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Larry M. Fischer  
*East Tennessee State University*

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Prophecy and Group Identity and Purpose: Connecting the Leadership Conference of the  
Women Religious with the Catholic Legacy of Feminist Politics

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A thesis presented to  
The faculty of the Department of Liberal Studies  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies

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by  
Larry M. Fischer  
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Dr. Keith Green, Chair  
Dr. Marie Tedesco  
Dr. Thomas Crofts

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## ABSTRACT

Prophecy and Group Identity and Purpose: Connecting the Leadership Conference of the Women  
Religious with the Catholic Legacy of Feminist Politics

by

Larry M. Fischer

While the Second Vatican Council advocates an inclusive priesthood and unified People of God, exclusion of consecrated Roman Catholic women from ministerial priesthood, official church interpretations of the scriptures, and judgments concerning faith and morals continues. This thesis examines creative tactics of resistance among consecrated women on account of hierarchal and essentialist models found in church traditions, including Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), and contemporary American women associated with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. I analyze aspects of three prophetic critiques and hermeneutical tactics of each, appealing to the critical interpretive methodologies of Elizabeth Bucar and Grace Jantzen. The LCWR are “in good company,” contrary to the representations of male superiors in the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and episcopal hierarchy. The feminist resistance of these women recapitulates forms of what Bucar calls “creative conformity,” which the church has embraced for its forbearers.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

After four years investigating the American nuns of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious<sup>1</sup> (LCWR: representatives of 80% of American Catholic nuns), on April 18, 2012, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome released *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei: Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious*. Upon investigation, the LCWR was placed under a doctrinal mandate by the judicial powers of the Roman Catholic Church: Pope Benedict XVI supported the CDF<sup>2</sup> in maintaining that LCWR

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<sup>1</sup> In 1956 the Vatican's Congregation for Religious requested that American sisters develop a representative national conference (Conference of Major Superiors of Women) to “promote the spiritual welfare of the women religious of the USA, insure increasing efficacy in their apostolate, and foster closer fraternal cooperation with all religious of the United States, the hierarchy, the clergy, and Catholic associations.” In 1971 the organization changed its name to Leadership Conference of Women Religious. The mission statement of the LCWR maintains that the conference’s purpose is to “promote a developing understanding and living of religious life.” In this effort, the group is interested in “assisting its members personally and communally to carry out more collaboratively their service of leadership in order to accomplish further the mission of Christ in today's world.” “Fostering dialogue and collaboration among religious congregations within the church and in the larger society,” the LCWR have been “developing models for initiating and strengthening relationships with groups concerned with the needs of society, thereby maximizing the potential of the conference for effecting change.” LCWR History: Leadership Conference of Women Religious (accessed March 11, 2013). <https://lcwr.org/about/history>.

<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1542 by Pope Paul III, “The responsibilities of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith were set down in the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus. Art. 48 states the basic norm: The proper function of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals throughout the Catholic world; so it has competence in things that concern this matter in any way. In this function it does not replace the Bishops, but is meant, at the service of the Holy Father, to help them, In particular, it takes care lest faith or morals be harmed by errors however disseminated; its responsibilities include vigilance over books and publications ‘lest errors or dangerous doctrines, which may have been spread among the Christian people, go without suitable rebuttal.’ To this end, ‘it examines writings and opinions that seem contrary to correct faith or dangerous, and, if it is established that they are opposed to the teaching of the church, it reproves them in due time having given the author full opportunity to explain his mind, and having forewarned the Ordinary concerned; it applies suitable remedies, if this is appropriate” (art. 51, 20). Velasio De Paolis. C.S.Canonical.

“programs and presentations” have the “prevalence of certain radical feminist themes” and “commentaries on patriarchy” that “distort the way in which Jesus has structured sacramental life in the Church.”<sup>3</sup> According to the CDF, LCWR theology “distorts faith in Jesus and his loving Father who sent his Son for the salvation of the world,” and undermines the “revealed doctrines of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the inspiration of Sacred Scripture.”<sup>4</sup> Pertinent to the ecumenical nature of the exclusion and inclusion of groups within the church, the CDF accused LCWR of not assenting to the “teaching of *Inter Insigniores* on the reservation of priestly ordination to men” as per the submission of “intellect and will” outlined in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) document *Lumen Gentium* (Light of Nations).<sup>5</sup> CDF criticism of the

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Observations on the New Regulations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/OROBSERV.HTM>. (accessed December 12, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei: Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious* April, 2012, 3. <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/doctrinal-assessment-for-lcwr.cfm>. (accessed on November 11, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 5. In an NPR interview with Teri Gross, Sister Pat Farrell mentions the CDF claim that the LCWR never expressed consent to male-only ordination. She states, “It’s interesting to me that the document goes back some 30 years to talk about our position on the ordination of women. There has, in fact, been an official position by the church that that topic should not be discussed. When that declaration came out, the response of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious was to call for a nationwide time of prayer and fasting for all women religious in response to that because of our deep desire for places of leadership for women in the church be open remains a desire. Since then, the leadership conference has not spoken publicly about the ordination of women. Imposing a silence, however, doesn’t necessarily change people’s thinking. But, you know, we are in a position to continue to be very concerned that the role of women in the church be recognized and accepted as equals and that the church can be rightfully enriched by the gifts that women bring.” See the Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Ferrell: *An American Nun Responds To Vatican Criticism* by NPR. Transcript (Accessed 11/12/12). Staff <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/17/156858223/an-american-nun-responds-to-vatican-condemnation>.

<sup>5</sup> *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 5. *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Gentiles) and *Perfectae Caritatis* (On Perfect Charity: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life) are Second Vatican Council documents that use different configurations of Saint Paul’s head/body anatomical trope as a rhetorical device. The figure models the reformed relationships between members of the consecrated religious, the lay, and the consecrated clerics within the church hierarchy.

LCWR's "corporate dissent"<sup>6</sup> makes reference to a longstanding disagreement regarding a particular gendered-mode of intercession:<sup>7</sup> the ministerial priestly function, an activity designated for men only to accomplish on behalf of humanity that includes the central church sacrament: the calling upon of the Holy Spirit and the administration of the unifying Holy Eucharist. The doctrinal assessment found that "many of the materials prepared by the LCWR for these purposes (Systems Thinking Handbook, Occasional Papers) do not have a sufficient doctrinal foundation."<sup>8</sup>

The CDF has not publically addressed details of the above-mentioned "materials"<sup>9</sup> that reveal aspects of the theological content of LCWR's unified, public, prophetic critique of church leadership. The reference to the Second Vatican Council in the passage from *The Systems Thinking Handbook* below indicates that members of the LCWR have been critical of the church's long history of hierarchal and dualistic thinking:

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<sup>6</sup>. Ibid., 2.

<sup>7</sup>. "Mode of intercession" refers to sanctioned group activities performed by consecrated members of the church. These duties or functions are actions accomplished on behalf of humanity or on behalf of members of affiliated religious orders (e.g., the LCWR is in charge of renewing their religious orders -- 80% of women religious in America). When the "mode of intercession" includes exclusivity on account of the outward signs of sex it becomes a "gendered mode of intercession."

<sup>8</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 6.

<sup>9</sup>. "Materials" shares a root with the Latin noun "mater" (Mother) and the word "matrix" (c.1200, *materie*): "subject of thought, speech, or expression." From Latin *materia* "substance from which something is made," also "hard inner wood of a tree" (cf. Portuguese *madeira* "wood"), from *mater* "origin, source, mother" Or, on another theory, it represents *\*dmateria*, from PIE root *\*dem-/\*dom-* (cf. Latin *domus* "house," English *timber*)." See Acts II where the Holy Spirit enters a "house." Online Etymology Dictionary.

[http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=matter&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=matter&allowed_in_frame=0)(accessed 12/12/12).

*Lumen Gentium* consciously grounded ecclesiology in the holistic image of the ‘People of God,’ rather than in the ‘top down’ definitions of the past. Thirty-five years later, however, we continue to struggle with how to effectively incorporate the laity in structures still unconsciously defined by dualism and hierarchy. The ‘move toward the world’ made by most apostolic religious congregations in response to Vatican II’s call to renewal still invites severe criticism from those who persist in holding the realms of spirit and matter as essentially separate.<sup>10</sup>

The above criticism draws a contrast between the symbolically portrayed image of the People of God and the actual incorporation of the laity into the unified church body. This suggests that certain members of the LCWR (i.e., consecrated members of the unified People of God) believe that the ecclesial vision of *Lumen Gentium* has not been fulfilled. As will be shown, the LCWR critique of Church unity stretches beyond the imagery of the council and into the primary liturgical/sacramental symbol of unity. As the central component in the institutional narrative of the church, the Eucharist enables “fullness”<sup>11</sup> in “unity of the mystical body”<sup>12</sup> through Christ's sacrifice. While the holistic image of *Lumen Gentium* is literary and rhetorical, and the holistic sacrament of the Eucharist is liturgical and ritual, it will be shown that both symbols maintain the underlying mystical unity of the Catholic Church above and beyond inclusion into the church hierarchy. The claim that unconscious elements found in dualistic and hierarchal structures are implicated in the church’s struggle to include the laity in the holistic People of God appears to be

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<sup>10</sup> Gertrude Foley, *Systems Thinking Handbook. An Invitation to Systems Thinking: An Opportunity to Act for Systemic Change*. (Silver Spring, Maryland. A Publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. 2004, <https://lcrw.org/resources/systems-thinking-handbook/>), 7. (accessed November 11, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen Gentium*; “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Solemnly Promulgated by his Holiness Pope Paul VI” The Holy See. (November 21, 1964) [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)), 13. (accessed December 12, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 12-13. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000,

1396. Throughout this thesis, symbolic and ritual unity is brought into contrast with the experience of unity.

grounded in the idea that these structures obstruct or prevent the actual experience of “Church” unity for members of the LCWR and the laity. *The Systems Thinking Handbook* states, “Through the 20th century and in the early years of the 21st century we have begun to see that this “dualistic, hierarchical framework of thinking is no longer adequate for interpreting our experience.”<sup>13</sup>

In hopes of solidifying group identity and purpose, writings from the LCWR show the group advocating open and inclusive dialogue with other members concerning church traditions (i.e., the Eucharist) and their legitimacy for experience. At the same time, open and inclusive dialogue is typologically incorporated into the LCWR’s mystical and prophetic message of change and transformation. Using Grace Jantzen’s work on the social construction of mysticism and Elizabeth Bucar’s methodology from her case-study investigations of Catholic and Shi’i women creating ethical knowledge through feminist politics, elements of the LCWR’s prophetic-critique and hermeneutical tactics will be compared with the tactics of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). The LCWR partakes in the tradition of prophetic-critique found in the said nun mystics. The longstanding exclusion of Roman Catholic women from male-only modes of intercession ensures that in all three cases, sisters improvise upon the rhetorical logic of their exclusion and supposed inclusion in order to bring about better correspondence with women’s experiences in the church. Because unity is implied in clerical

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<sup>13</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 7.

rhetoric and disunity is suggested in the writings of consecrated women, Bucar's methodology has cross-cultural and cross-historical application.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the consecrated religious have been given more responsibility to renew their own religious orders.<sup>14</sup> Chapter 2 will provide a brief historical and social context for the origins of the LCWR and provide explanations for how and why the leadership structure of the LCWR has become more democratic than the medieval cloister and peripheral to the organizational structure of the hierarchal church. In Chapter 3, the feminist orientation of the LCWR will be shown to have affinities with the secular-feminist values of Elizabeth Bucar and Grace Jantzen. Chapter 4 will show how Jantzen's assessment of the social construction of women's mysticism tracks into the *Systems Thinking Handbook's* notion of the western mental models of hierarchal thinking and separable spirit and matter, and the need for the increased solidarity of women's experiences in the church. Next, using Bucar's methods of evaluating the rhetorical logics of argumentation concerning faith and morals, a look into the LCWR's revised theological concept of the "Holy Spirit" will show how connecting with the apostle John's language of veiled transcendence affects the re-pairing of contemplation with action and helps legitimize prophecy. Finally, in Chapter 5 the focus is on Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen. If typology is, as Northrop Frye suggests, a "theory of historical process,"<sup>15</sup> it follows that hermeneutical models can provide the structure upon which gender or gendered attributes in the scriptures can be altered, aiding the transformation of women's identity in salvation history and even help legitimize women's prophecy. The typological constructs of

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<sup>14</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, "Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life." <http://www.vatican.va/index.htm>. (accessed November 11, 2012), 8.

<sup>15</sup>. Carole Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 43. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft5b69p02d/>, (accessed December 12, 2012).

Hildegard of Bingen and Teresa of Avila will be shown to be part of the affective tradition of women's mysticism and part of the history of Catholic feminist politics. With Bucar's notion of *creative conformity* in mind, feminist politics in the past will help inform the creative feminist politics of the present.

On account of women's exclusion in accordance with the outward signs of sex, consecrated women's identity and purpose in the church has always been other than priestly. For the women religious of the LCWR and the Catholic women mystics of old, the legitimacy of prophecy required (and still requires) a degree of conformity to gendered expectations of intercession (i.e., activities accomplished on behalf of humanity). Women in the Roman Catholic Church historically have been unable to affect the salvation of humanity in certain gendered ways: they have never been in dialogue with church leadership regarding issues on faith and morals and have never been allowed into the gateway of the Episcopate: the clerical priesthood that offers opportunities for dialogue with church leadership. By studying Bucar's case-studies of women's creative adaptations of church rhetoric of dogma and doctrine, the LCWR's recasting of "spirit" will be seen to help inform the ethical and spiritual norms of group identity and purpose.

According to Elizabeth Bucar, women's religious adaptations are not merely "strategies" failing to realize the nature of "creative conformity" working within and beyond the imposed logical terrain.<sup>16</sup> Instead, with her methodology in mind, the LCWR's recasting of "spirit" works like a tactic for confronting hierarchal and divisive thinking that contributes to women's exclusion from dialogue with church leadership. Placing the emphasis on experience instead of

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<sup>16</sup> Bucar, 3.

church doctrine and dogma, the president of the LCWR directs emphasis away from essential notions of gender and instead grounds the groups emerging charism in what has become the predominate experience of women in the church: non-hierarchal, open, and inclusive dialogue with diversity is women's "gift to the church."<sup>17</sup> For members of the LCWR, a methodology of open dialogue is incorporated to help determine the essence of group identity: the experience of unity and the unity expressed in church symbols do not necessarily intersect with experience. Since Roman Catholicism maintains that the Holy Spirit's gifts to the church are charismatic and hierarchal, it is interesting that the LCWR's typological recasting of the Holy Spirit greets the historical Jesus in the Gospel of John, where cloud and light (veiled transcendence) "manifestations"<sup>18</sup> of the Holy Spirit allow for more charismatic than hierarchal adornments of Spirit. Around the theme of reconciling radical differences through affinities of being -- in darkness and communal contemplation -- a charism that re-pairs action with contemplation emerges.

As mentioned above, in recasting the symbol of the Holy Spirit and positing an emerging charism of open dialogue, the LCWR achieves something similar to what Elizabeth Bucar refers to as working within the boundaries of clerical-logic to aid in the creation of ethical knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Offering insights into how ethical knowledge is created in religious communities, Bucar's work shows how different groups of women extend, recast, and modify group religious identity by conforming and remodeling the architectonics (i.e., grounds, backing, warrants, and claims) of official church rhetoric. More specifically, Bucar's methodology offers insights into how the

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<sup>17</sup>. Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Ferrell. *An American Nun Responds To Vatican Criticism*

<sup>18</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 697.

<sup>19</sup>. Bucar, xvi.

LCWR works within and around the logic of ecclesial rhetorical techniques that both warrant their exclusion from dialogue with the magisterium and propose symbolic inclusion into the unified people of God.<sup>20</sup> When contrasting the symbolic assumption of unity with the actual experience of unity, instead of merely being an issue of faith, women's exclusion from dialogue with the church hierarchy becomes a moral issue: a threat to church unity and issue worthy of dialogue.

As shown in the excerpt quoted from *The Systems Thinking Handbook* above, members of the LCWR are aware of a hierarchy of spirit and matter that persists: an underlying western and ecclesial mental-model reinforcing the exclusion of consecrated women from dialogue with the church hierarchy. The rhetorical techniques addressed in this thesis include the Second Vatican Council's use of Paul's theology of the head and body to promote a unified, restructured church, and the use of the Theotokos (Mother of God) to promote a unified essential womanhood. Evidence will be shown suggesting that women's exclusion from dialogue with liturgical and judicial church traditions is supported by logic that is systemic, richly interlocked with church rhetoric of fullness and unity, and sharing the same informal logical premises as other rhetorical strategies supporting essential notions of unified womanhood. The Second Vatican Council realized that relations between the consecrated religious and the hierarchal organizational structure, including relations between consecrated and lay communities, needed to be transformed while retaining obedience to and unity with the church hierarchy. In the same rhetorical vein as arguments for a universal essential womanhood, the idea that the head and the diverse functions of the body are essentially "one" in identity and purpose has implications for

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<sup>20</sup> This concerns the church's application of literary tropes that attempt to reconcile the problems of difference (e.g., Jew and Gentile, clerical and consecrated religious) and unity.

obedience. Similarly, the idea of women's essential moral exemplarity on account of having different bodies than males, also uses consubstantial logic in clerical rhetoric to posit a unified experience, identity, and purpose in the church.<sup>21</sup>

By conforming to church doctrine and dogma, working within and in response to the informal logic that posits diversity of function and essential unity, consecrated religious and lay members of the church have the ability to conduct a variety of feminist politics. Bucar shows that conforming to the church's teachings often entails the restructuring of clerical rhetorical logic: the symbols and tropes of church rhetoric have elements of informal logic<sup>22</sup> that non-clerical members of the church can meaningfully shift to help make universal standards of morality better coincide with actual experience. This can help empower feminist politics and allow women working within the religious tradition a place to publically address moral and spiritual concerns beyond universally structured guidelines. In his critique of Bucar, Daniel Cowdin states,

Bucar structures her study somewhat loosely around five themes at the heart of women's religious lives, ranging from the more pious and personal (e.g. spiritual role models and child rearing) toward the more social and political (e.g. embodied public practices and civil activism). Each theme constitutes a chapter; each chapter develops both an Iranian and Catholic case study connected to the broader theme; each case study consists of a clerically authoritative opinion offered by either the Ayatollah Khomeini or Pope John Paul II on a specific issue, and in turn an engagement with that rhetoric by a prominent woman in each tradition; each engagement demonstrates how women work tactically with the clerical opinion, neither purely and passively Submitting to it nor rejecting it outright, but rather reshaping it (to a greater or lesser degree depending on the example) to better fit women's experiences and needs. In the process, the tradition is accepted yet transformed.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>. Bucar, 43.

<sup>22</sup>. This is a reference to Bucar's belief that the rhetorical logic of gendered bodies in church rituals is not "formal" logic. With help from Jeffrey Walker, author of *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, epideictic rhetoric is shown as the brand of informal logic that links church rhetoric with the bardic and royal rhetoric of ancient Greece.

<sup>23</sup>. Daniel Cowdin, "Elizabeth M. Bucar: Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S.

According to Cowdin, “Rhetoric is persuasive speech or writing intended for a specific audience.”<sup>24</sup> This thesis investigates aspects of rhetoric concerning the difference between symbolic and experienced inclusion and exclusion.

Bucar’s case studies and methodology show how lay women reformulate the logics and strategies of clerical rhetoric to better correspond with the experiences of groups of women. While addressing different concerns than lay-women or the consecrated mystics mentioned here, the claim is that LCWR rhetorical tactics share a history of exclusion with other consecrated women throughout Catholic history: while the prophetic critique of the LCWR’s current feminist morality maintains that the diversity of individual accounts of women must be appreciated, the fact of women’s exclusion from the outset of the Roman Catholic Church means that women’s prophecy has tactical cross-cultural and cross-historical continuity. Catholic women’s prophetic typologies show hermeneutic similarities among the tactics used by the LCWR, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). To show historical continuity and difference, Elizabeth Bucar’s notion of *creative conformity* will be supplemented with Carol Slade’s account of Teresa’s revised “feminist hermeneutic” and Grace Jantzen’s feminist social-constructionist critique of any one “essence” of women’s mysticism.<sup>25</sup> An appreciation of the social construction of women’s mysticism helps link prophecy of the past into LCWR prophecy in the present. Included will be a brief assessment of feminist methodologies that attempt to both support feminist morality and deal with the implications of cultural relativity. In the consecrated

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Catholic and Iranian Shi’i Women.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought*. 6, no. 1 (October 2012), 1.

<http://digitalcommons.salve.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=jift> (accessed February 1, 2013).

<sup>24</sup>. Cowdin, 5.

<sup>25</sup>. Slade, xiii., Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*. (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 343.

Catholic Church, conformity may be considerably more rigid. Inclusion and exclusion appear to be more sacramentally institutionalized into religious identity and purpose. Jantzen shows how the marriage of knowledge and power instituted by the male controlled-liturgical and judicial elements of the hierarchal church provide the criterion for conformity – the legitimacy of prophecy is socially constructed and its legitimacy is more determined by the clerics in power.<sup>26</sup>

The content and logic of informal epideictic church rhetoric historically is encountered in Catholic women’s prophetic typologies. While certain members of the LCWR typologically connect a feminine notion of spirit (Divine Ruah) to the Gospel of John to accentuate a mode of intercession that entails receptive communion through the experience of open dialogue, as a means for reforming the LCWR, the CDF promises to reinforce the presence of the Eucharistic feast -- an expression of gendered, (male-only) embodied logic that the CDF promises will be a “...priority at LCWR events and programs.”<sup>27</sup> The creativity of the LCWR’s recasting of “spirit,” as it both conforms with and critiques the church’s idea of the “Holy Spirit,” will be shown to directly apply to certain elements of Bucar’s *creative conformity*.

For the LCWR and Hildegard of Bingen, typology linking feminine Old Testament events to Jesus’s life rather than Mary’s enables the re-pairing of contemplation with action by reorganizing traditional ideas of subordination and submission. Concerning the enduring legacy of women’s exclusion from dialogue with leadership and women’s exclusion from affecting salvation in public liturgical performance, the accounts of two culturally and chronologically disparate (Hildegard from Twelfth Century Rhineland and Teresa from Sixteenth Century Spain) mother superiors reveals that on either side of the Second Vatican Council, women superiors express frustration regarding the fact and criterion of their exclusion. This unifying theme of

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<sup>26</sup>. Jantzen, 351.

