Spring 1984

Women's Experience And Redefinition Of The Divine: Significant Trends In Feminist Theology

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WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE AND REDEFINITION OF THE DIVINE:
SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN FEMINIST THEOLOGY

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with honors from the Department of Theology, Carroll College, Helena, Montana.

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April 2, 1984
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4-2-84 Date
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**                                                                                     v

Overview........................................................................ vi
Acknowledgements/Dedication......................................... viii

**CHAPTER**

I. HISTORICAL TRACING: THE DESCENT OF WOMEN.............. 1

  Symbolism, Myths, and Rituals................................ 3
  Tribalization to Urbanization................................... 6
  The Demise of the Mother: Consequences of Patriarchal Dualism........... 8
  The Beginnings of Christianity: Formation of a Male-Centered Church and the Alienation of Women............ 12
  Atrocities Upon Women: The Manifestation of Misogynistic Ideologies........... 16
  Footnotes....................................................................... 25

II. REASCENT OF WOMEN: QUEST FOR AND REDEFINITION OF THE DIVINE........ 28

  Stories........................................................................ 28
  The Journey................................................................. 32

    Emptying Out/Nothingness........................................ 34
    Awakening/Awareness/Insight.................................... 37
    New Naming/Redefining............................................. 39
    Political, Social and Personal Integration................... 44
  Footnotes....................................................................... 49

III. SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN FEMINIST THEOLOGY.............. 51

  Joan Chamberlain Engelsman: An Androgynous Approach to Feminist Theology........... 52

    Archetypes............................................................. 52
    Sophia................................................................. 54
    The Re-Emergence of the Repressed................................ 55
    New Possibilities..................................................... 57
Rosemary Radford Ruether: A Critical Re-Vision of Christianity............ 60
  A Feminist Understanding of God/ess........ 61
  Christology.................................. 65
  A New Vision................................. 66
Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza: A Reformist Vision of Christianity........... 70
  Feminist Critical Hermeneutics.............. 71
  The World of Jesus........................... 74
  The Early Christian Missionary Movement..... 78
  Feminist Vision.............................. 81
Mary Daly: A Post-Christian Revolutionary... 83
  Myths of Procession.......................... 85
  Christianity's Continuation of the Patriarchal Myth.............. 87
  "Spinning Cosmic Tapestries"................. 91
Footnotes...................................... 97

IV. CONCLUSION: CRITIQUE/VISION....................... 101

Critique....................................... 103
  Dismantling Patriarchy....................... 103
  Inclusive/Receptive Visions.................. 105
  Viable Stepping Stones....................... 106
  Permeation of the Whole of Society.......... 110
Our Vision..................................... 112
  Christianity................................ 112
  The Re-Creation of Ourselves and Our World................. 117
  Stepping Stones: Feasible Actions/Realities............ 119
  Spreading the Flame........................... 122
Footnotes...................................... 123
AUTHORS' NOTE

This thesis was conceived, nurtured and birthed through the combined efforts of Anne Michele Tapp and Karen K. Gaul. The research, choice of contents and final outline were discussed and agreed upon by both authors. The actual writing of the thesis was, however, both a collective and individual task. The Introduction and the Conclusion (Chapter IV) were written by both authors. Ms. Gaul wrote Chapter II and the discussion of Joan Chamberlain Engelsman and Rosemary Radford Ruether's theologies found in Chapter III. Ms. Tapp wrote Chapter I, and the discussions of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Mary Daly's theologies found in Chapter III.
INTRODUCTION

A strong woman is a woman
who loves strongly
and weeps strongly
and is strongly terrified
and has strong needs

Marge Piercy

This paper is written by two strong women; strong
in individuality, strong in determination, strong in be-
liefs, and strong in the commitment to dive deep into
the past and present struggles of women, and to emerge
with a vision of liberation. We came together not only
in an intellectual endeavor, but also in the need to express
and nurture both our personal and combined journeys. We
use the phrase "woman's journey" to describe a separate
and sacred path present in the depths of all women that
reveals itself only to the extent that it is received
and pursued. We, as women, are both dedicated to the
pursuit of our individual journeys and, in part, actualize
that pursuit through putting words to the experience and
expressions of feminist theology.

Our approach to this paper stems from our experiences
in relationship with each other, with other women, and
with the observations and insights of written and oral
resources. We have included examples of our own experienc-
es, as well as those of others found in poetry and music, to complement and better illustrate the scholarly information presented.

The traditional use of language is often limiting. Thus, we have found it necessary to develop and experiment with new uses of language to describe aspects of women's journeys. For example, though our use of the word "our" is occasionally grammatically questionable, we have chosen to use it consistently when speaking of women, past, present and future. Our connection with our Foresisters is vital; ours is the continuation of their journeys, their struggles, and their triumphs.

What is revealed in this paper is not only feminist theology but also the expression of a journey we are intimately involved in; therefore, we feel an element of risk in sharing it. We have chosen to incorporate our personal journeys, however, in the hope that others find them a source of insight for their own journeys.

This work is presented as a challenge to all readers. The information, insights and experiences revealed here are meant to urge the reader to new ways of thinking, new ways of understanding the world, and new ways of living that allow all people access to their wholeness.

Overview

We begin this presentation of women's experience and redefinition of the divine with the historical tracing
of the descent of women. The socially and spiritually subordinant positions of women are not innate, but rather results of androcentric (male-centered) or patriarchal definitions of the world order. The use of symbols, myths and rituals in the firming of androcentric ideologies will be discussed, as will the significance of the social movement from tribal to urban life, and the socio-religious consequences of a patriarchal world upon women.

Chapter Two discusses the re-ascent of women; that is, women's quest to break from androcentric definitions of ourselves and our experience of the divine. The struggle, as well as the liberating effects, of women's Journey to Ourselves will be presented in this chapter.

The trends of feminist theology are discussed in Chapter Three. We have chosen to address three significant movements within feminist theology through the presentation of four theologians whom we believe to be representative of those trends. Joan Chamberlain-Engelsman vividly represents what we call the "androgy nous approach" found in feminist theology. Within this trend, the "merging" of masculine and feminine elements is key to the affirmation of women's participation in the divine.

Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza represent the "reformist" position within feminist theology. Both, through various means and to varying degrees, acknowledge liberating elements for women found in Christianity and the Christian tradition. Though a
critical feminist analysis of Christianity is imperative, the reformist trend asserts that women can find "salvation" (healing) within Christianity and can experience it as a liberating force.

Mary Daly represents the third trend we address; that of the "radical revolutionary." Christianity is viewed as too steeped in oppressive, patriarchal ideologies to hold any liberating elements for women. Christianity is thus rejected as hopelessly androcentric and a new vision of women's spiritual experience is revealed.

We begin the final chapter with a challenge to and critique of these three trends: The ways in which they fall short of offering a liberating vision for women, the elements within them that should be discarded, and the elements which are liberating but demand further expansion.

Following this challenge/critique, we offer our vision of feminist theology and the liberation of humanity. We address the problem of patriarchal Christianity and the consequences of a feminist vision upon it. We also address the personal, social, and universal implications of our vision; that is, the challenge our vision presents to re-form and re-create the world.

Acknowledgements/Dedication

We feel it imperative to acknowledge those people who have been so very instrumental in both the creation
of this paper and in our personal and combined journeys which have brought us to this point.

We will use the image of the circle/spiral throughout this paper, an image which is appropriate now in acknowledging those who have influenced the creation of this work.

We would first like to acknowledge our Foresisters, those women who have gone before us in the spiral and, through their struggle and insight, drawn us closer to its center. The women of the distant past, some forgotten, some who made their mark on the pages of the human story, lay the foundation for our journeys today. We remember (re-member) the women who actively participated in the Jesus experience; the women who struggled to exist in a patriarchal world and who survived to find meaning in themselves and their experiences; the women who died vicious psychological, emotional and physical deaths at the hands of androcentric cultures who refused to understand them; and the women who fought for new definitions of themselves and their experience with the risks of alienation and rejection. Through their struggles, insights, and triumphs we find strength to continue our personal journeys and the Journey of Women that they birthed and nourished.

We also acknowledge our Sisters today who inspire us and urge us in our journeys. We offer infinite gratitude and respect to the feminist theologians cited in this paper as well as those who were not. Their endeavors in retrieving women, past and present, from the oppressive
veil of patriarchy, and their liberating perceptions and insights have offered us the resources to follow the spiral deeper to its center and to our center.

We acknowledge those women who have directly touched our lives and encouraged our journeys. Women like our mothers, whose significance transcends explanation in words, our sisters, who shared in our struggles of "growing up," and our friends, Jean Vrbka, Cindy Stergar, Darla Weisbeck-Munday to name only a few, who have supported us, nurtured us, and challenged us to our depths.

Lest we forget the importance of our Brothers along our journeys, we acknowledge and thank, of course, our fathers, who participated in our creation, our brothers, who shared their Tonka trucks and Matchbox cars with us, and other "Gentles" who have sought to understand our journeys. Most significantly, we thank Dr. William Thompson for his encouragement, patience, and sensitivity to women's quests. He has gained much endearment and respect from both of us.

Finally, with words inadequate, we acknowledge each other. Together we made this paper possible. We challenged each other, worked together, struggled together, and together emerged with a vision that culminates each of our personal experiences with the wisdom and depths of our shared centers. We thus dedicate this paper to each other and to all women who share in the Journey to Ourselves.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL TRACING: THE DESCENT OF WOMEN

"ALL THE INSTITUTIONS OF OUR CULTURE TELL US--THROUGH WORDS, DEEDS AND EVEN WORSE SILENCE--THAT WE ARE INSIGNIFICANT. BUT OUR HERITAGE IS OUR POWER" (Judy Chicago. The Dinner Party [pp. 241-51])

In her creation, The Dinner Party, feminist artist Judy Chicago pieced together a symbolic representation of women's past through the table settings of 1038 historical women. As with much of women's history, the names and roles of these significant women remain unfamiliar to us; their prominence lost in the androcentric telling of "his-story." Still, they represent the foundation of women. They are our sisters, our mothers and grandmothers who slowly and painstakingly fought to raise women from beneath the omnipotent foot of mankind.

To more fully understand a facet of the world it is necessary to trace back to the roots which bore it. We cannot begin to discuss the current movements in feminist theology until we have uncovered pieces of the foundation which necessitated that movement.

To return to the roots of women's story is both a painful and a strengthening process. It is painful in that the events of subordination, alienation, abuse and oppression
are real. The particular events may be over but the ethos behind them remains subtly present, and the scars of the past are still vividly marked upon the women of today.

However, women, as with many oppressed groups, have learned of the strength gained in re-membering our past. As with the Hebrew's exodus, women gain a new understanding and insight into the journeys of our Foresisters and how those journeys continue in the lives of all women today.

In this chapter we shall begin the process of uncovering a portion of women's past. Though our focus is centered primarily upon the spiritual/religious developments of particular times and places, the social, economic and political roles and definitions of women will also be revealed. To understand a culture's spirituality, its relationship to a "beyond," and its definition of that "beyond," lends a great tool to also understanding the social dynamics of that culture.

This chapter will deal with the importance of myth and symbol, the cultural movement from tribalization to urbanization, the emergence and development of Christianity, and the atrocities women have experienced in a male-centered world. Though by no means is this a complete account of women's story, it is a place to begin a new and continuing awareness of women's past. With this knowledge we are then able to create a future that enhances and opens all women to wholeness.
SYMBOLISM, MYTHS, AND RITUALS

Theologian Paul Tillich, in his book *Dynamics of Faith*, asserts that humanity's most ultimate concern is the discovery of, and connection with a "Beyond." It would seem that much of contemporary psychology verifies this assertion. Jungian talk of the collective unconscious, Third Force descriptions of peak experiences, and Roberto Assagioli's theory of spiritual psychosynthesis all point to the human need to go beyond an egocentric mode of reality. It has become apparent that there is more to the human person than simple instincts and the satisfaction of basic needs; also is the potential to actualize all aspects and dimensions of the self. It is this quest for wholeness, this search for meaning that makes for the expression of religion.

Tillich goes on to say: "Man's [sic] ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate." Thus, symbols, myths and rituals, though culturally specific, are universally used to express what is otherwise inexplicable.

As the use of symbols becomes more systematically linked with the entities they express, a powerful momentum begins to build and their authority avows to be implicitly equated with the entities themselves.

Cultural Anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes the relationship between symbol and entity this way:
Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other.5

Hence, the meaning associated with a symbol both transcends the symbol and validates the world view derived from it. For example, the American flag symbolizes more than the uniting of fifty states to form a nation. Implicitly, its stars and stripes also hold the memory of a young nation fighting for its independence, the struggles and triumphs of a people united in a belief, and the message affirming a particular way of life. The less than respectable moments in American history are, of course, forgotten in the glory that the flag symbolizes. Few people recall the deceit and injustices of America's past when the flag is raised and all respond to the patriotic call to stand and honor.

Thus, the flag, as with all symbols, becomes both a model of reality, (perpetuating a particular way of life), and a model for reality, (affirming those who live and believe its message).6

This process is vividly apparent in religious symbolism. "God in 'his' heaven is both a model of divine existence and a model for women's subordination to men."7 The way in which a culture defines its gods reinforces and divinizes the values, beliefs, lifestyles and ideologies associated with that god. God the omnipresent father/king perpetuates and affirms a society in which men, as mortal
father/kings, rule those lower in the patriarchal hierarchy of power and prestige.

The cycle continues; the symbol defining a metaphysics, the metaphysics validating a lifestyle, the lifestyle confirming a symbol, until all are inseparable. To challenge a culture's lifestyle is also to challenge its metaphysics, a delicate place to walk without the shoes of compliance.

Thus far, we have labored to show the ambiguity of symbols, not to invalidate their significance, but rather to reveal their undeniable relationship with cultural limitations. Symbols, myths, and rituals are a necessary part of human life. Symbols give meaning to life. They acknowledge the existence of "something more," and do so in a way that reminds us of our participation in a Universal Force. Myths help to retell the past, thus giving meaning to the human predicament of the present. Stories are told which connect a people to their heritage, allowing them to draw strength, insight, and continuity from their past. Rituals give order to life. They serve to manifest the meaning and messages of symbols and myths in ordinary life.

The essential factor, however, is to realize that symbols, myths, and rituals do not transcend the limitations of culture. They are created by culture and, simultaneously, create culture. This relationship is intimate and often only painstakingly, and even dangerously, penetrated.
It is precisely the power of symbols which feminist theologians dare to challenge. As the cultural roles and definitions of women became androcentrically-defined, the image of a patriarchal god strengthened. The feminist task thus becomes distinguishing between a true understanding of the "Beyond" and the culturally circumscribed symbols, myths, and rituals which perpetuate a patriarchal god and thus, a patriarchal society.

TRIBALIZATION TO URBANIZATION

It is historically evident that where the wealth is, so also is significant power. Obviously, the powerful define their society in a manner which not only proclaims that they indeed hold the authority but also sets a system which assures them the retention of their power. Those alienated from the wealth, and thus the power, find themselves subject to the authority of the laws, roles, and social mores defined by the power class. The relationship that ensues is irrefutably one of oppression and subordination.

Rosemary Ruether in her book, *New Woman New Earth* attributes the socio-economic alienation of women to the cultural move from tribal to urban life. The roles of women and men in tribal cultures were both interdependent and complementary. Survival depended upon each person fulfilling expected duties dictated by gender roles. High mortality rates required the constant utilization of women's
fertile years. Thus, long hunting expeditions, which included the possibility of encountering dangerous enemies, were not feasible for women. Instead, their responsibilities were more family and village oriented.

The livelihood of the clan depended upon women's creative and transformative powers. She transformed the raw into cooked, herbs into medicine, the natural into the useful. She worked with the earth, producing the food that would sustain the tribe when the hunt was unsuccessful. Most importantly, she created the life that maintained the survival of the clan. The significance of these roles offered women both respectability and socio-economic bargaining power.8

Between the third and first millennium this life slowly gave way to urbanization. The consequence of this transition from tribal to urban life lies not so much in a drastic change in gender roles as it does in the transfer of the economic center from within the family to the outside, male dominated world.

As long as the economy was centered in the family, woman had social bargaining power, despite the development of patriarchal political systems that defined her as dependent and rightless.9

Urbanization demanded the development of a political elite, a governing body that would guide, protect and rule its people. Men, whose tribal roles included that of hunter and protector, adjusted quite well to this new social necessity and, in doing so, denied any formal par-
ticipation of women in the decision making body. Whereas a woman's roles remained primarily the same, (the growing and processing of food, the making of clothes and the bearing and rearing of children), her socio-economic prestige lessened.

