

Gender and Religious Education in the Primary Classroom.

Introduction

In an environment where issues of equality and gender are acutely important ¹ the Catholic Church has been accused not alone of legitimising gender inequality, but of sacramentalising it by saying that it is divinely ordained. If this is true, then it is hugely problematic for religious educators committed to educating children in an inclusive, egalitarian understanding of the Catholic faith. Factors which mitigate against gender equity in the Catholic tradition include: a male-centred religious and theological tradition where women are largely invisible and silent; a sacramental system with six sacraments potentially available for females and seven sacraments potentially available for males, and an almost exclusive dependence on male or what is known as ‘God-he’ religious language and imagery. However, issues of religious language (whether we refer to God as she or he) and ordination (ordained female/male priesthood) may capture the popular imagination, but they only represent a tiny fraction of the debate surrounding gender and religion.

Every area within the Christian religious tradition, its scriptures, doctrines, philosophy, sacraments, morality, liturgy, spirituality and pedagogy, has been critiqued and challenged by feminist theorists. Religious educators should not simply note these debates, they must actively ensure that religious education does not contribute to marginalization or domination on the basis of gender. Susan Ross sees that ‘the process of faith formation in children is complicated by a tradition in which girls and boys see themselves differently in relation to their tradition and in relation to God’. ² Religious educators must appreciate how gender impacts on childrens’ self perceptions and their view of God for ‘there can be no doubt that current difficulties with bringing up boys and girls in the Christian faith calls for a careful analysis of the situation and for new approaches.’³

Gender Theory and Religion.

Gender is a social construct that is related to but separable from sex. All human experience is influenced by gender. Whereas biology determines sex, culture determines gender. Gender theorists argue that traits associated with femininity and masculinity are learned and not inborn. While one’s sex is biologically based (human beings are born as females or males⁴) one’s gender is socially constructed. Gender refers to social expectations, power relationships, and cultural-linguistic constructions associated with the female and male sex. In many Western societies once the sex of the

child is established in the labour ward, gender comes into immediate effect through the provision of pink clothes for a girl, blue clothes for a boy, with the accompanying expectation that the child will behave appropriately as a 'girl' or a 'boy'.⁵ A trip to a toy shop provides immediate visual evidence of the exaggerated stereotypical gender conditioning exercised by toys such as 'Tiny Tears' and 'Action Man'. While these toys are almost bi-polar caricatures of female and male gender it is interesting to note that they co-exist in a complex modern Western society that simultaneously emphasises an inclusive 'unisex' culture.

Gender theory deconstructs and questions all assumptions and stereotypes concerning gender and sex. It argues that the bi-polar categorisation of male or female, masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual are subject to radical questioning. Michael Ryan has argued that 'normatively heterosexual men are masculine and normatively heterosexual women feminine because the reigning cultural discourses instruct them in behaviour appropriate to the dominant gender representations and norms, while stigmatising non-normative behavior'.⁶ Gender theory questions the assumption that the female baby will grow up to be a heterosexual feminine adult, and the male baby will grow up to be a heterosexual masculine adult. A host of cultural enforcement procedures privilege certain traits while denigrating others. Popular gender role stereotypes present the man as 'the one who enjoys sex, is ambitious in his career, knows how to use a drill, can read a map, and has difficulty expressing his emotion. The woman is the one who wears cosmetics, loves shopping, wants to get married, has a very loudly ticking biological clock and works just to get out of the house'.⁷ The cultural assumptions that females will generally have good interpersonal skills, be unafraid to express their emotions, and that males are generally more independent and less able to express emotion in public, is perceived by gender theorists as a self-fulfilling social construction.⁸ If females are rewarded for exhibiting emotion they will tend to replicate that action. If men who cry in public are seen as wimps, they will tend to eliminate that action. Recent research tends to posit the opinion that males and females share huge areas of commonality.⁹ Gender theorists challenge interpretations of the innate emotional nature of femininity and of masculinity's innate emotional retentiveness.

To date, Gender Studies has mainly focused on women because women's experience of acute marginalization and discrimination has caused them to acknowledge and challenge gender discrimination. More recently Men's Studies, which explores male genderedness, has contributed to the debate by focusing on men's experience and simultaneously on a more inclusive analysis of gender relations between men and women. Gay and Lesbian as well as Queer Theory questions the notion that one is either male or female, masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual and that there are appropriate ways for males or females to behave. Theorists see a continuum of possibilities

between these fluid categories including male-feminine-heterosexual or female-masculine-homosexual. Some gender theorists look to biology or neurology to provide an understanding of gender while others look to sociology and psychology to explain why women and men behave, think and act in particular ways. For example, neurological research has emphasised that women have stronger left hemisphere brains than males while males have stronger right hemisphere brains. While it is blatantly obvious that female and male biology differs,¹⁰ it would be ironic if Gender Studies, which challenges gender based stereotyping, used biology or neurology to simply exchange new stereotypes for old. Sandra Lipsitz Bem in a book called *Toward Utopia* imagines a society 'wherein the biology of sex might be considered as one of minimal presence in human social life, important only in the narrowly biological context of reproduction.'¹¹

Contemporary research emphasises the changing nature of genderised roles. A recent study shows that men do more cooking than women, are doing almost twice as much housework as they did in 1961, and their 'unpaid chores include taking children to school, cleaning, household repairs and administration'. Professor Jonathan Gershuny speaks of women and men 'converging' in the way they spend their time.¹² In the Western world, changing gender roles for males has resulted in masculinity undergoing an identity crisis and Men's Studies explores the causes, contours and consequences of this crisis. While feminism empowered women to speak of their marginalization and to work to eradicate it, it simultaneously critiqued masculinity as oppressive and abusive. The consequent impact of this critique has left many attempting to liberate maleness from an understanding that sees it as automatically oppressive and discriminatory.

Once one perceives gender as a fluid social construct which is historically and culturally conditioned, one begins to appreciate the importance of socialisation in all areas of life, and especially in religion. Socialisation is a process whereby role models provide women and men with acceptable versions of the 'feminine' or 'masculine' as well as legitimate female or male aspirations. Religion is a powerful tool of socialisation and has the capacity to allocate fixed, value laden, non-transferrable and separate roles to females and males. Within the official Catholic Church a female is socialised into desiring not to become an ordained priest. One could argue that falling numbers for male ordination illustrates that males are now similarly socialised. The difference is that for men who chose it, ordination is generally considered an acceptable and legitimate option. Gender theory sees that while theological reasons are given for the exclusion of women from the priesthood (e.g., Jesus was male, Jesus' disciples were male, no basis in scripture and tradition),¹³ what is operative here is a gender construction which should be critiqued and challenged.