<sup>27</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 8.

women's prophecy points to clear elements of social construction and the church's enduring embodied-logic of exclusion.

In public rhetorical performances (e.g., *The Occasional Papers*, *The Systems Thinking Handbook*, *Inter Insignores*, *Lumen Gentium*) mentioned in the doctrinal assessment, the CDF makes allusions to disagreements over the legitimacy of church rituals and symbols. As mentioned above, and as will be elucidated later, gender differences between members of the church hierarchy (i.e., clerics) and the women religious of the LCWR are found regarding the agency that sanctifies and unifies identity and purpose: the Holy Spirit. Members of the LCWR maintain that public rituals contribute to the clarity of group identity. Concerning the rights of the individual and duties to greater society, the *Systems Thinking Handbook* widens the context: the legacy of the church gets directly associated with western society in general. The church's struggles regarding the value of the individual are inserted within the context of greater societal limitations imposed by the reinforced caste structures of the same "centuries-old mental model:"

Social theory prior to Vatican II was based on the dualistic and hierarchical world view and justified both the one up/one down relationship between the rich and poor and the superior/inferior classifications of races and peoples. In *Pacem in Terris* (1963), John XXIII gave individual human rights an emphasis that was new in Catholic teaching. At the same time, he struggled to find a different framework for talking about the individual vis-à-vis the larger society. "On the one hand he implicitly acknowledges the tradition which states that individuals by reason of their place in society have certain duties to society; on the other hand he validates the modern claim that individuals by virtue of their personhood have legitimate moral claims over and against a society. . . it is not clear how one can reconcile the philosophy of both rights and duties within the encyclical." Consciously, Pope John wanted to address new experiences in a new way. Unconsciously, he wrestled with the limitations of a centuries-old mental model.<sup>28</sup>

Discourse surrounding the mandate suggests that the LCWR are knowledgeable about contemporary feminist arguments regarding human rights and the value of the "individual vis-à-

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<sup>28</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 9.

vis the larger society.” Tracking into the feminist insights of Elizabeth Bucar and Grace Jantzen concerning the appreciation for difference and diversity, the LCWR draws on the rites of the individual to defend CDF accusations. When LCWR president Pat Farrell was asked in an NPR interview to respond to CDF criticism of Sister Laurie Brink’s remark, “perhaps we should move beyond Jesus, beyond the church,”<sup>29</sup> Farrell takes issue with the CDF equating one individual sister’s remark as representative of the LCWR as a group.<sup>30</sup> In her 2007 Keynote Address, sister Brink places her remarks about religious life in terms her own particular lens, a “reflection” of her own “experience of Religious Life and its possible future:”<sup>31</sup>

One of the benefits of Post-Modernism—the wholesale critique of modernity and its reliance on objectivity and western assumptions that there is one obtainable “Truth”— is that we are more readily able to recognize the place of subjectivity. If you and I look at the same cluster of clouds, we will doubtlessly see something different. It might look like a giant hand to me, but a spreading tree to you. Post-modernism allows that both you and I are correct. We are simply viewing the same thing through a different lens. Therefore, I begin with this disclaimer: the opinions offered in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the opinions of LCWR, the Roman Catholic church, the Dominicans of Sinsinawa or the Dominicans of the U.S. for that matter. Nor do they necessarily reflect the opinions of other women religious who are relatively new to community.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the legitimacy of group prophecy and its inspiration, the conundrum is stated as such: in Catholic traditions the agency of the Holy Spirit is said to sanctify the experiences of individuals and unify the identity and purpose of the collective group (see Acts 2: the event at

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<sup>29</sup> Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Ferrell.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Laurie Brink, “A Marginal Life: Pursuing Holiness in the 21st Century” (Kansas City, MO, LCWR Keynote Address. 2007) 3.  
[https://lcwr.org/sites/default/files/calendar/attachments/2007\\_Keynote\\_Address-Laurie\\_Brink-OP.pdf](https://lcwr.org/sites/default/files/calendar/attachments/2007_Keynote_Address-Laurie_Brink-OP.pdf). (accessed February 12, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Pentecost), however, while the church treats the LCWR as a representative conference, and indeed the LCWR has a clear, unified prophetic voice, the CDF claims that LCWR prophecy expresses the imposition of a few radical feminists on the values of the majority;<sup>33</sup> the LCWR president rejects CDF claims that the statements of individual sisters represent the LCWR as a group.<sup>34</sup> Citing Sister Brink’s statement mentioned above, the doctrinal assessment argues that LCWR leadership does not hold their members accountable for the implications of the statements of individual members:

Addresses given during LCWR annual Assemblies manifest problematic statements and serious theological, even doctrinal errors. The Cardinal offered as an example specific passages of Sr. Laurie Brink’s address about some Religious “moving beyond the Church” or even beyond Jesus. This is a challenge not only to core Catholic beliefs; such a rejection of faith is also a serious source of scandal and is incompatible with religious life. Such unacceptable positions routinely go unchallenged by the LCWR, which should provide resources for member Congregations to foster an ecclesial vision of religious life, thus helping to correct an erroneous vision of the Catholic faith as an important exercise of charity. Some might see in Sr. Brink’s analysis a phenomenological snapshot of religious life today. But Pastors of the Church should also see in it a cry for help.<sup>35</sup>

Again, while the CDF states that the LCWR are not holding members accountable for their statements, the LCWR claims it is doing it out of respect for individual differences.

The following excerpt from the winter edition of the 2012 *Occasional Papers* portrays Mary Ann Zollmann’s depiction of her interaction with a church bishop. If, as president Pat Farrell states, the individual voices of the women religious do not represent the group, the below

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<sup>33</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 2. The Catechism states, “On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Promise was poured out onto the disciples, gathered ‘together in one place.’ While awaiting the spirit, ‘all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer. The Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls for her everything that Jesus said was also to form her in the life of prayer.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 731.

<sup>34</sup>. Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Ferrell. Even different sisters have different ideas of representational authority

<sup>35</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 2.

passage suggests that even the notion that individual sisters speak for themselves is not unanimous within the group. For Sister Mary Ann Zollmann, it appears that authentic group unanimity is evidence of a successful charism rooted in contemplation and open and inclusive dialogue:

When writing to the bishop, I was reminded that speaking and acting with conviction, clarity, and courage, especially in the ecclesial realm, often presents a particular dilemma for those of us in congregational leadership. Because of the symbolic function of leadership we represent our religious congregation in all that we say and do. Although very aware of that reality, I trusted in my sisters' solidarity with me in my response to the bishop. Again, in the retrospective reflection afforded by continual quiet sitting, I mine the layers of my confidence and certitude.<sup>36</sup>

If LCWR leadership maintains that sisters only speak for themselves and not for other members, Zollmann's statement draws attention to how the LCWR's emerging charism relates to faith and group unity. More specifically, the above statement alludes to how the LCWR reformulates the traditional ideas of contemplation and how the new formulation relates to faith in the symbolic, representative function of leadership.

Differences between the leadership values of the "ecclesial realm" and the "congregation" have historical precedents.' Before addressing how the LCWR's current prophetic critique of church leadership relates to the embodied logic of public performance and its implications for rhetorical techniques in argumentation concerning faith and morals, historical accounts of societal and organizational transformation will be presented, including evidence from the theological models of the Second Vatican Council documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Perfectae Caritatis*. This will provide the historical, sociological, and theological/rhetorical context for this discussion.

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Ann Zollmann, "Re-membered in Darkness: A Shift Recognized, Realized, and Released." *The Occasional Papers*. 41 no. 1 (Winter 2012): 4.

Even though the doctrinal assessment depicts the LCWR's questioning of church traditions as a symptom of "corporate dissent"<sup>37</sup> and a "phenomenological snapshot of religious life,"<sup>38</sup> media surrounding the current mandate directs attention to CDF accusations of negative errors (e.g., human sexuality):<sup>39</sup> church rulings on hot-button issues that the LCWR is accused of not expressing support for. Other sociological, philosophical, organizational, and theological differences between the LCWR and church leadership are not addressed concerning the continuing debate over the language of the Second Vatican Council and deeply divisive patterns of exclusion found in the consecrated Catholic Church.

The following excerpt from the doctrinal assessment reveals that the CDF is aware of the LCWR's characterization of the Eucharist as having attributes associated with the western mindset. Making a philosophical distinction regarding social and historical institutional differences, members of the LCWR maintain that their group's style of leadership is based more on the "Organic mental model" -- a contrast with ecclesial traditions that the CDF implicates in supporting disunity over the legitimacy of the Eucharist and the "objectionable" presence of an ordained priest:

These materials recommend strategies for dialogue, for example when sisters disagree about basic matters of Catholic faith or moral practice, but it is not clear whether this dialogue is directed towards reception of Church teaching. As a case in point, the Systems Thinking Handbook presents a situation in which sisters differ over whether the Eucharist should be at the center of a special community celebration since the celebration of Mass requires an ordained priest, something which some sisters find "objectionable." According to the Systems Thinking Handbook this difficulty is rooted in differences at the level of belief, but also in different cognitive models (the "Western mind" as opposed to an "Organic mental model"). These models,

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<sup>37</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 2.

<sup>38</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>. *Ibid.*, 6.

rather than the teaching of the Church, are offered as tools for the resolution of the controversy of whether or not to celebrate Mass. Thus the *Systems Thinking Handbook* presents a neutral model of Congregational leadership that does not give due attention to the responsibility which Superiors are called to exercise, namely, leading sisters into a greater appreciation or integration of the truth of the Catholic faith.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast with lay members, for consecrated members under the jurisdiction of the church, the Eucharist seems to have different consequences for church unity that relate to the structure of gender relationships and the formation of group identity and purpose. The following excerpt from the *Systems Thinking Handbook* suggests that certain members of the LCWR maintain that as a ritual with symbolic words and actions, the Eucharist has implications for group identity and its theological foundation. Concerning the correspondence of the symbolic content of ritual with experience, and its importance for group identity, church traditions are open for dialogue. The handbook states:

Since so much of our identity is bound up with shared theological assumptions manifested in group behaviors and practices, who we are as a group can be called into question if we do not believe the same things. The function of [the Eucharistic] ritual is to bring to visibility our deepest beliefs through symbolic word and action. Tension over which symbolic acts and words to use reveals differences at the level of belief. Such differences call into question our identity at the core of who we are. They push us to ask, 'Is there something at the heart of who we are which is beyond a common Eucharistic theology and which holds us together?'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 6.

<sup>41</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 17.

## CHAPTER 2

### SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE REORGANIZATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The prestige and secrecy granted by symbolic participation in the organizational structure of the hierarchal church, offered a kind of mythological inclusion for the women religious. What was lost brought opportunities for solidarity, but what was gained came at a high cost: as the traditional solitude and isolation of cloistered living increasingly became outdated, avenues for dialogue between women religious and between women religious and lay society also increased. The Second Vatican Council document *Perfectae Caritatis* ushers in new responsibilities for religious orders charged to adapt and renew religious life -- while constantly returning “to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.”<sup>1</sup> While delineating definite historical moments of organizational transformation is potentially problematic, the following historians and social theorists (Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, Mary Jo Weaver, Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, and sister Bertrand Meyers) who will be mentioned, maintain that the Second Vatican Council was responding to social changes in society occurring around the middle of the twentieth century. After World War II, the traditional roles, relationships, and functions performed by the religious would be reformed. While the Second Vatican Council restructuring of religious life inevitably affected the lives of consecrated and lay members of the church, the focus here is on characterizations of social and theological trends and changes said to have affected the identity

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<sup>1</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

and purpose of the non-clerical, non-lay, consecrated people of God.<sup>2</sup> According to Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, “What has happened in religious orders in recent decades cannot be understood without understanding the fundamental theological changes that underlie the organizational changes.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1956, the LCWR was created under the title, “Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious,” to function as a “national forum for the exchange of ideas” to “coordinate the professional, apostolic, and religious life of sisters.”<sup>4</sup> According to Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, authors of *Transformation of American Catholic Sisters*, in the late 60s the organization was restructured, incorporating universal suffrage by way of a yearly national assembly wherein all members could have a voice for consideration in Conference decisions.<sup>5</sup> Quiñonez and Turner maintain that as the “fundamental legislative body of the Conference,” the annual Assembly “was charged with determining LCWR “policies and directives and receiving and approving the report of the president.”<sup>6</sup> The Assembly became a “key element of structure” for the organization.<sup>7</sup> Quiñonez and Turner present an interesting backdrop of the LCWR’s

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<sup>2</sup>. This is the term used in *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Lumen Gentium* to signify one united people: all members of the church-- clerical, consecrated religious, and lay united through baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

<sup>3</sup>. Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister: Organizational Decline in Catholic Religious Orders in the United States*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 68.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid., 71.

<sup>5</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, *Transformation of American Catholic Sisters*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). 24.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid.

merging self-consciousness as women in the Church.<sup>8</sup> Truly, this is a Roman Catholic women's organization that has witnessed a steady evolution of identity and purpose in the Church -- becoming increasingly aware of the representative purpose of their gender and mission, and the fact that they outnumber the male consecrated religious in America.<sup>9</sup> The LCWR had high hopes for the Second Vatican Council. Words from the Pope promised a "more direct and fuller participation of the life of the Church, especially in the liturgy, in social charity, in the service of her brothers."<sup>10</sup> A larger say in Church matters came to be expected:

The sixties laid down two critical bases for awakening—unfulfilled expectations and collaboration. As the association of officers of women's communities, the Conference poised for full, vigorous participation in the church's life after Vatican II. They expected to have a voice in the church, they expected it because the documents of the Council seemed to promise, even to exact, it. When expectations failed to materialize, they began to grasp that they were invisible in and excluded from the systemic processes of the church.<sup>11</sup>

In their explanation of the background of the emerging solidarity and group awareness of the LCWR, Quiñonez and Turner explain how the emphasis became increasingly concerned with

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<sup>8</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, 94.

<sup>9</sup>. While the LCWR is not the only group of women religious in the United States, it has been at the forefront of the emerging feminist consciousness of social transformation in the church. Arguably, while its group feminist orientation would be beneficial for women throughout the world, their American orientation and connection with American social problems has contributed to their distinctly American group consciousness. The other major group of Catholic sisters in the United States are the titled the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. It is considerably smaller in number and a more conservative group, and are found wearing the traditional habit. Catholic Online, "They Do Not Speak for Me: These Catholic Sisters say 'No' to Health Care Bill" [http://www.catholic.org/national/national\\_story.php?id=35848](http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=35848). (accessed January 12, 2013).

<sup>10</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, 96.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid., 97.

raising consciousness and “transforming knowledge’s”<sup>12</sup> as the group’s energies became directed on pulling together the once isolated voices of women. In order to “comprehend the systemic character of their exclusion required that they come to know one another’s experience and recognize the connections.”<sup>13</sup> The representative nature of their public identity as consecrated Catholic women become more focused in the early 1970s when Assembly titles began reflecting an emerging feminist group consciousness. The Assembly title, *Women in the Church* directly addressed inequalities in church law as a focus began to center on women’s unique gifts to the church and the linkages between gender identity and power.<sup>14</sup>

In her assessment of organizational change, Ebaugh maintains that the Second Vatican Council restructuring of religious orders changed a “totalistic, autocratic, highly uniform organizational structure” into one more focused on “individualism and respect for the needs and choices of individual members.”<sup>15</sup> While this suggests that sisters have been able to create organizations that uphold contemporary feminist values regarding the rites of the individual, Ebaugh includes a prediction for the non-clerical, consecrated women religious. In *Women in the Vanishing Cloister*, she states that,

It is my contention that religious orders are caught in an organizational dilemma that will eventually lead to their demise, which they basically have no viable choice in preventing. Given certain exogenous factors, beyond their control, their destiny was established, and their degrees of freedom were limited. These factors include the theological and structural changes set in motion by Vatican II, loss of their unique environmental niche because of

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<sup>12</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, 98.

<sup>13</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>. Ibid., 97.

<sup>15</sup>. Ebaugh, 98.

changes in Catholic parochial schools in this country, and general societal changes that especially increased opportunities for women.<sup>16</sup>

According to Sister Bertrande Meyers, author of *Sisters for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the post-war population explosion was accompanied by a “sudden and simultaneous explosion of knowledge on all fronts.”<sup>17</sup> Sisters for many years predominantly found work in parochial school education and care for the poor and the sick; they were now beginning to find access to higher levels of secular education. Meyers states that in the 1950s, “even teachers who possessed hard-earned masters’ and doctoral degrees were obliged to return to the universities for almost completely new courses. Luckily, federal and foundation grants to defray rapidly increasing expenses were available for Sisters and lay teachers alike to acquire the new knowledges that became vital to elementary, secondary, and college faculties.”<sup>18</sup> This suggests that certain traditionally associated actions or functions on behalf of humanity began transforming through social pressures. Supporting her claims, Ebaugh provides statistics showing dramatic decreases in the number of nuns teaching children at parish parochial schools -- dropping from 104,314 in 1965, to 19,012 in 1990.<sup>19</sup> Beyond the educational criteria for parochial teaching, science and liberal arts became important topics of study for women members of the consecrated church.<sup>20</sup>

According to Ebaugh’s depiction of Second Vatican Council changes that helped move the religious into closer relations with the laity, being more fully delegated to the sanctioned self-

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<sup>16</sup> Ebaugh, 83.

<sup>17</sup> Ebaugh, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Bertrand Meyers, *Sisters for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965). 50.

<sup>19</sup> Ebaugh, 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 53. “Religious should strive during the whole course of their lives to perfect the culture they have received in matters spiritual and in arts and sciences. Likewise, superiors must, as far as this is possible, obtain for them the opportunity, equipment and time to do this. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 18.

renewal<sup>21</sup> of religious life emboldened the aspirations of women's orders. Those participating in the evangelical counsels<sup>22</sup> are those of the religious brothers and sisters given primary responsibility for the renewal of religious orders, and in this effort are instructed to adapt to the "changed conditions of our time,"<sup>23</sup> and to "adjust rules and customs to fit the demands of the apostolate to which they are dedicated."<sup>24</sup> Suggesting consequences for the Second Vatican Council delegation of renewal as the responsibility of religious orders, Ebaugh states that "increased group experimentation has been the organizational stance of orders since the council: rather than fear of risk taking, religious orders have abandoned their secure positions in all types of settings in favor of greater diversity, in not only occupational terms but also life-style of members, financial arrangements, and systems accountability."<sup>25</sup> Potentially problematic for the church, exposure to opportunities largely unavailable in cloistered living meant increased involvement with ideas the church might consider secular. When considering the LCWR's current adherence to feminist values, elements from Ebaugh's assessment of *Organizational Decline in Catholic Religious Orders in the United States*, suggests that the LCWR's questioning of church traditions through open and inclusive dialogue belongs to the greater Second Vatican Council movement of reform and renewal.

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<sup>21</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis* states, "These communities, then, should adjust their rules and customs to fit the demands of the apostolate to which they are dedicated. The fact however that apostolic religious life takes on many forms requires that its adaptation and renewal take account of this diversity and provide that the lives of religious dedicated to the service of Christ in these various communities be sustained by special provisions appropriate to each." 8.

<sup>22</sup>. "Evangelical counsels" is the term used in *Perfectae Caritatis* to refer to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience that consecrated religious brothers and sisters profess.

<sup>23</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>24</sup>. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>25</sup>. Ebaugh, 34. Ebaugh refers to "organizational decline" in terms of "anomie," an idea developed by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim.

Stating that “organizations rarely die gracefully,”<sup>26</sup> and emphasizing the loss of “distinctive norms and values,”<sup>27</sup> Ebaugh maintains that the reforms of Second Vatican Council were attempts to remedy organizational degradation. The church’s attempts to facilitate “new ways of viewing religious life” are considered attempts to diagnose symptoms of normlessness and “strain” facing the “new mission” -- as available opportunities for higher education and the increased variety of available professions began conflicting with the “outdated structures” of cloistered living: an organization once held together by hierarchal mystique and “consensual validation in the form of social support for ideas, conventions, and commitments” could no longer “counteract outside pressures.”<sup>28</sup>

In disobedience with the church’s teachings on morality and women’s bodies, Ebaugh’s assessment of post Second Vatican Council religious life depicts church relations with women religious strained over issues of solidarity and involvement with civil rights issues.<sup>29</sup> In 1984, the sisters attempted to form a kind of union -- a support group to help defend the autonomy of members through the development of “consultive panels” to protect groups from being “forced to submit to official sanctions without recourse to the collaborative strength of American sisters.”<sup>30</sup> Ebaugh mentions that a similar “example of such collaboration occurred when the LCWR organized religious orders to protest the actions of Rome in condemning the nuns who signed a *New York Times* advertisement promoting free choice for women regarding abortion.

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<sup>26</sup>. Ebaugh, 3.

<sup>27</sup>. Ibid., 24.

<sup>28</sup>. Ebaugh, 71.

<sup>29</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>. Ebaugh, 71.

These actions indicated that American sisters were no longer willing to be docile servants without voice in matters that involved their well-being.”<sup>31</sup>

Quiñonez and Turner address issues related to the increased diversity of function (i.e., duty, profession, or activity) among the members of Christ’s consecrated body, maintaining that since orders are no “...longer committed to specific works—teaching, hospital work, or social services—they face the issue of what makes them unique in the Church.”<sup>32</sup> While consecrated religious emissaries witnessed an extended horizon concerning religious identity and its relation to functions on behalf of humanity, the following excerpt illustrates some of the difficulties faced by the church in the restructuring of religious life. Ebaugh alludes to difficulties indicated in *Perfectae Caritatis* regarding what constitutes inclusion with the church and inclusion with lay communities:

Permeating the Council decree to religious orders is the notion of Church as a pilgrim people with clerics and laity mutually involved in the journey. Traditionally, men and women in religious orders in the Church were accorded special status, somewhere between cleric and laity. The new document [*Perfectae Caritatis*] makes it clear that religious are laity by virtue of their baptism and confirmation. Their religious vows do not promote them to a higher status;<sup>33</sup> they merely confer on the religious to live the lay state to its perfection.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>. Ibid., 72.

<sup>32</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, 27.

