

Boston University School of Theology
Anna Howard Shaw Center Newsletter

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**Women and
the Word '96:
A Feast for
Hungry Souls!**

One hundred twenty-five people, some from as far away as Delaware, attended the twelfth annual session of *Women and the Word*, presented by the Anna Howard Shaw Center of Boston University School of Theology, March 14 and 15 at Boston University. The theme was *Spirituality: Praying, Preaching, and Practicing Shalom*, and three carefully chosen leaders led attendees through each of these experiences with obvious wisdom, commitment, discernment, and vision. What a feast for hungry souls! What a cool, refreshing drink for thirsty hearts! What a boost to those in ministry near and far who long for insight and encouragement along the way.

In her address "Giving God the Glory," subtitled "The Redeeming Work of Liturgy," Dr. Heather Murray Elkins, assistant professor of worship and liturgical studies at Drew University, artistically blended together the work of worship with the human condition, blurring the boundary between the two so effectively that you felt as though you had truly been in the presence of God. She cited four principles or projects, using a series of chasubles, a relatively unfamiliar liturgical vestment in Protestantism, to illustrate these principles. The first "little house" as she called it, was made for her when eight months pregnant so as to be "properly covered," and became a sign of that which says yes and no. . . yes, to some women at the Table of the Lord, and no to others. That chasuble *cont. on p. 2*



From the Director...
Margaret Suber Wiborg

The Shaw Center has recently completed its twelfth annual *Women and the Word* preaching event as reported in this newsletter. Each year I better appreciate the importance of this mid-Lenten gathering for women and men who minister. It provides new insights and ideas, enabling creative worship.

The Shaw Center research repeatedly underlines how important supportive community, in its many forms, is to those who thrive in ministry. As we consider our findings, we will continue to strive to enable your ministries. In this issue of the newsletter we suggest good summer reading and offer the opportunity for you to acknowledge the name of someone whose ministry needs to be celebrated and recognized. If you have other suggestions for ways we can serve as a catalyst to lift one another up, please let us know. ●

**SPRING WOMEN'S
RETREAT**

There are many reasons to retreat—quiet, solitude, prayer, camaraderie, fresh air, the sound of "trumpets" signaling withdrawal. Regardless of the reason, the annual Spring Retreat for Women, March 29–30, 1996, in Worcester, Massachusetts, provided time and space for everyone. Eleven women and a baby (four-month-old Emily Ford at her first women's retreat) gathered in a YMCA cabin that served as our refuge for the weekend.

The weekend began leisurely as people trickled in early Friday afternoon. Following dinner, we gathered for evening prayer to officially begin our retreat. The short prayer service was centered on the belief that each retreatant had been called by God to the weekend. Understanding that everyone had left something or someone behind in order to be present, each retreatant was asked to use a sheet of paper to draw or list the thing(s) and person(s) that they needed to let go of in order to be fully attentive to the weekend. This letting go was ritualized symbolically by placing the sheets of paper on a table in the center of the room. Following prayer, everyone talked and relaxed in front of the fireplace.

Saturday morning started slowly as everyone enjoyed continental breakfast. Following breakfast, we enjoyed a sing-along of familiar hymns. *cont. on p. 3*

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Women and the Word '96

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illustrates the way we need to "enable a congregation to sanctify that vocation the world calls a job. The ALTAR . . . the world, needs to allow human need to begin to express a holy presence."

The next set of four chasubles were given to her by a Roman Catholic colleague who couldn't use them after the changes brought about by Vatican II. Here Professor Elkins saw beyond the differences in traditions and advised that "we cannot clean it out of our households. We need to be able to lay hands on that which belongs to us; know that which we choose to say 'no' to; wear it; wear it backwards, but wear it; and find in it that *oikos* [household] relationship with our brothers and sisters of other communions that offer the strength to stay in the loneliest of vineyards."

Professor Elkins introduced the term *bricolage*, meaning "to make do with whatever is at hand," as a way to describe the process she was unfolding. She reminded us that we are about the business of revealing, first the *imago dei* in any person and second, the *imago Christi* in any Christian.

A last chasuble made for Dr. Elkins by the children in her church contained a particularly messy cross which she

planned to hide by wearing it backwards. When she found that it had been painted by a boy with cerebral palsy, she was ashamed—ashamed that she had been so judgmental and biased about his abilities. The work of the children became a symbol of true worship, or *worship*, meaning "to esteem the being of another," and she received a lesson in the multiple, beautiful images of what the body of Christ truly is. She said, "When our worship silences, distances and dis-ables, it is no worship at all."

Finally, she explained that the fourth principle in the redeeming liturgy as the work of the people has to do with reformation. Reformation involves rending and renewing basic constructs of faith communities. "In our work of liturgy we attach to form, and this is good until it becomes too narrow, and then we must broaden it," Dr. Elkins explained. Parting and joining are the work of the rite process—reformation.

Presentations by Dr. Elkins were not merely academic. She spoke with spirit-filled ardor, intentionally choosing words and using phrases as vehicles to call forth the here and now "Worship of God" even as she speaks. What a gift!

"Paying Attention to the Moment" was the focus of Verna J. Dozier, a lay

woman in her seventies from Washington, D.C. Verna's years of teaching, have equipped her with the ability to speak sparingly with a deep and profound wisdom. With a clarity of heart and mind, she talked about the embodiment of spirituality. She said,

"Faith is a verb. It means 'that which you would risk.'"

