

the voices. This image is not meant to suggest a classical blend of "easy listening," but rather a mode of hearing that allows us to retain inner peace as much as possible. Perhaps a better way of expressing what I have in mind is this: to allow the challenging protests and demands to play over a ground bass, or even better, a ground alto, of God's healing and empowering and justice-making love for us all.

The virtue of humility is not given a chapter in William Bennett's current bestseller, *The Book of Virtues*.<sup>4</sup> But the combination of humility and trust in God's mercy is essential if we are to get past the Babel of alienating and empty rhetoric about solidarity and receive the Pentecost gifts we need for the praxis commended to us so eloquently by Shawn Copeland.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1988), p. ix. A new concern emerges when recognition and assertion of difference lead to diversification of women's theologies. The fact that "feminist" theology is now complemented by "womanist theology," "mujerista theology," and "minjung theology," to mention examples of women's theology from African-American, U.S. Latina, and Korean perspectives, is indeed a promising development. At the same time it must be noted that these "women's theologies of color" are at some risk of marginalization when anthologies and course syllabi are put together.

<sup>2</sup> Lorraine Bethel, "What Chou Mean We, White Girl?" *Conditions: Five* 11 (Autumn 1979), 86-92.

<sup>3</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr discusses the conversational character of conscience in "The Ego-Alter Dialectic and the Other," *The Journal of Philosophy* 42 (1945): 352-59. His conclusion offers a particularly useful set of distinctions: "The choice does not lie between the good conscience of a self which has kept all its laws and the bad conscience of the transgressor, but between the dull conscience which does not discern the greatness of the other and the loftiness of his [God's] demands, the agonized conscience of the awakened, and the consoled conscience of one who in the company of the Spirit seeks to fulfill the infinite demands of the infinite other" (359).

<sup>4</sup> William J. Bennett, *The Book of Virtues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

## Amnesia in the Catholic Sunday Lectionary: Women—Silenced from the Memories of Salvation History

Regina A. Boisclair

### Introduction

The pericopes from the Bible that are introduced in Catholic public worship are predetermined and published in a lectionary.<sup>1</sup> A lectionary, by its very nature, excludes some ancient traditions as it includes others, recasts its selections into designated collections, and assigns each collection to a particular context in the church calendar. Thus, devising any lectionary, not only reproduces in large measure what James A. Sanders calls "the canonical process" that produced the Bible,<sup>2</sup> but also establishes a "canon within the canon." The contemporary Catholic lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities (hereafter: Sunday lectionary) is a "canon within the canon."

When selections from the Sunday lectionary are proclaimed during the liturgy, they become lections.<sup>3</sup> Each lection concludes with the phrase "Word (or Gospel) of the Lord," to which the assembly verbalizes its assent. The members of a worshipping assembly enter into a liturgical process that evokes *anamnesis*, i.e., remembrance, and by listening to and affirming the lections the Word becomes "real and present" in their minds and hearts. The liturgical process is designed by the rubrics to lead the assembly to internalize what is heard as a matter of faith: *lex supplicandi* communicates *lex credendi*.<sup>4</sup> The whole liturgy effects *anamnesis*, but a significant part of who and what an assembly remembers is established by what is *set into* and *heard from* the assigned lections. The Sunday lectionary has an overwhelming

influence on determining what I call "the story in the heads and hearts of Christians."

Marjorie Proctor-Smith claims that when it comes to women, the Sunday lectionary suffers from amnesia.<sup>5</sup> The Bible sacralizes a patriarchal social structure, founded on an androcentric view of God and humanity, and is chiefly preoccupied with stories of men. However, it also includes female images for God and provides accounts of many women in the unfolding stories of Israel, Jesus, and the early Church. Were these female images and stories of women well represented in the Sunday lectionary, it could better balance the story in the heads and hearts of Christians. Instead, as Eileen Schuller recognizes: "the Sunday readings give the impression that the Bible is even more male-centered than one would find if one sat down and read it through as a whole."<sup>6</sup>

The first part of this study: 1) provides a brief history of the contemporary Catholic Sunday lectionary and its ecumenical influence; 2) describes the efforts and problems with respect to gender-inclusive language lectionaries; and 3) applies George Lindbeck's cultural linguistic model to explain why the silencing of the biblical witness of women in the lectionary is detrimental to Christians. The second part examines: 1) the First Testament readings; 2) the Second Testament lessons; and 3) the Gospel selections.<sup>7</sup> This second part: names many women who have been omitted, eliminated, or hidden in the Sunday lectionary; draws out the implications of three specific collections of lectionary readings; and identifies some of the premises of the androcentric hermeneutic that unconsciously influenced the compilers of the Sunday lectionary.<sup>8</sup>

### The Catholic Sunday Lectionary

The Second Vatican Council called for a revision of the lectionary used in the Roman Rite since 1570. The new lectionary (hereafter: RL), promulgated in 1969,<sup>9</sup> was introduced in the United States and Canada on the First Sunday of Advent, 1970.<sup>10</sup> The *ordo* for Sundays and Solemnities had three major innovations: 1) it replaced an annual table of readings with a three year cycle;<sup>11</sup> 2) it provided for three biblical selections together with a psalm or canticle where previously a gospel pericope had been preceded by a brief segment from an epistle;<sup>12</sup> 3) it appointed regular readings from the First Testament that were rarely included in the 1570 *ordo*.<sup>13</sup> When the 1969 RL was slightly

revised in 1981,<sup>14</sup> no substantive changes were made.<sup>15</sup> The 1981 edition (hereafter: RL2) has been used in Canada since the First Sunday of Advent, 1992;<sup>16</sup> it has not been introduced in the United States. Vatican II envisioned a new lectionary in which "the treasures of the Bible are . . . opened up more lavishly so that a richer share in God's Word may be provided for the faithful."<sup>17</sup> When it is compared to the 1570 *ordo*, it is beyond question that RL realized the intention of the Council.

As early as 1970, other American churches began to modify and use the new Catholic *ordo*.<sup>18</sup> The ecumenical influence of the RL was unexpected.<sup>19</sup> No one who devised the RL ever anticipated that it would be acclaimed as "Catholicism's greatest gift to Protestant preaching."<sup>20</sup> Today, the RL and the RL2 as well as its variant lectionaries, in the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (hereafter: EL),<sup>21</sup> the 1980 *Lutheran Book of Worship* (hereafter: LL),<sup>22</sup> and the 1992 *Revised Common Lectionary* (hereafter: CL2),<sup>23</sup> issued by the Consultation on Common Texts, are widely used in North America and elsewhere. I find these lectionaries are sufficiently similar to call them "synoptic lectionaries." While this study is focused on the Catholic *ordo*, some secondary studies based on other synoptic lectionaries have been taken into consideration. Many observations made in this study apply as much to the EL and the LL as they do to the RL and the RL2.<sup>24</sup>

The RL was designed to assign the texts considered "of greatest importance" to Sundays and major feasts.<sup>25</sup> While Eileen Schuller insists that "there is no systematic plot to exclude women from the [Sunday] lectionary,"<sup>26</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith claims that an androcentric hermeneutic influenced both the selection and the way the collections of three selections and a psalm or canticle were put together.<sup>27</sup> The lections in Catholic Sunday lectionary disclose the male voice of "Mother Church" safeguarding the interest of "her" sons.