It must be noted that gender does not exist in isolation from other factors which shape social and personal identity including class, race, sexual preference, ethnicity, and culture. Any analysis of gender must also take into consideration these powerful and all pervasive categories. Neo-Marxist and post-colonial critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak¹⁴ have argued that perhaps the greatest form of discrimination occurs on the grounds of class and not gender. Spivak points to the collusion between the native male and female upper middle classes and the colonising forces to the exclusion of indigenous lower class male and female groupings. One of the unexpected consequences of this collusion resulted in the empowerment of relatively small groups of women within a largely patriarchal system. In the colonial system some white Western middle-class women were also involved in the oppression of black colonised men and women. Therefore, the nomenclature of oppressor becomes increasingly problematic and ambivalent when applied exclusively to men.

Men and Patriarchy

Anthony Clare, a psychiatrist broadcaster and writer, explores the causes and consequences of the contemporary crisis of male identity in the Western world.. Clare reveals that in his own life although nobody ever explicitly addressed what it meant to be a man, a son, a brother, a lover, a father, he nonetheless learned by a kind of 'osmotic' process that his work as a man was more important than who he was. In contemporary society, Clare argues, a man is defined in terms of doing, not being. If male identity is dependent on occupation then any change of employment pattern results in a potential identity crisis. In the nineteen nineties Clare observed lonely, confused middle aged male clients increasingly requesting his services as a psychiatrist because they were in crisis as a consequence of retirement or their children growing up or their wives being busily occupied with their own careers. Clare states 'it is the women who now play the golf, who have jobs and friends at work. It is the men who cower in the empty nest, nervously facing what an eloquent Irish businessman friend has termed 'the forgotten future'.¹⁵ The real impact of Clare's intimate writing comes from the fact that is that he is not just describing a crisis he observes in his patients. He simultaneously explores his own identity crisis as a male. He confesses that 'as a young father, I shouted at my children in order to feel powerful, and covertly and sometimes overtly declared that manly boys didn't complain but had to be strong and responsible and suppress vulnerability, particularly if they were to avoid being bullied by other boys.'¹⁶ Now Clare questions his own adequacy as a father and as a man and sees that his own questioning and uncertainty is part of a much larger cultural crisis for masculinity, which he describes as the dying phallus:

Now, the whole issue of men - the point of them, their purpose, their value, their justification - is a matter for public debate. Serious commentators declare that men are redundant, that women do not need them and children would be better off without them. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that men are in serious trouble. Throughout the world, developed and developing, antisocial behaviour is essentially male. Violence, sexual abuse of children, illicit drug use, alcohol misuse, gambling all are overwhelmingly male activities. The courts and prisons bulge with men. When it comes to aggression, delinquent behaviour, risk taking and social mayhem, men win gold.¹⁷

Clare provides chilling statistics of the male suicide rate outnumbering female suicides by a factor of between three and four to one in North America, Europe and Australia. He identifies the fact that, throughout Europe, girls are outperforming boys in schools, at college and at Universities and notes that many men are afraid to put a foot wrong for fear of being charged with being sexist. Of course Clare's thesis needs to be critiqued and contextualised. While he is not writing a decline and fall history which laments the passing of patriarchy he does raise the question of the impact which patriarchy has upon masculinity. Furthermore he raises the question of the impact of the empowerment of women as well as changing gender roles upon men. Clare avoids the facile conclusion that women are responsible for men's crisis. However he hints at the interrelationship between women's confidence in taking up new gender roles and men's fears of relinquishing old ones. There is no doubt that he writes movingly and sensitively about masculinity and provides much data to support the premise that, whatever the causes, contemporary men are indeed undergoing a multi-faceted crisis.

Feminism

Sandra Cullen notes that Men's Studies has not 'yet begun to critically examine the influence of religion on masculine gender construction'.¹⁸ The same cannot be said of feminism which has generated a large body of research on the relationship between religion and gender. Feminism is an umbrella term that describes a complex movement which seeks to critique and confront the devaluation of women in all aspects of life, to eliminate sexism, and to generate an egalitarian society. The systematic devaluation of women on the basis of their perceived inferiority is termed misogyny. The word misogyny is a composite word that comes from the Greek term 'misein' to hate and 'gyne' meaning woman.¹⁹ Misogyny portrays women as intellectually inferior (icon of dumb blond), emotionally unstable (the word hysterical comes from the Greek word for womb 'hysteria')²⁰ and physically weak (fit for *Kuche, Kinder, Kirche*).²¹ Feminism challenges all forms of misogyny

and advocates women's rights to full citizenship and equality in all spheres.²² There are many different types of feminism and it is important to note that while all women are not feminists, not all feminists are women.

Feminism has made a huge impact on the discipline of theology. Alistair McGrath notes that feminist theology is a 'major movement in western theology since the 1960's which lays particular emphasis upon the importance of women's experience and has directed criticism against the patriarchalism of Christianity.'²³ McGrath's definition could be refined on two counts. Firstly, feminist theology is by no means an exclusively Western phenomenon. Black Womanist theology, Asian feminist theology and Hispanic and Latino feminist theology are just some of the feminist theologies that can be found in the world's continents. Secondly, feminist theology has a long history that pre-exists McGrath's nineteen sixty date. The roots of feminist theology go back hundreds of years. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is generally seen as one of the founding text of modern feminism. Less well known is the work of one of her American contemporaries, the Black American evangelical preacher Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), who argued for freedom from the twin evils of slavery and gender oppression. In the nineteenth century Elizabeth Cady Stanton's (1815-1902) pioneering work in advocating women's civil and religious rights culminated in her edition of *The Woman's Bible* (1895).²⁴ Stanton argued that the degrading ideas about women in the bible were not divinely inspired and that the bible must be analysed and assessed in terms of its male bias. More recently feminist writers have looked beyond the bible and reclaimed women's invisibility by documenting their role in the early Church, as well as their contribution to theological thought in the medieval, reformation, modern and post-modern periods.

