

in any case they are not in a strong position vis a vis pentecostalism: pentecostals have a self-authenticating experience of God which in many ways renders the services of the churches unnecessary. Neo-pentecostal leaders committed to the churches have to work hard to keep neo-pentecostals aware of the benefits of church doctrine and membership and many neo-pentecostals in the climate of ecumenism do not care greatly what, if any, church they belong to.

Nor, as a devotional movement, does neo-pentecostalism constitute any threat to the present structures of society. Glossolalia is certainly deviant in the sense of unconventional and often therefore characterised (wrongly) as the result of mental instability but glossolalia might be taken as precisely that kind of private unconventionality which is acceptable in our society.

In protecting the experience of general well-being, devotional movements usually eliminate in one way or another the tensions inherent in Christianity. As to the world, they do not necessarily reject it (though often enough their unconcern eliminates that tension too), but their emotional and unreflective nature coupled with direct contact and guidance from God makes them peculiarly open to simply accepting the dominant values of society. Neo-pentecostalism is at present largely a devotional movement of this kind. Undeniably in its present form it confers a very real feeling of well-being and effective problem-solving for its adherents but arguably the experience is too well protected not to be somewhat trivialised. More bluntly (and abandoning the detached stance for a partisan one) it is often a middle class cop-out. As such it is indistinguishable from Billy Graham revivalism and the Divine Light Mission. Receive the Spirit, make a decision for Jesus, tune in on the divine knowledge, and forget what's going on in the world around us.

Women and the American Churches

by Gary MacEoin

I have talked to many women around the United States who are establishing themselves in church positions hitherto exclusively male. They represent the principal Christian denominations and Judaism. Ages range from grandmothers to college students. Some reject the revolutionary label. But what they are doing adds up to a radical revolution. They are reformulating mankind's most basic assump-

tions: not just the relationships between the sexes, but the notion of human nature itself, the notion of sin, the very notion of God.

Age is a factor in attitude. The younger women tend to more belligerency. But also important is the level of resistance of their churches to opening up the three male preserves: ruling, sanctification (ministration of the sacraments) and teaching. Women in Protestant denominations which give them some openings as rulers, ministers and theologians, are irked by tokenism but believe they can surmount it if they keep their cool. The higher resistance of Episcopalianism and Roman Catholicism is producing a strident, angry response. Curiously, the even more traditional position of Greek Orthodoxy and Orthodox Judaism, affirming the patriarchy as literally unchangeable, seems to arouse no protest. Apparently, women who may secretly feel aggrieved simply turn elsewhere. The Jewish alternative is the Reformed version, where—at least in principle—women and men are equal at all levels, including the liturgical.

The parallelism with the black movement is evident. At first, the goal was integration into the church as men had formed it. Ursula Niebuhr, a first-class honors graduate in theology at Oxford in the 1920s, takes for granted the normalcy of having subordinated her own distinguished career as a scripture scholar to that of her even more famous theologian husband. 'I like being a woman', she insists. 'I don't think Betty Friedan or Simone de Beauvoir likes being a woman. If you choose your man and your man's big enough, you're perfectly content to tailor your job to him. You stay with him in New York even if offered a job as president of Bryn Mawr or Smith. Perhaps we who have been busy fighting would say rather instinctively we don't have time to get worked up about issues. We managed at the same time to have husbands and children, and we don't feel that our wonderful husbands used us as sex objects and all the rest of it'.

Elsie Gibson, ordained in 1935 a minister of the United Church of Christ, has a similar perspective. 'Basically, my whole ministry has been opposed to any forcing of my way, and I think probably this is one reason I have encountered less resistance than some. My first ministry was on a part-time basis in my husband's church. Other churches, seeing how well I was received, called me as a supply or an interim minister. Later, I moved toward a specialised ministry in ecumenical work between Protestants and Roman Catholics. I always avoided any issue of 'rights'. A militant woman minister places men on the defensive. Waging a feminist war and serving a local parish do not mix'.