### Gender Language

Lectionaries necessarily adopt an established version of the English Bible. In the early 1980's some feminist scholars recognized that, while awaiting forthcoming gender-inclusive translations of the Bible, immediate action needed to be taken to eliminate linguistic androcentrism from public proclamation. The National Council of Churches sponsored the preparation of *An Inclusive Language*

*Lectionary* based on the Revised Standard Version (hereafter: RSV) to provide gender-inclusive readings for the CL.<sup>28</sup> *The Lectionary for the Christian People*, devised by Gail Ramshaw and Gordon Lathrop, supplied gender-inclusive readings based on the RSV for the RL, EL, and LL.<sup>29</sup> Interim efforts were also made at the local level; but the practice of making *ad hoc* changes placed too much responsibility on individuals with little training to discern when and what changes would or would not be appropriate. For those churches that use a pulpit Bible, the publication of the New Revised Standard Version (hereafter: NRSV) resolves the problem for the moment.

Catholics publish full-text lectionaries that are designed to be used in liturgies. These lectionaries eliminate the difficulty readers experience in finding the proper selections in a Bible and then having to skip over verses not designated for proclamation. The Committee on Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (hereafter: NCCB) addressed the issue of gender-language while preparing an American text of the 1981 *ordo*.<sup>30</sup> The NCCB was also committed to using the New American Bible (hereafter: NAB) as its master text.<sup>31</sup> This meant that all the relevant pericopes in the NAB would need to be reviewed because the revised "inclusive-language" New Testament, introduced in 1986, was unsatisfactory.<sup>32</sup>

The NCCB recognized that "the concern for gender-inclusive language had reached the point that further changes in horizontal language, that is, language referring to persons, was imperative."<sup>33</sup> Members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America (hereafter: CBA) revised all the pericopes in the NAB that were appointed by the RL2 to insure that "the language . . . [would] facilitate the full, conscious and active participation of all members of the church, women and men, in worship."<sup>34</sup> Three specific principles guided their decisions: 1) Clauses in the third person masculine singular were put either into the plural or the second person "so as to be inclusive in meaning . . . when this does not affect the meaning of the clause." 2) The Greek *adelphoi* was translated as brothers and sisters "in a context that, in the judgement of scripture scholars, includes men and women." 3) "In those instances where the meaning of the text would not be altered, a word that is exclusive in meaning is replaced by an inclusive word or words when the context includes women as well as men."<sup>35</sup> These principles do not allow the alternating use of "she" and "he" (him and

her) to convey inclusive meanings. These principles also insure that nothing that is said to or about males would be represented inclusively. The new lectionary was approved by the American Bishops in June, 1992. It awaits ratification from Rome. The 1981 *ordo* has been available for some time; the proposed U.S. text is not; it is not possible to assess this lectionary at the moment. However, it is now an open question if this lectionary will ever be issued.

On October 25, 1994 the Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith rescinded the approval of the Congregation for Divine Worship for liturgical use of the NRSV.<sup>36</sup> These Europeans presume they can "authoritatively" define the use and meaning of English for Catholics in North America. The Vatican curia has chosen to cast down a gauntlet on inclusive language. In the process, it has insulted women, the ecumenical community, the North American bishops and biblical scholars, as well as the CBA, because the Vatican also rejected the inclusive-language Psalter that was introduced by the CBA into the NAB in 1993. North American Catholic biblical scholars plan to discuss this issue in Rome; it would be precipitous to speculate about the final outcome in the context of this study.

Although all these efforts are important, by the mid-1980's some feminist scholars realized that the Bible cannot be "rescued" with better translations or even feminist interpretations.<sup>37</sup> Other feminist scholars recognized that problems in the lectionaries can never be resolved by the present forms of gender-inclusive translations.<sup>38</sup> Feminist lectionaries are beginning to appear. However, these important alternative resources are neither designed nor intended to be substitutes for the existing Sunday lectionaries in the institutional churches.<sup>39</sup>

### Silencing Women's Witness: A Systemic Problem

In the last decade some feminist scholars identified a more systemic problem in the RL and its variants. These lectionaries tend to omit passages that introduce women, eliminate women from approved shorter readings, hide women in long lessons, and emphasize passages that reinforce patriarchal presuppositions.<sup>40</sup> The Sunday readings silence the very texts that could balance the Bible's androcentric and patriarchal perspectives. In her study of the EL, Jean Campbell observes:

The fullness of the compassionate, merciful and loving God, as well as the history of the women who have been faithful, have not been considered of value to be heard publicly in the gathering of the community of faith.<sup>41</sup>

The significance of the tendencies to marginalize or silence the female imagery and women witnesses from the Bible, while including passages that sacralize patriarchy, can be clarified by applying a cultural-linguistic understanding to how lectionaries and liturgy function. George A. Lindbeck develops a cultural linguistic model to explain the nature and function of doctrine, theology, and the Bible in the believing community.<sup>42</sup> He claims that the Bible shapes the experience of Christians by providing the paradigmatic stories from which the "language" of discursive and non-discursive symbols establish the world of Christian culture. Thus, for Lindbeck, the inner experiences of Christians are "derived from" and "identified by" the world that the biblical stories construct. Lindbeck calls this process "intertextuality" and claims that it is through "intertextuality" that Christians "make the biblical story their own."<sup>43</sup> As Lindbeck explains:

To become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms. A religious system is above all, an external word, a *verbum externum*, that molds and shapes the self and its world, rather than an expression of a pre-existing self or of pre-conceptual experience.<sup>44</sup>

John Reumann recognizes "the lectionaries are the Bible for the vast majority of Christians in America."<sup>45</sup> For most Catholics, liturgy is the obvious way Lindbeck's "intertextuality" is realized. Members of the assembly participate in the process of celebrating liturgy, and that process leads them to interpret and experience themselves, others, and the world, according to the categories it establishes. Through this liturgical process, the assembly communicates, remembers, and reinforces Christian culture. The liturgical rubrics are designed to insure that the proclamations from the lectionary effect "intertextuality" that engenders *anamnesis*.

The influence of the Catholic Sunday lectionary, however, also extends beyond the limits of public worship: parochial Bible studies,<sup>46</sup>

catechetical programs,<sup>47</sup> and spiritual guides<sup>48</sup> often follow lectionary selections. The Sunday lectionary is the only canon heard, read, preached, or studied by most churchgoing Catholics. When women and female images are silenced from this canon within the canon, the witness they provide in the Bible does not shape the inner experiences or the world of most Christians. When women and female images are marginalized in the lectionary, women are interpreted as marginal beings. When androcentric and patriarchal texts are emphasized, many Christian women internalize androcentric self-understandings and many Christians assume that patriarchy is a divinely designed social order.

### First Testament Readings: Derivative, Disposable, Dangerous Women

In the Sunday *ordo*, First Testament readings correspond to the Gospel and/or to the Second Testament lesson in the same collection. Four readings from the First Testament include Eve,<sup>49</sup> one mentions Sarah,<sup>50</sup> two introduce the widow of Zarephath,<sup>51</sup> and another features the Shunammite woman.<sup>52</sup> Eight selections introduce only four women as participants in the story of Israel and these selections are appointed to only ten occasions over a period of three years!<sup>53</sup> The RL remembers dozens of male heroes and holy men—but Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Tamar, Shiprah, Puah, Moses' mother, Zipporah, Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Naomi, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Bathsheba,<sup>54</sup> Hulda, Judith, and Esther are never mentioned. The RL2 introduces Hagar, in an additional reading about Sarah,<sup>55</sup> and provides a selection that includes Hannah.<sup>56</sup> However, both these new readings are optional; celebrants may choose to use neither. For the compilers of the RL, the women of ancient Israel were not among "the treasures of the Bible" Vatican II spoke about.<sup>57</sup>

The assembly hears the empowering female imagery associated with Lady Wisdom at least twice each year;<sup>58</sup> but other female images for God are heard only twice in three years—and both are introduced in the same year! Is 49:14-15, "Can a mother forget her infant,"<sup>59</sup> and Is 66:13, "as a mother comforts her child"<sup>60</sup>—are overwhelmed when images of God as King, Lord of Hosts, and Father are so prominent. The community never hears of God imaged as a mother eagle (Dt 32:11-12), or the endearing image of God teaching the toddler Ephraim

to walk (Hos 11:3-4), to mention two other possibilities.