To justify this male-power elitism, ideologies emerged which reinforced both sex and class distinctions. Women were told they were weak, inferior, and unable to comprehend the complexities of leadership. These ideologies denied the very core of women's self-knowledge. The integration of these androcentric, mesogynist ideologies with all facets of society, (including the political and economic areas, mythology, and the arts), subtly, and often violently, invalidated women's self knowledge and redefined her as inferior and subordinant.

THE DEMISE OF THE MOTHER
CONSEQUENCES OF PATRIARCHAL DUALISM

Feminists' interest in the ancient worship of goddess and god religions has heightened over the past several years. Literature has been, and continues to be written about the roles and relationships of the goddesses and gods. Merlin Stone in When God Was a Woman and Judith Ochshorn in The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine both emphasize the egalitarian relationships between the goddesses and gods who transcended gender boundaries defined by patriarchal societies. The power and authority
of the goddess varied from the Greek Demeter, goddess of law and agriculture, to the Celtic Cerridwen, goddess of Intelligence and Knowledge, to the Mesopotamian Ishtur, referred to as the Lady of Vision, the Prophetess and the Directress of People.12

Consistently, the goddesses of the third through first millenia were ultimately connected with the powers of creation, though not limited to that realm. They exemplified the fertile Earth-Womb which cyclically birthed the substance for survival. The people of this time had yet to realize the connection between sexual intercourse and the bearing of children. The power of procreation seemed to lie completely within the will of the woman. Tribal dependency upon creation, both in the human and natural realms, thus resulted in the revered position of the Mother Goddess.11

The symbolic connection between women, (as bearers of tribal legacy), and the Mother Goddess, (as bearer of the Earth's fruits), would eventually become disastrous as tribal life moved closer to "civilization." Urbanization allowed for a more systematized definition of society. A hierarchy of power was established with the male political elite dictating to those lower in the hierarchy (women, children and lower classes). The previous order of the world could be rearranged to create a new order. Nature was no longer the omnipotent controller but rather something that could be manipulated and conquered.
The issues of control and hierarchy paved the way for philosophies of dualism. As society grew further away from complete dependency upon the unpredictability of nature, succinct divisions were drawn between the natural world and human reasons.

Early Greek philosophy elevated human reason as master over all things. Dichotomies were set up which placed body against spirit, reason against emotion, and the natural against the divine. The implications of these dualisms, together with the conception of women's intimate connection with nature, had devastating consequences for the "daughters of Eve." Women, as the symbol of nature, became another element subordinant to the mastery of men who saw themselves as lords over nature rather than children born from it. The natural world, and all associated with it, became the malevolent dungeon from which men had to escape.¹⁴

Male puberty rites symbolized the deliverance of the boy-child from the natural world, the world of his mother.

[in the puberty rite]...The young male is taught to identify with the male sphere as higher than the female sphere, the place of an earlier, lower self that he has now 'transcended.'¹⁵

Dualistic ideologies not only pitted one sphere against another but also created distinct definitions of the nature of those spheres. Women, irrationality, chaos, evil and the body were understood as different veins of the same root.

The "Sin of Eve" brought all of these together for
the Jewish-Christian tradition. It was she who destroyed the unity of paradise, and her daughters would bear the price of her sin for millennia to come.

I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you. (Gen. 3:16)

The hierarchy was arranged and consecrated by the word of God and to be forever reinforced by men who would not forget that their mothers and daughters, their sisters and lover were indeed the daughters of Eve.16

Not only would men be the masters over women, they also would be rulers of the natural world.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth. (Gen. 1:28)

In essence, the creation myth assured men dominance over the whole of the natural and human world. Additionally, the hierarchy positioned men as the sole receivers of divine revelation. God revealed "his" message to men, who in turn interpreted that revelation to those lower in the hierarchy. The implications of this dualistic mentality, and the hierarchy it implies, would affect all aspects of culture. Especially important for this paper are its effects upon the religious sector, specifically that of the beginnings and development of Christianity.

Christianity did not develop in a vacuum. The effects of urbanization and dualism, as well as the notion of the inferior nature of women, had firmly been established
by the first centuries c.e. The definition and subsequent roles of Christian women did not escape the social ideologies of the time. It is only with this in mind that the plight of Christian women, both of the first centuries c.e. and of today, can be critically understood.

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY: FORMATION OF A MALE-CENTERED CHURCH AND THE ALIENATION OF WOMEN

The importance of Christianity and its place in the telling of women's story lies not only in the effect androcentric ideologies had upon it but also in its role as perpetuator of those ideologies. The process of biblical hermeneutics, as a force which attempts to reconstruct and understand Christianity's beginnings, allows us to step back in time to grasp the full context of a culture and people which so vitally affect the Christian experience today.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, in her book, In Memory of Her, applies a feminist perspective to the process of biblical hermeneutics. In doing so, she offers Christian women today the opportunity to embrace the whole of their Christian roots.

...feminist biblical hermeneutics has the task of becoming a 'dangerous memory' that reclaims the religious suffering and engagement of the dead. Such a 'subversive memory' not only keeps alive the suffering and hopes of Christian women in the past but also allows for a universal solidarity of sisterhood with all women of the
past, present, and future who follow the same vision.17

Feminist biblical hermeneutics then becomes a filtering process, sifting through the cloud of patriarchy which has strategically covered the important role of women in the formation and leadership of early Christianity. These forgotten women of the past give Christian women today the foundation and courage to recreate and continue the vision of their foresisters. No longer are women forced to either completely accept or completely reject androcentric biblical interpretations. The grey area between truth and interpretation widens and, despite the weight of androcentric texts, women can recover a fuller understanding of the roles and positions of Christian women in the first centuries.

Androcentric interpretations perpetuate the marginality of women's role in and experience of the divine. The patriarchal hierarchy attributes to men the role of "middle-man" between the revelation of the sacred and the explanation of that revelation to those lower in the hierarchy, (i.e., women, children, slaves, minorities). Thus, women's relationship with the divine and understanding of ourselves is defined through the middle man, who, because of either ignorance of women's actual roles in the early church or the threat of his own esteemed position, has reinforced the secondary importance of women.18

Re-evaluation of these androcentric texts is imperative
to feminist theology. This re-evaluation helps to set the foundation for the various trends in feminist theology, which will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters. At this point, however, the focus shall remain upon the historical aspect of women's story; that is, the influence and effect early Christianity had upon women.

The active role of women in the early Christian movement can be discerned by the mere recording of their names in biblical texts. At a time when the value and status of women was nominal, the historical recording of particular women's positions indicates that they indeed did play a prominent role in early missionary movements.

Pauline and post-Pauline texts are particularly valuable in uncovering the participation of women in the beginnings of Christianity. These texts not only reveal women's function in the development of house-churches but also acknowledge them as prominent leaders and missionaries who "toiled for the gospel."¹⁹

The practice of missionary partners in the early church allowed for the shared missionary work between women and men. Esteemed titles were given to both men and women; i.e., co-worker (Prisca), mother/sister (Apphia), deacon (Phoebe), apostle (Junia). In addition, Paul uses the verb, ἐργαζόμενος, to labor or toil, in describing women's evangelization as well as his own.²⁰

It is interesting to note that Phoebe, (Rm. 16:1ff), is the only individual in Pauline texts to receive an
official letter of recommendation. She is attributed three substantial titles—sister, deakonos, and prostatis. In translation, however, exegetes denigrate these titles. For example, the translation of the title "Deakonos" in reference to a man reads "minister" or "missionary." When referring to Phoebe, however, the translation becomes "Deaconess" or "helper." Thus, it is apparent that the leadership positions of women in the early Christian movement were significant, despite the slighting of that position in androcentric interpretations.21

For Christianity to survive its infant stage, it had to adapt to the Greco-Roman world. Just as the message of Jesus had to be told in such a way that it spoke to the experiences of the Greco-Roman people so, too, the structure of the early church had to conform to that of the Greco-Roman culture. Thus, the status stratification of the patriarchal household subtly filtered into the Christian community.

The leadership and behavior of women and slaves becomes restricted and defined according to the patriarchal standards of Greco-Roman society so that outsiders will not take offense at their insubordinate behavior.22

The Greco-Roman dualistic mind set, (as mentioned earlier in this chapter), had a definite understanding of the social position of women. For Christianity to be accepted, it had to conform to this understanding, and that it did.

The second and third centuries are characterized
by much internal struggle within Christianity. The question of church authority was a prominent one. By the middle of the third century, however, the teaching authority of the bishop had been firmly established, as had the subordinant role of women within the church.23

Thus, the groundwork was laid. Men had maintained and reinforced the legacy of their dominion—as makers of laws, definers of roles, and revealers of the divine. Not only would their dominion include the Christian community but it would spread with the heightened authority of the institutional church and encompass nearly every aspect of society.

The spreading influence of the church upon society dramatically affected the lives of women, Christian and non-Christian alike. The divine consecration of the dominance of men over women was used to exonerate much of the vicious treatment of women to be discussed next.

ATROCITIES UPON WOMEN: THE MANIFESTATION OF MISOGYNUSTIC IDEOLOGIES

I have gained many sisters
And if one is beaten
or raped, or killed,
I will not come in mourning black.
I will not pick the right flowers.
I will not celebrate her death
and it will matter not
if she's Black or white—if she loves women or men.
I will come with my many sisters
and decorate the streets
with the innards of those
brothers in womanslaughter.
No more can I dull my rage
in alcohol and deference
    to men's courts.
I will come to my sisters,
not dutiful,
I will come strong.

Pat Parker,
from "Womanslaughter"
Womanslaughter

The pleasure of the past is quite simply that it is the past. It becomes abstracted from our lives and is labeled "an event in history," important, perhaps, but nonetheless over. The linear distinction between past, present, and future denies us the full impact of what has preceded us. This leaves open the dangerous tendencies to minimize, justify, forget and, most tragically, repeat the atrocities of history.

Radical feminist, Mary Daly, in her book *Gynecology*, has pieced together the pain of women's past. The re-mem-bering and re-collecting of women's story only begins with the scholarly tracing of women's descent. Still remaining is the task of revealing—the bodies of women murdered by the manifestation of thousands of years of misogynist ideologies. The violent effects of patriarchy upon women includes both psychological and physical scars. It is only after the wounds are exposed that the healing process can begin.

Daly addresses what she refers to as "The Sado-Ritual Syndrome: The Re-enactment of Goddess Murder." She cites Indian suttee, Chinese footbinding, African genital mutila-
tion, European witchburning, and American gynecology as examples of the Sado-Ritual. In each of these atrocities against women, a similar pattern is reinacted.

In the Sado-Ritual we find, first, an obsession with purity... Second, there is total erasure of responsibility for the atrocities performed through such rituals... Third, gynocidal ritual practices have an inherent tendency to 'catch on' and spread... Fourth, women are used as scape-goats and token torturers... Fifth, we find compulsive orderliness, obsessive repetitiveness, and fixation upon minute details, which divert attention from the horror... Sixth, behavior which at other times and places is unacceptable becomes acceptable and even normative as a consequence of conditioning through the ritual of atrocity... Seventh, there is legitimation of the ritual by the rituals of 'objective' scholarship--despite appearances of disapproval. 25

The Indian suttee, or the rite of widow burning, is exemplary of the first step in this Sado-Ritual Syndrome. The widow (usually of, but not limited to, the upper caste), was burned alive on the funeral pyre of her husband in the ceremonious act of "freeing" her from the temptation of impurity. The Hindu restriction against remarriage, together with the belief that the widow was in some way responsible for her husband's death, gave justification to the horrors of this Sado-Ritual. The respectability of the family depended upon the widow's death. 22

Benjamin Walker describes a case in which a widow had escaped but was hunted down and dragged back to the flaming pyre of her husband.

She pleaded to be spared but her own son insisted that she throw herself on the pile as he would lose caste and suffer everlasting humiliation. When she still refused, the son, with the help of some others present, bound her hands and feet and hurled her into the blaze. 26
In the Sado-Ritual of Chinese footbinding, this same theme of purification is present. The young girl's feet were bound in three inch "lotus hooks" in order that she would be marriageable. Physically crippled, she would spend her life confined to home, stumbling from stump to stump. Dependent entirely upon males for survival, she would be "purified" from any outside world contact.27

This torture and mutilation was carried out by female relatives, thus reinforcing the belief that women were to blame for the destruction of themselves and each other. For thousands of years, women were forced to enact the maiming of their daughters, nieces, and sisters in order to satisfy the sadistic, twisted fetishes of men.

Auntie dragged her hobbling along, to keep the blood circulating. Sister wept throughout but mother and auntie didn't pity her in the slightest, saying that if one loved a daughter, one could not love her feet.28

The theme is repeated again and again; expiation of women's impurities, the sin of being born female. Women were "cleansed," (mutilated, disabled, bound, murdered), from all that might tempt her from the will of men. Her entire being was viciously molded to the whims of men who sought to control her physically, psychologically, sexually, and spiritually. And all of it done unsuspectingly through the hands of her sisters and mothers.

African genital mutilation especially demonstrates the notion of sexual control through rituals of clitoridec-
tomy and/or infibulation.* The clitoris, a uniquely female organ, is removed and the girl is "sewn up" to assure her future husband that she will be pure from any sexual activity.

The horrors of this Sado-Ritual are inexpressible. The young girl's sexuality is violently reconstructed to physically and psychologically remind her that her sole purpose is for procreation and the sexual pleasures of her future master.

A testimony by a Guinea woman describing this ritual was given at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women:

The operation was done without any anesthetic, with no regard for hygiene or precautions of any sort. With the broken neck of a bottle, the old woman banged down hard, cutting into the upper part of my friend's genitals so as to make as wide a cut as possible...the blunt glass of the bottle did not cut deeply enough... and the exciseuse had to do it several more times...When the clitoris had been ripped out, the woman howled with joy, and forced my friend to get up despite a streaming hemorrhage, to parade through the town. They were informing the village that my friend was ready for marriage. In Guinea, in fact, no man married a woman who has not been excised and who is not a virgin, with rare exception.30

*Clitoridectomy consisted of the "excising of the entire clitoris with the labia minora and some or most of the external genitalia." Infibulation is defined as the "excision of the entire clitoris, labia minora, and parts of the labia majora. The two sides of the vulva are then fastened together in some way either by thorns or sewing with catgut. Alternatively the vulva are scraped raw and the child's limbs are tied together for several weeks until the wounds heal (or she dies). The purpose is to close the vaginal orifice. Only a small opening is left (usually by inserting a slither of wood) so the urine or later the menstrual blood can be passed."29
Male responsibility for these Sado-Rituals is erased by the use of women as "token torturers." Women are blamed, both as victims and as the victimizers of each other. What is forgotten is that they had no choice. The cultural systems were, (and remain), set up to demand women's conformity to the perverted, misogynistic conceptions men maintained. Women's responsibility to each other meant that either they perform these required Sado-Rituals or they relinquish their sisters and daughters to the realm of outcast where the hope of survival was virtually non-existent. 31

Lest Westerners forgot the atrocities of women that have occurred in our own culture, Daly cites the Sado-Rituals of European witchburning and American gynecology.

Estimates of the women killed as witches during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries vary from the conservative figure of thirty thousand to nine million. 32 Once again, the theme of purification arises. The predominant focus of the witchcraze was upon unmarried women and widows.

The witch-hunters sought to purify their society (The Mystical Body) of these 'indigestible' elements--women whose physical, intellectual, economic, moral, and spiritual independence and activity profoundly threatened the male monopoly in every sphere. 33

Men felt completely justified in ridding society of the "devil's temptresses." In the name of god and mankind, they tortured, seared, hung, burned, and stoned
to death all of those who posed a threat to the patriarchal rule and control of society.

The *Malleus Maleficarum*, (The Hammer of Witches), published in 1486, and the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII, (1484), gave support and authority to all those devoted to the extermination of witches. The fight was a holy one—good against evil. Those who dared to question the righteousness of the cause were deemed agents of the devil and found themselves in the same predicament as the victims they attempted to defend.34

The witchcraze succinctly follows the pattern of Sado-Rituals: the purification element, socio-religious justification of the atrocities; the "spreading" of the Sado-Ritual, (over several centuries and the majority of the western hemisphere); fixation upon details, (part III of the *Malleus Maleficarum* is entitled "Containing XXXV Questions in which are most Clearly set out the Formal Rules for Initiating a Process of Justice, how it should be Conducted, and the Method of Pronouncing Sentence"); the pitting of women against each other, (the accused were often tortured until they revealed the names of other witches); and the slighting or convenient dismissal of the atrocity in "objective" scholarship, (Vol. III of the highly regarded *Pelican History of the Church* is devoted to this time period yet contains a total of only three sentences concerning the witchcraze).35

Finally, the most pervasive yet least acknowledged
of the Sado-Rituals Daly cites is that of American gynecology. Perhaps it is because it is so close to our own experience that women rarely grasp the implications of American gynecology.

