

# Daughters of Sarah



OUR  
ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATING  
10 YEARS  
TOGETHER

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# Daughters of Sarah

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## Editorial

# Passing the Torch

We have survived for ten years. From a faded mimeographed copy sent to two hundred people in 1974, *Daughters of Sarah* has grown to thirty-two pages and a cover. Between three and four thousand people read it every two months.

That's not phenomenal growth, of course. We're not *Time* or *Ms.*, or even *Sojourners*. We've done very little advertising, so we continually get letters from people who wonder where we've been all their lives. We've operated on a shoestring budget and never go out on a financial limb for fancy office space or slick graphics.

But we have tried to be faithful in our commitment to the integration of feminism and Christianity. In this effort we have been affirmed by many responses from both women and men who share what *Daughters of Sarah* has meant on their spiritual journeys.

For this issue we've asked several women who have roots in *Daughters of Sarah* or who have been at the forefront of the biblical feminist movement these last ten years to reminisce about the past for us, and dream about the future. It's exciting to assign the same topic to five persons—Anne Eggebroten, Lucille Sider Groh, Nancy Hardesty, Virginia Mollenkott and Letha Scanzoni—and get back such varied, creative responses.

As usual, we get bogged down with names and labels. Are we evangelical feminists or biblical feminists or simple Christian feminists, or parts of all three? *Daughters of Sarah* was born in an evangelical setting, and proper interpretation of biblical passages affecting women

has always been a high priority. But through the years evangelicalism has broadened out, as Nancy Hardesty notes in her reflection. And we've acquired readers from many different backgrounds—Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches as well as traditional evangelical churches, Mennonites or charismatics. You'll hear more about that in our March/April issue when we print the results of our survey.

Who are the women behind the magazine? Who actually slugs through all those subscription orders, rejects most of the manuscripts, or trudges to the post office with twenty-six bags of magazines for bulk mailing?

As one might guess, we do not run a hierarchical organization. We aim for mutual submission to each other, and try to make our decisions by consensus. We pay some of our members for part-time work, but all of us try to volunteer about three hours a month. In our efforts to be inclusive, we've listed names, but not titles, of all our active members on the inside front or back cover of the magazine.

It's just as well we don't include a regular masthead; we could hardly keep up with the changes. Each year the people-mix is a little different, as women take new jobs, retire, have babies, or feel called to different ministries.

Tuesdays and Thursdays find three staff persons in the office—Andria Anderson, Annette Huizenga and Reta Finger. Andria and Annette co-manage the office, handling subscriptions, correspondence, mailings, book orders, finances and a thousand details necessary for survival. Annette also works as Book Review Editor. As Editorial Coordinator, I correspond with authors, do the copy editing, and prepare all material for typesetting. Evelyn Montgomery, a plucky grandmother who has been with us

# 40 Years to Go...

by Anne Eggebroten

Feminism rooted in the Bible and in Jesus Christ is so deep a part of my perspective on life that it is hard to imagine life without it. Yet ten years ago the phrase "biblical feminism" did not exist. The movement that would eventually adopt that identification was just beginning. In August, 1974, *All We're Meant to Be* was published; in November Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC) was founded; and in December *Daughters of Sarah* (DoS) appeared for the first time.

Where was I in 1974? I was floundering as a woman who claimed to be both a Christian and a feminist. At the few NOW meetings I visited, my clean-cut Christianity made me suspect; at my church, people made efforts to correct me in such areas as keeping my own name and endeavoring to have an equal partnership marriage. I was very alone and needed support, but there was no book that agreed with my views (I had checked them all), no DoS, no EWC.

Today, in 1984, I am deeply immersed in the work and friendships of EWC. I take for granted the existence of *All We're Meant to Be* and its many successors, buying them but frequently not reading them. The bimonthly arrival of DoS is no longer a moment to drop everything and read it; instead, I feel friendly recognition and affirmation of my choices but often place the actual reading of the issue on the back burner.

There is another major contrast between my life then and now. In 1974 I was deeply involved in a large evangelical church and tied to the evangelical community in many ways. However, the pain of encountering constant sexism was too great. I later left that church and today

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have no ties to the evangelical community—except EWC and magazines. Because the church I attend does not really preach the gospel as I understand it (I attend as a missionary), all my spiritual growth, biblical teaching and fellowship come through EWC.

In other ways my life has changed since 1974. Then I was in graduate school studying medieval English literature, and I was 26 years old. Now I am in junior college teaching English composition, 36 years old. In 1974 I didn't desire or expect to have a child; today I have a two-year-old daughter (who bears my surname), and I am pregnant with a second child. In 1974 I was just beginning to think that perhaps it was okay that abortions had become legal. Today, having experienced the weariness, pain, and sexist treatment of pregnancies begun by choice, I cannot imagine forcing a woman to complete a pregnancy she does not want. In 1974 I believed homosexual relations to be a sin, and I didn't know that I knew any homosexuals. Today I have close friendships with three lesbians and a large number of acquaintances among gays and lesbians. I believe that the church needs to offer them understanding and oppose the persecution they experience; I support homosexual marriage.

The political world around me has changed in the last ten years, and the changes have influenced my outlook on life. In 1974 the ERA was receiving an upsurge of support; state after state was ratifying, and victory seemed close at hand. There was no such thing as the Human Life Amendment (HLA)\*. Organized antifeminism had not yet appeared, but Total Woman seminars were advertised at

evangelical churches, and the misuse of the Bible by people teaching women how to be "feminine" made me very angry. I had a very short fuse and felt compelled to "Combat Total Woman," as I titled one workshop at the first EWC conference.