"Faith is a verb. It means 'that which you would risk.'" Be very careful how you use words, she cautioned, and offered as an example the term spirituality. "It is NOT some unworldliness that has nothing to do with day-to-day life." She elaborated on the way embodied spirituality (the only kind there is) is reflected in the lives of several biblical women, namely, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, and Priscilla.

In the case of Mary and Martha, Jesus did not value one sister over the other. Rather, Martha demeaned her "center," while Mary valued what she was doing as she sat at Jesus' feet. "Calm down," Jesus said to Martha, "Value your center." So she did, from the kitchen among the pots and pans, becoming the Patron Saint of Doers. She paid enough attention to who Jesus was to make one of two professions in the New Testament (the other was by Peter) that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the Resurrection, is referred to in Scripture only four times, yet she receives the first apostolic commission to "Go and tell." Long thought to be an immoral woman, there is absolutely nothing in Scripture to support that notion. She obviously suffered from a mental disorder—she was "a little wacky." But she paid enough attention to that moment when Jesus healed her and to what he was all about, to become an important saint.

Priscilla, an early church woman of means and welcomed in its midst,



*The leadership of Women and the Word tell "fireside stories":
Rev. Dr. Heather Murray Elkins, Rev. Prathia Hall Wynn, and Ms. Verna J. Dozier.*

Women and the Word

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listened to the Apostle Paul while sitting at his feet. She understood his theology and cast it in classical Greek in the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament. Paul looked upon her with a kind of affection, using the shortened version of her name, Prisca. Although authorship of the Book of Hebrews is unknown, many scholars believe it was written by a woman and left unnamed because, had she been identified, it would have been dropped from the canon. Priscilla was similar to Mary in that she was no ordinary woman—she was a leader who was well educated.

“Sitting at Jesus’ feet listening is important,” said Ms. Dozier. “Saints come in no sex, no color, no previous condition of servitude. Saints hear the word of the Lord and listen.”

The Reverend Prathia Hall Wynn, associate professor of church and society at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, and pastor of the Mt. Sharon Baptist Church of Philadelphia, served as “Preacher Extraordinaire” for this session of *Women and the Word*. Her zeal electrified the Marsh Chapel Worship service when she preached on “Captivity’s Capture” using Ephesians 4:1–10 as her text. Motivated by a horrific image of the nineties, “of young people, boys mostly, often black, but not always, filing into courthouses chained and manacled, getting younger and younger,” she asked the question, “What is the relation between my or your daily business and those ‘captured captives’? What is this living death to us, and what are we to them?” But the text lifts up a cosmic Christ, as answer for the church and the world. Prathia pleaded with us to “hear the word! Jesus rose on high because he had descended into the lower parts of the earth, and had conquered all existing space in the universe! Jesus Christ has captured captivity,” she announced.

Wynn continued that, “We must be chain removers! Operation rescue must begin in the church, house to house,

tenement to tenement, shack to shack, person to person, heart to heart, and hand to hand. Too many of us are like Lazarus, walking around in our gravecloths. We must do for society what Jesus did for us. We are now free because our own shackles have been removed . . . Then we can sing the victory song: *All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!*”

But it was in the session entitled “Being Wrestled by the Scripture” that we learned what was behind such powerful preaching. “Take the text seriously,” she admonished. “Question it; it can handle it. Don’t try to manipulate it. Walk around it, be willing to be interrogated by the text. If you squirm, stay there. God has business with you. Then, find a way that the people can hear it. If you don’t know, then pray this prayer: God you know how these people hear, I don’t. Please God, give me not only the lyrics, but give me the tune and give me the key. I need help, knowledge, guidance.”

Two principles remain, said Prathia. “First, there is no way out of the wilderness except through it. The search for Shalom cannot take place in the absence of conflict; the Shalom of God is justice, mercy, peace. Secondly, avoid doing a straight-line reading of the text. It is too easy to hear what we want to hear. And remember the words of Charles Adams, ‘God has to constitute a hearing Congregation.’ There can be two different congregations hearing the same sermon: one won’t get it, and the other will go up in flames.”

I doubt that anyone went away from *Women and the Word* ’96 without a good bit of inspiration and a great deal of enlightenment, thanks to three genuine, earthy, and intelligent women.

This article was written by Rev. Donella Siktberg, a participant of the conference, and was also printed in The Zion Herald, the newspaper whose constituency includes the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church.

RETREAT

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Everyone was then invited to take some time for themselves and explore the campgrounds. Taizé music was available for those who chose to remain indoors.

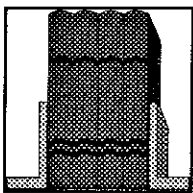
When we reconvened as a group, each person was encouraged to write a letter to themselves concerning the weekend. The letter, which would be mailed to each retreatant in a month, would be a reminder of the gift of the weekend. We then gathered for a final prayer service of thanksgiving. Pending our entry into our everyday worlds, everyone was invited to give thanks for whatever the weekend had given us to carry back.