There are different stages and types of Christian feminism and it is important to take note of these before engaging in any exploration of important themes to emerge from feminist scholarship on religion and gender. In the first half of the twentieth century much mainstream theological thinking was carried on from a pre-feminist perspective (unaware of its male-centred bias) or a soft feminist perspective (suggested that women have divinely ordained distinct roles as wife or mother). Critical feminist research which acknowledges, challenges and works to eradicate patriarchy, began to enter mainstream theological discourse from the late nineteen sixties onwards. While feminist theology was originally seen as a marginal area of specialist research of relevance only to women, it is now widely accepted as relevant to all aspects of theology. Radical feminist theologians emphasise the Christian tradition's marginalization and abuse of women, while Post-Christian feminists reject Christianity as irretrievably sexist. Post-modern feminists acknowledge that 'woman' is not a universal, unitary, unproblematic term. They argue that concern about equality is not simply the

preserve of feminists but of mainstream culture and so they see feminism as being superseded by less oppositional and more inclusive understandings of male and female. In this sense, one can speak of a Post-feminist movement where feminism has been overtaken by a more inclusive and universal concern with male and female genderness and the use and abuse of power by males and females. Post-modern feminism, neo-Marxist and post-colonial theorists all explore how women themselves are not necessarily exempt from the abusive use of power as a consequence of their privileged race, class, age, sexual orientation and geographical location.

Religious Tradition and Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be defined as the view that the male perspective is normative (use of term mankind/ God-he language), legitimate (Freud's notion that women suffer from penis envy)²⁵ and superior (male-only priesthood). The exclusive use of male imagery for God or the view that women are incapable of representing God in the way that males can, are seen as typical manifestations of patriarchy. Even the word for theology, derived as it is from the Greek masculine word for god 'theos', as opposed to the feminine word for god 'theas', marks theological activity as male-centred.²⁶ Traditionally, theology involved males reflecting upon a male God. The history of theology bears witness to this fact and so we speak of the 'Patristics' or 'Fathers of the Church' whose work is the bedrock upon which subsequent theological reflection was built. Medieval theological reflection took place in the 'school' (university) and involved 'schoolmen' or scholars like Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) or Duns Scotus (1270-1308) seeking to understand faith in a way that did not take account of women's experiences and ideas.²⁷ Up until the late twentieth century the vast majority of theological thinking was done by men and while most people might have heard of male theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, Karl Barth, Karl Rahner and Hans Kung, relatively few know of any female theologians such as Frances Young, Mary Grey and Rosemary Radford Ruether. In a patriarchal society one did not even begin to question the possibility of women doing *theology*. This situation is not unique to theology and prior to the twentieth century other academic disciplines witnessed the systematic exclusion of women from most areas of scholarship.²⁸ One has only to look at the preponderance of female writers using male pseudonyms, or female artists and composers having their work presented by male artists and composers to realise how women were obliterated from formal participation in a myriad of cultural, academic and social activities.²⁹ Patriarchy did not result in the exclusive abuse of females, it also had a negative impact upon men. The German philosopher G.W. Hegel's (1770-1831) reflections on the 'Master-Slave' relationship may help to analyse the impact which patriarchy had on men as well as woman.³⁰ Hegel recognised that the master's exploitative, illegitimate use of power over the slave did not only result in the dehumanisation and

diminishment of the slave but also in the concomitant dehumanisation and diminishment of himself. The struggle for domination and suppression is internalised by the master who is not untouched by his own abuse of another. Treating the slave as less simultaneously involves self-abuse by treating the self as more. Patriarchy not only diminished females by treating them as less, it also diminished the male who was incorrectly perceived as a dominant superior.

Scriptures

Many feminist scripture scholars acknowledge the prevalence of patriarchal texts in the bible yet they also emphasise that the bible is a complex, potentially empowering and liberative text. Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza sees the bible as 'a cacophony of interested historical voices and a field of rhetorical struggles in which questions of truth and meaning are being negotiated.'³¹ The bible is neither totally patriarchal nor totally egalitarian. It is simultaneously a source of suffering and empowerment for women and men. Many feminist scripture scholars investigate biblical texts critically, acknowledge the presence of patriarchy but also find the scriptures as a source of nourishment for those who are oppressed and seeking liberation. Schussler-Fiorenza investigates scripture texts critically before re-visioning the scriptures for an ethic that nurtures the oppressed. For Schussler-Fiorenza the scriptures, which contain patriarchal texts, are also a source of liberative nourishment for women and other marginalized groups. As part of this re-visioning of scripture texts, feminist scholars have focused on powerful biblical women (Mk.14:3, a woman anoints Jesus), who shatter domestic stereotypes (Lk.10:38, Mary), who recognise Jesus' messiahship (Jn. 4:11), witness the resurrection (Lk.24:49, 55, 25:10) and teach in the Church (Acts 16:4, Llydia).

Phyllis Trible speaks of a three stage approach to biblical texts. Stage one involves documenting discriminatory texts. Stage two involves discovering and recovering women who counter patriarchal culture. Stage three involves retelling the biblical stories of abused women sympathetically and creatively in order to lead to liberation. Trible's first stage is embodied by feminist scholarship which concentrates on emphasising the abuses which Christianity and other patriarchal religious traditions perpetuated against women.³² She explores some of the issues which feminists first focused on when they began to study the bible:

Less desirable in the eyes of her parents than a male child, a girl stayed close to her mother, but her father controlled her life until he relinquished her to another man for marriage. If either of these male authorities permitted her to be mistreated, even abused, she had to submit without recourse. Thus, Lot offered his daughters to the men of Sodom to protect a male guest

(Gen.19:8); Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to remain faithful to a foolish vow (Judg. 11.29-40); Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13); and the Levite from the hill country of Ephraim participated with other males to bring about the betrayal, rape, murder and dismemberment of his own concubine (Judg. 19).³³

Trible rightly names these narratives 'texts of terror'.³⁴ These terrifying accounts create a consciousness of the radical inequality between biblical men and women. Feminist scholarship focuses on the fact that in the Hebrew Scriptures women were defined as the male's property (Ex. 20. 17; Deut. 5:21), a female slave was worth half the monetary value of a male slave (Lev.27.1-7) and a woman was far more unclean than a male (Lev. 15).

In the creation accounts of Genesis, the first account (Genesis 1) is relatively egalitarian and tells of God's simultaneous creation of the male and female (Gn.1:28) who share joint stewardship over the earth. However, the second creation account (Genesis 2) portrays the creation of the male as prior to that of the female. The female is given helper and partner status only because of the male's dissatisfaction with the animal kingdom. The female is named by Adam who, in an inversion of the actual birthing order, painlessly gives birth to her. Genesis tells us 'woman is her name because she was taken out of man' (Gn.2:23). In Genesis 3 woman is vulnerable to the temptation of the serpent. She disobeys God and eats the fruit of the tree and also offers it to Adam. Adam is punished 'because you have listened to the voice of your wife'. Adam's painless birthing of Eve contrasts with God's condemnation of all woman to suffer labour pains as a consequence of Eve's transgression. Eve's foolish disobedience is responsible for the downfall of the human race and her own biological ability for reproduction, a source of power in matriarchal culture³⁵, is seen as an occasion for divine punishment: 'in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you' (Gn.3:16).