<sup>33</sup>. “That all the members be more closely knit by the bond of brotherly love, those who are called lay-brothers, assistants, or some similar name should be drawn closely in to the life and work of the community. Unless conditions really suggest something else, care should be taken that there be only one class of Sisters in communities of women. Only that distinction of persons destined, either by special vocation from God or by reason of special aptitude. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15

<sup>33</sup>. “That all the members be more closely knit by the bond of brotherly love, those who are called lay-brothers, assistants, or some similar name should be drawn closely in to the life and work of the community. Unless conditions really suggest something else, care should be taken that there be only one class of Sisters in communities of women. Only that distinction of persons destined, either by special vocation from God or by reason of special aptitude. *Perfectae*

<sup>34</sup>. Ebaugh, 60.

*Perfectae Caritatis* (on perfect charity: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life) differentiates the sacred synod (i.e., the magisterium) from the consecrated religious with a demonstrative tone identifying the speaker as an external source of revelation. The introduction gives the text's directive and states what group is doing the directing: "In order that the great value of a life consecrated by the profession of the [evangelical] counsels and its necessary mission today may yield greater good to the Church, the sacred synod [the magisterium] lays down the following prescriptions...."<sup>35</sup> After drawing a clear delineation of the addressing ruler and the addressed ruled, the last paragraph of section one provides insight into CDF criticism of LCWR prophecy, stating that those with the authority of renewal are "meant to state only the general principles of the adaptation and renewal of the life and discipline of Religious orders and also, without prejudice to their special characteristics, of societies of common life without vows and secular institutes."<sup>36</sup> This suggests that in order to be in harmony with the teachings of *Perfectae Caritatis*, as a representative Conference responsible for the renewal of religious life, the LCWR must toe the line between appreciating the members of secular life --"without prejudice" to the "special characteristics" of secular institutes. The doctrinal assessment states that,

The doctrinal confusion which has undermined solid catechesis over the years demonstrates the need for sound doctrinal formation—both initial and ongoing—for women Religious and novices just as it does for priests and seminarians, and for laity in ministry and apostolic life. In this way, we can hope that the secularized contemporary culture, with its negative impact on the very identity of Religious as Christians and members of the Church, on their religious practice and common life, and on their authentic Christian spirituality, moral life, and liturgical practice, can be more readily overcome."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1.

<sup>36</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1.

<sup>37</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei*, 8.

Church leadership appears to have a disparaging attitude toward secular values. While the LCWR clearly does not differentiate feminist values from their Catholic religious values, the doctrinal assessment gives a disparaging account of feminism. The “radical” characterization expresses the church’s remoteness from secular concerns now facing the women religious: the CDF gives no legitimacy to the LCWR’s theologically supported critique that calls for open dialogue with the magisterium, and dismisses the group’s prophecy as an illegitimate “radical feminist” intuition of a non-representative minority.<sup>38</sup> This same notion of radical feminism gets characterized by the CDF as a “diminution of the fundamental Christological center and focus of religious consecration which leads, in turn, to a loss of a ‘constant and lively sense of the Church’ among some Religious.”<sup>39</sup> For the CDF, this is shown in LCWR members not acquiescing to male-only ordination and not expressing public support on church judgments of faith and morals. When asked about being called radical feminist, Sister Pat Farrell framed the accusation in the context of divisive church language and the exclusion of women:

Sincerely, what I hear in the phrasing...is fear — a fear of women's positions in the church. Now, that's just my interpretation. I have no idea what was in the mind of the congregation, of the doctrine of the faith, when they wrote that. But women theologians around the world have been seriously looking at the question of: How have the church's interpretations of how we talk about God, interpret Scripture, organize life in the church — how have they been tainted by a culture that minimizes the value and the place of women?"<sup>40</sup>

With rhetorical support from the consubstantial implications (i.e., head and body unified though the body has many functions) of Paul’s anatomical trope, the sacred synod (the head)

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<sup>38</sup>. *Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei* ., 6.

<sup>39</sup>. *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup>. Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Ferrell.

acknowledges a diversity of “function” in the Mystical Body of Christ, delegating the future of renewal in terms preserving church traditions of prayerful solitude and contemplation. The sacrifice of the religious framed in terms of the inner life of contemplation, a circumcision of sorts, differentiates the actions of the external apostolate from those same members engaged in inner contemplation as Christ’s sacrifice of his body to his father:

Communities which are entirely dedicated to contemplation, so that their members in solitude and silence, with constant prayer and penance willingly undertaken, occupy themselves with God alone, retain at all times, no matter how pressing the needs of the active apostolate may be, an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ, whose "members do not all have the same function" (Rom. 12:4). For these offer to God a sacrifice of praise which is outstanding. Moreover the manifold results of their holiness lends luster to the people of God which is inspired by their example and which gains new members by their apostolate which is as effective as it is hidden. Thus they are revealed to be a glory of the Church and a well-spring of heavenly graces. Nevertheless their manner of living should be revised according to the principles and criteria of adaptation and renewal mentioned above. However their withdrawal from the world and the exercises proper to the contemplative life should be preserved with the utmost care.<sup>41</sup>

Regarding the “Mystical Body of Christ” as “communities” of religious, the above excerpt addresses the consecrated religious members of the “People of God.” With its informal consubstantial logic maintaining head and body essentially united though separate in function, the rhetorical strategy roots religious identity in traditional modes of spiritual intercession (i.e., contemplation) while preserving the relationship clerics have with lay communities. Somehow this tracks nicely into Paul’s differentiation of the inner spiritual man from outward man of the flesh.<sup>42</sup> The following excerpt suggests that Romans 2:28-29 and 1 Corinthians 12 can be nicely

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<sup>41</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>42</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 7. “For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.” Bible Gateway. Romans 2:28-29 (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition)

integrated. Chapter II from *Lumen Gentium* (“On the People of God”) ends with the following statement:

The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a "bodily" manner and not 'in his heart.'<sup>43</sup>

In *Perfectae Caritatis*, contemplation, isolation, and silence are the activities of the evangelical counsels that both ensure that religious communities are included in the consecrated “Church” and are differentiated from the lay. The life of contemplation, chastity, obedience, and poverty (i.e., evangelical counsels) are framed as sacrifices to God: what connects the religious to the consecrated church differentiates the counsels from the outer “pressing needs of the active apostolate.” The church attempted to redefine the identity of the religious in terms that differentiated inclusion with church traditions from that of active life with the lay. By strategically using consubstantial logic allowing the anatomical trope<sup>44</sup> to switch its signification, God is placed at the head of Christ’s body (i.e., the church body consisting of the lay and the

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<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%202:28-29&version=RSVCE>.

(accessed February 4, 2012).

<sup>43</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

<sup>44</sup>. In an essay titled *Polytropy*, Paul Friedrich states that, “A third variant of the continuity trope is anatomical relations. Anatomies always imply analogies: the part of the body, the house, the car, their natural landscape (foot, footstool, foot pedal, foothill and so forth). Body parts are primary in many ways. The imaginative pattern by which they are extended or projected onto social, technological, political, and intellectual fields of meaning is surely one of the most powerful and universal forms of metaphor.” Fernandez, James W. *Beyond Metaphor: the Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*. (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 36. In an essay titled *Polytropy*, Paul Friedrich states that, “A third variant of the continuity trope is anatomical relations. Anatomies always imply analogies: the part of the body, the house, the car, their natural landscape (foot, footstool, foot pedal, foothill and so forth). Body parts are primary in many ways. The imaginative pattern by which they are extended or projected onto social, technological, political, and intellectual fields of meaning is surely one of the most powerful and universal forms of metaphor.” Fernandez, James W. *Beyond Metaphor: the Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*. (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 36.

religious); the sacrifice needed from the religious gets directly associated with Christ's willful sacrifice of his body to the Godhead.<sup>45</sup> This has implications for obedience to the vicars of God: "in professing obedience, religious offer full surrender of intellect and will as sacrifice of themselves to God and so are united permanently and securely to God's salvific will."<sup>46</sup> As will be shown, this move enabled by consubstantial logic (i.e., spirit one with matter) allows the sacred synod to make Eucharistic connections, allowing the royal People of God to be expressed as an undifferentiated entirety.

In agreement with the doctrinal assessment, current CDF prefect archbishop Gerhard Müller placed the current mandate in terms of revelation and representational authority.

According to an interview with the *National Catholic Reporter*, Müller stated that he,

looks upon every group in the church with sympathy. The church lives on the responsibility of its members who freely come together, and it's nourished by the life of every one of its communities, from the smallest to the biggest, made up of laity, priests, and consecrated persons. At the same time it doesn't seem to me that any group can set itself up as the source of authentic interpretation of revelation. Among other things, the themes you mentioned touch on dogmatic elements. The right question isn't 'who's wrong?', but 'who respects revelation and its essential elements?'<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>. "Christ loves the Church as His bride, having become the model of a man loving his wife as his body; the Church, indeed, is subject to its Head. "Because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", He fills the Church, which is His body and His fullness, with His divine gifts so that it may expand and reach all the fullness of God." *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

<sup>46</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2e. "The purpose of the religious life is to help the members follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It should be constantly kept in mind, therefore, that even the best adjustments made in accordance with the needs of our age will be ineffectual unless they are animated by a renewal of spirit. This must take precedence over even the active ministry."

<sup>47</sup>. Allen, John L, National Catholic Reporter "Vatican doctrine czar on LCWR: We expect 'substantial fidelity.'" (Oct 13 2012) <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/vatican-doctrine-czar-lcwr-we-expect-substantial-fidelity>. (accessed December 12, 2012).

<sup>48</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368. "The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she

Standing out in Müller’s assessment are elements of exclusion and inclusion tracking into Paul’s head/body figure found in *Lumen Gentium* and *Perfectae Caritatis*. The inclusive (i.e., the church body with “every one of its communities” as parts, and the hierarchal (i.e., “from the smallest to the biggest”) and exclusive (i.e., that no one part of the *body* can assert an authentic interpretation of revelation) aspects of Bishop Müller’s assessment brilliantly characterizes his religious function: to ensure that the sacred synod is the source of “authentic interpretation of revelation.” As prefect of the CDF, Bishop Müller also has obedience to a head, on behalf of which he is playing a huge part in discerning the legitimacy of LCWR revelation and prophecy. Therefore, it is clear that one “group” *is* determining the legitimacy of revelation.

In the following example from *Perfectae Caritatis*, the faith requirements of submission and obedience expected from the consecrated religious is expressed by extending the Pauline figure of Christ as head of the body<sup>48</sup> to include notions of Christ’s obedience to God’s will, and by extension, to the “superiors” who represent God as head. Explicitly stating that the clerical priesthood and magisterium represent God or the Godhead, the following excerpt from *Lumen Gentium* places the Godhead in clear synonymous relation to the head of the church:

In professing obedience, religious offer the full surrender of their own will as a sacrifice of themselves to God and so are united permanently and securely to God's salvific will. After the example of Jesus Christ who came to do the will of the Father (John 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:9) and "assuming the nature of a slave" (Phil. 2:7) learned obedience in the school of suffering (Heb. 5:8), religious under the motion of the Holy Spirit, subject themselves in faith to their superiors who hold the place of God. Under their guidance they are led to serve all their brothers in Christ, just as Christ himself in obedience to the

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herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his body.

Father served His brethren and laid down His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; John 10:14-18). So they are closely bound to the service of the Church and strive to attain the measure of the full manhood of Christ (Eph. 4:13).<sup>49</sup>

By shifting that which represents the head and its subordinate body members, the rhetoric enters the realm of “fullness.” This allows the creation of another inclusive category at the risk of creating another exclusive category: while all the baptized in the church, as Christ’s entire unified body are realized through the sacrament of the Eucharist, those unbaptized are not the “People of God:”

It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church.<sup>50</sup>

While baptism is the criterion for inclusion in the universal priesthood, the demonstrative tone clearly differentiates the rulers (God/Christ’s head/sacred synod) from the ruled (Christ’s mystical body/religious and laity) in various figural configurations, expressing that what ultimately unifies the “People of God” completely is the Eucharistic sacrifice that the male priest makes present “bodily:”

Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14.

<sup>50</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

<sup>51</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

In the spirit of Christological discussions uniting divinity with humanity, the two different essences of the “common priesthood of the faithful” and the “ministerial or hierarchical priesthood” are granted unity through the Eucharist. The path is open to conceive of priesthood in a widened context of participation in terms of Eucharistic union while maintaining the distinct essence of the liturgical priesthood:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.<sup>52</sup>

In summary, the Second Vatican Council “call to renewal”<sup>53</sup> and “move toward the world”<sup>54</sup> includes a Pauline epideictic rhetorical strategy-- an anatomical trope allowing the church to outline relational differences between the clerical, consecrated, and lay, while maintaining the fundamental concept of Eucharistic unity. God is separable from Christ and under Christ’s head they are part of the people of God in its fullness -- as Christ’s head is not separable from its body. Yet, the women religious are part of the laity in the non-clerical sense of the “Body of Christ”<sup>55</sup> with Christ the head in a Pauline sense. Having a diversity of functions, the women religious are charged to renew their members in accordance with local norms, along the tightrope of church traditions and societal transformations. Through consubstantial logic, God is placed at the head of Paul’s figure and the shared Eucharistic experience unifies the church and realizes

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<sup>52</sup>. Ibid., 10.

<sup>53</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 7.

<sup>54</sup>. Ibid., 7.

<sup>55</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 11.

the priesthood in its fullness and completeness. However, Eucharistic unity does not seem to presuppose dialogue or unity of identity and purpose.

In attempting to renew the religious identity of their orders, the LCWR has reached the threshold of division, taking risks by defining its emerging charism with a critique associating the Eucharist and the church's "ways of relating and proceeding"<sup>56</sup> with secular, western "mental models."<sup>57</sup> However, it appears that culturally specific adaptations at the far reaches of church influence and authority are conflicting with the identity and purpose of the founding evangelical counsels.

Combined with access to higher forms of education and increased involvement with human diversity, movement away from cloistered living coheres with movement away from the mystique of hierarchal secrecy and the bodily concentration of mystical power granted to the clerical priesthood. According to Penelope Johnson, access to education shares intimate relation with spiritual authority:

Religious women's authority faded as their education failed to keep pace with clerical university training; once they lost their facility in Latin, there would be precious few Heloises corresponding with abbots of Cluny. Religious women's spiritual power waned when their liturgical processions and solemn oath ceremonies were confined within convent walls, away from society, and their prayers for the dead were eclipsed by masses celebrated by priests.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>. Maricarmen Bracamontes, A Call to Transformation. *The Occasional Papers of the Leadership Conference of the Women Religious*. Vol.41 No. 1 (Winter 2012): 7.

<sup>57</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 16.

<sup>58</sup>. Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France*. (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1991.), 253.

<sup>59</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15. "Unless conditions really suggest something else, care should be taken that there be only one class of Sisters in communities of women. Only that distinction of persons should be retained which corresponds to-the diversity of works for which the Sisters are destined, either by special vocation from God or by reason of special aptitude."

In reaction to greater societal forces, the scripturally-based, ontological shifts of the Second Vatican Council seem to support an altered epistemology concerning a more gender-neutral, less caste-oriented Catholic identity (Galatians 3:28).<sup>59</sup> However, the cost seems rather high concerning links to identity and purpose. The mystically-charged logic of gendered embodiments in Church symbols (in liturgical rituals or prayerful contemplation) stand to be dismembered from their “founding” purposes, losing legitimacy for interpreting religious experience or offering meaningful inclusion into the Church. This includes interaction with traditional symbols of obedience and submission that signify an essential eternal feminine nature, and an essential masculine nature with the power to unify Church identity and purpose.

The movement away from what Irving Goffmen called the “total institution” is articulated by Ebaugh as a movement away from the motivational myths sustaining Pre-Second Vatican Council religious orders. Ebaugh points out that the “meaning systems” informing “group norms, values, interests, behaviors and customs” comprise the comprehensive elements of group identity and purpose in accordance with “meaning systems” supported by shared understandings of myth:

The term myth, as sociologists use it, has nothing to do with its popular use to mean mythical, fantasy, or unreal. Rather, the relative truth or untruth of myth is unimportant. Members do not *understand* a myth; instead, they feel, experience, and believe in it as the ultimate explanation for what is. Members are less interested in proving the myth than living it out in daily life. consensual validation by the group sustains the myth—the fact that others also believe it and are willing to live out their lives in terms of it.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ebaugh, 60. As symbols informing group behaviors and unified identity and purpose, both the Theotokos and the Eucharist unify women and the church respectively. The same consubstantial logic that unifies the church allows Mary’s to become the Mother of God who epitomizes that which unifies essential womanhood: Motherhood.

Ebaugh's assessment suggests that the hierarchically organized, pre-Second Vatican Council cloistered life of the convent, whose members are more inclined to base their religious identities and functions on the mystique of God-granted authority by way of "mystical manipulation,"<sup>61</sup> contributed to a "coherent cosmology"<sup>62</sup> for consecrated women in the Church: "Catholic girls who entered religious orders were well socialized into this hierarchal authority structure in the Church and were therefore primed to generalize the notion of authority to religious superiors in the order. Both explicitly and implicitly superiors were viewed as sharing the God-given hierarchal authority exercised in the Church."<sup>63</sup> For Ebaugh, unquestioned and unchallenged traditions promoted by hierarchal values of leadership helped maintain a "total institution" wherein contemplative seclusion offered a degree of inclusion into Church mysteries. This meant a degree of mystical authority was available for consecrated women who worked within the logic of their exclusion.

In a similar vein, Mary Joe Weaver's characterization of pre-Second Vatican Council life suggests that the limitations of the past retain significance for present realities. In *New Catholic Women: a Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority*, change is characterized in terms of social realities before and after the Second Vatican Council. Weaver states that women in the consecrated Church

...have power within the Church only insofar as they as they conform to traditional expectations and do not try to gain a hearing for any of their own issues. Their problems are exacerbated by a history of isolation, as well as by a tradition of superiority and an illusion of power. Up until the Second Vatican Council it would have not occurred to most laywomen to attempt a personal conversation with a nun: sisters lived in consecrated space, closed off from contaminating contact with the world and effectively discouraged from dialogue with other women. Rather than suggesting deprivation, their isolation

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<sup>61.</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>62.</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>63.</sup> Ibid., 60.

projected an image of superiority. Sisters were incarnations of the 'eternal feminine,' chosen by God to be brides of Christ.<sup>64</sup>

The above quotation suggests that removal from the hierarchal organizational structure has implications for the legitimacy, and therefore social construction of mysticism. Living in secluded contemplation, within the logic of Church symbols of obedience and submission, may have been, and still may be empowering for some women in the consecrated Catholic Church. As a system with interrelated parts, the mystique of the clerical priesthood and the Church hierarchy, theologically (mystically) supports the exclusion of women from dialogue with church leadership and liturgical functions, and helped rationalize their bodily placement into cloisters.

Concerning the hierarchal structure of the Church organization and the access to information, Ebaugh mentions how the mystique of secrecy helped inform the pre-Second Vatican Council identity of women religious:

The myth of obedience to superiors and thereby obedience to God was operationalized in the official authority structure of the order. In the Sisters of Service, as in most religious orders prior to Vatican II, the highest governing body was the general chapter, a group of representatives elected by the members. The chapter met in secret enclave every six years to elect a central administration, including the superior general and her council, and to formulate general policies. The secrecy that characterized the chapter meetings created a sense of mystique and awe regarding the proceedings and policies of the chapter, and encapsulated the outcomes with an aura of legitimacy and extraordinary power. The members of the order knew little or nothing regarding how the decisions were made. They were simply announced as official policy and framed in the context of the vow of obedience.<sup>65</sup>

While the clerical Church awards conformity with priestly vows of obedience by [in part] allowing men increasingly closer access to dialogue concerning the interpretation of the scriptures and rulings on faith and morals, current vows of obedience binding sisters to the

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<sup>64</sup>. Mary Joe Weaver. *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority*. (Indiana University Press. 1996), 17.

<sup>65</sup>. Ebaugh, 68.

authority of the Church hierarchy do not include a share in the Church's reward system of hierarchal reciprocity: the obedience of consecrated men is rewarded with increased access to information and spiritual status while women religious organizations embark on a mission of open and inclusive dialogue. The discourse is socially primed for theological divergence.

If reforming American women religious orders according to democratic values brought attention to what makes the experience of women in the church unique, it follows that greater participation in democratic and capitalist organizational structures promotes steps to create democratic ideals of leadership; since American women religious are now directed to renew their own orders, it follows that American values play a large role regarding the search for a distinct purpose and identity in the church.

According to Quiñonez and Turner, "American sisters in general wanted participation in decision making" and it "behooved the leadership to examine their own organizational behavior."<sup>66</sup> In this way, it appears that distinctive differences in leadership became the institutional norm. Unfortunately for church ideals unity, the scene was set for the hierarchal structure of the church to become more peripheral to the experiences of women religious. Ebaugh states that, "the council fathers themselves set the agenda by insisting that nuns were not clerics but laity who dedicated their lives to special witness of the gospel. With this in mind, nuns set about to restructure their life-style in a way that allowed greater participation with the laity."<sup>67</sup> Movement from the traditionally isolated life of contemplation meant increased interaction with the laity, and this corresponded with access to diverse modes of intercession, access to higher education, and increased interaction with diversity in general. For the women

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<sup>66</sup>. Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, 20.

<sup>67</sup>. Ibid., 21.

religious, the identity and purpose of religious life would be directed away from the mystique of the church hierarchy.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION FEMINISM AND ELIZABETH BUCAR'S UNIQUE METHODOLOGY

In *Power and Gender in Christian Mysticism*, Grace Jantzen maintains that no single Roman Catholic mystical tradition exists apart from its social and historical context. She states that "...various social constructions of mysticism have been bound up with issues of power and gender."<sup>1</sup> If any of the "forms of 'mysticism'" flourish, their existence and longevity depends on "compatibility with dominant ecclesiastical perspectives:"<sup>2</sup>

It is only latterly that the term 'mystical' began to be applicable to 'experience at all: in earlier times, one might speak of a 'mystical interpretation or of the 'mystical body of Christ', but not of a mystical experience'. Similarly, 'the mystics' were not those who had particular states of consciousness, but those who were able to elucidate the spiritual interpretation of a passage of scripture, say, or who were faithful participants in the (mysteries of the) Eucharist.<sup>3</sup>

According to Jantzen, the "idea of an essence of mysticism is a patriarchal construct, and one of which women have every reason to be suspicious."<sup>4</sup> Jantzen suggests that the religious experiences of women have been pigeonholed by historians and ecclesiastical authorities, and that the narrowing of religious experience is a means of control and domination. This claim is strikingly similar to the arguments of Sister Laurie Brink and LCWR president Pat Farrell regarding the importance of appreciating the voices of individual sisters.