For approximately twenty-four hours, the retreat site became our Holy Ground. God was present as friends gathered just to “be.” There was fresh air and a clean lake, moonlight by night and sunshine and blue skies by day. In God’s infinite wisdom, Emily was sent into our midst to remind us that life truly is a gift. In the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives, it is often difficult to face life with Emily’s wide-eyed wonder. Yet on this weekend we discovered that when we let go and let God, we can experience life anew. For this blessing, we give God thanks.

by Francine Collins, MDiv ’98



BOOK REVIEW



Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction

In the first volume of her recent anthology, *Searching the Scriptures*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza brings together a diverse group of contemporary feminist biblical-critical scholars to address the issues involved in approaching scripture from a feminist perspective. She sees this book as the first of its kind, as filling the obvious need for an introduction to the diverse ways that feminist women approach biblical criticism. She sees feminists as those persons, or women in this text, who have abandoned the illusion of a value-detached, objective stance praised during the Enlightenment, in favor of a hermeneutic perspective that takes into account gender, class, race, ethnicity, and other structures of oppression. By bringing together a culturally diverse group of women scholars, Schüssler Fiorenza hopes to bring to light those contextual factors that were often overlooked by many of the Euro-American, middle-class women who were perceived as beginning the "Feminist Movement."

In response to the critique of feminism(s) as racist and ethnocentric by women of color who felt excluded and silenced, Schüssler Fiorenza states that she intentionally gathered "different voices and discourses" from "diverse locations and divergent traditions" (ix) to address the multilayered contextual factors that oppress women. She also intentionally gathered women who have received extensive education in biblical and historical critical methods. She states that she has chosen these authors to set up this text in contrast to *The Woman's Bible*, which "on the whole engaged mostly Protestant white women from the United States and was not able to attract women schooled in 'higher criticism'" (xi). In choosing some of the world's finest contemporary biblical and historical scholars, Schüssler Fiorenza attempts to grapple with the concept, put forth by Audre Lorde, that "the master's

tools will not destroy the master's house" (xi). In providing the reader with authors skilled in using and critiquing the master's tools, Schüssler Fiorenza hopes to empower the reader "for the task of engaging in critical analysis and for developing a different sociohistorical and theo-ethical imagination" (xi).

Kwok Pui-Lan is an excellent scholar who provides a comprehensive and thorough introduction to the problem of racism and ethnocentrism that has plagued the feminist movement(s) and feminist biblical interpretation. She highlights many of the ways that women of color have been marginalized in the development of a feminist model of historical-biblical criticism and calls for

[Feminists are] those women who abandon the illusion of the value-detached, objective stance praised during the Enlightenment.

the recognition of their contributions, the hearing of their stories, and the inclusion of their voices in the process of developing a method that is responsible to and liberating for all.

Kwok present ten theses that highlight these areas of concern including the ways that the concept of biblical authority has been used to doubly oppress women of other cultures, the critique that the historical-critical method is based on a model of impartiality that does not address the needs and experiences of women of color, the ways in which the contributions of women of color and their multiple oppressions have been ignored, and the ways in which the Bible has been used to oppress many ethnic groups. She also stresses the belief that the community, both the religious

community and the multi-faith community, is intrinsic to assigning biblical authority and in creating a responsible hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible.

Kwok's ten theses provide an excellent introduction to the problems that are the main focus of the essay — racism and ethnocentrism. Kwok presents her ideas in a way that is clear and accessible to those readers who have never considered these issues yet is supportive of the efforts by those already aware of these areas of concern. Her text provides an historical and contemporary critique as well as immediate suggestions for readers to effect change in their own thought processes and actions. Kwok's critique is supportive of change rather than confrontational and thus the reader is left inspired and empowered.

Judith Plaskow also offers the reader ways to change her/his thought processes so that s/he is not unintentionally being racist or ethnocentric. Her essay focuses on the ways in which Christianity has posited Judaism as its negative antithesis with the intention of presenting itself in a more positive light. She traces this process historically and analyzes how it is present in the contemporary feminist movement(s). Plaskow demonstrates that "anti-Judaism" is present in the very roots of Christianity, where Judaism is identified with the negative side of such opposites as "letter versus spirit, works versus faith, and particularism versus universalism" (118). She then demonstrates how this dualistic mind-set has been embedded in the feminist arguments about the egalitarianism of Jesus.

Plaskow argues that Jesus cannot be seen as having a radical approach to women and equality unless he is seen against the background of a sexist and misogynist Judaism. She says that the scriptures do not show Jesus as "a champion of women's rights in the contemporary sense" *continued on p. 8*

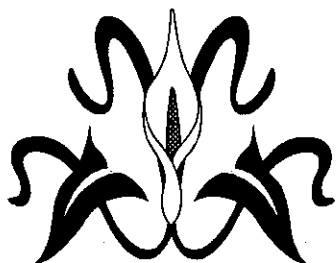
**OBSERVING
ANNA'S 150th
BIRTHDAY:
February 14, 1997**

Plans are underway as to how the Shaw Center will appropriately celebrate Anna's 150th birthday. One way we wish to celebrate is by recognizing 150 women who exemplify one or more aspects of her effective life. Those aspects include:

1. attempting to abolish society's various "isms";
2. encouraging education;
3. being a visionary in attempting to reach a common good;
4. serving as a medical doctor to the disadvantaged;
5. speaking out against alcohol abuse and/or gambling;
6. persisting in the face of difficulties;
7. working in the political arena toward equal opportunities for all;
8. being in pastoral ministry;
9. serving the less fortunate, especially women and children;
10. being resourceful in presenting the Gospel.