An early casualty is the family system which regards domination by one member over the others as natural, a system endorsed by both Moses and Aristotle and reaffirmed in Pope Pius XI's 1930 encyclical on Christian marriage. Ursula Niebuhr and Elsie Gibson already question the need for mother to stay home, even with small

children. 'Modified kibbutzim might help', says Mrs Niebuhr. 'I feel that every woman copes better with her children if she isn't with them all day'.

Younger church women see a multiplicity of family styles, the traditional husband-wife relationship as one form, the commune as another, relationships for less than a lifetime or even multiple simultaneous relationships, the morality of each is to be judged in and by the concrete circumstances. The rebellion is less against the responsibilities of marriage than against its premises. Why, the young are asking, must one sex be shackled to a desk and the other to a stove?

The pedestal elevating the priest above the people, protected by the 'sacred mark' of the sacrament of orders, is also undermined. The new stress is on a ministry of service, and on a multiplicity of services to be performed by many ministers.

Women theologians are formulating the notion of God and the relationship between God and man in new ways, starting with approval of Mary Baker Eddy's notion of a Father-Mother God, then going to more radical approaches. Some insist on the need to get sex out of God and God out of sex. Those are objectives already being promoted in a wider context. The Death-of-God movement was largely an effort to erase the God created by man in his own image and likeness, a superman away out there. The Sexual Revolution was similarly a challenge to attitudes and practices that had been given moral sanction when the world was underpopulated but which today are unnecessary and perhaps dangerous. For women theologians, however, both movements have added significance. The superman God was particularly enslaving for women because of the male identification. Similarly, women were always the victims of the double standard on sex.

Even sin does not escape. 'Identification of original sin with pride is a projection of the male psyche', says Esther Woo. 'We don't even know what woman's dominant sin it, because she has never had a chance to develop normally. The pettiness and jealousy we see are simply the defects found in any depressed group. They are the response of the helpless'.

Where will it lead and how long will it take? 'This is more basic than any previous revolution', says Peggy Billings. 'There is no knowing how long the road or where it ends'.

Peggy Billings, age 43, single, from Mississippi, who worked ten years as a missionary in Korea, is with the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church in New York.

Q. In what way does the church fail you as a woman?

A. Precisely because of its male orientation. Religion had always been important in my life, but as something naively accepted with-

out examination. We did not question—we were the silent generation of the 1950s. It took me a long time to see that religion could be examined. And when I began, I saw that everyone with a voice was male. The ministers were all men. So were the bishops. The decisions were made exclusively by the men in the important positions. I experienced a sense of alienation from my faith, and in particular an almost total rejection of Saint Paul. He didn't have anything to say to me, and Christianity with its male-orientated and male-dominated theology, lifestyle and hierarchical arrangements didn't offer me any help in my personal struggle.

Q. Your personal struggle?

A. Yes. It was my concrete life experience that led me to this conclusion. I grew up, white, in Mississippi, but it took ten years as a missionary social worker in Korea to make me conscious that two societies existed in my homeland. Korea forced me to re-examine my basic assumptions about human relationships, about the church, about the Gospel. I saw that help to an individual, whether material or spiritual, caused little change or improvement while the social structures remained distorted. So in 1963 I made the difficult personal decision to stay home and work in the civil rights movement for a change in structures in the United States. And this, in turn, brought me in a curious way to women's liberation. During a civil rights march in the South, I was billeted in the home of a black woman who managed a ring of prostitutes in the town. I had professional experience of prostitutes in Korea, where war conditions had made prostitution a lucrative profession, often the only way to keep a family afloat. But Korea had not prepared me for this experience. Here I met a sensitive person acutely conscious of the injustices she had suffered not only as a black but as a woman. I experienced her enormous alienation, the anger and hostility of an intelligent and articulate woman who knew she was trapped yet saw no way to escape from the trap. She gave me a whole new understanding of what it feels like to be at the bottom of the heap because of situations over which one has no control.

