

The Feminist Threat to the Church – part VIII

by Patricia Phillips

In the last article on radical feminism, we saw that the dissenting group *Catholic Women's Network* has changed its name to *Women Word Spirit*. Lo and behold, attempts are *still* being made – by themselves and by their Episcopal protectors - to keep it listed in the Catholic Directory – although it was omitted from the 2007 edition due to a slip-up by CWN/WWS.

In the September 2006 issue of *Network*, on pages 8/ 9 of the Annual Report, the matter of CWN/WWS being listed in local Catholic directories, and in the national Catholic directory was raised. On page 8, the group stated that it will be listed in three diocesan directories, namely, Brentwood, Cardiff and Westminster, followed by the wording of the entry. It then went on to state:-

“National Catholic Directory – It is unlikely that the above (entry) or an alternative will appear in the next edition. An attempt was made to change the entry to Women Word Spirit, which involved writing out a new application to meet criteria and supplying a constitution. As WWS and CWN are the same organisation, things got confused. The deadline was 30 April 2006. Veronica Seddon sent a simple and clear letter on 30th April 2006 and we were subsequently offered an extension, but I was still away. The last letter from the Catholic Directory Panel was dated 17 May 2006 and included the following paragraph: “*You will know of the criticisms regularly levelled against the Catholic Directory Panel for its inclusion of CWN as a Catholic organisation; our defence has always been CWN's declaration that they acknowledge and accept the authentic teaching of the Church. You will understand therefore the Panel's requirement that Women Word Spirit make a formal application to be registered under the new name, with the same assurance of orthodoxy which your detractors will again undoubtedly dispute . . . (In any future application). I believe it would be proper for your self-description in that application to make clear the continuity of WWS with CWN, as the context of its implicit claim to orthodoxy 'as formally written and as corporately pursued' ”. This is unbelievable! Why are this panel bending over backwards to get this openly dissenting group into the Catholic Directory? – telling them that as long as they *claim* to be orthodox, they can be treated as such – no matter what they do or say to oppose or undermine orthodoxy!*

This is a continuation of the disastrous and dishonest policy of Bishop Vincent Malone, who has always done his utmost to advise this notorious group how to remain in the *Catholic Directory*. A couple of years ago, on page 17 of the September 2005 issue of *Network*, CWN stated the following in a letter to Bishop Malone:-

“We note that you are concerned that the reports in the Catholic Herald may have some substance, and because of this, you want CWN to: 1) include, with each controversial article in the journal ‘Network’ a specific note pointing out that it does not reflect the position of CWN as an organisation but expresses the opinion of the author only (rather than including a general disclaimer as is done at present) . . .”

You couldn't make this up. Even though he clearly has concerns that reports in a Catholic paper of CWN's dissent have *“some substance”*, instead of examining this and questioning why CWN continually has *“controversial”* – i.e. dissenting articles in its journal, Bishop Malone just wants them to put a specific disclaimer against each one, to safeguard them against criticism! As if that makes everything all right! On page 18 of the same journal, a letter from CWN to Bishop Malone reveals that he asked for CWN's *“help”* in responding to letters from Catholics who were complaining to him about the inclusion of CWN in the Catholic Directory. Why should a bishop seek help from an openly dissenting group to defend their erroneous positions against the complaints of those who fully accept Magisterial teaching? Most odd. But then this is the same bishop who recently wrote a piece in a book wondering if it might be possible for women to hear confessions or administer the Sacrament of the Sick in the future.

And so the episcopally-protected dissent continues. In the September 2006 issue of *Network*, this group that allegedly *“acknowledges and accepts the authentic teaching of the Church”*:-

- On page 7:- identifies its links to, and membership of, various dissenting groups, when it states:- *“Women Word Spirit, the voice of catholic women's network Annual Report”*. In section 4: *“Links in the UK and Europe”*. Among dissenting links listed are:- *“European Network – Church on the Move. CWN is a member together with other UK groups such as Catholics for a Changing Church, Catholic Women's Ordination, We Are Church, St Joan's Alliance.”* The section also states:- *“Other groups on whose activities we report include the RC Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, Living Spirituality Network, Catholics for a Free Choice, Catholic Women's Ordination and Women's Ordination Worldwide, We Are Church, Catholics for a Changing Church, CAFOD and other social groups”*. It goes without saying that all reports given by CWN/WWS on the activities of these groups are entirely favourable.
- On page 13:- heard at its *“Core”* meeting on July 10th 2006, how John Wijngaard's Catherine of Siena Virtual College had difficulties with officialdom which considered the notion of *‘empowerment’* for women not to be a charitable cause (this *‘virtual college’* is pro-women priests propaganda. See <http://www.womenpriests.org/net/instit.asp>)