Nominations should be written in a quasi-biographical style of no more than 200 words explaining why the person you name should be recognized. Nominations must be received no later than November 1, 1996, and should include the address of both the nominee and the person making the nomination. Mail to:

**Anna Howard Shaw Center
B. U. School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215**



Board Member Receives Honors



AHSC Advisory Board member Carmen Dressler Ward has recently received two honors: one at Babson College, where she is Assistant Director of International Programs, and one from the Massachusetts Association for Women in Education (MAWE), a professional organization to which she belongs.

In March, Carmen was recognized as a "Woman Who Makes a Difference at Babson College," an award sponsored by the Women's History Month committee at Babson and given annually to four women: a faculty member, an administrator (Carmen's category), an administrative assistant, and a student.

In April, at the state-wide spring conference of MAWE, Carmen received the Mary E. Tobin Award, the organization's most prestigious annual award. The Tobin Award is given to one woman each year who has met the following criteria: donated personal time and energy to advance women's causes; guided other women in their personal/professional development; authored scholarly materials about women; developed courses or programs which heighten awareness of/increase equity for women; demonstrated commitment to implementing policies and programs to improve women's access in education. ●

Profile of Women at STH:

Connie Bickford Departs

Connie Bickford, director extraordinaire of the Doctor of Ministry and Field Education Programs, has announced her decision to leave her position here at Boston University School of Theology.

For the past ten years, Connie has led a split life, dividing her time between her professional life here in Boston and her family life on Cape Cod. With great support from her husband, Arthur, she has continued this life, but finds it difficult to maintain a sense of community on the Cape.

Connie believes this is an ideal time to leave. The programs she has worked on have developed and are going well, and many of her personal goals for these programs have been accomplished. Connie reiterated how much she has cherished her time here. She is grateful for the time spent interacting with the students, her relationships with her colleagues, and the support and opportunities presented

here, and she acknowledges the incredible amount of trust that was invested in one just out of seminary. She will miss being part of the STH community and the interaction with colleagues, students, and pastors.

Connie's plans for the future sound inspiring. In the Fall, she plans to complete her final project for her Doctor of Ministry degree. In September, Connie will journey with Arthur to Ireland to participate in her son's wedding. She and Arthur further plan to take about two months (in the cold of January and February) to travel to New Zealand, Australia, and India. Following these adventures, Connie trusts that God will bring her a new challenge in employment. But for now, she is really looking forward to spending some wonderful time with Arthur, her children, and friends on the Cape.

We at the Shaw Center wish her joy, love, and God's blessings in all her future endeavors. ●

Profile of Women at STH: A Discussion With Paula Fredriksen



by Bonnie Stagg, MDiv '97

Professor Paula Fredriksen, the William Goodwin Aurelio Professor of the Appreciation of Scripture at the School of Theology, together with her husband and three daughters, spent last year on sabbatical in Jerusalem, where she was a visiting professor at Hebrew University. When I finally caught up with this dynamo woman, I wanted to know how life in Jerusalem and Israel differed from life in the United States, and how the year in Israel had changed her outlook on both her family and her professional lives. Our conversation centered on her observations as woman, mother, and professional.

When I asked how she liked being back in this country, Dr. Fredriksen's immediate response was, "I feel like I'm living in a war zone! We Americans have given up so much freedom!" In Israel she felt that she didn't have to worry about her children when they were outside playing with other children or if they were going somewhere. It was also perfectly safe for her children to talk with strangers or to ask for their help in crossing the street. In Israel, Dr. Fredriksen wouldn't worry when her youngest daughter, age seven, would go out and play—it was perfectly safe. Here in Boston, when Dr. Fredriksen's children are going somewhere they must call her when they have arrived at their destination, it is not safe for them to talk with strangers, and when she is out with her daughters, they are instructed not to leave her side. The parental responsibility in Boston involves a closer watch, a difference that is particularly relevant for Dr. Fredriksen now that her twelve-and-a-half-year-old daughter is itching for more autonomy. In America, it is difficult for parents to determine how much freedom to allow, at what age, and when to restrict a child. Here,

since the consequences can be more dire, a parent might not get a second chance if there is a mistake. In Israel, children can naturally develop their own instincts of independence.

Children are the priority in Israel's family-oriented society. While working parents are accountable and work incredibly hard, employers expect that if a child needs to go to the dentist the parent will leave work to take the child there. Even more basic than this, if a child is playing a daisy in the local school performance, it is assumed that the parent will attend. Dr. Fredriksen emphasizes that absolutely no apology is necessary for absences due to family matters.

"I feel like I'm living in a war zone! We Americans have given up so much freedom!"

From a maternal point of view, living in Jerusalem sounds wonderful. Imagine not worrying about your children while they are out playing. Imagine not feeling guilty for leaving work for a short time to be a responsible parent. This is not a possibility for most workers in this country.

It all sounded so ideal that I wondered if there was a down-side to living in Israel. Dr. Fredriksen says, "America has got to be the best place for a woman to be a professional, other than in Scandinavia. Zionism is an ideology of liberation. It condemns sexism. Yet at the same time there are almost no women at the top. Further, they are not aware they are not hooked-up. It is a man's game." Academic opportunity is very restricted in Israel—there are only six universities. Consequently, it is very difficult for women to get permanent

professional positions there. Though it is a very literate culture—the average Israeli reads twenty-five books for every one read by an American—the positions in academia are limited and there are few women in them. Dr. Fredriksen says, "It is more of a boys' club than the U.S. Senate."