The selections from the First Testament cannot be looked at in isolation. These lessons correspond to the gospel readings with which they are collected. The collections clarify what is intentionally and unconsciously stressed in the selections appointed to one day. In addition, any selection can also reinforce the premises of other selections. Three selections from Genesis (2:18-24, 18:1-10a and 2:7-9, and 3:1-7) convey the idea that women are derivative, disposable, or dangerous. These premises are reinforced by the collections with which each of these readings is assigned. In addition, each reading lends support to premises that are introduced in the other two passages.

The story of the woman's derivative creation from Gn 2:18-24<sup>61</sup> begins by suggesting that the woman is a divine afterthought: "it is not good for the man to be alone." As it continues, the reading recounts that the man names creation and thereby sacralizes a male perspective of reality. The lection also allows the woman to appear as a creature whose only purpose is to be "useful" to the man.<sup>62</sup>

Although Phyllis Trible's rhetorical studies demonstrate that in Gn 2 only grammatical gender necessarily applies to the "earth-creature" (*ha-adam*) before Gn 2:23c, when the terms woman and man (*issa* and *is*) are first introduced,<sup>63</sup> it is also true that the ancient authors could never have conceived of the androgynous being Trible postulates.<sup>64</sup> Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite insists that "feminist interpretation must also recognize that the history of control of women's bodies is at stake in this text and must become part of its interpretation."<sup>65</sup> The RL introduces Gn 2:18-24 in public worship with Mk 10:2-16. In this gospel passage Jesus affirms the indissolubility of marriage. The harmful potential of this collection is illustrated in real history by an episode Thistlethwaite recounts:

A Maryland woman who was severely abused over many years told me that when she complained after some attacks that she had sustained injuries, her husband would retort that "your bones are my bones—just like it says in the Bible."<sup>66</sup>

The compilers of the RL certainly never intended for this collection to legitimize wife-battering. However, in another selection the RL illustrates that the compilers never thought that there was anything wrong with the idea that women's only purpose is to be productive for

and reproductive of men. The only lection in the RL that introduces Sarah is Gn 18:1-10a.<sup>67</sup> Here, Sarah is instructed by Abraham to produce flour rolls to serve his male visitors at Mamre. Then, her future reproductive role as the mother of a son becomes the topic of the men's conversation. The lection ends before Sarah becomes a subject who overhears the prediction of her pregnancy, reflects on sexual pleasure, laughs, and denies that she did so. It eliminates the fact that Sarah spoke to God and that God responded to Sarah.<sup>68</sup> This passive Sarah "is certainly not the Sarah we find in Genesis."<sup>69</sup> The compilers dispossessed Sarah of herself by the way they disposed of her in this selection. Her brief appearance reinforces a number of standard misinterpretations of Gn 2. Gn 18:1-10a suggests that a) women were created to be useful to men, b) wives must be disposed to provide what suits their husbands, and c) short of divorcing them, husbands may dispose of their wives as objects rather than persons with whom they are partners and equals.

The account of Abraham and his visitors at Mamre is collected with the story of Mary and Martha from Lk 8:38-42. Since Abraham's hospitality is a typological foreshadowing of the sisters' hospitality, Sarah recedes even further. Leaving aside the relative merits of typology<sup>70</sup>—a longer account from Genesis that introduces Sarah as an active subject would provide even more symmetry. Sarah's laughter, and even her denial, serve as a type of Martha's misunderstanding of the meaning of serving Jesus. The compilers of the RL were fearful that people in the twentieth century could not listen to three long readings. Selections are often so short that one observer declares the compilers "chickenhearted."<sup>71</sup> In this instance, the selection was shortened because the compilers were blind to Sarah as a person. They should have noticed that a slightly longer reading would have strengthened the symmetry they wanted to suggest. Gn 18:1-15 would also allow the assembly to hear that God listens and speaks to women and perhaps even to conclude that Jesus praises Mary not for sitting in silence but for speaking as well as listening.

On the First Sunday in Lent in Year A, Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7 is proclaimed. The passage recounts the story of the disobedience of the first couple. Traditional androcentric interpretations of Gn 3 assume that the woman was tempted because she was the inferior, weaker creature.<sup>72</sup> However, the woman has a discussion, considers the options, and decides before she acts. She makes a conscious decision;

Adam simply eats. She then acknowledges that she had been deceived and recognizes her culpability; Adam blames God ("the woman YOU gave me").<sup>73</sup>

During the festal season, all three readings in every collection generally correspond to each other. During Lent, the First Testament selections tend to correspond more closely to the Second Testament lessons than to the gospel pericopes.<sup>74</sup> However, on the First Sunday in Lent in Year A, Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7 closely corresponds to both Rom 5:12-19 and Mt 4:1-11. In the pericope from Romans, Paul contrasts Adam's disobedience with the obedience of Christ. To provide gender symmetry Paul discards the woman from the story and disregards her as a moral agent. By overlooking Eve's dubious honor, Paul ignores the only one who made a conscious human act of disobedience. Only the man's act is important and only the man is credited with the moral culpability. In this combination of readings, the woman's only significance is her influence on Adam. The collection suggests that apart from their capacity to influence men, women's acts are irrelevant.

The idea that women are dangerous is reinforced by the gospel. Together, Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7 and Mt 4:1-11 contrast gender. The woman, Eve, is deceived by the serpent, the man, Jesus, resists the devil; Jesus orders Satan to depart, Eve encouraged her husband to eat. In a collection with Rom 5:12-19 and Mt 4:1-11 the reading from Genesis can only convey the idea that women are dangerous to men. This premise is another aspect of the unconscious androcentric hermeneutic that the compilers introduced into the lectionary. The three readings from Genesis suggest that women are derivative of men, dangerous to men, and except as the mothers of sons, they are just as disposable by men, as the lectionary disposes of the other women in Genesis.

### Second Testament Lessons: Forgotten Women

All but two early church women who were important enough to be named are forgotten by the RL and the RL2. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Chloe are named in passing,<sup>75</sup> but Mary, the mother of John Mark, and Rhoda, Tabitha, Lydia, Prisca, the four prophet daughters of Philip, Phoebe, Mary of Rome, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, Julia, the sister of Nereus, Euodia, Syntyche, Apphia, Nympha, Eunice, Lois, and Claudia are never mentioned. Early

Christian women are all but eliminated from the lectionary and the witness they could provide to contemporary congregations is unremembered and uncelebrated as "Word of the Lord."

In the RL and the RL2, three lections from Acts: 1) acknowledge women's presence in the earliest community;<sup>76</sup> 2) recognize that women as well as men were receptive to the early *kerygma*;<sup>77</sup> 3) portray women as objects of the church's ongoing ministry;<sup>78</sup> and 4) mention that some women opposed Paul's mission.<sup>79</sup> Thus, two lections from Acts remember that women were objects to be ministered to and in the one lesson in which women are subjects, they are opponents of and dangerous to the male missionaries.