A brief look at the motivations and objectives of the "fathers of gynecology" gives an insight as to the underlying ideologies of the gynecological movement.

...in 1848...Dr. Charles Meigs was advising his pupils that their study of female organs would enable them to understand and control the very heart, mind, and soul of women. [emph. ours]37

Gynecological surgery was used to "correct" such dysfunctions in women as hysteria, criminal impulses, insanity, and other disorderly behaviors. In 1852, Dr. Augustus Kinsley Gardner, a pioneer in gynecology, projected his victorious hypothesis that female castration could "cure" women's rightists, Bloomer-wearers, and midwives. That is, any woman who strayed from the path of conventional "female behavior."38

Men strategically placed themselves in the role of Healer, Controller, Manipulator of women's most intimate physiological dimension. At a time when women were beginning to discover and reject the plight of their social definitions, the battle cry for men became "cut it out" and that was precisely what the gynecological movement proposed to do.

The theme of purification is obvious. The "sin of Eve" was to be eliminated and what better way than placing
the control of female physiology in the hands of men. Thus, men not only defined the social, economic, and spiritual positions of women, but also, with the onset of the gynecological movement, they could now dictate the definition of her femaleness, her sexuality.

We have spent considerable time, thus far, reviewing the underside of his-story, both in its development and in the iniquitous results of that development. The story is by no means complete. The tracing of women's descent, the denigration of the Mother and the anguish inflicted upon women is inexhaustible. Often, quite often, the story is too painful to tell. But, tell it we must, for not until we have heard the story of our past, not until we have recognized the pain of our foremothers, can we begin to understand what it has, what it does, and what it can mean to be woman. Once we embrace our heritage, in its agony as well as its triumph, we can begin the process of telling our own personal stories. Our heritage is our power. Through the re-membering of our foremothers we gain wisdom and strength and the knowledge that we can survive.
1 The word "story" is used in place of "history" when speaking of women's roles and significance in the past. "History" is too often "his-story," an androcentric interpretation of the past. For some readers, the word "her-story" may imply the singling-out of women's past from the rest of the cosmic unfoldment. For this reason, we have chosen to simply use the word "story."


4 Tillich, p. 41.


6 Ibid.


9 Ibid., p. 7.

10 See: Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey, and Aristotle's Politics for examples of these ideologies which enforced women's subordinate status.

11 Ruether, p. 8.

13Ibid., pp. 11-13.

14Ruether, p. 11.


16Stone, p. 5.


18Ibid., pp. 49-57.

19Ibid., pp. 161-170.

20Ibid., p. 169.

21Ibid., p. 171.

22Ibid., p. 291.

23Ibid., p. 304.

24More on Mary Daly and Gyn/Ecology to be discussed in Chapter 3.


27Daly, p. 136.


29Daly, p. 156.

31 Daly, pp. 163-164.

32 Ibid., p. 183.

33 Ibid., p. 184.

34 Ibid., p. 189-189.


36 Ibid., p. 226.

37 Ibid., p. 227.

38 Ibid., p. 227.
CHAPTER II
REASCENT OF WOMEN: QUEST FOR AND
REDEFINITION OF THE DIVINE

STORIES

Flow back to your sources, sacred rivers,
And let the world's great order be reversed.

... Story shall now turn my condition to a fair one,
Women shall now be paid their due.
No more shall Evil-sounding fame be theirs.

Euripides

Amidst the horror and sadness of our long struggle through "his-tory," women attempt to dig ourselves out; to refuse to accept what we are told is the only viable way of life. Though the recording of women's stories is hard to trace, some do survive, and are retold. For every event or story recorded, millions certainly have gone unheard. Silent, lonely, women die, while still more are born into the seemingly endless patriarchal structure which spans thousands of years.

Therefore, the beginnings must lie in the telling of our stories. Identity and sanity for women lie in
our listening/telling process: by hearing another's story and seeing our own truth in theirs, or by sharing and gaining support and validation of our own experience from others.

Carol Christ in Diving Deep and Surfacing, clarifies the term "story" to "refer to all articulations of experience that have a narrative element, including fiction, poetry, song, autobiography, biography, and talking with friends."²

The stories we have been told represent a male view of what is real or true, and when women attempt to mold our experiences into the limited, biased frameworks we've heard, we neglect and negate our own true experiences, eventually becoming frustrated, unhappy, or leading a life that does not express our total, true personhood.

Storytelling, or the incorporation of stories as validation and direction for experience, is as much a part of the American culture as it is in cultures more articulate in rituals of the passing on of stories.

From early childhood, American girls are told the Eve story, a horror myth of the very first woman...how could she spoil it for us all? And we are bombarded with bits of the "Perfect American Woman" myth, urged to conform to the image of a magazine-beautiful subservient, man-pleaser who is wrapped in a pink blanket, given dolls and suitable roles, and never quite the same amount of attention as our brothers. Somehow, through these factors,
we should try to get married and live happily ever after. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are subtly and blatantly told variations of this story throughout our childhood and even our adult lives. Many would deny that they've been coerced into such a surface image of existence, we might also deny imposing such a plastic story upon our peers, but the truth is obvious in magazines, television advertisements, high schools and colleges, any mall-full of shopping women, and most every household.

It is a bad story, a very often false story and, inevitably, a destructive story. "In a very real sense, there is no experience without stories. There is a dialectic between stories and experience. Stories give shape to experience, experience gives rise to stories."3

We all live according to stories we've heard or read. Stories provide a map or guide to how we may choose to develop and exist. Therefore, learning others' stories is necessary in order that we may choose which types, or combinations of maps we might follow. A problem arises when the rack of maps at a service station is filled only with maps of California. Not only are we unsure of other options for travel, we have no direction for getting anywhere but California. The very same problem arises when we grow up in today's patriarchal world. Only certain, very limited stories are available to us, and attempts to develop or experience anything new or different leads to confusion, pain, uncertainty, and often turning back
to the well-worn paths already available to us, however inadequately they allow for unique experience.

Occasionally, women step off the worn path and painfully, joyfully define their own experience, create their own stories. Our duty now is to recount those unique experiences and see them as new guides for each of our personal journeys. The beginning of any woman's journey to spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness and integration must be in the telling of our stories.

The search for valid personal experience extends into every person's spiritual quest. "Women's spiritual quest undergirds every moment of women's social quest."[4]

A woman redefining her experience and affirming that as valid may also need to re-examine her definition (men's definitions) of the divine, or what she sees as sacred and powerful. Carol Christ uses Paul Tillich's language of the "ground of being," from which we all receive "powers of Being." She also uses Doris Lessing's ideas of "forces or currents of energy" that direct women's quests. "These forces are the energies of life, death, and regeneration of being, nonbeing, and transformation, which are most obvious in nature, but which also operate in the social world."[5] Once we find identity in the powers of nature, in life and death and new life, we can set a firm foundation and draw strength from the "energies of life." A great deal of strength is indeed necessary in order to challenge and overcome the false stories of our past.
Women are a wonderful, vast resource for each other. Learning and growing in consciousness-raising groups, or even informal gatherings of friends can be one of the most powerful, vital forces in the rebirthing experience. Only with other women, who begin to share their stories, can we start to vision new means of existence, fresh perspectives for viewing reality that are true to our own experience, and a variety of road maps that may guide us, honestly, in our own social and spiritual quests.

**THE JOURNEY**

Women's social and spiritual quests for meaning often follow similar patterns, both in the literature that Christ analyzes in *Diving Deep and Surfacing*, and in real struggles of women in today's patriarchal world. We would like to present Christ's basic format, and then rearrange and add a few adjustments. Her list of the journeying process is as follows: Nothingness, Awakening, Insight and New Naming. We would modify the process to be: Emptying out/Nothingness; Awakening/Awareness/Insight; New Naming/Re-defining; Personal, Social and Political Integration. These phases don't necessarily follow in this presented order and some, (nothingness, for example) might occur again and again. The most difficult step to take in any woman's spiritual journey is the first one. It is often easier to not even embark, to stay home or go to work unhappily identifying with stories that don't fit.
Sonia Johnson describes an analogy in which each of our minds is a giant filebox, or a warehouse full of filing boxes.\(^7\) (I've thought about this so much that I have a distinct, detailed vision of my own filing system in my head. Often I wander up and down aisle after aisle of information and browse proudly or painfully through my knowledge.) Each small bit of stimuli that we are constantly bombarded with is raced down to the files and stored. Often we aren't even aware of all that is being transported in; while a lecture or television show is being shipped in the big front door, factors from our environment (the shining sun or hard chair we're sitting on, or the sexist language of the lecturer) is seeping/drifting in through windows and side doors.

But it is all stored away. And back in a dimly lit corner is a very large, often unorganized file with a tattered weary label: "WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FEMALE IN A MALE WORLD."\(^8\) This file is composed mostly of those subconscious bits of information, and many women never recognize that it exists.

However, it's a very dangerous filebox. It has a limited capacity, and, stuffed with so many unknown bits of information, it may reach a point where one more piece, however tiny, may trigger an explosion. Every little bit of information ever stuffed in that file will be, suddenly, in conscious awareness.

The bursting of that particular file may be the catal-
yst for the beginning of a woman's spiritual/personal journey. Many women are already aware of that file and their journey may be less abrupt, less urgent.

**Emptying Out/Nothingness.**

"Women experience emptiness in their own lives—in self-negation, and in being victim; in relationships with men; and in the values that have shaped their lives."\(^9\)

Whether stemming from a deep sense of knowing, of being a victim for too long, or from a sudden over-whelming burst of filed information, the journey is started with a dull, yet overwhelmingly painful sense of nothingness, worthlessness, invalidity and betrayal. "Experiencing nothingness, women reject conventional solutions and question the meaning of their lives, thus opening themselves to the revelation of deeper sources of power and value."\(^10\)

Sonia Johnson's personal journey is a wonderful, yet pain-filled example of facing the untruths we're all brought up with.

As we've said, this process of change: Nothingness, Awakening/Awareness, New Naming/Redefining, and Integration is not always ordered as listed. Awareness may precede emptying out, or in fact trigger the process. The experience of nothingness doesn't necessarily end with awakening, insight and new naming. In fact, the experience of nothingness may become a constant presence and motivation for continuing the process, never to be completely filled/
healed.

The experience of emptying out physically affects women. As well as being spiritually, emotionally draining, Anne Wilson Schaff, psychotherapist and author of *Women's Reality*, describes the physical emptiness women experience in their "solar plexis." She refers back to Sigmund Freud and Erick Erickson, crediting them with correctly observing that women do indeed feel an emptiness or even ache in their abdomen, but that they were incorrect in interpreting, with male bias, that women longed to be attached to, or "filled" by a penis.

Women do experience an inner space. We never describe it as being in the lower abdomen, however; it is always in the solar plexus. Women use various words and phrases to name it—hole, pit, nothingness, void, "black" space, cavern. We are fearful of it and vulnerable to it...

Our cavern is central to our identity and wholeness, but it has nothing to do with penises and babies. Instead, it is related to the fact that we go from being our fathers' daughters to being our husbands' wives and finally our sons' mothers. It is related to our Original Sin of Being Born Female and our need to look outside ourselves for validation and approval. When we begin to determine who we are from the inside, our cavern begins to get smaller.11

Carol Christ draws a parallel between the experience of nothingness in women's spiritual quest and the concept of "the dark night of the soul" in classical mystical texts. (As also discussed in *The Experience of Nothingness*, by Michael Novak.)12

And while women share in the general human experience of finitude, women's experience of nothingness is more far reaching than men's. Women's
experiences of nothingness begin at birth and continue throughout their lives. What actually occurs in Emptying Out/Nothingness? A distinction we would make between these two terms is that emptying out is perhaps more of a conscious effort to cleanse, and open one's self to the possibility of new grounding, new awarenesses. Nothingness is, as quoted above, something each of us is born with, we feel it in our solar plexes when we're scared or confused. Or we may be suddenly, traumatically confronted by a full file of painful, meaningless lies; we may be numbed, feeling absolutely nothing, thinking perhaps we may never feel again.

One of the reasons women avoid looking at the file, or attempt to fill the void-cavern with food (obesity) or alcohol (alcoholism) instead of looking within is because somehow, by intuition, we know the intensity of the pain. And when it comes flooding in, after a period of numbness, the pain is almost unbearable. Another danger is that one may be swallowed up in the nothingness, lost in an inescapable void, as Lynda, Martha Quest's "mad" counterpart in The Four Gated City.

One important factor in surviving nothingness and moving toward insight or awareness would be the opportunity to share the experience and draw support from other women. Women's experiencing together becomes the fortress or stronghold for progress. Only through mutual support can we give each other encouragement to crawl out of our "dark night," reach out for another's hand, and rise to
fullness and wholeness.

**Awakening/Awareness/Insight**

Awakening often follows the experience of nothingness. Carol Christ compares awakening to a conversion experience where women touch into or are touched by the "powers of being." Through this awakening, women experience a new orientation in the world, and a new sense of self. We begin to find the power to overcome self-negation, self-hatred, refuse to be victims, and experience a hopeful glimpse of alternative ways of existing.

This illumination or enlightenment may be a small ray of hope, just bright enough to show direction out of the "dark night," or it may be a blast of lightening, suddenly illuminating many hidden facets of self and world. Through awakening, the individual moves from a previous state of perceiving and being to a new perspective:

...the movement from conventional notions of the meaning of life to a more direct experience of the 'really real' or ground of being, from ordinary to extraordinary consciousness, from bondage to freedom.15

The frightening consequence of such a spiritual transition is a weakening or invalidation of what has held meaning in the past.

The term "awakening" implies recognition of that which is already present; to wake up to new sources, new possibilities both within ourselves and in the surrounding world. "Awareness" expresses the joyful, renewed experience
of one awakened...of wandering in the warm sunshine after
groping and crawling from a dark, cold cave. Insight
and awareness also imply new capabilities of dealing with
experiences and a starting point for new naming.

In comparing mystical notions of the past with the
awakening experience of women, it is interesting to note
that for men to encounter insight meant stripping themselves
of material goods, removing all egocentric, worldly notions
of power and then becoming open to illumination. Awakening
for women means gaining of or recognition of new powers
never before known. Men speak of giving up of the self
(monastic), whereas women experience gaining of the self.
Rather than surrendering to the powers of being, women
ground themselves in the powers of being, recognizing
new strength, wholeness and communion with the creating
powers at work.

In an ironic way, the forced receptive roles women
have traditionally played not only lead us to the nothing-
ness experience, but they foster an attitude of receptivity,
allowing for openness in the event of an integration experi-
ence, or mystical union with the powers of being. These
traditional roles can be terribly dangerous, self-negating
activities, and it becomes necessary for women to transcend,
gaining a sense of power and self-hood.

The fact that women's traditional roles give them
the ability to be open to transcendent experiences does
not justify enforcing and continuing participation in
roles that in essence have no other meaning for them. It is a complex process indeed...

**New Naming/Redefining**

I led the six or seven young women (11-13 year olds) from our dim cabin into the bright mountain sunshine, all of us feeling the apprehension of the cross country race scheduled for the afternoon.

I felt their excited anxiety, and gently, firmly spoke to them of their strength. Each put on a bandana. We stretched our hands, theirs young and trusting, to the warm sun, asking her blessing and strength. Their bodies absorbed the gift, their bandanas became a symbol for that. We blessed our feet, our lungs and our hearts.

Later, upon the dry mountainside I watch the figures of Joey and Camie pacing their way along the trail. They are far in front of the other young runners, beautiful in their grace and synchronicity against the huge backdrop of the wild mountains.

As each in her own struggle crosses the finish line, bright eyes and glorious voices bubble the news, 'My bandana is sacred, I made it!' They learn to name their strength, claim it and act upon it in bindless ways.

New Naming is a term used to describe women's unique experiences. Once an experience is named, it is in a new form, a narrative form, and can be shared. The sharing, as mentioned above, may provide opportunity for identity, encouragement, or reciprocal sharing with other women.

Two extremes come to mind: In *Beyond God the Father*, Mary Daly speaks of Adam's naming of women and the animals as an example of "false-naming," in which women and the world have been named and are still being named from men's point of view. In the fictional *Wanderground*, feminist
Sally Miller Gearhart depicts a world totally named by women. Women's power in the Wanderground has been freed and expands beyond even the traditional use of words as means of communication. Power is no longer seen as a dangerous tool, but is used in a life-giving, supportive, shared way.

