes of that ordained governance toward the laity parallel that of a godly man toward his wife; and both image the attitude of Jesus to the Father, “not my will but thine be done.” (It looks as if the Church may, indeed, be incurably patriarchal.) We thank the feminist for the courage and the questions that have forced deeper understanding of man and woman and the meaning of their sexuality as it bears on justice. This sorting out allows us to see more clearly through to the Christian crux of the meaning of sexuality. The Arian challenge to faith refined the essential body of Catholic belief; the feminist controversy does the same. It is especially important in that it eventually may substantiate the Catholic Church’s traditional hierarchical system, and the meaning of sexuality that the Church through the ages has come to embrace.

11 JESUS: MALE LIBERATOR

The “image of Jesus as liberating for women’ religious feminists cry, “Is an offense!”

But wait!

The thoroughly intellectual idea of an image that sets up an imaginative relationship in the one who looks upon it, and thence inspires actions, thus saving the person, is foreign to the Gospel.

For that matter, the idea of a liberation from some kind of socio-political bondage is foreign to the Gospel.

Jesus does not liberate by a person’s establishing an effective relationship with “his image.” He liberates by confronting the human soul and evoking from it a “yes” to his being God! And a ‘yes” to his undying love by which he died to save that soul! He saves the soul from sin and death - that is the liberation.

It is the iron bars of sin that the “Yes” to him saws through. It is a one to one experience meant to change all orientation to life, not merely thoughts or feelings. What is missing in this complaint is any belief that Jesus lives, encounters, and touches, Person to person, right now. He is not a mere historic image whom if we perceive in the right way will somehow transform our thinking about ourselves, and whose maleness therefore is stumbling block. When we encounter Jesus and speak our “yes” to him, we submit our total selves and become his slaves (though he raises us up and immediately calls us “friends”). That is, we desire to become utterly obedient to his Will. So submission and death to self-will become the corollaries to freedom and liberation.

The oft repeated feminist interpretation of Galatians 3:27-28, by which the attempt is made to remove sexuality from the equation of salvation (there is “no male or female” in Christ),

is skewed. St. Paul, who authored this passage in Galatians, states that baptism regardless of race, sex, or condition of servitude brings ultimate unity of all in Christ. Yet, the baptismal water does not wash away sexual differences of those given unity in his Body. Males are still male, females female, Greeks Greek and Jews Jewish.

The unity effected is to be understood not as amalgamation even on a transcendent level, but as a union of opposites, Christ (God) and the believer (Man), which while the two become one, is at the same time forever two. It is union, not the transformation of two into a monolith. And the two have different roles to play in the union.

We have two models of this. The one is the perfect unity revealed in the Holy Trinity - two Divine Persons who are Ob-positioned (meaning facing each other from polar positions, not meaning opposed) and thus have different roles within Godhead; and the man and woman in the marriage union. Scripture treats these as analogous to a third - the union God pursues with his Beloved, but fallen, Man. A union of opposites, whether Father and Son, man and woman, God and mankind, is a paradox. Without the action of the Holy Spirit it is impossible to conceive on any level. An ob-position must be maintained for identity, they must not merge into one another, yet union and oneness of the two is the goal. The Holy Spirit is the agent of such unity for all. Through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.' Ephesians 2:18. This corrected idea of unity is essential to understanding relationships within the Body of Christ.

The Christian experience begun in baptism has no promise of immediate liberation from the effects of racism, sexism, and classism. The realities of fallen life on this planet make it quite otherwise. The Christian experience of baptism promises that despite external conditions which may include all of the above and worse, the spirit of the baptized is free in Christ and incapable of being deprived of its humanity by any such impinging condition. Truth is what frees a person, and Truth is what Christ brings to the believer. Because of his intimate relationship with Jesus everything in his life becomes imbued with transcendental meaning.

Though we must work to free others from socio-political bondage always, never resting in resisting the oppressors of our neighbors, we have no assurance that something worse will not come along to enslave - it is in the nature of the fallen realm to oppress. Jesus did not confront these socio-political systems. He could not be identified with those groups that did, notably the Zealots, nor with those who were so alienated they had retired to the desert, the Essenes. The freedom he preached was "the Truth will set you free," a purely spiritual liberation, and it was

received by the anawim - those humble enough to hear and heed. This basic receptive attitude is the poverty Jesus looked for. He found it usually in those who were less than wealthy - the disciples were mostly middle-class except for Matthew, but he also found it among those who were wealthy, Nicodemus, Zaccheus and Joseph of Arimathea.

Androcentric Christology subordinates and excludes women? What this means to a feminist is that viewing Jesus as wholly a man and emphasizing his maleness has kept women at an unfair disadvantage. Feminism is then seen as “the most fundamental and urgent of all liberation movements.” This is because “the man and woman relationship lies at the heart of all relationship.”

Only this last statement is true - male and female relationship does lie at the heart of all relationship. But feminism does not have the Christian answer for the full freedom and equality that is sought in the male/female relationship. Because it does not comprehend the Truth, it is not a liberation movement - it cannot be. Distortions, even lies, will not set us free, but only make us more enslaved.

First, feminism assumes that woman’s meaning arises only out of her own experience - it does not look to a revelation above and beyond the woman to interpret her and her experience. It suspects all “above and beyond” revelation to be contaminated with androcentricity. It does not grapple with what (who) it was that God was creating when He created her because all the sources for the answer are considered “patriarchal.” Anything in which the masculine (God-He) has been instrumental is ruinously marred as a source.

In order to be as suspicious of divine revelation in Scripture and Tradition as the feminist, distrust of the Holy Spirit origin of either, and unbelief in his control or ability to use the sinfulness of human beings in order to get his Truth across, must rule the consciousness. Scripture becomes then a thoroughly defiled and retrograde collection of bits and pieces meant to keep the males ascendent and the females in servitude. Though the Spirit may have given an initial impulse to the tradition that became Scripture, somewhere the whole effort was diseased as it found its form through the dirty hands of men. The same is thought true of the Tradition of the Church. There is no belief that the Holy Spirit has written straight with crooked lines. There is only a belief in crooked lines which the feminist must straighten out herself with her own experience as her only guide.

If we deny the premise of the feminist that androcentric Christology has kept her enslaved, we must support the idea that androcentric Christology has a purpose that frees both men and women, and that feminists because of their prejudices, fears, and mind-sets have been unable to understand or appropriate that freedom. It would be instructive to analyze both - the feminist mind-set that blinds to the truth, and the positive values of androcentric Christology.

Androcentric Christology is based on the premise that Christ's maleness is a sign of something at the heart of things that must be grasped by the believer if he is to comprehend the meaning of sexuality - which is at the base of all relationship. What does Jesus Christ's maleness communicate in its self? We assume here that "Christ" refers to more than a human messiah, but refers in the Christian sense to the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus. God appears among men in the human flesh of a male. Why? The answer is so simple it is often overlooked, even perhaps by the Holy Father in his denial that God can be considered masculine (*Mulieris Dignatatem*).

Let us consider where the concept "masculine" comes from. It proceeds from where we get all our concepts - from our senses. We experience male morphology, we comprehend how it acts and works, and we generalize to a principle of the masculine - an active generator. We see female morphology, we experience how it acts and works and we generalize a principle of the feminine - a receptive matrix.

But isn't it really the other way around - that within the Creator Godhead there is both a generative and a matrical principle which God expressed in making man and woman in his image and likeness? And in lieu of the origin of male and female to exemplify this basic polarity of initiator and receiver, is it not correct to say that the whole human race will always be as feminine to the Eternal God? Is there any way the human being can initiate anything with the Almighty? Is not the human wholly dependent upon God for everything? Does not all the scriptural language speak of that truth - that men and women must open themselves to God, that they must receive from him, and allow him to abide in them so that they may be fruitful? And Jesus gave one criteria for discerning who is really his - the one that bears fruit.

Fruit does not develop unless there is fertilization by a male agent. Of course, within the Trinity there is no "male" agent, maleness depends on physical morphology, but the principle by which that physique was determined and which we call "masculine," that intrinsically is within the Trinity and purely revealed to us as "First Person" or the "Father." Jesus comes as male

because it is human physiology which speaks the truth of the relationship between God and mankind.

The Christian who believes in the purity of divine revelation in Scripture marvels at the Hebrew language itself which from the beginning lays down these principles in its very words. The Hebrew word for “knowing” God is the same word used for sexual intercourse, “yada.” And the mechanics of sexual intercourse designate that the human being who “knows” God and whom God “knows” whether male or female is feminine before God. God is the impregnating initiator. The Holy Spirit plants new life into every human person who surrenders to him.

For this reason Jesus comes as Bridegroom. The Hebrew knew the significance of St. John’s declaration concerning Jesus, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice; therefore, this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease.” The Hebrew knew all about “yada” by his constant contact with the scriptures.

The feminist ideology blinds to this truth because it has been formed by men and women with what appears to be a set of psychological deformities. Sin has formed it - chiefly sin in the exercise of sexuality that they have experienced in their parents and others close to them in formative years. The abuse and misuse of authority has misformed it. Men and women have been boys and girls who have seen their mothers denigrated and physically violated in those unredeemed situations where “might meant right.” In fear they could not defend or correct the situation, and they determined in their hearts that as soon as they could, they would. Men were strong and men were evil. They could not be stopped from grabbing from everyone the human rights and dignity that were rightfully theirs. They forced service from others, and never served. Or so it seemed.

The whole lives of these now-adults has been twisted into the righting of the wrongs visited upon mankind by “patriarchy,” the supremacy of the male. This is the blindness, understandable in itself, that keeps feminists, both male and female from being able to decipher the scriptural image of sexuality and its ultimate meaning. It is like looking at everything through glasses tinted with a preconceived color - the color of “hatred of the male.”

What is the relationship of man and woman presented in Genesis 1-3? What about the words used so frequently, “supremacy” and “subordination” as regards these texts. Is feminist

theologian Phyllis Treble right in her conclusion that woman is “no opposite sex, no second sex, no derived sex - in short, no ‘Adam’s rib’?”

In the first creation story, man, *ha-’addam*, is created in the image and likeness of God. *Ha-’addam*, a one, but two - male and female. Pope John Paul in “*Dominum et Vivificantem*” writes:

This biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to existence . . . but also the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, that is to say, the . . . self-communication to the things he creates. This is true first of all concerning man, who has been created in the image and likeness of God: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” “Let us make”: Can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man? The Christian reader, who already knows the revelation of this mystery, can discern a reflection of it also in these words

It is enlightening to reflect on that statement. The plural does suggest the Trinity, and contemplating the Trinity causes us to look back once more at this man and this woman who make up the whole, Man. A two in one on the mankind-side, and a three in one on the God-side. Mankind made in the image and likeness of God. It would have had to be neater if the analogy was meant to be drawn. It would have had to be a three in one on both sides of the analogue. If that could be shown, all kinds of logical extensions might be made.

But Jesus has said in regard to the marriage of man and woman, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” Count the persons; doesn’t that imply that in holy wedlock Jesus sees that three make one? A man and a woman, ob-positioned because one is initiator and

the other receiver, joined together. . . by God? I count three. And because of my Christian understanding of God's work in this, I call his name here, the Holy Spirit, he who brings unity.

Now the parallels are clear. Godhead is Triune Persons in one Being. Two ob-positioned Persons joined by the Holy Spirit. Mankind is triune persons (with the Holy Spirit condescending to be the joiner) in one being. Jesus himself quotes Genesis, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Therefore, that principle of initiation or generation which because of our contact with the male physiology we speak of as masculine resides purely in the First Person of the Trinity, as the male is considered the first person of the human trinity; and that principle of receiving, or matrix which because of our contact with female physiology we speak of as feminine resides purely in the Second Person of the Trinity, as the female is considered the second person of the human trinity. Only from this model can we speak of equality and freedom. Equality because first and second, even as among the Divine Persons cannot mean other than wholly equal in value and worth of person; the designations can only point to order. The Holy Spirit before the Fall was the gift of God to these two persons as the Person to Unify their otherwise irreconcilable opposite positions.

Jung was right, to this point, that man and woman are the basic pair of irreconcilable opposites. Only the Holy Spirit can make unity of such polarity without destroying those qualities of each which make the differentiation. The differentiation, just as in the Trinity, makes possible the sharing of the creativity and ecstasy of divine life with God's creature, Man.

It is in the second creation story that we have the account of Adam's rib (Genesis 2:18-24). The woman's relationship to the man in this story parallels the creedal words describing the relationship of the Second Person to the First. Just as the Second Person is "eternally begotten of the Father, . . . begotten not made, one in being with the Father, so her "second person" to the male is fully one in being and of the same substance, the "second" indicating only order not worth.

Sad to say, such Perfection as this did not last. Enter a perverted Intelligence to overturn this reality and blot out its understanding. That enemy of woman seems to be mounting a new offensive right within God's New Eden, the Church, where dwell the new Adam and His bride in formation. Will she fail again?

12 IN DEFENSE OF PATRIARCHY

Though the first draft of the *Pastoral on Women, Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* shies away from the word using it only once, “patriarchy” is at the heart of the debate which has forced the pastoral into being. In Chapter Four “Voices of Alienation” state, “Some, noting that theological opinions vary, insist that scripture does not decide the question and that the tradition of the Church has been colored by the cultural situation of former times, namely patriarchy, a social order characterized by male dominance.”

The bishops don’t reply directly to this assessment that calls into question their male role of authority in the Church, but they simply assert that male and female have true equality, ‘brothers and sisters equal in dignity and freedom,’ and then call for further study of Christian anthropology to “place in proper light the church’s consistent practice.”

Vocal feminist theologians and spokeswomen for national organizations which appeared before the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee writing the document, have been plainly stating their objections to “patriarchy” for years. They have not minced words. We quote only a few representative statements.

Feminist theologian, Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether, writing for the National Catholic Reporter in 1984 challenged readers to understand the “radical agenda of feminist transformation” by first recognizing how “patriarchy has structured our culture and social systems through much of human history.” Then building on what the “rule of the father’ has meant to human history she concludes that “patriarchy imbues all relationships with others with the element of power struggle. . . Femaleness in patriarchal culture becomes the generic symbol for that which is to be dominated, that which is to be ruled over - . Once it is seen how profound

the ramifications of patriarchy as culture and social structure are, it becomes evident that the aspirations of feminism cannot be contained within it.”

In 1985 the National Assembly of Religious Women called for increased struggle with the “brutal destructiveness of patriarchy in Church and society.” Sister Marjorie Tuite, OP, saw the fundamental problem of women ‘s struggle in the global context as one of patriarchy. “Patriarchy in the family unit is disabling, and to me the vertical, patriarchal power of the Church hierarchy is violent. It robs the dignity of persons by limiting their participation.” In 1987 Sandra Schneiders speaking for Women in the Church called patriarchy an “evil system.” And Starhawk, a Jewish witch, who teaches in a Catholic college in California in her new book *Truth or Dare*, 1988, promotes her own brand of “psychology of liberation” which confronts the patriarchal system of “power-over,” a system that she explains was born with the rise of cities, protector-kings, and ultimately, warfare, after the death of the “gentler goddess worship.”

The feminist prognosis for what must happen in the Church was given by Joan Beifuss in the National Catholic Reporters “Women Doing Theology” issue - “Over the long haul, women say, it will be *the rethinking of the patterns of God* by women that will force the centers of religious power to change.” (Italics mine)

Defenses of patriarchy have been few. George Kocan’s article “A Church of the Absurd?” (Homiletic Pastoral Review Oct. 1987) vindicates male rule by appealing convincingly to the relativist’s own authorities; evolutionary theory, and sociology. George Gilder’s impressively documented *Men and Marriage* had difficulty finding a publisher; a reviewer comments, “well informed, traditional thinking must seem very dangerous indeed.” Gilder believes that God-ordered families can save the day.

Philosopher Michael Levin challenges the feminist orthodoxy on every level in his book *Feminism and Freedom*. Feminism’s unisex ideology is incompatible with human nature, he declares, and backs this up with further physiological data from studies on the human brain, and behavioral studies. He points out that because feminism’s goal, the overthrow of patriarchy, is counter to human nature, society will never conform to the feminist ideal of its own accord. Therefore, feminists have had to mobilize political action to push their views through the power of the state, from ERA, to “Affirmative Action,” to *Wade-Roe* (see *Roe v. Wade: The Untold Story of the Landmark Supreme Court Decision that Made Abortion Legal* by Marian Faux). As a result government at all levels heavily promotes the once-radical feminist agenda.

The feminists thus have forced their ideology upon secular society, and Beifuss recognizes that women “rethinking patterns of God” could “force” religious power to change as well. A bishop, discussing the first draft of the pastoral on woman, worriedly confided, “We bishops are intimidated.”

When noted Catholic author and spiritual leader, M. Basil Pennington, O.B., uses a Marian theme in his latest book (*Mary Today*) to assail patriarchy as mere male dominance accompanied by “mea culpa” for the whole priestly system, one is heartbroken at the pressure that priests and bishops undergo these days to bring them to such a pass.

Why have feminist, anti-Catholic, anti-clerical attacks been so easily accepted by their victims? Is patriarchy a great evil perpetrated by design of men to subject women? Can patriarchy ever again be seen as God’s governance of His People, especially in light of the bishops’ intimidation? Touching these questions with observations of a few concerned thinkers, I rely chiefly upon a woman who will certainly be canonized, Blessed Edith Stein. Contributing from great philosophic and psychological knowledge, and more importantly from a depth of Christian wisdom, her perspective, to this point, has been overlooked.

Tom Bethell in an article in *Catholicism in Crisis* (before the magazine changed its name to *Crisis* has the courage to tackle the question: Why have feminist inroads into Catholic faith been so easy? Quoting a priest, Msgr. Harry Byrne of Epiphany Parish in New York City, writing in *America* Bethell points out that this priest’s position endorsed by *America’s* editors is that the Church should join the winning side - which he assumes is the woman’s movement. Then Bethell comments, “. . .I hope to show the women’s liberation movement is a response not so much to patriarchy as to the kind of pusillanimity that Byrne himself typifies.”

Pusillanimity, “lacking manly courage,” is a trait that brings out disgust and anger in women. It is instinctive that women know man’s penultimate end which next to loving, serving and enjoying God forever, is to protect and lead the other half of the human race, the woman and her children. To find a man adverse to his very ethos (by this Blessed. Edith means his “inner form, or that constant spiritual attitude which the scholastics term *habitus*”) is repugnant to a woman. Why this happens is for the psychologists to tell, but a common observation is that some men fear women and need to placate them, while others have a sentimental relationship to their mothers, whom they perceived suffered ill-treatment, and all their years try to compensate for this perceived suffering. Whatever the cause, it is as though there is nothing that can be done

when salt has lost its savor, thus woman's frustration which ripens into anger when the man lets go of principle and becomes wishy-washy.

Echoing E. Michael Jones who wrote on the topic for *Fidelity* Bethell questions, "Is it possible that the root of feminism is authority that failed? Is feminism in the church based on the experience of women who found men weak, either morally or pastorally? Is it possible that the presence of feminism in the church is the result of an abdication of authority by those who should have used it to defend the weak, and that the women who looked for it in their male superiors went away disappointed, only to seek real authority in the state?"

In this regard the pastoral itself presents some interesting evidence. Among the numerous complaints of dominance by males, powerlessness, and the effects of being totally disregarded, are paragraphs decrying the males irresponsibility; "of [lack of] involvement in family planning decisions, practices and consequences."

The underlying need of women and children to be provided for by men also surfaces: "Having to abandon these tasks [care of children and educating them in accordance with their needs] in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother."

Inherent in these words is the sadness and abandonment women feel by their husband's neglect of a headship which leads, protects, and provides, alongside the confusion when they think about those feelings. They seem to want it both ways - no headship at all, but responsible men.

E. Michael Jones points out (*Fidelity*, December 1985) how bereft and left-at-sea the women religious felt with the cutting away of their rule sanctioned by the male authorities in Rome. Concerning the effect of the changes, he quotes Ann Roche Muggeridge, a Canadian author who spent two and a half years in a convent. ". ..For the love of Christ ...you sublimated every human perfection, and all of sudden. . the superior says to you, 'Oh, you didn't have to do all these things. They're outmoded relics of patriarchal society, etc.' And then you think, 'We were mugs; we were really had,' and you hate yourself for having done it; you hate the order for having changed; you hate the faceless male bureaucracy in Rome that did change it, and you get very angry."

As Bethell points out, “feminism is not a revolt against patriarchal authority; but a revolt against the breakdown of authority.” The unspoken, unwritten feeling of that breakdown in woman’s being says, “If they (meaning the male authority) will not take care of me like they are supposed to, I will take care of myself, and force real caring into existence as the law!”

In fact, “being cared for’ must come in for its own scorn. “ ‘They’ kept us children so they could dominate us,” is another complaint of “renewed” nuns. Real caring as Edith Stein points out has, of course, no such motive, rather, the service of male headship frees individuals for rich, productive living.

If there is a lack of manly courage displayed in the pastoral by exaggerated expressions of contrition, concessions to opinions which are opposed to Catholic truth, i.e. “some women ... suggest the need for a ‘realistic’ approach to family planning (including discussing the abortion question as a complex issue with diverse options),” and a lack of firm statements supporting Tradition, which is softened into “heritage”, and Scripture, which labors under the suspicion that it is “conditioned by the cultural patterns of the New Testament era”; then the pastoral will not diminish feminine anger. It will exacerbate the underlying disgust and frustration. No concessions will be enough until hierarchy is pulled down and patriarchy dismantled.

