
HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Volume 6, Number 3 OCTOBER 1993

NEWS AND NOTES

NETWORKING

Requests have come in from several *NEWS AND NOTES* subscribers to enhance the networking capacity of this newsletter in two directions. The first would widen our scope through use of "e-mail." The second would improve members' capacity to get papers accepted at professional meetings through sharing of experience with submitting proposals.

Ritamary Bradley, SFCC, professor emerita at St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa, would be happy to provide HWR members with information on various electronic bulletin boards related to religious, medieval, and women's studies. Her e-mail address is rbradley@saunix.sau.edu. If you have e-mail, you are invited to take advantage of this offer. Please forward to the newsletter editor any other e-mail comments, resources, and suggestions you may have. Electronic networking of this sort would seem to have great potential for broadening our network to include secular historians both here and abroad.

Regarding proposal submission, newsletter focus for the next several issues will be on the Berkshire conference, next scheduled for 1995. Concerns have been expressed by several members that the program committee for the last Berkshire failed to accept proposals which would have given the program better balance in the direction of women in religion. The current Berkshire program committee goes out of office in November, but we urge HWR members who have had difficulty getting proposals accepted, or who simply want to register objection that the subject of their interest was not featured on the program, to write Marilyn Williams, program committee secretary, at the Department of History, Pace University, Pace Plaza, New York, NY, 10038.

A stack of letters of that nature is often persuasive to future program committees.

In addition, you may wish to forward to me as newsletter editor a copy of papers or panels which were rejected (or accepted) for the 1989 and 1992 conferences. I can then invite a few of our members to review these to see if a pattern exists. Next steps to enhance proposal success will be based on what we learn through this review and any further ideas you may wish to share.

PUBLICATIONS & TALKS

Margaret Susan (Peg) Thompson's article, "*Cultural Conundrum: Sisters, Ethnicity, and the Adaptation of American Catholicism*," appears in *MID-AMERICA: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW* (74:3, October, 1992, pp. 205-230). The article represents part of a larger project Peg has underway with Oxford Press entitled *THE YOKE OF GRACE: AMERICAN NUNS AND SOCIAL CHANGE, 1808-1917*.

Francis Bernard O'Connor, CSC, includes women religious in her study of Catholic women in the United States, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Uganda: *LIKE BREAD, THEIR VOICES RISE! Global Women Challenge the Church*, Ave Maria Press (1993). The book and an accompanying video dispell the assumption that Catholic feminism is an exclusively North American phenomenon. Research included a questionnaire administered to over 1200 women and numerous on-site interviews. Copies can be ordered from the author at 919 St. Vincent St., South Bend, IN 46617; or from Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556.

HALF-PINT ON GUADALCANAL, by Mary Paulita Schneller, SMSM, is the life story of Sister Mary Evangeline of the author's Marist congregation who spent 53 years in the Solomon Islands, most of them, including the war years, on Guadalcanal. Copies can be ordered from the author at 349 Grove St., Waltham, MA 02154.

Margot King is the editor of *A LEAF OF THE GREAT TREE OF GOD: Essays in Honour of Ritamary Bradley*. The festschrift, due out in September by Peregrina Press (17 Woodside Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6T 1L6, Canada), honors one HWR Network member and contains an essay by another, Peg Thompson, "*The Validation of Sisterhood: Canonical Status and Liberation in the History of American Nuns.*"

Jane Klimisch, OSB, has just published *WOMEN GATHERING* (Peregrina Press, 1993), a history of the fifty-year old Benedictine Federation of St. Gertrude and a profile of each of the sixteen (now eighteen) member monasteries: Crookston, Minnesota; Madison, Wisconsin; Beech Grove and Ferdinand, Indiana; Belcourt and Richardton, North Dakota; Yankton, Watertown, and Rapid City, South Dakota; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Grand Terrace, California; Lakewood, Colorado; Mount Angel, Oregon; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Columbia, Missouri; Cottonwood, Idaho; and, briefly, the emerging priories in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and Martin, Kentucky, along with several missionary priories in Latin America. Jane reports that the HWR Conference of 1989 inspired her to undertake this work.

The analysis of post-Vatican II changes offered by Joseph M. Becker, SJ, in *THE REFORMED JESUITS, Vol. I, A HISTORY OF CHANGES IN JESUIT FORMATION DURING THE DECADE 1965-1975* (Ignatius Press, 1992), offers valuable parallels for those researching the subject as it affects women's congregations. Although the Jesuits seemed to experience more intellectualized revolts than was typical of women's groups, this highly structured order and its fifteen-year formation program went through many of the same changes experienced elsewhere, with comparable effects. Becker is now at work

on a second volume (notice provided by Catherine Ann Curry, PBVM).

