

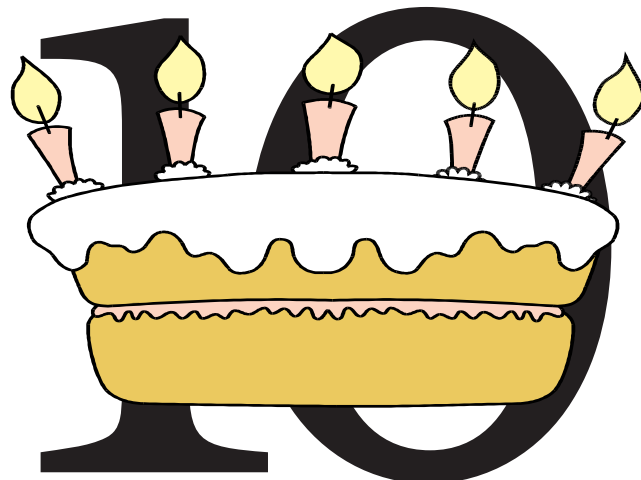


Women in Ministry celebrates ten years

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Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry begins the anniversary year with a celebration on March 7 at the University of Richmond, the site of the first conference in 1988. In that year over 60 people assembled to explore the theme of "Empowerment." Much has happened in the ten years since that tentative beginning. This year VBWIM will celebrate the birthday with a workshop on "Personality Types and Ministry," worship and celebration in the Wilton Center at the University of Richmond.



Ex Cathedra

Birthdays are Great!

Birthdays are one of the ways that we mark milestones in our lives. We use them mainly to mark the passage of years. They are times for family gatherings, for having friends over, for storytelling, for picture taking, and for making memories. They are times of celebration, of joy, of reflection, and of dreaming. Oh, yes, birthdays are also for cake and ice cream and presents and balloons and sometimes games and silly hats. Mostly, they are just plain fun.

So what do you do when an organization turns ten?

We are having a birthday party! Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry has been around now for a decade, which is young as Virginia Baptist organizations go, and we plan to celebrate our reaching this milestone and to affirm our intention of growing into the next century.

This issue of SYNERGY has articles that relate our beginnings and a brief history of our organization. For our spring conference on March 7, we shall return to our roots at the University of Richmond. In addition to the morning conference on Personality Types in the Workplace, there will be exhibits that tell our story and a worship service of celebration. We wish to worship our Lord, honor our founders, celebrate who we are, and look forward to our future. We might even have cake and balloons. After all, it is a birthday party.

It would be wonderful if all of our members and supporters could be present at this service. I know, though, that scheduling conflicts will prevent some of you from attending. Come and celebrate with us if you can; but if you cannot, do however take several moments to wish yourself and your organization well.

The Rev. Ellen T. Gwathmey is minister of visitation and outreach, River Road Church, Richmond.

VBWIM Spring Workshop is scheduled for March 7. The program, on the theme "Personality Types and Ministry," includes an examination of the Myers-Briggs personality profiles in the context of ministry. Participants will take the self-scored short test.

There will be a presentation on the typologies and a discussion on the relevance of an understanding of types, especially one's own type as well as those of co-workers, in church work and ministry.

The program begins with registration at 9:30 a.m. at the Wilton Center. Following the morning emphasis on Myers-Briggs and lunch, the day will culminate in worship and celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry. The event closes at 3 p.m.

The afternoon session will provide an opportunity to honor those women ministers who had the vision to plan the first conference and to lay the groundwork for the organization that now flourishes with an identified constituency of over 500 persons.

The books are still open for anyone who wishes to be counted as having been ordained to the gospel ministry. VBWIM is attempting to accurately identify and count ordained women ministers in Virginia. If your mailing label has "Rev" beside your name, you are counted. If not, please let us know. We attempt to keep up through *Religious Herald* announcements and the registration form for VBWIM events, but we could have missed some names.

VBWIM will host a continental breakfast on Saturday morning, March 21, at the general assembly of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Virginia at its annual meeting at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church.

SYNERGY, the newsletter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, is published in Richmond, Va. Membership is \$20 per year (\$10, students). Memberships and manuscript submissions should be mailed to River Road Church, Baptist, 8000 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229. Editorial Board: Ellen Gwathmey, chair; Holly J. Irvin, treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; Dawn Mayes, networking; Anne Rosser, memberships; B.J. Seymour; Alana Woolley. ©1998

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry—Our Beginnings

by B. J. Seymour

Because 1998 marks the first decade of VBWIM, it is appropriate, even necessary, to look back and recover our beginnings ten long/short years ago.

In some ways, those beginnings paralleled those of the organization of the national Baptist Women in Ministry. The decade of the '80s was crucial for both.

In 1983, in Louisville, Ky., 33 women—seminarians, women involved in WMU at the national and state levels, those in church staff and pastoral ministry, ordained and unordained, those involved in domestic and global missions, academicians—gathered informally in a meeting which preceded that of the Southern Baptist Convention. These pre-convention gatherings continued for several years, never with official sanction nor with recognition by the convention leadership and often accompanied by controversy and opposition by the power structure of the SBC.