This complex upheaval has uncovered sin - other than the puzzling “sin of sexism” repented of in the pastoraL Alongside of lack of courage, priests (and husbands) must acknowledge that they have indeed assumed that the role of authority meant prestige and power. Such a value ignores the Lord’s injunction against the ways of the worldly: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:25f)

The guilt displayed by some priests in regard to being one of an all male priesthood, and of some fathers who are uneasy about being head of their families, testifies that they actually believe it is more worthy to rule than to be ruled, more honorable to be a “father” than, say, a mother. This, despite Jesus’ elevating the dependent and trusting as first in the Kingdom. Such priests and husbands are guilty of believing themselves superior to women, and the actions and semantics used to apologize for that higher ranking are puzzling except to those who accept the same premises, i.e. the feminists.

Looking at authority through the eyes of Christ is an altogether different matter. Authority given by God over the body, either family or Church, is one of abject lackey service - diakonia! No priest need apologize for being available night and day for all the dirty work in a parish, nor a husband for totally denying himself in order to protect and provide for a wife and children; nor need a woman ever despair because of priest or husband's "abusive, thoughtless domination" - not in the Catholic Church or the Catholic family when ordered by the Spirit of God.

A sweeping *religious* education is necessary! It is here that Blessed Edith Stein steps to the fore. Her writings, in the process of being translated and published by the Institute for Carmelite Studies, present a clear religious education which is her forte in the matters under discussion. *Woman*, the latest volume to appear, is a light of pure Christian feminism shining into the incomprehension of Christian things which characterizes the current feminist debate.

With that straight out clarity we cherish in saints, Blessed Edith points out that there are three levels of patriarchy. The first is the original order of the perfect realm created for man and woman. In a drastically changed way, because of sin, it is the order commanded by God after the Fall. And it is the order of the redeemed community whose principles are the same as those of the original. It is therefore obvious; patriarchy is God-willed.

However, the trouble comes with the perversions of God's original plan by the disobedience of man and woman. In the fallen order, Blessed Edith points to sin as the master, with patriarchy assuming all the vices of the fallen state - "greedy exploitation, senseless acquisition, and brutal authority."

All the defects of patriarchy under the fallen order are rooted in a perverted relationship to God. "Fallen man is characterized by two basic principles: the rebellion of the spirit against God's dominion; the rebellion of the lower faculties against the higher - the senses versus the spirit's control, the will versus the intellect. There results from the first a changed relationship to the other creatures which man wants to exploit for himself instead of preserving for God. . . The specific degeneracy of man is seen in his brutal despotism over creatures - especially over the woman, and in his enslavement to his work up to the point of the atrophy of his humanity. The specific degeneracy of woman is seen in her servile dependence upon man and in the decline of her spiritual life into a predominantly sensual one. . . Then we have the type of the rebellious slave in the emancipated woman: she denies not only her servitude to man but also the God-

willed subordination to him, she is set against men by her hostile attitude, but even this attitude of hostility betrays the tie existing between them .”

Reestablishment of patriarchy in its God-centered sense depends on the attitude of hostility of feminists being resolved, as well as a clearer understanding of what patriarchy means and does not mean on the part of the males who exercise it. The first can happen through dissemination of insights like Blessed Edith’s which through grace would lead women to submit to their God-given woman’s ethos; or barring that, by their leaving the Catholic Church which is among the last religious institutions to adhere to God’s order in regard to patriarchy - there are other religious options. The second can be achieved by realigning the exercise of patriarchy to the Lord’s command of selfless service. For peaceful order to be reestablished, Christ-like submission is required for both man and woman.

Blessed Edith is most interested in the first part of the problem, woman’s ethos, and she tells us that perverted feminine nature is “restored to purity only if completely surrendered to God.” The deepest longing of a woman’s heart is to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other being completely. . . . But this surrender becomes a perverted self-abandonment and a form of slavery when it is given to another person and not to God; at the same time, it is an unjustified demand which no human being can fulfill. Only God can welcome a person’s total surrender in such a way that one does not lose one’s soul in the process but wins it.’

Only with this surrender to God can woman become the handmaid of the Lord everywhere, accepting the subordinate but equal role. “Were each woman an image of the Mother of God, a Spouse of Christ, an apostle of the divine Heart, then would each fulfill her feminine vocation no matter what conditions she lived in and what worldly activity absorbed her.”

Edith Stein is aware that this could appear to be “eccentric idealism” so she devotes much of her teaching of women to how this can actually be put into practice. Her teaching centers around the Eucharistic life wherein is the grace necessary to live out this life of obedience and submission. “To have divine love as its inner form, a woman’s life must be a Eucharistic life.”

Redeemed woman can freely consider and choose to live the vocation of woman that God has called her to. Redeemed man can freely consider and choose to live the vocation of man that God has called him to. Blessed Edith writes, “What man and woman are called to does not

appear to be easily recognizable, as it has been a controversial subject for some time. And yet there are any number of ways by which we receive this call: God Himself declares it in the words of the Old and New Testament; it is inscribed in the nature of man and woman; history elucidates this matter for us; finally, the needs of our time declare an urgent message.”

Mutually man and woman are originally given a “threefold vocation: they are to be the image of God, bring forth posterity, and be masters over the earth. . . the second passage of Genesis, which deals more extensively with the creation of man, elucidates the question a bit further. A certain pre-eminence is indicated in that the man was created first. Again it is from the word of God that we are to understand why it would not have been good for man to be alone. God created man in His own image. But God is three in one; and just as the Son issues from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, so, too, the woman emanated from man and posterity from them both.”

With the Fall, woman is punished by subjugation to the man losing her original relationship to him, that of companion and helpmate - the two being one flesh. Yet, woman and her motherhood is “the distinctive tie established between the Fall and the Redemption. The distinction of the female sex is that a woman was the person who was permitted to help establish God’s new kingdom; the distinction of the male sex is that redemption came through the Son of Man, the new Adam. And therein, man’s rank of priority is expressed again.” It is to be noted that priority does not imply superiority, which Blessed Edith denies. “The Lord clearly declared the new kingdom of God would bring a new order of relationship between the sexes, i.e., it would put an end to the relationships caused by the Fall and would restore the original order. . . Man and woman are destined to live one life with one another like a single being.(Matt I 9:3f) But the leadership of this community of life is proper to the man as the one who was created first. . . If the body rebels against the head, the organism will suffer as much as it the head were to allow the body to atrophy . But it must not be forgotten that it is a matter of a symbolic relationship. Both the image of Christ and the Church remind us of this relationship.”

The Church cannot bend to any “rethinking of the patterns of God” or be “forced” to change when these patterns are indelibly etched into the very nature of the men and women who are the People of God and into the very fabric of its instituted being. Both the Old and New Testament present patriarchy as God’s ordering of His People, and the Church through 2000 years of Tradition has been guided by the Spirit in the very same way. Therefore, the spiritual

peace and prosperity of God's People, male and female, rests upon the given ordering of patriarchy - a holy institution in itself.

13 THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE AND THE GREEN WITCH

There is a favorite story that is triggered in my brain very often these days. It is the story of the children and the Green Lady from C.S. Lewis ring cycle for children, the fourth book in the Chronicles of Narnia, *The Silver Chair*. When the nasty, witchy queen of Underworld must undo the work of the good children who have delivered Prince Rilan from her bondage, she went to “a little ark set in the wall not far from the fireplace, she opened it, and took out first a handful of green powder. This she threw on the fire. It did not blaze much, but a very sweet and drowsy smell came from it. And all through the conversation which followed, that smell grew stronger, and filled the room, and made it harder to think. Secondly, she took out a musical instrument rather like a mandolin. She began to play it with her fingers - a steady, monotonous thrumming that you didn’t notice after a few minutes. But the less you noticed it, the more it got into your brain and your blood. This made it hard to think. After she had thrummed for a time (and the sweet smell was now strong) she began speaking in a sweet, quiet voice.” The Green Lady then questions them on everything that is true and everything they believe, insinuating persuasively that there is nothing true, and nothing to believe but her own constructions, her own awful underworld.

With all the stir these days about inclusive language, that is, the revision of the Scriptures and the liturgy to eliminate the designations of male, other insidious abuses and misuses of language in the church context are multiplying. Often these are hatched by the watchdogs of language inclusivism. This cannot be inadvertent in the contexts, but rather a covert attempt like the Green Lady to change the orientations, if not the basic beliefs, of the *sensus fidelium*.

“Be on your guard against liars,” a prominent editor regretfully wrote about this phenomena. Those who want to change the foundations of the Church, not development in the line of true development of doctrine (which will never attempt a change in foundations), but change in line with an alien ideology, do not hesitate to take advantage of the general Catholic confusion on the basics of Catholic faith, to direct the faithful into foreign philosophies.

This deceptive language problem often presents itself in theology these days. The use of the word “justice” is a case in point. In Scripture the justice of God apart from three cases in Proverbs, stands in both Old Testament and New Testament for the words which are also translated “righteousness” or “righteous.” In both Testaments “to be justified” means “to be brought into right relationship;” and in the New Testament is most often a reference to the way God has brought mankind back to himself in the sacrifice of Jesus. Such is the “justice” that dominates the book of Romans. “It is not so much an ethical word as a word that belongs to the vocabulary of salvation”⁶ The truth of the word as Scripture intended it, is quite different then from the way the social activist is prone to use the texts where the word appears. The justice effort of *Renew* in the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis has appropriated many texts for its own propagandizing for a certain view of social justice. When brought to the attention of the deacon who heads the effort, he shrugged and admitted that texts had been “used to promote a cause.”

A recent article in our Archdiocesan newspaper illustrates this point. A pastor, Father Frederick Mertz⁷, interviews Holy Name Sister Anne E. Patrick elected vice-president of the American Catholic Theological Society, now head of the religion department at Carleton College. She will proceed to the presidency of this prestigious society in 1989.

Father asks her to explain her paper, “Linguistic Turn and Moral Theology” read at the recent theological meeting. She replies “that ‘linguistic turn’ has to do with a whole series of developments in philosophy which calls attention to the ambiguities in the formulation of truth. Perhaps the word, ‘humility,’ would describe the kind of search for God’s will for us today, rather than simply ‘repeating ancient formulas,’ to use Pope John’s phrase.”

The priest asks, “Could you give examples?”

⁶ Richardson, Alan, *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, MacMillan p.118

⁷ Mertz, Father Frederick, “Interview”, *Catholic Bulletin*, July 19,1987

Sister Anne replies, “Patriarchal language can shape both power and relationships. As men and women today relate as equals, our language also about divine and human relationships must change.”

“Another example?” asks Father Mertz.

“Just as the church in the 16th century could not accept Galileo’s statement that the Earth revolves around the sun, so today, discoveries about reproduction ask new questions of moral theology. Or again, just as the first century church recognized the Holy Spirit guiding the Apostles away from practices like circumcision and mosaic dietary rules in order to make room for the gentiles, so we need to see that there is a continuous dialogue with God as God reveals new directions.”

It is tempting to record the whole interview here, it doesn’t get any better. But this is enough to well illustrate our point.

“Linguistic turn.” “Humility of search for God’s will for us today . . .rather than repeating ancient formulas.” The strumming begins, the suffocating incense rises from the fire. It all sounds so credible. But shake yourself from the spell and take a closer look. We Catholics believe that the ancient formulas boost us along toward truth, in a similar way that the Pythagorean theories of the sixth century B.C. furthered mathematics. What foolishness if we should toss them out to begin all over again making our own math discoveries.

How did Pope John use these words, ‘repeating ancient formulas’? Sister Anne leads us to assume he meant to denigrate the ancient formulas; by which do we mean the creeds, the scriptures? It cannot be so, though because the reference is non-specific we cannot trace the context. I am sure it would be interesting. But one of the ways neo-modernists work is to pretend they are simply using new words to describe old faith. They often use papal words and phrases in this attempt - and “use” is the right word. They are never in context; they regularly twist the original meaning, ending up with no relationship to “old faith” as our analysis will demonstrate.

The “humility” that the sister appeals to is all very well in its rightful place. What has it to do with “the search for God’s will?” Here she implies that only a searcher is humble, those who find and claim truth, like those who accept what the Catholic Church has professed from the beginning - just read St. Paul, are arrogant. There is a slogan on the wall in the Minneapolis Unitarian church, “For each question ...another question.” Gosh, the green smoke is making us

foggy! It sounds plausible. Therefore, we conclude, we must always be seekers, and never finders.

Searching is, however, not the stance of the Christian despite its elevation in today's spiritual terminology. Those who seek in the gospel are assured by Jesus that they will find! Finding God's will is not an endless quest; especially in the area of morality which is the next topic the Sister addresses - "discoveries about reproduction ask new questions of moral theology." Presumably the new questions will raise questions - certainly not answers from "ancient formulas." The gospel, however, is extremely explicit about what is God's will in the matters of sexual morality. There is not a lot "seeking" will do to change the truth that is set forth, though mighty are the attempts to twist it. One wry writer of my acquaintance contemplated heading his column, "Found, A 3000 Year Old Cure for Aids - - the Seventh Commandment!"⁸

We need Puddleglum, who in Lewis' story is a strange frog-like person. He strives against the magic to persist in believing in the world of sun which the Green Lady denies exists. ". . . don't know rightly what you all mean by a world,' he said, talking like a man who hasn't enough air. 'But you can play that fiddle till your fingers drop off, and still you won't make me forget Narnia; and the whole Overworld too. We'll never see it again, I shouldn't wonder. You may have blotted it out and turned it dark like this, for all I know. Nothing more likely. But I know I was there once. I've seen the sky full of stars. I've seen the sun coming up out of the sea of a morning and sinking behind the mountains at night. And I've seen him up in the midday sky when I couldn't look at him for brightness.'

"Puddleglum's words had a very rousing effect. The other three all breathed again and looked at one another like people newly awakened."

Giving examples of this "linguistic turn" Sister Anne brings up "patriarchal language.' (Strum strum.) Wake up! Catholics, remember! there is eternal truth expressed in masculine and feminine in Scripture! From the beginning, when "God created man in his image, male and female created he him/them," there has been significance in the form, the role, the function, and the meaning of the sexes. Patriarchy is not a sin, it is a form of societal management that attempted, in admittedly a fallen world, to imitate the ordering of Godhead. The man, in the first position, is given headship like God the Father in the Trinity. The woman, in the second position,

⁸ Bernard Casserly, syndicated

is matrix for joint fruitfulness, a like position to God the Son, dependent, receptive, (also Second Person, though thoroughly equal to the First Person) through whom all things were made. There is a mystery about the union of man and woman that St. Paul says is awesome and has to do with Christ and the Church.

Peter Kreeft writes, “Why then not call God Mother as well as Father? Ultimately because God Himself has told us how to speak of Him. The fundamental issue in the dispute about feminism is not ‘male chauvinism,’ which no one defends, but the authority of Scripture, which Christians defend. Is Scripture God’s words about us or our words about God?”

Sr. Anne believes it is the latter. Does she not hide behind these words, “linguistic turn” feelings like Mary Daly who advocates “a castrating of language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world”... traditional language is “a gang rape of women’s minds”? At least Daly isn’t linguistically mesmerizing; we clearly understand what she wants to do with language - break it to fit her ideology.

Back in 1963, before Vatican II, the same year that Betty Freidan got the ball rolling with *Feminine Mystique* . a poignant little book was translated from the German, *Man and Language* by Max Picard. Wrote Picard, somehow sensing the future of the Gospel and the attempt to change its language to more modernly acceptable norms:⁹

the power of secular language is so intense today that it would drown the truth of the Gospel if it were translated into the “language of the modern age.” The words of the Gospel would become part of the universal verbal noise; they would seem a mere modulation of the verbal noise and no attention would be paid to them as they appeared only to disappear again. The language of the Gospel would be dissolved. The “language of the age” would not be redeemed, for it seems capable of assimilating anything, even the words of the Gospel. The language of the Gospel can

⁹ Picard, Max, *Man and Language Gateway*, p.90

preserve its true nature today more than ever
 before only by remaining wholly different, but
 changing man through the impact on him of the
 wholly different, the magic of the wholly
 different.

The orientation of the Bible toward sexuality is wholly different from that of the present milieu. We must keep its impact so! But here comes Sr. Anne and her cohorts with their glib subtleties. “As men and women today relate as equals, our language also about divine and human relationships must change.” Her agenda is being implemented by the American Catholic Bishops who have commissioned a committee of scholars to insert ideological feminism into the liturgy. Soon we will be not be hearing, “Man does not live by bread alone.” Instead it will be “One does not live by bread alone.”

Many of the Bishops, beginning with Bishops Lucker and Balke in Minnesota, followed by Bishops Mahoney, Weak and others kowtow to the rebellious “rejected” and put their weight with what they mistakenly think is the underdog in American Catholicism - the feminist woman. She needs their defense as much as the Green Lady needs the defense of some well meaning earthling who stumbles into the dark smoky chamber and mistakes who is oppressing whom. “All of us need to listen carefully to what these women in the church are saying to us . . . (about their pain and alienation because of sexist language etc.)”¹⁰

Under sway of this lingo we feel like Jill, one of the benumbed children. “For the last few minutes Jill had the feeling that there was something she must remember at all costs. And now she did. But it was dreadfully hard to say it. She felt as if huge weights were laid on her lips. At last with an effort that seemed to take all the good out of her, she said: “There’s Aslan.””

Aslan in our story is a great lion who is the figure for Jesus Christ in Lewis’ tales. We want to say emphatically to Sr. Anne, “There’s Jesus!” She promotes “a change in language about divine and human relationships.” These are complete in Jesus.

“BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS I AM. “I AM HE”

¹⁰ Francis Canavan S.J., in *Catholic Eye* May 17’87’

These are direct references to Exodus' revelation of the name of Godhead, I AM WHO AM. He the God-man comes to save and restore the bride to himself. He comes as *Bridegroom*. We all know what that means, and what the right relationship between bride (us) and bridegroom is. One takes the initiative, yes, sexually, the other is submissive, in the best sense of that word.

The Bride and the Bridegroom are, no doubt, equal in worth because God has elevated the Bride to be so, but they are not equals in the way Sr. Anne means. Neither are men and women equals in the way that she means. She has changed the meaning of equal as it is in scripture (there it has to do with our equality in worth and status in the salvation that baptism confers on all) to the meaning, "the same as in all regards."

Having Sr. Anne and her friends in charge of the meaning of language is, to use J O. Tate's exceptional metaphor, like having Count Dracula wind up chairing the local Blood Drive. Subtly, so subtly she works this verbal sleight of hand till our brains seem heavy and hopeless, like the children's. We stand like them, "their heads hung down, their cheeks flushed, their eyes half closed; the strength all gone from them; the enchantment almost complete."

And then Sister Anne, continues by throwing in Galileo. She assumes that you do not know that the Church in the 16th century had readily accepted that the earth revolves around the sun; the church's own astronomers had discovered this before Galileo. The Church's disagreement with Galileo had to do with the timing of the dissemination of this information, there was no quibble about the discovery itself. This bit of information (thrum, thrum) is calculated to make us say, "Oh, yes, the church has been wrong before! It made that awful boo boo about Galileo. She's right, there is no moral ground we can be sure of."

The smoke rises further, our brains are now completely addled. In the first century church, she hums, the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles away from Jewish rules in order to make way for the gentiles.

Of course, everything has to be open-ended. We can be sure of nothing . . . linguistic turn. . . .linguistic turn.

But wait - this change of Jewish law is recorded in the Holy Bible as coming from the hand of God. Peter was instructed by God in a vision. Are Sr. Anne's pronouncements of continuing change in the same category? She wants us to think they are. Or is there something quite authoritative about the "turn" of understanding of Peter, something that stands forever and

is unchangeable because divine revelation ended with the closure of the canon while nothing in modern ways of thinking have that authority?

Tate has figured her right; behind these ambiguous, fuzzy words lies her real agenda - she “would substitute a counter-canon exemplifying female consciousness upheld by a feminine community that is autonomous and empowered.

Is it really true that there is “continuous dialogue with God as God reveals new directions” - beyond scripture, aside from tradition? It is precisely this relativism, here so seemingly innocently promoted that *Time* magazine has laid at the base of “the widespread sense of moral disarray. “ Quoting Bryn Mawr Political Scientist Stephen Salkever, “there was a traditional language of public discourse, based partly on biblical sources and partly on republican sources. But that language, says Salkever, has fallen into disuse, leaving American society with no moral lingua franca.” And James O’Hare President of Fordham University, who with his successor editor at *America*, George Hunt, has helped foster this relativism, promoting the likes of Richard McBrien and R.R.Radford, mourns “Now there don’t seem to be any moral landmarks at all.”¹¹

Would Sister Anne be happy with tumbling moral standards? I think so, it is exactly what she is advocating. Her real attitudes though, smokily hidden and sweetly expressed, would find commitment to revealed Truth in Jesus Christ dismissed as conservative and pietistic.

And then she throws in slavery! As though the roots of freedom were not firmly established in the gospel but were necessarily come from some other source. She needs to reread St. Paul’s letter to the slave owner Philemon. Paul threatens to command Philemon! “So if you consider me your partner, receive him (the runaway slave, Onesimus) as you would receive me.”

With theologians like Sister Anne abroad who does nothing to unify and everything to polarize, Charles Dunn is justifiably worried;

During the founding era in American history,
theology provided the glue to hold society together,
but now it appears to be tearing society apart, raising
the very real question of whether America can
survive as a free democratic society without a

¹¹ 16 Dunn, Charles, *American Political Theology: Historical Perspective and Theoretical Analysis* Praeger, 1984, review Heineman *The University Bookman* Winter 1998

generally accepted moral and spiritual foundation of
common values.¹²

Help, help, Puddleglum, the fumes are overwhelming and we may be going under for the last time.