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Patricia Jean Manion, SL, and nine other Loretto women are compiling a series of essays on the involvement of Loretto Sisters in social protest, the experience of Hispanic women in the community, Loretto's mission to China in the 1920s, the impact of the South American experience on their corporate thinking, and other experiences with the Roman Catholic church. The collection, which is supported by a grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women, is expected to be ready for publication by early 1994. Anyone with suggestions about potential publishers is asked to write Manion at 111 Weisser Ave., Louisville, KY 40206.

Joan Brosnan, OSU, whose work on a biography of Monica Maginnis was noted in the last issue, asks that congregations check their archives for traces of this Ursuline nun's inter-community work. As a pioneer world traveler, she visited convents in North America and Europe for research purposes from 1930 to the early 50s. Joan can be reached at 8 Alpine Drive, Ft. Mitchell, KY 41017, telephone (606) 331-4701.

Carmel McEnroy, RSM, has received a \$2,500 grant from the Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women at the College of St. Catherine to support a research project titled "Guests in Their Own House: the Women of Vatican II." The project involves recording the personal experiences of the 23 women officially invited to the third and fourth council sessions in 1964 and 1965, and a discussion of why the women were chosen, how council attendance impacted their lives, and what impact they had in the gathering of 3,000 men.

Susan E. Dinan, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, intends to focus her doctoral dissertation on the involvement of the Daughters of Charity in hospitals in France from 1634 to the end of the seventeenth century. She is interested in any information subscribers

may have on U.S. archives containing documentation pertaining to French congregations, her broader topic being women in French orders from 1598 to 1660. She can be reached at 149 North Butler St., Madison, WI 53703.

Bernadette McCauley, assistant professor of history at Hunter College, has begun a project on the history of the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary. This community of African-American women was founded by Elizabeth Williams (Mother Theodore) in Savannah, Georgia in 1916 and moved to New York City in the 1920s. They worked in a variety of educational and social service areas, particularly child care. Bernadette has started an oral history project with members of the community including Mother Agnes Eugenia, who was one of the first members in Savannah. Anyone wanting to talk with Bernadette on this project can reach her at Hunter College, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10021.

Alice O'Rourke, OP, is working on a biography of Mother Mary Samuel Coughlin, mother general of the Sinsinawa Dominicans 1909-1949. Alice will be residing at the motherhouse in Sinsinawa while conducting this research.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CREATION OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS: (FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO EIGHTEEN-SEVENTY), by Gerda Lerner (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 395 pp.

Why did it take women so long to think their way free of patriarchy?

Gerda Lerner, eminent historian and author of eight books of women's history, asks this question in her latest and most significant piece of scholarship. It is a must-read book for women interested in education, history, women's religious orders, or the roots of the women's movement--in fact, for any educated woman.

The second in her series entitled *Women in History*, this book took Gerda Lerner 15 years to write, including the "grand detour" of volume 1, *THE CREATION OF PATRIARCHY*. But collectively it took women in Western civilization 1300 years to write this book, an exploration of our coming to awareness of our own history--and our relationship to recorded history.

History of Women Religious

In Chapter 2, Lerner presents the first answer to the question of why patriarchy lasted so long: it systematically excluded women from education or disadvantaged them educationally compared to their brothers. As a result, women have been deprived of authority. In Chapters 3-10, Lerner shows how various women gained authority in alternative ways--through direct mystic contact with God, through motherhood, and through sheer genius and creativity.

The second critical factor undermining women's development was that men defined women as persons outside history, thus denying them any knowledge of the work of their predecessors. This exclusion, along with restriction from education, formed "truly the most oppressive aspect of women's condition under patriarchy" (280), argues Lerner.

Beginning with Hilda of Whitby, continuing with Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen, Christine de Pisan, Sor Juana de la Cruz, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Goldman, Simone de Beauvoir, and many others, Lerner demonstrates how "women, ignorant of their history, had to reinvent the wheel over and over again" (268).

For over 900 years--from Hrosvitha to Harriet Beecher Stowe--the rights simply to think and to write remained controversial. Lerner painfully documents how "woman after thinking woman argued her way out of patriarchal confinement and constraints"--unaware that similar arguments had been worked out hundreds of years earlier by other women, unable to "test and improve their ideas by being in dialogue with the women thinkers before them" (281).