Women naming their experience and claiming a power rooted in the ground of being has potentialities of being a mighty force strong enough to "reverse the world's great order" as quoted from Euripides at the beginning of the chapter. Not only will women's new naming create new possibilities for each other, but it could change the world order that has been instituted and taken for granted in our culture for centuries. We've heard the awesome, exciting murmer from a variety of writers and speakers: "women's speech has the potential to transform the way people view the world."17

Looking backward from the same perspective, women's experiences have not been the basis for writings and beliefs in our biblical tradition. Once women begin the process of rediscovery/recovering our own experiences, we become more and more alienated, no longer able to identify with male images, language and symbols in biblical and other traditions. (The extent to which we can reinterpret, sift out and find meaning and identity in those stories, or the extent to which we would have to reject them is debated among feminist theologians and will be discussed
in subsequent chapters.)

Self-discovery, along with a parallel discovery that basic assumptions of power and reality are rooted in male-centered biblical tradition can be terribly threatening to previous stability in our understanding of the world. Through clarification and articulation of women's experience, new perceptions of the ultimate will arise, or ancient, long buried perceptions will be recovered.

The broad term "women's experience" is more complex than it first may seem. All women share a fundamental alienation from ourselves, each other, and our misconstrued "his-tory." Yet, further distinctions of experience must be made: i.e., black women and white women, rich women and poor women, women with feminist convictions and women not exposed to radical* thinking all have diverse experiences in their womanhood. But giving the general title to all women gives us a common starting place for beginning the long process of sifting, sharing, listening and talking to decide which parts of traditional feminine experience we want to own, affirm, and integrate into a new feminist consciousness.

Women today are creating/expressing new rituals; not only as means to share and express spirituality, but also to share basic experiences. Written stories, oral stories, poetry, sharing of songs, dance, gathering together or expressing alone are all forms of ritual.

*from or getting to the root.
Concrete examples would be women joining together in song and spirit at a concert or gathering; women celebrating nature together, naming the sacredness of their surroundings through hikes, climbing, canoeing, and earth-praise rituals; affirmation of connections through various art forms, all in free expression, perhaps moving beyond traditional definitions of art, song, relations with nature and rituals.

Women's spiritual quest needs to be reinforced with underlying rituals and themes. The underlying sacred story is based on understanding and affirmation of others and self, with a new orientation in the world. It is based on a drive toward wholeness, toward healing the splits between people and nature, body and spirit, reason and emotion, culture and experience.

A most important step in women's re-naming is learning to value everything about being a woman.

Women name the beauty and strength of women's bodies and of their own particular bodies. They learn to value the life-giving potential of their monthly bleeding and celebrate their bodies' connections to nature. Women learn to overcome the 'false-naming' and de-valuing of traditional women's activities like mothering and nurturing. Women begin to see our activities as valuable, as sources of insight, and to recognize our powerful life-giving and nurturing capacities as positive and sacred, as well as developing and valuing less traditional skills (assertiveness, physical strength, leadership, etc.), activities and roles and naming those powerful. We begin to celebrate
our connection with nature and our connections with each other. We begin to value time alone, to cherish moments of insight and self-discovery, growth and healing. In each other we find sources of strength, encouragement and identity that enable us to move ever onward.

A basic root in women's spiritual awakening, as mentioned above, is our deep connection with nature. The earth and all of creation reflects each of our own life-giving power. More than that, in nature we are able to be, free. When in touch with creation, our potentialities are challenged, growth is gently, strongly encouraged, solitude is safely given, and we are inspired with gentle insights.

Many women have written about how a new sense of connection with nature has changed their feelings about their bodies, as well as a sense of growth and freeing of their spirits. A sense of owning, of wholeness, of coming home wells up from within when women reunite with "Mother Nature."

It happens here often: I watch a hawk soar through the morning sky and something falls into place with me. It's as if I travel through a wood long unvisited and recognize trees grown taller with the passing of time. I come upon a thought, an act, a place with a vague sense of having thought that, done that, been there once before. Or I come to a fork in the road and know by some unexplainable sense which is right for me. I walk and uncover or discover anew what I have always known.

Living intimately with nature opens doors to my spirit; the mystery becomes known, darkness
becomes light. The land comforts me, nourishes me—but above all, enlarges my reality and leads me unerringly where I want to go.19

Political, Social and Personal Integration

An additional phase in this spiritual journey of women would be integration. Again, a very, very difficult stage in that women often remove ourselves (by choice, or just as a matter of circumstance) from our usual social setting, gain new insights, perhaps find it necessary to leave behind previous ideals, and then attempt to re-enter the same social sphere we stepped out of. This is not always a literal removal and re-entry, (though physical movement away from usual settings is often a significant and even symbolic occurrence), but represents a putting on of different ideas than our previous norm.

Women in transition may not always be aware of exactly what it is they are experiencing. Moving into the stage of Nothingness, for example, may be a conscious choice, but often is uncontrollable emptying out. Through the process, as we've discussed, women often feel the need to reject original beliefs, or sources of meaning as we gain new insights and the ability to name our own experiences as powerful and sacred.

Let's look at the hypothetical situation of a Catholic married woman who has four children. Through her work she comes in touch with a women's consciousness-raising/support group and begins to explore the dynamics of her own
personhood. The relationship she shares with her husband and children may fluctuate as she questions the structures and value systems those relationships are based on. Through her journey the woman may feel strengthened and encouraged to move on by virtue of the vast energy sources she discovers within herself and in supporting women.

Relating to her family, then, does not necessarily mean turning away or altering her basic love, but as she moves in her growth-filled direction, the family may move in another or not move at all. If she turns to challenge or question the basic structure of her church, (her original source of ritual and meaning), and finds an unbudging, dominant, hierarchical structure, again she may turn elsewhere for new meaning. Searching for new sources of meaning, or finding new sources and leaving others behind, can be terribly frightening, confusing and lonely. Thus, in many, many ways, the journey may be personally anguished. The woman must struggle between her desire to explore and the insecurities she might face in that exploration.

On a larger scale, there exists a struggle to integrate within interpersonal relationships beyond the family. Not only do we look for where we might "fit in" with our new awarenesses, but new naming and fresh insights are often accompanied by the desire to share with others and encourage them to similar pursuits. Sadly, frustration and loneliness can cloud original convictions of spiritual transition.
Another development resulting from this journey is a deeper, more universal sense of injustice that spurs the neophyte traveller onward. Women's eyes and hearts are opened to the earth's riches and abuses she suffers; racial problems; awareness of oppression in subsets of our own group such as battered or raped women, chemically dependent women, poor women, children; world hunger, world poverty, world peace, etc. This leads to involvement in social justice issues on a local or world scale.

Women with new insights focus on a new world view, a new vision for existence, and may feel called to action to make that vision a reality. Such a vision might include the integration of technology, intellect and education with the spiritual, intuitive elements of people. This is a challenge both at the personal and global level.

[Through my own personal quest I have experienced the deep mystical, spiritual, intuitive sacred place that is both inside my psyche and profoundly connected to nature; but also I am deeply committed to my intellectual growth and the ability to challenge others as well as myself in an analytical, strict, and disciplined fashion. Often I feel demanding in my need to cognitively grasp information. It becomes very difficult to integrate both of these extremes in my one person.]

This apparent paradox has additional complications when viewed in a wider social perspective. The question of not only how we can be more personally whole, but of
how we can be more unified with each other and creation needs to be raised.

This focus encourages a new visioning of the social structure as we know it, beginning with our political ideologies. Rosemary Ruether in *New Woman/New Earth* suggests that the "major systems of power in the United States, Russia, and even China would merge together to create a global planned society." 20

She describes a system of smaller local communities run on self-management and cooperation; involving residential groups to share household chores, gardening and child care, while sex-role stereotypes, and traditional concepts of power and domination would be erased.

Ecological revolution is a necessary step in the new vision. It is in nature that the dualistic, overpowering forces first stomp in. The economy would also need to be turned around and viewed in a new, egalitarian perspective. New sources of energy, safe for our environment and our bodies, need to be further developed.

This new vision, in these few scattered segments (to be further expounded upon), seems hopelessly idealistic in its overview, but to those committed to change, a vision is necessary. For women in search of a healthy, integrated world, it is a vision worth pursuing. For only when sex-role stereotypes are broken down, can women gain decision-making power and validity in those decisions. Then, too, can men regain nurturing and compassionate expressions
as valid in the male experience. Shared tasks, in honesty, would allow free individuation of personality, and removal of the power structures would open up new possibilities in all forms of relationships.
FOOTNOTES


3C. Christ, *Diving Deep*, pp. 4 and 5.

4Ibid., p. 11.

5Ibid., p. 10.

6Ibid.

7Dr. Sonia Johnson, Transcript of remarks made at University Forum, Sept. 24, 1982, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska (based on her book, *Housewife to Heretic*).

8Ibid.


10Ibid.


49

15C. Christ, *Diving Deep*.


18Ibid.

19Barbara Dean, *Wellspring*.

CHAPTER III

SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN FEMINIST THEOLOGY

In the following chapter we shall address what we believe to be the significant trends in current feminist theology. We will present three distinguishable trends and four feminist theologians who represent various dimensions of those trends.

For clarity's sake, we have arranged these theologians in "linear fashion, though they are more appropriately understood as different depths of the same spiral; that spiral being women's experience of spirituality.

Joan Chamberlain Engelsman represents the most "mild" of the trends, the "androgy nous vision" of Christianity. Rosemary Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza represent two variations of the "reformist vision" of Christianity, and, finally, Mary Daly represents the "radical, revolutionary vision."

We have chosen these four theologians because they are recognized and respected as theologians and because we consider them to be paradigms of the various trends they represent.

The following overview of trends in feminist theology has two purposes: 1) to show where feminist theology
is today and, 2) to open the doors to the continuation and revision of the Feminist Vision, addressed more fully in the final chapter.

JOAN CHAMBERLAIN ENGLESMAN:
AN ANDROGYNOUS APPROACH TO FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Joan Chamberlain Englesman, in *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine*, bases her analysis of the "feminine dimension" on psychologist Carl Jung's concept of archetypes, and on Sigmund Freud's theory of repression. She traces goddess worship in the Hellenistic culture and throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the biblical tracing she focuses on the figure of Sophia (wisdom) and the repression of the figure throughout the Old and New Testaments. Engelsman also addresses the patristic doctrines of Mary and the Church and Christology and, finally discusses future possibilities for the "feminine" image of God in modern Christian theology.

Archetypes

Engelsman begins by describing psychologist Carl Jung's concept of archetypes and the personal and collective unconscious. Archetypes are ideas, models or symbols that are common throughout cultures and all ages of the world. There are two classes of archetypes, personified and transformative. Personified archetypes can be expressed as the wise old man, the shadow, the animus, the anima,
the mother, the maid and the child. The anima is that part of the male which is the "feminine" dimension, just as the animus is the "masculine" dimension of the female. These ideas are the basis for an "androgynous" model of the human being. Both "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics should be developed in each of us according to this mode. Through the collective unconscious, we draw sources of expression for these different aspects of ourselves. There are certain universal, shared experiences among people in terms of experiencing and expressing both human and divine facets of our lives.

In reference to the expression of a "feminine side" of the divine throughout history, Engelsman asserts that the archetypes once able to be expressed are now repressed, or emerging in disguised forms. There are three expressions of the feminine archetype: the mother, the maid, and the anima, (or the feminine side of the male psyche). Engelsman groups these images into a discussion of one super archetype, The Great Mother.

This archetype of The Great Mother possesses both positive and negative dimensions. She can simultaneously be stable and changing, ordered and chaotic, good and evil. This archetype is revealed in pre-historic goddesses, images of the modern woman, nature, and even the Church, (as the "bride of Christ"). It expresses an inclusive spectrum of symbols throughout the entire cosmos (i.e., life giving symbols, vessels, cities, symbols of women's
work, processes of transformation, and wisdom rooted in the way of the earth). Engelsman concludes that, "because they are part of the archetypal structure of the collective unconscious, mater, anima and maid will always seek expression, whether or not such expression is sanctioned by consciousness."²

**Sophia**

Sophia emerges in Judaism as the personification of the wisdom of God. Differing from the Hellenistic goddesses Demeter and Isis, Sophia has no cult of her own, no independent status. Engelsman mentions the argument of scholars that the Sophia image is linked to the goddess figures before her, but she dismisses this argument by defining Sophia as an archetypal image. Sophia would naturally have similar characteristics to other great goddesses as she emerges from the collective unconscious.

There are two factors, according to Engelsman,³ which contribute to the restriction of Sophia's development and keep her a hypostasis of God rather than allow her emergence as a separate goddess cult. The first factor, quite simply, is the monotheistic element of Judaism. Sophia's power was repressed, especially during the beginning of the Christian era, because she threatened to exist in comparative status to Yahweh.

The second factor contributing to the repression of Sophia was her dichotomization into positive and negative
images. "Folly" emerges as the destructive figure parallel to the more positive Sophia. These negative images attributed to her character reduced Sophia's power. Engelsman cites the books of Ecclesiastious, Proverbs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the writings of Philo as representative of the repression of Sophia.4

Within the New Testament, Christ is paralleled to Sophia. Her role is consumed by God's son: Jesus as logos replaces Sophia. She is then "elevated" (removed) to heaven where she becomes a supplemental figure to God. A few short decades after Christ's death, all Sophia's powers are attributed/transfered to Christ. She is repressed but later, through archetypal symbols, will emerge again.5

The Re-Emergence of the Repressed

Engelsman uses Freud's analysis of repression in describing two ways the "feminine" will re-emerge. First, because certain elements of the "feminine" could not be repressed, they would, in part, remain near the surface of human consciousness. However, these elements would be foreign; that is, separate from the rest of the information in consciousness. Second, repressed information is like a submerged beach ball, always pressing to emerge again, but forced to do so in disguised forms.

Engelsman centers her analysis of the return of the repressed "feminine" in Christianity on Mariology, Ecclisi-
ology and Christology.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is eventually given a long list of suprahuman qualities, titles and roles: For example, the immaculate conception of Mary, her perpetual virginity, her bodily assumption after death, her title Theotokos (Mother of God), and her role as co-redemptrix found in some patristic theologies. Though she was originally given such powers to further glorify her son, she emerged with characteristics previously attributed to Hellenistic goddesses. Mary becomes more than a human being. She becomes the expression of the repressed archetypal dimensions of Sophia and goddesses before repressed. However, Mary retains none of the negative characteristics previously linked with the goddess images (Folly, Sophia's counterpart, for example), and thus, is not the exact expression of this archetype before her.

In ecclsiology, the repressed "feminine" dimension returns with the themes of the Church as wisdom, the Church as Mother, and the Church as the Bride of Christ.

Repression of the "feminine" dimension of the divine in the early church is based on what Engelsman calls "Philo's law of pre-eminence." This pre-eminence (superiority) consistently pertains to the masculine, thus understanding the feminine as "less." Because of this law of pre-eminence," only the masculine and masculine elements could be divine. Early Christians worked through this problem of exclusive masculine pre-eminence in divinity
by giving the feminine attributes of the divine to the Church and Mary, or by turning Sophia into Logos (Christ). But, in all of its returning forms, the goddess image stays subordinate to God, and remains in its disguised forms.

Eventually, the attributes of wisdom linked with Jesus were repressed again in order that Christ might be identified more closely with God the Father. Wisdom is part of the God/Jesus relationship and Sophia is removed, the only bit remaining will be vague traces in the New Testament and the writings of the Ante-Nicene fathers.

New Possibilities

Since early Christianity (especially the first five centuries), the repression of the feminine dimension of the divine has been set. Western tradition accepted Philo's assertion of masculine pre-eminence and, though doctrines concerning Mary, the Church and Christ were elaborated upon, the early fragments of the feminine continued to be unrecognized.

The past ten to twenty years, Engelsman believes, have been catalytic for new awarenesses within this long historical struggle. The realization of the absence of a feminine dimension was recognized especially during the emerging feminist movement of the 1960's. "The result is not so much a raising of consciousness as a raising into consciousness of material that previously has been
represed." Now, according to Engelsman, we can begin to challenge philosophical "givens" and find that they have no truthful basis. We can look at old boundaries and definitions and break free of them. What is happening now, she believes, is a study of past behavioral patterns, and all that has occurred within the past several thousand years. Engelsman asserts that we are at a confusing middle ground: Still sorting out the past, still dreaming of possibilities for the future.

Engelsman cites several areas of systematic and practical theology that will be affected by the changes being born. The areas most affected are those which: 1) emphasized the "feminine" before Christianity; 2) contain elements of the repressed "feminine" after Christianity and, especially; 3) contain trinitarian speculation and 4) question the origin and nature of evil.

Because of the historical struggle with monotheism and the feminine intrusions that emerged to confuse that image, Engelsman feels we could look to the doctrine of the trinity as a resource to rectify the age old problem with a variety of possible solutions. First is the possibility of naming one of the members of the trinity as feminine. She suggests the Holy Spirit since it is the least sex-defined of the members, and because it is often symbolized by feminine images. A second possible solution would be to emphasize the feminine aspect of all three members of the trinity, taking an "androgy nous" approach
to the divine members. This approach would thus draw out the character of Sophia in Jesus' make up, and emphasize, rather than repress, the long held ideas of the feminine in God and the Holy Spirit. Precedents for such theologies are found in the theology of Clemet of Alexandria and in the Odes of Solomon.