Q. And that is why you are trying to propel the church into woman's lib?

A. This woman, of course, had a double burden because she was both black and female. As I reflected, I became convinced that her primary source of alienation and anxiety was in the male-female relationship, and that her situation—while extreme—was symptomatic of what is wrong with our society. She made me decide that the basic revolution of our time is the movement to end the inequalities that characterise male-female relationships in the church and in the world. It is our most basic human relationship, whether

as husband and wife, mother and child, father and child, brother and sister, friend and friend. It has a potentially explosive dynamic greater than that of any other contemporary revolutionary movements.

Clara Marie Henning, age 32, single, only Roman Catholic woman canon lawyer in United States. She resigned from the marriage tribunal of the Detroit archdiocese in 1970 because her associates (all priests) were 'so brainwashed that they were unable to deal with a woman as an equal'.

Q. What most offends you as a canon lawyer?

A. I am confronting in the church a male culture. All our laws express exclusively this male culture, or rather the subculture of celibate males who legislate on the basis of men's fantasies about women as they imagine them to be. My fellow students of canon law at Catholic University (Washington, D.C.) showed that the old myths remain fully alive in the seminary. Candidates for this celibate priesthood are taught that women are not only dumb but dirty: ritually impure, intellectually inferior, emotionally unstable, in perpetual subjection to men by divine ordinance. There is an obsession about menstruation, a hangover from primitive societies with their taboos about shedding blood. Such attitudes, which prevent the recognition of women as persons, will become progressively more untenable as we increase our understanding of the processes of biology and complete the process—already begun—of separating sex and procreation. Expanded human knowledge will force theological re-evaluation, and finally canon law will reluctantly follow.

Q. And you think women should get into this priesthood?

A. Women should be allowed to train for and be ordained to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. Men and women theologians alike argue that there is no theological obstacle, but only sociological ones. But I'd hate to see a woman having to embrace unwanted celibacy as a condition of ordination. One's sex life has no bearing on one's ability to preach the word of God or administer the sacraments. And I am absolutely opposed to something now being actively discussed, the ordination of women as deacons but not as priests. The diaconate for men, as now being restored, is a device to maintain a celibate male priesthood in spite of a drop in vocations. It would provide a controlled group of servants for the priests. If women settle for this inferior status, the final step will take another 50 to 100 years.

Q. Will theology change when women are seen as equal persons in God's sight?

A. The biggest bombshell will be a total reorientation of the man. Woman today suffers from distortion, but she does have a recognised role and that gives her an identity. It is the man who has a weak identity. He defines himself in terms of domination, in strutting phallic sex symbols. His identity is in his contrast with woman. The woman is bad, the man good. Such attitudes may have been socially beneficial at an earlier stage of human evolution, but not any longer. Theologically speaking, the man's identity will be far more spiritual. The ego drive will be de-emphasised. It will be acceptable for him to be sweet and loving, no longer committed to his fantastic sense of ego power. But the transition will be—in fact already is providing difficult. Many men will be unable to accept emotionally the ego deflation. The only way they know to defend themselves is by violence, and their defensiveness will express itself in an upsurge of violence in society. I am convinced that this is already happening, a much bigger factor than the overcrowding that results from the population explosion. (That also will come but it is still in the future.) The mounting statistics on rape and other forms of sex violence are particularly significant as expressions of the subconscious terrors of the deflated male ego.

Joyce Richardson, age 32, black, single, a graduate of Brown University, has taught in Catholic schools and been associated with the Emmaus House experimental Christian community in Harlem. She is on the staff of Fordham University.

Q. What has Christianity to offer women?

A. First of all, it offers a magnificent example of how we can reverse the meaning of symbols, turn the things we are ashamed of into things to be proud of. The central symbol of Christianity is a re-picturing of the execution of a criminal. Christianity has for so long told us the criminal was God that we forget that in the life situation, that was a criminal. Our attitudes to him give the picture of his execution a new meaning. It has been revalorised.