Conscious of the implied relativism of maintaining various [social] constructions of mysticism that are not reducible to any "one" conception of women's religious experience,

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<sup>1</sup>. Jantzen, 352.

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid., 341.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid., 317.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid., 347.

Jantzen does not balk at being a deconstructionist, stating that deconstruction is not a neutral academic practice or display of scholarly prowess.<sup>5</sup> Rather, deconstruction is an effort to “show how power and knowledge have been hooked together in oppressive ways, and by that recognition make it possible to see through and resist such hook-ups were they continue.”<sup>6</sup> Jantzen states that, “Feminist theorists have struggled to find ways of retaining the insights of deconstructionism while rejecting its relativistic implications.”<sup>7</sup> She explains that her philosophical moral compass maintains that “although it is necessary for us to make political and moral choices, there are no universal, objective truths or foundations upon which such choices can be grounded, and no criteria for evaluating them.”<sup>8</sup>

Jantzen quotes Richard Rorty, author of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* to help explain her vision of moral progress as it relates to the achievement of increased solidarity: an idea of solidarity “not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities in respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people widely different from ourselves as included in the range of us.”<sup>9</sup> She aligns her idea of solidarity with Jacques Derrida's idea of “infinite Justice:” this idea of “justice” is not related to an ideal that can be realized like the mathematical ideal of infinity. The “infinite” in “justice” points to its inability to ever be reduced to an essential Platonic form or ideal.<sup>10</sup> According to Jantzen, the writings of mystics

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<sup>5</sup> Jantzen, 347.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 348.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 347.

often methodologically dispose of essential qualities or properties. The map is not to be confused with the territory:

Because the idea of Justice is not fully graspable, and yet demands attention, all effort of articulation must always be subject to critique. It is not far from the religious insistence that any images, whether conceptual or material, that can be made of God, are if taken as the substance rather than the symbol, idols, and as such must be shattered: yet as symbols they are necessary. It is an understanding shared by many of those that have been counted mystics, many of those whom we have looked at in this book.<sup>11</sup>

Objectivity is important when using any sort of lens; Jantzen doesn't leave a claim to authority beyond criticism. Summing up how she interprets Derrida's notion of justice and the importance of objectivity, she states, "Any concept, any authority, all the methods of patriarchy and all the methods of feminism which appropriate legitimacy must be subjected to criticism and self-criticism in the name of justice which is owed to the other."<sup>12</sup>

Bucar also acknowledges the link between feminist morality and the acceptance of solidarity and diversity concerning "the Other."<sup>13</sup> Bucar's research considered in this thesis is concerned with feminist politics and rhetorical tactics in public performance regarding the creation of ethical knowledge in religious communities of women.<sup>14</sup> Expressing the view of feminist politics as a "...form of action that attempts to reshape the conditions of women's individual or collective existence," she grants that feminism includes challenging "any system or thought" having "...stereotypes that misrepresent women's experiences." In part, her case-studies were completed to demonstrate how "liberal secular assumptions" about religious traditions are often "only partly correct and importantly misleading."<sup>15</sup> With her interests in

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<sup>11</sup>. Jantzen, 352.

<sup>12</sup>. Ibid., 352.

<sup>13</sup>. Bucar, xvi.

<sup>14</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., xix.

challenging the orthodoxies of liberal feminist politics, Bucar's methodology attempts to avoid the errors of fundamentalist feminism."<sup>16</sup> The idea that hierarchal, patriarchal, or centralized religious traditions are necessarily oppressive must be rejected. She outlines her revelatory moment in the introduction of *Creative Conformity*, telling the story of her encounter with Shala Habibi, Iran's first presidential advisor on women's affairs, and how interaction with her helped frame the "conceptual approach" of her research.<sup>17</sup>

Like Jantzen, Bucar is conscious of her secular approach. She outlines two challenges her interview with Habibi brought to her attention: first, she questions the categories of her "secular liberal framework," stating that "secularism is by no means neutral in its approach toward religion. Even in forms tolerant of religiosity in the political sphere, it assumes that certain actions are more legitimate than others, such as those that create equality and empowerment."<sup>18</sup> The second challenge resonates with the LCWR's methodology of open and inclusive dialogue. It pertains to "...understanding diversity among women's arguments"-- a diversity that "exists among traditions within a single community, and even at times within the feminist politics of individual women, which can vary contextually and biographically."<sup>19</sup> Bucar states that "differences between traditions are expected, given variations in theology, local political conditions, and historical women's movements."<sup>20</sup> Bucar was humbled at Habibi's response after she called Habibi an "Islamic feminist."<sup>21</sup>

In response, she slams her hands down on her desk, cuts me off mid-sentence, and says, 'I am not a feminist. Do not call me a feminist. I do not believe in

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<sup>16</sup>. Bucar, xix.

<sup>17</sup>. Ibid., xiii. Shahla Habibi is a post revolution figure in Iranian politics. She was the appointed director of the Iranian Network of Women's NGO's. Bucar, xi.

<sup>18</sup>. Bucar., xiv.

<sup>19</sup>. Ibid., xiii.

<sup>20</sup>. Ibid., xii.

<sup>21</sup>. Ibid., 180.

your feminism.’ I stammer and apologize, knowing that my despite my familiarity with Khomeini’s writings and my effort to wear ‘good hijab,’ I have at best distanced myself from Habibi and at worst offended her.<sup>22</sup>

Bucar believes that her interaction with Habibi demonstrates challenges cross-cultural feminist projects face. What Bucar calls “academic ventriloquism,”<sup>23</sup> she defines as occurring when “both scholar and subject ‘throw their voice’ to the other.”<sup>24</sup> As a counter measure, she states that her interest in “redefining what counts as feminist politics” led her to include in her assessment an evaluation of rhetorical tactics to aid in discovering how clerical leaders construct visions of women’s “proper roles:” the “moral anthropologies”<sup>25</sup> of clerics and how woman conform with and alter those visions through the re-arrangement and reconceptualization of “components of clerical rhetoric.”<sup>26</sup> This may occur at the level of logical structure (architectonics) or rhetorical tactics. Locating the occurrence of public feminist politics in two distinct Abrahamic traditions, Bucar seeks to find variations and similarities regarding the logics, content and architectonics found in the rhetorical techniques of lay Catholic and Shi’i women. According to Daniel Cowdin, the Shi’i case studies were exceedingly more conformist than the Catholic case studies. He states that Bucar’s case studies are “widely divergent in terms of their location on the conformity-to-creativity spectrum.”<sup>27</sup>

Bucar makes clear that her intended focus is not outright dissent, rejection, or rebellion against the tradition, but rather the tactical middle ground of those women working within, and thus accepting as a framework, the basic presuppositions of the tradition itself. The Iranian case studies all fit this description, but arguably the majority of Catholic case studies do not. The more radical approaches of African American womanist theologian Diana Hayes, the Latina mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi Diaz, and Catholics

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<sup>22</sup>. Bucar, 180.

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., xx.

<sup>24</sup>. Bucar, xiv.

<sup>25</sup>. Bucar, 65.

<sup>26</sup>. Ibid., 50.

<sup>27</sup>. Cowdin, 2.

For Choice leader Frances Kissling seem to burst the bounds of conformity altogether. Helen Hitchcock, noted above, is the only Catholic example with a clearly conformist dimension.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding tactics: “spatial context”<sup>29</sup> can be shifted, resulting in a *relocation* of ideas once found in association (e.g., *The Systems Thinking Handbook* maintaining that contemplation should be paired with action);<sup>30</sup> what Bucar terms *substitution* occurs when a once “central symbol”<sup>31</sup> is replaced with an alternative (e.g., the LCWR’s “spirit” replaces the hierarchal “Holy Spirit”). Lastly, *expansion* occurs when a clerical claim gets applied to an unexpected case (e.g., what happens when Teresa of Avila revises the tropological sense of traditional hermeneutics away from the letter to prefigure her life in Mary).<sup>32</sup> There is a “traditional logics of womanhood”<sup>33</sup> that Bucar recognizes, within which, women can insert collective notions of morality -- more in accordance with their actual experiences than that prescribed by clerics in centralized religious traditions.

In the ethical and theological rhetoric of gender, “rhetorical performances assume specific audiences.” In Bucar’s examples of clerical and lay-women rhetoric, women lay members constitute the intended audience. Bucar develops a “technique for isolating components of clerical rhetoric in order to see precisely where women contribute distinct logics through their responses.”<sup>34</sup> What Bucar calls “affective strategies” consist of “logical form” and “affective logoi.”<sup>35</sup> She states that,

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<sup>28</sup>. Cowdin, 2.

<sup>29</sup>. Bucar, 50.

<sup>30</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*. 8.

<sup>31</sup>. Slade, 53.

<sup>32</sup>. *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>33</sup>. Bucar. xviii.

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*, 18.

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

To persuade rhetoric would entail some logical structure, though, it need not abide by the formal rules of a syllogism. Affective logos is the ability of rhetoric to access the emotional and intuitive commitments of the audience. It is also a way to motivate action by invoking an audience response that is affective as well as cognitive. A technique of rhetorical analysis can work on both levels, attempting to isolate logical form and affective logos.<sup>36</sup>

As opposed to formal logic, it is important to interpret aspects of informal rhetorical logic and direct analysis between the “intra” and “inter-traditional”-- appreciating both the “details of logical structure and larger audience assumptions.”<sup>37</sup> What Bucar terms, “micro-investigations” requires “getting up close” (i.e., intra) to “identify an argument’s internal rationality in terms of its logical structure.” On the other hand, a “macro explanation” requires “standing back” (inter) for the means of analysis.<sup>38</sup>

Not necessarily having a formal syllogistic premise, clerical rhetoric is explained in terms of its “epideictic form”<sup>39</sup>-- referencing a mode of ancient rhetoric that Jeffrey Walker, author of *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, calls “the central and indeed fundamental mode of rhetoric in human culture.”<sup>40</sup> For Walker, the “rhetoric of belief and desire” contrasts with, though is not mutually exclusive from, the more pragmatic “rhetoric of civic business.”<sup>41</sup> Modern conventional distinctions of poetry from rhetoric do not abide with Walker’s classical differentiation of *epideiktikon* from *pragmatikon*. Walker uses Hesiod’s depiction of *epos* functioning in Greek antiquity in an example depicting how a *basileus* (king of ruler) benefits from having at his disposal a “princely eloquence” of persuasion and “knowledge of both lore

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<sup>36</sup>. Bucar, 18.

<sup>37</sup>. Ibid., 23.

<sup>38</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>. Ibid., 18.

<sup>40</sup>. Walker, 111.

<sup>41</sup>. Ibid., 19.

and the language of *epos*.”<sup>42</sup> According to Walker, a ruler must be able to “recall, interpret, and apply to the question at issue the memories lore encoded in rhythmic formulae, sententious language resembling traditional *epea* as he carries off the mind of the fractious crowd on the stream of ‘honeyed’ discourse.”<sup>43</sup>

The logical structure of epideictic (i.e., demonstrative) rhetoric is “built on shared initial understandings,” and has validity that cannot be “externally judged” like “deliberative or judicial” logic.<sup>44</sup> Bucar states that “...formal logic is actually less binding than informal logical procedures: in formal logic, the speaker or writer is free to designate their own meanings to symbols, even create their own system of language, independent of its meaningfulness to others or other systems of logic.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, for Bucar’s isolation of “aspects of arguments,” in which it is “necessary to show how they [arguments] create opportunities for dynamic response,” the informal rhetorical logic of clerics allows women to engage in context driven “types of feminist politics,” and is not based on syllogistic form whose validity is “determined by its author.”<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, Bucar maintains that the informal rhetorical [demonstrative] logic of arguments supporting judgments on faith and morals have a basis in the embodied logic of public performance (e.g., the liturgy). Therefore, male-only ordination is particularly systemic and rooted in the “gendered-logics of embodiment.”<sup>47</sup> This connects to the enduring reality that

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Walker gets from Hesiod a definition of *epea* that refers to verses or rhythmic formulae, or the “winged words of gods or bards.”

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19. The Pauline figures incorporated into Second Vatican Council documents that support the church’s agenda are introduced into the social context of reform.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>45</sup> Bucar, 165.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Bucar, 115.

sexual characteristics in public performance have consequences for the underlying rhetorical logic in arguments concerning women's moral issues. The following excerpt exemplifies what is meant by the logic of embodiment and how it contributes to a gendered, dualistic discourse on morality:

Politically this is why feminism is sometimes considered a dirty word in public discourse (Habibi): it is assumed to prioritize women or men, rather than understanding each in their proper relation to the other. Equity is theologically based on a distinction between materiality (body) and spirituality (soul). In Khomeini's and other clerics' rhetoric, men and women are equal spiritually, but their material embodiment makes them different. This means that in the embodied moral life, only equity between men and women is appropriate because true equality is only possible in the spiritual realm.<sup>48</sup>

The role of the logics of embodiment in liturgical performance exerts an influence on the discursive practices of rhetorical logic. Bucar maintains that veiling in Shi'i traditions and male-only priestly liturgical functions in Catholic traditions, are both "public and embodied performances."<sup>49</sup> in both traditions, "clerics and women use gendered logics of embodiment rhetorically to make arguments that raise theological and moral issues related to the public conceptualization, display, and work of female bodies."<sup>50</sup> The consequence of having the wrong gendered bodily presence (e.g., in the performance of the sacred liturgy) in public creates "moral unbalance and disorder within the clerical logics of moral embodiment."<sup>51</sup> This suggests that the consubstantial logic of the church's rhetoric, with implications on separable spirit and matter, like veiling in Shi'i' traditions has consequences for the logical structure of arguments for women's ordination. Spiritually, men and women are equal, but their different bodies require different moralities. A huge fallacy is that theological impressions about men's and women's

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<sup>48</sup>. Bucar, 110.

<sup>49</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>. Ibid.

moral bodies are not related. In the apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (On Ordination to the Priesthood), John Paul states, “The presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable.”<sup>52</sup> Concerning moral issues, Bucar shows that the logical embodiment of public performance meaningfully partakes in structuring the informal logic of rhetorical techniques.

Ten years before the 1994 *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Helen Hitchcock delivered a Catholic woman’s *Affirmation* to John Paul that directly conformed to the church’s essentialist notions of male-only ordination. Bucar states that the content of Hitchcock’s argument was developed to “counter” criticisms of elite “leftist Catholic feminists.”<sup>53</sup> The following passage expresses an ontological basis about the essential sex properties of Catholic priests:

We therefore also reject as an aberrant innovation peculiar to our times and our society the notion that priesthood is the ‘right’ of any human being, male or female. Furthermore, we recognize that the specific role of ordained priesthood is intrinsically connected with the representative of the begetting creativity of God in which only human males can participate. Human females, who by nature share in the creativity of God by their capacity to bring forth new life, and, reflective of this essential distinction, have a different and distinct role within the Church and in society from that accorded to men, can no more be priests than men can be mothers.<sup>54</sup>

Bucar maintains that at the level of architectonics (i.e., grounds, backing, claims, and warrants) clerical rhetoric is “rearranged”<sup>55</sup> and re-conceptualized by Hitchcock. The grounds (ordination is not a right but a vocation given from God and the begetting creativity of God is

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<sup>52</sup>. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* “On Priestly Ordination” The Holy See. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_22051994\\_ordinatio-sacerdotalis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html), 3. (accessed December 4, 2012).

<sup>53</sup>. Bucar, 114-115.

<sup>54</sup>. Ibid., 115.

<sup>55</sup>. Bucar, 83. John Paul uses Christ’s response to the Pharisees to back his claim that Genesis 1-2 has “both an ontological original unity and duality.” John Paul matches his grounds with Christ’s words. According to Bucar, the “Backing is the rationale for why a warrant should be considered reliable.” Ibid., 82.

only achievable by men) supports the claim that women should not be ordained. The grounds are warranted by the “importance of conserving Catholic tradition in a current atmosphere of dissent.”<sup>56</sup> Bucar states that claims (e.g., Genesis’s theology of the body implies the original unity of the sexes) convey an idea similar to the conclusion in formal logics, and that different individuals or groups can provide different grounds (e.g., “Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female?”<sup>57</sup> and “Men create by begetting and women create by bringing forth new life.) for the same claim (e.g., women should not be ordained.<sup>58</sup> Also, ontological backings (e.g., “Women commune differently than men,” and “Men create by begetting and women create by bringing new life into the world) can have radically different claims (“A priestess should invoke a separate notion of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy.” and “only men should be in the priesthood”), have “grounds” that are radically different, and have in both cases ontological backings: “women commune differently than men” is socio-ontological and “men create by begetting and women create by bringing” would bio-ontological.<sup>59</sup>

According to Bucar, Hitchcock shifts John Paul’s logic: the first shift is that Hitchcock places her grounds in theology while John Paul grounds his claim in history, and the second shift is that Hitchcock turns the issue of ordination into a discussion concerning the creation of an experiential-based morality. Like the LCWR whom adapt a different Holy Spirit, Hitchcock gets

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<sup>56</sup>. Bucar, 115.

<sup>57</sup>. Bucar, 83. John Paul uses Christ’s response to the Pharisees to back his claim that Genesis 1-2 has “both an ontological original unity and duality.” John Paul matches his grounds with Christ’s words. According to Bucar, the “Backing is the rationale for why a warrant should be considered reliable.” Ibid., 82.

<sup>58</sup>. Bucar, 84.

<sup>59</sup>. Ibid., 111. Bucar outlines Pope John Paul's supporting evidence for male-only ordination as follows: “The first apostles were men,” “The Roman Catholic Church has always ordained only men,” “The Church has always taught that only men can be ordained, and “The Eastern church has always only ordained men.

beyond the hierarchy to create ethical knowledge and a critique concerning a contemporary moral issue:

Hitchcock's organization, founded to affirm papal teachings, evolves into a direct service organization in which volunteers read, assess, research, and respond to women's moral inquiries. This is an implicit critique of clerical moral guidance....Through this work, they have also bypassed the need for ordination, by creating a woman-centered practice of ethical reflection. In some ways this can be seen as a more radical move than ordaining women because it moves ethical work from the clergy class to lay women. In this way Hitchcock uses the clerical logic of institutional hierarchy to make an argument about the moral guidance that is not at all hierarchal.<sup>60</sup>

Bucar uses the example of Hitchcock's discursive performance, a reaction to then current feminist arguments criticizing the Vatican for promoting a priesthood based on "competence or merit"<sup>61</sup> to show how Hitchcock creates a "strict vocational gender distinction based on the embodied physical differences between the sexes."<sup>62</sup> The idea of begetting (the transfer of something pre-existing) is radically different from creating through making. It is interesting to note that while Roman Catholics maintain that Jesus's humanity was made in the fullness of Mary's flesh, his divinity is said to have been begotten by the Father. As opposed to being silenced, veiled, exempt, or absent, Bucar states the when women engage in moral arguments they insert their role in the production of "moral knowledge" that relates directly to experience.<sup>63</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter II, *Lumen Gentium's* "people of God" are enabled through Paul's anatomical trope by applying consubstantial logic in rhetorical performance: through metaphor bodily functions (e.g., arms do different things than legs, men beget and women create new life) and race differences are proposed to be unified though radically different in essence.

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<sup>60</sup>. Bucar, 115.

<sup>61</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>. Ibid., 96.

<sup>63</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 9.

The belief that spirit is shared in common despite bodies having essentially different functions or appearances, is Paul's way of reconciling ethnic differences. The incorporation of people with distinct ethnic practices helps make oneness in the New Covenant. *Lumen Gentium* states,

...the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God, not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit, are finally established as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God."<sup>64</sup>

Grace Janzten's work on the historical backdrop of the gendered construction of mysticism extends into the Greek origins of Christianity, providing insight into the essentialist origins of Christian asceticism as relating to the social construction of mystical traditions. The Platonic model that excludes knowledge of the divine (e.g., grace) from knowledge obtainable from the senses, displays an ancient metaphysical backdrop for sex associations found in the embodied logic of liturgical performance today.<sup>65</sup> This has implications not only for the ideal conduits of spirit (men) and the fleshy mystical-bodies par-excellence (women), but also the backdrop for maintaining the male-monopoly of the interpretation of divine things (e.g., the scriptures and judgments on faith and morals). Long-held positions that associate maleness with the higher executive faculties of the mind (reason and rationality), and women with the all too human need for bridling the flesh into submission, still incubate in the subtext of church symbols (e.g., the Theotokos and the Eucharist) concerning union with Christ and essentialist ideas womanhood. Regarding patterns of difference (between the sexes) in the history of mysticism,

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<sup>64</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 9

<sup>65</sup>. Jantzen, 31. The legitimacy of the LCWR's prophecy is not ultimately determined by the convictions of experience; it is determined by male members of the church hierarchy.

while there is a diversity of shifting associations concerning what mysticism is (i.e., an inner experience of God or a mystical interpretation of the scriptures) and what constitutes a legitimate mystical experience according to gender, there is an enduring [informal] logical (theological and ontological), gendered consistency to the way direct intercession with the divine has been conducted by men and women in the Roman Catholic Church. This means that the outward signs of sex have a direct relation to the legitimacy of prophecy, religious experience, and the sexual characteristics of the group doing the legitimizing. Jantzen maintains the view that social realities (e.g., the predominance of bodily-based, emotion-based nun mysticism) became reinforced and recapitulated by the church as the legitimate means of credibility for the female nun mystic.<sup>66</sup>

According to church dogma, the incarnation (as prefigured in the myth of creation in Genesis 3:15) is prefigured as part of God's outpouring (deposit of grace) in creation.<sup>67</sup> However, by virtue of essential female characteristics and the supposed nature of the divine issuance (intervention) of grace associated with the incarnation, the table is set for divergences in religious experience from the outset of the central moment in salvation history. As will be explained below, the negative [apophatic] mystical tradition, known to have roots both in Neo-Platonist thought and the works of Dionysus the Areopagite, is predominately the legacy of men in the church, and utterly contrasts with the trends of "incarnational" prophetic mysticism found historically in the works of consecrated women.