I was curious about the work Dr. Fredriksen pursued in Israel. "I can't believe I had the *chutzpah* to teach early Christianity before I lived in Israel for a year," she exclaims. Although she had been working with ancient texts daily, being in Israel for a year gave her a deeper understanding as to what it was like being there when the texts were written. She went on a dig at Yodefat in Galilee, the last city Josephus defended before he defected to the Romans. Digging occurred between 5 a.m. and noon. Dr. Fredriksen explained that even "to smell the heat off the rocks was overwhelming." The dig reminded her of the text "the day the city was killed, killed by the Romans," from Josephus' Book III of *The Jewish War*, when he describes the Romans breaking through the wall. Being at that site led Fredriksen to imagine what it would have been like to wake up that day, 1,924 years ago, knowing that the Romans were inside the walls and would murder her family and others within the city. "The text, the place, rivet you to the spot."

The experience of being in Israel and of immersing herself in a different world has above all else affected Dr. Fredriksen's work and life. During her time there, Dr. Fredriksen saw all the sights a good church group tour would plan. She walked through the historic sites, just as people in ancient times had.

Life in Jerusalem is very intense, revolving around a six-day work week. Here we have two days off per week to take care of personal tasks.

Fredriksen Profile

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Social life in Jerusalem is intense because it is highly developed both intellectually and emotionally. Dr. Fredriksen was part of three intense study groups. One of these, a weekly reading group, consisted of her, her husband, a Josephus specialist, a rabbi, and others. They would read

"It is very quiet and the light comes from heaven."

Description of the Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem

the lectionary passages in Greek and Hebrew, then discuss the passages in English.

Dr. Fredriksen made a conscious effort to work in groups rather than concentrate on her own writing. These groups were open to anyone interested, and as word got out, people of diverse backgrounds began joining these vibrant, intense discussions.

Two significant liturgical/religious feasts in Israel held great meaning for Dr. Fredriksen. *Shavuot* (Pentecost) at High Holiday marks the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. During this time, one stays up all night wandering among various study groups. About 4 a.m., all walk to the Temple Plaza (at the Western Wall) to say morning prayers. "It is very quiet and the light comes from heaven," explains Dr. Fredriksen. She went on to describe a clear, uncolored pre-dawn light, then the sun rising with golden glow during which prayers are offered, thanking God for giving the cock the intelligence to discern the light from darkness.

Whole families then go to the plaza together, but once there, the women separate from the men. Dr. Fredriksen liked being with other women to pray because of the intensity of family life. Here women were independent, not identified as someone's wife. This gender separation is not usual for women in Israel. Dr. Fredriksen noticed that when women were alone

to pray, the sexual tension and information gathering that normally occurs when men are present did not happen.

The second liturgical/religious event that was precious to Dr. Fredriksen was the *bat mitzvah* of her eldest daughter. During this celebration, the supportive community first gathers together as a whole, then the women leave for a separate room where they celebrate a special service by reading the Torah in a certain way. After the reading is a blessing. The child is now expected to use the love of the scripture to develop her life. The women then gather around the daughter and sing historic songs. At this point, the women rejoin the rest of the community and the celebrations take on the familiar tone of those in America.

The recent suicide bombings of the busses in Jerusalem were particularly poignant for Dr. Fredriksen. Both she and her children rode that same bus

(the no. 18) on daily basis. Though we did not discuss the possibility, it was clear that if the bombings had occurred a few months earlier, she could have been the one mourning her children. As it is, Dr. Fredriksen knows that people she rode the bus with died in the explosions. Her reaction is one of sorrow and fury. While so many of her Israeli friends are committed to peace, she feels that a powerful majority of the Arab community still believes that if they continue the bombings and other forms of killing, the Jews will leave. Dr. Fredriksen points, as evidence, to Yassir Arafat's persistence in wearing guerrilla fatigues. At a time when the two cultures are supposedly trying to establish and maintain peaceful relations, she sees his clothing as an index of the way he views his role in the peace process.

Since returning to Boston, Dr. Fredriksen dreams of establishing a program to allow every MDiv student to spend a semester studying Christian origins while living in Israel. ●



Shaw women Elizabeth Brick, MDiv '98 and Julie Todd, MDiv, '96 demonstrate for the "Open the Doors" campaign at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Denver, April 16-26, 1996.

CENTER UPDATE

The cassette tapes from the 1996 *Women and the Word* preaching conference are now available for \$18.00 a set (four tapes of ninety minutes each). This price includes shipping and handling. To order, send your request to the Anna Howard Shaw Center, B.U. School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. Please include your check or money order payable to the Anna Howard Shaw Center.

Book Review

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and thus his treatment of women must not be held up as an antithesis to the Jewish treatment of women at that time (119-120). In order to prove Jesus as a feminist, Judaism's treatment of women is often cast in a negative light by Christian feminists—a light that Plaskow does not believe is supported by historical evidence.