Opposition of the SBC over the issue of women in ministry culminated definitively and decisively at the 1984 convention at Kansas City where the following resolution was passed by 58% of those voting:

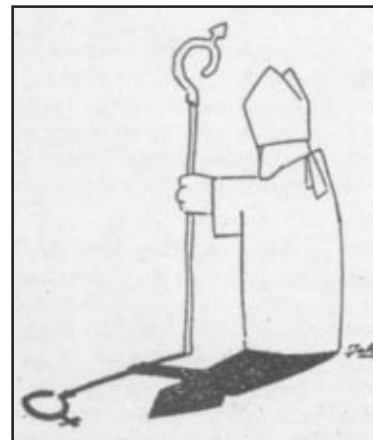
... Whereas he [Paul] excludes women from pastoral leadership (I Tim. 2:12) to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (I Tim. 2:13ff.) ...

Therefore, be it Resolved, ... that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work *other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination* (italics mine).

Had anyone entertained even a modicum of doubt about the "whereas ..." and the "therefore ...," it was soon erased by W.A. Criswell. In a television interview, Criswell was pointedly asked to respond to the claims of those women who believed themselves to have been called by God to pastoral ministry. Criswell quickly and omnipotently replied that they had simply been mistaken. As one woman quipped, "We were relegated to second-class citizenship in the SBC's vision of the Kingdom!"

Women, however, were not to be deterred. In Virginia activity among women ministers prior to 1988 was sporadic and unstructured. According to Sharon James, a veteran of 14 years of ministry in Virginia, most meetings at this time were scheduled around the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

From 1986 to 1988 there were several attempts to provide more structure to the informal meetings taking place and several women volunteered to serve on a steering committee for that purpose. According to Lynda Weaver-Williams, this group included Sharon James, Jan Allred, Anne Rosser, and Lynda. Kathryn Bullard of the state WMU offered support and some financial assistance from her office. But none of these efforts was able to provide the sustained leadership and organization needed.



Out of a chance encounter at the WMU Centennial celebration in Richmond in May 1988, a group of women began meeting that summer to lay the foundation for what would become Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry. The women who participated were Judy Bailey, Lynda Weaver-Williams, and B.J. Seymour.

The group formulated a vision statement, which was later adopted at the first meeting of the VBWIM. Three purposes were articulated:

- ... to provide a network of support and community;
- ... to offer opportunities for growth and self-understanding, competencies, and skills;
- ... to create awareness of personal and institutional influences which have shaped us.

A LOOK BACK

At this point, Sharon James of Franklin joined the group, and these four women planned the first gathering of VBWIM in Virginia. A list of persons in ministry whom we knew was compiled, and information about our first statewide meeting was communicated by letter and by word of mouth.

It was clear from the beginning that this endeavor had to be undergirded by resources far beyond our own; and therefore, we chose "Empowerment" as the theme for our first conference. Our biblical text was:

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and self-control. (II Tim. 1:7)

(please turn to page 4)

Editorial

by Barbara Jackson

The year 1998 is the ten-year anniversary of Women in Ministry in Virginia. In the coming months we will honor those visionary women who took the initiative and called women to stand up and speak for themselves. The rallying call was issued to women and their male supporters to come together for a conference to learn the secrets of "Empowerment." Since then we have had many conferences and speakers on various subjects, but that first theme, "Empowerment," was significant because of what it meant in the larger scheme of things.

The '80s was a time of turmoil in the Southern Baptist Convention. It was apparent that fundamentalists had gained the upper hand. They had taken over the machinery of the denomination. They had positioned the fight around the issue of loyalty and belief in the bible. "Inerrancy" was the clarion call. Most people did not know what inerrancy meant, but they did know they believed in the bible. Another issue focused on family life, particularly on good moral women who stayed home and raised children, obeyed their husbands, served the church by teaching children and studying missions, and who did not go out to work or stray from their place of subordination. That expectation, too, was biblical, so it was claimed.

Yet the times were leading women in another direction: to work outside the home because basic economics demanded it. Most families needed two incomes to make ends meet, especially after the oil crisis, inflation and exponentially rising costs for everything from gas to bread to schooling. Another factor: more and more women had achieved higher education and expected to pursue careers. What a paradox; their educations had prepared them for achievement, but opportunities for women remained limited.

Especially in the church. Many professions and the business world responded to the talents of women and opened the doors of opportunity. But not the church. Many churches remain reluctant even today to accept women's leadership except in the traditional roles. Women might respond to a call from God to serve him in church work—but where could they go? Wonderful, we can use you if you don't aspire to rise above your place! That meant doors were still closed for advancement in academia, pastorates, or denominational work. Doors were still closed for lay women in the church to serve as deacons or on key committees. It was apparent that the old order in the denomination would conspire to keep women from fulfilling their calling and to thwart their ministries.