The post-Christian feminist Daphne Hampson can be interpreted in the context of Trible's first wave of feminist scholarship. Hampson, who documents Christianity's patriarchal texts and traditions, has abandoned the Christian tradition because she judges it to be irredeemably patriarchal and sexist.

That the bible reflects a patriarchal world is clear. The majority of biblical figures, whether patriarchs, prophets, priests, disciples or Church leaders, are male. The scriptures largely concern the interaction of men with one another and with their God. The central figure of the tradition for Christians, Jesus Christ, is of course male. A handful of women who play a part on the stage form the exception. Likewise the parables and ethical sayings are largely directed to the world of men. But it is

not simply that women are noticeable by their absence. When they are present they are present for the most part performing female roles as defined by that society.³⁶

Feminists have understood the word 'history' as a literal testament to the predominance of 'his' 'story' and the exclusion and invisibility of her story, 'the forgotten history of over half of the Christian community'.³⁷ An example of the male-centred (andro-centric) history and concomitant exclusion of 'herstory' is found in the bible, in Luke's presentation of Jesus' ancestors (Lk.3:23-28).³⁸ Luke's genealogy begins with Jesus³⁹ and through a filiation formula 'was the son of', lists and names all of the fathers and sons leading right back to Adam, the son of God, the original male progenitor. The genealogy is totally silent with regard to the women in this lineage. This is consistent with a patriarchal culture where females are largely marginalized and invisible so that one can speak of a 'sexism by omission'.⁴⁰

Patriarchy generally means that women are defined in relation to the primal male (traditionally the Ní or Uí in Irish culture) and are circumscribed according to their role as the daughters, wives and mothers of men.⁴¹ One of the main consequences of patriarchy has been the inappropriate elevation of males as superior, legitimate and normative, and the consequent denigration of woman as inferior, illegitimate and non-normative. The Judeo-Christian tradition provides numerous examples of patriarchy.

Sandra Cullen hints at the disproportionate emphasis on males in the Hebrew scriptures by providing some salient statistics. 'A total of 1,426 names are mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, 1,315 are men and 111 are women.'⁴²

Trible's second stage of feminist biblical interpretation involves the rediscovery and recovery of women who had been marginalized by patriarchal culture. Anne Thurston emphasises that 'the feminist interpreter is suspicious of controlled readings of texts, of readings which mask the dominance of the interpreter under an apparent cloak of objectivity'.⁴³ Feminist interpreters acknowledge their own contextual situation and its impact on their interpretative lense as they approach the biblical text. The texts do not contain objective meaning and the reader plays an important role in framing the text, interpreting it in a particular way and creating meaning though encountering it. Thurston states 'the text is not a container into which meaning, divine or otherwise, was poured centuries before and which is waiting to be drawn out'. The interpreter interacts with the text and in the process both are transformed so that the 'context alters the text'. The manner in which a feminist interpreter views and understands the biblical text actually has the power to change not just the feminist interpreter but the text as well: 'for me this has been one of the most fascinating aspects

of this whole endeavour: watching how familiar texts oddly comforting, if slightly boring, have shaped themselves so differently as I have attempted to read them ‘against the grain’. They have compelled my attention again’.⁴⁴

Trible’s second stage of interpretation involves a feminist reading of familiar texts ‘against the grain’ which results in revisioning and reclaiming biblical women. For example Tribble reinterprets Eve’s ‘helper’ status in Genesis 2. She sees the use of the Hebrew word *ezer* for ‘helper’ as a mark of powerful status since it connotes superiority in several other biblical texts.⁴⁵ Tribble views the serpent talking to the woman as evidence that she is recognised as the spokesperson for the couple. The woman shows theological skill in arguing with the serpent, she interprets God’s word and makes an independent ethical decision. In this manner a classic patriarchal text becomes a locus for reclaiming Eve as ‘theologian, ethicist, hermeneut and rabbi. Defying the stereotypes of patriarchy, she reverses what the Church, synagogue and academy have preached about women.’⁴⁶ Tribble’s reinterpretation of a familiar text illustrates how the creation stories can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For instance one could argue that the creation stories in Genesis reflect the culture of their place of origin and their focus is not on gender relationships but on human life having its origin in God.⁴⁷ For the Hebrew word ‘*Adam*’ has two meanings and it can be translated as the general word for a human as well as the specific name of a man ‘Adam’. If the word ‘Adam’ is interpreted as ‘human’ and not as an exclusively male name the emphasis in Genesis 2 shifts from gender relationships between a man and a woman and God to more inclusive divine-human relationships.

Tribble’s third stage involves retelling the biblical stories of abused women sympathetically and creatively leading to liberation. Tribble interprets the story of the rape of the concubine on behalf of the concubine and her suffering and death are a powerful witness and challenge to sexual violence. In this way the interpretation of these biblical texts is not circumscribed by patriarchy and it becomes a catalyst for a critique of patriarchal society and an impetus for change. The interpretation of these terrifying texts challenges the very patriarchal system of which they are a product.

Images of God and Language about God

All human beings, including religious believers, are influenced by gender constructions. It would appear that in the Christian religious tradition, religious believers project these gender constructions onto God so that God is generally imagined as male. The French theologian, Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) spoke of God’s transcendental masculinity and also of his transcendental heterosexuality.⁴⁸ It is entirely possible to see the God the father, Mary the mother and Jesus the son as a heterosexual

family unit reinforcing heterosexuality. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) argued that humans project whatever they value onto God.⁴⁹ Feuerbach concluded that since humans have traditionally valued masculinity they project that quality onto God so that God is father, son and (male) spirit.⁵⁰ In the nineteenth century, Feuerbach was not engaging in a feminist critique of male imagery for God. He was using his theory of projection to reinterpret the maleness of God.⁵¹ Contemporary gender theorists do not simply accept gender constructions as Feuerbach did, they question them. One must question whether it is theologically appropriate and educationally desirable to attribute exclusively male gender to God. The feminist theologian Mary Daly succinctly states that ‘when God is male, the male is God’, for if ‘God in ‘his’ heaven is a father ruling ‘his’ people, then it is in the ‘nature’ of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated’.⁵² Daly sees God the father as the divine male who reinforces a hierarchical patriarchal system based on power and domination where men rule over women.