Engelsman believes her final suggestion to be the most radical: The addition of a fourth image for God. The feminine image would join the trinity in the making of an androgynous quaternity. Mary seems a likely candidate here, but would certainly be victim of heated debate.

Though these alternatives seem out of reach at present, Engelsman feels certain some new angle will be created to "lift the repression of the feminine; and permit the development of a feminine image of God."8*

With whatever changes evolve, a more accepting vision of the Divine as feminine may channel new attitudes toward Mary. She would no longer have to bear the burden of repressed feminine imagery. A more wholistic image of

*A block to this development is found in the notion of evil. Evil in the Great Goddesses prior to Christianity is combined with their greatness. While they were caring, majestic and awesome, they were also wrathful and vindictive. Because such dualities exist in the archetype of the goddess, they are likely to reemerge in whatever form the new feminine takes. However, with the development of monotheism and Christianity came the notion of one evil, Satan, who took on the negative characteristics previously attributed to the goddess. Any attempt to reunite these characteristics in one wholistic god-image would certainly be problematic.
God would dissolve the Mary issue as a major block between Catholics and Protestants, and be a positive step toward unity.

Another area of change would be to overcome the idea of masculine pre-eminence. Expansion of feminine dimensions of the Divine would then be reflected in the real lives of women who could then feel a strong sense of righteousness and support in pursuing ordination and full participation in the institutional structure of the Church.

ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER:
A CRITICAL RE-VISION OF CHRISTIANITY

Rosemary·Radford Ruether is one of the most important, dynamically thorough feminist theologians of the present time. Her latest book, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, is a concise overview that covers many important, debated issues in feminist theology today. In this book, Ruether traces women's place in history, finding some saving factors both in Christianity and pre-Christian traditions. She carefully describes women's experience in historical tradition, male and female images of the divine, women and creation as dominated and oppressed, and Christology and Mariology. She also discusses new possibilities in ministry and community, liberation of the earth, feminine trends and different patterns of hope for women, men and all the earth.

The areas that we feel are especially important for
this paper are her tracing of sexism and God-language and movement toward a feminist understanding of God/ess; her analysis of Christology and the question of a male savior for women; and her vision for a new earth. Addressing these areas, we believe, will reveal Ruether as a critical participant in the reformist trend of feminist theology.

A Feminist Understanding of God/ess

Ruether, citing archeological evidence, asserts that the most ancient image of the divine was female. The goddesses' life-giving powers were most emphasized; figures with enlarged abdomens and breasts were the human expression of that which gave life and supported agriculture.

We can speak of the root human image of the divine as the Primal Matrix, the great womb within which all things, Gods and humans, sky and earth, human and non-human beings, are generated. Here the divine is not abstracted into some other world beyond this earth, but is the encompassing source of new life that surrounds the present world and assures its continuance. This is the expression in the ancient myth of the World Egg out of which all things arise.

The emergence of male monotheism incorporates these ancient ideas in various ways. God is expressed in terms of the Primal Matrix. "He" is identified with the image of the Ground of Being which, like the Primal Matrix, maintains the idea of a surrounding, life-giving power rather than that of a removed, puppeteer Divine-Source.

When the existence of the goddess (or even the co-existence of gods and goddesses that were not limited by gen-
der-specific roles), is viewed in terms of the overall historical time-line, a sole God with one gender seems peculiarly out of place, almost unnatural with respect to past tradition. The one male God is modeled after a patriarchal ruling class that has emerged. It is possible, according to Ruether, that this new image originated with nomadic, herding societies that lacked a female life-giving, gardening role. Their religion came to be shaped after the hierarchy of their own society. Women became symbolically and literally oppressed. God dealt men as his representative, and with women only through the men. This hierarchy is carried into the tradition of the writings in the Old Testament, and also into the New Testament: "...the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."10

With the existence of male monotheism comes the split of reality into a dualism of transcendent/spirit (male), and dependent/physical (female).

The new monotheistic Yahweh did not simply replace the divine figures of the past. Rather, many of those figures and their stories were assimilated into the image of Yahweh. The goddess Anath or Ashuah is not replaced, as is Baal, but absorbed by, and put into new relationship with Yahweh.

In Christianity, Sophia (logos) shifted to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is given female traits. In Gnostic texts, God is often imaged as Father, Mother and Son.
This androgynous image of God can be found in some Reformation thinkers, as well as mystics from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, and eighteenth century Shakers.

Whereas Joan Chamberlain Engelsman may accept these traditions as solutions to an exclusively male God-image, Ruether does not.

It is doubtful, however, that we should settle for a concept of the Trinity that consists of two male and one female 'persons.' Such a concept of God falls easily into an androcentric or male-dominant perspective. The female side of God then becomes a subordinate principle underneath the dominant image of male divine sovereignty. 11

In this concept, the "feminine" side of God remains partial and subservient without independence, just as women remain in the social order.

We need to go beyond the idea of a 'feminine side' of God, whether to be identified with the spirit or even the Sophia-Spirit together, and question the assumption that the highest symbol of divine sovereignty still remains exclusively male. 12

Though there are examples in the biblical tradition that promise liberation or suggest comparative roles for men and women and even a personal image of the Divine (Abba), Ruether suggests we move beyond these to new images. She has developed the term "God/ess" to express a wholistic image of the Divine which includes both life-giving goddess images, and those characteristics of "God" which are free of gender-linked connotations. This term, however, does not imply the simple addition of a divine "Mother" to the image of divine "Father." Certainly a parental image
of the Divine would be more encompassing than the exclusive male image, as well as being analogous to the source of our being and a groundedness in those who have gone before us. However, there are undeniable, negative implications to this two-parent image. If the God/ess is described as purely parental, our roles in relationship to the Divine would appear to be that of children. Parenting also carries with it the stereotypical male/female roles that are based in patriarchal culture. According to Ruether, we need to start with an imaging of the Divine as a liberating source of life, free from binding associations within our own hierarchical system.

One of the most basic problems we need to rid ourselves of is the concept of dualism which has been firmly set as a measurement for good and evil in this system. We need to cease categorizing and defining everything in terms of one side of the dualism or the other. This process will be much harder than it might at first seem. However, it is imperative that dualistic ways of thinking be eliminated and replaced with an all-encompassing, harmonious vision of self and body, self and world, self and Creator/Creation.

The true imaging of God/ess must be free of the structures we now participate in because they are not of Her/His making. To strip ourselves, and our old images of God/ess and structure and begin anew in a liberating, non-stifling way is our challenge and our duty.
Christology

In her analysis of the development of patriarchal Christology, and even alternate Christologies such as Androgynous Christologies and Spirit Christology, Ruether concludes that all remain basically misogynistic. As long as Christology is male-centered, women will be excluded as representatives of Christ in ministry as well as being held at their subordinate position in the hierarchy. Even in Androgynous Christologies, women are relating to a male Christ with "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. Thus, women still are positioned to represent only the "feminine" side of the male-centered symbol manifested in a male person. However, through their institutionalization, the relationship of the historical Jesus and the Spirit becomes limited by the tendency to discount the humanity of Jesus. Because of this, our personal connection or identification with the Divine is blocked.

To start afresh, in search of a Feminist Christology, Ruether suggests we strip away the traditional masculine imagery of Jesus, and grasp the true implications of his message.

The Jesus of the synoptic Gospels can be recognized as a figure remarkably compatible with feminism. This is not to say, in an anachronistic sense that 'Jesus was a feminist,' but rather that the criticism of religious and social hierarchy characteristic of the early portrait of Jesus is remarkably parallel to feminist criticism.13

Jesus' reversal of the social order, through parables...
and relating to the prostitutes, the poor and the ill, points to a direction of liberation void of previous hierarchical principles. Women are often the lowly to and about which he speaks. At the root of his message, it does not matter if Jesus is male or not. His gender only becomes problematic in the patriarchal social context. Once the redeeming Christ is viewed as a gender-free liberator for all, we can gain true freedom to embody the message and in turn be liberating for others.

A New Vision

Even though there are liberating foundations in the New Testament tradition, equality and redemption on the social level have yet to become a feasible reality.

Equality in Christ has been understood to apply to a new redeemed order beyond creation, to be realized in heaven. Patriarchy, as order of nature or creation remains the underlying assumption of mainstream and radical Christianity alike.14

Christians often believe redemption to be a purely spiritual matter having nothing to do with the world's social systems. Similarly, sin is understood in terms of the individual, and not as a product of social structures. We are taught to reflect upon transgressions committed against ourselves and neighbors, but not in the larger perspective of the societal structures we participate in that perpetuate racism, war, poverty and the oppression of women. Our efforts to improve our selves must go hand in hand with an effort to improve society.
Ruether describes three different traditions of feminist liberation: Liberal, socialist and radical feminism. Each of these, as separate entities, becomes too limited to provide for a total revisioning of society.

But each can be a valuable contribution to a larger, inclusive vision that encourages democratic participation, and values each person as potentially capable of whatever employment or educational opportunities are available. Incorporating the socialist feminism, Ruether adds that:

...we seek a democratic socialist society that dismantles sexist and class hierarchies, that restores ownership and management of work to the base communities of workers themselves, who then create networks of economic and political relationships.

The vision is community based; all members, women and men, would share in the processes of decision making, activity, education, child-rearing and work in such a way that would be compatible with the natural ecological system.

Ruether describes two practical methods for approaching such a system change. First, would be to set up, in its entirety, a separate, complete system flowing in ideological track with the vision. Subsystems such as these have been successful to a small degree, but have inevitably failed to become paradigms for the larger society.

A second method would be to take segments of the overall vision and develop them, in part, within the context of the larger social structure. Examples of this approach
(and indeed these are successful alternatives), would be:

...a communal child-care unit within an educational institution or workplace; an alternative energy system for an apartment building; solar greenhouses for a neighborhood; a women's collective that produces alternate culture for a society.17

The development of these separate segments can be seen as small pieces to the overall world picture that will eventually develop into the new vision. True, this vision is ideological, but parts of it are becoming reality and the idea itself is a necessary and saving direction for our present situation.

Theologically, new visions for the Church would have to be based in liberation for all members; a community committed to challenge and growth beyond the traditional oppressive patriarchal structure. Indeed, some churches are starting at the radical level and integrating feminism into their understanding of the meaning of Church. They begin to use inclusive language for the Divine, they share ministry among the entire community, not just the ordained, and they remain committed to social change. In Latin America, for example, base communities take on the responsibilities of the ordained because there are too few ordained. They often take on communal tasks that otherwise would not be faced by the ordained.

The development of feminist based communities within the Church may range from totally separate groups holding
separate goals from the Church, to groups participating within the larger Church community yet still holding slightly different goals than that community.

A feminist base community is an autonomous, self-gathered community that takes responsibility for reflecting on, celebrating, and acting on the understanding of redemption as liberation from patriarchy. Such a community might take on as many or as few of the functions of Church as they choose. They might range from consciousness-raising groups that primarily share experiences, to groups who engage in analysis and study as well, to groups that also worship together....They might further choose to make their shared spiritual and social life together the base of political action.18

Again, members of the alternate community might still be closely integrated with the institutional Church, drawing on different sources of enlightenment from both and drawing both together.

Ruether's vision, then, has a broad base in that we can be as integrated with or separate from the traditional Church as we choose. The underlying purpose of the vision, to whatever degree it might be pursued, remains to be the re-thinking and re-creating of the patriarchal structures at a root level. Necessary to the re-construction of society as a whole is the formation of supportive base communities that successfully cut through stereotypical gender roles and allow for the liberating development of all people.
ELISABETH SCHUSSLER FIORENZA: A REFORMIST VISION OF CHRISTIANITY

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza received her D.th. from the University of Munster, Germany, and is currently Professor of New Testament Studies and Theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her publications in New Testament exegesis and feminist theology are numerous. However, for the purpose of this paper, we shall refer primarily to her most current and extensive work in feminist theology, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*.

It is precisely because her scholarship is so thorough that we have chosen to evaluate Fiorenza's theology. Her emphasis upon the formulation of a feminist hermeneutics exemplifies the "reformist" trend in which biblical interpretation and exegesis is examined within a critical feminist perspective.

Fiorenza begins with a discussion of feminist critical hermeneutics, its various models and the changes needed to make those models more effective. She then addresses the actual and interpreted roles of women in the early Christian movement, and, finally, presents her vision of a feminist reconstruction of Christianity. To understand Fiorenza's theology it is necessary first to examine the foundation she builds upon and then to trace that foundation into the construction of a feminist theology. It should
be mentioned that we are not attempting an extensive study of Fiorenza's theology but rather an overview that gives insight to that theology and reveals it as representative of the reformist trend. Thus, the particular aspects of Fiorenza that we present should be understood as facets of a more indepth feminist, reformist theology.

Feminist Critical Hermeneutics

As a historical scholar, Fiorenza emphasizes a feminist critique of biblical interpretations and hermeneutics as imperative for the retrieval of Christianity's liberating message. She cites Cady Stanton's writing of *The Women's Bible* as the initial attempt to disengage women from the stronghold of patriarchal monopolization within biblical hermeneutics. Though Cady Stanton's motivation was certainly more politically than theologically oriented, the implications of her work remain vitally significant today. Stanton understood the Bible as not simply a theological reflection on the revelation of God, but also, when used as such, an androcentric weapon reinforcing the subordination of women in all arenas of society, political and theological alike.

Stanton outlined three purposes in her writing of *The Women's Bible*.

i...The Bible is used to keep women in subjection and to hinder their emancipation.

ii...Not only men but especially women are the most faithful believers in the Bible as the word of God. ...The Bible has numinous authority.
iii...No reform is possible in one area of society if it is not advanced also in all other areas. One cannot reform the law and other cultural institutions without also reforming biblical religion which claims the Bible as Holy Scripture...19

Fiorenza's theology follows much the same line as Cady Stanton's political endeavor in feminist hermeneutics. Because theology is not an isolated entity within society, it must be addressed in the whole of the authority it receives. Thus, the Bible, as the source of theological tenets, cannot escape the critical eye of a feminist hermeneutics.

Fiorenza identifies three models of feminist hermeneutics as, first, the neo-orthodox model of feminist interpretation, second, the feminist sociology of knowledge model, and third, a feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation.20 Simplified, these models can be understood using the visual image of a Venn Diagram.* One circle contains the "form" of the biblical texts; that is, its patriarchal influences, androcentric language, and cultural and historical variability. The other circle then contains the "content" or divine revelation and theological essence of the texts.

In the neo-orthodox model of feminist interpretation the circles are mutually exclusive. The form and context of biblical text are understood as existing separately from each other. Thus, the process of feminist hermeneutics

* A Venn Diagram uses the image of two or more circles to represent the relationship of the elements contained in each circle.
is simply to identify the two circles (content and form), separateness; that is, to distinguish divine revelation from the androcentric language and culture which explains it. Inversely, the sociology of knowledge model identifies the two circles as one and the same. The androcentric form of biblical texts is the message. The Bible in its entirety perpetuates a patriarchal metaphysics and thus must give way "...to the construction of a life-center that generates new cultural texts, traditions, and mythologies."21

Fiorenza offers a third model in which the circles of the diagram are neither mutually exclusive nor one and the same. Within the model of "a feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation" form and content intersect. Thus, the New Testament is understood not only as a source of revelatory truth but also as an instrument for the continued subordination and oppression of women.

A feminist hermeneutical understanding that is oriented not simply toward an actualizing continuation of biblical tradition or of a particular biblical tradition but toward a critical evaluation of it must uncover and reject those elements within all biblical traditions and texts that perpetuate, in the name of God, violence, alienation, and patriarchal subordination, and eradicate women from historical-theological consciousness. At the same time, such a feminist critical hermeneutics must recover all those elements within biblical texts and traditions that articulate the liberating experiences and visions of the people of God.22

Within this model, the most vital element is that
of the liberation of women from oppressive patriarchal ideologies and structures which reveal themselves through scripture. Thus, revelation if it is to be true and liberating, can only include those traditions and texts which transcend patriarchal culture.\textsuperscript{23}

Scripture must be understood as a historical prototype open to the assimilation of future generation's human experience rather than a mythical archetype bound in principle and time. A feminist critical method of hermeneutics, therefore, both challenges scripture as a prototype and asserts that only the liberating elements of that prototype can be deemed as revelation. Thus, the early history and theology of Christianity can be reclaimed by feminist through the knowledge that women did have authority and power in the gospel and scripture does hold liberating elements that transcend patriarchal structures and ideologies.\textsuperscript{24}

This feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation sets the foundation for the direction of Fiorenza theology. It is with this understanding that she addresses the New Testament, the early Christian movement, and her own vision of feminist spirituality.