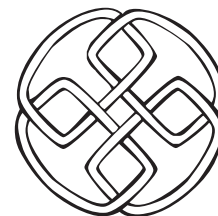
It was this situation that led Baptist women in various places to say to each other: We cannot wait for doors to open. We cannot wait for "them" to recognize our callings or to see we have something to offer. We have to help ourselves. We have to speak for ourselves. We have to shed the victim mentality and become empowered with speech and action.

And thus Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry was born. The call went out to women and their male supporters. Shall we organize? they were asked. What is it we can do together that would not be done individually? Read the summary of those early years in the accompanying article by B.J. Seymour.

Several purposes have emerged. We can present a united front and make our presence known. We can provide support to each other through friendship and informal networking. We can communicate information through conferences and newsletters. We can speak out on issues that affect us. We can encourage institutions and churches to strive for equity and fairness in their dealings with women employees. And most significantly we can take our destinies in our hands and strive to be effective ministers as we work out our callings in worthwhile ways.

Ten years down! How long, O Lord . . . !

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy.



Seymour ... from page 3

Dr. Nancy Richardson, co-founder of the Women's Theological Center in Boston, skillfully wove that theme into our purposes, challenging us to explore personal and institutional power and suggesting strategies for empowerment.

From there, our organization began to grow. Within two years the steering committee was expanded and included Wanda Sauley Fennell, June Hardy Dorsey, and Barbara Jackson. We initiated several goals: 1) to hold an annual meeting in the fall to coincide with the General Association annual meeting, and to gather in the spring where our focus would include workshops which dealt with issues of concern to women in ministry; 2) to develop regional groups of women around the state; and 3) to publish a newsletter (now called SYNERGY). The first issue appeared in 1991 and has, from its beginning, been edited by Barbara Jackson.

And so ... from these beginnings, we have turned vision to reality. Now, new beginnings beckon. We move confidently to enlarge that vision through our second decade and into a new millennium!

The Rev. Dr. B. J. Seymour is professor of religious studies at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland.

Rosemary Radford Ruether: Sprunt Lectures at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond

by Anne P. Rosser

At long last, Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of America's great contemporary theologians, has come to Virginia! In January she delivered the annual Sprunt Lectures at Union Theological Seminary on the topic "Gender and Redemption in Christian Theological History."

A church historian and theologian *par excellence*, Dr. Ruether currently is the Georgia Harkness Professor of Theology at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, a Methodist institution near Chicago, where she teaches courses on the relationship of Christian theology and history to issues of social justice—sexism, racism, poverty, ecology, and interfaith relations.

She is an alumna of Claremont University Graduate School in California, where she received the Ph.D. degree. Currently, she holds eleven honorary doctorates. She has authored more than two dozen scholarly books, including *Sexism and God-talk; The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; An Eco-feminist Theology of Earth Healing; and Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. She is the author of numerous articles found in magazines and theological journals. She continues to travel and lecture widely throughout the world. Her husband is Herman J. Ruether, a political scientist and cultural historian. They have three children.

Dr. Ruether's most recent book is entitled *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. In it she asks two penetrating questions and then attempts to answer them: *first*, How did women become identified with sin? and *second*, What forces struggled in Christianity's deep ambivalence toward women?

In the four lectures Ruether delivered at UTS, she dealt with gender and redemption in the context of four historical periods: the patristic period of church history, the early European period, Reformation history, and the growth of Christianity after the Reformation.

Unfortunately in early Christianity, the church fathers defined women as created subordinate by nature to men. This subordination was firmly established by such early theologians as Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, and others who claimed women were to be punished for their proclivity to sin. By contrast, the belief in original equality became spiritualized. It referred, they thought, to our future in heaven beyond gender and sexuality. One can easily see how this false teaching led to the requirement of celibacy for the priests of the church.

Yet in contrast to the prevailing view of women among church leaders, as far back as the year 1220 the now-famous Francis of Assisi wrote about the God-ordained equality of both genders in his *Canticle to All Creation*.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's Sprunt Lectures were based on her new book being published in February of 1998:

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Protestants today as well as Roman Catholics claim spiritual kinship with that gentle saint. [See below.]

As the Reformation broke upon western Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the lot of Christian women scarcely changed. The exceptions were the formation of two left-wing groups, the Baptists (often called Anabaptists, or rebaptizers) and the Quakers. The great reformers themselves, Luther and Calvin,

(please turn to page 6)

a canticle to all creation

Be praised, my Lord, with all your created things. Be praised, brother Sun, who brings the day and gives us light. He is of air and radiant with shining face and he draws his meaning from on high.

Be praised, my Lord, for sister Moon and her stars in the heavens. You have made them clear and precious and lovely.

Praised be, my Lord, for our brother Wind, and for the air and the clouds and calm days and every kind of weather, by which you give your creatures nourishment.

Praised be, my Lord, for our sister Water, which is abundantly helpful and humble, precious and pure.

Praised be, my Lord, for our brother Fire, by which you light up the darkness; his is of air, bright and strong.