In her preface, Lerner gives us a glimpse of the personal toll this book took: "It was the most difficult work I have ever done because the scope of women's difficulties, losses and disap-

pointments, the horrifying tragedy of wasted talents and energy extending over the centuries and millennia, became more visible to me than it had ever before" (x).

The good news in the book is the central role of women religious in claiming authority to think and write, in establishing the right to education, in becoming participants in public discourse, and in documenting individual lives and then group histories. In Chapter 7, entitled "One Thousand Years of Feminist Biblical Criticism," Lerner shows how women beginning with Hildegard of Bingen and Christine de Pisan engaged in theological reinterpretation of the passages in Genesis and St. Paul that had been used to justify the subordination of women.

Lerner says that the most important thing she learned in writing her earlier work on patriarchy was "the significance to women of their relationship to the Divine and the profound impact the severing of that relationship had on the history of women" (vii).

This book is worth reading simply as an introduction to a large number of significant, courageous women who were not included in the history classes of the past. But Lerner's main contribution in *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* is the clarity with which she perceives the sweep of Western history--both the 4000 years since patriarchy took hold and the 1300-year period during which women became aware of the wrongs they had suffered, realized that these were socially determined, and began to join with other women to remedy them.

In her conclusion, Lerner asserts that "now, the period of patriarchal hegemony over culture has come to an end. ...Women do not as yet have power over institutions, over the state, over law. But the theoretical insights modern feminist scholarship has already achieved have the power to shatter the patriarchal paradigm." Efforts to halt the transformation can retard the process "but they cannot stop it" (283).

A subject covering so many years and such a large geographical area is certainly daunting, and History of Women Religious

specialists may have disagreements with Lerner's handling of certain women or topics, but the breadth of her earlier work in women's history certainly qualified her and led her to a project of this scope. In addition to 283 pages of text, Lerner offers 47 pages of notes, a 46-page bibliography, and a detailed index.

Anne Eggebroten

Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA

ARCHIVAL NEWS

Denis Sennet, SA, has compiled a workbook-style source compendium, *A DIVINE LEGACY: Records Keeping for Religious Congregations/Orders*, to assist archivists or records managers in the administration and appraisal of material for their collections. For copies, contact the author at Friars of the Atonement Archives, Graymoor - P.O. Box 300, Garrison, NY 10524-0300.

The Monroe IHMs continue to work with the help of a substantial gift for capital improvements to their archives. Further information on this effort may be obtained from Rose Matthew Mangini, IHM, who is the new archivist.

SPECIAL REPORT

by

Mary Hayes, SND
Book Review Editor

In an interview for *NEWS AND NOTES*, Sister Mada-Anne Gell, VHM, archivist for the Georgetown Visitation Monastery and second Federation of the Visitandines in the United States, shares the lessons she learned from the fire that destroyed the central building of Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School on July 8, 1993.

This central section of the school was in many ways the repository of the history of Visitation. Built in 1873, it contained the school archives, parlors with valuable antique furniture and religious art, the Archbishop Leonard Neale Room, filled with precious artifacts from the first decades of the school and a small museum-like room on the fourth floor, also containing material artifacts.

The fire began on the roof where workers had been using a heat gun to strip paint. It then spread to the attic and to the fourth floor, the site of the school archives. By 10:00 P.M., six hours after it had begun, the fire seemingly had been extinguished. But it reerupted at 2:00 A.M., completing the destruction of the 120 year old building and causing severe water damage to the chapel which separated the school from the monastery.

Although the loss was extensive and will reach several million dollars, the fire was contained to this section of the complex, sparing both the 1830 and 1850 wings of the monastery and the other wings of the high school. In her interview, Sister Mada-Anne noted that ten years ago Visitation had erected 150 fire doors. The presence of these doors effectively contained the fire and saved the monastery. They also may have contributed to the almost miraculous survival of the school archives which were discovered water-logged and somewhat burned at the edges, next to the elevator shaft. With the assistance of a disaster recovery team, and a legion of volunteers working in relays, these records were boxed and shipped soaking wet to a lab for flash-freezing. As visible testimony, the fire-charred silhouette of the elevator shaft rises eerily in the gutted frame; abutting the shaft on what was once the fourth floor, a fire door still stands.