Jantzen states that in accordance with the "Neo-Platonist idea of procession and return: all things come from God, in a great outflowing of the divine bounty, and all things return again

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<sup>66</sup>. Jantzen, 101.

<sup>67</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1299.

to God in final consummation.” Expanding on the negative theological traditions of Dionysius the Areopagite (late fifth or sixth century), Jantzen shows how the social construction of the female visionary become far less “relentlessly cognitive,” and considerably less “bound up with the hierarchic authority structure of the church.”<sup>68</sup> Jantzen points out that a long legacy of male “speculative” mysticism cannot be divorced from the enduring legacy of sex-essentialism in the Catholic Church. According to Jantzen, Dionysius posited that the

names which are given to God in the scriptures can be understood positively as God’s self-outpouring, the ways in which God can be known. Yet none of them are adequate to God’s reality. Thus they must all, also, be negated, transcended. Hence the downward motion of outflowing, corresponding to the names ascribed to God in scripture, must be coupled with an upward motion of consummation, where the names are successively negated until at last all that is left is silence, a silence which, however, must be understood not as a silence of ignorance but as a silence transcending speech.<sup>69</sup>

An alleged disciple of Paul, Dionysus influenced the criteria that God “must be utterly transcendent (beyond conceptualization or verbalization) so any positive knowledge can only be achieved through God’s outpouring in creation and the Holy Scriptures,”<sup>70</sup> Instead of promoting more verbal, exegetic modes of negative theology, women mystics achieved notoriety for decidedly more intimate, more subjective modes of intercession that are more bodily-based, erotic, founded on experience, sensual, rapturous, less iconoclastic, and more oriented towards image mediation.

According to Grace Jantzen’s genealogy of the social construction of mysticism, regarding power and gender, “the meanings of the terms ‘mysticism’ and ‘spirituality’ have undergone major changes within early and medieval usages.”<sup>71</sup> Beginning with the Pythagorean

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<sup>68.</sup> Jantzen, 101.

<sup>69.</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>70.</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>71.</sup> Jantzen, 26.

cosmology, she maintains that certain ideas of asceticism included “negative attitudes towards sexuality and women.”<sup>72</sup> Rooted in the notion that the immortal soul and corruptible body is “separable” and “different,”<sup>73</sup> Jantzen recognizes an epistemological splitting that occurred within Platonic and Pythagorean cosmogonies that both fixed essential attributes of being in the outward signs of sex, and have metaphysical consequences for Christian asceticism. Within this world of gendered opposites: order, reason, and unity find association with men, while darkness, duality, and chaos become decidedly feminine attributes. Jantzen emphasized that Plato's legacy is one of associating men with spirit and mind, and women with embodiment.<sup>74</sup>

Known for differentiating and favoring the complete perfection of “ideas” over the earthly copies of those ideas, Plato despised the mystery school notion of copulation amongst the gods and articulated a more heavenly kind of copulation occurring exclusively between males.<sup>75</sup> Jantzen regards this proclivity for male-only conjugation as an expression of homoerotic misogyny. She quotes Plato’s *Symposium* stating, “...and so the bond between them [men] will be more binding, and their communion even more complete, than that which comes of bringing children up, because they have created something lovelier and less mortal than human seed.”<sup>76</sup> Copulation unbridled from the material consequences of embodiment gets favor over the creation of something mortal and bodied. Heterosexual copulation is thought to weigh down the soul with corporeality; by essential nature, women would become very problematic by virtue of being closely identified with properties diametrically conflicting with spirit, mind, and union with the

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<sup>72</sup>. Jantzen, 81.

<sup>73</sup>. Jantzen, 36. The soul is separable from the body and as “true self” has access to mystical knowledge.

<sup>74</sup>. Jantzen, 33.

<sup>75</sup>. Jantzen, 36.

<sup>76</sup>. Ibid.

One. Earthbound acts of procreation would be cast as a non-spiritual kind of union, entailing close associations with the material world and the flesh.<sup>77</sup>

Claire Brunetti's focus on Saint Teresa of Avila's and Saint Bernard's "in-dwelling" contemplative (*kataphatic*) mysticism, finds correspondence with Grace Jansen's depiction of the more bodily-based, female intercession found to be distinctly more positive, and more rooted in bodily-experience than the more intellectual, literate, Platonic/Plotinian (apophatic) model.<sup>78</sup> Brunetti's differentiation of *apophatic* (Gk.  $\alpha\pi\acute{o}\phi\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$  from  $\alpha\pi\acute{o}\phi\eta\mu\iota$  – *apophēmi*, "to deny" via negative theology), and *kataphatic* (incarnational...via affirmativa of the indwelling God) mystical traditions coheres with Jantzen's characterization of the predominate gendered-logic of mysticism, drawing attention to distinct and enduring differences in the traditions of male and female Catholic mysticism and mystical credence regarding the acceptable modes of intercession with the divine.<sup>79</sup>

Brunetti's differentiation of -- predominately male and predominantly female -- mystical intercession does not constitute mutually exclusive gender categories. Brunetti mentions that commentaries on the *Song of Songs* from Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) both belong to the *kataphatic* tradition. Making the term "mysticism" even more clear and placing the term within the context of the prayer-based contemplative model of Teresa of Avila, Brunetti uses the word "contemplation" as a near-synonym for "mysticism," claiming

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<sup>77</sup>. Jantzen, 36. The flesh is of lower significance. Church heresies (e.g., Arianism, Nestorianism, and some varieties of Gnosticism) that have problems with the consubstantial notion of spirit inhabiting flesh are markedly influenced by Greek ideas that designate the flesh as having lower significance than the spirit.

<sup>78</sup>. Clair F. Brunetti, 1991. *Songs of Silence: The Affection for Bride and Body in the Rhetoric of Bernard of Clairvaux*, Margery Kemp and Teresa of Jesus. Master's Thesis., (University of Florida.), 4. (accessed December 9, 2012).

<sup>79</sup>. *Ibid.*, 4.

an association with "being aware of," or "looking at divinity" while "meditating on God with attention and thought." She states that, "as a mystical action in Christianity, contemplation partakes of the love which is God."<sup>80</sup>

The question of gender pertains to what Claire Brunetti calls the, "controversy concerning the issue of the individual interpretation of Christianity based on the Bible and experimentation in sexual ethics."<sup>81</sup> She bases her thesis on the importance of the *Song of Songs*, on the premise that "sexual imagery was the metaphor for the workings of grace, and the Song of Songs was its biblical basis."<sup>82</sup> Accentuating the *kataphatic* notion of "the silent bodily process of knowing," Brunetti adds that the conduit of the body concerns the "cultural process of gendering in describing the language of love that *kataphatic* mystics employ,"<sup>83</sup> as it were, in vivid analogy with sexual communion.

The erotic nature of the Song of Songs has functioned in Catholic mystical traditions as the rhetorical grounds for the Christian affective tradition of love. Brunetti states that,

The allegorical reading of Christ as Bridegroom and soul as Bride participates in two reflexive processes: the silent body's way of knowing and the cultural process of gendering. Knowing through the body involves spatial movement: vertical regard, horizontal Socialization,<sup>84</sup> personal containment, and birthing process. Cultural gendering imposes dichotomies of value on these movements.<sup>85</sup> Within such dichotomies, the mystics formulate persuasion

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<sup>80</sup>. Brunetti, 6.

<sup>81</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>. According to the New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics, "Cultural transmission is modeled as the result of purposeful socialization decisions inside the family ('direct vertical socialization') as well as of indirect socialization processes like social limitation and learning ('oblique and horizontal socialization')." *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. <http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/dictionary>. (accessed December 13, 2012).

<sup>85</sup>. Regarding the consecration ceremonies of Medieval French monastics, Penelope Johnson states that "There were actually two services, one for nuns that drew heavily on the imagery of marriage and one for monks that centered on the idea of *renovatio* of the whole person. The differences by gender emphasize the hierarchy's view of women as living spouses of Christ and

advocating the audience's and their own gender transference and depend upon body knowledge as a source of appeal.<sup>86</sup>

According to Elizabeth Bucar, women's religious adaptations are not merely “strategies” failing to realize the nature of “creative conformity” working within and beyond the imposed [logical] terrain of expectations.<sup>87</sup> Bucar borrows an excerpt from Michel de Certeau to aid her distinction between *strategies* and *tactics*: “A tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority<sup>88</sup> then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.”<sup>89</sup> It goes almost without saying that practitioners within religious traditions that have a centralized locus of authority must place their lives meaningfully within aspects of universal dogma and doctrine. For the women religious of the LCWR and Catholic mystics the terrain demands conformity to the gender of legitimate revelation in some shape or form.

While there is on one hand doctrine and symbols, on the hand there is life and its challenges. The adaptive measures of women in life do not necessarily coincide with the tenets of centralized dogma that attempt to condition religious values. Yet, Bucar’s methodology is not merely concerned with dissent. In the preface of *Creative Conformity*, Bucar mentions that her

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monks as “putting on the new Christ” –thereby identifying themselves directly with Christ.” Johnson, 63.

<sup>86</sup> Brunetti, vi.

<sup>87</sup> Bucar, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Conformity is thus according to what the other delineates as its own. By not espousing what church leadership designates as their criteria of faith and morals, the LCWR is held accountable. That is, the place where the male gendered mode of intercession (i.e., concerned with official rulings on faith and morals) stakes its authority over the use or un-use of language.

<sup>89</sup> Bucar, 180.

inquiry into the feminist politics of Catholic and Shi'i women attempts not to “identify the strongest articulations of dissent, but rather responses that construct new and intriguing rhetorical spaces through their architectonics, content, and logic.”<sup>90</sup>

In a July 2012 *National Public Radio* interview, Sister Pat Farrell stated that the LCWR “seeks dialogue and reconciliation” with the church hierarchy. In her opinion, church leadership would be aided by recognizing women’s “gift to the church” as it relates to experience with “proximity to people at the margins, to people with very painful, difficult situations in their lives.” When asked if she feels like the “church is removed from those real-life situations,” she replied, “I think elements in the church are.”<sup>91</sup> She furthermore states that within the church there are different roles, “and a bishop, for instance, can't be on the streets working with the homeless. He has other tasks. But we can be. So if there is a climate of open and adequate and trusting dialogue among us, we can bring together some of those conversations.”<sup>92</sup> In accordance with Paul’s trope used in *Perfectae Caritatis*, Farrell’s statement suggests an orientation towards identifying the present charism in terms of experience with the laity. It appears that for Farrell, open dialogue can help people with the existence of diversity in the church. The claim that the women religious’ “gift to the church” is open dialogue with diversity, creatively shares grounding with the idea that members of the Mystical Body of Christ “do not all have the same function.”<sup>93</sup> However, the shift implicit in the warrant that the church should conduct open and inclusive dialogue with the LCWR -- the same way the LCWR does with lay members or other consecrated religious -- does not follow for church leadership.

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<sup>90</sup>. Bucar, xxii.

<sup>91</sup>. Teri Gross interview with Sister Pat Farrell.

<sup>92</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 7.

Moreover, Farrell's re-conceptualizing of the Second Vatican Council rhetorical strategy of Paul's anatomical trope corresponds with Bucar's concept of women's discursive use of rhetorical models to insert themselves into the public arena as moral exemplars.<sup>94</sup> Farrell achieves what Bucar calls the shifting of the "logic of expansion: the application of the original clerical claim to cases he might not have intended."<sup>95</sup> By drawing on living experience (i.e., dialogue with diversity) as a model for unifying religious identity and purpose, clerical logic is shifted. The LCWR's conception of unity might not be realizable under the consubstantial-logic (God as head of Christ the body) unifying the "people of God" in the complete "royal priesthood" achieved through Eucharistic communion. Since the "common priesthood" and the "ministerial priesthood" differ in essence and degree, essentially, they may be as radically different as spirit and matter.

This includes Bucar's notion of "dianomy" as a mean between a focus on "autonomy" and "heteronomy."<sup>96</sup> For Bucar, *autonomy* emphasizes the importance of the individual in creating her own moral life as the source of her own "freedom and innovation."<sup>97</sup> However, Bucar states that, "a study of religious women that assumes autonomy tends to focus only on women's dissent from religious traditions (the bad girls of religion)."<sup>98</sup> *Heteronomy* on the other hand, "tends to obscure free subjects, or reject their existence outright, and neglects that enactment itself can be ambiguous or innovative."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>. Bucar, 50.

<sup>95</sup>. Ibid., 50.

<sup>96</sup>. Ibid., 5.

<sup>97</sup>. Bucar, 5.

<sup>98</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>. Ibid.

The concept of *dianomy* is posited as a way to avoid neglecting “dimensions of moral agency” by acknowledging both heteronomous and autonomous laws as “sources of the moral law.”<sup>100</sup> She states that autonomy and heteronomy are,

held together in an unresolved tension, the emphasis being on the process by which they interact. In addition to signifying two sources of the moral law, the *dia* is meant to invoke exchange akin to dialectic between two individuals, such as a law-woman and a cleric, who share a group of premises. The model of agency implied in *dianomy* is also double: a woman is formed within a specific discursive and performative environment, but she is also able to interrogate that environment. I developed this model through the study of religious women, but it can be applied to any agent.<sup>101</sup>

Bucar acknowledges that women are not merely victims of the patriarchy; they have the ability to shape their moral lives and theological orientations within the structure of imposed clerical logic. She states, “When applied to the subject of this book [Creative Conformity], the 'terrain imposed' on the subject is the religious tradition as interpreted and conveyed by the clerics. Women within the religious communities 'take advantage of opportunities on this terrain.’”<sup>102</sup> Regarding *creative conformity*, she states that “the conformity of the feminist politics is how women stay within the game by using clerical logics; the creativity is the logical surprises and ruptures of the women's discourse that are unanticipated, and yet made possible, by the clerical rulebook.”<sup>103</sup> With this in mind, the creative ways in which the women of the LCWR use receptivity to dialogue as they posit their own theory of transformation comes into focus.

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<sup>100</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>. Ibid., 3.

<sup>102</sup>. Ibid., 4.

<sup>103</sup>. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4  
ENCOUNTERING DICHOTOMIES OF SPIRIT AND MATTER AND RECASTING THE  
“SPIRIT”

Just prior to the announcement of the mandate, the 2012 winter edition of *The Occasional Papers* revealed scriptural typological renderings supporting the overarching theme of transformation through active contemplation and inclusive open dialogue. The first two essays<sup>1</sup> contain a scriptural basis for the final four submissions to provide the reader scripturally-based connections with personal experience. More specifically, a biblically-based notion of spirit helps the group articulate how “communication about differences...creates connection, understanding, and compassion...that strengthens relationships that build community.”<sup>2</sup> The mystical and prophetic qualities of Mary Ann Zollmann’s and Maricarmen Bracamontes’s submissions in the 2012 edition of *The Occasional Papers* connects the feminine “spirit” with personal and contemplative reflection on radical differences through deeper appreciations of sameness. Ideas of courage, empowerment, compassion, and methods for the general transformation of society through dialogue correspond with the charism forming methodologies outlined in the *Systems Thinking Handbook*.

While *The Systems Thinking Handbook* uses the social philosophy of systems thinking and study-oriented methodologies of dialogue in application, *The Occasional Papers* uses scriptural typology, living experience, and social commentaries to express how the LCWR’s gospel of open dialogue and communion with diversity concerns relations between all members of humanity: the women religious, the church, and the laity. In both *The Systems Thinking*

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<sup>1</sup> Bracamontes’ submission is an essay/ interview.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Jacksteit. “Readying ourselves for Change.” *The Occasional Papers* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2012):13.

*Handbook* and *The Occasional Papers*, members of the LCWR stress the importance of open dialogue in producing change and transformation, and how open dialogue can help heal deep theological, ecclesiastical, and societal divisions. In the winter 2012 edition of *The Occasional Papers*, Mary Ann Zollmann ties her personal experience with radical difference into the emerging charism's vision of communion through open and inclusive dialogue:

Acknowledging in a letter to the bishop our common love for God and God's people, I proposed that he and I speak and act out of radically different understandings of God, church, and Jesus. Owing open tables with room for all as the guiding image of my life, the yearning for inclusive communion breathed through every word of my message. The communication flowed easily, freely from my heart. I felt like my whole life was in it. And indeed, as the following biographical experiences bear witness, it was!<sup>3</sup>

The LCWR claims to have an organizational structure with interpersonal communicative attributes radically different from the male hierarchy's. This refers to what sister Maricarmen Bracamontes calls "...ways of relating and proceeding."<sup>4</sup> Bracamontes seems to speak for the women religious as a group when she places elements of the LCWR's prophetic critique in the context of the imposed limitations of traditional institutions. Bracamontes suggests a unified prophetic directive:

"We became convinced that there is no mysticism without prophecy and no prophecy without mysticism. From there we discovered that we needed to recognize the emerging subjects in these new times and find our place in the present historical setting. We have seen and worked with the limitations so

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<sup>3</sup>. Zollmann, 3.

<sup>4</sup>. Bracamontes, 7.

apparent in traditional institutions, especially noticeable in their ways of relating and proceeding.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Catherine Bertrand and Barbara Stanbridge, “The task of women religious today is not to create buildings and institutions, but to create a ‘climate’ for building relationships in this fragmented church and world.”<sup>6</sup> The sisters maintain that the “majority of members” appreciate the relationship that “heightened awareness and commitment to ‘contemplation’ and ‘discernment’ has with the “reflective and dialogic process.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the essay continues: “If the way of being and doing leadership is to be highly collaborative, it will take great effort to build the kind of relationships which speak of a deep trust in the wisdom of the whole, even in the midst of messiness.”<sup>8</sup> While LCWR leadership appreciates the beliefs, values, and experiences of individual religious women concerning the shared values of the group and the identity and purpose of the group’s mission, the male hierarchy of the church does not seem to share this commitment in relations with the LCWR.

As a group, the members of the LCWR appear to be highly educated and aware of church theologies and doctrines, well studied in church histories and histories of their group’s identity as women religious in the church. The telling passage from Pat McDermott below exhibits a familiar LCWR formula: the acknowledgment of commonalities, an awareness of

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<sup>5</sup>. Bracamontes, 7.

<sup>6</sup>. Catherine Bertrand and Barbara Stanbridge. “Our Time is Now.” *The Occasional Papers* .41 no. 1 (Winter 2012): 26.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>. Ibid.

distinct historical, theological and organizational differences, and the existence of a “not yet” realized goal for women religious in church history:<sup>9</sup>

I do understand that there is much about our faith lives, our evolving perceptions of religious life, and our very beliefs about God that distresses many today – and that does cause me pain because it causes such anxiety and suffering for some of my sisters. As leaders of religious congregations, we do have a responsibility to help create environments where various and sometimes conflicting ideas, perspectives, and values can be explored in a safe and sacred space. How women religious face, address, welcome and/or avoid change has always been part of our history and yet our efforts to engage one another in respectful dialogue about pertinent issues that stretch and challenge us is difficult and at times avoided.<sup>10</sup>

Like McDermott, Mary Ann Zollmann appreciates communion in terms of experiences found in her life. As expressed in Zollmann above, the premiere element in the emerging charism of the LCWR (i.e., the notion of inclusive communion) is referred to as something “breathed.” Both Maricarmen Bracamontes and Mary Ann Zollmann refer to a creative Old Testament event: the arrival of a feminine agent interceding on behalf of creation -- the Divine Ruah (breath/spirit/wind) of Elohim hovering or brooding over the waters of the abyss amidst an already pre-formed<sup>11</sup> and separate Heaven and Earth (Genesis 1:2).<sup>12</sup>

The following passage from Zollmann's opening essay expresses a group understanding of contemplation in the LCWR's emerging charism. Through a typological, figural expression of

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<sup>9</sup> Bracamontes, 7. When asked about the “struggle of going between two mindsets,” Bracamontes states, “It has to do with the paradox of eschatology: the ‘now,’ the present historical reality of transformation, and the ‘not yet in all of its fullness.’” Above, Seruto states that she has a “yearning for inclusive communion.”

<sup>10</sup> Pat McDermott, “Nothing Specific, But Actually Everything.” *The Occasional Papers* (no 1 Winter 2012): 15.

<sup>11</sup> This is “begetting” as the dividing of an already formed substance.

<sup>12</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Genesis 1:2 Bible Gateway. New International Version.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1-2&version=NIV>. (accessed December 14, 2012).

experiencing communion that transcends differences through an underlying mutual sameness, avenues for a kind of transformative communion potentially more seated in experience emerges:

Tutored by communal contemplative silence, we learn to speak our communal prophetic testament to the truth of who we are; created in communion for communion. As we do, communities within communities in our universe rejoice in the liberating realization of radical relational mutuality and resonate with the vibrations of integrity. In us the spirit hovers over the darkness; the universe shudders with immense creativity, and prepares itself for its next macrocosmic transformation. 'We are the universe surging into existence anew.'<sup>13</sup>

As per church dogma, the Eucharist constitutes the Christological phenomenon of the Holy Spirit's inhabitation in the congregation of the faithful through Christ's grace.<sup>14</sup> As the central component in the "institution narrative" of the church, the Eucharist enables the "unity of the mystical body"<sup>15</sup> and the fullness of the Holy trinity through Christ's sacrifice.<sup>16</sup> In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Holy Eucharist is not only the self-confirming "sum and summery" of the Catholic faith,<sup>17</sup> it is the "sacrament of sacraments" transcending all sacrifices of the Old Covenant,<sup>18</sup> upon whose "invocation of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>19</sup> the church is unified in essence with Christ's body as per Corinthians 10:16-17.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>. Zollmann. 5.

<sup>14</sup>. The *Catechism* states, "The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch" *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1324.

<sup>15</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1396.

<sup>16</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1375.

<sup>17</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1327. The *Catechism* reads, "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." This suggests an element of circular reasoning in the Eucharist.

<sup>18</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1330.

<sup>19</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1375.

<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1327. The *Catechism* states, "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." This suggests an element of circular reasoning in the Eucharist.