“Then he (Puddleglum) did a very brave thing. He knew it wouldn’t hurt him quite as much as it would hurt a human; for his feet (which were bare) were webbed and hard and cold blooded like a duck’s. But he knew it would hurt him badly enough; and so it did. With his barefoot he stamped on the fire, grinding a large part of it into ashes on the flat hearth. And three things happened at once.

“First the sweet heavy smell grew very much less. For though the whole fire had not been put out, a good bit of it had, and what remained smelled very largely of burnt Marsh-wiggle, which is not at all an enchanting smell. This instantly made everyone’s brain far clearer. The Prince and the children held up their heads again and opened their eyes.”

We need Puddle-glums everywhere. We need them in the home; they needn’t be intellectuals (Puddleglum was a practical soul), but on the basis of common sense able to start calling nonsense, nonsense. We most need them midst our priests and religious, singular persons who will risk stomping on the fire of deceit, even when it originates in the administrative offices of the diocese. Dour they may, Puddleglum wasn’t a very bubbly sort, but they must have the courage of bearing pain. Because it is very true, putting out the confusing incense of twisted language demands risk.

The Church administrative offices, Adult Education, Parochial Education, Social Justice, and Renew are steaming with it; they aren’t going to take kindly to “stumbling blocks to progress and freedom.” I wonder what happened to the man in our Archdiocese who publicly asked the Archbishop to call a certain film put out by the Commission on Women “heresy?”

Another tactic that will be sure to be employed against any stomping on cunning ideologies will be a hue and cry about “charity.” The “reformers” will whimper that they are being treated “uncharitably.” Where deception is concerned, a call for charity means “be blind.” If the Puddleglum persists, the resistance moves into a fearful second phase.

¹² Jones, Michael E., “The Sodomitization of the Catholic Press in Saskatchewan.” *Fidelity* Feb 1987. The letter responses, *Fidelity* April 1987

“Secondly, the Witch, in a loud, terrible voice, utterly different from all the sweet tones she had been using up till now, called out, “What are you doing? Dare to touch my fire again, mud-filth, and I’ll turn the blood to fire! inside your veins.” This isn’t farfetched. Read the letters that came to E. Michael Jones when he revealed the flimflam of deception of Catholic theologians supporting homosexuality who did-in a faithful man of God who wouldn’t bend to their demands. Father Lalonde O.M.I., resisting the revisionists, defending orthodoxy, was fired as editor of *Our Family* magazine (I know from experience he deserved the “faithful, man of God” adjectives, having worked with him on a series of articles). Who were the bees that stormed from the hive to sting Jones hopefully to the same end as Lalonde? Many were nuns, Ursulas, members of the Liturgy Commission of the Archdiocese of Regina Saskatchewan, Sisters of Charity Immaculate Conception; and religious workers, the librarian of the Religious Education Office of the Diocese of Hamilton “ *anger and frustration concerning your article, which they say ‘reveals an obvious psychological fixation on the part of the editor.,’ . . . an affront to human and religious sensibilities.* ”. *‘diabolical literature, distorted magazine.’* Please cancel my subscription immediately. I want no part of your Wanderer-type invective, and name calling etc.”

But the pain is worth it!

“Thirdly, the pain itself made Puddleglums head for a moment perfectly clear and he knew exactly what he really thought. There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic.”

Once we begin to move our muscles against the atrophy that takes place with the strumming and the mesmerizing, we will be castigated, (with the feminists as opponents, you can drop the “ig” and add an “r”) but the pain will make the truth ever clearer to us and to those we may influence.

“Oh, hurrah! Good old Puddleglum!’ cried Scrubb and Jill. But the Prince shouted suddenly, Ware! Look to the Witch.”

When they did look their hair nearly stood on end.

The instrument dropped from her hands. Her arms appeared to be fastened to her sides. Her legs were intertwined with each other, and her feet had disappeared. The long green train of her skirt thickened and grew solid, and seemed to be all one piece with the writhing green pillar of her interlocked legs. And that writhing green pillar was curving and swaying as if it had no

joints, or else were all joints. Her head was thrown back and while her nose grew longer and longer every other part of her face seemed to disappear except her eyes. . . Long before there was any time to do anything the change was complete and the great serpent which the Witch had become, green as poison. . . Ah, dear reader, never forget who it is that lies behind “linguistic turn.”.

14 HELL HATH NO FURY

“We are intimidated,” one worried bishop said when pondering what to do about the NCCB’s first draft of the Pastoral on Women, entitled “Partners in the Mystery of Redemption.’ As teachers the bishops are trying to rise to the questions raised by divisive feminism in the Church.

Though trappings of elitism in the Catholic Church were scrapped in the aggiornamento of Pope John XXIII’s Vatican I Council, its age-old claim of keeper of the treasures of truth was not. “. . . the Church as teacher of truth, remains faithful to her task of preserving ‘the old’ that is, the deposit of faith*Vat/II Sacrosantum concilium* Yet, the relativist spirit of the age seems to have seriously eroded the confidence of the American bishops in that heritage.

Fr. Charles Curran, whose relative stance (“stance” in the Context is an oxymoron, because it implies stability on both feet) on morality lost him his teaching post on such issues, spoke a prophetic word about women a few years ago declaring “women are the greatest internal problem for Roman Catholics during the next decade.” The bishops must think so, too - witness this pastoral; but the challenge shows up sagging knees not strength. They handle the fire-breathing feminists with a wobbliness that only fans the flame. This, even though the goals of feminism: reproductive rights, uni-sexism, priestesses, and Goddess worship, are wholly committed to a revision of Catholicism that will make Bolshevik rewrites look like ‘Come Puff, come.’

The scope of dismantling is frankly stated by feminist theologian, Mary Malone, quoted in *Fidelity* April 1986, who after helping to squelch the Canadian bishop’s feeble resistance to the infamous consciousness-raising Green Kit for women, happily stated, “It is clear to me in

retrospect, that most of the bishops did not understand the issues - that many of them are of enormous goodwill toward women. . .their affirmation of women doesn't as yet really include a critique of the structure as it is, and that they don't see the issues in the radical way that feminists see them, because in order to include women in the Church, we need a new ecclesiology, a new Christology, and a whole new theology of ordination and ministry. And so the radical nature of what is happening is not perceived by them on the theological level, but is perceived by them on the emotional."

Emotional to be sure! The collective she-dragon of the NARW (National Association of Religious Women), the LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and WOC (Women's Ordination Conference) among others has scalded with vitriolic steam alternating with hot tears the footing of the bishop's authority which lies in scripture and tradition, until it is no wonder the bishops look less than titled preservers of the faith.

Promoting in this pastoral letter moans, groans, and stupidities ("I'll probably be twenty years past menopause and still be scared to death I'll get pregnant") alongside their own mea culpae (. . . these contributions call the church to a profound interior renewal, to a radical conversion of mind and heart. . .), the bishops stop far short of developing scriptural and traditional insights about the meaning of male and female in the plan of creation. Equality of man and woman has never been questioned in the tradition, though "equality" has never meant "the same as in all regards." That is not to overlook the fact that misuse of authority by accretions of prestige, power, and dominance has often discredited the original establishment and intent by Christ of patriarchal authority. This misuse, sometimes downright abuse, can be credited with the rise of feminism, as feminism itself may someday be credited with the cleansing and realignment of the role of male authority to the command of Christ which he established to be abject service (Mt.20:25f).

At the Detroit Conference on Ordination in 1976, where the size of the Women's Movement critter was first noted with some alarm, then appeasingly fed (it seemed to grow nastier), George Tarvard, a theologian sympathetic to the ordination of women, posed this question, "does a Christian anthropology see womanhood and manhood as abstractions which imperfectly fit the living being called women and men? . . .This I believe should be the question before us. Until we have answered it, we cannot present a good case, whether for or against."

With a primary responsibility to be good teachers - “(The Apostles) gave them (the bishops) their own position of teaching authority” says *Dei Verbum* - their task in regard to women was laid out by Pope John Paul I in 1983 at a meeting with some U.S. bishops at Castelgondolfo. “The Bishops should work for “every legitimate freedom that is consonant with their human nature and their womanhood,” and “to oppose any and all discrimination of women by reason of sex.’ The bishop “must likewise endeavor to explain as cogently as he can that the Church’s teaching on the exclusion of women from priestly ordination is extraneous to the issue of discrimination and that it is linked rather to Christ’s own design for his priesthood.”

Such a task of teaching forcibly and convincingly a developing truth should eliminate errors being entertained as though they had authoritative weight. Words like “equal,” “justice,” “freedom,” “worth,” tc., wait for specific religious definition, and intrusions of incompatible secular thought need untangling from Christian ideas. Then men and women may be given a plain dictum which they can accept and go on being Catholic, or reject and find religious expression they like better elsewhere.

The Catholic Church has always understood that her doctrine is open ended and that her task is to uncover another level of her treasures when questions of the age challenge her. But at least for now, the belly of this dragon planted on the trove seems to be an effective deterrent to the will of those entrusted with the tools.

(Hell bath no fury like a woman who thinks she is scorned, especially when she misdiagnoses the problem.)

15 THE BIBLE'S INSPIRED USE OF SEXUAL LANGUAGE

In more and more Christian publications a conclusion is reached that was stated by Arthur Shaw¹³ in an article for *National Catholic Register* a year ago. That is, that addressing God as male or female is 'not only sowing confusion, but teaching heresy.' The statement as it stands is, of course, true. God is Pure Spirit and has no physical body that is male or female. Yet, a reply to this conclusion about gender language used for God is demanded if some critical truth is not to be totally obscured, because this assertion simply doesn't go far enough. Addressing God with gender language exclusively of one sex is neither confusing or heretical, but correct and true, and is first to be found in the Bible.

To explain that statement the place to begin is at the beginning - that is Genesis 1. There, where it describes God's creation of man and woman in His image, the words are written "let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."¹⁴ Pope John Paul II in the encyclical "Dominum et Vivificantem" writes about this passage, "Can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man?"¹⁵ Using his logic which in every particular fits the unrolling story of man and woman in the Bible, brings us to some clarifying insights about the meaning of sexuality.

¹³ Arthur Shaw, "Gender Language for God" *National Catholic Register*, November 12, 1989 p,4

¹⁴ Genesis 1:27

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II , Encyclical "Dominum et Vivificantem" Pentecost 1986 1:3:12,

In his Pastoral Letter, “Do This in Memory of Me”, Cardinal Carter presents the deep covenantal theology based on the Trinity from which we understand relationships on all levels of being - God and mankind, man and woman, priest and laity. The Cardinal Archbishop’s teaching ranges from deductions based on the nature of the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ, to anthropological considerations drawn from the nature of human sexuality. He begins with an analysis of the Trinity, a community of diverse persons which implies neither Lordship nor subjugation of one Person to another, yet with distinct roles, irreducibly different in what concerns their being as distinct Persons.¹⁶

Within the relationship of the Triune Persons stand revealed an Initiator, the Father; a Dependent Responder, the Son; and unifying these two polar Person (initiation and response are ob-positioned, that is, irrevocably facing one another) is the Holy Spirit, who is as St. Bernard said, “the kiss between the Father and the Son.” Adding insights from the Athanasian Creed, it is possible to conclude: God is a Triune unity: two polar Persons, one Initiator, one Responder united by a Third who is in Himself the Unity of the ob-positioned Persons. Each have all the attributes of the One nature, but some are more to be said of one than the others - “neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance”.

From the union of Father and Son in the Spirit emanates creativity and ecstasy. In creating man and woman, God shares that creativity and ecstasy of His own Being by enfleshing, materializing these awesome principles of personhood in a male who initiates, and a female who is dependent and responds.

Cardinal Carter writes:

This qualitative sexual differentiation is rooted not in physiology but in the created human imaging of the Trinity, and is indissociable from the revelation of the Trinity in Christ, as his Incarnation bears witness.¹⁷

In The Perfection of the Original Plan these two (male and female persons of Mankind) are made in this image: two polar persons sharing one nature - one the initiator, one the responder united by a Third, the Holy Spirit, who condescends to share Himself and unify these

¹⁶ Carter, Gerald Emmett Cardinal, “Do This in Memory of Me.” 8 December 1983

¹⁷ *Ibid* p.24

opposites with Divine Love. Therefore, the sexuality that appeared in physical form expresses in a creaturely way something utterly spiritual at the heart of things.

God is saying something about His very self in the creation of the man and woman; He is sharing the dynamics of the Personhood in the Trinity with the creature He makes in His Image. Therefore maleness, though not found in the Trinity, of course, speaks nevertheless of what we would intrepidly say is the Masculine Principle among the Persons of the Trinity. How do we come to the idea of “masculine?” By observing the action of the male.

But the male is picturing for us something far beyond himself. Because the male generates, in a secondary way, new life, and because God has revealed Himself as generator of everything that is, it may be anthropomorphic to describe the First Person as Father, but the very idea has come from God down, not from man up. God has spoken about Himself in real terms by creating male and female bodies. Therefore, what has visible form as male imperfectly incarnates a masculine principle in the Trinity. We call the principle “masculine” because of our human experience with maleness - but it precedes maleness and lies at the heart of things. What has visible form as female imperfectly incarnates a feminine principle in the Trinity. We call the principle “feminine” because of our human experience with femaleness - but it precedes any physical femaleness and lies at the heart of things.

Accordingly, the Second Person in both the Holy Trinity and in Mankind, is the responder. This role for both the Son and the woman is in response to the First/first Person. (Do the Son and the woman have the attribute of initiation? Do the Father and the man have the attribute to response? Of course, because the polar persons share all attributes of each, but certain attributes are more to be said of one than the other which makes the persons' positions polar and non-exchangeable).

the absolute unity of God is not monadic but trinitarian. This eliminates the necessity of placing antagonisms between unity and multiplicity, because the Triune God, who is Unity itself, is also three Persons, qualitatively differentiated and irreducible to each other, yet without antagonism.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid p.11

In Perfection the “Second/second Person is completely equal in worth to the First/first Person. It is a result of the Fall, the takeover of the scene by an enemy’s values, that “response” “dependent” become despised concepts. In the Perfect Plan receiving and responding are values equal to governance and generating. The Second Person is co-equal and co-eternal to the First. Man and woman, created to image that relationship in human flesh, were created with the same polar roles inherent in their flesh and psyche, yet, they stand eye to eye as total equals. As in the Trinity, initiation (or authority) and response (or obedience), indicative of man and woman, are not principles unequal in their value and worth. They are the stances of wholly equal beings, who enjoy an equality like Father and Son.

The very idea of *the inequality* of the role of response came from an alien consciousness, one who had already envied the role of authority and spread that envy to the Perfect creation. When the woman accepted his definition, eventually believing his lies, his value system was established which is the Fall, a value system that still is *modus operandi*. It took this alien consciousness to cast doubt on that equality and to substitute a value system which contaminates everything since the Fall. The anti-word (Pope John Paul II’s term) corrupts with the lie that to initiate and order is power and power is ‘where its at.’

As a corollary, the same anti-word insists that to heed and serve, to receive and respond, is for lackeys and nitwits. Jesus restored the value system of Perfection; in bridging this abyss, he restored the values of the Original Plan - to be obedient is not the least important role, to be authority is not the most important role, but almost no one believes it to this day - least of all the one who most purely is created to model obedience and service, the woman.

Archbishop John Roach recently cast light on this as it refers to laity and clergy to the National Council of Catholic Women.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one, but very different. The Father does not do what the Son does, the Son does not do what the Father does and neither does what the Spirit does. Jesus spoke often of doing the Father’s will. He wasn’t obsequious; that was his role and he recognized the Father’s role. The Father did things unique to the Father. He initiates, governs, presides, creates in a very distinctive way. The Son’s role is to respond, to be the word for the Father, to reflect the Father, to be the splendor and glory of the Father. The

Spirit is the bond of love animating the Father and the Son. He is the comforter and consoler and paraclete and inspiration.

That may seem to be a kind of lofty ideal for us, but think it's what we have to aim at. Our roles are different, but that ought to be a source of rejoicing, not resentment. There are things that you do as laity that I shouldn't do. There are things that I do as bishop and priest that you shouldn't do.

There is no inferiority or super-superiority in the Trinity. There can't be any among us. I must exercise a kind of leadership and a kind of authority for the good of the church which is not your responsibility. To do that, however, I must recognize not only the dignity of you as persons and children of God, but as people in whom the Spirit resides and to whom the Spirit speaks. . . In a collegial gathering all bring gifts. The leader becomes servant and the last rises to full dignity. . .¹⁹

In order for this vision to catch on, it takes the woman first (beginning with The Blessed Virgin Mary, but we women, too) to revalue her role and meaning in light of the Second Person of the Trinity. That is because woman first accepted Satan's false definition and evaluation of her role; that is, as less worthy than the role of authority her husband held in their relationship by Divine command. Edith Stein says, "the nature of the temptation was in itself of more significance to her."²⁰ The woman must begin the unraveling of the knot by not choosing again the values of Satan, not accepting again the lie that ordering/authority/governance has a higher prestige, is more worthy than service and is, therefore, an object of envy. She must claim her role and love it; and if she must fight, it is to have that role of obedience recognized as fully equal to the opposite role of authority. She is neither a lackey nor a nitwit. Authority will not talk down to her if she talks straight with it, respectfully, but eye to eye.

¹⁹ Roach, Archbishop John, Archbishop of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Eucharistic Celebration, November 9, 1987, National Council of Catholic Women

²⁰ Edith Stein, *The Collected Works*, Volume Two, *Essays on Women* ICS Publications, Washington, DC, 1987, p.62

In order for the value system of Perfection to be restored, woman must accept obedience as fully worthy, fully equal to the opposite role. The Virgin Mary has done it. Women have rarely done it, and the very idea is being washed away in our day. Obedience (submission) has not only been devalued as the feminine role; but authority has been falsely elevated (Satan's values are intact). Therefore the man considers his role as prestigious and powerful; and this worldly, not to say carnal, evaluation is widely endorsed by women.

Authority, which is another word for ultimate initiation and governance, must take its clues from the First Person of the Trinity - that is, it exists to put all at the service of those who are receivers/responders. Pope John Paul II's insistence that Ephesians 5 speaks of "mutual submission" of wife to husband and husband to wife underlines this.²¹ But the submission of both, *the total giving of self*²² that both experience, is done differently. The woman submits to the husband's governance and ordering (the role of headship) of their life together, making one will of two; and the husband submits to the woman's need for protection and provision, and this whether he feels like it or not.

In the Christian community, males have authority, and women model obedience. But both live lives of self-giving service in mutual submission. The laity (feminine though consisting of males and females) submits to the clergy's (masculine) governance, the clergy submits to the laity's need for headship, spiritual and material, whether convenient or inconvenient. Further, the Christian community forms the people of God (the Bride) whose relationship to God is as feminine to masculine. The model? Again, man and woman in marriage; just as man and woman in marriage are the image of the Holy Trinity. This imaging of the meaning of sexuality is not deviated from throughout the Bible despite the different pressures of time and culture in 2000 plus years of its formation.

We see the Model for both roles within the Holy Trinity. There is no prestige in the role of authority, and no servility in the role of obedience - such is the peculiar Christian vision of relationship. Says Jesus who was sent, "I do nothing but what I see the Father doing." "I have not come of my own accord" etc. Such statements are the core of the Gospel of John.²³

What does this mean? It means that maleness and femaleness and the roles inherent in the bodily form speak of ultimate truth about relationship originating in the Holy Trinity. God

²¹ John Paul II, Pastoral Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1989 p. 91,92,98

²² *Ibid* p. 67,78,84

²³ The Gospel of John, among many other verses, 5:19,5:26,5:30, 5:37, 5:43, 6:66, 8:28 etc.

knows that this creature will develop a language according to information received through the senses. That language will necessarily be anthropomorphic, but because the sexual body, male and female, is created to image the truth, the words developed can be used to express that truth truly.

CS. Lewis in his masterful investigation of the meaning of sexuality in the space-fiction trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*, writes in the latter,

‘Yes,’ said the Director, There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called Daungier, we call it Pride. . . .the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it.²⁴

The inspired writers of Holy Scripture, where Lewis gained his insights, will be speaking truly when they reveal God as forever masculine, and mankind in relation to God as forever feminine. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they will never deviate from this form of expression, not once! Examine carefully those scriptures used to present God as mother and the idea will not be found. The importance that God in His Triune Persons be always considered masculine to us human beings is so overwhelming that in every case in Scripture the truth of this is rigorously guarded. It is for this reason, also, that the Second Person of the Trinity came as male - all Persons of the Trinity are as masculine to feminine to us whether we are male or female humans.

Isaiah 66:13ff is the favorite of the misquoted scriptures and is always used in this way: “As nurslings you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you.” This, however is the actual context.

Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream, and you

²⁴ Lewis, C.S., *That Hideous Strength*, MacMillan, 1964 p.315

shall suck, you shall be carried on her lap and dandled on her knees,
 As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

Obviously God does not present Himself as the mother in this passage. The distinction He places between Himself and Jerusalem is very clear. The same holds true for Isaiah 49:14-15, another favorite attempt to substantiate God's motherhood. "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even if she forgets you, I will never forget you." The speaker is Yahweh, *the Lord*, who in the entire context of Isaiah presents himself as enduringly masculine though with a depth of compassion that surpasses all earthly love, even the love of a mother. Mothers may forget, it's possible, but The Lord will not forget. This Lord continues, "Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord, your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." The very next chapter, the 50th, continues the theme with God identifying Himself as Husband and Father.