From the Pauline letters, the RL and the RL2 recognize Jesus' Jewish mother each year on the Solemnity of Mary,<sup>80</sup> and once in Year C the assembly hears Gal 3:28, which declares that in Christ "there is neither male nor female."<sup>81</sup> None of the readings disclose that Paul worked with women or that he recognized that women had noteworthy roles in the early communities. Rom 16:1-19 could have been an especially interesting lection. This passage notes that Phoebe was a deacon, Junia was an apostle, names other significant women in the early community in Rome, and then recommends that Christians cease splintering into factions. Christians never hear this list of early women leaders. Thus, it is not surprising that many, including some who should know better, assume that feminists are "deceiving the hearts of the innocent" (Rom 16:18). It is the lectionary that deceives Catholic assemblies by forgetting the witness of early Christian women.

Admittedly, things could have been worse. Many of the most notorious Pauline passages that pertain to women are not found in the Sunday lectionary.<sup>82</sup> However, the infamous "household codes" were included. The RL and the RL2 introduce Eph 5:21-32 in Year B,<sup>83</sup> and the RL appoints Col 3:12-17 every year on the feast of the Holy Family that is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. In the RL2, Col 3:12-17 is assigned to the feast of the Holy Family in Year A and is designated as an option for Years B and C. These selections from Colossians and Ephesians omit the adjoining parenthesis that admonishes slaves to obey their masters. The compilers insured that the Sunday lectionary would not suggest that slavery is an acceptable social institution but they provided readings that promote patriarchal marriage as a Christian ideal.

Since Vatican II North American Catholic women began to exam-

ine their marginalization by the church. They found the patriarchal ideals represented by the household codes offensive to their dignity as persons, as wives, and as Christians. Several years ago the American Catholic bishops recognized that it would be pastorally expedient to follow the lectionary's own principle to omit "biblical texts which contain serious literary, critical or exegetical problems,"<sup>84</sup> when they authorized eliminating the verses in question from these readings. The proposed new American RL2 also allows for these verses to be optional.<sup>85</sup> Still, an option to exclude is an option to include. An either/or option is not the clear stand. It will be interesting to see which option is printed as the first and second choice; first choices are usually used.<sup>86</sup>

In the Sunday lectionary, the readings from Acts and Paul barely whisper about women. It is interesting to juxtapose this fact with the following words from "The Role of Women in Evangelization of Peoples," a document issued in 1975 by the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples: "Women are capable of giving themselves without counting the cost . . . The church can never thank them enough. . . . Silence and contemplation, for which women are suited by nature, should find expression in liturgy and para-liturgy."<sup>87</sup>

Selfless giving and silence are strategies that women have perfected over the centuries to survive and to participate in the world from which they have been marginalized. These strategies can be powerful but they also have undesirable effects. Feminists have long recognized that the root sin of women as women is the negation of self and the dependence on others for self-affirmation.<sup>88</sup>

The Vatican document, briefly cited above, contains a long-winded stereotypical description of women's selfless qualities, celebrates and praises women's silence in purple prose, and thanks women as if they were not already part of the church. The Sunday lectionary emulates the silence the Vatican claims to be integral to women's nature. This silence discloses another premise of the androcentric hermeneutic set into the lectionary: the women from the early church are incidental. The compilers of the RL allowed this lectionary to forget the early Christian women because they could not conceive that women's presence or prominence in the early church was significant. This silencing betrays a predisposition to assume that women in the church today are incidental.

### The Gospels: Women's Silenced Witness

The gospel readings appointed to Solemnities, such as Christmas, and some Sundays, such as the annual observance of the Baptism of the Lord on Sunday following Epiphany, feature passages that recount the particular event in the life of Jesus that is being celebrated. Sundays in the festal seasons are assigned gospel pericopes that lend themselves to the themes that are associated with each season. Other Sundays are provided with semi-continuous passages from the synoptic Gospel that is assigned to each year. The compilers tended to skip over the pericopes that were introduced in the seasons or on Solemnities,<sup>89</sup> and once they introduced a story from one Gospel, they often skipped the parallel accounts in the other Gospels. However, some stories that feature the male disciples in an especially favorable light appear in every variation. Thus, the lectionary includes all four accounts of the call of the first male disciples<sup>90</sup> and the four accounts of Peter's profession of faith.<sup>91</sup> A few other stories are included from two Gospels but, except for the accounts of the women who discover the empty tomb, none of the accounts that feature an encounter between Jesus and a woman is introduced more than once.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the stories of women that Jesus encountered in his ministry are heard only once every three years.

While the problems of gender-exclusive language and the household codes received considerable attention, the fact that several pericopes in the Gospels, which feature women, were not in the RL, was only recently introduced in a popular Catholic publication.<sup>93</sup> The RL2 does not add any relevant gospel pericopes to the RL. What follows identifies the women's stories and images from the Gospels that are (1) omitted, (2) eliminated in shorter readings, (3) hidden in long lessons, and (4) considers how the Sunday lectionary marginalizes one especially significant gospel tradition.<sup>94</sup> In the process the women and female images included in the Sunday lectionary are acknowledged.

#### Omitted Women

Three important pericopes that feature women are never introduced in a gospel reading in the Sunday lectionary. Lk 13:10-17 provides an

account of Jesus healing a woman that he identifies as a "daughter of Abraham" (13:16). The story of this woman who likely suffered from osteoporosis is not included in the Sunday *ordo*. John provides an account of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning. This important story in Jn 20:11-18 about the first witness to the Resurrection is omitted from the Sunday lectionary. The Gospel for the Solemnity of the Assumption in Year B is from the canonical ending of Mark. However, the verses that describe Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9-11) are not provided in the reading.

Jesus' healing of Simon's mother-in-law and her response of serving illustrate the ideal of Christian discipleship. The story appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke but only Mark's account (1:29-31) is introduced in the lectionary.<sup>95</sup> Jesus' healing of the Gentile Canaanite woman from Mt 15:21-28 is provided<sup>96</sup> but the parallel story from Mk 7:24-30 is not. This story is particularly interesting because it is the only occasion in which Jesus initially refused to heal and it is the only occasion where somebody's persistence and astute wit forced Jesus to change his mind. Although Mt 15:21-28 makes the same point, by excluding the story from Mark's account the lectionary minimizes the fact that women benefited by Jesus' ministry and avoids a second opportunity to portray a woman as an extraordinarily intelligent person.

The RL and the RL2 excludes most accounts in which Jesus' teachings make use of women or female images. In Mt 23:37 and Lk 13:34 Jesus images himself as mother hen; in Lk 13:20-21 Jesus uses an image of a woman kneading bread to illustrate the growth of the *basilea tou theou* (i.e., the reign of God); in Lk 15:8-10 Jesus images God as a woman seeking a lost coin; in Jn 16:21 Jesus likens the impending distress of his disciples to a woman in labor and then likens their future joy to a mother with her newborn. These analogies are never heard because none of these verses is incorporated in the Sunday readings. Jesus called attention to a poor widow who contributed two coins to the treasure and identified her as the paradigm for true devotion to God in Mk 12:41-44 and Lk 21:1-4, but only Mark's account is included in a reading.<sup>97</sup>

The pericopes that recount the stories of Mary, the mother of Jesus, are included in the *ordo*, especially during the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Mary also appears in the story of the Wedding at Cana on

the Second Sunday of Year C. However, other passages that introduce Mary during the ministry of Jesus are all but ignored. Both passing references to Jesus as the "son of Mary" in Mt 13:55-56 and Mk 6:3 are omitted and the brief episode in which Mary and his siblings call to Jesus from outside the crowd is included only in its Markan form.<sup>98</sup> It is a happy coincidence that the pericope from Mark's Gospel was introduced because Mark provides two female images for Jesus' followers when Jesus claims that those who do God's will are his *mother*, brothers and *sisters* (Mk 3:35). However, the Sunday lectionary could have emphasized an important feature of Catholic Marian devotion had it included Mt 12:45-60 and Lk 8:19-21 where Jesus also identifies those who do the will of God as his mother.