Praised be, my Lord for our sister, Mother Earth, for she sustains and keeps us and brings forth all kind of fruits together, with grasses and bright flowers.

Praised be, my Lord, for our sister Bodily Death, from which no living persons can flee, praised be, my Lord, for all your creatures. We give you thanks.

The Battle of the Sexes

The battle of the sexes goes on—and on. What is the world to do with women It can't live with us and it can't live without us. The whole country is wrestling with the woman question.

We have girls in little league, women dressing for success and claiming equal pay for equal work. We have women lawyers, bankers and stock brokers, women truck drivers and carpenters. Women in the military give rise to the question: should women fight to kill? It gives new meaning to "Be all you can be—in the Army!"

But women in the church? That's a different matter. While the rest of the world moves ahead confidently toward the 21st century, the church seems to be in a time warp. Those who would turn back the clock to some previous ideal world are living with blinders on. Such a world of latter-day Suzy Homemakers became a thing of the past several decades ago.

When I went to college, education for women was justified by the maxim—"Educate a woman and you educate a family." I never heard about "Be all you can be." That came later.

When I went to seminary, women were just getting a foot in the door for equal theological education and equal prospects. No second-class, watered-down, basket-weaving education then. It was three full years of Greek and theology and preaching and the whole bit. Those years were a wonderful and joyful anticipation of fulfillment.

All that changed in 1984 when women suddenly became second-class citizens in the SBC. Women were "last in the creation" and first in the Edenic fall." Read that, women were the source and instrument of sin. Women were too tainted to be leaders in church or preachers in the pulpit—and certainly not to be ordained. On that day in 1984 I too joined the chorus of outraged protest. Now I was an outsider.

Those who destroyed the old SBC and who are now remaking it into a TV-evangelism lookalike made the role of women in the church an issue. I entered the fray because I have been attacked. My call and my sense of who I am have been debased. A *Newsweek* feature (8-5-91) on women in the military quoted West Point

graduate, Capt. Carol Barkalow, about her life in the military. She said, "If we weren't feminists when we went in, we were when we came out."

I think that sums up the experience of many women in the church. To be a feminist is not to polarize the world by gender.

What we are about is affirming ourselves as real people with real abilities and a real calling to participate in the Kingdom. We want to be in the partnership.

We praise the men of good will who insist on inclusiveness and do their part to make it happen. We praise the women who are pioneering new avenues. Women and men working together in ministry.

Hallelujah for a new day to come! But we are not there yet. —BDJ

[An opinion piece reprinted from the first newsletter in 1991.]

(Rosser ... from page 5)

still held to patriarchal roles for women in the church. Early Baptists accepted women as co-reformers—but after two generations they succumbed to the ways of the established Protestant reformers whereby women were relegated to second-class status.

The Quakers, however, persisted in promoting the complete equality of women and men. They did more to break down the gender barrier than any other group. One way they accomplished this was through the education of women. In a day and age when most religious communities educated only their male children, Quaker families insisted on equal education for their daughters. This was the genius of left-wing Christianity! Baptists in America, who hark back to the pioneer work of Roger Williams in Rhode

Island, need to remember that the Quaker minister Anne Hutchinson and her husband were equal partners with Roger Williams and his wife, not only among those English colonists who defected from the Massachusetts Bay Colony but also among the Narragansett Indians of Rhode Island.

In one lecture Dr. Ruether discussed the question, "What type of society do we seek?" Her answer follows:

We seek a society that affirms the values of democratic participation, of the equal value of all persons as the basis for their civil equality and their equal access to the education and work opportunities of the society. We seek a society built on organic community in which the process of childraising, of education, of work, of culture have been integrated to allow

both men and women to become involved in decision making in the larger society.

And from one of her early books, *Women-Church*, we read:

We must do more than protest against the old. We must begin to live the new humanity now. We must begin to incarnate the community of faith in the liberation of humanity from patriarchy in words and deeds, in new words, new prayers, new symbols and new praxis.

Strong words indeed!

The Rev. Anne Rosser is a former pastor. Before her retirement she was associate pastor at Hampton Baptist Church. She now lives in Richmond.

BOOK REVIEW

Kates, Judith A. and Gail Twersky Reimer, eds. *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim A Sacred Story*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

Review by Alana Woolley

Reading Ruth brings together the writings of 31 contemporary Jewish writers, including our editors, Judith Kates and Gail Reimer. These women are novelists, essayists, poets, rabbis, psychologists, and scholars. Each of them comes to the Book of Ruth from her own unique perspective and creativity.

Our editors start with a brief introduction to this volume. It is followed by a translation of the Book of Ruth. A commentary of Ruth is then presented by Ruth Sohn, who was ordained as a rabbi in 1982 at Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion.

The book's seven sections are each introduced by the printing of a series of original papercuts. This is a traditional folk art originating in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The papercuts combine biblical verses and traditional symbols to give a visual representation of the text being read.

Each of the seven sections explores a theme represented by a verse or partial verse from the Book of Ruth. Along with these sections, there are two creative interludes surrounding section 4. Poetic reflections on sections of the Book of Ruth are the main element of these creative interludes.