\textbf{The World of Jesus}

Fiorenza prefaces her analysis of the world and message of Jesus with the statement that the Jesus movement can best (and perhaps, only) be understood as a renewal movement
within Judaism.

The praxis and vision of Jesus and His movement is best understood as an inner-Jewish renewal movement that presented an alternative option to the dominant patriarchal structures rather than an oppositional formation rejecting the values and praxis of Judaism.25

This statement presupposes the existence of some "liberating seeds" within Judaism. The Jesus event simply nurtured those seeds while challenging the existing systems and structures which held them dormant. This implies that while the message of Jesus was indeed radical ("reform your lives!"), it was not foreign.

The inclusion of women in the life and vision of Jesus would seem to assert an existing feminist "seed" within Judaism that was allowed to sprout through the Jesus message. The historical foundation for this assertion is vague.26 The impact Jesus had upon this feminist "seed," pre-existing or not, can be historically deciphered only through an analysis of the Jesus message and its consequential effects toward the liberation of women.

For Fiorenza, it is the "basileia vision of Jesus as the praxis of inclusive wholeness"27 which holds liberating hope for women. Jesus' basileia (kingdom, empire) vision expressions not a rejection of the Judaic thought of his time but rather a shift in emphasis.

While John announces God's judgement and wrath preceding the basileia and eschatological restitution of Israel, Jesus stresses that, in his own ministry and movement, the eschatological salvation and wholeness of Israel as the elect people of God is already experientially available.28
The **basileia** was an all inclusive celebration. The shift is made from the Pharisaic vision of the elect holy (male officiants) eating their ritualized, purified meal together to the **basileia** vision in which all people, the sinners and the holy alike, are invited to participate in table-sharing, the "wedding feast," the "royal banquet."\(^{29}\)

Fiorenza agrees with other exegetes in affirming that Jesus preached the **basileia** of God as both present and yet of the future. However, she adds that the tension between present and future, between brokeness and wholeness, must be examined within the contextual setting of the day; that is, who were the broken people that Jesus spoke to?

The reoccurring motif of the earliest gospel emphasize three distinct groups as the inheriters of Jesus' **basileia** vision: "1) the destitute poor; 2) the sick and crippled; and 3) tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes."\(^{30}\)

Fiorenza gives particular attention to this third group. Though exegetes readily acknowledge the moral implications of the inclusion of this group of social derelicts, they tend to ignore the social implications of such an inclusion.

The phrase 'tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes,' ...characterizes not just a morally reprehensible group of people but even more a class so destitute that they must engage in 'dishonorable' professions in order to survive.\(^{31}\)

In the case of prostitutes, there appears the tendency,
(which continues today), to view them simply as "sinners," as fallen from the path of righteousness. What is so imperative to realize, however, is that prostitutes were dictated their role and position by society.

Prostitutes usually were slaves, daughters who had been sold or rented out by their parents, wives who were rented out by their husbands, poor women, exposed girls, the divorced and widowed, single mothers, captives of war or piracy, women bought for soldiers...32

In short, prostitutes were (and remain today), women alienated from their proper niche within patriarchal society and scorned by the same people who enjoyed their "profession." The inclusion of these women into Jesus' basileia vision is a significant statement toward the liberation of women and all socially outcast groups. Jesus set a special place at his table-sharing for the victims of societal injustices. His acceptance of the socially marginal reveals not only a sensitivity to the human condition, (the need to be healed, to be drawn toward wholeness), but also an awareness of the "social sins" which perpetuate the brokeness of bodies, minds and spirits.

Fiorenza, thus, embraces the Jesus message as the in-breaking revelation of a liberating vision for women. Though not without struggle, not without confrontation, the basileia Jesus spoke of seeks to heal both individually and collectively the brokeness of existing social and religious "illnesses" (i.e., institutions, ideologies,
As a feminist vision, the basileia vision of Jesus calls women without exception to wholeness and selfhood, as well as to solidarity with those women who are the impoverished, the maimed, the outcasts of our society and church.33

The Early Christian Missionary Movement

The early Christian movement, when juxtaposed with the Jesus message, must reveal a continuity with the liberating elements of the basileia vision in order for feminist theology to retrieve a historical foundation that will challenge the past and present androcentric facets of Christianity. Through commendable historical scholarship, Fiorenza attempts to reveal this continuity between the message and praxis by tracing the position of women within the early Christian missionary movement. An examination of the initial missionary movement, the development of house churches, and the growing influences and eventual consequences of patriarchal codes helps to outline the evolving, (or perhaps, dissolving) participation of women within the ranks of Christianity. Though Fiorenza acknowledges the limitations of using biblical text (Acts, Pauline, and Post-Pauline literature) for this task, she nonetheless is able creatively to reconstruct a vision of women within early Christianity.

Paul's use of language to describe the particular titles and positions of both men and women within the Christian missionary movement reveals that women did indeed
play an active role in the leadership and discipleship of that movement. Women such as Phoebe, Prisca, Apphia, and Junia were not simply the helpers of men but actually played significant leadership roles in the spreading of the Word and the organizational development of Christianity.

Also, the practice of missionary partners allowed men and women to come together in shared responsibility as co-workers for the Christian message. There is no indication that the male maintained superior authority over his female co-worker or that she was simply his assistant or helper. Rather, both worked together and received equal teaching authority.

The initiation of house churches offered a unique opportunity for Christian women to participate in another facet of Christianity. House churches allowed for the space, communal support, and leadership needed to nurture the growing organization of the missionary movement. Paul mentions several women as founders and maintainers of various house churches. The mistresses of these house churches were usually women of wealth (widowers, perhaps), who sought the opportunity to participate meaningfully and authoritatively in the Christian movement.

This practice of house churches would become increasingly significant with the developing structure of church leadership and authority. As Christianity expanded, so did its need for a central, authoritative body. This
body or administrative council consisted of chosen women or men presbyters who were usually also of house churches. An overseer/bishop was then chosen from among this body as the presiding administrator. It seems as if the position of overseer/bishop was rotated among the various other presbyters of the council. Thus, "women presbyters who were heads of households and house churches...must have taken for granted that they were also eligible for the function of overseer/bishop.38

However, at this same time the patriarchal codes of the Greco-Roman households began their disastrous penetration. Though women presbyters were still allowed to teach and preach, their message was now to be limited to other women, only. The supreme authority of the male could not be threatened by the teaching privilege of women. This ultimately denied women any opportunity to attain the position of overseer/bishop since only men had the right to teach and direct other men.39

Leadership in the community still consists of male and female heads of households, of male and female presbyters, of fathers and mothers, but their functions are defined and limited according to the status stratifications of the Greco-Roman household and society.40

During the second century the shift begins from local leadership to a centralized, authoritative office, and by the mid-third century, "the teaching authority of the bishop was so well established that it seems to have become the rule."41 The end result, as Christian women painfully
know, is the alienation of women from the authoritative, controlling body of Christianity.

Patriarchalization of the early Christian movement and ascending of the monarchial episcopacy not only made marginal or excluded women leaders in the early church but also segregated and restricted them to women's spheres, which gradually came under the control of the bishop.42

And so it remains today, only more deeply engrained with nearly two thousand years of patriarchal Christianity enforcing the subordinate position of its women members and reassuring us that "this is the way it has always been done." Fiorenza's historical probe and use of critical feminist hermeneutics reveals that this is not "the way it has always been done." The active participation of women in both the life and basileia vision of Jesus, as well as within the early Christian movement, dissipates the myth of male supremacy and exclusivity. For Fiorenza, the knowledge that our Foresisters broke bread with Jesus and carried that healing tradition to the ears of the broken and disheartened gives not only a foundation but also strength to her vision of the future.

Feminist Vision

Fiorenza names women as the "paradigms of true discipleship." The gospel of Mark identifies the true disciples as those, first, open to the transforming, healing power of Jesus and then willing to embrace the struggle, the "suffering," that follows that transformation. Within this suffering motif it is the greatest who shall become
least, and the least the greatest. It will be the servants, the outcasts, the oppressed, the women who embrace the vision of Jesus.

...while the circle of the twelve male disciples does not follow Jesus on his way to the cross for fear of risking their lives, the circle of women disciples exemplifies true discipleship.43

The women already knew what the cross was about. They had been the suffering servants all of their lives. The basileia message of Jesus offers them a vision beyond the cross and thus there is no hesitation to follow it. The men, on the other hand, feared for their lives (their positions, their prestige, their wealth, their authority). They had to first embrace the cross before they could understand its transformative power.

In the Fourth Gospel, too, there is this emphasis upon service and love. The inclusion of women within the Johannine gospel is significant. The gospel begins and ends with a story about women (Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary of Bethany). The story of the Samaritan woman, the four women who stand under the cross, the prominent role of Mary Magdalene, and the story of Martha and Mary all present images of women as not only vital to Jesus’ message but also to the manifestation and implementation of that message.

Thus, for Fiorenza, the biblical significance given to women as open to the receiving and understanding of Jesus' message reveals them as the true disciples. The
gospel stories present women as "integral parts of Jesus' alternative' praxis of agape and service" and in doing so offer all women, of the past, present, and future, the opportunity to share in that alternative praxis, that liberating vision.

The feminist theology of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza can best be concluded in her own words:

A feminist Christian spirituality, therefore, calls us to gather together the ekklesia of women who, in the angry power of the Spirit, are sent forth to feed, heal, and liberate our own people who are women. It unmasks and sets us free from the structural sin and alienation of sexism and propels us to become children and spokeswomen of God. It rejects the idolatrous worship of maleness and articulates the divine image in female human existence and language. It sets us free from the internalization of false altruism and self-sacrifice that is concerned with the welfare and work of men first to the detriment of our own and other women's welfare and calling. It enables us to live 'for one another' and to experience the presence of God in the ekklesia as the gathering of women. Those of us who have heard this calling respond by committing ourselves to the liberation struggle of women and all peoples, by being accountable to women and to their future, and by nurturing solidarity within the ekklesia of women. Commitment, accountability, and solidarity in community are the hallmarks of our calling and struggle.

MARY DALY:

A POST-CHRISTIAN REVOLUTIONARY

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word, "revolt," as "to turn away in disgust or revulsion." In this way, Mary Daly can be defined as a radical revolutionary. She rejects Christianity as not only hopelessly
patriarchal but also as a primary contributor to the continued demise of women.

Daly represents a trend in feminist theology which "revolts" against Christianity and the whole of the patriarchal world. As with most radical revolutionaries, there exists the tendency to undermine Daly as extremist and fanatical, and therefore unworthy of valid "scholastic," "rational" examination. We feel, however, that Daly not only merits discussion but also contributes an invaluable dimension to feminist theology. She demands respect both as a Foresister who broke the ground for the development of feminist theology and as a Sojourner who has traveled the road of patriarchal scholarship and dared to emerge with a vision so radical that it shakes the very essence of humanity.

Her book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, (1968), helped to build the foundation for contemporary feminist theology. Though Daly openly refutes her early publication, still it remains a significant contribution to the developing study of women's spirituality. In *Beyond God the Father*, (1973), Daly revealed her evolving theology and, in doing so, urged the expansion and refinement of a feminist vision. It is her most recent publications, however, in which Daly offers her most radical vision of feminism. In speaking of her book, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Daly states:
This book voyages beyond Beyond God the Father... Going beyond Beyond God the Father involves two things. First, there is the fact that be-ing continues... This book continues to Spin on, in other directions/dimensions... Second, there is some old semantic baggage to be discarded so that Journeymers will be unencumbered by malfunctioning (male-functioning) equipment.46

For our purpose, we will rely upon Daly's post-Christian insights expressed in Gyn/Ecology. As a representative of, and trail-blazer in, the radical, revolutionary trend of feminist theology, Daly proposes an uncompromising critique of Christianity, its consequential effects and perpetuation of androcentric culture and ideology, (i.e., the atrocities discussed in Chapter I), and the radical vision of her post-Christian "voyage beyond."

It must be mentioned that this "voyage beyond" demands a break from ordinary, (that is, common, patriarchially ordered), language and thinking. To foster this break, Daly recreates the use of language. She names women with words of the past (Crone, Hag, Spinster, Fury), transcending their negative connotations and embracing the power of their origins. Though this new, woman-centered language may be distracting for some readers, we feel it imperative to continue Daly's language in the analysis of her theology and vision.

**Myths of Procession**

Daly cites the "myth of procession" as the foundational ethos upon which Christianity was built. In this symbolism there is a break from the Source, (a "birth" into the
mundane), an existence separate from that Source, and finally, a return (ascension), back to the Source. Within Christian theology, the "Son" proceeds from the "Father," and the "Holy Spirit" in turn proceeds from the "Father" and "Son." In addition, all people will proceed back to this triune upon completion of this world's separation from the Source and the in-breaking of the End.47

Beginning from the male godhead, the masculine triune is created. It is the "Father"/Source who thinks into existence creation, and from whom all things proceed. The female element is completely nullified:

'The Processions of Divine Persons' is the most sensational one-act play of the centuries... Here we have the epitome of male bonding... The perfect all-male marriage, the ideal all-male family, the best boy's club, the model monastery, the supreme Men's Association, the mold for all varieties of male monogender mating.48

This cosmic masculine Procession then becomes the paradigm for the continued "creative" powers of men. It is men who create the world, create women, and create the ideologies and institutions which remind women of the "creative" authority of men.

This procession myth, as with all patriarchal myths, alienates women from the experience of Ourselves. The doors to the Otherworld are locked and the sole key is held in the hands of the patriarchal myth. Thus, women's Journey to the Otherworld, to Ourselves remains defined and regulated by the patriarchs.49
Christianity's Continuation of the Patriarchal Myth

The patriarchal myths expand and progress, thus continuing the nullification of women's power and experience. The Christian myths/symbols of the trinity, the cross, and the virgin birth exemplify this procession of the patriarchal myth.

Daly cites the Triple Goddess in early mythology as a primary source in which the Christian trinitarian symbol was derived, contorted, and reversed to continue the illegitimatation of women.

The presence of the Triple Goddess is evident in much of early mythology and pre-historic culture. For example, the Triple Goddess of Greek mythology is identified as Athena; in Libya she is Neith; in pre-Hellenic mythology she is identified as Hera-Demeter-Kore; and in Irish myth she is called Eire, Fodhla, and Banbha.50

As patriarchy became the dominant societal structure, a common means of legitimation of this transition from gynocentric society was forcible marriage of the Triple Goddess, in her various forms, to a trinity of Gods. Thus Hera was taken by Zeus, Demeter by Poseidon, Kore by Hades.51

Other similarities between the mythology/symbolism of the Goddess religions and that of the Christian trinity are also apparent. Euryrome, (the Goddess of All Things), of the Pelasgian creation myth, is said to have become a dove and laid the Universal Egg. In Sumeria, Eurnnome was known as Iahu or "exalted dove," a title later passed onto Yahweh. This symbolism of the dove was then eventually
attributed to the Third Person of the Christian trinity, the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{52}

The patriarchal assimilation and reversal of the Goddess image seems apparent. The Christian trinity did not emerge from a Cosmic Knowledge but rather from the androcentric appropriation of the Triple Goddess and gynocentric imagery.

Similarly, Daly links the Christian symbol of the cross to that of the Tree of Life which belonged to the cults of the Great Mothers.