In Year B the lectionary includes Mk 10:17-30. In this lection Jesus reinforces the commandment to honor both mother and father.<sup>99</sup> Jesus also cites this commandment in Mk 7:10-13, Mt 15:4-5, 19:18, and Lk 18:20. A reading that includes this teaching from Matthew in Year A and Luke in Year C should have been introduced. Care of the aging is one of the major moral dilemmas of this generation. Women tend to live longer than men and make up a large majority of the dependent elderly. It is unfortunate that Jesus' strong support of the obligation to care for the elderly is seldom heard in communities that have to grapple with new understandings of just what such care means.

There are a few other passing references in Jesus' teachings that allude to women: he refers to the Queen of the South in Mt 12:42 and Lk 11:31, to women in the eschatological travails in Mt 24:19, Mk 13:17, Lk 17:35, 21:23; to family disruption as a cost of discipleship that specifically identifies women family members in Mt 19:29, Lk 14:26, 18:29. None of these verses appears in any lection. Only Mk 10:29-30, which speaks of the disruption that discipleship will bring to families, is part of a gospel selection.<sup>100</sup> There is, however, a positive note. Mark's is the only gospel in which Jesus acknowledges that women may initiate divorce. The only gospel lection that includes Jesus' teaching regarding divorce is from Mk 10:2-16. This text provides an explicit affirmation of women's civil-right to divorce even as Jesus counsels both men and women not to exercise the right to do so. However, as was noted above, the collection in which this passage is introduced lends itself to the idea that women are derivative beings whose purpose is to be useful to men.

*Eliminated or Hidden Women*

Some approved shorter gospel readings must be noted. On the Third Sunday of Lent in Year A, the Gospel introduces the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman that is unique to John's gospel.<sup>101</sup> Although the shorter reading eliminates Jn 4:29-30 in which this woman evangelizes her city, it also eliminates Jn 4:16-18 in which Samaria's theological syncretism is imaged by the woman's marriages.<sup>102</sup> The shorter selection concludes with Jn 4:39-42 and these verses acknowledge that the Samaritans first believed in Jesus because of this woman's testimony. Thus, the shorter reading actually provides a more positive picture of the very first evangelist in John's gospel. However, most shorter readings do not improve the presentation of women; they eliminate the women.

The Gospel appointed to the Fifth Sunday of Lent in Year A is the account of the raising of Lazarus after Jesus discussed the situation with Martha and then Mary.<sup>103</sup> In the shorter reading Mary is all but eliminated.<sup>104</sup> On the feast of the Holy Family in Year B, the gospel text is Lk 2:22-40. This reading includes an account of the woman prophet, Anna. After seeing the infant Jesus, she "gave thanks to God and talked about the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). Anna functions as an evangelist. In the shorter reading, Anna is eliminated. Although the shorter reading provides celebrants with a respite after Christmas, it eradicates another woman's story from the memory of the assembly.

The account of Jesus healing Jairus' daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage is found in all the synoptics (Mt 9:18-26; Mk 5:21-43; Lk 8:40-56). This double story is only appointed as a lection in its Markan form.<sup>105</sup> It is unfortunate that the compilers did not choose to introduce each healing on separate Sundays every year to balance the many accounts of Jesus healing men. Instead the compilers provided a shorter reading that removes the story of the older woman, who had taken a great personal risk to seek healing. In assemblies that use the shorter reading, only the story of the young girl healed by Jesus is proclaimed and her healing represents a favor to a man.

Some women are hidden by the lectionary. On Palm Sunday the passion narrative from one of the synoptic Gospels is proclaimed. Matthew is introduced in Year A, Mark in Year B, and Luke in C. The approved shorter readings for Years A and B end with a statement by

the centurion who identifies Jesus as the Son of God. As a result, the faithful women who stood and watched from a distance are removed from the memory of the community.<sup>106</sup> Mt 27:55-56 and Mk 15:40-41 also provide the only reference in their respective Gospels to the fact that women were part of Jesus' inner circle. Admittedly, when the longer reading is proclaimed, these women and the important information about them are hidden in the very long passion narrative. In Year C, the shorter reading continues through Lk 23:49. In that verse Luke includes Jesus' male friends with the women who witnessed the crucifixion. The compilers, no doubt, continued as far as Lk 23:49 because Luke's centurion only declares that Jesus was an innocent man (Lk 23:47) and this is an inadequate Christological statement and an inadequate conclusion to a liturgical reading. However, it is noteworthy that the only time the shorter passion narrative provided for Palm Sunday includes the memory that women did not abandon Jesus but witnessed the crucifixion is from the only synoptic account in which men are with them.

*A Paradigmatic Tradition*

In Mk 14:3-9 an anonymous woman in Bethany anoints Jesus' head. Her act is a symbolic Christological confession.<sup>107</sup> Matthew 26:6-13 reproduces Mark's story. In Lk 7:36-50 a sinful woman in Galilee washes Jesus' feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, kisses them, and anoints them with ointment. Luke's story may be based on a different memory but the account in Luke has many affinities with Mark's story of the woman from Bethany.<sup>108</sup> In Jn 12:1-8, Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet. This Johannine account touches on both Mark's and Luke's versions of the story. The story is situated in Bethany shortly before Jesus' death, as in Mark and Matthew. Although Mary is identified by name and is not considered a sinner, like the anonymous sinful woman in Luke, she washes and anoints Jesus' feet.

Mark's story of the anonymous woman from Bethany is included in the longer reading for Palm Sunday but it is omitted in the shorter reading. Thus, this woman's story is either hidden in a very long reading or eliminated altogether. This pericope, as well as its parallel account in Matthew could have been easily isolated and introduced on another Sunday. This woman's symbolic Christological gesture should have been given greater prominence. Jesus declared that this woman

would be remembered "wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world" (Mk 14:9); the compilers show that they never considered that promises to a woman even made by Jesus should be taken very seriously and honored.