Reflecting on Ruth 1:14, the writers of section one explore the relationship of Ruth and Naomi. A Jewish writer from New York presents a parable of friendship while a philosopher writes an essay. But the most creative contribution to section one comes from Roberta Appel and Lise Grondahl. They come to the relationship of Ruth and Naomi from their experience with psychotherapy, supervision, and psychiatry.

The second section moves us to Ruth 1:16, the famous verse of Ruth's pledge to go wherever Naomi will go. Alicia Ostriker combines biblical commentary with fantasy and autobiography to try to connect the biblical time with our time. She writes to connect us to our mothers and fathers in scripture.

Naomi's pain and anguish is the focus of section three's exploration of Ruth 1:21. Nehama Aschkenasy reflects on the use of language in this verse and beyond. She sees Naomi's lament as a bold step to be in the tradition of the men of the Old Testament as they challenge God concerning their suffering. The next two writers of this section reflect upon the loss that we all experience and share with Naomi.

Section four centers on the theme of kindness as found in Ruth 3:10. The Book of Ruth is read on the holiday of Shavuot—the festival of the giving of the Torah. This section presents the role of kindness in the community and the central place of women to the Biblical vision of human society. Susanne Klingerstein looks particularly at the issue of lineage and ancestry. Cynthia Ozick provides a meditation on the Book of Ruth. Most touching is her remembrance of her grandfather's reading of the book.

The role of women is given center stage by the invoking of Rachel and Leah in verse 4:11. Adele Berlin analyzes the theme of family in the Book of Ruth. She focuses both on family at the personal level but also on the family as the nation of Israel. Comparing the relationships of Rachel and Leah to that of Ruth and Naomi, Francine Klagsbrun helps us to see the depth and complexity that we might otherwise overlook in Ruth and Naomi. Sylvia Barack Fishman rejects traditional stereotypes and argues for models of courage and leadership among biblical women.

Using Ruth 4:17, section six looks at the disappearance of Ruth and her replacement by Naomi as the Book of Ruth draws to a close. Many of us will be

encouraged by Vanessa Ochs's reflection that she reacts to the text in a less than conventional way. She provides us an opportunity to reflect upon our own approaches to scripture. Mona Fishbane finds her reading of Ruth as a middle-aged psychologist to be more complex than the sweetness that she read there as a child.

Unique to section seven is the focus on two verses rather than one. We are presented with the beginning and end found in phrases from verse 1:22 and verse 4:22. Susan Reimer Torn also invites us to see the complexity of Ruth not seen by a youthful, superficial reading of the text. Both writers in this section speak to our psychological and spiritual needs.

Reading Ruth provides rich and creative insights into an ancient text. These insights are presented with great variety in style and form. This allows us to look at this biblical book with fresh eyes. But the true gift of *Reading Ruth* is to encourage women to reflect on all scripture with our own style using our unique gifts for creativity.

The Rev. Alana Woolley is a telecommunications consultant and a member of River Road Church, Richmond.

a parable of friendship and
family — models of courage
and leadership—

The Bookshelf

New Titles

compiled by Alana Woolley

Antonelli, Judith S. *In The Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah.* Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1997.

Using sources from history, anthropology, sociology, ancient religion, and feminist theory, the reader is presented with information about women and women's issues from the Torah.

Bancroft, Anne. *Women In Search of the Sacred.* London: Arkana, 1996.

Exploring the lives of ten women, many different journeys of searching and seeking for a spiritual life are followed here.

Bird, Phyllis A. *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel (Overtures to Biblical Theology).* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

Women in ancient Israel and Israelite religion are explored along with an investigation of Genesis 1-3.

Brakeman, Lyn. *Spiritual Lemons: Biblical Women, Irreverent Laughter, and Righteous Rage.* Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, 1997.

The author follows the women of scripture from Sarah in Genesis to Mary and Martha in Luke while exploring many emotions including laughter, shame, envy, and powerlessness.

Brasher, Brenda E. *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

The author examines the contrast between roles of power depicted by

fundamentalist women in a system organized around their disempowerment.

Brink, Judy and Joan Mencher, eds. *Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Analyzing the effect of religious fundamentalism on gender roles, this text looks across the board at Christian groups in North and South America, Islamic groups in the Middle East and China, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, and Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

Buchanan, Constance H. *Choosing to Lead: Women and the Crisis of American Values.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Following the roles played by 19th and early 20th century women, women of today are encouraged to play a larger role in national issues and to help reshape our moral fabric.

Chaves, Mark. *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

The text provides an exploration of forces affecting debates and policies about women's ordination. Data is presented from more than 100 Christian denominations to assist in understanding institutional rules concerning ordination.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

This text is scheduled for publication on April 1, 1998.

Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture*

of Gender Equality. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997.

Exploring the traditional proof text against equality, the author presents a middle of the road approach that rejects extremes of radical feminism or traditional restrictions.