Plaskow labels this process as "anti-Jewish" as opposed to "anti-Semitic" because she wants to allow for the fact that "feminists who are not social or racial anti-Semites still make use of anti-Jewish literary and theological motifs" (123). Plaskow recognizes Christian feminists do not necessarily intend to be anti-Semitic, but instead seek support for feminism within their tradition. She seems to feel that Christian feminists have unfortunately failed to recognize this painful flaw in the development of their arguments—a flaw which they also inherited from their tradition. By presenting her argument in a constructive fashion, Plaskow creates a space in which the reader can critique her/his own thought processes without immediately becoming defensive. Plaskow constructs her model in such a way that it gives the reader the competence to apply this critique to arguments not explicitly mentioned in this article. Thus the reader comes away with an excellent tool to add to her/his theological/ethical toolbox.

A third author in this anthology, Monika Fander, also provides the reader with tools for the struggle. In her article, Fander critiques the dangers present in using the historical-critical method "as-is," and demonstrates ways in which feminists can rework the presuppositions associated with this method so that it is transformed into a tool appropriate for their own work. She begins by critiquing the traditional belief that the historical-critical method could be used to discover value-free, objective truths about history. She gives examples of scholars who have failed

to remove their own androcentrism from their scholarship, and claims that it is not possible to have scholarship without some preconditions and prejudices.

Fander then argues that the historical-critical method can be used as a tool by feminists once they recognize its limitations. She demonstrates this by applying the model to a number of texts that produce information helpful to the feminist deconstruction and reclamation process. She proposes a method of feminist historical-critical research in which historical-critical tools are used, along with other tools

The difficulty I had with...the whole book: its sole focus on reworking and reclaiming the master's tools.

such as linguistic structuralism, within a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Fander demonstrates how the master's tools can be reforged, or at least reunderstood, so that they can be used to dismantle the master's house. Since her language and her arguments are more complex than those of some of the other authors in this anthology, her essay requires careful reading. The inclusion of articles like Fander's—articles with more density than the introductory essays mentioned—makes this anthology appropriate for a wide range of readers from those beginning in the field of feminist scholarship to those experienced in feminist biblical criticism. Even though I was cautious and critical of the potential for elitism present in Schüssler Fiorenza's stated intention of creating an introductory book aimed at "women schooled in higher criticism," I acknowledge that she includes articles that are accessible to a range of women, even those not

continued on p. 11

BUILDING A DREAM

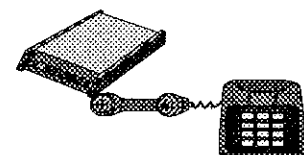
The Latin American Biblical Seminary in San Jose, Costa Rica, will soon become a University. As part of the transition from seminary to university, they want to build a more appropriate home to continue an innovative, personalized and decentralized model of theological education which responds to the special needs of women and men who have historically been excluded. To accomplish this, there is a dream!

—That one million women from all over the world will send their names and one dollar each to help build the home for the next university;
—one dollar will allow all women to share equally in building the dream;
—women want to leave footprints on this new path of theological education;
—the new building will provide a home for the new model of decentralized and integrated theological education;
—they will be better able to respond to the needs of women, indigenous peoples, and those of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean;
—please pray with them and encourage others to send in a dollar.

Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano
Dept. SJO 2174
PO Box 025216
Miami, FL 33102-5216

CORRECTION

Our e-mail address is
shawctr@bu.edu



✿ *Gifts of Poetry* ✿

WISDOM...

"The word 'virgin' did not originally mean a woman who was untouched, but a free woman . . . not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and socially her own person. In any universe of patriarchy there are no Virgins in this sense." *Marilyn Frye*

Today she reads *Snow White*
 I watch this child,
 Entranced, ruby-lipped,
 Wan Innocent . . .
 Ankles crossed, Indian style
 Book across her lap
 She turns a page . . .
 In child stillness, she twists
 her nested hair around a bowed
 finger . . .

At once a watercolor
 Illustration,
 Bleeding into paper
 seeping beyond
 penciled line. Heavy,
 She sighs . . .
 And reaches

For the gnarled hand . . .
 Tempted, she breaks
 Apple's red cheek,
 the juice shines clear on her lips
 the skin, sharp on her tongue . . .

My memory floods . . .

Brazen Eve
 Lush Gardens
 Tangibly forbidden
 Temptations
 Sinewy Snake . . .

Brazen Eve bit her apple
 Became a martyr
 To kingdoms and fiery wombs.

Sweet Snow White, glass encased
 Youth, unassuming adolescent
 gifted with the responsibilities
 for Dwarves and Princes, too.

And fruitless,
 Sleeping Beauty paused
 The king's castle,
 Sharp struck, spindle,
 Simply cast

FORGOTTEN LEGACY

They equate me with a cat
 sharp claws and flash flood temper
 but though I roar like a lioness
 and fight like a tigress
 no one knows my story
 I stand within a legacy of women
 forgotten and maligned by history

They call me flighty; a bird
 thoughts floating wherever wings
 touch air
 but though I soar like an eagle
 and run fast as an emu
 I am no Esther married to a king
 No Hagar mother to a nation
 No Mary tenacious and proud

No one tells my story
 how prejudice
 siphoned off my life
 as discrimination meant
 cleaning the dirt others dispensed
 poor, homeless and forgotten I stand
 Maligned by history
 told for and by a well-set man

They have forgotten me
 the mammy, the prostitute
 images of their past they would refute
 but it was my purr, that made them roar
 my life on my back allowed them to soar
 so here I am continuing to stand
 though my foundation be quicksand

Rachel Williams, MDiv '97




Zina Jacque, Kim Lay, Elizabeth Brick and Jonah Waltz Rieber at Women and the Word.