Proctor-Smith considers Mk 14:3-9 the paradigmatic illustration of the amnesia of the Sunday lectionary.<sup>109</sup> The lectionary's treatment of this whole tradition provides a fuller paradigm. John's account of Mary of Bethany's loving act is not introduced; neither is Matthew's account of the anonymous woman. Mark's account is eliminated or hidden. The lectionary features Luke's pericope of a sinful woman in both a longer and shorter reading.<sup>110</sup> The longer reading attaches the three verses that follow this woman's story (Lk 8:1-3). These verses note that many women were part of Jesus' inner circle and identifies Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna among them. However, the story of the woman whose tears wash Jesus' feet quickly grasps the imagination; the other women are either hidden by the longer reading or silenced from the shorter lection. This is all complicated by the fact that many "interpreters" assume that the sinful woman in Lk 7:36-50 was a prostitute and frequently conclude that she was Mary Magdalene.<sup>111</sup>

While all Christians are sinners and should model their lives on the repentant woman in Luke's Gospel, the Sunday lectionary balances the good and sinful features of men but eliminates or marginalizes the good features of women. By featuring this tradition from Luke, omitting the accounts from Matthew and John, and hiding or eliminating that of Mark, the lectionary discloses another premise of the androcentric hermeneutic of the compilers: women who are deficient from the male human norm are an appropriate image for human deficiencies.<sup>112</sup>

### Conclusion

Amnesia is an illness of the mind. Although every one connected with a person who suffers from this disorder is affected, amnesia is not infectious. The amnesia in the lectionary is contagious. It infects the *anamnesis* of the liturgical process and afflicts many members of the assembly who, by means of intertextuality, internalize a systemic culture in which women are marginally important and even just marginally human. Proctor-Smith recognizes that this is not only detrimental to women, it is dangerous for the church:

Without . . . a firm grounding in the particularity of historical events, which when connected with God's faithfulness make liturgical celebration possible, Christianity runs the risk of drifting into gnosticism. But Christian liturgy also suffers when its memory of those particulars is faulty or incomplete. Then Christian liturgy may tend toward heresy, or self-deception. Thus the restoration of women's memory to liturgical anamnesis is of critical importance to the church as a whole, as well as to women whose memories and experiences have been distorted, misused or ignored."<sup>113</sup>

When Vatican II asked for a lectionary with "richer fare" it was comparing its vision to the 1570 Lectionary. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's (hereafter: PBC) recent document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," compares the Roman *ordo* to the Bible. This document notes that while Vatican II called for a lectionary with a more abundant, varied, and suitable representation of the Bible, the lectionary "in its present state, . . . only partially fulfills this goal."<sup>114</sup>

The PBC did not recognize that the absence of women in the lectionary is among its deficiencies. The PBC did acknowledge that feminist hermeneutics "brought many benefits . . . [that] unmask and correct certain commonly accepted interpretations which were tendentious and sought to justify the male domination of women."<sup>115</sup> This feminist study has demonstrated that the Sunday lectionary silences women's witness and female images. It has identified some androcentric premises that the compilers unconsciously disclosed when they determined their selections. The foundational principle for devising the RL was to provide readings that disclose the "mystery of Christ and salvation history,"<sup>116</sup> their selections disclose that they assumed that, apart from giving birth to sons, women are marginal to the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation.

The critique of the lectionary by the PBC may signal that a real revision of the lectionary is being considered. This is an important moment for feminist exegetes and theologians. Every relevant selection and collection must be subjected to feminist analysis because a future revision will only be as adequate as the efforts that are made to unmask the present problems. *Ad hoc* modifications will fail to address the systemic problem. A lectionary is by nature, a canon within the canon. It can be designed to provide a

better gender-balance than the canon of the Bible.

Because women's witness from the Bible is silenced, the present Sunday lectionary teaches that, apart from their function as the mothers of sons, there is nothing significant enough about women's experience to celebrate as "Word of the Lord." This silence betrays a mindset that women are human only to the degree that they are like men. It tells women that they should be honored to identify with the stories and images of men and to make them their own ideal. It tells men that they have nothing to learn from the women in the Bible; it appears to be protecting them from identifying with these lesser humans. This silence also discloses another premise of the androcentric hermeneutic of the compilers of the lectionary: women's particular experiences as women are irrelevant to the lives of Christians. Thus, it is perfectly consistent to suppress and silence the images and stories of the women in the Bible and honor the admonition: "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (1 Tim 2:12). An androcentric hermeneutic that conceives of women as the most appropriate image for human deficiencies, marginalizes women as derivative, disposable beings, who, if not silent, silenced, and submissive are dangerous to men, has significant negative consequence for both the sons and daughters of an institution that claims for itself the image of "mother."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A lectionary is (1) a table of readings (or *ordo*) that are appointed to specific occasions on the church calendar or (2) a book that contains the full-text of these readings in the sequence in which they will be introduced. Unless otherwise noted, the term "lectionary" refers to a table of readings and words "lectionary," "table of readings," and "*ordo*" are synonymous in this study.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 178.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz West, "From Scripture to Lection: Toward a Hermeneutic of the Roman Lectionary," *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy: Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Mo. 2-5 January, 1990* (Valparaiso, IN: Valparaiso University, 1990), 120-121.

<sup>4</sup> The words and actions of liturgical rites are designed to enact and to convey what the church believes.

<sup>5</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith, "Liturgical Anamnesis and Women's Memory: 'Something Missing'," *Worship* 61 (1987): 406.

<sup>6</sup> Eileen Schuller, "Women in the Lectionary," *National Liturgy Bulletin* (Canada) 27 (1994): 108.

<sup>7</sup> A brief discussion of the inherent problems in the terms "Old" and "New Testament" and other designations for the two collections in the Christian Bible is found in James A. Sanders, "First Testament and Second," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17 (1987): 47-9.

<sup>8</sup> Feminist exegetes, liturgical scholars, and theologians have been aware of problems in the Sunday lectionary for some time. However, few publications are devoted to how women are presented in the contemporary lectionaries; even fewer focus on the Catholic lectionary. Studies that are not cited elsewhere in this article include: Brigit Janetsky, "Ihre Namen sind im Buch des Lebens: Frauengeschichte und erneuertes Lektionar," in Teresa Berger and Albert Gerhards, eds., *Liturgie und Frauenfrage* (St. Ottilien: OES, 1990); Marjorie Proctor-Smith, "Lectionaries—Principles and Problems: Alternative Perspectives," *Studia Liturgica* 22 (1992): 84-99; Carol J. Schlueter, "The Lectionary: Toward a More Balanced Selection of Texts," *Consensus* 18 (1992): 65-75, and her "The Gender Balance of Texts from the Gospels. The Revised Common Lectionary and the Lutheran Book of Worship," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 20 (1993): 177-186; Eileen Schuller, "Some Criteria for the Choice of Scripture Texts in the Roman Lectionary," in Peter C. Finn and James M. Schellman, eds., *Shaping English Liturgy. Studies in Honor of Archbishop Dennis Hurley* (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1990), 385-404.

<sup>9</sup> *Missale Romanum ex Decreto Sacrosancti (Ecumenici) Concilii Vaticani II. Instauratum Auctoritate Pauli PP. VI Promulgatum, Ordo Lectionum Missae. Editio Typica* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Use of this lectionary became mandatory throughout the world on the First Sunday of Advent, 1971.

<sup>11</sup> The sigla A, B, and C are used to designate each year. Year C is assigned to the calendar years that are divisible by 3.

<sup>12</sup> Each year is assigned one of the synoptic gospels: A = Matthew, B = Mark, C = Luke. John's Gospel supplements all three years.

<sup>13</sup> Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, tr., Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 406-25.

<sup>14</sup> *Missale Romanum ex Decreto Sacrosancti (Ecumenici) Concilii Vaticani II. Instauratum Auctoritate Pauli PP. VI Promulgatum, Ordo Lectionum Missae. Editio Typica Altera* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> The RL assigned different gospel selections for each year in the triennial cycle to feasts such as Holy Family, the Baptism of the Lord, Ascension, and Pentecost but it provided only one set of first and second readings for each of these feasts. The RL2 retains the readings assigned by the RL and assigns them to Year A, provides alternative sets of first and second readings for Years B and C, and indicates that the first and second readings assigned to year A may be used in Years B and C. Other changes are minimal. See Alan Detscher, "The Second Edition of the Lectionary for Mass," *Liturgy* 90 (1993): 4.

<sup>16</sup> National Liturgical Office, *Lectionary: Sundays and Solemnities* (Ottawa:

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992). This full-text lectionary provides readings from the New Revised Standard Version, modified slightly.