Lawless, Elaine J. *Women Preaching Revolution: Calling for Connection in a Disconnected Time.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Elaine Lawless explores her collection of sermons by women to attempt to locate the development of new sermon traditions differing from those taught these same women while in seminary.

Ranft, Patricia. *Women and Spiritual Equality in the Christian Tradition.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

This text is scheduled for publication in June, 1998.

Schneider, Carl J. and Dorothy Schneider. *In Their Own Right: The History of American Clergywomen.* New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Crossing many traditions, the authors look at the history of women as Roman Catholic "parish administrators," ordained Mormons, Methodist bishops, conservative Jewish rabbis, Episcopal priests, prison chaplains, Salvation Army officers and New Age practitioners.

Wainwright, Elaine Mary. *Shall We Look for Another: A Feminist Reading of the Matthean Jesus (Bible & Liberation Series).* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998.

This text is scheduled for a February 1998 publication.

*The Rev. Alana Woolley is
atelecommunications consultant and a
member of River Road Church, Richmond*

THE LAST WORD

Some “P” Words

by Barbara Jackson

The topic of the Spring Workshop, “Personality Types and Ministry,” serves as a springboard for this word study. Most people in the helping professions are familiar with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the 16 configurations that indicate how one approaches the demands of life—from time management to child-rearing. It is not the aim of the word study to describe the types. Save that for the conference and the professional leader. What we will do, however, is look at some related words and concepts.

Of all the dichotomies used in the “Type Indicator,” the Judger-Perceiver is probably the most difficult to pin down. The words are not apt nor precise. But if you are a Judger, most Perceivers drive you crazy. Js want order and closure; Ps want spontaneity and flexibility. What is it about Ps anyhow? What does the word mean? Let’s take a look.

Perceive

Perceive is derived from the Latin *capere*, to take in one’s hands, to contain, to seize or catch, and the Indo-European (IE) root, *kap-*. There are a host of related words, such as capable, capacity, incapacitate, caption, captive and capture. Then there are all the compound words, like anticipate, occupy, participate, recuperate, emancipate, and receive. Akin to receive are: conceive, deceive, accept, except, inception, susceptible, precept, and finally, perceive and perception. An impressive list of related words!

Perceive means to take (*cap-*) into the mind one idea through (*per-*) something else. To perceive is to observe or experience a thing and make a leap to understanding—here then is the essence of creativity.

A perception is shaped by what one brings to the experience. For instance, to look at a sunset is to perceive light and color, to appreciate beauty, to see shadows and forms, to be aware of change, to share a moment with a friend or lover—or to understand natural phenomenon and meteorological reality. It’s all in how you look at it.

Yet to see is not necessarily to notice.

Sometimes the customary becomes old-hat and is just part of a pattern. We see what we are prepared by experience to see. The creative as well as the logical person can be trapped by established patterns of perception. To escape the trap, they must resort to what has been called “lateral thinking,” that is, to escape the obvious one must step back from the obvious and find new angles, new approaches, for looking at problems. Lateral thinking is the practical process of creativity, a tool for analysis and change. Lateral thinking is one way the perceptive, the P personality, challenges what is.

Carpe diem, seize the day, is the slogan for the perceiver.

Some Other P Words

There are other ways of approaching life’s experiences. Here follow some other P words that come to mind.

Pragmatism

The pragmatist is the ultimate realist. He or she does what needs to be done when it needs to be done. The philosopher William James posited the idea that the nature of truth was not some metaphysical or mathematical idea, but was whatever works or has some practical effect. And the ultimate political realist, Machiavelli, wrote a book, *The Prince*, in which he advised the princely rulers of Renaissance Italy on how to increase their power—a book full of pragmatic advice. We see much of his advice used in the political world even today.

Another example. In religion, the concept of situation ethics, which emerged some years ago, shocked and challenged traditionalists.

Pragmatic is generally defined as practical, matter-of-fact, or skillful in business. As a philosophy, pragmatism is the notion that the truth or falsity of an idea can be judged only by the practical effects that arise.

Derived from the Greek *prassein*, to do habitually, some related words are practice,

practical, practitioner, impractical and praxis.

Many women are pragmatic: do the dishes, the laundry, make the beds, take care of the kids, cook dinner. Of course, there are also many who hate to do those routine things, and would rather do the creative project, read a book, or save the world. Women come both ways!

Pragmatism is surely a component—but not the only one—of the J type person.

Procrastination

This word could be understood as the opposite of pragmatism, particularly if one is considering time management and how one approaches the demands of work (or ministry). The procrastinator postpones or brings forward (*pro-*) until tomorrow (Latin *-cras*). It is a failure to follow through.

Procrastination adversely affects making decisions, achieving dreams or projects, tackling difficult projects (such as tax preparation), or completing tasks, *ad infinitum*.

Some of us procrastinate life. We may come up to old age without fulfilling the promise of our lives because we just couldn’t get around to it.

It is important to point out that procrastination is not the condition of just one type;

There are strategies for conquering procrastination ... I think I’ll try out the ideas—tomorrow!

all people succumb to its seduction in one way or another or at one time or another.