Evidence suggests that the LCWR's ideas of communion cannot be equated with the Eucharistic notion of communion. According to the church Catechism, the "Holy Spirit" is not to be confused with other uses of the term "spirit:"

The term 'Spirit' translates the Hebrew word *ruah*, which, in its primary sense, means breath, air, wind. Jesus indeed uses the sensory image of the wind to suggest to Nicodemus the transcendent newness of him who is personally God's breath, the divine Spirit. On the other hand, "Spirit" and "Holy" are divine attributes common to three divine persons. By joining the two terms, Scripture, liturgy, and theological language designate the inexpressible person of the Holy Spirit, without any possible equivocation with other uses of the terms "spirit" and "holy."<sup>21</sup>

It seems that for theological reasons the church differentiates ideas of "Spirit," separating its use as a "sensory image" expressing "transcendent newness," from the synonym for the "Holy Spirit" that unifies the Trinity and congregation through the sacrament of the Eucharist in the liturgy.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* mentions the controversial nature of the Eucharist, stating that,

The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: 'this is a hard saying; who can listen to it?' (Jn 6:60) The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks. It is the same mystery and never ceases to be an occasion of division. 'Will you also go away?' (Jn 6:67): the Lord's question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has 'the words to eternal life' (Jn 6:68) and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 691.

<sup>22</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1336. "The cup of the blessing we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."

This announcement of an “occasion of division” from the Holy “One” of God has implications for unity and disunity, crossing over into the anthropology of the Eucharist concerning the “othering” of groups not participating in the feast of the faithful. Commentary from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* on Corinthians 10:16-17 states that Paul’s “interpretation of the bread in the sense of communal sharing is unique in the New Testament. In the main point of his argument, Paul combines *the body of Christ*, represented by the bread, with ‘body’ as a standard political symbol of how the people of a city-state, though many, are united.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, regarding the subsequent verses (19-21), the commentary describes how Paul “moves the focus from abstract principles of knowledge to concrete social practices—sacrificing and eating in temple banquets—and formulates his final prohibition in terms of the mutual exclusivity of solidarity with the Lord and solidarity with demons (gods/idols).”<sup>24</sup> This is a great example of Pauline either/or thinking.

The scriptural marking of the New Covenant as introduced through a theology of the Eucharist, reveals that the basis of Christian unity has implications for division already in the early church. Early Christian practices of worship and eating reveal its roots in the mutually-exclusive Hebraic practices of food and ritual -- that also function to unify a group of people by differentiating them from the god’s of other groups. This depiction of the anthropology of the Eucharistic critiques the church’s use of the denial of the Eucharist to exclude members from the feast of communion. Again showing the consubstantial logic of the sacraments at work, members of the Roman Catholic Church are currently denied the Eucharist if they get divorced (dis-unified) from their spouses. Yet paying the church a sum of money so that the spousal union can

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<sup>23</sup>. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. 3rd edition. 1989, 282.

<sup>24</sup>. *Ibid.*

be annulled as if it never even existed, enables lay members to once again participate in the sacrament of church unity.<sup>25</sup>

As if building on the theme of Zollmann's "radical relational mutuality," Bracamontes constructs a typology in which communicative differences represent a kind of communion. In Bracamontes' typological rendering, communicative differences allegorically represent a kind of communion occurring between distinct realms. Bracamontes refers to the feminine spirit [breath] of God [Elohim] as it relates to the "task of incarnation...not yet realized in its fullness" as women religious "plumb the depths of their "charismatic tradition."<sup>26</sup> As if drawing on the model of the epiclesis of the liturgy (i.e., the doxology: invocation of the Holy Spirit), the Ruah also intercedes in communion of remembrance.<sup>27</sup> Below, the spirit is referred to as the "hermeneutic of memory." Like the "Holy Spirit" mentioned in the Catechism, the Ruah is a gift from the "Risen Christ:"

As we reflect on the cultural transition in which we find ourselves, we rediscover the importance of our charisms. Our task is to plumb the depths of the best of our own charismatic tradition that was a gift for God's people at the time of our founding. It can be a dynamic expression of the good news of this time in history that apparently would ignore or exclude it as irrelevant. We have become aware that we can reclaim the action and all the possibilities of the Divine Ruah within us. The Divine Ruah is the Hermeneutic of memory,

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<sup>25</sup>. Catholic Bridge.Com "Marriage, Divorce and Annulments in the Catholic Church." [http://catholicbridge.com/catholic/marriage\\_divorce\\_annulments.php](http://catholicbridge.com/catholic/marriage_divorce_annulments.php). (accessed December 13,2012).

<sup>26</sup>. Bracamontes, 7.

<sup>27</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1103. The Catechism states that the "in the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit 'recalls' to the assembly all that Christ has done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the churches, the celebration 'makes a remembrance of the marvelous works of God in anamneses which may be more or less developed. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church inspires thanksgiving and praise (doxology).'"

she is the gift of the Risen Christ who reminds us of all that Jesus gave us, of the gift of God's Reign. The spirit leads us into the fullness of truth.”<sup>28</sup>

The hierarchal nature of the Holy Spirit is promoted in the Nicene Creed. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, after God’s work in creation and the second person who carries the mystery of redemption arrived, the Holy Spirit came and finished the “baptismal seal:” According to *Lumen Gentium*, the Holy Spirit is a masculine agency adorning “hierarchical and charismatic gifts:”

The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, ‘Come!’<sup>29</sup>

While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that referents to “spirit” in the Bible cannot singularly refer (“equivocate”) to the “Holy Spirit” called upon in the liturgy, it provides eight examples (water, anointing, fire, cloud and light, seal, hand, finger, dove) of the “Symbols of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> The following paragraphs expand on two different symbols of the Holy Spirit (i.e., anointing, and cloud and light) that may have implications for the gender of spirit and the legitimacy of traditional Catholic prophecy. Though the teachings of the Catechism preserve the “Holy Spirit” from being referred to synonymously with the divine Ruah or any other reference to “spirit,” the LCWR’s emerging charism clearly has elements of “Holy Spirit” theology expressed in church dogma. Similarities withstanding, in an example of what Bucar

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<sup>28</sup>. Bracamontes, 7.

<sup>29</sup>. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 768.

<sup>30</sup>. Ibid., 695-701.

refers to as the “recasting” of symbols into the political realm, the LCWR’s adaptation of a different spirit symbol helps the group address contemporary moral issues (i.e., lack of open and inclusive dialogue that includes an appreciation of difference) in the formation of their charism.<sup>31</sup>

Like the other six sacraments, Holy Orders are ritually imparted by baptized male Bishops with the ability to conduct priestly functions.<sup>32</sup> Unlike the other sacraments, the administration of Holy Orders requires a bishop: however, like the ministerial priestly function itself, the bishop’s power to bestow priestly grace proceeds from Christ, through power granted from the Pope.<sup>33</sup> By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the Pope becomes the Vicar of Christ, ritually sending Christ’s anointed touch down into the representatives of the apostles [bishops], who in turn anoint the incardinated presbyter priesthood by touch. In this way, with the endowment of *sacra potensia* (sacred power) the priesthood is not only empowered to administer the salvific power of the Holy Spirit to the laity by procession from Christ, the priest (as titled, and now with priestly functionality) now has the possibility of becoming a bishop. Elucidating how the omnipresent reality of the hierarchy communes, with the sacrament of the Eucharist as an example, the *Catechism* states,

The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ. Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist, wherein he is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church. The bishop of the place is always responsible for the Eucharist, even when a *priest* presides; the bishop’s name is mentioned

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<sup>31</sup>. Bucar, 51.

<sup>32</sup>. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1600. The other six sacraments are baptism, confirmation, anointing of the sick, confession (atonement), Holy Eucharist, and holy matrimony. Since every order above the title “priest” has priestly *sacra potestas*, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, the Pope, and priests, can all administer the Eucharist in the liturgical feast. Another clarification needs to be made regarding confirmation. In the Roman Catholic Church Bishops are needed to administer the sacrament of confirmation, while in the Eastern Rite it is ideally done by the priest of the Child’s baptism. Both Holy Orders and Confirmation involve the processional potency of “putting on Christ.” Sacraments that require anointing tend to require a Bishop.

<sup>33</sup>. Ibid., 1594.

to signify his presidency over the particular Church, in the midst of his presbyterium and with the assistance of *deacons*. The community intercedes also for all ministers who, for it and with it, offer the Eucharistic sacrifice: ‘Let only that Eucharist be regarded as legitimate, which is celebrated under [the presidency of] the bishop or him to whom he has entrusted it.’<sup>34</sup>

The “Church” maintains three levels of priestly ordination, but only two degrees of “ministerial participation in the priesthood of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> This includes the episcopate that “Christ the Good Shepard head of his church presiding” has ordained bishops ( i.e., the fullness of priesthood) and presbyterate priests who administer the sacraments as “co-workers of the episcopal order.”<sup>36</sup>

In the Catechism, the anointing-type Holy Spirit is said to be a “synonym” of the “Holy Spirit.”<sup>37</sup> The description continues: “Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew “messiah”) means the one anointed by God’s Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord King David. But Jesus is God’s anointed in a unique way: the humanity the son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit.” The passage ends with another reference to “fullness:” “Now, fully established as Christ in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until ‘the saints’ constitute – in their union with the humanity of the Son of God – that perfect man ‘to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’”<sup>38</sup> Regarding “fullness” and the Second Vatican Council adaptation of Paul’s Body/Head trope in *Lumen Gentium*, the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ:

Christ loves the Church as His bride, having become the model of a man loving his wife as his body; the Church, indeed, is subject to its Head.

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<sup>34</sup>. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1369.

<sup>35</sup>. Ibid., 893.

<sup>36</sup>. Ibid., 1652.

<sup>37</sup>. Ibid., 695.

<sup>38</sup>. Ibid.

"Because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", He fills the Church, which is His body and His fullness, with His divine gifts so that it may expand and reach all the fullness of God.<sup>39</sup>

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.<sup>40</sup>

According to the Nicene Creed, Christ is God's only-begotten (John 3:15).<sup>41</sup> Like the rays of the sun, the divinity of Christ is not made on Earth. The above translation of John's revelatory theophany of light is more than commentary on the creation of light (Genesis 1:2-4). In this case there appears to be a struggle. The *21st Century King James Version* replaces the verb "overcome" with a more veiling than conquering verb: "comprehendeth."<sup>42</sup> While the *King James* translation suggests a veiling of transcendence, the Catholic translation leads directly to the Proto-evangelium, the idea of submission and an eschatological, dualistic battle.

As opposed to the anointing "synonym" of the Holy Spirit mentioned above, through which priests obtain incardination and bishops achieve the fullness of priesthood, the cloud and light symbols of the Holy Spirit are referred to as "manifestations" of the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup> The Catechism states, "In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory...."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>. *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

<sup>40</sup>. John 1:1-5 (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition) Bible Gateway. <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%201:%201-5%20&version=RSVCE> (accessed December, 12, 2012).

<sup>41</sup>. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 460.

<sup>42</sup>. Bible Gateway John 1:1-4. *21st Century King James Version*. <http://www.biblegateway.com/> (accessed December 17, 2012).

<sup>43</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 697.

<sup>44</sup>. *Ibid.*

In conclusion, the passage states that as a figure, Christ fulfills cloud and light manifestations through the Holy Spirit: “the Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and ‘overshadows’ her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus.”<sup>45</sup> This “manifestation” seems particularly incarnational. According to the Catechism,

We know him [the Holy Spirit] only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. The Spirit of truth who ‘unveils’ Christ to us ‘will not speak on his own.’ Such properly divine self-effacement explains why the world cannot receive [him], because it neither sees him or knows him,’ while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them.

Also invoking Genesis 1:2, Sister Maricarmen Bracamontes posits an agent of transformation in the Ruah whose creative intercession prefigures the “rolling away” of the stone at Lazarus’s tomb (John 11:1-45).<sup>46</sup> Commenting on Martha's encounter with Jesus at the death of Lazarus, Bracamontes states,

If there had been time,<sup>47</sup> we could have contemplated together, to experience the Good News and how it leads us to let the Divine Ruah act within us. That is Jesus' gift to us. I would have underlined the fact that the dynamism of the Spirit, her recreating power, has its roots in divine compassion, which is a vital force within us that transforms situations of death into life-giving encounters. That is the sense of life and resurrection for the here and now and not only on the last day.<sup>48</sup>

As Zollmann elucidates, the compassion associated with Christ’s weeping for Lazarus, as well as the universal perception of an absence of light (darkness), are human commonalities.

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<sup>45</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 697.

<sup>46</sup> Bracamontes, 7.

<sup>47</sup> “Then after this he said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again’ The disciples said to him, ‘Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.’” Bible Gateway. John 11:9-10 (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition). <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2011:9-10%20&version=NRSVCE> (accessed December 18, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Bracamontes, 9.

Though according to the *Catechism*, Bracamontes' "spirit" cannot singularly refer to the "Holy Spirit," by changing the gender of "spirit" the Old Testament imagery of being "veiled" or "overshadowed" becomes fulfilled in the rolling away of the stone, invoking feminine imagery of light and a notion of fullness wherein contemplation and compassion are repaired with action. The cloistered world of public inaction has transformed. The Ruah typologically connects with Christ's life instead of Mary's; the Greek word  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  (pity mercy, compassion)<sup>49</sup> suggests compliance with an empathetic, if not action-oriented [works- oriented] connection with Mary. This depiction of the divine Ruah is more assertive than passively obedient: it creates order out of chaos through action-oriented compassion. In other words, as a brooding spirit, an external orientation points to the works-oriented tendency of female Catholic intercession as community oriented action; this isn't *Perfectae Caritatis's* inner life of "solitude and silence, with constant prayer and penance willingly undertaken."<sup>50</sup> The *Systems Thinking Handbook* states, "

Systems thinking can thus supply us with more effective ways to name, claim, and explain the need for new ways of acting. Using it, we will expend much less of our energy swinging with the pendulum of reactionary change. With it, we will see more readily how to restore missing parts (for example, how to restore contemplation to its right relationship with action) without fearing to appear regressive or reactive.<sup>51</sup>

Again, drawing on the gendered Hebrew language of Genesis 1:2, the idea of the creation of light from preexisting divisions and preexisting darkness allows a useful, if not prayerful practicality for dissolving multiplicity and achieving unity through deeply unconscious, bodily-present commonalities. Zollmann states,

Sitting in the dark at the heart of Holy Mystery, our hearts are one with the heartbeat of the universe; we breath in rhythm with the universe. Held in the all-nourishing abyss, the fecund womb of our Mother God, we remember that

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<sup>49</sup>. Bible Suite. <http://biblesuite.com/greek/eleos.htm>. (accessed December 12, 2012).

<sup>50</sup>. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 7.

<sup>51</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 8.

we, all of us and all creation, are originally and irrevocably knit together in a common birth womb: 'That which blossomed for the fifteen billion years ago now blossoms forth as one's community of living beings, as our planet, as our blue planet, as our ocean and our galaxy clusters. The same fecund source—then and now; the same numinous energy then and now.'<sup>52</sup>

With qualities receptive, communal, compassionate, and salvific, the unifying charism identifies and directs the energies of women religious. Applying to humanity in general, the focus on open and inclusive dialogue acknowledges deep affinities amidst appreciated radical differences. The cloud/light “manifestations” [adornments] of the Holy Spirit are more charismatic than hierarchal. The call of the anointing Holy Spirit is not as applicable for the non-priestly LCWR. In her Keynote Address, Laurie Brink stated, “We may not avail ourselves of the Sacraments, because we are angry—not about the Eucharist itself—but about the ecclesial deafness that refuses to hear the call of the Spirit summoning not only celibate males, but married men and women to serve at the Table of the Lord.”<sup>53</sup>

In Chapter II of John Paul’s *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity of Women), the subtitle “union with God” has a double meaning: On one hand, Mary’s expression of free will is depicted as an individual woman (“I”) consenting to supply the Word with flesh.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Mary achieved the “particular union of the “Theotókos” with God - which fulfills in the most eminent manner the supernatural predestination to union with the Father which is granted to every human being (*fili in Filio*) - is a pure grace and, as such, a *gift of the Spirit*.”<sup>55</sup> The symbol of Mary as Mother of God (Theotokos) has a place in the church’s history of “fullness” dogma:

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<sup>52.</sup> Zollmann, 5.

<sup>53.</sup> Brink, 25.

<sup>54.</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, “On the Dignity of Women.” Apostolic Letter of his holiness John Paul II. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_15081988\\_mulieris-dignitatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html) (accessed December 12, 2012), 3.

<sup>55.</sup> Ibid.

the consubstantial logic that preserves two separate essences while presuming an underlying unity is not without moral implications for salvation history. Mary's appearance in salvation history puts a woman's body at the "centre" of the "salvific event."<sup>56</sup> However, Mary's consubstantiality is not as a deified woman/God. Mary's obedience is a willful human act of humility, a sacrifice of her flesh for the sake of God's divine plan; Mary's obedience and virginal purity broke the disobedience of Eve.<sup>57</sup>

According to the informal logic of consubstantiality, when Mary became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit she began nourishing God's grace with her body and thus became the mother of God. The *Catechism* states, "The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily is with the child Jesus."<sup>58</sup> Again, the idea of "fullness" is accompanied with the logic of consubstantiality. It follows by consubstantial logic that Mary being with Christ in her body, is "full of Grace" and the Mother of God. John Paul's apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatum* states, "It is not just a matter here of God's words revealed through the Prophets; rather with this response "the Word is truly made flesh" (cf. Jn 1:14). Hence, Mary attains a union with God that exceeds all the expectations of the human spirit."<sup>59</sup> Bucar states that,

John Paul emphasizes how during this event, Mary attains a union with God that exceeds all the expectations of the human spirit. For John Paul, Mary's union with God is not merely spiritual, but rather has an embodied component. The physical aspect of the union is described metaphorically, however, to warrant his claim that she is a model for all kinds of gendered bodies. Mary's physical conception and pregnancy therefore becomes a symbol of a spiritual union with God: Mary conceived a man who was the Son of God, of one

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<sup>56.</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 3.

<sup>57.</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>58.</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 722.

<sup>59.</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 3.

substance with the Father. Therefore she is truly the Mother of God, because motherhood concerns the whole person, not just the body. The virgin womb becomes a metaphor for readiness to be filled with God's grace.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, relating to the Proto-evangelium (Gen. 3:15), Mary is also the archetype of humanity.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, she is the second Eve making up for Eve's disobedience. John Paul states that the "Woman-Mother of God" was announced as "woman" when Christ (John 2:4; 19:16) linked Mary with Eve -- the essential "woman" that crushed the serpent's head, thereby linking "woman" typologically with the "self-revelation" of God:<sup>62</sup> A powerful statement about gender is made in the allegorical movement from the general (i.e., Eve mother-type of humanity) to the specific (i.e., Mary historical mother of Jesus).

The Proto-evangelium is "salvific in character" and establishes the Theotokos as the "fullness of time," eschatologically marrying Mary to the destiny of the church.<sup>63</sup> As opposed to the traditional use of the word "men" that so often refers to all of humankind, "woman" in the singular ends up representing the essence of "women" as a unified collective. Under the chapter heading "union with God," and paragraph section titled, "Woman-Mother of God,"<sup>64</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatum* states,

When the time had fully come, *God sent forth his son, born of woman*". With these words of his Letter to the Galatians (4:4), the Apostle Paul links together the principal moments which essentially determine the fulfillment of the mystery "pre-determined in God" (cf. *Eph* 1:9). The Son, the Word one in substance with the Father, becomes man, born of a woman, at "the fullness of time". This event leads to *the turning point* of man's history on earth, understood as salvation history. It is significant that Saint Paul does not call the Mother of Christ by her own name "Mary", but calls her "woman": this coincides with the words of the Proto-evangelium in the Book of Genesis (cf.

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<sup>60</sup>. Bucar, 43.

<sup>61</sup>. *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 4.

<sup>62</sup>. *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 3.

<sup>63</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>. Ibid.

3:15). She is that "woman" who is present in the central salvific event which marks the "fullness of time": this event is realized in her and through her.<sup>65</sup>

Thus far, two different and interrelated aspects of the salvific event have been characterized: Mary as the Mother of God/fullness of Grace of the incarnation that gave birth to Jesus and Mary as the Fullness of Time (Archetype of humanity) revealed as "woman" in John's (2:4) account of Christ's words at the wedding, and the "woman" present with John at the cross (John. 19:26). While Mary as the Fullness of Time with her link to the Proto-evangelium has moral implications, there is one more aspect of Mary that is particularly important concerning human volition and choice concerning women in particular: Mary must give consent for the grace bestowed upon her. This is where the Marian traits of humility and receptivity come in and where the LCWR can be said to be in conformity regarding its gift of open and inclusive interpersonal dialogue. This is Mary's *fiat*.<sup>66</sup> As a moral exemplar for all women there is a message here that links chastity with obedience in the preservation of unity or fullness. This concerns the giving up of bodily delights for the sake of another -- whether to Christ or a single human spouse. Mary's human act constitutes the humble sacrifice of her flesh for the sake of humanity. The ideas of union and sacrifice seem to intersect, linking salvation with matrimony. Union as a kind of marriage corresponds with the sacrifice of intellect and will into the larger purpose of church unity. Regarding the kind of faith needed for this kind of submission, the *Catechism* states,

But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is

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<sup>65</sup>. *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 4.

<sup>66</sup>. Ibid. "*Fiat*" is the Latin subjunctive of the verb "to become." Bucar, 43.

it contrary to our dignity to “yield by faith the full submission of...intellect and will of God who reveals,” and to share in an interior communion with him.<sup>67</sup>

The imposed symbolic terrain outlined above means to orient the logic of the church's notions of the feminine: the rhetoric of essential womanhood found in the symbols of Mary concerning the gender-neutral notions of Mary announcing the possibility the entire human race has for union with God, and the implications of moral exemplarity that Mary has for women in general. Bucar shows how religious leaders [Khomeini and the Pope] evoke Fatima and Mary as feminine exemplars for women's morality and spiritual growth.<sup>68</sup> Both traditions use these potent female symbols to accentuate women's roles as moral exemplars and bearers of children. Concerning the two gendered moral aspects of Marian theology, Bucar states that according to the Pope's rhetoric, the virgin womb not only becomes a “metaphor for readiness to be filled with God's grace,” the “embodied” conception and pregnancy of Mary becomes a symbol for the spiritual union with God.<sup>69</sup> Women take on the likeness of Mary by simultaneously being the Mother of God, and willing recipients of God's salvific grace. As per the official narrative, the Theotokos expresses Mary's status between God and the rest of humanity. As opposed to Christ who is consubstantial with the Father, begotten and not made and issued from the Father, Mary cannot be full of grace without her own consent. These essential incarnational tenets of doctrine help shed light on how female members of the church became mystical and moral body(s) of the church par excellence, while still being excluded from administering salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>67.</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 154.