Q. And what symbol of woman would you like to revalorise?

A. Several, I'm sure. My favourite is bitch. Until recently, the idea that someone was secretly thinking that I was a bitch was one of the most horrible experiences. The word exercised social control. It told me I was out of my place. It told me I was not being what someone else defined me to be. So we must take this designation *bitch* as Blacks have taken the designation *black*, turn it around and say: 'Bitch Is Beautiful'.

Q. This applies to the church, too?

A. Definitely. If people are trying to manipulate you, to categorise you, then you have to start revalorising. Let me give you an example. In the Catholic Church, I have found many things supportive of my development as a person. But there are other things. Women may now in certain circumstances read in church. But they must stand outside the presbyterium, the part of the sanctuary reserved for the clergy. Now, this is wild. Because of a biological designation, one may not enter a particular space. That's like Blacks in the pre-sixty South. A Black could cook food for whites, care for their babies, but could not sit with them at the lunch counter or stand in the front of a bus. It is mad. We must recognise it as crazy and call it crazy. But the bread is rising. Maybe we'll be able to recognise things like this as madness.

Esther Woo, from Hong Kong, age 33, was in 1967 awarded the title of Master of Sacred Science (Magister in Scientiis Sacris) at Regina Mundi, a women's institute in Rome established by the Vatican because the Roman ecclesiastical mentality could not allow women to attend theology school with men or receive the same degree (the licenciate). She has subsequently won a Master's degree in theology and a doctorate in Philosophy at Fordham University.

Q. What will the church be like 500 years from now?

A. I do not think it will be Roman Catholic in the present sense of being under centralised Roman control. It will have to be much looser, each race and culture developing its own forms. To impose the Roman concepts on Polynesia or India or China would be artificial, basically repugnant to the local culture.

Q. And how about other Christian churches?

A. Well, if we are talking about a theology of women's liberation, I don't think it can start from any Christian tradition. Scripture, ecclesiastical tradition as well as theology have been used to suppress women—to oppress us and deprive us of freedom. Creation is consistently attributed to power, never to the female mode of creating through planning, generation and doing. Only under a Father-God could the Western world have developed the arrogance of a theory of just wars. Similarly, the system of divine reward and punishment has been conceptually formulated along the pattern of the male and paternal virtues. The whole creation story is a myth of the Jewish culture. A god who created woman 'for man', and only as an after-

thought at that, is not a God worthy of womankind. This myth attributes the human vice of discrimination to God.

Q. Then where can we go from here?

A. We must have a total restructuring at all levels in the church as well in the world, if we are to have an equal input by men and by women. Everything must change. Marriage, for example, will be between two persons, and not between a person and a half, as at present. Man will have to liberate his anima, so that he can integrate into his personality all the qualities now approved only in the woman, kindness and gentleness and so on. I am now using terms from Jungian psychology. I think Jung's notion of anima and animus is helpful for our integration. The anima is the female component in the unconscious of the man, and the animus is the male component in the unconscious of the women. An integration of the two aspects would enable everyone, irrespective of sex, to express all desirable human traits. There's nothing intrinsically female about kindness. There's nothing intrinsically male about aggressiveness. It's hard to know whether a man is aggressive by nature or simply by his conditioning.

Q. Is that what women want?

A. Not consciously, for the most part. Few women are consciously unhappy or disgruntled by the present relationships of the sexes and the present assumptions of society, e.g., the feminine mystique. The reason, I believe, is fear. Women are afraid to face reality. They are reluctant to face the hatred they would feel inside, if they admitted to themselves that they are victims of prejudice and unjust treatment. They are also afraid to admit that their lives have been inferior or incomplete. For me, the experience was not traumatic, but older women who have more to look back on and less to look forward to are seldom willing to admit to a wasteful life. You can see the same psychology at work in convents. Slowly but inexorably, however, the world is forcing us to face reality. Don't forget that the women's liberation movement started with the Communists. Even the term comes from them. They applied it from the start in China and in Vietnam. Even earlier, Russia was the first to establish legal equality, and it has enforced the principle more radically than we have. Admittedly, there is the dilemma that it is imposed by men and consequently formulated in male terms, but it is a start. Chinese women are traditionally strong types, and more of them hold leadership positions than is generally realised. You have Madame Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, and her sister has enormous intellectual influence in Communist China. Even if this liberation was motivated by the emergency conditions of war mobilisation, it is an improvement on subjugation. It stresses that the old system prevented the expression of the totality of woman's dynamism. In that sense, the United States