<sup>17</sup> Vatican II, "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*," 51, in Austin P. Flannery, ed., *Documents of Vatican II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 17.

<sup>18</sup> John Reumann, "A History of Lectionaries: From the Synagogue at Nazareth to Post-Vatican II," *Interpretation* 31 (April, 1977): 129. For a list of the American lectionaries see Horace T. Allen, Jr., "Introduction," *Common Lectionary: The Lectionary Proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1983), 8 and 24-5 notes 7-14.

<sup>19</sup> Eileen Schuller, "The Bible in the Lectionary," in Donald Senior, et al., eds., *The Catholic Study Bible* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 450.

<sup>20</sup> James White, *Christian Worship in Transition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 139.

<sup>21</sup> Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: Seabury and Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 889-921.

<sup>22</sup> Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Ministers' Desk Edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg and Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1978), 121-170.

<sup>23</sup> Consultation on Common Texts, *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992). *The Common Lectionary* (hereafter: CL) was designed as a consensus lectionary. It was patterned on the RL and its variants. CL provided a table of semi-continuous First Testament selections for most of the Sundays after Pentecost. The CL was adopted by many Anglican and Protestant churches throughout the world. It was replaced by the CL2 in 1992. The CL2: a) expands the table of semi-continuous First Testament readings for Sundays after Pentecost; b) provides an alternative table of First Testament readings that correspond to the gospel selections following the pattern of the RL, EL, and LL; c) adds or adjusts pericopes to call greater attention to the women in the Bible; d) attempts to avoid readings that lend themselves to anti-Judaic interpretations (see "The Story of the Common Lectionary," in Consultation on Common Texts, *Revised Common Lectionary*, 75-9). The CL2 was approved for use as an alternative lectionary by the 1994 General Convention of the Episcopal Church. It will be adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America on the First Sunday of Advent, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Although the selections in the CL2 introduced many more women into its selections, many problems found in the RL and its earlier variants were not resolved by the CL2. An analysis of the issues pertaining to women in the CL2 is a separate exercise. A preliminary study, "Women in the Roman and Common Lectionaries: Interpretations of Women from the Bible," was presented by the author at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> "Introduction," I:2, *Lectionary for Mass* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1970), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Schuller, "Women in the Lectionary," 112.

<sup>27</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 125-6.

<sup>28</sup> National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Division of Education and Ministry, *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983-1985, Rev. ed. 1986-1988).

<sup>29</sup> Gail Ramshaw and Gordon Lathrop, comps., *Lectionary for the Christian People* (New York: Pueblo, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> See Detscher, "The Second Edition," 4-7.

<sup>31</sup> Although the NCCB has authorized the use of other versions of the Bible in Catholic liturgies, the copyright of the NAB is held by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. There are financial incentives for promoting the NAB as royalties are paid for its use in ambo lectionaries, personal missals, and disposable missalettes.

<sup>32</sup> For an assessment of the 1986 revision see Herbert G. Grether, "Translations and the Gender Gap," *Theology Today* 47 (1990): 302.

<sup>33</sup> Detscher, "The Second Edition," 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> At present, the Canadian Bishops remain committed to the NRSV.

<sup>37</sup> See Letty Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed., Letty Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> God-language is the very heart of the Bible and liturgy, and God-language continue to perpetuate and reinforce an androcentric ideology in public worship. If there is a growing consensus between feminists and the institutional churches that when speaking about humans it is essential to use inclusive terms, the institutional churches have shown little inclination to make more than modest adjustments to the prominence of male-specific terms for God and male images of God in liturgy. This issue is discussed in Proctor-Smith, *In Her Own Rite*, 85-115; Mary Collins, "Naming God in Public Prayer," *Worship* 59 (1985): 301; Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, *Christ in Sacred Speech: The Meaning of Liturgical Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 54-6. (See also Elisabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* [New York: Crossroad, 1992]).

<sup>39</sup> Miriam Therese Winter, *A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter*, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroads, 1990-92); Barbara Bowe, et al., comps. and eds., *Silent Voices and Sacred Lives. Women's Readings for the Liturgical Year* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith, "Images of Women in the Lectionary," in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Collins, eds., *Women Invisible in Church and Theology* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1985), 53-60.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Campbell, "The Feminine as Omitted, Optional, or Alternative Story: A Feminist Review of the Episcopal Eucharistic Lectionary," *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (1990), 66.

<sup>42</sup> George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>45</sup> Reumann, "History of Lectionaries," 129.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., Philip McBrien, *How to Teach with the Lectionary* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> E.g., *Seasons of Faith* (New York: Brown-Roa, 1991); *Lectionary Teaching Resources* (Denver: Living the Good News, Inc., 1976-1995); *Opening the Word* (New York: Sadlier, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> E.g., David Philippart, ed., *At Home with the Word* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> (1) Gn 2:18-24 is appointed to the 27th Sunday in Year B (hereafter the symbol "=" will be used in place of the words "is appointed to the" when noting the occasion of each assignment); (2) Gn 2:7-8, 3:1-7 = 1st Sunday in Lent A; (3) Gn 3:9-15 = 10th Sunday in Year B; Gn 3:9-15, 20 = Immaculate Conception. Note: Three Sundays that fall between the 6th and 12th Sundays of the Year are dropped each year to accommodate the date of Easter and the American observance of Corpus Christi on the Sunday that follows Trinity Sunday. Thus, in Year B the readings for 10th Sunday are not used when this Sunday is suppressed to accommodate the date of Easter.

<sup>50</sup> Gn 18:1-10a = 16th Sunday in Year C. Sarah is also mentioned in Heb 11:1-2, 8-19 = 19th Sunday in Year C.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Kgs 17:10-16 = 32nd Sunday in Year B; 1 Kgs 17:17-24 = 10th Sunday in Year C.

<sup>52</sup> 2 Kgs 4:8-11, 15-16a = 13th Sunday in Year A.

<sup>53</sup> The RL and RL2 authorize using the readings assigned to Lent in Year A every year. This practice is recommended by the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults.

<sup>54</sup> Bathsheba is obliquely referred to as the "wife of Uriah" in 2 Sam 12:7-13 = 11th Sunday in Year C. In addition, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Uriah are introduced in Mt 1:1-25 that is included in the gospel on Vigil of Christmas.

<sup>55</sup> Gn 16:1-6, 21:1-3 = Holy Family B.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28 = Holy Family C.

<sup>57</sup> The only specific reading from the First Testament that must be read at the Easter Vigil is the account of the crossing of the sea from Ex 14:15-15:1. Although the 1981 *ordo* did not change this selection, the new Canadian lectionary inserts Ex 15:20 before 15:1a. Thus, the lesson used in Canada introduces Miriam the prophet who led women with tambourines in a dance to celebrate the deliverance at the sea. It is possible that this verse was also added to the U.S. edition. It is only one verse, but it is a commendable adjustment.

<sup>58</sup> Wis 6:12-16 = 32nd Sunday in Year A; Prov 9:1-6 = 20th Sunday in Year B; Wis 7:7-11 = 28 in Year B; Prov 8:22-31 = Trinity Sunday in Year C; Sir 24:1-4, 8-12 = 2nd Sunday after Christmas ABC; Bar 3:9-15, 32-4:4 = Easter Vigil ABC.

<sup>59</sup> 8th Sunday in Year C. The 8th Sunday of Year may be dropped to adjust for

the date of Easter. See note 49 above.