However, the maleness of God has not always been universally or automatically accepted. Julian of Norwich (c.1342-c.1416), a late medieval mystic, perceived God as a nurturing protective parent. In *Revelations of Divine Love* she states ‘In this way I saw that God was rejoicing to be our Father; rejoicing too to be our Mother; and rejoicing yet again to be our true Husband, with our soul his beloved wife. And Christ rejoices to be our Brother, and our Saviour too’.⁵³ Elsewhere Julian states that the ‘deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother’.⁵⁴ Julian uses gendered language to speak of God as father, mother, spouse and parent. She realizes that God is greater than any human linguistic construct or set of gender relations and so she simultaneously and paradoxically applies what may appear to be contradictory gender categories to God. Rosemary Radford Ruether explores ‘androgynous christologies’ and locates Julian of Norwich’s writings in the context of a broader (early Church, medieval, nineteenth century Shaker and Pietist) emphasis on Christ unifying male and female characteristics.⁵⁵ This tradition reflects St Paul’s statement that ‘there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:28). Both women and men are represented by Christ and both are redeemed by Christ. Ruether’s reading of the androgynous Christ means that ‘his ability to be liberator does not reside in his maleness but, on the contrary, in the fact that he has renounced this system of domination and seeks to embody in his person the new humanity of service and mutual empowerment.’⁵⁶

Mary Grey explores the ‘fairly clear, if modest, strand within Jewish tradition where God is imaged as female, as mother or midwife’. She explores Isaiah’s images of God as a mother in labour crying out in pain as well as Hosea’s image of God never forgetting the child in her womb.⁵⁷ Many other writers have reflected on God as mother. An autobiographical and experiential account of *Motherhood*

and God is given by Margaret Hebblethwaite whose own theological understanding of God as mother developed as a consequence of her experience of conceiving, carrying, delivering and nurturing her own children.⁵⁸ Hebblewaite's captivating account of her own spiritual journey as a mother of three young children was inspired by her experience of finding God in motherhood and motherhood in God. She recounts how, as she was in labour delivering her child, she used the stages of labour as a spiritual meditation on the passion of Christ and the crucifixion.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, when it comes to God, most children as well as many adults tend to interpret exclusively male or God-he religious language literally and so assume that God is male or indeed 'a male'. Gail Ramshaw examines religious language and explores the variety of options with which people who wish to speak of God are faced. Ramshaw repeatedly emphasizes that human language is inadequate when it comes to describing human events and experiences. It is unsurprising then that language is incapable of adequately describing human encounter with God.⁶⁰ Ramshaw explores the varieties of metaphors, similes and analogies that are applied to God. Metaphoric or non-literal language is often ascribed to God to show the similarity between some aspect of God's being and another reality i.e., God is a rock. However metaphors are always open to interpretation and are contradictable as they are not meant to be taken literally. God is not literally a rock although God has the qualities of strength and endurance that are associated with a rock. The power of the metaphor lies in its non-literal and paradoxical ability to draw attention to an aspect of God's nature without literally reducing God to it. Likewise anthropomorphic language describes God in human terms and so God 'walks' and 'talks' in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Again this linguistic device is used to emphasise God's communication with human beings without literally ascribing human physiology to God. Human personal characteristics of love, joy, anger are attributed to God as the divine is personified in the scriptures. This is unsurprising because the Judeo-Christian tradition is based on a personal God who engages in personal relationship with human beings. However as with metaphor these personifications of God are not meant to be taken literally because God is greater than any human linguistic construction or reality.

Catholic Religious Education

In an age of equality legislation contemporary teachers and children may assume that issues of patriarchy and misogyny are only of historical relevance to their lives. They may identify that in the past, people held anachronistic sexist views that are of no contemporary significance. Jean-Jacque Rousseau's (1712-1778) ideas about the education of women may provide an example of one such patriarchal attitude in the history of ideas.

‘The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them and to make life sweet and agreeable to them – these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from their infancy’.⁶¹

Teachers may be unsurprised to locate sexist ideas about education in previous centuries but may fail to see the relevance of gender to religious education in the present Irish primary classroom. It must be emphasised that issues of gender are not only of historical concern to believers who see the Judeo-Christian tradition as providing numerous examples of negative, oppressive and sexist attitudes to women in the past. Post-Christian feminists view the Christian tradition itself as a contemporary vehicle of sexism and gender inequality which not only perpetuates this inequality but legitimates it and presents it as the divine will. In the United Kingdom Pat Hughes’s research on gender issues in the primary classroom led him to comment that religious assemblies, which refer to all men as Jesus’ brothers and pray for all mankind, provide some of the most striking examples of the lack of inclusive language in the primary school.⁶²

It behoves those who take Catholic religious education seriously to explore the issue of gender in religion, to assess whether or not Christianity has a case to answer before they advocate nurturing children in the Christian faith. It would be extremely irresponsible for parents and teachers to promote a religious tradition which denigrated females and allocated illegitimate superiority to males, promoted sexist language and institutions and disabled children and adults from critiquing and challenging exploitative and unjust gender relations. In Catholic schools religious educators face the difficult task of ‘passing on a tradition which already has within it certain unquestioned assumptions about gender roles and a liturgical tradition that reinforces these roles in significant symbolic ways. Children see the (male) priest celebrating Mass, hear references to God the Father, and thus grow up with a set of unquestioned assumptions about gender and faith that may come under scrutiny only later in life, if at all.’⁶³

Gender in the Classroom

Contemporary Gender theory has moved beyond the opposition of females versus males, girls versus boys, women versus men. In the classroom this means that teachers can emphasise the importance of the child having a healthy, positive sense of who they are as a girl or a boy. Teachers should emphasise non-hierarchical co-operative relationships between girls and boys (e.g., in groupwork,

seating arrangements, task allocation, assessment) where one sex is never seen as better than the other.⁶⁴ Teachers need to be aware that a positive sense of what it means to be a girl simultaneously contributes to a positive sense of what it means to be a boy. The elevation of one sex and the denigration of another is unhealthy for both sexes. It is important to acknowledge gender difference by recognising that while girls and boys are not bi-polar, neither are they identical. However the recognition of difference must be uncompromising in its simultaneous emphasis on equality. Educators should not make generalized assumptions about girls or boys preferences or performance in any area of the curriculum, including religious education. Furthermore educators should model good practice by using inclusive language as well as culturally, ethnically and gender inclusive imagery in the classroom. References to man or mankind as generic are no longer acceptable in children's literature or in the classroom. For almost thirty years the guidelines of reputable publishing houses specify that occupational titles which are sex-specific e.g. actress, poetess, should be abandoned as there are only a few occupations which are dependent on sex e.g. wet nurse, surrogate mother, egg donor, sperm donor.⁶⁵