is far ahead of most Western countries in recognising that society was underutilising woman's potential. Italy, for example, is quite hopeless. The United States is now the pioneer in women's liberation because many women have education and economic independence, and that enables them to overcome their fears and fight for their rights.

Q. You say Italy is hopeless. Does this Italian mentality slow down women's progress in the Catholic Church?

A. Absolutely. All our theologians now agree that there is no theological justification for downgrading women, but as long as the Roman mentality controls the structures, we can expect little progress. The only hope I see is to create an independent Roman Catholic culture in this country. I don't mean a schism, but you can be pretty independent in the United States. I see this starting, not in the underground church nor within the structures, but *beside* the structures. Women here are teaching theology, and we are reading the gospel, when Roman directives don't allow us near the altar. If you abide strictly by Roman directives, you get nowhere.

Q. So you think that in 25 or 50 years, when there is no longer any cultural resistance here, the bishops will start to ordain women?

A. There I would draw the line. Even though there is no theological reason for not ordaining women, this is such a basic ecclesial issue that one single conference of bishops could not decide unilaterally. It would be like establishing a separate church. The whole church will have to join in that decision.

Sally Priesand, age 27, single, completed her rabbinical course at Cincinnati's Jewish Theological Seminary in 1972, and was admitted to the rabbinical ministry.

Q. You feel that women suffer no discrimination in Judaism?

A. On the contrary, it has always given them an honoured position. Formerly, it was in the home. But Reform Judaism has liberated them. Since 1864, it is on record 'that woman be entitled to the same religious rights and subject to the same religious duties as man'. Since 1922, it is further on record 'that woman cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination'.

Q. But in fact no other woman has been ordained?

A. Several started the rabbinical course but all dropped out. I suspect that the school was not too helpful, though I must say nobody has tried to discourage me. Of course, one problem was to find a congregation. Ordination itself was not an issue. Unlike the situation

in the Christian churches, the rabbi is a teacher rather than a priest. It's primarily an academic thing, a symbolic laying on of hands by the president of the college at the completion of the academic studies. But the rabbi is then on his own. A placement commission will help, but the contract is ultimately between the rabbi and the particular congregation. And formerly resistance to a woman was very strong, even more from the women in the congregation than from the men. However, women's lib has changed attitudes rapidly.

Q. You recognise the help given you by women's lib. But you do not think of yourself as involved in that movement?

A. Just as I did not come to the seminary in search of a husband, neither did I come to champion women's rights. I came because of a deep belief in Judaism and a firm conviction that I might have something to offer. To shout for female equality is not enough. Nothing will be accomplished if there are no women who want to serve on congregational boards or become rabbis or share in the decision-making of religious institutions. If women are to be fully accepted, then there must be a change in attitudes and that change must begin with ourselves. Natural feminine charm and sensitivity are a woman's most important assets in the fight for equality. But, before equality, the Jewish woman puts Judaism itself.

My one companion is darkness

by Gerard Mackrell, S.M.M.

Lord my God, I call for help by day;
I cry at night before you.
Let my prayer come into your presence.
O turn your ear to my cry.

For my soul is filled with evils;
my life is on the brink of the grave.
I am reckoned as one in the tomb:
I have reached the end of my strength,

like one alone among the dead;
like the slain lying in their graves;
like those you remember no more,
cut off, as they are, from your hand.