Isaiah 46:3-4 is also a standby text for the Mother-God argument, yet there is nothing necessarily maternal in the picture of God carrying the heavy burden which Israel had become. In fact it is explicitly stated in this passage that the one who carries is masculine!

Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and twill bear; I will carry and will save.

Next to Isaiah in frequency, Hosea is often called on to bolster the femininity of God. Such a twist of Hosea's intent cannot be supported by the text in which God speaks throughout as a betrayed husband and deserted father. There is no credence for assuming the speaker in Hosea 11:3-4 is maternal. The Father is expressing warmth and concern as we expect from either parent, mother or father. Nothing maternal is stated here. The actual text, with irrelevant passages deleted, reads:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me . . . Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. . . How can I give you up, O Ephraim? My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy”

Can this be considered to be the Mother-God talking? The context is quite the contrary. Neither can the Sirach reference, “God will love you more than your mother’s did,” say anything to conclude the femininity of the One who loves more than human mothers. Again the actual wording is:

. . . you will then be like a son of the Most High,
and he will love you more than does your mother.

The Holy Trinity, of course, *ad intra* holds all the positive expressions of relationship that there are. That means that mother-love has its origins in the Holy Trinity. What from mankind’s point of view would be called feminine love is present within (*ad intra*) the Trinity, it has been enfleshed by the Creator in the woman - the Son is the Person imaged by the woman. Yet, despite the obvious full measure of what we humans call “femininity” inherent in the Trinity, God will never approach His people as mother or as feminine. To mankind God (*ad extra*) is consistently Husband, Father, Lover and not Wife, mother or beloved, because Godhead is to Mankind the Initiator, the Author, eliciting Mankind’s response and obedience, and the *roles cannot be reversed*.

His People are polar to Himself, and though they are intended to be, in a certain sense, His equals (“Bride without spot or wrinkle.”)²⁵ they can never be God despite Satan’s words to the contrary. Yet, they are meant to be joined in union with Him; the Holy Spirit will condescend to His mysterious work, but only after Jesus has come to forgive otherwise indelible sin. His

²⁵ Ephesians 5:27

People cannot initiate anything with God, He is the Initiator. They cannot work their way back to union with Him; they are wholly dependent on His action. In relationship to Him they can only receive and respond - as they were created to do, to think God's thoughts after Him and to obey His Holy Will, or if they prefer to exercise their freedom the opposite way, they may think Satan's thoughts after him and do his will.

If God can be presented as mother or as feminine, that is, as receiver and acceptor in the God/Mankind relationship, where does that place His polar people? They are His children, right; but they are growing into His Bride, not His Groom. A feminine God makes them the masculine pole ? - exactly what Satan tempted them to think in the beginning - that they should envy and seize the authority side of the equation and "be like gods." Already the value of the role of willing obedience has been totally disparaged. It is the Satanic concept that Godhead is merely dominating authoritarianism who lords it over lackeys that has been put in its place.

Thus, the significance of masculine and feminine runs very deep indeed. There is no mother in heaven other than the Blessed Mother, and she is given to us as all the mother we need. There is another heavenly mother, the Church, in that mystical dimension of her that is Holy. It is her overflowing breasts that feed us (Is. 66) and her warm lap that holds us. The only consort of the God who presents Himself as masculine to us is ourselves!

Another aspect of the question that appears more and more frequently in periodicals is the matter of history - the assumption grows that the Hebrews had somehow messed up things and imposed upon the world their perverse patriarchy which they expressed in their sacred writings. Their patriarchal prejudices, declare this reasoning, overpowered the more gentle goddess religions.²⁶ We need to look again at that premise in light of the above. Also in light of the goddesses themselves who were not gentle and approachable at all - Tanit, Astarte, or Astaroth demanded child sacrifices, a very bloodthirsty goddess she was - depicted with a lioness head !The others don't stand any kind of scrutiny either. They are projections from the fallen psyche of mankind and cannot stand comparison with the Holy One of Israel, I AM HE!

Therefore, objections to much current writing on God and gender language is legitimate; 1) that it twists Scripture, theology and history, albeit perhaps innocently; 2) that Scripture is not just a human book - it is far too fantastically profound for that, often speaking more than the

²⁶ See "Feminine Images of God Can-Inhance Your Prayer and Change Your Life" by Virginia Ann Froehle, R.S.M., St. Anthony Messenger, May 1989. This article blatantly blames the Hebrews for male images of God.

human author knew or intended. *Dei Verbum* asserts “Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.”²⁷ Often those who adhere to this definition are pejoratively called fundamentalists, a word many who are unwilling to take Scripture wholly and seriously use much too freely in order to quiet their questioners. It is necessary to heed literary forms, the times addressed, the exact meaning of words in their contexts, and ways of perception of the times. But none of this negates the statement above which transcends all of the human aspects of scripture - that God has seen to it that this Book speaks what He wants us to know sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind . . .²⁸ That in the matter of sexuality in scripture we are we are not working with mere metaphor, we are working with an analogy. That is, there is a very close parallel in comparison of the three Triune Relationships, and the sexual designations made in each tier of relationship speak the truth. An analogy points up a relationship between two things - a real parallelism of character, or attributes. Therefore, to say that man and woman and their relationship is an analogy of God's relationship to Mankind is to say that there is a real parallel in the comparison that rests in verity. In this case because God has created the one (Mankind) to be a sign of the other (God). A metaphor, on the other hand, merely suggests a likeness in some particular about two very unlike things. For instance, “That dog walks like a turtle.” Feminine references to Godhead in scripture can be seen with little effort to be sheer metaphors. When Jesus said that he was like a hen wanting to gather his chicks he was speaking in metaphor - he didn't resemble a chicken in any regard other than this one particular. But when he said He and the Father are One he was not speaking metaphor at all - either about Father, which I have explained above, or about their oneness.

In this matter of gender language for God, and the meaning of male and female, many people are being swept by something that they do not understand, and are taking up the mistaken values of feminism about authority/submission, so they are constantly tempted to envy the masculine side and thereby cast aside the beauty and wholeness of Jesus' way of abject obedience, saying it does not behoove women to be obedient, and don't use that word,

²⁷²⁸

“submission.” All of this is a serious concern to the Church as we enter the Third Millennium, it is of serious concern because it lies at the center of what it means to be a Catholic Christian, it is sifting those who have the heart for it from those who do not, and will eventually be seen to vindicate the Church’s assertion that the Holy Spirit is “lead(ing) her to perfect union with her Spouse.”.

32 Vatican II Dei Verbum, 1965 III:11

33 Ibid III:12

34 Vatican II Lumen Gentium, 1964, 1:4. (footnote refers to St. Irenaeus.)

16 A SPIRITUALITY ENMESHED WITH GENDER LANGUAGE

In these days when pressure increases to make Scripture wholly accessible to people with keen feministic sensibilities, whatever can be done with the following story? It is an important question because the gender meanings in this story are fundamental to the spirituality of the whole Bible, New Testament as well as Old.

There was a man living in Bible times who struggled through a heart-rending marriage to a prostitute, oddly enough a marriage God himself had proposed. Because of Hosea's faithfulness to what he heard the Lord say, his words were recorded and have come down to us in the Old Testament in the form of a book of prophecy called "Hosea." Here he relates that when the Lord first spoke to him it was in these enigmatic words

"Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits a great harlotry by forsaking the LORD" (Hos 1:2)

Why would the God of the universe ask a man who loved him to do such a thing? A woman like Gomer would be considered impure by his fellow Israelites. Thus what benefit could such a union be either to the prophet, or to his children, or to the people God was speaking to through Hosea? It is not as though Gomer had reformed her ways. Rather, she was still addicted to her way of life, and leaving her husband and their three children sold herself again into its slavery. Hosea sought her out from the pagan cult where she plied her trade, buying her back for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a letchech of barley. This time he spoke to her;

"You must dwell as mine for many days, you shall not play the harlot, or belong to another man, so will I also be to you." (Hos 3:2-4)

Hosea might pledge faithfulness to Gomer, but faithfulness was not anything that Gomer valued or care to live. God knew in bringing her into Hosea's life that the good man would not be able to inspire her to a new and holier life. He knew that she would stubbornly cling to her old friends at the cult site, that she would only half-heartedly care for their children and that her attitude to him, rather than gratitude, would be sullen resentment. Why then had God commanded this peculiar union?

The times of Hosea and Gomer were fraught with grave temptations for the people whom God had chosen to be his own. The Israelites more often than not succumbed. Through their descendant, Jesus, God meant these very people to bring blessing to the whole world (800 years in the future), yet at this point they were enamored by pagan gods and goddesses. The bottom-drawer religion of Baal and Ashtaroth was a simple one, easy to understand and compatible to the raw human nature. If a farmer wanted to be sure of adequate rains for a good harvest, he merely visited the local cult prostitute and Baal would fertilize his fields. No strict moral precepts, no demanding spiritual comprehension such as Yahweh required were demanded by Baal; it was a wholly animalistic transaction. Sexual union was involved, both in the actual "worship" and in the concept of a fruitful yield from the soil. But God cried out his anguish that the people chosen to be "holy as God is holy," those wedded to him in the intense promises of Covenant, forgot him, ignored his love and went after false gods.

While his own people praised the gold-headed god Baal and his mistress Ashtaroth for their provision, all the bounty actually came from the hand of Yahweh who was ignored.

"And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold which they used for Baal." (Hos 2:8)

How would God express to Israel the depths of his anguish at their betrayal? He would ask that faithful man Hosea, the one who heeded the covenant and obeyed his Word, to be the walking witness of his own intense feelings. Yahweh was Israel's husband; he recalled the days when he had wooed her as a bride during forty years in the wilderness. He had taught her from the first that "Covenant" was marriage, that he was her Provider, Lover, and Husband. He would again bring her to the desert wilderness "and speak tenderly to her." But he must catch her attention.

The people of Israel were used to sexual imagery in thinking of God. Their common way of expressing "knowing" was a sexual term, "yada." Israelites weren't conversant with abstract

concepts; therefore, in the most concrete of analogies “knowing” to them meant sexual intercourse. The intimate, whole person experience of God, opening to him, allowing him in, was how to “know” him, not merely by exercising the brain. This “yada” knowledge of God was subtle, spiritual, and required differentiation from the Baal imitation with its perverted sexual activity. The demands of the Eternal God upon the people forced them to stretch spiritually in order to comprehend things too wonderful for them. The Baals, on the other hand, encouraged retrogression to the lowest common denominator of human capability.

Baal had a consort in Baal-heaven, and his relations with Ashtaroth were aped in false worship in the temples of Baal. True, a man transcended himself in the sex act, and in union with Baal’s female priestesses Baal would be encouraged to bring forth from the earth the oil, the wine and the grain.

The only true God, however, had no heavenly consort. Instead, he founded the family of Abraham. He promised him and his descendants that they would be his people and he would be their God. Their knowledge of him in this intimate union would be “yada.” His intimate love was meant for them alone and not for any heavenly goddess.

The exercise of sexual intimacy of man and woman in Israel was then, surrounded with a “hedge of thorn.” They will be prohibited from adultery or from union with prostitutes because their sexual union was on the same order as the holiest of all relationship, the union of God and his people. The Old Testament poetry of Song of Solomon inspired many of the saints to extend that understanding to mean the union of God and the individual soul. Sexual purity or fidelity to a marriage partner was in a most important sense linked to a man or woman’s relationship to God. If they were not faithful to the marriage partner to whom they had vowed lifetime fidelity, there was not only serious betrayal of their promises to God, but serious doubt of their desire to be eternally his, to be one with him.

Adultery and idolatry had a spiritual affinity that made them inseparable sins. Perhaps, when we abuse and transgress our sexuality, it is this tremendous truth deeply embedded in our unconscious mind that activates the most painful guilt of all guilts. It is a guilt meant to propel us to repentance, forgiveness, and then fidelity - where all our happiness lies.

Such repentance and guilt God meant Hosea to stimulate in the Israelites. Therefore, he was to marry Gomer, name their children with words that would remind Israel of her infidelity to God, and mourn Gomer’s transgressions of his faithful love. Thus, in real human flesh and

blood, a drama would be enacted that would demonstrate to Israel in a small degree how God's heart was torn by her rejection. Hopefully they would be motivated to return to his love - their happiness.

“And in that day, says the LORD, she will call me, ‘My husband,’... For I will removed the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. . . And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know (yada) the LORD.” (Hos 2:18-21)

When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the expected bridegroom and when Jesus referred to himself as Bridegroom, the meaning was not lost on the Israelites who heard these words. It was a portentous claim with deep roots in the prophecies of Hosea among others of the prophets. To sweep away the use of the masculine - Husband, Father, Bridegroom - for God, as the inspired writing of the Bible uses it, is to sweep away an essential teaching about God and humankind's relationship, which must, in human terms, be understood as bridegroom to bride, or as masculine to feminine. All souls, whether male or female, are thus regarded in Scripture to be “the beloved” of God who is a Tremendous Lover.

17 FRUITFULNESS

I have just come back from a few days visit to our daughter and son-in-law who farm in southwestern Minnesota. Jack's magic beans must have been crossbred into the seed they shoveled out of their storage bins and seed bags this spring. Everywhere in this bumper year the fruits of the earth engulf the land in floods of amber and green. The corn is as high as a giraffe's eye and the soybeans curl their tendrils nearly to your chin. One field of flawless beans, a full quarter section that ripples in the wind and glistens in the sun, is bounded by aptly named Genesis Road.

The garden and the orchard have gone wild with fecundity. Perfectly good windfalls are thrown over the fence to the cows. Cucumbers in shiny dark skins tumble out of bushel baskets, while several shades of golden-yellow mark as many kinds of squash. Potatoes push up out of the black soil, a thousand dirty giant toes; and broccoli, stiffly holding up blue-green monster heads, march down rows in regiments. The abundance is overwhelming. The zucchini have already passed the super-proliferation stage - picking can't keep up with them and they are growing the size of boats. In the kitchen turned processing center, melons splitting their skins with moist orange flesh vie for your appetite in competition with gigantic pans of steaming pink applesauce whose fragrance alone guarantees a winner. What madness is this on the part of God? Billowing, burgeoning, inundating, surging over us with fruits of every conceivable kind. There is five times as much as can be eaten - tomatoes, corn, beans, beets like softballs and cabbages too heavy to carry unless they are sworded in half right off the stem. The kitchen steams like a factory sweat shop while fruits and vegetables are trucked in one door and neatly contained in

bottles, jars, plastic bags and paper boxes, are trundled out the other. Freezers are stuffed and fruit-cellars boast sagging shelves lined three deep with shining jars of multicolored produce.

As for the animals, a gangly white and black four -legged baby will suck your hand eagerly at each calf hutch, and next month's occupant is already in sight in the swollen sides of dry cows who patiently wait their freshening in the far meadow. The steers on the feedlot suction up their silage cheek by jowl, shoving massive shoulders through to stand and stare, while you stare back pondering the pounds of hamburger, the rump roasts and T bone steaks. Meanwhile the milk truck backs in to the bulk-tank carrying away milk measured in tons - the last couple day's production.

These are some of the fruits of the tar-black soil of southwestern Minnesota, topsoil they tell me is three feet deep in places. And when you add to this picture, the abundance of the unnumbered other very different places and their strange and wondrous contributions from this earth's fertility - date palms waving along the Jordan valley, pineapples by the mile in Hawaii, carefully tended tea bushes in the highlands of China, burdened vineyards flowing over the hills in France, the oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes, kumquats, mangoes, kiwi, bananas - you can only cry with the psalmist, "oh, the copious fruits of the earth!" "Thou crownest the years with thy bounty; the tracks of thy chariot drip with fatness. The pastures of the wilderness drip, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy." What madness is this on the part of God? Billowing, burgeoning, inundating, surging over us with fruits of every conceivable kind. There is five times as much as can be eaten - tomatoes, corn, beans, beets like softball and cabbages too heavy to carry unless they are sworded in half right off the stem. The kitchen steams like a factory sweat shop while fruits and vegetables are trucked in one door and neatly contained in bottles, jars, plastic bags and paper boxes, are trundled out the other. Freezers are stuffed and fruitcellars boast sagging shelves lined three deep with shining jars of multicolored produce.

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Thus it is with God. Crowning all his attributes is fruitfulness. Yes, crowning his love is his fruitfulness. For fruition is the result of love. God's love is not intangible. God's love is manifested in a bounty of blessings that we hear, see, touch, smell and taste. His love makes things. It makes things which include ourselves. No airy, fairy love is God's. His love is as practical as the next mouthful of food you eat and as mundane as the blade of grass which together with its kindred zillions covers the earth with the most incomparable of blankets. He has filled every crack and cranny of the earth with love, each small carnation pink that lives in a granite rock in New Hampshire speaks God's love language, as does every gnarled spruce demanding and receiving life above the timberline, and every blind white worm in the deepest trenches of the Pacific Ocean.

Love is not an end in itself. God's love produces. The principles of the creativity of love have been made a part of that creature Man, male or female, who is made in the image of God. We are made to be fruitful, to reproduce ourselves biologically; but more than that, to imitate the fruitfulness of the Father God in following his design for creation. The way of fruitfulness is explicit in sexuality. Yes, sexuality images Godhead. As St. Paul said about male and female in marriage, "This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church,..."

It is part of our heritage as creatures made in God's image to be fruitful. However, biological bearing of children is not by itself the point. As Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon agree, virtue is the ultimate fruit. "The prolific brood of the ungodly will be of no use." "Blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, . . . she will have fruit when God examines souls.

Biological progeny are worthy and primary in the plan of God and in the development of the human person, yet it is the fruits of the Spirit that are the criteria of those who are God's own. How are such fruits produced? Not by mere human effort. As Evelyn Underhill, English mystic writes; "So the reality, the living quality of our prayer, our communion with God, can best be tested by the gradual growth in us of these fruits of Divine Love;. . . They are real fruits and therefore they grow by their inherent vitality, at their own pace, hardly observed till they are ripe. They are not something we can model with deliberate effort in spiritual plasticine. Perhaps you think you have only produced a few small green apples - wait patiently till the sunshine of God brings them to maturity."

Being fruitful for God requires elements in our faith life as specific as deep soil, bountiful water, good seed, protection from pests and weeds, and long summer sun. Fruits do not happen on trees that are not meant to bear fruit, nor do sandy wastes produce rich produce. Some fruit takes more time to ripen than others. There are spiritual principles which must be heeded in order for the Christian life to show the evidence of the fertilizing of the Spirit of God. These principles are found by prayer and meditating on the Scriptures.

What does this world most need? Isn't it this fruit in lives?

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law."

It is not *works*, even the benevolent works of human beings for each other. Rather it is the fruits of the Christian life. These are available by the same kind of law at work in the gardens of Minnesota - simply by opening to the Holy Spirit, allowing His seed to drop into tended soil, and joyfully accepting the consequences.

18 THE DRY WOOD: FEMINISM, HOSEA, AND JESUS

Writing this I am very conscious that today is St. Catherine of Sienna's feast day. Recalling some of the things Catherine said extolling submission to authority as the Will of God makes me wonder if our priest understands feminism fully. He reminded us at mass this morning that Catherine was a feminist long before there were such. Her indomitable spirit could not be contained by any cultural strictures of family or Church, he said. Catherine would do what she would do!

And then we have the American Bishop's drafts of the Pastoral on Woman opening up a round of input. Here, responding to the woman's movement we see bishops acceding to a whole list of complaints, even as, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Pope in Avignon, who was supposed to be in Rome, finally got back there after confrontation by Catherin. Or are the situations really parallel considering Catherine's deep respect for and obedience to Godly authority?

A third news item in current Catholic periodicals is the publication and release of the new New American translation of the Bible. Here in a modest way we have our first inclusive language edition of the scriptures for the Church with the promise of more to follow.

In a curious adjunct to these: St. Catherine's feast day, the release of the Pastoral 'Partners in the Mystery of Redemption' draft, and the inclusive language New American Bible publication, I have been working with the writings of a dear old Old Testament friend of mine, the eighth century B.C. prophet, Hosea. I suppose that at his name the eyes of the gender-sensitive glaze, their mental tape races into Fast Forward, anything to get out of the "cultural

milieu” that had no comprehension of the importance of the female half of mankind - make that “humankind (though “man’ can hardly be expunged from any word that describes humanity).

The Old Testament, no matter the century, has been called hopelessly misogynistic more than a few times by the feminist theologians and scripture scholars. Hosea with his hang-ups about Israel being a harlot to her “husband” Yahweh, is certainly one with the worst credentials when it comes to “sexism.” All this “he” and “she” dichotomy with “He” irrevocably the pronoun for God may resist unisex indefinitely. Some have actually given up, believing that the best thing to do with Hosea and his ilk is to relegate their writings to the Scripture Cultural Museum.

Revamping Hosea, these critics realize, would really not settle any problems, for Hosea claims vigorously that his view of the world (for him a very small country named Israel) is actually God’s view of the world no matter how big it eventually is found to be. The Church in accepting his prophecy in the Hebrew Bible as inspired writing, has made a final fiat to Hosea’s claim - he was presenting God’s view of the world. As one would expect, therefore, the same perspective shows up in all the major and minor prophets, beginning with the great revelation of God’s plan in the first three chapters of Genesis.

Professor Mary Ann Tolbert (faculty of Vanderbilt University Divinity School) writes that one of the more radical evaluations of Biblical material among feminists is that “the Bible is permeated with the language, symbols and ideals of female inferiority and sub-humanity. Whatever the historical reality, “the biblical authors, influenced by political and cultural tendencies, composed thoroughly patriarchal documents.”