Practical exercises can enable children in the senior primary classes to address the issue of gender in religion in a supportive yet critical manner. For instance the biblical story of the feeding of the five thousand, which is found in all four gospels,⁶⁶ tells the story of Jesus' miraculous feeding of 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Now while John, Mark and Luke's accounts stress that there were 5,000 'men', Matthew's account states that 'the number of men who ate was about 5,000, not counting the women and children' (Mt. 14:21). Matthew's observation about the absence of numerical data for women and children enables religious educators to critique gender constructs and to support children in asking evaluative and inferential questions concerning the text. For instance children can initially conjecture why the number of children might have been excluded from Matthew's account and they can subsequently discuss how the knowledge that children were excluded makes them feel. Then they can further discuss why the number of men present is recorded whereas the number of women is not. Once more they can explore what it feels like to be invisible in the gospel record. The teacher can lead them to appreciate that while boys are excluded on the basis of age (children) girls are excluded on the basis of age and gender (children and women). Furthermore the children can imagine story from a child's or a woman's perspective and can revision and reclaim a story from which they were initially excluded. The aim of this exercise is not to create tension between girls and boys but rather to enable the children to explore how in certain cultural and religious traditions at certain historical epochs and people have been allocated different status according to age and gender.

The children can use their religious imaginations to conjecture about females who may have been present at certain events e.g. Last Supper but whose presence is not recorded in the biblical account. Since the Christian scriptures largely document the faith testimonies of men, the children could imagine what the women would have written about Jesus' birth (Mary Jesus' mother/ Elizabeth Mt.1-2, Lk.1-2.), his ministry (Martha & Mary / Suzanna/Joanna/Mary Magdalene, Jn. 11, Lk.8) his death (the two Marys, Mk.15.) and resurrection (Mary Magdalene/ Joanna/Mary the mother of James, Lk. 23). One strategy for reclaiming these largely invisible women involves focusing on women and men who are mentioned in the text but whose characters are largely unexplored. When dealing with the scriptures children can use their fertile religious imaginations to repopulate the stories with characters who, although they do not figure in the text (e.g. the prodigal son's mother, sister, uncle, nephew), can enable the children to penetrate the story from a variety of dramatic and gender perspectives. This enables them to break open the story and give it a new transgender relevance. It is important to state that this interpretative device does not involve rewriting the text but involves interpreting within a larger imaginative framework. The children's religious imaginations brings the story to light in a new manner.

Language

The classroom should never become a locus for gender warfare between a God-she and a God-he tradition. The view that all God-he religious language is patriarchal and oppressive of females denies the complexity of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, the power of God-he language to mediate spiritual meaning as well as the impact which exclusive language has on males as well as females. Many teachers resist using God-she language for fear of confusing children. However it must be noted that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and the Christian tradition are authoritative sources of positive female and male imagery and language for God. Teachers may wish to use non-gendered references to the God who is beyond gender and address God directly in prayer as 'You' or alternatively with older children speak of God as 'the divine' or 'God-self'.

While children generally know that Jesus taught us to call God 'Our Father' (Mt.6:9) they may be less aware that in the bible the parable of the woman looking for the lost coin comes in between the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the Prodigal son.⁶⁷ Now many Catholics have little difficulty in imaging God as a Good Shepherd minding his sheep⁶⁸, or as a loving father welcoming his son home, yet they have considerable difficulty in imaging God as a woman searching for them ceaselessly in the way that she searches for a lost coin. While one can empathise with people who

experience cultural or social discomfort when using female imagery for God, but this in itself is insufficient reason for excluding all feminine imagery and language for God in the classroom.

To speak of God in the feminine is not to engage in a new departure from the Catholic religious tradition but to reclaim and revision an existing rich scriptural and theological tradition. However the success of introducing female imagery and language for God in the classroom depends on how it is done. There is no point in suggesting a simple substitution of one set of gendered language for another and of substituting the pronoun 'she' for 'he' whenever it comes to speaking of God. A total and exclusive replacement of God-she language for God-he language would not be any more inclusive than God-he language. In the same way that Gender studies has moved beyond an antithetical bi-polar understanding of female and male, a contemporary theological tradition influenced by gender studies appreciates the need to move beyond either exclusive matriarchal or exclusive patriarchal imagery and language for God. Neither is adequate taken in isolation. Taken together and complimented with other non-gendered ways of imaging and speaking of God they give a fuller image of who we are, as females and males created in God's image, as well as a glimpse of God's incomprehensible otherness. At the end of his life Thomas Aquinas experienced what some have interpreted as a mystical vision and thereafter was unable to complete his theological masterpiece *Summa Theologiae*. Aquinas declared that he could no longer write 'because all that I have written now seems like straw'.⁶⁹ Aquinas was aware that God eludes all human attempts at defining divine nature. There is always more to experience, more to know, more to say. The more religious educators present children with a sense of God's transcendence, with a sense that while we can speak about God, there is always a beyond, an otherness to God that we can try to talk about but that we can not fully describe, the truer they are to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Teachers can lead children to appreciate the unknowability of the God made known through revelation, the paradoxical otherness of God who is experienced as intimately present in the world, by using inclusive and non-gendered religious language. Julian of Norwich's simultaneous use of male, female and non-gendered images of God provides a powerful medieval model which explodes the boundaries of gendered language and appreciates that God is beyond all linguistic and cultural categories.

Images

Teachers have a very significant role to play in developing children's religious imaginations so that children can image God and speak positively of God in a way that is comfortable with female and male gender and that does not reduce God to any one gender. While religious educators can of course use male imagery for speaking of God they should not depend on it exclusively any more than they

should depend entirely on conventional Western images of God as white, elderly and male. Children's religious imaginations need to be nurtured with a variety of inter-cultural and gender inclusive images of God, so that children can begin to appreciate that there are many ways of speaking of and imaging God. Jesus was not culturally constrained by gender-based stereotypes and he challenged the gender, ethnic and class conventions of his society. His acknowledgement of his messiahship to the Samaritan woman at the well provides evidence of this (Jn.4:26). Margaret Cooling and Jane Taylor's presentation of the way in which Aboriginal, African, Asian, South American, European and North American artists have depicted biblical stories and themes is a wonderfully refreshing classroom resource.⁷⁰ It enables children to perceive Christ and many other biblical characters through the eyes of diverse artists from different cultures and epochs and it broadens their capacity to understand them. If religious educators rely exclusively on conventional Western religious art they miss an opportunity to engage with diverse theologies and aesthetic and cultural perceptions of God.