<sup>68.</sup> Bucar, 34.

<sup>69.</sup> Bucar, 43.

The consubstantiality of the Theotokos was a brilliant rhetorical strategy in the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) where the idea of the “Mother of God” helped counter Nestorius’s idea of “Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God’s son.”<sup>70</sup> Christ’s divinity from his humanity. Along with a number of other Eastern bishops who refused to acknowledge Mary as Mother of God, Nestorius lost his episcopal dignity and his position in the college of priests of Ephesus and Chalcedon.<sup>71</sup> In Cyril’s letter regarding the decision of the Council of Ephesus, with a reiteration of the Nicene Creed, the formula of union went as follows:

We confess, then, our lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God perfect God and perfect man of a rational soul and a body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the virgin, according to his humanity, one and the same consubstantial with the Father in godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the holy virgin to be the mother of God because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to himself the temple he took from her. As to the evangelical and apostolic expressions about the Lord, we know that theologians treat some in common as of one person and distinguish others as of two natures, and interpret the god-befitting ones in connection with the godhead of Christ and the lowly ones with his humanity.<sup>72</sup>

Jesus is literally consubstantial with the Father, but Mary is mother of God only through the idea of consubstantiality. The above passage shows two dichotomies: the “rational soul” and the

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<sup>70</sup>. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 466.

<sup>71</sup>. Papal Encyclicals Online. The Council of Ephesus - 431 A.D. Synodical Letter about the Expulsion of the Eastern Bishops. [http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum03.htm#Synodical letter about the expulsion of the eastern bishops \(et al.\)](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum03.htm#Synodical%20letter%20about%20the%20expulsion%20of%20the%20eastern%20bishops%20(et%20al.)). However, the concept of the Theotokos goes back even further than the 431 Council. Mary’s consubstantiality was a brilliant rhetorical device, an Eastern idea based on the Fourth Century letters of Saint Gregory of Nazianus (c.390).

<sup>72</sup>. Papal Encyclicals Online. The Council Of Ephesus - 431 A.D. Formula of union between Cyril and John of Antioch, 38. [http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum03.htm#Twelve Anathemas Proposed by Cyril and accepted by the Council of Ephesus](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum03.htm#Twelve%20Anathemas%20Proposed%20by%20Cyril%20and%20accepted%20by%20the%20Council%20of%20Ephesus). (accessed December 20, 2012).

“body,” and the “God-befitting” and “lowly ones of Humanity.” If Mary represents humanity as the passage suggests, the above account constitutes a gendered hierarchy in Bucar’s definition. She states that, “Hierarchies work in arguments to establish greater intensity of one value over another.”<sup>73</sup> Regarding her case-studies of women creating ethical knowledge through feminist politics, she adds that, “Although none of the women uses an explicit gender hierarchy (women are higher than men or men are higher than women), they all use gendered hierarchies in some form.”<sup>74</sup> If Mary gave her flesh for the sake of humanity, and humanity is given a lower status than those connected with the godhead of Christ, this suggests a clear hierarchal favoring of spirit over matter, an indwelling that does not express completeness like the consubstantial fullness of Christ.

The sacramental processes of inclusion and exclusion that guarantee the church’s hierarchal authority appear to be centered on the Eucharist and the notion of consubstantiality. If consecrated women in the Catholic Church feel that the Eucharist is too loaded down with an outdated mental model, logic or mythos, they face the challenge of finding meaning through other rituals and symbols that offer them inclusion into church traditions. According to the *Systems Thinking Handbook*, systems thinking can help uncover the underlying “mental models” found in systems (e.g., institutions like the Catholic Church that have interrelated parts), that conservatively operate as “filters,”<sup>75</sup> recapitulate or enable “deeply held internal images of how

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<sup>73</sup>. Bucar, 22.

<sup>74</sup>. Bucar., 168.

<sup>75</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 11. These are filters “through which information must pass.”

the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting.”<sup>76</sup> Since systems are stubbornly conservative and offer limited means of access, disruption may involve critiquing the systems most cherished values.<sup>77</sup> Regarding the characteristics of living systems, the handbook states,

In our response we are guided by Margaret Wheatley’s characteristics of a living system: availability of information, clarity of identity, the healing of relationships and the ability to hear all voices. Any disturbance we can create that will promote the free flow of information, strengthen identity, enhance relationships and increase our ability to hear all voices, will benefit the congregational system. It will also help us to gain perspective on the shared assumptions, beliefs and values embedded in us from both the Western Mind and Organic mental models affecting us.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the handbook posits that some of the tenets of systems thinking claim that access into the workings of systems involve methods of conscious disruption: “Our places of entry into these systems - in this instance, the congregation as a system - are the places where disturbances occur. Something that upsets the status quo or the equilibrium of a system offers an opportunity to look at the system as a whole and respond in a positive fashion. In the issue at hand, the letters of concern provide a place of entry for leadership.”<sup>79</sup>

It appears that the LCWR has found a place of entry into leadership that includes disturbing the status quo of the hierarchy of the church, attempting to disrupt the system by

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 12. The handbook states, “What many organizations call “planning” is simply a projection of their current mental models into the future—the status quo with a new date. These projections are not about change and therefore are not planning as defined in this set of documents.”

<sup>78</sup> *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 18.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 18.

incorporating case-studies in the handbook wherein sisters enter into dialogue with other sisters regarding the centrality of the Holy Eucharist along with other church traditions. Regarding its correspondence with the actual experiences of women religious: as a system with interrelated parts (e.g., judicial and liturgical), the LCWR believes that the church recapitulates mental models that include patterns of exclusion beyond the sum of the systems parts:<sup>80</sup>

With regard to theology and spirituality, many sisters move back and forth between the ‘Western Mind’ and the ‘Organic’ mental models. They value beliefs and practices flowing from a stable world of fixed relationships characteristic of an earlier time, as well as the insights of process, liberationist and feminist theologies grounded in a more organic model. For them, cherished beliefs about Eucharist co-exist with a haunting awareness of patterns of ecclesial exclusion.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>. *Systems Thinking Handbook*, 18.

<sup>81</sup>. *Ibid.*, 16.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDING CROSS-HISTORICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE SHARED EXPERIENCE OF EXCLUSION

Bucar's discussion in *Creative Conformity* provides insights into how women's prophetic typologies and creative theological adaptations can help renew religious life by creating meaningful ethical knowledge that better co-insides with experience. In launching rhetorical tactics based on the rhetorical strategies of clerics, women in the church can shift the grounds of clerical logic to support feminist politics. Like the gifted sisters of the LCWR, the creation of moral knowledge can involve a prophetic critique of the status quo.

On account of the church hierarchy's longstanding tradition of keeping consecrated women from public interpretations of the scriptures, it follows that women's mystical traditions would become more based on inner experience than biblical typology. Though church authorities kept Teresa of Avila from publically engaging the Latin scriptures, like Hildegard, she seems to have used her lack of learning to help legitimize her inner, prophetic experience of God. While gendered bodies remain integral to Roman Catholic theology and ritual, traditional biblical hermeneutics have often served to connect individuals to historical bodies in the scriptures. In comparison with the life of Christ, the attributes and actions of Mary are decidedly non-biblical and more rooted in official dogma than on the historical New Testament. Carole Slade quotes A. C. Charity, author of *Events and Their Afterlife*, to articulate the Christ-centered nature of biblical hermeneutics:

[Typology] is applied ... not only to the hearer and his existential understanding, but *in* the actual response of the hearer to God's acts. The hearer's right response means that there is initiated a self-conforming with the act of God.... In the New Testament, the central concept of the imitation of Christ itself contains both the idea of eschatological self-alignment and the idea of alignment with the past. For God's future is already contained in

Christ's history and the individual's relation to the one involves him in the same relation to the other.<sup>1</sup>

Not being vicars of Christ or sharing an embodied relation with Christ literally in salvific history, women in the cloistered consecrated church rely on other tactics to provide meaning to their religious identities as Catholics. The combination of the androcentricity of the Bible and the techniques of traditional hermeneutics (i.e., typological constructs of biblical knowledge) seems to support the status of women as unlearned. More importantly for Bucar's assessment of the creation of ethical knowledge in religious communities, accentuating the symbolic importance of having certain gendered bodies in public ritual also attempts to model moral exemplarity based on gendered-bodies acting in history.

The medieval typology elucidated below has teleological implications for the church's mission and place in the eschatological fullness of time. For example, the Proto-evangelium has allegorical (e.g., Eve crushing the serpents head as the church's purpose in overcoming evil), literal/historical (e.g., Mary's fullness of Grace as literal Mother of God),<sup>2</sup> anagogical (e.g., the "woman clothed with the sun"<sup>3</sup> as the completely unified church at the end of time) and tropological (e.g., the *fiat* that relates to women's duty in salvation history as moral exemplars)<sup>4</sup> senses. With Teresa of Avila's use of typology, while fullness with God (i.e., individual salvation) constitutes an inner experience of union, fullness with the church (i.e., unity of identity and purpose with the greater church's mission) would be less tenable due to the circumstances of isolation and exclusion. That moral models (i.e. gendered bodies from the scriptures) for the

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<sup>1</sup> Slade, 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2676.

<sup>3</sup> BibleGateway, Revelation 12 (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition). <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev%2012&version=NRSVCE>. (accessed December 18, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2617.

female sex are less scripturally and historically based than male models, exacerbates the situation in terms of viable hermeneutic models and the meaning those models impart for experience.

In Saint Teresa of Avila's (1580-1582) commentary on the *Song of Songs*, Carole Slade locates where Teresa diverges from the hermeneutic structure of Thomason typology and constructs a “revised feminist hermeneutic.”<sup>5</sup> For Slade, the revision was necessitated by a disconnection between the allegorical sense which “refers to the church or defines church doctrine,” and the tropological sense that “promises individual salvation.”<sup>6</sup> As per the predominant hermeneutic model of scriptural typology at that time, with its anagogical (a.k.a. mystical), allegorical, and literal/historical senses, the tropological sense had a dual structure.<sup>7</sup> Slade maintains that the other part of the tropological sense, the sense that united Teresa’s salvation and the identity and purpose of her order with the salvation history of the church shown in the allegorical sense, was neglected on account of her emphasis on “personal communication with God,”<sup>8</sup> a communion that could not be articulated within the “Scholastics' tools of Scriptural typology” at the time. In an excerpt that ends with a quote from Teresa, Slade states that,

Accordingly, Teresa often gives the vocabulary of figural fulfillment private rather than collective significance, using the words *promise (promesa)* and *fulfillment (cumplimiento)* to mean not promises to all of humanity to be executed by the Church but rather God's personal assurances to her. Teresa used fulfillment as a touchstone for distinguishing a divine locution from a

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<sup>5</sup>. Slade, xiii.

<sup>6</sup>. Slade, 43.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid., 40.

<sup>8</sup>. Ibid., 41.

diabolical one: "When it is from God I have had much experience in many things that were said to me and were fulfilled after two or three years."<sup>9</sup>

Co-founder of the original discalced Spanish Carmelites with Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), Teresa's writings (*Interior Castle of the Soul, Life, Meditations on the Song of Songs, Way of Perfection*) are particularly concerned with the spiritual and moral development of her sisters. Having the responsibility for renewing and guiding the spiritual identity of her religious order meant Teresa faced the task of linking her order's mission with the church's mission in salvation history. Slade suggests that the limitations of cloistered intercession in Teresa's lifetime meant that women's history in the church was confined to "spiritual history alone."<sup>10</sup> Excluded from public discourse, public interaction, and the interpretation of the scriptures, meant limited possibilities for Teresa in "fulfilling her moral obligation to perfect human society in preparation for the Last Judgment. The restoration of wholeness to her artificially truncated life...depended on divine intervention, or mystical experience."<sup>11</sup> Slade maintains that typology with a tropological sense allows the individual to insert their current life situations into meaningful context:

Teresa's applications of her divided tropological sense makes a statement about history, in particular, the history of a female life. Her theory of the divided tropological sense thus reflects the disjuncture she finds between the spiritual and material reality of her own life, and of women's lives in general, and it comments on the Church's failure to incorporate women into the Christian community.<sup>12</sup>

Bringing consecrated life into unity with the mission of the church as a whole seems to have been a challenge for Teresa. Slade maintains that Teresa's typology expresses frustration in her

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<sup>9</sup>. Slade., 40-41.

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid., 40.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid., 43.

<sup>12</sup>. Ibid.

status as a religious women in the church; more specifically, her inability to publicly affect the salvation of the many.<sup>13</sup>

Partaking in the bridal trope of Old Testament lore, women religious as a group, the church, and the individual soul, are traditional brides desiring the fullness of Christ. While Teresa's individual salvation may have been secured through her mystical union with Christ, unity with the church's mission in salvation history (*pars pro toto*) may have been overshadowed by the criteria of her exclusion. What Slade calls a "feminist hermeneutic" depicts Teresa making changes to accommodate the imposed limitations of her exclusion from public influence in the church. Teresa expressed frustrations in her text *Life* regarding the church's attempts in the Sixteenth Century to prohibit access to other than Latin scriptures:<sup>14</sup> "When they forbade the reading of many books in the vernacular, I felt that prohibition very much because reading some of them was an enjoyment for me, and I could no longer do so since only the Latin editions were allowed. The Lord said to me: 'Don't be sad, for I shall give you a living book.'...His Majesty had become the true book in which I saw the truths."<sup>15</sup>

The above quotation shows Teresa inventively reformulating an evaluation of what may be construed as a weakness for women in the church. The fact that other than Latin texts should be prohibited while literacy in Latin was rare amongst the Teresa's nuns says much about the social construction of the legitimacy of mysticism. Unlike the LCWR whom make no mention of Mary in their typology in the 2012 Winter edition of *The Occasional Papers*, in an unexpected, creative way, in *Meditations on the Song of Songs* Teresa prefigures her life in Mary: "She did not act as do some learned men (whom the Lord does not lead by this mode of prayer and who

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<sup>13</sup>. Ibid., 42.

<sup>14</sup>. Slade, 43.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., 44.

haven't begun a life of prayer), for they want to be so rational about things and so precise in their understanding that it doesn't seem anyone else but they with their learning can understand the grandeurs of God.”<sup>16</sup> According to Slade, in this example of biblical typology, “Teresa leaps over the allegorical or ecclesiastical sense, which traditionally intervenes between the literal sense and the spiritual senses, to the tropological. The ideal reader of Teresa's tropological sense, in both of its aspects, is the Virgin Mary. Rather than reason or curiosity, the approaches Teresa finds characteristic of male interpreters, Mary uses feeling as an instrument of reading.”<sup>17</sup>

Like Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa seems to acquiesce to an expected state of ignorance to legitimize her mystical/prophetic voice. In the following excerpt, Teresa gives her ability to understand Latin a miraculous, revelatory status. Reticent of other instances where Teresa turns what might be negative evaluations of her gender on its head, her validation of mystical authority privileges her intimate association with Christ over the supposed wisdom of literate members of the male hierarchy:

Thus, when in this state of Quiet, I who understand hardly anything that I recite in Latin, particularly in the Psalter, have not only been able to understand the text as though it were in Spanish but have even found to my delight that I can penetrate the meaning of the Spanish. Let us leave out of account occasions when these learned men have to preach or teach, for then it will be well for them to make use of their learning, so as to help poor ignorant creatures like myself, for charity is a great thing, and so is a constant care for souls, when undertaken simply and purely for the sake of God. In these periods of Quiet, then, let the soul repose in its rest; let them put their learning aside; the time will come when they will use it in the Lord's service and will esteem it so much that they would not have failed to acquire it for all the treasures imaginable, simply because they can serve His Majesty with it and for this purpose find it a great help.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>. Ibid., 54.

<sup>17</sup>. Slade, 53.

<sup>18</sup>. Allison E. Peers., *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Avila: Trans P. Silverdio*, (New York Sheed and Ward. 1946), 92.

Concerning creative conformity and prophetic legitimacy, Teresa's use of typology allows her a way to create useful rhetorical strategies. In Hildegard's third vision, "The Church, Bride of Christ and Mother of the Faithful," the church is imaged as a "women as large as a great city."<sup>19</sup> Commentary on the vision directly references human morality, relations with the "other," and the Gospel of John's theme of concealment by being overshadowed: She expels unbelief and expands belief, by which it should be understood that in the mortal world each of the faithful is an example to his neighbor, and so they do great works in virtue in Heaven. And when the just, one by one, shall come to join the children of light, the good they have worked will appear in them, which cannot be seen here among mortal ashes, concealed as it is by the shadow of trouble."<sup>20</sup>

Hildegard's visions, which were edited by the monk Volmer, often reveal content grounding her prophecy in both the oneness of the trinity and existing gender differences. Despite this element of Hildegard's conformity to church doctrine, similar to the interpretations of the LCWR, her take on the intercession of God's spirit (Genesis 1:2) alludes to the experiences of women. Unlike the rhetorical tactics found in LCWR typology, which attempt to break the logic of gender dichotomies by routing a feminine spirit through Christ instead of Mary, Hildegard's "The Redeemer" abides with traditional gender dichotomies by incorporating prophecy into the logic of then current gender norms. Like Teresa, Hildegard creatively shifts the grounds for women's exclusion by turning what might be negative essential feminine attributes (i.e., unlearnedness and bodiliness) into the grounds for legitimizing women as prophetic voices. Below, Hildegard's first vision in the *Scivias* begins with a demonstrative tone, clearly alluding

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<sup>19</sup>. Jane Bishop and Mother Columbia Hart. *Scivias*. (Abbey of Regina Laudis: Benedictine Congregation Regina Laudis of the Strict Observance, Inc., 1990), 169.

<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.*, 170.

to the creation of light in Genesis 1:2-3. The vision begins with three paraphrases of Genesis 1-3. First there is a forming, a kind of begetting accomplished by dividing a pre-existing substance into two distinct things. Next, after making man with earth, wind, and fire, a key element is missing: water.<sup>21</sup>

The atmosphere suddenly rose up in a dark sphere of great magnitude, and that flame hovered over it and gave it one blow after another, which struck sparks from it, until that atmosphere was perfected and so Heaven and Earth stood fully formed and resplendent. Then the same flame was in that fire, and that burning extended itself to a little clod of mud which lay at the bottom of the atmosphere, and warmed it so that it was made flesh and blood, and blew upon it until it rose up a living human. When this was done, the blazing fire, by means of that flame which burned ardently with a gentle breath, offered to the human a white flower, which hung in that flame as dew hangs on the grass. Its scent came to the Human's nostrils, but he did not taste it with his mouth or touch it with his hands, and thus he turned away and fell into the thickest darkness, out of which he could not pull himself. And that darkness grew and expanded more and more in the atmosphere.<sup>22</sup>

To help understand Vision One, it helps to read Vision Three, "Church Bride of Christ and Mother of the Faithful," where circumcision is brought into direct relationship with baptism: "I gave circumcision to you and your race until the coming of My Son, who openly forgave the sins of humanity; but with Him the physical circumcision of the flesh of the foreskin came to an end, and in the sanctification of the washing of My Son, the true font of baptism poured forth."<sup>23</sup>

Hildegard uses Paul's idea of the inner and outer man in the context of John's idea of concealed transcendence to link circumcision with the Old Covenant, the fall, and women's place in the New Covenant. Women's internal, "hidden tabernacle" is brought into contrast with the external markings of the Old Covenant. Her statement that "Men who were circumcised in the time of circumcision were transgressors," does not refer to "men" as collective humankind

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<sup>21</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>. Jane Bishop and Mother Columbia Hart, 149.

<sup>23</sup>. In Hildegard's essentialist cosmology, god creates through the elements.

including men and women. She refers to “men” essentially, of whom, having a specific discernibly external marking of gender, contrasts with the bodies of women, whose generative organs bring new life “in the waters of birth.”<sup>24</sup> There is something essential about the female body that prefigures the New Covenant:

But those of your race who in the time of circumcision were not circumcised when they were told to be, whether they were of lesser or greater age, transgressed the terms of My covenant; except women, on whom circumcision is not enjoined. For woman is not to be circumcised, since the maternal tabernacle is hidden within her body and cannot be touched except as flesh embraces flesh; and also she is under the power of a husband like a servant under his master.<sup>25</sup>

In reference to the New Covenant, in the story of the Good Samaritan which reveals the eternal life of Jesus’ “living waters,”<sup>26</sup> “woman” (Jn. 4:10-16) is brought into relation with the announcement of the Holy Spirit through baptism: “Jesus said to her ‘Woman,’ believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (Jn. 4:21-22).”<sup>27</sup> By incorporating Paul’s idea of inner and outer circumcision (i.e., outer Jew/inner spirit and earthly food/eternal food) into John’s idea of veiled transcendence, “woman” who has a “hidden tabernacle” is brought into relation with the New Covenant and the “living waters” that contrast with the unquenchable waters of the Old Covenant. The bodies of women are given a meaningful, experience-filled place in the historical New Testament.

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<sup>24</sup>. Ibid., 177.

<sup>25</sup>. Jane Bishop and Mother Columbia Hart, 177.

<sup>26</sup>. Bible Gateway. John 4:10-16 (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition). [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=\(Jn.%204:10-16\)%20&version=NRSVCE](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=(Jn.%204:10-16)%20&version=NRSVCE) (accessed January 13, 2013).

<sup>27</sup>. Bible Gateway. John 4:21-22 (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition). <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jn.%204:21-22&version=NRSVCE>. (accessed January 13, 2013).

After Hildegard posits the fall as the fault of the essential man (Adam), the vision turns to commentary through revelation from the eternal fire. The result is a tropological-like assessment of cosmological happenings occurring in the rawer version of her vision: by placing the vision in social/historical context it becomes prophecy pointing to gender disparities regarding the acquiring of knowledge and philosophical understanding.