A second feminist exposition of the Old Testament, the prophetic-liberation view, is not so radical and looks beyond the words themselves. Women are oppressed by the stigma of obedience and submission to patriarchy, they assert. The fact of God’s continual siding with the oppressed gives these feminists a hope for retaining the Old Testament. However, there is a further difficulty that Dr. Tolbert poses, “The prophetic-liberation exposition must overlook the fact that the prophets never argued for the liberation of women, and indeed, within the prophetic material itself one finds some of the most misogynistic passages in the Bible.” It’s bad news for the Old Testament (whose writers, evidently, didn’t think women were oppressed) having a life among the feminists.

Though it is never that of dominator and dominated, but something divinely instituted and wholly spiritually acute, it is certainly true that there is a reiterated, integrated understanding of the meaning of male and female throughout the Old Testament. This, even though history relentlessly pushes the Hebrews through many cultural situations, from an original Sumerian culture, through nineteen hundred years of political and cultural changes to ultimately a Greek one. Hosea assumes that consistent, bedrock, spiritual meaning of male and female totally. He would be most surprised to learn that he is considered to be among the prime woman haters, for he was a relentless lover; he would be amazed that he is blamed for holding women as mere accoutrements, when, akin to Jesus' sacrifice for his Beloved, he was called to sacrifice himself for one who was neglectful, unfaithful, and ungrateful.

The story is well-known to us. "Go take a wife of harlotry," commands God. And obediently Hosea does so. He is brokenhearted with her lapses, but continues to forgive and take her back - a walking parable of God's anguish over His own faithless people. To the children born of this woman, Hosea gives names to embody the message of God's unhappiness with God's own spouse, Israel: "Jezreel," calling attention to the bloodbath on the plain of Jezreel perpetrated by the kingly house of Jehu, and the coming retribution of Assyria on the same locale; "Not-pitied," proclaiming God's refusal to overlook His beloved's chronic sin; and "Not-my-People," declaring the covenant (a solemn marriage contract) so devastatingly broken by spouse, Israel, as to cause her Husband to relinquish her to her adulterous lovers, the Baals. Sexuality's inherent meaning is relied on to carry the full impact of God's intended relationship with His People.

Baal and his bloodthirsty consort, Astarte (Ashtaroth, Tanit are her other names) headed up one of the pre-revelation fertility cults so common among the pagan peoples of the world. These people, too, used the dynamism and creative power of sexuality to describe their god, Baal's, rule. His sperm came as rain and uniting with the earth brought forth the bountiful harvest. The best way of ensuring this fecundating action was to engage one of the cult prostitutes. It was a simple, straightforward religion which demanded no high moral laws, none of this strain of heightened spiritual consciousness, or the grasp of eternal principles that Yahweh called forth from his covenanted 'wife'. The feminine stance rooted existentially in woman alone, but here indicating both sexes - mankind as "wife" is so greatly esteemed by God that He

shares with “her” his all, and expects from her the full measure of her created capability for truth and good. Baal had no such idea in his metallic gold-plated head.

Astarte for her part demanded the fruit of man and woman’s bodies as payment for her part in the favors bestowed. The Phoenicians (seafaring Canaanites whose religion permeated the Promised Land) transported the Baal/ Astarte religion over the whole Mediterranean. The archaeological dig at Carthage has graphically put before our horrified eyes the payments made to Tanit’s fire - bones of uncounted babies buried in jars. An inscription on a small tombstone reads, “To our Lady Tanit, and Our Lord Baal Nimmon, that which was vowed.” What was vowed? A baby. Symbols of Tanit and Baal complete the marker set up to fulfill a screaming sacrifice of a babe-in- arms, often thrown into the belly furnace of an idol.

One of the leaders in the feminist spirituality movement, a Jewish witch who teaches in a Catholic college in California, and is part of Fr. Matthew Fox’s Creationism entourage, Starhawk, has done her share of rewriting history to capture “the lost values” of this pre-Judaic feminine. In her new book *Truth or Dare* (Harper and Row) she has contrasted these fertility cults with what she and other feminists regard as the crass dominance of patriarchy’s takeover in Judaism. Under a headline “Witch captures the spirit of peace and liberation” her reviewer states, ‘The first thing she wants people to understand is that the Old Religion has nothing to do with evil; it is a pre-Christian, tribal religion of Europe, rooted in a gentler time when worshiping the goddess meant seeing as sacred the earth and the fertility of all things on it.’ Such a gentle goddess whom feminists have conveniently defanged, Hosea, will have none of - Baal and Astarte are flagrantly false gods, their combined influence on God’s chosen, devastating. Worshipping them, God’s Beloved Israel, is prostituting herself. Idolatry, adultery; the two are the same thing. It is Yahweh, her real lover, who bestows bounty on Israel, the fruitfulness of field, of flock, of human family, not Baal. God’s is the role of providing husband to covenanted spouse. He is not like Baal pictured as having intercourse with the earth; He has intercourse with his faithful Israel whom he means to bring into union with himself as an equal. Oh, I know, this seems an impossible statement until we gain the sense of Jesus and the New Testament - “We shall be like Him, as He is.’

God may have chosen the Hebrews precisely for the concreteness of their verbal expression which demanded nothing less than reality. Quite beyond our limp language for relationship, the Hebrew prophet always declared that knowledge of God was completely

analogous to man's *knowing* woman - the verb for sexual intercourse, *yada*, alone sufficed. No vague intangibles for the Hebrew. For them knowledge may not lie in the cranium, it must be a total experience, an undeniable contact with the living God. Theophany! Without such knowing - if the bond of intimate, experienced love which held them together since Sinai was forgotten, ignored, or worse, despised - fruitfulness would simply cease.

Listen to the warnings of Hosea as he sees through God's eyes what idolatry/adultery was doing to God's beloved Ephraim (his fond name for Israel). Because of God's law which calls for exclusive union with his people, spiritual promiscuity and unfaithfulness on their part inevitably bring on crippling of even the physical body's ability to reproduce itself. Perhaps only in the 1980's can we appreciate the truth of this so well with sexual diseases, contraceptive damage, and abortion's sterilizing effects, as well as purposeful delay in childbearing drying up fertility.

Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird - no
 birth, no pregnancy, no conception!
 Even if they bring up children
 I will bereave them till none is left.
 Woe to them when I depart from them.

Give them, O Lord - what wilt thou give? Give
 them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts

Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they
 shall bear no fruit. Hosea 9:1 3ff RSV

The horrible end of all of this, Hosea cries, will witness the abominable calf which is worshipped in Yahweh's stead at Bethel carried off to Assyria; Israel's king will perish; and disaster is so inevitable that people will call out to the mountains, "Cover us," and to the hills, "Fall upon us." (10 :7f)

The persistency of inspired texts in the Old Testament to claim sexuality as wholly analogous to the culmination of Salvation History in redeemed mankind's Re-Union with God - mankind, man and woman alike, being wholly feminine, and God wholly masculine, is an

irreparable offense to those committed to neutering Scripture. Jesus, in the matter, has therefore become an object of ideological tug-of-war to be sure he is perceived as being on the feminist, non-sexist side of the debate.

He needn't have been a *he* - just as well *she*, they say. Nevertheless, they continue, Jesus was active in elevating woman from her devalued state and in liberating her from her bondage. In these regards he went totally against the Judaic tradition which both '*debased and enslaved*' her - a presumption about Jewish attitudes toward woman constantly claimed but impossible to prove. However, as a man bound by his culture, the feminist goes on to declare, he also was hampered in doing as much as needed to be done, for instance, he could not have a woman as one of his apostles.

Did Jesus really begin to overthrow the sexism of his Jewish tradition, hopefully so that it would continue till woman and her role were indistinguishable from man and his? Were the Old Testament prophets such victims of their patriarchal bias, regardless of the Holy Spirit, that they twisted God's words around to fit their own warped sensibilities about such things? And did Jesus in any way reverse them?

Jesus and Hosea share the same name, Jesus being the Greek form of the Hebrew name. Jesus knew Hosea's prophecy like the back of his hand. It is safe to say that he was preoccupied with it during the very last hours of his life. Far from disagreeing with Hosea's total commitment to the function of male and female as analogous to the relationship of God and mankind, Jesus underlines that ultimate meaning and points mysteriously to woman as being the key to either dissolution of salvation history or its consummation in bringing redeemed mankind into union with God. He says that woman's disgust with fruitfulness will actually be a sign of the end time. Luke (23:27f) dramatically tells us the story of this last discourse of Jesus on the Via Dolorosa:

And there followed him a great multitude of the people,
and of women who bewailed and lamented him, But Jesus
turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep
for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For
behold the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed
are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the
breasts that never gave suck!' And then they will begin to
say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover

us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Relieved of the grinding weight of the cross by the young shoulders of the Cyrenian, Jesus is able to catch his breath, straighten his battered body and, in almost the very words of Hosea, speak prophetically to the women who passionately mourned him. In his mind he was equating the words of that prophecy given nearly seven hundred years earlier with what was happening at that moment, and he knew it was part of a continuum whose end was “a day that was coming.”

Like the experience and vision of Hosea, the new Hosea, Jesus the Bridegroom, was experiencing abject rejection by the Bride. The People of Israel would have nothing to do with the one who had espoused them to Himself as Husband to Wife. When he came to them, they “received him not” and were in the process of ridding themselves of his obnoxious presence. Very bad. Yet said Jesus, these rebellious times were not as rebellious as a time to come. The fire of rebellion was now in the green wood, but at the end of the centuries the wood would be dry. That time would be recognized because the common denominator of receptivity, of acceptance, of obedience and submission, the monad of the feminine, the woman (the Bride), would rebel against the very functioning of her body. All Hosea had declared to be the result of rebelliousness would be seen in her - she would elevate barrenness and abhor fruitfulness. The very physical attitude of conception would be repulsive to her along with the agency of the one who impregnated - the despised male.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep! (Not so much for me, but...)

Weep for your children who are to come!”

How could a Hebrew woman comprehend this prophecy? To her it was unintelligible that a woman would ever choose to be barren. Barrenness was considered a curse, the result of some sin toward Yahweh, of some deserved anger on his part - just as Hosea saw it. Could things ever get so bad as to have nations abort millions of the fruit of man, woman .. .and God’s union? Unthinkable! Could times ever bring woman to thwart her own fruitfulness with contraception? Would a woman ever resent the initiative of the male? That would be dry wood indeed! Fire has

ignited the dry wood! Mountains, fall on us! Hills cover us! The reversal of all God's truth is burning up the earth!

What hope can there be for us who live in the time of the dry wood?

Jesus provided that hope on the cross. Luke, who recorded the above discourse from witnesses, didn't know the incident, but John who was there at the cross records the essential complement to these dire words on the Via Dolorosa (John 19:26f)

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home'

The words which follow are of utmost importance, especially in the Greek which has been slightly, but importantly changed in English to slant the reading in a particular way, and which in the original may well bear out the eschatological import of this last act. The literal Greek is:

After this knowing - Jesus that now all things have been finished, that might be fulfilled the scripture, says: I thirst.

The Woman! The woman who in her pure being embodies ultimate fruitfulness because of her union with God, who within herself is the core of the feminine principle applied by Hosea to his prophetic insights, the true Spouse of the one True God who is forever true to Him, who never deviates from loving wholly her Husband and Him alone, and with whom He gives his very self, it is she who is given to the beloved disciple of Jesus, as mother to son. He is given to her as son to mother. In this final act the Church has blessedly recognized a significance that bears on all who love Jesus and follow as disciples - *his mother is theirs*. They are only to take her as their own mother into their own homes, which can surely mean nothing less than "into their inmost being."

When this mystical acceptance (it must be deeply real) takes place in the believers heart, when the Blessed Mother enters to abide, welcomed as one's own, then the Woman through her

Son has completed the believer. Righted femininity within and without finally means that Jesus' work is finished and all scripture is fulfilled - the Bride is ready "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Come Lord Jesus! This time your Bride will lovingly receive you!

The meaning of sexuality, male and female is ultimately so profound how can Scripture be touched, how can eucharistic words of inspired Tradition be changed by those whose culture, a culture of dry wood ready for the consuming flame, demands acquiescence to a barren ideology?

19 JULIANA OF NORWICH AND THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

With the American Bishops pulling out an inclusive language lectionary this year, the focus of the debate has relocated to whether the Godhead Himself can be de-sexed or uni-sexed in our theological thinking. A medieval anchoress and mystic whose writings, notably *The Revelations of Divine Love* are gaining attention because she seems to advocate the motherhood of God, Julian (or Juliana) of Norwich is more and more frequently quoted on the subject.

It is usual when arguments like this develop that a great deal of misquoting or misunderstanding of positions take place, and this is certainly true of Julian's ideas about the motherhood of God. An essayist, John Swanson OJN, has recently pointed out the fact that Julian while drawing out the mothering characteristics of Jesus never gave him other than the masculine pronoun, "Jesus, Mother, he." Yet, reading a play recently on Julian he reports, "I was puzzled at first as to what made me so uneasy. Then it became clear: the Julian character in the play uses feminine pronouns to refer to Christ, while Mother Julian, of course, does nothing of the kind. For her, it is always, *He* is our Mother."

In order to understand Julian's concepts we need to be able to distinguish carefully between the Trinity *ad intra* (1) and *ad extra* (2), two bold terms which mean 1, looking at the Trinity as the Persons interrelate from within, and 2, looking at the Trinity as we do from the other pole, as creatures, from outside. If this is not done a great confusion develops which has Julian supporting non-gender language, or interchangeable gender terms for God which she actually does not support. Placing her mystic revelations within this theological frame, however, we have an orthodox but warmly relevant understanding of the masculine and feminine dimensions of the Second Person of the Trinity.

Whenever anyone attempts to write or speak about the Trinity it is common to begin with disclaimers. “Who are we? How dare we? Is it possible to use words?” All very true and right questions to ask of us who approach the Almighty God with our little constructions about this and that. And yet, Hosea, Isaiah and the other prophets of this Almighty God were assured themselves and assure us that He longs for us to know and love him. “To know” this is not to be analytical knowledge, of course, it is not to be a knowledge reserved to heavy thinkers, to the big theological guns, so to speak, no, it is to be a knowing that even the common man can have, an experience of God that leaves behind an inner “knowing.” The Bible itself is there for us so that we can come to a knowledge of God in all that will bring us to salvation.

It is this kind of knowing that I appeal to when we discuss the Trinity *ad intra*. Bear with this explanation and it will help us better understand ourselves, our relationship to each other and our relationship to God, even if it amounts to less than an astronomer gazing at the immensity of the heavens through an old fashioned telescope.

Ad intra, the three Persons of the Trinity are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The First Person is so-called because he is the generator of the Second and Third Persons. They are dependent on Him for their existence, yet they are not created - they have co-existence with Him; He cannot be thought of as ever being without their being there also.

In a real sense, the Second Person is positioned in a polar way to the First. On a continuum of Godhead, they face each other as oppositional by relations. The First Person initiates, the Second Person receives that initiation. The First Person creates through the Second Person.

Two opposites (though never opposed), their contraposition makes possible an ecstatic union which is far stronger in love than any monolithic (an idea of God as only one Person) God. It is the products of this love-union, ecstasy and creativity, that the good God will share with his creature, mankind, whom he will make to image himself. It is this imaging by male and female that makes it possible to look through our old telescope at the Trinity at all.

The union of love of these polar Persons is the Third Person who is “breathed” by the Father and the Son. Personified love, this Person is the unity of the universe, He holds together all things, and is given to man and woman as their unity when they are first created in the Garden.

Here God makes man in his image which is Triune. Man he creates in the image of the First Person, woman in the image of the Second Person, and unites them as Father and Son are

united by the Third Person, the Holy Spirit. In so doing, God has made himself a spouse, an opposite, mankind. He will unite mankind to Himself in the same way, by the self-giving of the Third Person, the Holy Spirit. Thus, Godhead, mankind, and the God/mankind union will all share in the unifying gifts of the Holy Spirit which is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Love.

The Arian heresy of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries forced this theology into being. Contrary doctrines about the degree of Christ's divinity caused a refinement and formulation about the equality but distinctiveness of the Persons of the Trinity. Though a Second Person, the Son was wholly equal to the Father - a distinction that the Arians could not make, believing as they did that second meant second best. Though more a receiver than an initiator the Son and the Spirit had all the attributes of the Father. Some of these attributes held commonly were, however, more to be said of one than of the others.

Today the same kinds of speculations that caused the Arian heresy are forcing the further refinements of the meaning of male and female. With the doctrine of the Trinity as the background, the meaning of masculine and feminine is made clear. God created mankind in his image says Genesis 1:26 if. Male and female created he him/them (the Hebrew pronoun can be read either way -wonderful because it fits either way). Man is to be seen either as a two in one - "him," or as two separate polar beings, male and female - "them." The male is the first person of this new unity, the female the second person. They are oppositional, one initiates, the other receives initiation. The woman is created from the man and is dependent on him, she has all the attributes of the man but some are more to be said of her than of him and vice versa. It sounds familiar.

To get back to the *ad intra* view of the Trinity, we can see that within the relationship of the Divine Persons there is an analogic relationship of masculine to feminine - an initiator and a receiver, one who creates, the other through whom all things are made. Can we call the Father, "he," and the Son, "she?" Definitely not! We stand outside of the Trinity, *ad extra*, and view them from afar, so to speak. To us, even though there is a feminine principle within the Trinity, *all the Persons are masculine*. The Godhead and all its Persons, is forever the initiator to our "feminine" receptivity. We can initiate nothing with the Godhead. We are the receivers, and it is merely through us that God brings other individuals into being. The very idea that the Son originates then, a feminine principle in the Trinity, the principle through which femaleness comes into being, and is still called "Son" tells us that to us all Persons of the Trinity are to be

referred to in masculine terms, this applies to the Holy Spirit as well. According to the meaning of masculine and feminine whose origins are in the Trinity Himself, Godhead is eternally masculine to us who are His creatures.

So we return to Julian and her revelation that the Son when he comes to earth in the incarnation as the man Jesus is approachable as Mother. First, as we have seen he is indeed the epitome of the feminine as the Second Person, but when he comes to earth among men as the obedient Sent One he images much more than the Second Person of the Trinity. He images the complete Godhead. Jesus is God. Therefore, he comes as a male. It must be, “*I am He*,” even as he said. As Julian writes, “Where Jesus appeareth, the blessed Trinity is understood.”

When Julian continues, “He is our Mother,” she is combining Jesus’ two aspects in the right way. Swanson points out that Julian does not say that Christ is like our mother, but rather that it is Christ whom our mothers are like. “It is not that Christ’s love is like a mother’s love; it is rather that the source and origin of mother- love is Christ. Our mothers love us with Christ’s love. To be a loving mother is to be Christ. . . The maternal and feminine is not something Christ imitates, it is something Christ originates.” This is true to the reality that the Son is in analogic, anthropomorphic language, the feminine Person of the Trinity.

Julian writes, “Christ in his mercy works within us, and we graciously co operate with him through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. This makes us Christ’s children.” It is upon this that Julian builds her concept of the Christ-Mother. He is the mother of all the living. He is our mother because he made us. It is in Him that we grow and develop. It is from His own self that we are nourished. Jesus is, therefore, our Mother. “Indeed, our Saviour himself is our Mother for we are for ever being born of him, and shall never be delivered.”

In a similar way, it is the Second Person of the Trinity to whom Wisdom literature refers, calling wisdom “she.” Jesus is the eternal word, the eternal word is the wisdom of God. Julian connects with this idea; “the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother.” Wisdom throughout the books of Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach is personified as “she”- this would be a correct pronoun for the ad intra relationship of Wisdom to the other Persons of the Trinity, yet not really correct for we creatures to refer to personified wisdom (The Son) as “she.” In the writings referred to sometimes the context does seem to be ad intra, others not, but there are also other incomplete ideas i.e. “the Lord creating wisdom.” In Trinitarian parlance it would need to read, “God the Father begets Wisdom.”

All in all, the light that Julian sheds on the matter of the Motherhood does not take us away from the irrevocable masculine designation of Godhead. In Julian's specialized sense, yes, Jesus can be seen and experienced as Mother, though it might be suggested here that he gave us his own mother so that difficult concept would not deceive us in other ways. It is extremely important that we keep the masculine designations for the Trinity, even as Julian foresaw, so that we remember who we are in relation to Him. We are developing into the Bride. Jesus came as the Bridegroom respective of the Trinity to whom we shall one day be wedded.

However well Julian senses the gender implications of Jesus as Mother, care must be taken with her "shewings" (revelations). "At our creation we are one'd with God," she muses. It sounds as though for her God's creation is so immersed in him it is part of him. This would be pantheistic unless Julian meant the union of opposites in the Holy Spirit. It doesn't quite sound like that, however. Swanson has actually written concerning her belief, "We are created and intended and meant to be part of the Holy Trinity." No Christian theology would support this contention - clearly an error.

Sometimes Julian is hazy about the distinction of Creator and creature, a distinction that cannot be revoked. Confusing ourselves with God is a devastating error, part of the reason that we must see ourselves forever feminine and Godhead forever masculine. Thoughtless promotion of the motherhood of God may be part of the age-old diabolical attempt to obliterate the meaning of sexuality as though it had no ultimate reference point in the Godhead. This leads to the corollary, ala Genesis 2 - mankind may just as well think of itself as God. Oh, dear!