- On pages 14 and 15 gives favourable accounts of the Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology event, which was addressed by Marcella Althaus-Reid, who describes herself as a “Queer Theologian”. One of the accounts states that Marcella “*questions heterosexual knowing and the assumptions of heteronormativity within feminist theology*”. It goes on: “*Queer theology is a political theology, an incarnated body theology taking on not only desire but pleasure. More specifically, she (Marcella) sees S&M as a possible way to recognition and liberation, provided it happens within a justice setting*”. On page 16 Marcella states that we need to “*queer the politics of crucifixion*”.
- On page 18 promotes the work of the dissenting group Catholics for a Changing Church. A quote from the piece states that someone called John Davis:- “*supports the idea that if the Bishops of England and Wales collectively decided to ordain married men, there is little the Vatican could do about it. ‘How can an absolute dictator claim to be the servant of the servants of God?’ He finishes by saying that it is time we stood up to be counted: we outnumber the clergy by 99 to 1*”
- On page 18 promotes the Spring/Summer 2006 bulletin for the Association for Inclusive Language group, which is a special issue on Liturgies for Civil Partnerships
- On pages 19/20 publishes a letter ferociously attacking the Australian Catholic Women’s League’s resolution to have St Maria Goretti as Patroness of the Innocence of Children
- On page 20 under the title “Ordination”, congratulates June Boyce-Tillman, a long-standing member of WWS/CWN, “*who is to be ordained Deacon at Holy Trinity Church in Wimbledon on October 1st*”, and gives their “*best wishes to her on her journey towards the Anglican Priesthood*”;
- On page 22 promotes the Soho Masses of the dissident group Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement.
- On page 23 promotes the Catholic Women’s Ordination vigils outside Westminster Cathedral and St Mary’s Cathedral in Edinburgh

Also, in the December 2006 issue of *Network*, this group that allegedly “*acknowledges and accepts the authentic teaching of the Church*”:-

- On pages 22/23 reviews the recent London conference “A Vision of Ministry and Priesthood for Tomorrow’s Church in a Changing World”, organised by the dissenting group *North Atlantic Federation for a Renewed Priesthood*. The article states:- “There were three speakers: Anthony Padovano, writer and expert in church renewal, on Catholic Ministry Redefined; Verena Wright (who is a CWN/WWS member) lecturer and editor of *Healing Priesthood: Women’s Voices Worldwide*, on the voice of women; and John Wijngaards, director of ‘Housetop’ and of a website on women priests, who spoke about the

laicisation of the ministerial priesthood. **It was taken for granted by all three speakers that the ordained priesthood should be opened to women, so this aspect was not specifically dealt with.** The article also states:- “Out of the afternoon’s input from the floor and general discussion and comments by the speakers came some valuable insights, particularly about hope for the future. This included the suggestion that before any major change, a groundswell of opposition was built up, and this was now happening. The Magisterium has lost much of its teaching credibility”

- On page 23 promotes “Conscience”, the journal of the dissenting group Catholics for a Free Choice. Apparently, the Autumn 2006 edition of “Conscience” contained a series of articles on the theme “Whatever Happened to Childhood?”. An interesting question coming from an organisation that vociferously promotes abortion and contraception.
- On page 24 promotes an event being jointly organised by Women Word Spirit/Catholic Women’s Ordination for 5-8 April, Easter 2007.
- On page 25 promotes the Soho Masses of the dissident group Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement.
- On page 25 promotes the Catholic Women’s Ordination vigils outside Westminster Cathedral and St Mary’s Cathedral in Edinburgh

And in the March 2007 issue of *Network*, this group that allegedly “*acknowledges and accepts the authentic teaching of the Church*”:-

- On page 3 in the editorial, promotes the writings of dissident homosexual ‘theologian’ James Alison (www.thetablet.co.uk/pages/jamesalison)
- On page 18, promotes a booklet calling for, among other things, the ordination of women, published by the dissenting group *Catholics for a Changing Church* titled “*Women and the Roman Catholic Church – Wasted Potential and Unrecognised Achievement*”.
- On page 21, gave a glowing report of an event held to celebrate the 80th birthday of notorious dissident Ianthe Pratt, including “*many members of Women Word Spirit/Catholic Women’s Network, together with Catholic Women’s Ordination, the Association for Inclusive Language, St Joan’s Alliance, and others . . .*”
- On page 24, promotes the contents of “Conscience”, which is the journal of the pro-abortion/pro-contraception group *Catholics for a Free Choice*
- On page 24, promotes the contents of RENEW, which is the journal of the dissenting UK group *Catholics for a Changing Church*
- On page 25, promotes “Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies” Quote from the review: “ . . . *the topics covered include the growth of contemporary Paganism in Canada, goddess spirituality and nature in New Zealand, nature and technology in*

feminist witchcraft, and nature and ethnicity in East European Paganism.”