To sleep . . .
 where Temptation is
 the Object is . . .
 the Woman is . . .
 Eve slept among tribes of men . . .
 Snow White slept among small men . . .
 and only Sleeping Beauty
 slept alone . . .

Elizabeth Brick, MDiv '98

*Do you have comments, questions,
 ideas, or submissions
 for the newsletter?
 We look forward to
 hearing from you!*



*Contact
 Wiborg at
 Meredith Manning Brown at
 (617) 353-3075 or write to the
 Anna Howard Shaw Center.*

1996 Valentine Recipients

Lillian C. Allison
Priscilla Barnard
Edward W. Bauman
Millie Beane
Walter R. Benn
Sue Benn
Connie Bickford
Geraldine Bickmoor
Arlene Bodge
Mary Lou Greenwood Boice
Shirley Budden
Charlie & Carole Camp
Catherine Carpenter
Christine Carpenter
John A. Carpenter
Lee Carpenter
Alicia Castonguay
Deb Church
Linda Clark
Beth Collier
Elizabeth Contra
Tremayne Copplestone
Violet Damon
Larry Espling
Pamela Estes
Toinette Eugene
Frances Folsom
Cynthia Good
June Goudey
Gerald C. Grant
Phebe Gregorian
Morse Hamilton
Sharon Hamilton
Richard Harding
Shirley Harding
Edith Higgins
Marguerite Hill
Shirley Hoover
Marguerite M. Jenkins
Harry Johnson
Nancy B. Johnson
Nancy S. Johnson

Rev. Sam and Donna Johnson
Diane Kelton
Judith Kohatsu
Phoebe Janet Hardwick Lee
Diane H. Lobody
Elizabeth Lurie
Julie Marashlian
Melanie May
Jane & Jack Middleton
Virginia Mollenkott
Susan M. Morrison
Joy Mueller
Kay Muise
Rebecca Muller
Rev. & Mrs. Clinton Parker
Jeanne Audrey Powers
Dianne Reistroffer
Anne Reynolds
C. Faith Richardson
Dorothy Rogers
Christine Sass
Ann M. Sears
Elizabeth Schrader
Eric Shank
Patricia Simmons
Sharon Simonton
Lornagrace Stuart
Ruby Thomason
James Todd
Julie Todd
Katherine Todd
Mary Todd
Ed & Jean Trench
Carmen Ward
David Weiss
Elizabeth Whitehouse
T. C. Whitehouse
Margaret Wiborg
Richard Wiborg
Julia Wilson
Vicki Woods
Marsha Wordell
Lorna Young



UPCOMING EVENTS

June 8-9, 1996

Fifty Plus One will host a beginner-level electoral campaign training for pro-choice women at the Simmons Institute for Leadership and Change at Simmons College in Boston. Cost is \$100 with scholarships available; \$35 student and senior citizen rate. For information, call Cindy at 301/587-8061.

June 14-18, 1996 (First Session), June 21-25, 1996 (Second Session)

Jean Baker Miller Summer Training Institute, "Relational and Cultural Theory and Applications," at Wellesley College. For further information, contact Helen Matthew at 617/283-2506 or fax 617/283-3646.

June 27-30, 1996

United Church of Christ hosts the *Third National Meeting of Women* entitled "Visions and Voices." Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston. Registration through the Metropolitan Boston Association, 14 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. Attn: Jean Knibbs.

September 27-28, 1996

Annual Shaw Center Fall Women's Retreat for women of the Boston University School of Theology community (students, faculty, staff, spouses, partners). At Camp Harrington, Worcester, MA. Call the Shaw Center for further details at 617/353-3075.

October 27-29, 1996

Annual Conference: National Association of Gender Diversity Training, "Working Together: Men and Women Looking to Collegueship and Team Building in the New Millennium." For more information call 602/451-6010 or fax 602/860-6525.

FACULTY NOTES

Imani-Sheila Newsome-McLaughlin will co-facilitate a discussion of reflections on women's theological perspectives at "Visions and Voices" the UCC's *Third National Women's Meeting* to be held June 27-30 1996 in Boston.

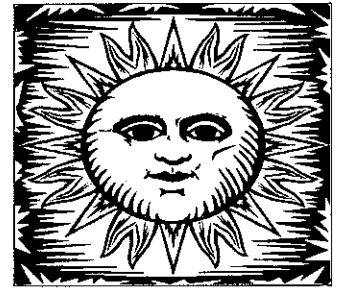
Paula Fredriksen was on Lifetime Network Television on March 31, 1996 as a speaker on a program entitled "The Virgin Mary." She also wrote a chapter, "Jerusalem in Christian Thought," for *The City of the Great King*, edited by Nitza Rosovsky.

Sharon Peebles Burch taught a Lenten Series at the First Baptist Church in Newton entitled, "Nothing but the Blood." She will present a segment on the Baptist tradition for Rodney Petersen's course, *Comparative Christianity: The Struggle for Protestant Identity*, at Andover Newton Theological Seminary. Dr. Burch's segment will cover the American and Southern Baptist Traditions.