In addition to the safety provided by the fire doors, other circumstances combined to mitigate the worst effects of the loss, including a slow moving fire that enabled faculty, staff and friends to retrieve precious artifacts from the lower floors, while priests removed an invaluable painting from the chapel donated to Visitation by Charles X of France.

Secondly, Visitation has begun to plan for the celebration of its bicentennial in 1999-2000. Providentially one of the projects already completed is a video and photographic documentation of the furniture and art collection. For insurance purposes this identification is essential. Sister Mada-Anne stresses the importance of

documenting not only the paintings but also the markings on the back of the canvas. She urges curators and archivists to provide off-site copies of this documentation which Visitation fortunately had done. The school archives however, did not have an off-site record. Had they not been recovered, the loss would have been incomparable. Current school records are located in a site untouched by the fire, yet it underlined the importance of back up disks for these records.

Sister Mada-Anne also urges an inventory for the sacristy. Visitation did not have one and was thus unaware of the valuable vestments which they owned. Institutions need both an inventory and a plan for the conservation and restoration of textiles.

Institutions would also evaluate the capacity of their sprinkler systems and upgrade them if necessary. Visitation had an adequate, working system but it was an old system that sprinkled downward while the fire spread from above.

Georgetown Visitation benefitted from its location in Washington, D.C., which is a museum city filled with museum professionals. Within hours of the widely publicized outbreak of the fire, many of these professionals volunteered their services. Yet most of our institutions are not so fortunately located. Lacking this advantage, we need a comprehensive plan that includes the identification of resources for immediate, quick response.

As planned, Georgetown Visitation opened its new school year on September 7, 1993, utilizing a combination of space untouched by the fire, other buildings on campus, and eight mobile classrooms. The school not only opened on time but with an increase in enrollment from last year, prompted in part no doubt by the inspiration all of us received as we watched TV reports of the fire and witnessed the heroism and hope of faculty, staff and students, as well as the love they have for their school.

One of two grants given to Catholic institutions by the National Historical Publications and Records

Commission (NHPRC) went to Georgetown Visitation Monastery: \$3,600 to develop its archival program. For information on this grant program contact NHPRC-NP, Room 607, National Archives Building, Washington, DC, 20408, telephone (202) 501-5610. The next deadline for proposals is October 1, 1993.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

The Gannon Center at Loyola University, Chicago, was dedicated in May in honor of Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, president of Mundelein College from 1957 to 1975 and known for her educational leadership both regionally and nationally. The Center will house the women's studies program, the Gannon Institute for Women in Leadership, and a study area.

Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, has been selected to appear on Ireland's new five pound note. A panel of the Central Bank selected her along with Daniel O'Connell, James Joyce, Douglas Hyde, and Charles Stewart Parnell to be featured on the new 5, 10, 50, and 100 pound notes. The criterion was persons who significantly affected Irish society and culture.

OPPORTUNITIES

A conference on "The Role of Women's Religious Orders in Education" is scheduled for March 12, 1994 at D'Youville College. Proposals for papers or panels (3 related papers) on the subject are invited; the primary focus will be Western New York, but papers on similar topics in other localities will be welcome for purposes of comparison. Address inquiries and proposal abstracts (300 words), completed papers, or panel proposals, including names and addresses of participants, to Ruth Reilly Kelly, Coordinator-1994 Women's Conference, D'Youville College, 320 Porter Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201-1084. Deadline: December 15, 1993.

Richard J. Altenbaugh, editor of the soon to be published *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION*, is seeking contributors. Greenwood Press is the publisher for the volume which is to consist of about 400 articles on eminent people and important topics related to the development of American public, private, and parochial schools. Interested potential contributors should contact Prof. Altenbaugh at Slippery Rock University, ELEC, Slippery Rock, PA 16057-1326.

Editors of *THE BIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EDUCATORS IN THE UNITED STATES* (working title) invite all interested scholars to begin thinking of contributions they would like to make to the project which is to consist of a multi-volume collection of scholarly biographies of exemplary United States educators, including practitioners, theorists, and researchers. Send suggestions regarding topics, categories, or educational issues that should be represented through biographies to Prof. Courtney Ann Vaughn, Dept. of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please have copy for the February issue to the editor by January 1, 1994.

THE HWR NEWSLETTER

Published by the Conference on History of Women Religious
12001 Chalon Road
Los Angeles, CA 90049-1599

ISSN:1054-545X
Annual Subscription: \$5.00

Editor: Karen Kennelly, CSJ
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