- On page 27, promotes the Masses run by the dissenting homosexual group *Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement*.
- On page 27, promotes the *Catholic Women’s Ordination* vigils in Westminster and Edinburgh.

As I have shown in previous articles, the umbrella women’s organisation *National Board of Catholic Women*, and in particular the off-shoot named the *Joint Dialogue Group*, are heavily infiltrated by listed or known CWN/WWS members/supporters. The *Joint Dialogue Group* held an Open Conference in Coventry in January 2007 which attracted “70 women, 8 priests, a deacon and Bishops Vincent Malone and Kieran Conry”. It was interesting to note that the CWN/WWS wrote an article about this event on page 23 of the March 2007 issue of *Network*, in which the author stated “There were several friendly faces there from CWN/WWS and many other women were open and easy to talk to”.

Listed CWN/WWS members are still regularly invited to speak publicly on Catholic premises. One recent example is the ubiquitous Tina Beattie. Beattie’s extremely dubious views on abortion have been published in the dissenting journal *The Tablet* (<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/articles/1510>) and she has been public in her support for women’s ordination – even writing a commendation on one of John Wijngaard’s Women Priests campaign leaflets. Also, acting in her capacity as President of the *Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain*, she wrote a letter to the *Tablet* on 24 March 2007 rebuking the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for its censure of dissident theologian Fr Jon Sobrino, yet in spite of all this, she was recently invited to speak in the Cathedral Hall of Nottingham Diocese, and her talk was advertised on the Cathedral’s website.

For concerned Catholics who would be good enough to write and complain to those in authority about the matter of CWN/WWS being (a) listed in the Catholic Directory; and (b) a constituent member of the NBCW, the following three things can be cited as absolute proof of its dissent:-

- 1) Despite its claim not to be pro-abortion, CWN, as an organisation, co-signed a pro-abortion/contraception document by the group “*Catholics for a Free Choice*, titled “*A Faith-Filled Commitment to Development Includes a Commitment to Women’s Rights and Reproductive Health*”, (see <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/news/pr/2005/documents/mdqreligiousenglish.pdf>)
- 2) CWN, as an organisation, made an open declaration supporting the aims of *Women’s Ordination Worldwide*, which was

published in the CWN journal *Network* in September 2001. This declaration stated:- *“Women’s Ordination Worldwide, International Conference, Dublin, June 2001. From: Catholic Women’s Network. ‘Catholic Women’s Network believes that the gospel speaks about freedom from oppression and calls women to full participation in all aspects of life and the church as a matter of justice. We strongly endorse the aims of the world-wide movement for the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church, and of the recent conference in Dublin, for a renewal of priesthood within transformed and inclusive structures, where women’s gifts are welcomed and accepted. We believe that it is totally wrong to attempt to ban serious debate, reflection and research of this issue. We commend the vision of those who initiated the conference and are grateful that it has re-energised us all to work more vigorously for the above aims. Catholic Women’s Network*

3) CWN/WWS’s “starter pack”, issued in June 2006, states on page 1 that the title WWS is *“a more inclusive and descriptive name which also recognises that the membership has always included many women from other denominations or none”*. It goes on to say that CWN was founded in 1984 and went through a process of *“‘denouncing’ aspects of church which inhibit women’s participation and ‘announcing’ a new vision of how church could be”*. The group also *“identified strategies for bringing about change . . . in our church institutions”*. On page 2 it states that *“WWS feels that the contribution women can make as responsible Christians, gifted in the spirit, to the RC Church is often ignored; in particular women are excluded from the ordained ministry and thereby from the leadership in the church . . .”* On page 5 of the pack, WWS proudly shows its networking links with other dissenting groups, even giving website/e-mail addresses so that they can be contacted – in other words, helping to spread and promote dissent. WWS’s networking group list contains all the usual pro-abortion/contraception, pro-homosexual and pro-women’s ordination groups, which CWN have long promoted and supported:-

- *Association for Inclusive Language*
- *Catholics for a Changing Church*
- *Catholic Womens’ Ordination / Women’s Ordination Worldwide*
- *Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement*
- *Living Spirituality Network*
- *European Network – Church on the Move*
- *Catholics for a Free Choice*

(see <http://www.womenwordspirit.org/otherwebs/index.html> for this starter pack. This webpage also contains the WWS documents *“How to plan women’s liturgies/rituals”* and *“Create your own mandalas”*)

There is clearly enough evidence here to show that CWN/WWS does not “*acknowledge and accept the authentic teaching of the Church*” so it is high time that our hierarchy stopped assisting them. As there is every sign of the bishops’ support for CWN/WWS continuing, then we *must* petition Rome. Remember, “*Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it*” (Pope St. Felix III).

Our Blessed Lady of Good Success, pray for us!