...cosmic energy is symbolized in the Tree of Life, the Sacred Tree, which is the Goddess... This Cosmic Tree...is the deep Background of the christian cross, the dead wood rack to which a dying body is fastened with mails.\textsuperscript{53}

Once again the Life-Giving, Creative Power of the Goddess, (of women), is dismissed and reversed through the patriarchal myth to a symbol of death, to a torture cross. Christ becomes the Tree of Life and, moreover, its sap, its juice, its power. Christians are told they must drink of this juice ("drink of my blood"). Thus, the Goddess symbol is not only contorted but it is also "consumed." Through the hands of the priest the sap, (the "blood" of Christ), is distributed and the Goddess is devoured.\textsuperscript{54}

The procession of the patriarchal myth and consumption of the Goddess continues in the Christian credo of the "virgin birth." "In order to become the Goddess, the male god, manifested in Christ, had to be reborn."\textsuperscript{55} Follow-
ing the theme of the Dionysus myth (in which the "pre-existing" Dionysus is reborn from Zeus' thigh), the sempiternal "Word" is reborn from the father-god in "Christ Incarnate." The third person of the trinity informs Mary that it is her womb that will house this mystical transformation, which is so sacred that her virginity will remain intact.56

It should not be imagined that Mary had any real role in this conception and birth. Although some christians like to call the 'virgin birth' a paradigm of parthenogenesis, it is not that...for in the myth of the Virgin Birth, Mary does nothing, whereas in parthenogenesis the female accomplishes everything herself.57

Mary, as the representative of all women, is stipped of her participation in creation, her integrity, and, in essence, her humanity. She is made into "little more than a hollow eggshell, a void waiting to be made by the Male."58 Mary becomes the symbol of the conquered Goddess, the Total Rape Victim who gives her unqualified "consent" to the will of the father-god. For this "consent," she is graciously compensated with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. She was born free of "original sin" in order that she may "stainlessly" birth the son who would save her and whom she would piously adore.59

Daly goes on to explain the expansion and extension of the Christian myth into all arenas of Western culture. "The fact is that the symbols of christian and prechristian patriarchy permeate Western culture and are actively promoted by Western technocracy."60 An example of this permeation is evident in the "Goddess murdering"/"male-controlling"
messages found in children's stories. For instance, Shel Silverstein's, The Giving Tree, a contemporary children's best seller, retells the story of the dismemberment and taking of the Goddess, the Tree of Life. In the story, a young boy develops a "relationship" with the tree, (consistently referred to as "she"). Initially, he discovers her shade, fruit and leaves, but as the boy grows, he finds her various other "uses." By the time the boy is an old man, all that is left of the tree is a stump, which he promptly uses as a seat. Through it all the tree remains "happy" in her non-reciprocated giving and "necessary" dismemberment. Regardless if the author realizes the patriarchal, Christian myth he is perpetuating, the message remains the same; the demise of the Goddess, the masochistic giving of women's selves to the sadistic pleasures of men.61

This message of women's unprotested self-sacrifice for men continues in adult "entertainment." Women are portrayed as the wives, lovers, secretaries, and servants of men. They are valued only insofar as they "give" themselves to men, care for men's children, and cater to the needs and desires of men.

Thus, the power and authority of the "Christian myth" does not end in the institutional religion, but rather carries over to the secular, Christian or not, faction of culture. Christianity not only assimilated the pre-historic patriarchal myth but also is responsible for the
permeation of that myth into the emotional, psychological, and spiritual depths of women, men and children. For this reason, Daly concludes, Christianity must be ultimately abandoned by feminists as a primary courier of patriarchal tidings.

"Spinning Cosmic Tapestries"

I have dreamed on this mountain
Since first I was my mother's daughter.
And you can't just take my dreams away
Not with me watching.

You may drive a big machine
But I was born a great big woman
And you can't just take my dreams away
Without me fighting...

No you can't just take my dreams away

Holy Near
From "Mountain Song"
Imagine My Surprise
(Redwood Records)

In the Spinning of Cosmic Tapestries, Woman's Dream is fully, passionately embraced. Daly's "voyage beyond" patriarchal Christianity takes her to a woman-identified, woman-centered Space. The dream is named and brought to life through the Spinning and Weaving of Crones, Hags, and Spinsters. Daly's vision is one of "gynergy" in which the patriarchal, Christian myth is not so much dismantled as it is simply "left behind." The power of this vision lies within the Journey itself; it is a Journey to women's depths, to Ourselves; the Spiraling procession back to our essence.
This "Labyrinthine Journey of Ecstasy" begins with the Sparking of Female Friendships:

Sparking means building the fires of gynergetic communication and confidence. As a result, each Sparking Hag not only begins to live in a lighted and warm room of her own; she prepares a place for a loom of her own. In this space she can begin to weave tapestries of her own creation. With her increasing fire and force, she can begin to Spin. As she and her sisters Spin together, we create The Network of our time/space.62

It is through this bonding of women, this Sparking of the Female Flame, that we are able to address the "Spooks" (the ghosts, the "invisible and almost insensible presences"63) of patriarchy. These spooks are present in all facets of patriarchal culture. They create our language, define our roles, and set us against each other with a tokenism that defines us as each other's enemies.

Women must break the spell of the patriarchal spooks in order that we may begin Spinning our own tapestries. Radicalizing patriarchal language will not do: "...for example, the use of the pronoun she to refer to the christian god within the context of christian religious services."64 Instead, a new gynergetic language must be created in which we name ourselves, our power, our connection with each other, and our unique experiences.

We need only to recall the shaking experience of being deemed "unwomanly" or "anti-male" to realize the power of these words which not only fail to truly define us but also attempt to destroy our identity. Hags learn
to "spook back" these messages, to protect ourselves from the invisible poison of patriarchal language, philosophy, rituals, and theology.65

This journey through the spooks of patriarchy strengthens the bond between women. "...Their friendship is possible because they have come out from the male-imposed veils/covers/identities, sparking forth their Selves."66 Within the Sparking of Female Friendship, we name each other as co-Sojourners along the Journey to Ourselves. This coming together of women as friends and sisters differs radically from the male notion of brotherhood/comradeship. Whereas the brotherhood/comradeship of men is epitomized in the male bonding experienced in war, (J. Glenn Gray writes: "...they [men] can be caught up into the fire of communal ecstasy and forget about death by losing their individuality..."67), women's bonding/sisterhood is experienced not in the "losing of individuality" but rather the joining of Selves. In women's bonding, identity/Self is not lost but rather expressed, dis-covered, created. This drawing together of Selves is also a vital part of the Lesbian experience. "A Spinster/Lesbian can be and often is a deeply loving friend to another woman without being her 'lover,' but it is impossible to be female-identified lovers without being friends and sisters."68 The male-defined erotic love in which identity is lost is, thus, nonexistent in women's experience of bonding (whether that be sexual or not).
This Flame of Female Friendship is the ultimate threat to the patriarchy, to men. "He knows that he has everything to fear from the combination of even two or three Sparking Female Selves, for Sparking Spinsters confirm each other's sense of reality, burning through his lies." In women's discovery of Ourselves, the perversions and lies of patriarchy are revealed and the defining power/control of men is forever destroyed.

Part of this Journey demands that women move outside the realm of patriarchy, that we expand the "room of our own." Daly names this expansion as "separation." Derived from the Latin se, (apart), and parare (to get ready, set, to pare), separation/separatism is the "paring away" of all things alien to women's experience of Self. Women's experience of Ourselves is expanded through our bonding with each other, and all things alien to or in violation of that experience are pared away.

Each woman sees her own knowledge of reality confirmed in her sister. The possessors' spell is broken. Their prisons are reduced to ashes as these Sparking Selves energize and re-energize each other, giving each other the incendiary incentive.

After "spooking back" the patriarchal myth and Sparking the Flame of Female Friendship, women are able to begin the Spinning of Cosmic Tapestries. "Spinning implies spontaneous movement, the free creativity that springs from integrity of be-ing." The Spinning of Spinsters is comparable to the movement of an "eddy;" defined as
"a current of air or water running contrary to the main current." The Spinster continues her "contrary" Spiral toward her Center. Because her movement challenges the flow of the "main current," she will not be without struggle, or, what Daly calls, "the earthquake phenomenon."73

There will be moments during the Crone's Journey when, as she is traveling, Spinning her web, suddenly the earth opens beneath her. She must think quickly and react precisely in order to escape the gaping abyss prepared to swallow her.

She holds fast until the horror passes, converting the necessary effort of resistance into increasing assertion of her energy and discovery of latent powers... She knows that the greatest peril would arise from ceasing to Spin. Spinning is Surviving (Superliving). Ceasing to Spin is subviving.74

And she does Survive. She moves from ignorance, (Latin ignorare: Not to know), to innocence, (Latin in-no-cere: Not hurt, injured). The Otherworld Journey allows women to "know" Ourselves, to leave behind patriarchal definition of our be-ing, and then, to embrace our "innocence," our health, our wholeness.75

Daly's vision of radical feminism encompasses the entirety of women's essence. The Journey is traveled to Ourselves, to our experience, to the Otherworld dichotomized by patriarchy. As Hags, Crones, and Spinsters, we re-name and re-create Our world through the bonding of sisters along the Journey. The world is turned upside down and patriarchy falls away.
In the beginning was not the word. In the beginning is the hearing. Spinsters spin deeper into the listening deep. We can spin only what we hear, because we hear, and as well as we hear. We can weave and unweave, knot and unknot, only because we hear, what we hear, and as well as we hear. Spinning is celebration/cerebration. Spinsters Spin all ways, always. Gyn/Ecology is Un-Creation; Gyn/Ecology is Creation.
FOOTNOTES


2Ibid., p. 31.

3Ibid., p. 75.

4Ibid., pp. 74-120.

5Ibid., pp. 120-121.

6Ibid., p. 139.

7Ibid., p. 150.

8Ibid., p. 153.


101 Corinthians 11:3,7.

11Ruether, p. 60.

12Ibid., p. 61

13Ibid., p. 135.

14Ibid., p. 214.


16Ibid., p. 232.

17Ibid., p. 233.

18Ibid., p. 205.

20 Ibid., pp. 14-36.

21 Ibid., p. 21.

22 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

23 Ibid., p. 33.

24 Ibid., pp. 33-36.


27 Ibid., p. 118.

28 Ibid., p. 119.

29 Ibid., pp. 119-120.

30 Ibid., p. 122.

31 Ibid., p. 127.

32 Ibid., p. 128.

33 Ibid., p. 153.

34 See Chapter I, subtitle: "The Beginnings of Christianity: Formation of a Male-Centered Church and the Alienation of Women."

35 Fiorenza, pp. 169-172.

36 Ibid., p. 169.

37 Ibid., pp. 175-183.

38 Ibid., p. 290.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., pp. 290-291.
41Ibid., p. 303.
42Ibid., pp. 309-310.
43Ibid., p. 319.
44Ibid., p. 334.
48Ibid., p. 38.
49Ibid., p. 46.
50Ibid., pp. 75-76.
51Ibid., p. 76.
52Ibid., p. 76-77.
53Ibid., p. 79.
54Ibid., pp. 80-81.
55Ibid., p. 83.
56Ibid.
57Ibid.
58Ibid.
59Ibid., pp. 84-85.
60Ibid., p. 89.
61Ibid., p. 90.
62Ibid., p. 320.
63Ibid., p. 317.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION:
CRITIQUE/VISION

"i found god in myself
and i loved her fiercely"

Ntosake Shange

for colored girls who
have considered suicide/
when the rainbow is enuf

Ntosake Shange's statement is precisely what feminist theology is about; transcending the bounds of patriarchal definitions of ourselves, our gods, and our world, and discovering the presence of the true Divine within.

Throughout this paper, we have traced the descent of women and the atrocities that have resulted because of that descent. We have explained woman's struggle to break the powerful, controlling chains of a patriarchal world, a world that tells her that her strengths, her insights, her dreams and goals are secondary to those of men. Through the dismantling of the patriarchal chain, she is able to discover the depths of herself, to find the Divine within, and to love her fiercely.

The trends in feminist theology present a variety of definitions of "the problem" (that is, the position
and interpretation of women within Christianity), and ways or visions in which that problem is eradicated.

Though our respect for these theologies and the women who have struggled to develop them is immense, we feel a critique is necessary to address the areas in which we think they fall short of a truly liberating vision for women. Because feminist theology is a living, growing movement, it must constantly challenge itself to deeper levels scholastically, personally, and socially.

We believe in the strength of feminist theology to openly confront challenges and to assimilate new, liberating insights. We also believe in the vision that we will present following our critique. The vision we offer is derived directly from our experience; that is, our experience of several years of research and growing insight into the women's question, our experience, both individually and collectively, of women's bonding and women's power, and our experience of being women in a male-defined world. As unique individuals, there are places where our experiences do not meet. Because of this, there are also places within our vision that remain separate. At their cores, however, our individual visions remain intimately intertwined. It is this sharing of a common spirit, a common "language," that has enabled us to come together and speak into existence our vision of the liberation of women spiritually, socially, and universally, and to dare to re-create the world.
CRITIQUE

In addressing the trends in feminist theology, we shall base our critique upon what we believe to be four crucial questions: 1) Is patriarchy in its entirety challenged?; 2) Is the theology fully inclusive and receptive?; 3) Does it offer viable "stepping stones in the making of the vision a reality?; and, 4) Does it permeate the whole of society; that is, does it challenge the social, political, economic, ecological, and spiritual realms toward re-creation?

Beyond this actual critique, we believe our divergence from the particular visions of these theologies will reveal itself when compared to our own vision offered later in this chapter. At this point, however, we would like to explicitly state the significant ways in which we believe these theologies may fall short of a truly liberating vision for the whole of humanity.

Dismantling Patriarchy

Women's Journey to Ourselves is continuously impeded by a patriarchally, (and thus, hierarchically), defined world. Even after a woman comes to identify herself, her power, and her dreams in a way that transcends patriarchal stereotypes, she still must concede that she lives in a patriarchal world that will subtly continue the oppression of herself and her sisters.

Feminist theologies must demand not only the break-down
of blatant patriarchy, but also that of the subtle ways in which it defines our world through its language, myths and visions.

For this reason, we cannot accept Joan Chamberlain Engelsman's vision of androgyny through the addition of the repressed Sophia to the Christian experience. Androgyny, by perpetuating "half-ness," (the merging of the female and male halves), reinforces the idea that we are unwhole until united with the male "other." Women's wholeness remains dependent on the masculine. Sophia is not recognized as whole until she has maneuvered herself into an acceptable position within the masculine trinity. This compromise is both unacceptable and damaging to women's spiritual quest for individual wholeness. Androgyny is a "pseudo-liberating" vision which may begin a consciousness of sexism and the oppression of women but, because it perpetuates gender-division, cannot enter into the fullness of liberation. The "andrognous approach" represents a trend in feminist theology that does not make the complete break from the patriarchal language and ideology of dualism, and as such must either be rejected or urged to further development of a truly liberating vision.

Patriarchal language, as that which names the world in masculine terms and according to male experience, is the most pervasive element of sexist ideologies present in our world. Masculine terms can no longer be used under the pretence that they include both men and women. Terms
like "he," "father," and even "God" perpetuate a masculine image of the Divine, and thus, cannot be used in a vision which strives to free the Divine from the exclusive masculine realm. Here we would challenge Fiorenza's use of "God" as failing to break from the patriarchal definition of the word. Ruether's re-naming of the Divine as "God/ess," we believe, comes closest to offering a gender-free, meaningful expression of the Divine. However, we would encourage further re-naming of the Divine in terms that transcend gender implications; for example, the "Sacred," the "Universal Force," or the "Creative Source."

**Inclusive/Receptive Visions**

The dismantling of patriarchy demands a commitment to radical change from both women and men. Feminist visions which exclude men from their responsibilities in this radical change are not complete. In this way, we find problems with Engelsman's, Fiorenza's, and Daly's visions.

In the case of the first two theologians, the challenge for men to re-form/re-create their lives is not as explicit as we believe it needs to be. Though we feel the transformation of the world will and does begin with women, its completion is impossible without the full commitment and responsibility of both sexes. The men who perpetuate the alienation and subordination of women, on both the local/communal and institutional level, must be vehemently
challenged to rid themselves of patriarchal ideologies or be "left behind."

Mary Daly's vision of separation, though significant in its creation of "women's space," excludes men from both the struggle of the vision and the liberation attained from it. Because we exist in a world that always has and always will "house" both men and women, we feel it imperative to work not only for the re-definition of women, but also the re-definition of men. Though it is often difficult for feminists to envision men giving up their patriarchally defined positions of power, we feel this is a vital part of the struggle which will usher-in the liberating experience of humanity in its wholeness.

**Viable Stepping Stones**

The visions of these feminist theologians, though beautiful and inspiring, are limited unless paired with concrete, realistic stepping stones that can actualize the vision. Though each of these women offers knowledge and insight in all women's struggle toward wholeness, both historically and of the present, the stepping stones which allow for the movement from knowledge of the vision to concrete implementation of the vision, are often not explicit.

Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly offer the most developed explanation of the necessary steps toward making the vision a reality, though we still find gaps
in the transformation of their visions to reality. Though Daly's description of women's Journey to Ourselves is both powerful and true to women's experience, we believe this Journey cannot reach its most ultimate destination within separatism. This Journey will constantly encounter patriarchal "road blocks;" in the market-place, in the media, in the business world, and in the educational system. Until patriarchy is dismantled, not simply ignored, women's Journeys will be detoured by frustration, rage and hatred toward the system that holds us from Ourselves. Thus, women and men must be challenged and encouraged in order to actualize all peoples' Journey to wholeness and liberation.