As a practitioner of procrastination, one has to wonder why. I know what has to be done. Why don’t I get on with it? There are self-help books written on procrastination. So why?

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Word Study ... from page 9

One author suggests several dimensions to the problem. What procrastination is not: procrastination is not limited to one gender, age or stage in life, birth order or intelligence. Everybody does it.

What procrastination is: it is a coping strategy. It can be a way of dealing with anxiety, the fear of failure, a fear of adverse judgment by others. Procrastination can be a result of low self-esteem. It can be an indicator of lack of focus or self-discipline, or even a symptom of depression, or rebellion of authority. It can also be a reflection of and resistance to perfectionism. Procrastination can be an expression of a need to do things in a proper sequence, maybe even a compulsion.

There are several strategies for conquering procrastination—a subject far beyond the scope of this essay. I read the book. I think I'll try out the ideas—tomorrow!

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a seductive notion. If only! If only I had more time. If only I had more education. If only someone had given me a break. If only I had worked harder. If only luck had been on my side. If only....

The idea of the perfect (Greek *teleios*) is a dominant biblical concept. In the Old Testament, perfect indicates that which is full-grown and fully developed, and in that sense refers only to God. When referring to persons, it means upright or mature.

In the New Testament, perfect means full commitment to the will of God, the fulfillment of prophecy, or God's work through Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." In such a context, perfection is a goal of both Christian living and the ultimate realization of God's kingdom.

From the poet, we have the words to the hymn, "O Perfect Love." The poem was written in 1883 by the Anglican Dorothy Frances Gurney for her sister's wedding. The perfect love of God, the perfect life of Christ are the petitions she makes for her sister's happiness. The hymn became one of the most popular of wedding hymns.

*O Perfect love, all human thought
transcending, Lowly we kneel in prayer
before Thy throne. That theirs may be the
love which knows no ending, Whom Thou
forevermore dost join in one.*

In the secular world, perfection is not such a glorified idea. To many people, the perfectionist is compulsive and obsessive, a bane to those around him or her, a picky prude or a criticizing carper.

Ambrose Bierce defined perfection as "an imaginary state distinguished from the actual by an element known as excellence." In other words, there is no such thing as perfection but there may be degrees in a continuum toward an ideal.

Perfect is defined as complete, faultless, exact, precise, entire, total. The word perfect is derived from the Latin *per-* (through) *facere* (to do or make), and is kin to a host of other words derived from *facere*. We have fact, feat, feasible, facility and difficult. There is benefactor, malefactor, factory, manufacture, artifice, sacrifice, feature, faction, counterfeit, proficient, surfeit, surface, face, facade, efficient, and all the -fy words such as justify, notify, etc.

The perfectionist is defined as a person who is satisfied with nothing less than what he or she thinks is perfect. Again, we see the subjective notion. The judge and arbiter of perfection is the actor, the doer. Even when perhaps the critic or the parent is the perfectionist, the judgment is made by the doer looking at her own performance as seen through the eyes of the critic.

Perfection for a woman is a particularly devastating concept. Women are bombarded with impossible standards for beauty and physical slimness. Such Barbie-doll standards lead women to incessant dieting, even anorexia. Pencil slim model-like bodies are impossible for most of us, an idea leading to widespread dissatisfaction with oneself.

Women are also subject to an impossible standard because they are not male. Hebrew men pray, "Thank God I am not a woman." Men do not have to deal with monthlies or have babies. Women by nature have less body strength than men. Women by tradition do the jobs men don't want to do, are paid less and have less opportunity for advancement and achievement. Theologians such as Augustine stated that women are the vessel of sin because they tempt men.

Are women less perfect because they are not male? The answer to that question is what the women's movement is all about. The woman who is comfortable with her gender, her sexuality, does not feel imperfect. Her

goal is completeness within her person—not perfection as usually defined. Her goal is to fulfill the promise of her life, her calling as a child of God.

Person

This P word is one of the more interesting because of its history. The Latin word *persona* was the actor's mask. In ancient times the actor held the mask in front of his face to denote the character he portrayed. To change characters, he would hold up a different mask. In time *persona* was extended to any character or dramatic role in a play. Only later did it refer to one's character or role in life or to an individual personality. The root word is *phersu*, the Etruscan word for mask.

Over time the word came to refer to the three modes of the Trinity, to the grammatical person, or a legal entity. And by the medieval period, *persona* was a human being, a being of importance, the parish priest. The French *parsonne*, the parish priest, became parson in English.

In literary usage, a persona is a mask or an alter-ego of the author, especially referring to literature written in first person.

The psychologist Carl Jung used *persona* to denote an individual's social facade that reflects the role in life the individual is playing. Jung contrasted the *persona*, the outer character, with the inner attitude, the *anima* or soul.

In the latter years of this century, person is often used as a gender-neutral word for both men or women so as to avoid the gender-specific word, for example, the chairperson.