The time of making fine distinctions about the meaning of sexuality is upon us. It is not difficult to be misled in a day which is witnessing a new doctrine in its agonized formation, the arguments being hammered out on the anvil of theological thought - a doctrine of mankind, defining the meaning of sexuality. Julian, pressing on with her understanding of Mother Jesus would have avoided any pantheistic confusion, and would have come to applaud us for our insistence that God has told us his name, and it is "Husband" (Is 54:5 and Hosea 3:16) and he has told us ours, and it is "Wife" (Is.54:6) or "Bride" (Rev. 21:9).

Lewisian Imagery Illustrates Theology:

20 THE SPACE TRILOGY AND THE CARDINAL

CS. Lewis speaking to Anglican clergy and youth leaders once said, “You must translate every bit of your theology into the vernacular. This is very troublesome and it means you can say very little in half an hour, but it is essential.”

His Eminence Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter, Archbishop of Toronto, may not get around to that for a while with his weighty Pastoral (Dec.’83) “Do This in Memory of Me.” But it is well worth doing because the Cardinal, a theologian of note, has begun the hard job of disentangling a well-rooted weed-tree from the landscape of Christian consciousness - the ideology that equates male and female. His tool is a theological grub-hoe, heavy, unglamorous, of very refined tough substance, polished and sharp, extremely well suited to its job. However, there are very few strong enough in mind, trained enough in mental musculature to wield it with any sense of direction or with much hope of effectiveness. We may all get into the uprooting activity only if we can find tools forged along the same lines as his which are, however, more suited to our varying strengths. In other words, we need a good interpreter. We need someone who can put this theology into the vernacular. With this help we can be effective, perhaps, in our personal efforts against this fast growing intruder which is the Cardinal’s concern.

Reenter C.S. Lewis. A master of the use of fantasy to provide imagery for the truths of the Christian faith, reading theology through Lewis is like drinking strong coffee through a couple of sugar cubes. The Cardinal theologizes convincingly that removal of sexual difference is a great threat to the covenantal realities. These covenantal realities lie at the heart of our Catholicism - the Eucharist, the Church, and the priesthood. Lewis threaded a similar theme

through his enormously successful science fiction trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*). Writing more than forty years earlier than the Pastoral, the trilogy may be used to depict at least some (perhaps fifteen minutes worth) of the Archbishop's intense theological insights that work off of the sexual analogue.

“(Confrontation with) the male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine to it.” So says Ransom, the agent of God's will, to the heroine, Jane, in the last book of the trilogy. Jane is an independent, intelligent, and thoroughly liberated young woman who is also an unhappy wife. The working out of her marriage relationship is secondary and only the result of what to Lewis is more important, Jane's coming to grips with her sexuality and its meaning. That meaning begins with her as a woman and ends with each individual woman as epitome of the relationship of all mankind to God. The Cardinal in presenting “the authentic Catholic consciousness” as existing “in a covenanted and maritally constructed world, assumes the same continuum, stating,. “the symbolic importance of sexuality is inescapable.”

Jane must work the value of the feminine, especially the submission it requires, into the nitty-gritty of her life. This value is for herself, but it is also for all Christendom. Though the resolution of her anti-feminine bias is only counterpoint to the story, it is intrinsic to the major theme, the rebellion of mankind toward God. Woman, no matter how she hates the role, as Jane does, has been the clear sign of that rebellion ever since mankind began to reflect on its sad state. Woman may despise the implications of this not realizing that it is only because she is also the clearest statement of what God loves most in his creation that the corollary must follow. If she allows her nature to be whole and holy she epitomizes love, if she does not she epitomizes the misery of love lost.

Lewis paints a lurid picture as the rebellion of mankind reaches its climax. A poisonous scientism attempts the final replacement of God. In the wildest imagery of all his writings Lewis stages Armageddon. Angelic forces confront demonic ones at the furthest end of the time of rebellion.

What *That Hideous Strength* thus ends, the second book of the trilogy, *Perelandra* begins. Here Lewis deals with the Satanic anti-Word which through the character, Weston, works to undo and destroy the truth of woman in a new unspoiled creation. This creation pictures

nicely what the Cardinal calls, “the radical goodness of the created order” – “The Good Creation.” This Creation is other than God. It is made by him from nothing, and is bonded to him by covenantal love - a marriage.

In both Lewis and Cardinal Carter the anti-Word’s purpose is to destroy this marriage. While Lewis presents to our imaginations the incredible beauty of unfallen creation on a mythical distant planet and the attempts of the enemy of God to undo it, the Cardinal deals with the effect of that same anti-Word on earth. What begins as a beautiful free unity is attacked - an attack which leads to rejection of the covenant of union. Divorce is wreaked upon God and his Beloved. “When infidelity to the covenant enters human history, as it does from the beginning we have sin.” “Original Sin and the Fall are inseparable from Christianity.”

The Eucharist is the reestablishment of that covenantal, marital union - the divorce annulled. The law that decreed it is paid off in the blood of Christ. Says Carter, that Eucharist is the re-remembering of the Lover and the Beloved, God and His People. This reunion is one link of an unbreakable three link chain. On one side it is soldered into the basic holy man/holy woman relationship, and on the other welded to the origin of that relationship - the Persons of the Holy Trinity. These then, are three covenantal relationships inseparably interconnected. First, the Father and the Son united in the Holy Spirit. Second, the holy man and woman united in the Holy Spirit, and third, God and His People united in the Holy Spirit. Mankind, man and woman, are created in the image of, not a monadical, undifferentiated God, but Triune, differentiated God.

Perelandra pictures for us the beginning attempts of the same anti-Word to sever this delicate and intricate multi-leveled unity. It begins where it must begin, with an attack against the epitome of loving obedience, woman. On earth these same efforts have been successful.

Happily for the unspoiled planet of *Perelandra*, the bearer of the diabolical anti- Word that undid the perfection of earth fails against the new woman of *Perelandra*. The inspired efforts of the servant of God, Ransom, come between the innocent first mother of the new creation and the evil Weston. Ransom aids her to maintain integrity of her original wholeness and holiness because he knows the arguments of anti-Word and the results of woman’s belief in them on earth. These arguments are especially insidious by their clever closeness to the truth, and Weston hammers them against the integral woman. The same arguments circulating in the Church today have made necessary this Cardinal’s Pastoral Letter.

First, the anti-Word insists that to be mature the woman must disobey. (Remember the woman is the key to undoing the whole marital chain of covenant relationships, like it or not). Obedience, says Weston, is both a result of immaturity and an instrument which causes immaturity. God's hope for the woman, says this voice, is that she grow up and dramatically break the obedient, dependent stance toward Him.

Second, the anti-Word says that men will honor and love the woman more if she no longer looks to him for her sense of meaning and direction. (Ultimately in the multi-layered interrelationships that rest on the meaning of sexuality, that attack is against Christ - the body will do better without the Head) —Third, this route of disobedience takes great courage, she will be misunderstood, but this valiant way will make sure that her life will not be wasted (childbearing alone is a waste of her talents). The “magnanimity, the pathos, the tragedy, and the originality” of this lonely track Weston extols. While saying that the man, her husband, will not like her to take this route, he insists that the man must be forced to be free. This man is “pitifully childish, complacently arrogant, timid, meticulous, unoriginating, sluggish and ox-like, rooted to the earth in (his) indolence, prepared to try nothing, to risk nothing, to make no exertion, and capable of being raised into full life only by the unthanked and rebellious virtue of (his) female.”

The difficulty that Ransom faces in countering these lies is that there is some truth mixed in the argument. Especially that “an obedience, freer and more reasoned and more conscious is necessary for this innocent woman.” Yet the image conjured up of a “tall slender form, unbowed though the world's weight rests upon its shoulders, stepping fearlessly and friendless into the dark to do for others what those others forbade it to do, yet needed to be done” is the very carrier of death to Perelandra, a still immortal world.

These very ideas stated twenty years before *The Feminine Mystique* and ten years before *The Second Sex* are now thoroughly embraced by feminism. For Lewis they were the dark carriers of ruination of the relationship of God and mankind. The same arguments are insinuated by the same diabolical mind into the marital relationship of Christ and his Church, insinuations which would have been rebuffed by earlier generations but which are courted by our own.

Writes Cardinal Carter, ‘The qualitative differentiation of man and woman is sacramental and liturgical. It is integral to the Good Creation, to the Covenant, to the worship by which the Church is constituted as the Body, the Bride of Christ. . . . To invoke Paul's letter to the Galatians to contradict this position is not valid.’ Here he refers to Galatians 3:27, much quoted almost to

the exclusion of anything else Biblical on the sexes. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female...” The Cardinal continues, ‘Paul obviously did not intend to invoke identity in place of equality. Had he done so marriage itself could not survive as a sacrament.’

Ransom discusses with Jane the problem of male/female equality, “Ah, equality. We must talk of that some other time. Yes, we must all be guarded by equal rights from one another’s greed, because we are fallen. Just as we must all wear clothes for the same reason. But the naked body should be there underneath the clothes, ripening for the day when we shall need them no longer. Equality is not the deepest thing, you know.’

(Jane) ‘I always thought that was just what it was. I thought it was in their souls that people were equal.’

‘You were mistaken,’ said he gravely, ‘that is the last place where they are equal. Equality before the law, equality in incomes - that is very well. Equality guards life, it doesn’t make it. It is a medicine, not a food. You might as well try to warm yourself with a blue-book.’

“But surely in marriage. . .”

“Worse and worse,” said the director, “Courtship knows nothing of it; nor does fruition .. . No one has ever told you that obedience - humility - is an erotic necessity. You are putting equality just where it ought not to be.”

From a false idea of equality never intended by St. Paul, the Cardinal continues, More radically still, “the Eucharist is transformed in the service of this kind of advocacy, for the marital structure of the Church as the Bride of Christ, the Body whose sacrifice is qualitatively distinct from that of her Head is intelligible only upon the presupposition that masculinity and femininity are thus distinct.”

Says Lewis of Jane, “she had been conceiving this world as ‘spiritual’ in the negative sense as some neutral, or democratic, vacuum where differences disappeared, where sex and sense were not transcended but simply taken away. Now the suspicion dawned on her that there might be differences, contrasts all the way up, richer, sharper, even fiercer, at every rung of the ascent. How if this invasion of her own being in marriage from which she had recoiled, often in the very teeth of instinct, were not, as she had supposed, merely a relic of animal life or patriarchal barbarism but rather the lowest, the first, and the earliest form of some shocking

contact with reality which would have to be repeated - but in larger and more disturbing modes - on the highest levels of all.”

Cardinal Carter is presenting this shocking level of that reality which is the highest known on earth - God’s union with us in the Eucharist. If the distinctions are blurred, the very structure of Eucharistic worship, “is no longer marital and covenantal, no longer the union of two sacrifices in one flesh” . . . instead it becomes “the unstable metaphor. . . of a community whose secular and religious structures are indistinct from the leadership of any other. . . social grouping.”

The anti-Word which tempts the holy woman in *Perelandra* and fails, is finally rejected by Jane in *That Hideous Strength*. She, in her final acquiescence to the truth of God (which coincides with the cosmic victory of angelic forces) gives illustration to the Cardinal’s teaching. Jane comes slowly to this acceptance of God that includes a new reasoning about herself as His female creature. Though he does not say so, it is upon such a personal acceptance in each woman that the Cardinal’s powerful theology comes to rest with all its implications for the Church, the priesthood, for Eucharistic union.

“Supposing,” says Jane, “one were a thing after all - a thing designed and invented by Someone Else and valued for qualities quite different from what one had decided to regard as one’s true self. Supposing all those people who, from the bachelor uncles down to Mark and Mother Dimble, had infuriatingly found her sweet and fresh when she wanted them to find her also interesting and important, had all along been simply right and perceived the sort of thing she was? Supposing (God) on this subject agreed with them and not with her?”

As Jane matured in spiritual understanding she accepted a role, actually an identity, which made her the sign, despite herself, of a whole and holy humanity as God’s spouse. That humanity presents itself to God as a free, self-giving, happy partner in a two-in-one-flesh union. This is the highest confrontation of masculine and feminine of all - reunion with God which is the Eucharist.

Archbishop Cardinal Carter’s intensely theological pastoral meets the questions of the intellect on the one hand and Lewis’ imagination picturing it for us may enlist the cooperation of the will on the other. With the ideas thus reasonable and attractive in this matter of the covenantal meaning of sexuality the choice is more clearly up to us.

21 HESTER OBSERVES HILARY CLINTON AND NANCY REAGAN

A couple of oddments spilling from my glutted tile have me wondering. First, an old folder on politics coughed up a news picture from a year or so ago of Hillary Clinton with her husband in an audience with the Holy Father. There she stood, head veiled, a little behind her husband, seemingly entranced by the world's spiritual leader. And separated by a small sheaf of other stuff, was a picture torn from an issue of some magazine of a woman dressed from fingers to toes in black with a black veil over her head, also listening attentively with her husband to the Pope. If I'd overlooked it before, this time Nancy Reagan in conjunction with the image of Hillary Rodham Clinton, struck me like a dash of cold water - jarring but rousing. These two wives of presidents, the most powerful world leaders in history, challenged everything that I was tempted to think about them.

Then there is this writeup clipped from *National Review* about Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, now an awful movie, they say, and one I won't see. I'd rather forgotten Hester, Nathaniel Hawthorne's patient and wise woman of *The Scarlet Letter*. So I renewed my acquaintance with her and remembered that she retells, from her early nineteenth century feminist perspective, the "recurring trials of the wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, erring woman."

Then I looked again at these two pictures placed side by side. What would Hester think of these women standing by their husbands, veiled, modestly attentive to the Pope? These women are not of Hester's time - we might imagine that a prominent wife of a head of state garbed like Mrs. Reagan would not have been startling in the early nineteenth century when Hester's prophetic story was written. These women are of our own individualistic and liberated post-modernism. They are not devout Catholics out of some eastern European country, nor are their

husbands faithful Catholic laymen who have devoted their lives to the Knights of Columbus. Such women of traditional consciousness so pictured would not have caused a second look. And in these times heads of state have flaunted Vatican protocol, just have a look at the Catholic Irish President, Mary Robertson.

These women are Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton, women who have stood or stand beside the unequalled leader of the gender-enlightened western world. They are both women, we are told, who have had great influence over their husbands and his decisions, women strongly motivated, and from all appearances suffering from no trace of a regressive syndrome. Even those who disagree with their political point of view, praise their integrated characters and self-ownership. No one quibbles over their effective, confident womanhood. Moreover, neither are even remotely Catholic, at least until perhaps that moment each stood before the Pope. In that moment, am I wrong something is happening?

The veil of Ms. Clinton must be reckoned with even though it is standard protocol, but Nancy Reagan is of interest because of her very special clothing. Of course, she is known to be a planner, and something began to happen the minute she made plans for that encounter. Because of that projected appointment, she shopped for that special dress and found somewhere the veil that all Catholic women in the west, without a backward glance, have given up for thirty or more years. No little head hanky would do. She came prepared, unusually prepared, considering the dress of other Americans who have an audience with the Pope in the late Twentieth Century. What went on inside her? Not in her head - we can understand the mental figuring that results in making a certain impression for a well thought-out purpose. Actresses, even former actresses, are into that. But what went on emotionally, or spiritually, if you like? She was, after all, preparing herself to meet the world's acknowledged spiritual leader. I'm not so sure about Hillary, contemplating her picture leaves doubts, but Nancy imagined that meeting. She looked inside of herself and found a soft responsive spot as she pictured herself and her husband before the Pope. It felt very good and right to engage that attitude, to pull it out and shake out its wrinkles and put it on. It didn't contradict her liberated womanhood, or if it did, expressing that interiority overrode all such intellectualizing. After experiencing in her imagination a feeling before ultimate spiritual authority, Nancy Reagan, Protestant, independent, self-directed woman, went out and found a black, long-sleeved, high-necked outfit and a long black veil symbolizing, even as St. Paul taught it, respect and submission to that authority. On the surface irrational, it was an

act . . . of love?. . . springing from the God- given well of her femininity, which is that deep reality of meaning and sign that God gives all women and which is indelibly written into female morphology.

Almost a hundred and fifty years ago, a prophetic Hester put all of the parts of this paradox together in a way of few words that hasn't been improved upon. Even to those of us not fervent feminists, she is movingly profound, both about the real problems women face - a sometimes hostile, authoritarian, masculine world, and the necessity of woman's awakening and coming of age, but more importantly, the dangers of losing her true self in the process. After studying this picture of Nancy Reagan's meeting with the Pope and the looking at Hillary Clinton, as well, I went back to Hester, another Protestant, and asked her to comment. I believe these might be her words, my imagination only adds a few words to those Hawthorne actually had her speak:

"You call me profound. I would never have said so. What I know comes not from formal study but from life - both the acceptance and the living out of what the "hostile, authoritarian" world has laid upon me. That burden became my mission, and I am thankful for it because it purified an otherwise . . . well, adulterated woman. Adulterated, not just in the physical sense of the red A on my breast that I'm forever marked by, but in the spiritual sense of being mixed with things unseemly to whole human femininity. I foresaw the need for women to become integral, whole, and no longer mixed up with an assigned veneer and imposed expectations. Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton, as I observe them, could be models of that integral woman, and their Protestantism well suits a certain part of that image in a way Catholicism, at least superficially, cannot, being bound up as it is with an ancient, mysterious, and unrelievedly male headship - I'm speaking as a Protestant, of course.

Hester (may) continue, "It is true that I foresaw that in the world the whole system of society would have to be torn down and built up anew, that the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, was to be essentially modified before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position.

"But I also realized that when all these difficulties had been obviated, woman herself could not take advantage of these preliminary reforms until she herself should have undergone a still mightier change. This change I felt would surely come. It has come in your generation - Nancy Reagan, Hillary Clinton and thousands of women whose self-possession is complete

witness to that. However, I also foresaw a danger - that in this mighty change, woman stood to lose her ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life - that the change might cause this feminine wellspring, as you described it, to evaporate. That, too, you must observe, if you dare to be honest, has been a plague upon your feminism.

“When I envision Nancy Reagan standing dressed as you describe before the Pope, I sense that she is unconsciously rescuing that essence. There is something close to the heart of the meaning of woman in her demeanor and her action there. A truth is being acted out and it can only be done so on your earth before this particular spiritual authority. Symbolically, Hillary’s veil doesn’t take her quite so far, just as she is further from saving the ethos of her womanhood.

“The masculine authority of that Church in this respect is not superficial. Despite my solid stance outside Catholicism, I recognize my need and the need of all, men and women, to find an authority before which, by the grace and for the glory of God, we all ultimately kneel. Such a response, such an inner attitude, is first of all feminine and rescues the essence of femininity from the power and propensity of the change to go too far and to become corrupt, and secondly it is appropriate to both men and women because as one of your modern writers, C.S. Lewis, has noted with peculiar insight, ‘before God we are all feminine.’”

“I knew that at some brighter period, when the world grew ripe for it, in Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed. Man and woman in your time stand eye to eye as equals, but the woman must be a sign, freely and with total consent, of the attitudes of surrender, obedience, and love, or else lose her unique self. It may seem premature to announce, but from my vantage point I see that with this necessary qualification in place, the time of the new truth has come, and that the relation between man and woman is now on a surer ground of mutual happiness. For this I rejoice.”

22 EDITH STEIN ON WOMAN

In the Cologne Soccer Stadium on the first of May of this year, surrounded by controversy and protesting people, Pope John Paul II beatified a German Carmelite nun - a Jewess turned Catholic who was killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1942. The 1,200 protesters, chanting 'Pope, get lost!' were opposing the Church's stand on abortion, birth control and divorce, all issues raised by the woman's liberation movement. The religious controversy over her beatification originated in the Jewish community who felt the identification of the woman as a Christian martyr was an insult in the face of the fact that Jewishness was the real cause of her death.

Yet, ironically, here was a woman with a clear vision of the place of woman in God's plan which included the best of feminist insights, and a woman who has been seen a sign of unity between Jew and Gentile.

Edith Stein or Sister Teresia Benedicta of the Cross was "a woman ahead of her time in insisting on the equality of woman to man." Dr. Freda Mary Oben, who has translated her papers and is also a convert from Judaism to Catholicism, notes, "Stein can bring to contemporary Catholicism a feminism that is different from militant nuns today making everybody unhappy with their demands." Stein also worked backwards from her atheism into her Jewish roots gaining deep appreciation for them and seeing, as Jesuit John Nota, a friend and confidant reported, the "fulfillment of her Jewish faith in the Catholic Church."

Oben testifies, "The first meaning of Edith Stein's life for me is that she is a sign of the reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity. She knew her faith was possible because the Old Covenant is fulfilled in the New. She becomes a symbol of this unity and a sign of God's

plan.” Oben believes Stein saw her impending death as a “dual offering” “As a Jew she suffered for her people, and as a Christian, she imitated Christ, her Lord, united to Him as He suffered for both Jews and Gentiles.”

This woman of stunning intellect had come from atheism to Catholicism in a brief six years. In 1916 while a Red Cross nurse, Edith was swayed toward Christianity by observing the reaction of a Protestant woman to the death at the front of her husband. She read Teresa of Avila five years later, closed the book saying, “This is the truth,” and went out to buy a catechism and a missal. The next year she was baptized. Ten years later after assisting Edmund Husserl as a phenomenologist at the University of Freiburg, and lecturing widely for women’s education, she entered a Carmelite convent in Cologne. This year ICS Publications has issued the second volume of her *collected works, *Essays on Woman*

Not a fundamentalist in her approach to Scripture, Sr. Teresia nevertheless takes the Bible very seriously as a base for her understanding of man and woman. She has questions to ask of the apostolic writers about their attitudes toward the Christian woman, sometimes seeing them reverting to pre-Christian ideas of subjugation, but her view of man and woman is wholly Biblical, uncompromised but rather enhanced by her deep philosophical comprehension and experience. Upon the maturing of woman and man into their wholeness in Christ, union with God awaits. “God created humanity as man and woman, and He created both according to His own image. Only the purely developed masculine and feminine nature can yield the highest attainable likeness to God. Only in this fashion can there be brought about the strongest interpenetration of all earthly and divine life.”