In her vision, Ruether sees Christian base communities/churches committed to the end of sexism and oppression as primary in returning the Christian Institution to its root liberating message. Though we acknowledge the need for liberating communities/churches within the frame work of the Christian Institution, we question their long-term effect. Communities/churches committed to non-sexist language and ideology, and to the breakdown of the institutional hierarchy will ultimately be thwarted by the slow-to-change formal institution of Christianity. These alternative churches within Christianity would pose an unfathomable threat to the foundation of an institution steeped in nearly two thousand years of patriarchy. Because of this threat, we believe these alternative churches would simply become
another name on the Institutional Church's list of heresies. It does not take an indepth search of Christianity, and particularly Catholicism, to realize the consequences of those individuals and groups who radically challenged the formal Institution. The call to "de-patriarchalize" Christianity is the most radical change the Institutional Church has or will ever face. And, as such, we believe it can realistically happen to the degree necessary only outside of the Christian Institution. Though we respect and encourage challenge from within the structure of the Church as part of the re-creation process, we feel that to its most radical, liberating, and necessary degree, this challenge to re-creation must and will take place in alternative communities outside of the Church, free from its bounds of authority.

This is not to imply that "secular" alternative communities committed to liberation from patriarchy would be without the influence of corrupt, oppressive hierarchical structures. As evident throughout this paper, patriarchal world views are present in all sectors of society and culture. However, we believe these alternative communities stand a better chance of survival and effectiveness within the "secular" sphere. Alternative, liberating visions found in women's communities, alternative education, social movements committed to peace and justice, earth-centered/agricultural communities, wholistic health programs, and organizations committed to the empowerment and re-definition
of women can find support and endurance in each other. Through this support and endurance, these alternative communities are able to continue the "de-structuralization" of the patriarchal hierarchy.

Though this same alternative vision may be present in groups within the Institutional Church, we cannot imagine the Church authority, the hierarchy itself, allowing the existence of Christian base communities which threaten the very foundation of Institutional authority and power. Thus, we believe the most dramatic challenge and example of liberation will come from outside of the formal Christian structure.

We would also challenge Ruether's critique of alternative groups of women who choose complete separation from men. Though, as mentioned previously, we do not accept Separatism as a viable vision in and of itself, we do see it as playing a significant role in the actualization of a liberating vision of all of humanity. For a liberating vision to stay "on track" with itself it must be constantly challenged and critiqued. It is this role of "challenger/critic" that Lesbian/Separatists can play. Because they remove themselves (as much as possible) from the limitations, definitions and expectations of patriarchy, Lesbian/Separatists can create new, alternative models for the world. They create and reveal new ways of being in relationship that transcends the stereotypes and bounds of heterosexual relationships. Their emphasis upon women's
"qualities," especially that of intuition and connection with the Earth Mother, break free from previous male definitions and reveal new ways of experiencing the world. Because Lesbian/Separatists' energies and efforts are entirely woman-identified and woman-centered, they are able to dive even deeper into the depths of "Woman" and emerge with new insights to what it means to be woman and, thus, what it means to be human.

Lesbian/Separatists are therefore the continuous "thorn-in-the-side" of society. Through their radically alternative world view they can challenge the world to deeper levels of liberation and offer new ways of understanding ourselves.

Permeation Of The Whole Of Society

Not only must feminist theology challenge Christianity to reformation, but it must also demand personal and structural re-creation in the social, political, economic, and ecological realms as well.

Of the four theologians we addressed, Rosemary Ruether is the most extensive in the permeation of her vision into various sectors and aspects of society. Just as feminist theology is not only for Christian women, its vision is not simply the re-thinking of women's roles and positions within Christianity. The feminist vision must not be limited to the religious sector, but must weave itself through all of the threads that make up our world.
Fiorenza and Engelsman, while perhaps not ignoring the social implications of their visions, fail to develop an adequate explanation of the challenge their visions must present to all institutions, factions, and sectors of our world. Though Daly realizes the implications/results of her vision, still she maintains that vision as separate from the patriarchal world.

Feminist theology and the feminist vision must straddle the fine line between sustaining and nurturing its powerful vision and having that vision infiltrate the whole of our world. It is a dangerous task, a draining task, as are all revolutions. If the vision is powerful enough, if it is born of the depths of experience, if it is grounded within the spirits of its believers, and if it is developed and formulated to the level of realistic implementation, then it will survive, it will transform the world.

In the following section we will present our personal vision. It is a vision which finds its roots within many of the insights of other feminist theologians, but remains a challenge to the further development and refinement of feminist theology. Our vision rejects some aspects of previous feminist visions, encourages a more intense development of other aspects, and wholly embraces still other aspects. Like our sisters', ours is a growing, emerging vision, open to change that will draw it closer to its depths, but firmly grounded in the conviction that it can re-create the world.
Christianity

The question of Christianity's place within our vision has been the most difficult and soul-searching one we have had to face. The permeation of a patriarchal world view, and the oppression that juxtaposes that world view within the Christian Institution, is painfully evident. Not only has Christianity historically perpetuated patriarchy, but it has also been instrumental in the suppression and destruction (both blatantly physical and subtly psychological), of women.

Realizing the deep-seated roots of patriarchy within Christianity, we are tempted to state that it has no place within our vision. However, we are quickly drawn back to the liberating moments we have personally experienced within Christianity. The foundation of those moments has consistently centered around the message of Jesus.

Through the words he shared, Jesus challenged his society to re-construction. He called his friends, his people, his world, to the re-formation of their lives. His message was one of action, for lives could not be reformed if hidden behind the "sacred" walls of the sanctuary. Transformation demanded active participation of individuals in the healing of themselves, others, and society.

Jesus' message challenged people to examine the brokenness in their lives and relationships. The experience
of God was both personal and communal. God's presence was not only found in the quiet moments of personal reflection (the desert experience), but also in the healing touch of relationships, and in the celebration of community (table-sharing).

His message was concrete and direct, "things must change!" Spirituality and the experience of the Sacred happened both on the individual and social levels. The basileia vision of Jesus demanded active social change. The infrastructures which prohibited individual and collective wholeness had to be dismantled. This could only occur if people committed themselves to the active re-construction of their lives and society.

Jesus's message was realistic also. A commitment to the liberation of individuals and society would eventually necessitate sacrifice. People would have to give up the comfortable situation of their lives and embrace the struggle toward wholeness. Rejection, alienation, persecution and humiliation were a part of this commitment to the basileia vision. However, this suffering was not the sole purpose nor outcome of the vision. In the celebration of community, individuals could strengthen each other, heal each other, enrich each other. The experience of the Sacred was not abandoned in the cross but rather embraced in its fullness (perhaps even beyond Jesus' understanding).

Though the message of Jesus does hold liberating
elements for women, the package of the patriarchal Christian Institution does not. The Institutional Church has been in the past and remains today a vehicle for the oppression of women, and as such, cannot be included in our vision toward the wholeness of humanity. We do not, however, exclude the possibility for radical (root) change within the Institutional Church, nor do we negate the sacred meaning and experience it holds for many of its members. Institutional Christianity, as a structure vulnerable to corruption, must acknowledge its patriarchal elements that alienate both women and men from their wholeness. In that acknowledgement, it must also implement radical, uncompromising change that returns it to the true, liberating message of its founder.

Women have and do find meaning in the message of Jesus. Our Foresisters who walked with Him and shared in the spreading of the message, our Grandmothers and Mothers who found meaning in, and lived the life of the message, and our Sisters today who continue in their lives and words the liberating message of Jesus, are all valid representations of the power of women's spirituality. What must be addressed, however, is the fact that these women remain subject to the roles and definitions of a patriarchal institution. In Catholicism specifically, women, both lay and religious, remain subordinate to the male priest, are denied full participation in the presentation of rituals as priests, deacons, and, (in many parish-
es), acolytes, and are alienated from the authority and power of the hierarchial Institution.

Our vision calls for unprecedented re-formation of the Christian Institution. The patriarchal hierarchy must be dismantled. Women can no longer accept secondary, subordinant positions within the Church but must resume our places in the authority and leadership of Christianity. Women's experience, both of a history of oppression and of the power of women's bonding, must be embraced as a unique, sacred revelation of the Divine. Words like "God" and "Father" can no longer be used as the exclusive names of the Divine. Images such as "the cross" and the "suffering servant" must transcend their patriarchal connotations, (i.e., "women's subordinant position as "our cross to bear," women as this world's "suffering servants" who will find reward in "the afterlife"), and embrace their original liberating messages. Christianity must be challenged to re-creation both internally, by those who choose to remain within its structure, and externally, by those who reveal alternative lifestyles and world views.

Women's spiritual quest, both within Christianity and outside of it, can find hope in the message of Jesus as well as others who lived and shared a liberating message. Through the visionaries of our past and present we gain guidance for our own Journeys.

We realize our Journey begins with a radical, uncompromising search of our individual depths, and that it will
continue to demand the discovery of our Center, (the desert experience). We realize the power of our bonding with others along the Journey, (the celebration of community, of table-sharing). We realize the socio-political implications of our shared Journeys, the demand to not only reform our lives, but also our world, (the spreading of "the word"). And, finally, we realize the struggles, personally, relationally, and socially, that we will inevitably encounter along our Journey, (the death and resurrection).

Our vision begins with women's spiritual quest and from there moves to an all-encompassing call for the re-creation of the world. In our quest, we embrace all those elements which add to, and allow for, the unfolding of our vision, and call for either radical reconstruction or ultimate rejection of those elements which impede this vision of humanity's wholeness.

Women's spirituality is unique. It is Self-defined. It is woman-defined. It is often Earth-Centered; drawing on the spiraling, cyclical images of nature to reveal the Journey's spiraling movement toward its Center. It is powerful. It is strong. It is uncompromising of patriarchal limitations and definitions. It is living, moving, creating, and re-creating. It is the Core of our vision to draw humanity out of its brokenness and into a liberating, whole, ("holy") world.

I remember their faces. A variety of wrinkles and lines and shapes that revealed the richness of their collective experiences. Accountants,
home-makers, college professors, social workers, business executives, secretaries, mothers, daughters, sisters. All drawn together in the climbing of a 13,000 foot peak—a mountain which silently represented lifetimes of symbolic climbs.

We had spoken of an invisible cord that passed through each of us, into the Earth, then, cyclically, through us again. It was a cord of protection that assured us of stable feet over the rocks and snow and fragile soil that led us to the peak's summit. And it was a cord of strength, a connection to the powers and energy of the Earth and each other. I felt humbled, both as the young co-leader of a group of women who had struggled through the experiences of life that I had yet to encounter, and survived, and as a participant in the power that occurs when women bond with themselves, each other, and the Earth.

I remember their faces—wet with the sweat of a struggle that most had never attempted, nor thought themselves able to survive. Beautiful, glowing faces; connected with the Energy which surrounded them.

We wept when we reached the top—overwhelmed with the magnificence of Creation, with the Mountain we had climbed together and with the gentle, enduring power of our bond with each other and the Earth. We had made it. We had survived. We had ascended.

The Re-Creation of Ourselves and Our World

Our particular combined vision is evolving, culminating, assimilating, sometimes rejecting, and hopefully challenging to feminist theologians. We are feminist theologians with an emerging vision that can gently, powerfully encourage others as well as ourselves to maintain a critical position not only toward theologies, but necessarily toward the entire world spectrum.

Our vision is deep-rooted and all-inclusive. Change
is obviously necessary. But a reform of churches is not enough. Women's bonding and re-birthing is not enough. Awareness and concerned recognition of the immense evil and damage of the patriarchal structure is not enough. At the very root of our vision is the need for fundamental change in the way our entire lives, women's and men's have been structured. The thread of patriarchy weaves through our political systems, our educational systems, our industries, our economy, our ecology, and our personal, minute to minute experience. We want to trace that thread, to follow it through every nook and crack of every city and home, and erase all of its implications; reverse all of its damage. We would like to replace it with a new thread, (Utopian though it may at first appear), that will fill the confused emptiness with options of compassion, liberation, gentle love and understanding, power through discovery of personal strength, encouragement for growth and the challenge to change.

We would like to see the elimination of old understandings of "power," "strength" and "success." Power and strength in new definitions would mean the discovery of Self, dedication to the emergence and continual growth of Self, and the challenge of the growth and powers in others. Success would be a personal measure of the extent to which we remain in honest pursuit of our real Selves.
Stepping Stones: Feasible Actions/Realities

The Journey to Ourselves, and parallel re-creation of our world, can be further represented by the Spinning/Spiraling symbolism. The personal and world process is parallel because through new understandings of our spiritual, psychological, physical Selves we can be open to the new world vision that unfolds and reveals itself to us. Only in our deeper understanding of Self can we be capable of working for world change.

The Spiral is a circling motion spinning ever inward. Moving beyond the symbol of circle as completion (no beginning, no end; returning to the starting point), the Spiral comes near to where it began, but moves more deeply toward the center.

As we Spin closer to the Center, in commitment and struggle, we discover a Core; a foundation of strength that enables us to struggle, bathes us in acknowledgement of truth, and replenishes us with joyful encouragement and affirmation to move more deeply to our Cores and to the Core of the larger world.

The incorporation of others in our Journey is expressed in concrete bonding, sharing and affirmation. Women's bonding is a powerful and unique manifestation of the joining of Selves; the coming together of individuals in the formation of a Universal Self. The basic communion of women's Spirals is paradigmatic for the union and integration of all the cosmos.
Women's connections build trusting foundations from which we can begin our Universal New Naming. The development of new expressions in language, (i.e., Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology*, Sally Miller Gearhart in *The Wanderground* and even fractionally in this paper), as well as the naming of our experiences as separate from patriarchal definitions, are born from the junction of our Cores, the sharing of our vision.

Women's poetry, literature, art and music are real and increasingly important ways for women to tangibly relate to each other, to affirm and propagate our vision, and to expose others to our message. These concrete expressions are sources of nourishment that link women as well as heighten the awareness of men and women previously less atuned to our Spiraling, Emerging world view.

Constant nourishment and incredible amounts of strength are necessary in order that we may spread, all on fire, the burning, driving understandings revealed through our Spiraling. A process of spreading, sharing with others, consciousness raising, then returning to our sisters for support, is set in motion. We gain from each other the energy necessary to light the flame in others before returning to our shared Core to give and receive renewed strength.

Staying in touch with our Centers keeps us grounded and able to perceive clearly our position in the surrounding creation/civilization. Rooted in the strength and peace of our inner Selves, we can strip away unnecessary "clutter"
that clings to our outer Spiral, serving as false definitions of who we are. This "clutter" consists of inhibitive, unhealthy stereotypes thrust upon us by society. Our new groundedness enables us to cleanse ourselves and return to simplicity patterned in nature.

Through the casting away of unnecessary baggage, (not necessarily material items, though this can be helpful, too), we become freer to recognize our paths and better able to remove that which deters us. Cleansing and removal of distractions certainly does not imply an aversion to technological advances that can be helpful tools, (i.e., developments in computers, medicine, alternate energy sources, etc.). The collective use of knowledge is necessary and beneficial in the growth of humanity.

Of primary importance in our vision is rootedness and identity with the earth and all of creation. We are responsible for the care and maintenance of our Source of Life and need to learn from her the simple ordering of things. At the same time, this natural simplicity must be applied to our roles as societal people.

Examples of this integrating model would be WomanQuest, Inc., Legendary Lodge and the Pena family, The Feathered Pipe Ranch and similar organizations that work for radically healthy, life-giving experiences, but still function closely within established channels of administration. The Earth-Spirit is not betrayed, but sought and found through adaptation in evolving structures.
Spreading The Flame

Alternative structures which incorporate a radical message with a functional form are ideal solutions for working for change. This model is not always feasible, but still, old structures can be permeated. The patriarchal thread can be slowly gnawed away by visionary termites at the very bases of institutions. Women can participate in industry, politics and education and, just when we seem to fit nicely into created roles, we can turn them upside down. We have the intelligence, the strength and most of all the burning need to penetrate power structures, set sticks of dynamite, and blast away confining roles and systems of functioning.

Further still, our vision reaches out to all who suffer from oppression. The flame of wholeness holds promise for all people in hungry, lowly, suffering positions. All classes, all races, all ages, and both sexes stand to be freed, to grasp a new dream of what wholeness means, and live that dream eternally.

The Spinning/Weaving of our Spiraling webs can plunge deeply to our Cores, unite them with other Cores and re-weave the tapestry of the cosmos with a firm connection of women and men that spans all former barriers.

We believe in this process. We believe in women. We believe in men. We believe in the possibilities of our Spiraling new world. We recognize the struggle necessary to embody the vision, but are committed to its power and its ability to become.
See Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, footnoted in Chapters I and III. Also, see Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (Watertown, Massachusetts: Persephone Press, 1979).

WomanQuest, Inc., outdoor experiences for women: 215 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68508; The Feathered Pipe Ranch, workshops and programs in wholistic health: 2409 Colorado Gulch Dr., Helena, Montana; Legendary Lodge, especially the Pina Family, write c/o The Catholic Diocese of Helena, Chancery Office, 515 N. Ewing, Helena, Montana.