Margaret Wiborg and Shaw Scholar **Beth Collier** made a preliminary report on the Clergywomen Retention Study to the Division of Ordained Ministry (UMC) plenary session and to the Continuing Education for Ministry Committee (UMC) at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, on March 19, 1996. Margaret was in Denver for the United Methodist General Conference, April 16-26, as a lay delegate from the New England Conference.



Summer Reading Suggestions



From Paula Fredriksen...

Fun: "Tweets Catalogue"

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austin

Challenging: *An Embarrassment of Riches* by Simon Schama

From Imani-Sheila Newsome...

Challenging: *Katie's Cannon* by Dr. Katie G. Cannon

From Dana Robert...

Challenging: *African Women South of the Sahara* by Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter; *Fundamentalism and Gender* by Margaret Bendroth

From Connie Bickford...

Fun: *Snow Falling on Cedars*

Challenging: *Leadership and the New Science* by Margaret Wheatley

From Sharon Peebles Burch...

Fun: *Rediscovering the Sacred* by Phyllis Tickle

Challenging: *Winds of the Spirit* by Peter Hodgson; *Memories of God* by Roberta Bondi

BOOK REVIEW

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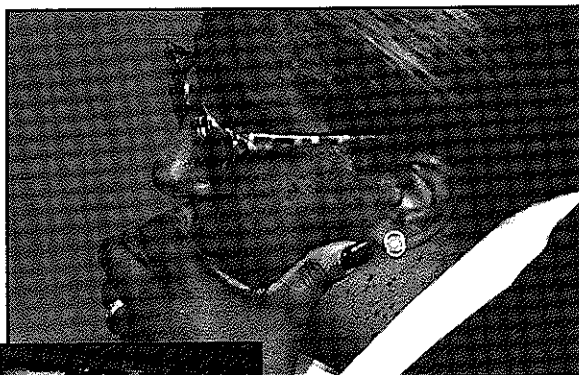
schooled in "higher criticism" (ix).

However, the difficulty that I had with Fander's article is the same difficulty that I had with the whole book—its sole focus on reworking and reclaiming the master's tools. While I recognize the importance of being able to defend ourselves on an equal playing field, I also feel that the hunger that got me started in this battle is not being fed. While I recognize that some people can be "converted" or convinced once they see the errors in their methods and thought processes (and the authors succeed in this without raising the reader's defenses), I am also aware of my own hunger for something more than thought processes. If I began my critique of patriarchal Christianity because I was not being fed by it, how can I find the food that I need by engaging only the tradition that starved me? And what kind of validity am I giving it if I spend all my time and energy questioning it? While I recognize the importance of methods that empower me to reclaim my tradition I also believe that we need to be creative and not let the patriarchy or the tradition totally limit our horizons.

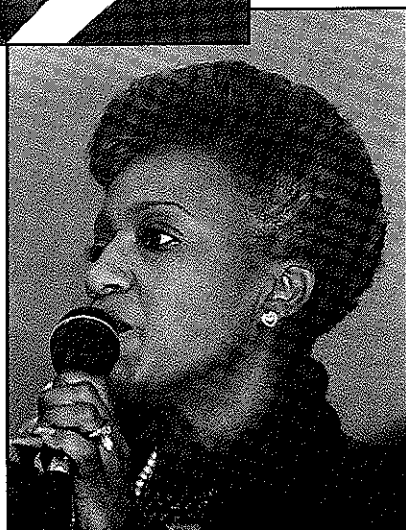
Although *Searching the Scriptures* provided some of the academic tools I

need to engage my educated colleagues, it did not really feed me. It certainly changed some of my thought processes, but it did not touch me, move me, stir and feed my spirit. If the patriarchal God of my tradition doesn't move me, and the analytical reworking of "Him" by feminists using patriarchy's reformed tools does not support my spirit, then where will I go to be fed? Perhaps the tradition has not failed merely because it has holes or blind spots that need to be reworked. Perhaps it has failed because it does not provide the bread/spirit/beauty that I need, and presumably others need as well. Its tools, reworked through a feminist lens, serve as analytical weapons, but I also need food to sustain myself through the battle. It is this hunger that got me into the battle in the first place. Perhaps that was not the intended goal of the authors in *Searching the Scriptures*, but I believe that they should at least acknowledge this hunger, and the struggle to balance the need for both tools and food. This hunger is a valid feminist critique and should be included and addressed in a text that claims to be a comprehensive introduction to feminist criticism.

by Kimberly Lay, MDiv '96



Praying, preaching, practicing Shalom at Women and the Word: (clockwise from the top) Rev. Julia Mayo-Quinlan, Rev. Idalmis Garcia, Rev. Lornagrace Stuart.



**Anna Howard Shaw Center
Newsletter**

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Managing Editor
Margaret Suber Wiborg

Editors
*Meredith Manning Brown
Bonnie Stagg*

Contributors
*Elizabeth Brick, Francine Collins,
Kimberly Lay, Donella Sikberg,
Bonnie Stagg, Rachel Williams*

Photographs
*Elizabeth Bettenhausen,
BU Photo Services, Mike Dubose,
Harry Johnson*

The Anna Howard Shaw Center

**Boston University
School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215**

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