In psychological terms, to be a real person is to be an integrated personality, a person in touch with his or her self. To be a real person is to know oneself and to act with confidence.

All of which brings us back to the first usage, the actor's mask. In portraying one's persona to the world, perhaps we all wear masks. Who among us bares her soul to the world, warts and all? The Greek word for mask was *prosonon*, compound of *pros* (toward) and *opa* (eye or face). What we hope and expect when facing the

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WOMEN IN THE NEWS

Word Study ... from page 10

world and the people we deal with is that they see us as we wish to be seen, that they see through the mask's eyeholes into the goodness of one's soul.

P Words—An Important Category

There are many other P words. The theological dictionary has entries for power and pride and priesthood. We have Pentecost, Pauline, pilgrim, predestination and Presbyterians!

A wordbook of newer concepts includes parameter, peer group, and profile. Say, can you define "parameter?" How does it differ from perimeter? And what is a porcine-epidermal spheroid?

One last word. Here's a challenge to amaze your friends and co-workers. Try out these words on them. (Look them up! Use at least one new word a day!)

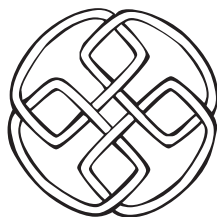
Here they are: Panegyric. Prolix. Paronomasia. Peccadillo. Perfidious. Persiflage. Profligacy.

Warning! Don't use paradigm, pejorative, phobia, platitude, plethora, portentous, or pusillanimity. Your friends will think you persnickety or picayune and will attempt to prescind or pretermit you.

They will consider you a source of proctalgia and call you guilty of pleniloquence or procacity or even—horrors!—psychobabble!

Sources: Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*; Claiborne, *The Roots of English*; Roberts, *Living Without Procrastination*; Wuest, *Word Studies: Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy



New Positions and Changes

Kim McGlamery is minister to children and youth at Mt. Gilead Church, Columbia.

Susan Price is associate pastor for youth and children at Huguenot Road church, Richmond.

Elizabeth Withers is youth director at Bethel Church, Midlothian.

Terri Kludt is minister of youth, education and outreach at Westover Church, Richmond.

Julie Halstead is assistant for children, preschoolers and students at First Church, Alexandria.

Tracey Allred is minister of youth at Hillcrest Church, Mechanicsville.

Kimberley W. Hardy is minister of music at Villa Heights Church, Roanoke.

Barbara Hollowell is minister of students at Harrisonburg Church, Harrisonburg.

Helen C. Riley is minister to senior adults at Melrose Church, Roanoke.

Ordinations

Bethany L. McLemore was ordained to the gospel ministry on November 16 by Waverly Place Church, Roanoke. She is minister of youth.

Linnea Petty was ordained to the gospel ministry on November 23 by Ginter Park Church, Richmond.

Graduations

Lisa C. Levdahl of Sterling, Va., received a Master of Arts in Christian Education/ Social Work from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in December.

A LITTLE HUMOR

No procrastination! The CEO ordered that signs be placed around the workplace saying, "Do it now!" Later he asked for a refund from the sign painter. "Didn't they work" he asked. "Oh yes," the CEO responded, "Last week, my accountant skipped the country with \$60,000, my secretary ran off with the sales manager, three clerks came and demanded raises, and every night after work I found the tires on my car flat."

Cynical definitions from Ambrose Bierce: *The Devil's Dictionary*, 1911.

Pantaloons. A nether habiliment of the adult civilized male. The garment is tubular and unprovided with hinges at the points of flexion.

Peace. In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

Piety. Reverence for the Supreme Being, based upon His supposed resemblance to man.

Pilgrim. A traveler that is taken seriously.

Plagiarize. To take the thought or style of another writer whom one has never, never read.

Platitude. A thought that snores in words that smoke.

Pleonasm. An army of words escorting a corporal of thought.

Politeness. The most acceptable hypocrisy.

Prejudice. A vagrant opinion without visible means of support.

Providential. Unexpectedly and conspicuously beneficial to the person so describing it.

Push. One of the two things conducive to success, especially in politics. The other is Pull.

CALENDAR

March

March 7

VBWIM Spring Workshop. "Personality Types and Ministry Styles." University of Richmond, Wilton Center. 9-3 p.m. Call 804-288-1131 or 270-2903.

March 20-21

CBF of Virginia General Assembly, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church. Call CBFV office. 804-213-0412.

April

April 20 - 23

UTS/PSCE Seminar, "Church Professionals as Spiritual Leaders." \$180. Call 804-278-4302 or 800-229-2990

April 23 - May 28

Richmond Hill, "Stories of New Testament Women: Do What You Have the Power to Do." \$30. Call 804-783-7903

July

July 28-30

University of Richmond Minister's Conference. Chaplain's office, 804-289-8500.

November

November 10

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry Dinner and Program. Place tba. Virginia Beach.

We will go before God and God will ask, "Where are your wounds?" We will say, "We have no wounds." God will ask, "Was nothing worth fighting for?"

... Alan Boesak, South African minister

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