Just as Phyllis Tribble's second stage of feminist interpretation led to the reclamation and revision of the forgotten women in scripture, contemporary Irish religious education needs to reclaim and revision female imagery for God and female language about God in the classroom. The Jewish and Christian scriptures and tradition contain inclusive imagery and language for God and use of this in a classroom context enables children to appreciate God's nature more deeply, to view themselves more positively as girls and boys made in God's image, and to develop their own self-transcendent spirituality. Gender studies helps to establish a counter-canon of women and men in scripture, of women theologians, of women reformers and writers within the Irish tradition. Children can benefit from learning about powerful female and male religious educators in the past like Saint Brigid and Saint Patrick, Nano Nagle and Edmund Rice, and more recently Frank Duff and Edel Quinn. If religious educators use inclusive language, culturally diverse imagery as well as teaching methodologies which reclaim and celebrates invisible women in the Christian tradition then religious education will offer a counter narrative and a powerful voice to contemporary girls and boys in Irish primary schools.

¹ See The Employment Equality Acts 1998 & 2004; The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004.

² Susan A. Ross, 'Gender, Culture, and Christian Faith Formation', in Werner G. Jeanrond & Lisa Sowle Cahill, Eds., *Religious Education of Boys and Girls*, *Concilium*, 2002/4, p. 17.

³ Jeanrond & Sowle Cahill, *Concilium*, p.7.

⁴ Anthony Clare writes 'The one biological difference between the sexes on which everybody is agreed is that whereas women possess two X-shaped sex chromosomes, men possess one X and a little Y-shaped chromosome. The Y

chromosome accounts for superior male strength, stature, mass of muscle, sleight of hand, speed of foot.’ Anthony Clare, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis The Dying Phallus*, Chatto and Windus, 2000. Inter-sex babies are those who have traces of male and female sex organs and are of indeterminate sex. This condition is sometimes referred to as *Hermaphroditism*. Of course modern medicine means that people can avail of artificial sex changes so that even the biological category of female and male is fluid and open to change.

⁵ Adjectives teachers used to describe typical behaviour from boys include ‘non-compliant, demanding, excitable, talkative, attention-seeking and active. Girls tend to be described as gentler, more caring, sensible, obedient, hardworking, co-operative, quiet, dependent and passive’. Pat Hughes, *Gender Issues in the Primary Classroom*, Scholastic Publications Ltd., 1991, p.131.

⁶ Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction*, Blackwell, 2002, p.116.

⁷ Sandra Cullen, *Religion and Gender*, Veritas, 2005, p.33.

⁸ See Terry L Martin, Kenneth J. Doka, *Men don't cry....women do: transcending gender stereotyping of grief*, London: Brunner/Mazel, 2000.

⁹ See Cathy Gunn, Dominant or Different? Gender issues in Computer Supported Learning in *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, Feb. 2003. Also Kelly Rathje, Malw Versus Female Earnings – Is the gender wage gap converging?, in *Economica Ltd*, Spring 2002, Vol.7, No.1.

¹⁰ ‘Science demonstrates that there are at least six differentials in establishing the sexual differentiation process: genes and chromosomes, sex glands, sex hormones, differentiation of internal reproductive tract, differentiation of external genitalia and the differentiation of some brain areas.’ Cullen, *Religion and Gender*, p.23.

¹¹ Ursula King, *Religion and Gender*, p.9.

¹² *The Sunday Times*, June 19, 2005. The study was carried out in 2001 by Professor Jonathan Gershuny, and was published by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Essex University, 2005.

¹³ *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*, 15 October, 1976. This declaration states that there must be a ‘physical resemblance’ between the priest and Christ. For a commentary see Ruether, *To Change*, p.47. The Vatican strenuously emphasizes that its teaching is scripturally and theologically based and resists the notion that its teaching is influenced by gender.

¹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The post-colonial Critic: interviews, strategies, dialogues*, London: Routledge, 1990. Donna Landry, Gerald MacLean, *The Spivak reader: selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, London: Routledge, 1996. Cf. essay Can the Subaltern Speak?

¹⁵ Anthony Clare, *On Men Masculinity in Crisis* Chatto & Windus, London, 2000, p.2.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Clare, *On Men*, p.3.

¹⁸ Sandra Cullen, *Religion and Gender*, p.37. See King, *Religion and Gender*, p.12.

¹⁹ While misogyny is usually associated with men, women can also harbor a hatred of their own sex. The antonym of misogyny is misandry.

²⁰ The word hysterical originates from ‘*hystericus*’ which means ‘of the womb’. Hysteria was a female specific neurotic condition which medics thought developed as a consequence of a uterine disfunction.

²¹ ‘*Kuche, Kinder, Kirche*’ refers to women’s suitability for three roles: their domestic role as cook (*Kuche*); maternal role with children (*Kinder*) and religious role praying in church (*Kirche*).

²² Feminism is the advocacy of women’s rights to full citizenship i.e. political, economic and social equality with men. cf. L. J. Nicholson Ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Routledge, 1990, p.26.

²³ Alister Mc Grath, *Christian Theology: An introduction*, Blackwell, 1994, p.497.

²⁴ Cady Stanton wrote the woman’s bible with other women members of a Revising Committee. It was produced in two volumes in 1892 and 1895. cf. Elizabeth Griffith, *In her own right*, OUP, 1985.

²⁵ Freud believed that at around four years of age young girls first realized that they had no penis. The girl child blames her mother for her sense of loss and focuses on her father as a love object. Anthony Clare reflects on the huge change which has occurred since Freud. ‘A century ago, a peevish Sigmund Freud, perplexed by a seeming epidemic of hysterical, depressed, lethargic and dissatisfied women, asked, ‘What do women want?’ He asked it at a time when to be a woman was to be pathological, to be male was to be health personified. A century later it is not women who are seen to be pathological, but men; it is not women's wants, but men's, that mystify us.’ Clare, *Men in Crisis*, p.