<sup>60</sup> Is 66:10-14c = 14th Sunday in Year C.

<sup>61</sup> 27th Sunday in Year B. Gn 1:26-30 and 5:1b-2 speak of a two-gender simultaneous creation in which both female and male are endowed with the image and/or the likeness of God. Gn 5:1b-2 is not in a selection, but Gn 1:1-2:2 is appointed to the annual Easter Vigil. By appointing Gn 1:1-2:2a to the Easter Vigil, the lectionary provides a lesson that affirms the equality of all humanity at its most solemn liturgy. Although this lesson may be dropped from the Vigil readings, the majestic creation hymn that opens Genesis is generally read.

<sup>62</sup> Phyllis Tribble calls attention to the fact that the term *ezer* (NRSV = helper; NAB = partner) is most often used to describe God's relationship to Israel in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 90.

<sup>63</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 72-143.

<sup>64</sup> David Joblin, "The Myth and Its Limits in Genesis 2:4b-3:24," in *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analysis in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986), 17-43. See also Pamela J. Milne, "Eve and Adam: Is a Feminist Reading Possible," *Bible Review* 4 (1988): 12-21, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation," in Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ, eds., *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 311.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>67</sup> 16th Sunday in Year C.

<sup>68</sup> Susan Judith, "Genesis," in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary* (London: SPCK and Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox, 1992), 18.

<sup>69</sup> Marie Louise Uhr, "The Portrayal of Women in the Lectionary," *St Marks Review* 135 (1988): 23.

<sup>70</sup> Typology is a complex issue that often lends support to Christian anti-Judaism. See Gail Ramshaw, "The First Testament in Christian Lectionaries," *Worship* 64 (1990): 494-510.

<sup>71</sup> Eugene O'Sullivan, "Some Criticisms of the Lectionary," in Patrick Rogers, ed., *Sowing the Word: Biblical-Liturgical Essays* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1983), 31.

<sup>72</sup> Ann McGrew Bennett, *From Woman-Pain to Woman-Vision: Writings in Feminist Theology*, ed., Mary E. Hunt (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 81-2.

<sup>73</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 40.

<sup>74</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, "The Three-Year Eucharistic Lectionary," *Occasional Papers. Standing Liturgical Commission* 1 (November, 1982): 2.

<sup>75</sup> Acts 1:12-14 = 7 Easter A; 1 Cor 1:10-13, 17 = 3rd Sunday in Year A.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 1:14 = 7th Sunday in Easter A.

<sup>77</sup> Acts 5:14 = 2nd Sunday in Easter C.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 6:1 = 5th Sunday in Easter A.

<sup>79</sup> Acts 13:50 = 4th Sunday in Easter C.

<sup>80</sup> Gal 4:4-7 = Mary Mother of God (January 1).

<sup>81</sup> Gal 3:26-29 = 12th Sunday in Year C. When the American observance of Corpus Christi falls on the 12th Sunday of the Year in Year C, this reading will not be introduced. See note 50 above.

<sup>82</sup> I.e., 1 Cor 11:2-15, which decrees women are to be veiled; 1 Cor 14:34-35, which demands women's silence in the church; 1 Thes 4:4, which advises men to take "a wife" to insure their own holiness (note: "wife" is a translation of *skewos* that literally means "a vessel"); 2 Tim 3:6-7, which describes women as unstable and incapable of making a rational decision; 1 Tim 2:9-15, which denies women the right to teach and makes women's salvation dependent on childbearing "provided she lives a sensible life in constant faith and holiness" (1 Tim 2:15).

<sup>83</sup> 21st Sunday in Year B.

<sup>84</sup> "Introduction," VI:7:c, *The Lectionary for Mass*, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Detscher, "The Second Edition," 5.

<sup>86</sup> The RL2 provides alternative second readings for Years B and C but the reading from Col 3 remains an option. It will be interesting to see if parishes use the reading for Year A every year or introduce the alternative selections in Years B and C.

<sup>87</sup> *Origins* 5 (1975): 702-6.

<sup>88</sup> Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 37; Wanda Deifelt, "Of Gardens and Theology: Women of Faith Respond," in Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro and Wendy S. Robins, eds., *The Power We Celebrate: Women's Stories of Faith and Power* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), 11.

<sup>89</sup> "Structure and Order of Readings from Mass," 66, 93, 95, 97, 99, 100, 105, 108, *Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities*, xxii-xxx.

<sup>90</sup> Mt 4:12-23 = 3rd Sunday in Year A; Mk 1:14-20 = 3rd Sunday in Year B; Lk 5:1-11 = 5th Sunday in Year C; Jn 1:35-42 = 2nd Sunday in Year B.

<sup>91</sup> Mt 16:13-20 = 21st Sunday in Year A and the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (The Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul has precedence over the Sunday cycle whenever June 29th falls on a Sunday); Mk 8:27-35 = 24th Sunday in Year B; Lk 9:18-24 = 12th Sunday in Year C; Jn 6:60-69 = 21st Sunday in Year B.

<sup>92</sup> For a list of the gospel parallels introduced in the RL2 see Normand Bonneau, "The Synoptic Gospels in the Sunday Lectionary: Ordinary Time," *Questions Liturgiques. Studies in Liturgy* 74 (1994): 154-69.

<sup>93</sup> Ruth Fox, "Strange Omission of Key Women in Lectionary," *National Catholic Reporter* 30 (May 13, 1994): 13-4.

<sup>94</sup> For a list of the gospel readings in the RL2 that introduce stories about women see Schuller, "Women in the Lectionary," 110-2.

<sup>95</sup> Mk 1:29-39 = 5th Sunday in Year B.

<sup>96</sup> 20th Sunday in Year A.

<sup>97</sup> Mk 12:38-44 = 32nd Sunday in Year B.

<sup>98</sup> Mk 3:31-35 = 10th Sunday in Year B.

<sup>99</sup> 28th Sunday in Year B.

<sup>100</sup> Mk 10:17-30 = 28th Sunday in Year B.

<sup>101</sup> Jn 4:5-42.

<sup>102</sup> Jn 4:4-5, 19-26, 39-42.

<sup>103</sup> Jn 11:1-45.

<sup>104</sup> Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45.

<sup>105</sup> 13th Sunday in Year B.

<sup>106</sup> The passion narrative from John is introduced on Good Friday. This narrative mentions that Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. It also reports Jesus' discussion about his mother with the disciple he loved (Jn 19:25b-27).

<sup>107</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1983), xiii-xiv.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-30.

<sup>109</sup> Proctor-Smith, "Liturgical Anamnesis," 405-6.

<sup>110</sup> Lk 7:36-8:3 = 11th Sunday in Year C.

<sup>111</sup> Jane Schaber, "How Mary Magdalene Became a Whore," *Bible Review* 8 (1992): 30-37, 51-52.

<sup>112</sup> In Year C Lk 7:36-50 (11th Sunday) and Jn 8:1-18 (5th Sunday of Lent) use women to image human sinfulness. Jn 8:1-18 is the story of Jesus' encounter with a woman caught in adultery. Although the men who wish to stone the woman come to recognize that they too are sinful, the woman's sin is specifically associated with gender, the sins of the men are not. Together the two readings can lend themselves to the suggestion that women, as women, are especially inclined to sinfulness.

<sup>113</sup> Proctor-Smith, "Liturgical Anamnesis," 406-7.

<sup>114</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," IV:C:1, *Origins* 23 (January 6, 1994) 1, 499-524.

<sup>115</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," I:E:2, 524.

<sup>116</sup> Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 410.