Man and woman have separate vocations, separate callings. “A call must have been sent from someone, to someone, for something in a distinct manner.” This call to man and woman is sent from God and is manifested in the distinct natures he has given them. The course of life fructifies the given nature, neither the course or the person’s nature are a trick of chance, but the work of God. Aside from being a man or a woman with the specifics their sexuality proscribes, each is called as an individual. That individuality includes for both sexes attributes of the opposite, in some more than in others, but overall there is a specific recognizable call to each person according to his sex

Even in Stein’s years what that call was had been controversial for some time. Reading what she wrote in 1931 one is not aware of the gap of fifty plus years (though she is not sensitive

to the inclusive language issue). She was as conversant with feminism as Gloria Steinem, though unlike the militant feminist of today she could see both its positives and its possible negative effect on the psyche and happiness of woman.

There are “any number of ways by which we receive this call: God Himself declares it in the words of the Old and New Testament; it is inscribed in the nature of man and woman; history elucidates this matter for us; finally the needs of our time declare an urgent message.”

Within the first passage of the Bible a common vocation is assigned to man and woman. Mutually they are given the threefold vocation: 1) they are to be the image of God, 2) bring forth posterity, and 3) be masters over the earth. That their threefold vocation is to be effected in different ways by man and woman is implied by the separation of the sexes itself.

Finding the scriptural woman to be a helpmate to man makes no difficulty for Stein. She analyzes the Hebrew term and finds it to mean a counterpart in equality like the left hand is to the right. Man’s pre-eminence is not a matter affecting that equality; it is merely a matter of order. Just as “God is a three-in-one, just as the Son issues from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son, so, too, the woman emanated from the man and posterity from them both.” Woman is the companion and helpmate, and both are to become one flesh. Thus, the initial pair is created as “a most intimate community of love” - a phrase also beloved of Pope John Paul II. Before the Fall “all faculties in each individual were in perfect harmony, senses and spirit in right relation with no possibility of conflict.”

It is the Fall that is the root of the subjugation of woman to man. The community of love is gone, and concupiscence has awakened. There is a drastic change in the relationship of human beings to the earth, to their children and to one another. All of this because the relationship to God has been altered beyond all recognition. Stein sees that the nature of the temptation was planned by the Tempter to “be of greater significance to the woman,” not because she was more easily induced to evil. The woman is the key to the harmony and perfection because of her dependence; her stance of receptivity is at the heart of the Perfection of the Garden. Therefore, the Tempter must succeed first with her. This is an insight not often found in current feminist theologians who feel her role is meant to imply ignorance, susceptibility to evil, or stupidity.

The Evil one is set by God to be forever at enmity with the woman because she will be a key to reestablishing the envied Perfection. “Woman” and “offspring” in the curse addressed to the serpent, represent Mother of God and Redeemer, but not exclusively, Eve and “her

successors have been give a particular duty to struggle against evil and to prepare for the spiritual restoration of life. The distinction of the female sex is that a woman was the person who was permitted to help establish God's new kingdom; the distinction of the male sex is that redemption came through the Son of Man, the new Adam."

Stein disentangles the dress code, hair-covering matters of fashion that St. Paul insists upon from what he says that are principles describing the relationship between man and woman. These principles, though not their cultural expressions, she believes, are the interpretation of the divine order in creation and righted to the original by the Lord for his new kingdom which establishes the redeemed order. In this Kingdom man and woman "are destined to live one life with one another like a single being. But the leadership in this community of life is proper to the man as the one who was created first."

She interprets I Cor 11 to mean that woman receives her spirituality from man as her mediator between herself and God, and draws back from this as well she might. In this she accuses Paul of an incompleteness that still reflects the fallen order. However, it may well be that man as spiritual mediator is not what Paul is signifying. He is likely only reiterating the God-given ordering of mankind, and that Stein has no trouble with. A may be first, but B is wholly equal, an equality and ordering she has already seen in the Trinity.

In accord with Scripture, Stein reminds us that as a single organism there must be a head, and that the relationship of man and woman must always be seen by Christians as a deeply symbolic one. "Both the image of Christ and the Church remind us of this relationship." In this it is the duty of the man to "conduct this microcosm (the family) in such a way that each of its members may be able to develop his gifts perfectly and contribute to the salvation of the entire body, and that each may attain his own salvation."

More strongly than in First Corinthians, Stein points out that Paul seems to subordinate the redemptive order to the fallen nature in the discussion on women in First Timothy. She sees St. Paul as expressing himself as a Jew in the spirit of the law. She feels he contradicts the words and whole custom of the Lord who had women among his closest companions. Here Paul even contradicts himself because he has affirmed that salvation in Christ eliminates distinctions of male and female. "Salvation admits of no differences between the sexes; rather the salvation of each one and their relationship to one another both depend on the same close personal union with Christ."

Here I would imagine a conversation with Blessed Edith. Is it possible that the very thing that she sees disrupting the harmony of God's original Perfection - the Tempter tailoring a temptation especially for the woman who must be the first to refuse her equal but subordinate role, is what the writer of First Timothy is so upset by? Doesn't the age-old temptation of equating subordination with inequality make the woman the forever-victim of the Evil one's insinuations? Isn't it devilish hard for a Christian woman to keep her eyes on the Trinity, especially the Second Person whom she especially images, in order to keep this Tempter from seducing her with envy and bitterness? First in order, does not mean best. Man too had better remember it!

The idea of childbirth in the passage above refers to the Birth of the Divine Child and the way all women are involved in this from the beginning of time. The promise of redemption is present "inasmuch as woman is charged with the battle against evil; the male sex is to be exalted by the coming of the Son of God. The redemption will restore the original order. The feminine sex is ennobled by virtue of the Saviors being born of a human mother; a woman was the gateway through which God found entrance to humankind..."

Man's call from God, on the other hand, is to be the master of the created world. His body and soul though limited by sin are 'equipped to fight and conquer it, to understand it and by knowledge to make it his own, to possess and enjoy it, and finally, to make it in a sense his own creation through purposeful activity.' Stein realizes fully how the Fall has made all of these attributes and strengths impossibly one-sided. Also that woman is to stand by his side in lordship of the earth, so she too must be endowed with the same gifts.

Yet, her first endowment is to serve man and protect him for his natural one-sidedness. She too rules," but her role as ruler is secondary and included in a certain way in her maternal vocation." It is her mission as a mother which involves an understanding of the total being and of specific values. It is this strong quality of understanding of total being which helps balance the masculine gifts.

As one continues to read Stein, one becomes more and more aware of a need to make fine distinctions. Perhaps it has been the strain and resulting fatigue in keeping these distinctions in mind that has brought feminism to its more simple generalities. The call of a woman is to stand by man's side and carry more than half of the family burden which the husband bears in addition to his professional duties. This does not mean that Stein believes women are to be only at home

without a profession of their own other than homemaking. She is very strong on women having a profession which they may set aside during child-bearing years, but which they assume when home necessities are less demanding. Her treatises on the education of women which make up half of her writing on women make it clear that each woman has gifts which good Christian education strengthens so that every woman contributes to society beyond the confines of the home. All professions are to be open to women who have the capabilities for them.

Writing in a time when economic conditions in Germany meant women working was a necessity, she points out that women have always worked outside the home; “The necessities of life have compelled women to work on the land, or in the factory or in the homes of strangers.” Even scripturally this is true. Consider all the side occupations of the ideal wife of Proverbs 31, the dye making of Lydia of Thiatira. It was the Reformation that disapproved of the employment of women with the exception of just a few fields, says Stein, in order to elevate family living above dedicated virginity.

A teacher herself, Stein is perhaps too optimistic about the work that good education can do to prepare a girl to be a whole and holy woman. A girl’s education must emphasize development of the emotional life which is her forte, but contained and channeled correctly by the strengths of intellectual discipline. This education then leads to the development and affirmation of her unique feminine nature. “Relevant to this is her God-willed place by man’s side; she is not to be in his place but also not in a degrading role unsuitable to the dignity of the person.” Education for a woman is to make this role not only possible in a wholeness for each individual, but attractive. This education will prepare her in her mission “to war against evil and to educate her posterity to do the same; this has been true of woman including the Mother of the Son who conquered death and hell, but it wilt have to remain so until the end of the world.”

“Mary stands at the crucial point of human history and especially at the crucial point of the history of woman; in her, motherhood was transfigured and physical maternity surmounted. . . the goal of all women’s education is presented to us through Mary.” “In Mary we do not see the Lord, but we see her always by the Lord’s side. Her service is rendered directly to Him . . . She does not represent the Lord but assists Him.”

This is womanhood, devoted to the service of love, a truly divine image. In such an imaging, Stein believes all women find their meaning and their happiness. “To become so one must be detached from all creatures, free of a fixation on oneself and on others; that is the

deepest, most spiritual meaning of purity. The wife and mother must also have this virginity of soul: indeed, only from this does she get the power to fulfill her vocation; from this source alone flows true ministering love which is neither servile subjugation nor imperious self-assertion and imposed self-will.”

Drawing a picture of woman’s soul, Stein terms its attributes as expansive, quiet, empty of self, warm and clear. And how does one come to possess these qualities? She sees it as a total condition of the soul that must be effected through grace. “What we can and must do is open ourselves to grace; that means to renounce our own will completely and to give it captive to the divine will, to lay our whole soul, ready for reception and formation, into God’s hands.”

Educational work must also bring all women not only those called to it to understand and be willing to undertake celibacy. Even women with a natural gift for motherhood may not attain this, and when God calls to a celibate life that call can” be obeyed willingly and not accepted rebelliously nor in weary resignation.” Stein places a high value on virginity and its spiritual fruitfulness for the whole Church. A great weight of responsibility is carried by mothers. They are the essential agent of a girl’s formation in the family. “The most essential factor in the formation of pure womanhood must be growing up near a woman who embodies it. And the mother who does not embody this fails in her mission.” This is not seen as burden on a mother; Stein believes God has gifted women with the grace necessary, if they have established a relationship with God that is personal and obedient. Without this personal, redemptive relationship, nothing can be expected in the way of true feminine development for either the individual woman or those girls in her care. That is why educational work must also embrace the supernatural goal. Each person must be brought to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ for the perfect restoration of nature.

Not uncritical of the obvious defects of our masculine Western culture; Stein is not blind to the faults of men. “The unredeemed man shows his specific degeneracy in his brutal despotism over creatures - especially over woman, and his enslavement to his work up to the point of atrophy of his humanity.” Yet, this sinful state does not free women from their specific call.

The woman who considers herself emancipated from this redemptive work of love, Stein considers a rebellious slave “who denies not only her servitude to man, but also the God-willed subordination to him; she is set against men by her hostile attitude, but even this attitude of hostility betrays the tie existing between them.” Though a moderate feminism which places value

on marriage and motherhood can be agreeable to Catholic faith, and the work of early feminists to change education is appreciated (she would be appalled at feminism's attempts to change education in the late years of the century), Stein reminds us "it should never be forgotten that (feminism) developed on a foundation foreign to us, that of German Idealism, of philosophical and political Liberalism." She believes that a Catholic Woman's Movement must rest on its own foundation, the foundation of faith and a Catholic world view "which is well thought out in all its consequences." Stein believed that even in the 1930's the essential differentiation of human nature, male and female had reached a new place. "Woman's difference is no longer considered as inferiority (in the circles of philosophy and theology, physiology and psychology, sociology and the history of civilization) but rather as a characteristic value; for that reason tendencies to deny woman's uniqueness completely have diminished." Fifty years later American feminism seems intractably committed to continuing to fight for the recognitions that Stein assumed had already been given.

Yet, she was cognizant of how the Nazis, the "political group now in power" were wiping out the gains made by their "romantic ideology, the use of women to bear babies of Aryan stock" and the confining of the woman to housework and family. "In doing so, the spiritual nature of woman is as little considered as the principles of her historical development."

In a note designated St. Lioba, January 12, 1932, Stein tells us how she achieved a holy celibate womanhood that embraced all the attributes she prized. "The duties and cares of the day ahead crowd about us when we awake in the morning. . . Now arise the uneasy questions: How can all this be accommodated in one day? . . . Thus agitated we would like to run around and rush forth. We must then take the reins in hand and say, "take it easy! Not any of this may touch me now. My first morning's hour belongs to the Lord. I will tackle the days' work which He charges me with, and He will give me the power to accomplish it."

"So I will go to the altar of God. Here is not a question of my minute, petty affairs, but of the great offering of reconciliation. I may participate in that, purify myself and be made happy, and lay myself with all my doings and troubles along with the sacrifice on the altar. And when the Lord comes to me then in Holy Communion, then I may ask Him, "Lord, what do you want of me?"(St. Teresa). And after quiet dialogue, I will go to that which I see as my next duty.

"I will still be joyful when I enter into my day's work after this morning's celebration; my soul will be empty of that which could assail and burden it, but it will be filled with holy joy,

courage, and energy. “Because my soul has left itself and entered into the divine life, it has become great and expansive. Love burns in it like a composed flame which the Lord has enkindled, and which urges my soul to render love and to inflame love in others: *‘flammescat igne caritas, accendat ardor proximos’* And it sees clearly the next part of the path before it; it does not see very far but it knows that when it has arrived at that place where the horizon now intersects, a new vista will then be opened.”

Stein’s insights on the meaning of sexuality she condensed in many places, this one is in the essay “Principles of Women’s Education:” “God created humanity as man and woman, and He gave to each his and her particular duty in the organism of humanity. Masculine and feminine nature degenerated through the Fall. They can be freed from this slag in the furnace of the divine molder. And whoever relinquishes himself unconditionally to this formation, not only will nature in its purity be restored in him but he will grow beyond nature and become another Christ in whom the barriers have dropped and the positive values of masculine and feminine nature are united.”

23 THINK ABOUT IT

Hearing a philosopher speak on moral problems might not be the best way I could think of to spend a Saturday morning. Yet, this time, that judgment was wrong. Greg Cotter Ph.D., of St. Thomas Co was touching on an area I had never stopped to think about as clearly as he was forcing me to think that morning. “What is the relationship between our personal good and the good of the community to which we belong?”

From the time I first reached for the biggest cupcake at our family table, the right course of action was made clear - “take the smallest one, and be cheerful about it!” Now, all around I hear quite the opposite: “If it will make you happy, take the biggest. Be assertive. And besides, it is really unhealthy to suppress desires under false cheerfulness.”

In marriage, “Others first; Me last,” meant “husband first, children second, and me last.” Nowadays things are not that simple. It is evident that such an arrangement is not always good for everyone involved. Some egos are blown-up with self-importance, some are blown- away by lack of discipline, and one may be punctured almost beyond repair. Yet, I am not convinced as I observe modern marriages that the purely egalitarian “its your turn to scrub the floor” conflicts are really so neat either.

So, Dr. Colter, tell me, how does one reach a balance when personal goals conflict with the goals of the family? Would it have been wrong, for instance, if I had taken classes at the U in philosophy, even though to do so meant less attention and care for my husband and children? I would have had a degree, and a personally rewarding career as well. I am sure that each of them would have survived besides.

(The following is an imagined conversation with Dr. Colter closely based on his words that morning.)

“First, Nancy, you are a Christian by choice and personal commitment?”

“Yes, I have freely chosen to accept Christ and to follow him.”

“Then you do what you do because of Christ, attain heaven and happiness, not only because it is what somebody expects of you?”

“Oh, heaven! and happiness! Yes, those are my goals-”

“Well, our society that speaks loudly about free choices no longer believes that following a sound set of God’s rules leads to happiness. It is a popular perception that living the moral life is opposed to happiness. The logic of that idea is similar to saying that exercise is opposed to physical fitness. Actually we Christians believe following God’s laws is an indispensable means for happiness.

“In marriage when personal desire bumps up against obligation we see why Christian marriage demands wholehearted psychological commitment. Without that commitment, something like these scenarios takes place:

“First, the person to achieve his or her desires may resort to force, not necessarily physical force, but perhaps by the force of instilling fear. Or he or she may bribe by emotional pressure and gifts. Then one person’s will is being imposed on the others. Nancy, if you should threaten the family by bribery, or by withholding your service, or by simply ignoring others needs and feelings as you make personal plans, you can see how it would harm the communal life.”

I would be on my way to dissolving the love there.

“Carry that a step further - to gain your goals without hindrance, you could dissolve your family ties and get a divorce. Then the conflict would be over.”

“Nothing I want would ever be that important.”

“Then, let’s say, as a third option, that your husband seeing your determination to do what you want to do, and not wanting to dissolve the family either, redefines his goals for family life. He will just let you go your way, and he will go his. This is often the modern solution which is no solution at all. You and your husband without thinking would have redefined the family; it is merely an association now, and not a family because it no longer embraces the aims of a

family. You would no longer be what Pope John Paul II called ‘the school of deeper humanity. . . .with the unique aim to cooperate with God’s creative purpose on earth.’

“If the children in a family are to receive what is due them it must come from both the parents, not somebody else. There is no legitimate way the individual can refuse the total commitment necessary for a family to be a family , yet that happens when both parents go their own way.”

“Well, what do I do?”

“First, maybe there only seems to be a conflict. Have you and your husband sat down and agreed about what ‘the good’ is for you as individuals and for the family? Which comes first, the goals of the individual or the goals of the community?

“To answer the questions raised about ‘the good’ consider the nature of community. What is it? A community is a group of people with a common purpose and goal. Take a rowing team, for example. The purpose is to row a scull with as much grace and speed as possible down a river course. This requires a contribution from each member in cooperation with the others.

“All communities, including the family, exist to do something, and therefore require something of their members. If its purpose is friendship and love, and in the case of the family, the upbringing of children in the Lord, then the required contributions of the man and woman are not elective, but obligatory.

“We are defined as ‘social animals’ by nature, unable and unwilling to live solely independent lives; we cannot be happy without other people. For ‘good’ living we must have community. We must have it for the essential dimension of knowing about God. ‘If you do not live in community,’ said Socrates, ‘you are ‘either a beast or God.’”

“You mean, that my good, and therefore, my happiness is dependent upon my contribution to and cooperation in achieving the goals of my community - in my case, this family.”

“Yes, Nancy, that is basic to your happiness.

“Christ formed a community whose whole purpose was human happiness - to bring humans to salvation. Of course, that community has an obligation to serve its members, but that is only half the story. St. Paul had a wonderful picture of how all the individuals in their own way serve the common good. He wrote about the Church as a body; the functions of eyes, feet,

limbs - all have a role and a function. Happiness and goodness for the whole and for the individual depend on the faithful attention of each to his role and function.

“Freedom dictates that a person decide to join the community. But once the decision is made he or she is obliged to contribute for the person’s own happiness as well as the happiness of the other.”

“This - obligation and enduring commitment - is so different from what I hear everywhere.”

“Yes, certain philosophic forces have sifted down into our century to lead people to believe that all obligations are conditional. The decision to carry out obligations is made moment to moment depending on what suits the person at the moment. To pursue why this does not produce happiness, we need to carry our argument one step further.”

“Let’s see. I want to be able ,after this discussion ,to reason out the conflict of my own goals for self-fulfillment and my relationship to the family. Let’s go one more step.”

“If there was a community that it was *natural* to belong to; if such a community existed in which membership was required by the very fact of being human, then the obligations of that community would be absolute. Do you follow this reasoning?”

You mean, that if God meant me as a human being to belong to a community, I’d have to belong to it in order to be a complete.”

“Something like that.”

“Oh, we’re saying that community would be natural for me; then I would be obligated to contribute to that community’s goals. Of course, being natural it would also make me happy to do so. We are using ‘natural ‘in a special way.”

“True. Now, are there such natural communities? Acting for our own happiness, we cannot not be without others. The question is then, which community?”

“Well, it would be the one that is geared toward my happiness in the sense of ultimate fulfillment, not merely passing pleasure.”

“What comes to mind?”

“Obviously my own family; not the one into which I was born though I have obligations there; but more importantly, the one I chose to form, the one that forms my moral character and the one through which I help to form moral character in others. In it my husband and I create something good and true - like love.”

“And there is another that we Catholics know by Revelation - the Catholic Church. Though we have a natural obligation to pray, it is not natural to be Catholic. But this community secures our happiness above all others; when we come to know that, then we have an obligation to be Catholic.”

“All right Now let me consider my original idea - that regardless of the family, I set a new course towards something I’ve always wanted. From your insights, it may be a course that is not really for my own good - as you have described ‘good. ‘I must first consider the goals of my family. How they will best be served? Working for that goal will really make me happy, because it has to do with ultimate happiness - heaven. I may not act with contempt for the common good, or do anything that is obviously wrong to those I love. If I err in making a decision, let it be an error on the side of charity. In time, needs in the family may change so that with the blessing of my spouse, even with his help, my personal wish may be reconsidered. Then I would believe that God, indeed, had made a way for me and that my plan was according to His will. What a freeing idea that is!

24 WALKING WITH MIRYAM, JEWESS, MOTHER OF JESUS

Biblically rooted, simple, but expressively written, two companion books, *Miryam of Nazareth and Miryam of Judah* by Ann Johnson center in the experience of the daughter of Israel, the virgin daughter of God's People, and offer fresh insights to those seeking to know Mary in her own life and times. Surely, just as Ann Johnson portrays, Mary was immersed in the traditions, scriptures, and ideals of her people. She was thoroughly a woman of the Jews with all the richness of spirituality that foundation meant to her very special calling. It is rewarding under Mrs. Johnson's poetic guidance to renew oneself in the ancient, but living spirituality that is hers.