And I heard a voice saying to me from the aforementioned living fire: “O you who are wretched earth and, as woman, untaught in all learning of earthly teachers and unable to read literature with philosophical understanding, you are nonetheless touched by My light, which kindles in you an inner fire like a burning sun; cry out and relate and write these My mysteries that you see and hear in mystical visions. So do not be timid, but say those things you understand in the Spirit as I speak them through you; so that those who should have shown My people righteousness, but who in their perversity refuse to speak openly the justice they know, unwilling to abstain from the evil desires that cling to them like their masters and make them fly from the face of the Lord and blush to speak the truth, may be ashamed. Therefore, O diffident mind, who are taught inwardly by mystical inspiration, though because of Eve's transgression you are trodden on by the masculine sex, speak of that fiery work this sure vision has shown you.”<sup>28</sup>

Brunetti's characterization of the “silent body's process of knowing” and the “cultural process of gendering”<sup>29</sup> shines through Hildegard's use of essential sex characteristics in function and identity. Like Hildegard's “The Redeemer,” Brunetti's interpretation appears to use the *King James* translation (John 1:1-4) mentioned above: Adam's darkness is attributed to a lack of comprehension. On account of Hildegard's rhetorical tactic that switches the grounds of Paul's inner/outer (spirit/body) association to include micro/micro associations of the feminine body, the power of the Spirit in Genesis connecting with John's idea of veiled transcendence allows Hildegard to rework the Pauline grounds of the association of “woman” with matter. The result is the flipping of clerical logics regarding Eve's transgression. Hildegard embraces

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<sup>28</sup>. Jane Bishop and Mother Columbia Hart, 150.

<sup>29</sup>. Brunetti, 4.

essential sex differences while shifting the logic of the clerics. Instead of positing that something essential about women's bodies (flesh) led to the fall, applying John's notion of veiled transcendence to Paul's dichotomy of spirit and flesh grants women access to the light of the world, while men, on account of lacking an inner spiritual tabernacle, are shrouded in spiritual darkness. The consequent darkness on account of this lack concerns bodily-knowledge: in contrast with the masculine sex, Hildegard posits that women have a less mediated locus from which to receive spiritual understanding.

Like the rhetoric of the LCWR, Hildegard's rhetoric compares two radically different types of understanding.<sup>30</sup> However, for Hildegard, instead of creating an intricate critique of the divisive and hierarchal language of the church, divisive essential sex differences are embraced to help legitimize women's prophetic voices. Even *Mulieris Dignitatum* grants that essential sex properties of women give their bodies prophetic significance:

The passage from the Letter to the Ephesians (5:23-32) which we have been considering enables us to think of a special kind of "prophetism" that belongs to women in their femininity. The analogy of the Bridegroom and the Bride speaks of the love with which every human being - man and woman - is loved by God in Christ. But in the context of the biblical analogy and the text's interior logic, it is precisely the woman - the bride - who manifests this truth to everyone. This "*prophetic*" character of women in their femininity finds its highest expression in the Virgin Mother of God. She emphasizes, in the fullest and most direct way, the intimate linking of the order of love - which enters the world of human persons through a Woman - with the Holy Spirit. At the Annunciation Mary hears the words: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35).<sup>31</sup>

While for the LCWR, the grounds for a distinct type of intercession for women, (i.e., open and inclusive dialogue) are based on experience with diversity, Hildegard's grounds for a

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<sup>30</sup>. The LCWR references two radically different notions of communicative dialogue while Hildegard compares two radically different modes of understating – spiritual understanding verses philosophical understanding.

<sup>31</sup>. *Mulieris Dignitatum*, 29.

distinct gendered charism gets rooted in women's essential experiences of their bodies. This means Hildegard's essentialist grounds for women's prophetic voice is much closer to the modern Church than the LCWR's. While both partake in feminist politics that attempt to legitimize prophecy, the shifting of architectonics is radically different between Hildegard and the LCWR. The grounds and backing are different yet the tactic of recasting the symbol (i.e., the Holy Spirit) is remarkably similar: in both Hildegard's and the LCWR's typology a kind of charismatic, revelatory routing through the Gospel of John occurs as an attempt to legitimize prophecy. While the LCWR accentuates the productive use of dialogue by women religious, -- who have more experience with diversity than the men of the church -- Hildegard posits that women's gift to the church is the immediacy of their inner spiritual senses that enables a more direct union with God through mystical prophecy. Women's prophecy is thus given legitimacy through the revelations of the spirit connecting to Christ and the New Covenant in the scriptures.

Though Hildegard advocates traditional dichotomies of sex and gender and conforms to the Augustinian tradition linking sexual desire with original sin,<sup>32</sup> she manages to turn the prejudices of the power structure upside down by understanding the microcosmic vessel of the universe to be the feminine body par excellence. As a receptacle for prophetic knowledge, the body of "woman" would be re-cast creatively -- though not without some adherence to clerical dichotomies. According to Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*, "in an age experiencing greater awareness of the bodily incarnation, Hildegard "used the feminine expressly to symbolize the eternal counsel: woman's role as vessel of the incarnation was the very seal of her creation in the image of God. Following an old analogy, she

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<sup>32</sup>. Barbara Newman. *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*. (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997), 89.

asserted that 'man is like the soul and woman like the body,' and by extension, signifies the divinity and woman the humanity of the Son of God."<sup>33</sup>

As shown above, Grace Jantzen maintains that the church's essentialist attribution of inherent female qualities posits an underlying nature of "women" that is largely socially-constructed: the church is not beyond constructing and reinforcing social realities. Throughout her text, she maintains the view that social realities (like the predominance of bodily-based, emotion-based nun mysticism) are reinforced and recapitulated by the church as the legitimate means of credibility for the female mystic.

In *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*, Jeffrey Hamburger depicts how inner contemplative practices based on visual sensuality became a premiere medium of spiritual intercession in nun-culture. Like Brunetti, Hamburger avoids falling into exclusive gender-categories in his characterization of intercession. He maintains that "like nuns, novices are another group for whom images were considered a legitimate means of spiritual instruction."<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, showing caste and gender differences, favoring the corporeal visual image over the letter, methods of contemplative prayer practiced by consecrated female nuns differed from the literary techniques of clergymen. Hamburger states that for certain nun groups, "Looking becomes both the means and the ends of the devotional act. The images present the nun with an opportunity to look into the heart of her spiritual bridegroom, an

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<sup>33</sup>. Newman, 92-93.

<sup>34</sup>. Jeffrey F. Hamburger. *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*. (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 184.

act of mystical intimacy not even envisaged by St. John, who saw more deeply than the other apostles only by resting eyes closed, on the heart of the savior.”<sup>35</sup>

According to Hamburger, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was particularly outspoken about the “phantoms of corporeal images” when it came to the appropriate methods of prayerful contemplation for clergymen.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, regarding women and novices he appears to have been less iconoclastic. Referencing an illustrated manuscript titled *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, Hamburger shows how potentially contradictory Bernard's negative theology of the senses could be, especially as it pertained to practicing image-based intercession for those isolated from the Latin scriptures. The fourteenth Century text states, “It is suitable for the contemplator to be mute, deaf, and blind, so that in seeing he does not see and in hearing he does not understand and in speaking he does not delight; that is order to be abstracted from these transitory things and joined to God, in hearing, seeing and speaking, he does not abate his course; but flees when he can.”<sup>37</sup>

Hamburger states that although Bernard was a “theoretician of imageless devotion,” his commentary on the *Song of Songs* helped “recast” him as an “exemplar of the new, image-laden ideal of piety.”<sup>38</sup> While Bernard’s vivid literary bridal imagery found more readerships among clerics, his promotion of contemplative methods using corporeal images directs attention to the interests of the less learned. Regarding Bernard’s valuation of the verbal accounts may have had “visual analogues” or *vice versa*.<sup>39</sup> No details are given over how Bernard may have favored one medium or the other as more or less removed from direct experience. One thing that does seem

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<sup>35</sup>. Hamburger, Jeffrey F. *The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>36</sup>. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 115.

<sup>37</sup>. *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>38</sup>. *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>39</sup>. *Ibid.*, 124.

evident is that Bernard promoted a kind of theology of sublimation: while visual images can be said to invite carnal desire, the process of contemplation works to purify desire by affecting the relationship inner experience has with corporeal images. Contrary to Bernard's reputation as an iconoclast, Hamburger quotes him from the *Sermons Super Cantica Canticorum* (Upon the words of the Song of Songs), stating that,

The soul at prayer should have before it a sacred image [sacred imago] of the God-man, in his birth or infancy or as he was teaching, or dying, or rising or ascending. Whatever form it takes, this image must bind the soul with the love of virtue and expel the carnal vices, eliminate temptations and quite desires. I think this is the principle reason why the invisible God willed to be seen in the flesh and converse with men, who are unable to love in any other way, by first drawing them to the salutary love of his humanity, and then to a spiritual love.<sup>40</sup>

Bernard's contradictory attitude towards imagery intercession tracks nicely into Hamburger's thesis about the gendered discourse of intercession surrounding imagery and devotion. While Hamburger says no more about Bernard's dichotomy regarding the gender and the caste orientation of intercession, he does elaborate on the identity affirming qualities of affective mysticism. He writes that, "the delicate balance in Bernard's sermons between the conceptual and the affective, the interpretive and the emotional, gives way to a process of identification. The nuns literally envisage themselves as the Bride of the Canticle."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 121.

<sup>41</sup>. *Ibid.*, 124.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

While the three examples of feminist politics investigated here display radically different tactical content and application within radically different social-historical contexts, in each case feminist tactics exhibit frustrations over the criteria of women's exclusion from participating in traditional male modes of intercession. In each case, feminist politics modify traditional church symbols through creative hermeneutic strategies that seem to help women find meaningful inclusion into church history that warrants their exclusion. Elements of frustration over exclusion come to the surface in the writings of the LCWR, Hildegard, and Teresa – all examples show Catholic women mystics attempting to legitimize their prophetic voices in accordance with then current social and historical realities of mysticism and prophecy. Whether reworking the bodily appraisal of Eve (Hildegard), the spiritual significance of Mary (Teresa), or the spiritual origin of transformation through open and inclusive dialogue (LCWR), traditional church symbols are recast in typological renderings to help meaningfully integrate women's identity and purpose into the mission of the church. More specifically, to help make church unity more meaningful in the search for group identity and purpose, the LCWR recasts the symbol representing the inspirational source of unity; for Teresa of Avila, the Scholastic tools of scriptural exegesis are modified to help place her order's women into direct relation with Mary as a spirit-filled, prophetic feminine exemplar; for Hildegard, Eden is turned upside down and Adam gets primary responsibility for the fall while the eternal living waters of women's bodies become essentially made for the enhanced spiritual senses of prophecy. In contrast with Hildegard and Teresa, the LCWR's post-modern lens avoids Eve and Mary and roots its prophetic charism in contemporary experiences with diversity: formulated as a gift from Christ

for open and inclusive dialogue accessible and applicable for all humanity, as breath/spirit/wind of God the divine Ruah gets invigorated into present difficulties with the church's ways of interaction.

The important conflict surrounding the current mandate motivating the Vatican sponsored censorship of the LCWR is summarized thus: while the LCWR posits that their prophetic message is contrary to the "ways of relating and preceding" found occurring in current church leadership, the CDF accuses LCWR members of attempting to create a radical feminist divergence between church doctrine and the illegitimate "theological intuitions" of a minority. Though media tends to focus on polarizing issues, the Vatican sponsored doctrinal assessment of LCWR publications and statements reveals that the LCWR is launching a creative prophetic critique of women's exclusion from dialogue with the church hierarchy that is critical of ideas surrounding Church traditions (i.e. the Eucharist) as they relate with the predominate unconscious artifacts of western mental models.

Bucar shows that the tactics launched by women in Catholic lay communities are many improvisations on the informal logic of clerics. While religious traditions provide the parameters on which communities improvise upon, and the potential for unlimited variations of religious adaptations exists, to some extent conformity is necessary for the legitimacy of prophecy. Daniel Cowdin states that,

Bucar's case studies show the innovation, integration, and even "artistry" of creative conformity through participation in a religious tradition. One is reminded of an old Jazz musician's line: You have to have something to improvise on. Her book ratifies the perception that an authentically religious life is one of interpretation—creative choices within parameters-- an insight commonplace to scholars and practitioners of religion though sadly lost on many secular moderns.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cowdin, 5.

For consecrated women in Roman Catholic mystical traditions, the extent to which women conform becomes a question of autonomy, empowerment, and inclusion. Because knowledge, power, and the legitimacy of prophecy are concentrated and determined in the male hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, to acquire posterity and influence women must in some degree conform to church dogma and doctrine.

Since gender expectations are largely a social construct with norms preserved in the conservative institution of the Catholic Church, the creativity of recasting church symbols in unexpected or unanticipated ways helps realign gender in ways more fitting for women's experiences. Though shifting the grounds of gender differences in quite different ways, offering the writings of Hildegard and Teresa for comparison with the feminist tactics of the LCWR shows that allowing essential gender dichotomies to flourish can be empowering concerning the legitimacy of women's prophecy. In contrast, the church's treatment of LCWR prophecy indicates that the LCWR is decidedly non-conformist. The group's request for open and inclusive dialogue with Church leadership does not conform to enduring sex-dichotomies maintaining that women should not obtain ministerial priesthood (i.e. the gateway to the episcopate) and have dialogue with the hierarchy concerning issues on faith and morals. The creation of ethical knowledge (i.e., open and inclusive dialogue as public feminist politics) that the LCWR is able to realize with other women religious and other members of lay society, is not allowed to apply in relations with church leadership.

With their creative theological ideas, the LCWR's critique of the church hierarchy is philosophically consistent with their methodology for developing group identity and purpose, suggesting tactics that are systemically integrated and unified into the prophetic voice of the emerging group charism. For the LCWR, "spatial context" is shifted in a way that allows women

a “discursive use” of “moral models” in the public arena.<sup>2</sup> Open and inclusive dialoged becomes an issue for both faith and morals. The result is the *relocation* of ideas once found associated in the life of the cloister: contemplation is theologically removed from the past realities of physical isolation and re-paired with moral action in the public arena. In addition, what Bucar calls *substitution* occurs when the masculinized “central symbol” of the church -- the Holy Spirit as “he” gets replaced with an alternative feminine “spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

Legitimizing prophecy through typology, for LCWR members Mary Ann Zollmann and Maricarmen Bracamontes, the hierarchal adornments of the “Holy Spirit” get re-oriented into revelatory metaphors of veiled transcendence (i.e., light and cloud). Similarly, as the segment on Hildegard shows, the typological directing of the spirit of Elohim -- from Genesis into the book of John -- as a traditional tactic in women’s prophetic mysticism, allows the feminine spirit of God to connect incarnation and revelation in a surprisingly inventive way. Maricarmen Bracamontes states,

We will be relevant to the degree that we risk participating in new ways of being and relating. That will imply entering into dialogue with the emerging subjects who are key elements in this time of historic transition. This is one of the gifts and tasks of incarnation. When I use the word ‘dialogue’ I am referring to an attitude of openness to listen and let ourselves be enriched by other’s contributions at the same time that we share our own insights. That is why I insist that if we don’t recognize what is happening all around us, if we don’t go out to meet the emerging subjects, if we refuse to participate in the systemic change that is needed, certainly we will cease to be relevant or significant. When I refer to emerging subjects, I am alluding to those groups of people oppressed and excluded by present structures, who are aware of their unjust situation, and who seek to participate in a process of change and transformation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bucar, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bracamontes, 6.

As opposed to expanding the meaning of incarnation and recasting the symbol of the Holy Spirit, with Hildegard, Bucar's concept of *substitution* (i.e. a clerical claim gets applied to an unexpected case)<sup>5</sup> occurs when the grounds for women's exclusion from having philosophical understanding gets symbolically recast into a positive valuation of the female body of prophecy par excellence. In contrast with Hildegard's tactical move, Teresa's maneuver to help legitimize women's prophecy is more akin the LCWR's *expansion* of the meaning of incarnation.

Paul's letters suggest that in order to unify the early Christian church, radical differences in "others" (Jews and Gentiles) required a different sort of mark of inclusion -- a body like the incarnation -- inwardly imbued and identified with spirit. Through informal consubstantial logic, Mary becomes full of grace, the Mother of God. Hildegard of Bingen states that women are exempt from Old Testament transgression (i.e., exempt from association with those who weren't circumcised when circumcision meant inclusion into the Old Covenant). The female body thus becomes a key allegorical element connecting the New Covenant with the Old Covenant. Having an "inner tabernacle" and watery nature pointing to baptism supports the idea that rather than being fleshy and hence more readily susceptible to temptation, the eternal watery qualities of "woman" became the missing part of God's initial failed creation. The negative associations of Eve's transgression, with its implications for women's fallen nature, would be turned upside down. Paul's neo-platonic trope is adapted by Hildegard's creative typology in "The Redeemer," allowing the grounds for women's subordinate status in the New Covenant to shift by reevaluating the perception of the essentialist sex characteristics of women. The prophetic-critique turns on the men of the letter by placing the primary transgression in Adam: upon the failed initial creation, all the elements are present (earth, wind, fire) except water.

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<sup>5</sup>. Bucar, 50.

Hildegard and Teresa both show how not being attached to the letter (the letter like the phallus is an external signifier) paves the way for a charism of the feminine prophetic body par excellence. In contrast, the LCWR's prefiguration obliterates gender essentialism: the spirit inspiring their charism links to situations surrounding Christ instead of Mary's or Eve's moral, bodily placement in the biblical narrative. LCWR's tactics shift essentialist grounds into the realm of situational experience -- removing revelation from the embodied basis of gender in order to gain prophetic legitimacy through experience prefigured in prophetic moral occurrences found in the New Testament.

In church rhetorical techniques found in *Lumen Gentium* and *Perfectae Caritatis*, adapting Paul's head and body trope provides the theological backing and informal logic to both maintain the traditional top-down configurations of authority, and inaugurate the movement of the religious into closer relations with the lay: using a literary trope with sliding signification, the necessary connection of the head with its rulership of the body brings the mystical church body into relation with Christ and Christ's body respectively: the vicars of Christ represent the head of Christ, and by consubstantial logic, God the head of Christ the body. This shift is important because the church attempting to reform the perceptions of the religious and the lay through rhetorical techniques based on the informal logical structure of consubstantiality. Just as the son is obedient and in union with the will of the father, the trope places the lay and religious in the bosom of the church, the heart where the submission of intellect and will occurs.

The discourse on "fullness" is more than simply an ontological or underlying consubstantial state of being: ideas of completeness or fullness comprise a rhetorical strategy utilizing informal consubstantial logic. For church clerical rhetoric, "fullness" is a religious ideal of complete union and strategy for articulating both Mary's obedient housing of the fullness of

divinity, and the positing of underlying symbolic inclusion into the One Holy Catholic Church: at the central moment of salvation history, the fullness of grace that Mary achieves not only points to the agency of church sacraments in unifying experience, it points to the essential attributes of “woman” above and beyond any individual experience of women. The central problem is stated as such: while the consubstantial implications in Paul’s figure allows the church to posit the idea of universal priesthood and the unified people of God, the unity or fullness that this figure portrays may not correspond to the women religious experience of “unity” with the church.

In contrast, within the different writings and different members of the LCWR there are variations on a central theme: open and inclusive dialogue helps bring together radical differences and strengthen group identity and purpose. Recasting the symbol of spiritual unity in the spirit of John’s revelatory theophany of light allows the LCWR to incorporate feminine notions of creation and transcendence through the revelatory unveiling of similarities through open communal dialogue. Concerning conformity in Bucar’s sense, this suggests that the LCWR has found other ways of experiencing unity of identity and purpose than advocated by the church symbols they are excluded from administering -- the very thing that *Perfectae Caritatis* delegated as the responsibility of the consecrated religious gets formulated in an unexpected way. While the formation of the LCWR predates the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the group has come to exemplify how women in the church have been transforming themselves in accordance with their removal from the leadership structure of the church hierarchy and into a greater appreciation of individual human experiences and human diversity.

The LCWR’s creative tactics launched in their emerging prophetic critique cannot occur without the church’s long history of keeping consecrated women from dialogue in judgments of

faith and morals. Creative feminist politics in this case requires gender disparities, and must work within the systemic logic keeping the LCWR from dialogue with church leadership. In contrast with the hierarchal veil of secrecy and concentration of power found in the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, the LCWR's charism of open and inclusive dialogue includes the idea that unity of identity and purpose can be achieved through the experience of dialogue with church leadership.

The doctrinal assessment mentions that members of the LCWR question the legitimacy of the Eucharistic feast, the central sacrament of the church in which a male body is required to administer. However, this research suggests that the living experience of communion is not reducible to symbolic and ritual unity. This also means that dogma on the essential nature of the female body – in some configuration of universal identity and function -- cannot account for the diversity of women's experiences with their bodies. This is why the LCWR's critique of the symbol of church unity and expansion of the symbol of "spirit" is so potent. Since the Holy Spirit is given a masculine gender by church leadership and the current Catechism designates no feminine models of agency in the Holy Trinity, it is appropriate that the LCWR finds a different "spirit" to drive their spirit-led charism. By recasting the symbol of the Holy Spirit and typologically routing God's living "spirit" through John's revelatory notions of what the Catechism terms cloud and light "manifestations" of the Holy Spirit, prophecy gets legitimized through living experience with radical difference -- revelation involves the unveiling of primordial sameness through accepting radical differences.

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VITA

LARRY M. FISCHER

Personal Data:                   Date of Birth: Date of Birth: May 18, 1975  
  Place of Birth: Wausau, Wisconsin  
  Marital Status: Single

Education:                        Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School  
  East Tennessee State University  
  Johnson City, Tennessee  
  B.A. Sociology, 2010  
  East Tennessee State University  
  Johnson City, Tennessee  
  Liberal Studies, M.A. , 2013

Professional Experience:        Enlisted, U.S. Navy,  
  Norfolk, VA, 2000 - 2005  
  
  Healthcare Telephone Interviewer  
  of Residents from Tennessee and  
  Virginia  
  Johnson City, TN, 2009  
  
  Coached, Grade School Girls Basketball  
  Johnson City, TN. 2009  
  
  Filmed, Passion Play  
  at the Stony Creek Baptist Church  
  Stony Creek, TN. 2009  
  
  Performed Music, for Residents at  
  Convalescent Home  
  Wittenberg WI. 2010-2012  
  
  Altar Boy and Current Musician  
  St. Florian's Catholic Church  
  Hatley, WI., 1983-2013

Work Experience:                United States Census,  
  Johnson City, TN. 2010  
  
  Electrical and Data Technician  
  Kingsport TN. 2008-2010

Enlisted, U.S. Navy  
Norfolk, VA, 2000 - 2005