Today there are huge antifeminist forces active in the political arena, and most of them are using the churches as their base. The names of the leaders of several groups in the submission movement have become household words: Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly, Bev LaHaye. Today the ERA is a has-been to everyone except its faithful supporters: the HLA is the amendment gaining support, even from the President.

Nevertheless, in spite of the growth of these antifeminist forces based in the

my attitude. I can go to an EWC conference and hear these forces analyzed sociologically. I now see them as a fact of life like mosquitoes—irritating, but not worth dedicating my life to their eradication. They will eventually be exposed in their true nature and will be defeated. I feel confident that right will triumph eventually. Sometimes I even feel patient about waiting.

That's my story. But what about the biblical feminist movement as a whole? It is now ten years old. We as a movement are wealthier and better organized than we were in those first struggling years. We are better at doing what we are doing. For evidence, look at the evolution of the cover of DoS. Look at the budgets and

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church, I feel more confident facing them today than I felt ten years ago in facing the comparatively mild Total Woman phenomenon. The existence of the biblical feminist movement makes the difference in

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**\*The Human Life Amendment to the Constitution (HLA)** would make abortion a crime in all cases, including pregnancy by rape and incest, including pregnancy in which the mother's life is in danger. It would set aside the Supreme Court decision in 1973 (*Roe vs. Wade*) that made abortion in the first two trimesters legal.

organizational structures of both DoS and EWC—and the addition of "I" (International) to EWC's name. Neither is about to go under, though in the early years it often looked as if EWC might not survive, and the other biblical magazine, *free indeed*, did expire. (Thank you, Diane Iepsen and Jan Abramsen, for your valiant efforts.) *All We're Meant to Be* has been reprinted several times and in 1985 will come out in a new, revised edition; it has turned out to be the foremother of an entire second generation of biblical feminist books. In the years from 1974 to 1984, our movement has become strong and well-

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established, though it still includes only a small percentage of the evangelical community.

A second fact about the biblical feminist movement today is evident in our publications and was felt at the recent national EWC conference. Many of us are growing beyond the personal issues that first attracted us to the movement. We are growing into awareness of other issues that for many years seemed to be none of our business as biblical feminists. We are becoming opposed to nuclear armaments and sensing that both our Christianity and our feminism call us to speak to this issue. We are becoming advocates for Third World women and again feel doubly called to involvement in world economics and hunger issues. Some of us are seeing the need for abortion to remain legal—and at the same time seeing the larger need for women to have enough support not to have to choose abortion. Some of us are becoming aware of the persecution and rejection that homosexual persons experience in our society, especially from the church. We are feeling a desire to support them as they “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.” In various ways biblical feminists are becoming involved in social issues, elections, legislation, and influencing our legislators. Not all

However, though small in numbers and financially very weak compared to the opposition, we remember that historically God has worked through those who are poor and through small bands of faithful followers. We have a life expectancy of at least fifty years. At age ten, we are digging into our task amidst great opposition.

It is time to take ourselves seriously as a movement with a job of at least fifty years duration. In the past ten years we have often felt ourselves to be an unneeded, unwanted small group of oddballs who could soon be forced to shut down for lack of money. Let’s take ourselves seriously and give financially to biblical feminism. Let’s become long-term activists for our movement, working into our lives the time to do the things that keep biblical feminism going. Let’s not take what we have already won for granted and then rush on to other missions. It’s easier not to invest time in sharing that good news with others—doing mailings, putting out flyers, planning and attending meetings, and so on. We must also fight the tendency to burn out and drop out after a few years of work.

Finally, I suggest that we take ourselves seriously by examining our relations to other movements. What does

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of us agree on these issues, but all of us are thinking and changing.

Let us now consider the future. Is biblical feminism on the decline, a ‘70s fad now passe? Is it a perspective most Christian women don’t need? Is it a small group that will die out as the Reagan/Falwell forces march through the ‘80s?

No. It is growing more and more solid. Like the YWCA and the WCTU, it arose to meet a need. That need is still there, and women are finding DoS, EWC and Christian feminist books despite enormous propaganda from the submission movement.

biblical feminism have to say about nuclear weapons? about Third World women? about hunger or abortion? Some of us biblical feminists have felt uncalled or afraid to deal with these issues over the last ten years. It is time to confront these immediate and thorny issues of our day. We have at least forty years to go.

ANNE EGGBROTON lives in Daly City, California, with her husband John Arthur and two-year-old daughter. She teaches English at City College, San Francisco.

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## **“These Walls of Sexism Shall Fall!”**

by Judith Corrigan

The procession wends its way slowly down the left aisle of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the mother church of the Archdiocese of Boston. In the long line march scores of priests, several bishops and even a prince of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is a hot June Saturday in 1983—Ordination Day for Boston. As the eleven men to be ordained file solemnly down the aisle, no less than three choirs are singing, trying to lead the large congregation in a rendition of “Lord Jesus Come.” But the voices sound tinny, like an old radio, as they filter through the cathedral’s ancient public address system.

Humberto Cardinal Medeiros blesses the people as he walks down the aisle. Three seminarians follow him, one of them holding the lectionary, the Word of God. Before him, before his bishops, before his priests and the ordinands, walks the crossbearer, setting the painfully slow pace.

The body depicted on the cross is the body of a Male, and that is why, with the single exception of a female lector, the many people following the cross down the aisle are males.

After the scripture readings and the proclamation of the Gospel, the rite of ordination begins as the deacon of the mass calls each of the eleven candidates by name. Each responds in turn, “I am ready and willing,” affirming a desire to serve God’s people in the Church.

As the last candidate is called, five women who have been sitting quietly on the left aisle stand and walk to the front, crossing the cathedral single file. They are members of the Boston Women’s Ordination Conference. They are also ready and willing, but their names cannot be called, and they feel excluded from the Church. They want to be able to participate in this rite of ordination themselves.