With little embellishment, for the most part line for line from the scriptures, the stories of the women of the Old Testament whose lives undergirded her own are retold from Mary's point of view in free verse in both books. The earlier one, *Miryam of Nazareth* tells the stories of Deborah, Judith, Esther, and Ruth. The second, *Miryam of Judah* repeats Ruth and adds Bathsheba, Rahab, and Tamar, encompassing the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel.

Added to these strong, always riveting stories, the earlier book adds the Hebrew song-form of the Magnificat to express Mary's contemplation on the events surrounding the birth of Jesus: Waiting for the Fullness of Time, the Stable, the Shepherds, the Magi; and the theological themes close to her heart: Freedom, Now, Understanding, Reconciliation, Conversion, as well as the events of the Passion: Prophecy, Desolation, Grief and Resurrection. Prayers of Miryam concern the Resurrection Community, Ascension morning, and Pentecost. We listen in to her final fiat when she ends her life's journeying in the arms of God in "Domition."

Miryam of Judah adds to the stories of the Old Testament women in “Lineage,” three other sections: “Learning,” “Miryam’s Sabbath,” and “Epilogue : Reflections of a Rabbi.” The beautiful Hebrew prayer form called “Kaddish” is used to reflect on the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Encountering the Kaddish is one of the joys of the books.

Perhaps the most moving section of the two books is in the latter, “Miryam’s Sabbath” with unforgettable images of Mary’s comfort and refreshment in living the fullness of the Jewish Sabbath on Holy Saturday after the terror and tearing of Good Friday, though that event is referred to only in a few allusions.

Ann Johnson has explored Judaism with the help of rabbi, Perry Cohen, who adds his comments and thanks at the end of *Miryam of Judah* for the mending such a book allows for Christian-Jewish relations. Perhaps because of his collaboration and help, and the felt need of such reconciliation, nothing is said to express Jesus as God - his teachings are rephrased as Kaddish prayer, common Jewish rabbinical expression, and only faint allusions are made to the resurrection. It is a weakness in the book for the Christian who wonders about Mary’s reflections on the death of the one she knows to be Son of God in a dimension unknown to and unforeseen by the prophets of Israel.

Growth in Mrs. Johnson is happily noted in comparing the two books. The first, *Miryam of Nazareth* as pleasant as parts of it are in depicting Mary’s spiritual journey, jarringly inserts too many ideas and words that are part of the often trite religious jargon of our time. I call it bubble-gum language because it is full of air, gives instant gratification, but hardens and becomes unchewable in time. It seems out of place in Mary’s head and mouth. “Change” and “sharing” are chewed to death. Words like “bonding,” “insensitivity,” “potential,” “touching,” “my true self,” “becoming,” essence of identity,” dialogue,” “community,” “listen openly;” and ideas like “birthing-time of searching and formation,” “to be all that we can be,” and “iron bands of fear and dogma,” dampen my ardor for the good that is in the book. Some of the language is stiff,

“You have deflected my fervent thrust toward iron-glad goals. . .”

While other sections like this one describing the Annunciation are modestly lyrical,

In the stillness, Miryam reached out
Mind alive, she reached out
Memory reflecting, she reached out

Inviting her God to inspire.

The Shadow streamed into her being.

I resist the bitterness expressed towards the rich and powerful, even though such folks often cause trouble in God's world. Yes, it is the anawim, the poor of Yahweh, who inherit the promises of God. But this is not to mean material wealth so much as a self-satisfied spirit. Jesus himself remained fair to all, totally apolitical, not judging by power or wealth. Look at his openness to Zaccheus, and Nicodemus. Such people "lie gasping in their worthless largess" or are "troubled and rumble of revenge" in Mary's reflections a' Ia Johnson.

She leaps too readily to the American Heritage Dictionary's interpretation of the Hebrew *miryam* to mean "rebellion." Granted the Hebrew has two forms of the word and one does lend itself to that meaning, however, an alternative meaning, "bitterness" has a longer claim and one more tied into both scripture and Mary's meaning in Salvation History. As Naomi cries, "Call me no more Naomi, call me *Mara*," (the same root). Call me no longer pleasant, call me bitter." As one Bible dictionary prefers, the meaning of *miryam* from the root *mara* (bitterness), is "a tear."

The second book moves away from all such superficialities and vogueish notions that are so soon passe'. The anti-authority, feministic tone has vanished. The new weakness is lack of the recognition of the Godhead of Jesus.

Yet, *Miryam of Judah* does have powerful images that I will not forget, as this woman who is my mother by the gift of Jesus, walks the road that leads to Calvary, and then walks into the arms of her loving friends. With them she takes part in the *mikvah* bath of cleansing on the evening of preparation for the Sabbath:

Welcoming waters!

Bending my knees, I immerse myself in the flowing pool,

water closing over my head,

healed in the watery silence.

Then Miryam pulls that day of rest over her like a down comforter, light but warm, as she absorbs all its ancient but present prayers as refreshments into her broken soul. Interwoven throughout are the psalms and poignant phrases of Song of Solomon, the longing of the grieving beloved for the bridegroom.

Both books are beautiful to look at and to handle. The calligraphy, print, and paper lend themselves to the making of special books of poetry. Their strong adherence to scripture, simplicity, insight into and love of the Judaism that was Mary and their reflective, prayerful character override their weaknesses and make them well worth owning.

25 A DEEPER LOOK AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In a church in a nearby community, a dear Catholic lady is going through the red lectionary deleting every sign of sexist language. I call her “lady” and “dear” deliberately, she would not rile at the words because her consciousness has not been “raised.” She is a loyal worker in this parish who, unaware of the stakes, has volunteered from the Pastoral Council to make sure that every “him” has an equal “her.” That every “brother” has a “sister.” Every “father” a “mother,” and every generic “Man” is changed to “mortal” or some such. All “wives submit” must be stricken in the name of justice. She would be appalled to be told that she is quite literally aiding in the destruction of the faith that means so much to her. And like so many of the controversies racking the Church these days, there is no one around to tell her; she is unlikely to read this article or any like it, and her progressive parish priest is the last person in the world to want it otherwise.

It’s serious to make such a claim about her innocence, or her ignorance, and his complicity. How can it be substantiated? To answer that we must look deeply, if briefly, into what Catholic faith holds as bedrock Truth. In the reductionism of our times, a concept of “bedrock Truth” daily slides, despite many a mourner, closer to theological oblivion. But we would be hard put to think at all about what it means to commit to Christ in His Church without certain basics that, despite development in their understanding, remain and will remain unchanged. Catholic faith begins at the beginning with the Original Order, where in the Garden of Eden Almighty God, Himself a Three in One, created man and woman to be perfect and to be one. The unity of the two was assured by the Person of the Holy Spirit, Third Person of the Trinity, who condescended to gift them with Himself, thus making them a created three-in-one

united in supernatural love in the very image and likeness of the Maker. That is why the Church has a Sacrament called Matrimony. In the Redeemed Order which is His Church, Christ re-established the Original Order now transcendently enhanced with Himself, and here the two are not made one without Him. All this is strata in faith's bedrock.

But there is more. Together man and woman in this union are named Adam, that is, Man. We read this in the first creation story, Genesis 1:26f. Like God Himself there is a solidarity, a Oneness which is primary to their being, expressed by this one word, Man. They are not separate like fish and fowl, not two separate beings primarily identified by male and female characteristics. They are first of all One - two beings participating in a whole with one and the same perfection. Jesus will express it in his teaching on marriage in Matt hew 19:6. "The two shall become one f lesh. . ." "let not man put asunder what God has joined." Jesus has told us here that God is the Third Person of their indissoluble union.

In this solidarity it is almost as the current debate has presented it, that there's no important difference in the sexes at all - almost, but importantly, not quite, as we will see. It is true that man and woman's characteristics are first and foremost those they both have equally and completely - it makes up their one common human nature. Only one word can demonstrate this absolute solidarity - what word do we want? Do we want "human" or "humanity"? Those have "man" in them without having the same personal unitive force. Do we want anthropoid? "Anthro" is simply "man." Perhaps "mankind"? No, it won't do - if still has "man" it while not expressive enough of solidarity. "Mortal?" Aren't all animals indistinguishable in their mortality?

What is our objection to a one word indication of their utter oneness? Do we object that Man has a second meaning, that the same word refers to the human male? And working backwards does it imply that the woman doesn't count? The disagreement lies with the idea that in this solidarity the unit has been given a name that is also the name of the male. That, we have been led to believe, is a put-down for the female.

Applying this conundrum to the Holy Trinity can be instructive. We call the One who is Creator, though He is Three, by one word "God." The word "God" applies to all three Persons equally, First, Second and Third; or Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Generally when we speak of God we are thinking of God the First Person, the Father, but not always. Yet, it is inconceivable to the point of absurdity that there might be suspicion or jealousy among the Persons of the

Trinity over this supreme title. Does the Son resent being called God because generally the Father is first thought of as God? That, we would agree, is nonsense.

Yet, it may point up the destructive jealousy that is indicated when the generic term “Man” is rebelled against. It shows not only immaturity of understanding, but the chronic original sin manifested by envy and disobedience that began with Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden. This original sin is another layer of substratum faith. Shall we now reinstitute the original sin into the Redeemed community with our religious language? If we do, it won't any longer be the Catholic religion founded by Christ and the apostles.

So the first truth about Man, male and female, that is inherent in his creation is *solidarity*. The dictionary definition of solidarity, “a entire union of interests and responsibilities in a group,” is not nearly strong enough to describe what our Holy Father means by the word - it is a total identification of those in the group with all the others - a total unity and oneness. In perfection, before the Fall, this solidarity in love was the supernatural added gift of the Holy Spirit. So it was that God made Man. Man - he was perfect with an unblemished human nature enjoyed equally by male and female. It is interesting that in the Genesis 1 account of the creation of Man, male and female, the same Hebrew pronoun refers to both the singular Man, and the duo, male and female, and may be translated either “him” or “them,” so important is the concept of solidarity to the original inspired words.

We belong to one body in Christ - one body. We are growing up into likeness of the Son of God. We claim the redemption gained for us in the one man, Christ Jesus, the second Adam. That is the solidarity that our religious language must express. Shall we change it to two bodies - sons and daughters - and forget our basic and original oneness in a rush to be accepted by the intellectual elite of the 1990's?

No, certainly not; describing that solidarity we must not divide what God has joined, which is all of us to Christ, in Christ and with Christ. The word is “Man” and it draws one pronoun, not two. The pronoun is “him” or “he.” Certainly not “it.” He or him is indicative of the head of this unit. This headship has been revealed in Sacred Scripture, and is not the expression of a backward social consciousness at all, but “the inspired Word of God “ as stated by Dei Verbum. The head of the unit is the male. But head is not more worthy than the other two parts of the union - not more worthy than the woman, and certainly not than the Holy Spirit who is the most self-effacing, and condescending of all. Head is simply a certain role of service and

responsibility to the whole, and the head listens to the Spirit for the guidance of himself and his spouse. Besides, we remember what Jesus said about those who had headship, “whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all.” (Luke 10:42-43)

Even though God stands revealed as pure spirit without sexuality, God has revealed Himself as He (other than a few metaphors, not a single scripture verse upholds any presentation of himself as “she”) for our human understanding. Referring to Godhead as God-He makes the same connection with headship - the ultimate Head. But, in this regard, he has told us that he created man to image in physical flesh the spiritual principal of fatherhood in the Trinity. St. Paul tells us about the origin of the family. It is from the Father in heaven that all families on earth are named. (Ephesians 3:15) It is not anthropological, quite the opposite - the man was created to be father in order to image the role of the First Person of the Trinity; the very idea has come from God down, not from man up. In this, then the “He-ness” of God precedes the creation of a male who is simply made to image in physical flesh the principle of the First Person of the Trinity who is the Original, Subsisting, Generator of all creation.

From Adam we also have received damage to our human nature that is universal. Each and every human being has received the broken nature of the one Man, Adam. We have solidarity in his sin as well as his humanity. The damaged human nature that resulted from Adam’s disobedience is ours - we are fallen Man, each one of us and all of us together. In order to preserve the great solidarity of the human race - that we all, yes, everyone, descended from the one man Adam, we must maintain one word - Man, and it can only draw the one masculine pronoun. That one word alone encompasses the physical male as well as the created unit, Adam-Eve.

To remove all these signposts of sexuality from our language is to destroy all of these primary and essential concepts from the revealed root of our faith. Just like that, through an elitist attack on language, four millennium of the Revealed Word coming to us from God’s own patient teaching through to his final sacrifice for us is washed down the drain.

To do otherwise than to hold securely to sexual language (in the end it proves to be the only inclusive language) wrenches apart not only the truth of our Created relationship to each other and to God, but it also wrenches apart and discards the unity of our Salvation in the one Man Jesus, the second Adam.

It was the threatened loss of this important truth, foreshadowed in inspired ways in the psalms, that has temporarily put the further inclusivization of the psalms on hold by the American bishops. The determined feminist poets who did the retranslating for the New American edition did so with a bias that now confronts the Bible reader at every juncture. With one exception, if you are reading any Catholic edition of the Bible published in the United States, all reference to the man is distorted and changed, therefore all solidarity of Everyman with Christ and with Adam is lost from the divine Word. The one exception is the edition of standard English of the Revised Standard Version published by Ignatius Press. The Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith in Rome has not approved use of these inclusive language translations, making it unclear what will happen about Bible editions in the future.

Every child of Adam is fallen like him, but is redeemed in solidarity with the Second Adam - Christ Jesus. But with that second Adam is included the Blessed Virgin Mary as co-redemptress. There is no need to wonder that in the solidarity of the Redemption, which was her co-work, no heed is given to identifying her separately. Somehow being one with Him was sufficient. Do we see in the light of the Virgin Mothers holiness what we are called to? Or do we continue to insist that for every 'he' there be placed a 'she' identifying ourselves in the process more with Eve's envy than with Mary's humility?

The Christian revelation, rooted in the Jewish revelation, consistently emphasizes that God is bringing back his family in solidarity with himself. The Passover meal in both the Old Covenant and the New is a family meal of sacrificial food provided by the Father, which is for us the Lamb of God of the eternal sacrifice. Yet, in a slide into incomprehensibility, we are compelled to sing a hymn that has been gutted of all meaning. "With God as our Father, neighbors all are we." With God as our Father doesn't make us neighbors. It makes us siblings of the same household of faith - Catholic Christians gathered around the sacrificial Eucharistic table. And again, to show the solidarity of that relationship, that it is intrinsically a oneness, we are willing to drop the secondary differentiations and proclaim that we are brothers, or the brethren. We don't want to say "brothers and sisters," a dichotomy which points up not our solidarity but our singularity. Singularity has its place, an important place as we will see, but not here at the Sacrament of Union.

St. Paul and the others writing to the Christians in apostolic times were not ignoring the women in the group when they addressed believers as "brethren." They were simply

appropriating the only conceivable way of addressing the family of God in one term of loving unity consistent with the whole revelation of growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

There is another aspect of Christian faith defaced in the use of inclusive language. It is the other side of the coin of solidarity. First and foremost we are One; one in Adam, one in Christ, one at the Eucharistic table. Only when that fact is cast in concrete at the base, can we build upon it that we are singular as male and female, and that this singularity is also an essential to be maintained. That's the way the Genesis revelation tells it - the solidarity comes first, the singularity second.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of
God he created him; male and female he created them.

In making every reference unidentifiable as to sexuality, we are erasing the intrinsic soul difference of male and female that God addresses when he calls them to their particular place in his creation. Behaving as though male and female were ultimately indistinguishable is to be thoroughly ignorant of the uniqueness of their meaning and role in creation. It is as disastrous to Christian faith to ignore sexuality's singularity as it is to ignore man and woman's total solidarity.

Going through the Bible or the liturgical texts and matching every masculine term with a feminine term, or eliminating the sexual term by supplying a non-sexual term is effecting an obliteration of the knowledge of God's truth written into the creation of male and female. It was for this reason that many opposed the opening of altar service to girls. Did it really mean that for all this time that Church authority has thought girls weren't good enough, so they were denied this role beside the priest? Does it now mean that the Church has revised its opinion to believe they are good enough?

Oddly enough, placing women at the altar to assure them that they are just as good as men isn't doing them a favor; rather, it may only be another blow to their intrinsic feminine meaning by implying that they are the same as men. Every girl and woman, when not deliberately confused by current secular doctrines, wants to develop integrally with the body and soul that God has given her. Each girl is hearing an inner call of God, personally, intimately, that is heard only because she is she, not he. Ignoring her feminine nature and its specific call seems to say that being male is better, somehow. Such ignorance is warping the girl's God-given

potential, slighting her singularity, and denying that her own call which is not to the altar, is as important and worthy as the call of any man.

God is calling her to be like the Blessed Mother in ways that only she can - he can't. She will be wife and mother, or she will be virgin spouse and virgin mother. She will bear and nurture the people of God one way or the other. For her sake, in either married or single state, a man will be given her so that she can fulfill the deepest longing of her soul which is to achieve oneness with the other, and with the other to bring forth. He will provide for her and protect her, so that her inner being can be fulfilled. He will be a husband for this purpose; or he will be a priest or bishop so that her needs, and those of her children, spiritual or physical, will be met. To desire his role rather than her own is a basic envy that when introduced into a family system will destroy it - just like the same temptation did in Eden.

Thinking otherwise is to mix the whole revelation of the Bible into mud soup. Could the Blessed Mother just as well have been a male? Could Jesus just as well have been female? There are advocates for the latter - none for the former, but just wait. It has already gone so far as to blaspheme revelation by publicly placing a nude female body on the cross. Google this.

Those who don't like the singularity of the sexes emphasize how insignificant that single chromosome is that determines sexuality. Are feminists emphasizing the solidarity of Man? No, that's not what they are doing. They are confused, even to the extent of considering the Second Person of the Trinity coming as a male as nothing but a female put-down. They don't believe, evidently, that the Church as Bride (which is them) is to be lifted to share in his divinity because he loves her so much. They don't much care that that means each one of them will be fulfilled as persons by a fruitfulness by his embrace that is exponential. In all their protests one thing is underlined, they'd rather be the initiator than the receiver. They continue to think in terms of power and accept the fallen world's valuing of the masculine, all the while decrying it. It is that system of belief that is behind this attack on the sexual language of the Church, and we all know who the author of the anti-Word is.

That Liar now has a powerful tool to wield against Catholic faith. We know ultimately he can't succeed, but individual souls may succumb, in fact, are succumbing to these lies. No exercise of power can gain the kingdom; it is the obedient and submissive who are first in the kingdom - people who model their lives after the Blessed Virgin Mary. Yes, when it gets right down to it, both male and female, in order to be Christ's Bride must have the humility and

obedience of the feminine side. CS. Lewis said it best “. . . the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it.” So the brethren might rightly be called the “sistern” ,to coin a word, except for the male headship of this unity by which it gains its nomenclature. There is transcendent meaning in sexuality because its origin is within the Trinity.

Because Jesus is the Second Person of the Godhead, he could not come to His people as female. His physical body and human soul had signification - just as all men and women’s bodies and souls do. The sign of his human being-ness had to speak of the initiator and Creator of all that is, because he is God. Mary’s femaleness, essential to conceive him by the Spirit, also spoke of the human Church who would receive Him as Bridegroom. Their sexuality mattered, not only for the mission that they were called to carry out, but for the statement that their sexuality made about the ultimate Kingdom of God.

All of this adds up to another essential truth of Catholic faith which is attacked by inclusive language. It is the marital imagery which is intrinsic to divine revelation from one end of the Bible to the other. Hard-line feminists are aware of this and have discarded the Bible as being “irremediably sexist.” It is. Even the Hebrew verb for “to know”, especially “to know God” is sexual in the Bible. To cut out the sexual terms, to balance them, to change them, is to obliterate the very heart and soul of the Bible. All our religious belief and practice depends upon this most basic human comprehension.

Pope John Paul II in *Mulleris Dignatatem* writes with a language that assumes the solidarity of Man in Redemption, the singularity of the sexes, and relies on all of the dependent marital imagery:

The Eucharist makes present and realizes anew in a sacramental manner the redemptive act of Christ, who “creates” the Church, his body. Christ is united with this “body” as the bridegroom with the bride. All this is contained in the Letter to the Ephesians. The perennial “unity of the two” that exists between man and woman from the very “beginning” is introduced into this “great mystery” of Christ and the Church.

Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is “feminine” and what is “masculine.” It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption. It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts *In persona Christi*,” is performed by a man.

Should we inform the Catholic lady who in fine penmanship is printing “she” beside “he”, “mother” beside “father”, and “daughter” beside “son”, that she is being used to help destroy three crucial aspects of Catholic Christian faith - the solidarity of all people both in Adam’s Fall and in the Second Adam’s Redemption, the singular meaning and role of male and female in the economy of salvation, and the marital relationship of God and Man consummated at every Eucharistic liturgy, and she would probably look at us blankly; but the priest and his Pastoral Council may listen. Perhaps the words themselves, “solidarity, singularity and marital unity,” will be infused by the Holy Spirit to be weighty so that the project will not be pursued. We must at least try. And while we’re at it, we can refuse to buy any Catholic Bible that is not in standard English. Such are hard to find, but Ignatius Press has them in their catalog as does EWTN.