²⁶ One could argue that the word theology is an English construction and that it is the consonants of ‘ology’ and not the masculine or feminine of the the Greek word for God ‘*theo/a*’ forms the word the/ology. According to this reading there is nothing inherently male or female about the activity.

²⁷ Faith seeking understanding was St. Anselm’s (1033-1109) definition of theology.

²⁸ Cf. B.Smith, & Ursula Appelt, *Write or be written: early modern women poets and cultural constraints*, Ashgate, 2001. Mary Cullen, ed. *Girls don't do honours: Irish women in education in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Dublin: Women’s Education Bureau, 1987.

²⁹ In a 2005 BBC Radio 4 ‘In Our Time’ vote on the world’s greatest philosopher, listeners compiled an all male shortlist for the top twenty greatest philosophers ever. No woman was included.

³⁰ Patricia Kieran, *A Study in the Roots of Modern Atheism*, Unpublished M.Th. Thesis, University of London, 1985, p.11.

³¹ Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, *Searching the Scriptures Vol. 1*, SCM Press, 1994, p.7f.

- ³² cf. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk Toward a Feminist Theology*, Beacon Press, 1983, p.228, for an account of Radical Feminism. 'For many, the logic of this position leads to lesbian separatism. Women can't be liberated from patriarchy until they are liberated from men'.
- ³³ Phyllis Trible, Biblical Tradition and Interpretation in Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology A Reader*, SPCK, 1990, p.24.
- ³⁴ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: literary-feminist readings of biblical narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress press, 1984.
- ³⁵ Síle na Gig (sometimes spelled Sheela na Gig or Sheila Na Gig) is a powerful female, perhaps Goddess image, found on medieval buildings and churches. It is a powerful reminder of women's sexuality and capacity for reproduction.
- ³⁶ Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p. 86.
- ³⁷ Barbara J. Mac Haffie *Her Story Women in Christian Tradition*, Fortress Press, 1986.
- ³⁸ Matthew also presents a genealogy of Jesus in Mt.1:1-17. Matthew's account emphasises Jesus' male lineage but unlike Luke's account his does make three references to the names of important biblical women eg. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, yet only in the context of describing them as the mother of a male. Matthew also makes reference to Uriah's wife without mentioning her by name.
- ³⁹ He was the son (Jesus), so people thought, of Joseph, who was the son of Heli, the son of...etc.Lk.3.23f.
- ⁴⁰ Ursula King Ed., *Religion & Gender*, Blackwell, 1995, p.2.
- ⁴¹ Only three of the books of the bible bear the names of women: Ruth, Judith and Esther.
- ⁴² Cullen, *Religion and Gender*, p.70.
- ⁴³ Anne Thurston, *Knowing Her Place Gender and the Gospels*, Gill & Macmillan, 1998, p.xiv.
- ⁴⁴ Thurston, *Knowing Her Place*, p. xv.
- ⁴⁵ Ps. 121.2; Ps.124.8; Ps.146.5; Exod. 18.4; Deut. 33.7, 26, 29. Cf. Trible in Loades, *Feminist Theology*, p.26.
- ⁴⁶ Trible in Loades, *Feminist Theology*, p.27.
- ⁴⁷ Both creation stories are generally seen as non-Jewish in origin and while Genesis 1 is Egyptian in origin Genesis 2 is generally recognised as having originated in Mesopotamia.
- ⁴⁸ Patricia Kieran, *New Light on Alfred Loisy? An exploration of his religious science in Essais d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses (1898-1899)*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1994.
- ⁴⁹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957, p.282. 'Man is the beginning, the middle and the end of religion'.
- ⁵⁰ Feuerbach sees the spirit as male and so sees Mary as the legitimate female aspect of the Trinity of Father, Son and Mother. Many writers have written about the breath or spirit *ruah* as a feminine aspect of God.
- ⁵¹ Feuerbach, *The Essence*, p.30.
- ⁵² Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father Toward a philosophy of women's liberation*, Beacon Press, 1974, p.13.
- ⁵³ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Penguin Books, 1984, p.151.
- ⁵⁴ Julian, *Revelations*, p.157f. Chapter 54.
- ⁵⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World Christology and Cultural Criticism*, SCM Press, 1981, p.49f.
- ⁵⁶ Ruether, *To Change*, p.56.
- ⁵⁷ Mary Grey, *Introducing Feminist Images of God*, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, p.24. 'Texts such as Isa. 42.14, 46.3-4, 66.13, speak of the tender motherhood of God, crying out in labour who at the same time does not forget the child of her womb (Hos. 11.3-4; Isa. 49.15).'
- ⁵⁸ Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Motherhood and God*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1984.
- ⁵⁹ Hebblethwaite, *Motherhood*, p.78.
- ⁶⁰ Gail Ramshaw, 'The Gender of God' in Loades, Ann, Ed., *Feminist Theology*, p.173.
- ⁶¹ Quotation from *Emile* (1762) in Pat Hughes, *Gender Issues in the Classroom*, Scholastic Publications, 1991, p.21.
- ⁶² Pat Hughes, *Gender Issues*, p.57.
- ⁶³ Ross, *Gender*, p.21. The word educate comes from the Latin '*educere*' meaning to lead out. Religious educators could model themselves on religious teachers or *gurus* who bring children from the darkness (*gu*) of religious stereotypes which diminish and devalue females and males to the light (*ru*) of critical, informed and egalitarian faith.
- ⁶⁴ The work of Margaret Spear and Margaret Crossman has revealed that teachers award higher marks on average to work they think is from a boy than to identical work that they think has been produced by a girl. Hughes, *Gender Issues*, p.99.
- ⁶⁵ Gail Ramshaw in Loades, *Feminist Theology*, p.176. Hughes, *Gender Issues*, p.58.
- ⁶⁶ John 6:1-14; Mt.14:13-21; Mk.6:3-44; Lk.9:10-17.
- ⁶⁷ Parable of The Lost Sheep, Lk.15: 1-8. Parable of the Lost Coin, Lk. 15:8-10. Parable of the Lost Son, Lk.15:11-32.
- ⁶⁸ Indeed this image of the Good Shepherd has given rise to Sofia Cavalletti's Good Shepherd school of catechesis.
- ⁶⁹ Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas*, Past Masters, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.26.
- ⁷⁰ Margaret Cooling, Jane Taylor, Diane Walker, *The Bible Through Art*, RMEP, 2000. Margaret Cooling, Jane Taylor, *Jesus Through Art*, RMEP, 2000.