

The Divine Dance: Partners in Remembering, Revisioning, and Reweaving
by
Martha A. Robbins, Th.D.

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In the Spring of 1995, Lawrence Sullivan, Professor of the History of Religions at Harvard University, spoke to the Harvard Divinity School Alums on the topic of "Religion, Death and Spirituality."¹ In describing some of the mourning rituals performed throughout the world, one ritual in particular captured my imagination, that of the Kogi Indians of South America.²

The Kogi Indians live in a world which is like a spindle.³ The sun shines on the central shaft of the spindle. Through the course of the year, the sun winds around the spindle, and in so doing weaves the "Thread of Life."⁴ The Thread of Life is drawn out of the soil, just like plants are drawn out by the sunshine from the soil. As the sun makes its way around the central spindle, laurels of life take shape. They take shape in nine bundles -- one for each month of gestation and one for each of the epochs of a fully lived life. At the time one dies, some divination is made to determine at what point the person has arrived in these nine bundles of life. If one has died prior to arriving in the ninth epoch of life, the community, through ritual and symbolic action, may create the rest of the nine bundles of life and thus bring the dead person's life to completion. When this ritual is fulfilled, then the living have an obligation to literally disentangle themselves from the threads that bound them to the dead person.

At the beginning of the funeral ritual, the Kogi tie the corpse in a fetal position and sew it into an envelope of white cotton cloth edged with sisal fibers or threads. Standing at the graveside, the Kogi first entangle themselves in these threads, winding them into an umbilical-like rope that is pulled taut and held until the grave is filled with dirt. Then the participants begin dancing their way away from the gravesite toward the village turning in one direction. They unwind themselves nine times, until they have disentangled themselves symbolically from the threads that bound them to the physical presence of their loved one.⁵

Nine days later, the people reapproach the gravesite, dancing and turning in the opposite direction, singing a collection of songs that they acquired or inherited from the dead. These

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songs are collected by the people with the help of a priestly leader, who decides whether or not they are appropriate. When the people sing these songs, they are chanting themselves back into attachment with the dead in an immaterial way. The threads of attachment, therefore, are rewoven symbolically through song and dance, and as such are real and binding. Once back at the gravesite, the priest cuts the sisal cord, which the Kogi believe, permits the dead person to be reborn into another world.⁶ The religious traditions of the Kogi help guide them as a community in this ritual of death and rebirth and the rechannelling of attachment into memory.⁷

Three major movements with correlated processes can be ascertained in this dance ritual. First, by becoming entangled in the threads of the person's shroud and then unraveling these threads, the community is engaged in the task of remembering. Secondly, as the people search for and gather the appropriate songs from among the community with the aid of a priestly leader, they are engaged in the task of revisioning new ways of being in relationship with the dead person and with each other. Thirdly, through the singing and dancing of these songs, they are engaged in the task of reweaving the threads of connection in a richer and more complex symbolic pattern.

This personal and communal activity of remembering, revisioning, and reweaving, however, takes place in a context that gives it its creative power. The context for the Kogi's dance is their religious worldview that sees all the threads of life- all life forms -as inextricably interwoven. Each thread of life is born, grows, matures, dies, and is reborn through the light and warmth of the sun as it winds around the spindle of their world. The Kogi's weaving dance partakes in the sacred mystery of Life that permeates their world view.

I suggest that pastoral ministry participates in a Divine Dance through which we are invited and empowered to be partners in remembering, revisioning, and reweaving. How, then, are we to speak of the Divine Dance in the context of our Judaeo-Christian world view? With whom are we to be partners in remembering, revisioning, reweaving? What is the music or song that inspires our steps? In order to address these questions, I first will describe briefly the historical-cultural context of our world today and show how we are entangled in the threads of a cultural crisis that suggests the end of an era. Then I will suggest that the Judeo-Christian biblical and theological tradition is one of engaging boldly in the activity of remembering,

revisioning, and reweaving. And lastly, I will show how pastoral ministry is an ongoing Divine Dance of the people of God as they continue to remember, revision, and reweave in today's world.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

None of us is immune to the enormous changes that are taking place in our world today. Theologian Peter Hodgson, drawing from Landon Gilkey's⁸ cultural analysis, identifies five signs of cultural crisis that are challenging both the way in which we understand the God-world relationship and the way we dwell humanly in the world. In his book Revisioning the Church, Hodgson describes how the threads of our woven patterns of meaning have become unraveled in the intellectual, historical, political, socioeconomical and religious domains of our lives.⁹

In recent decades, we have seen human intellectual creativity reveal its ambiguous and potentially lethal character through the double-edged sword of technical advancement. Nuclear technology, once touted as a boon to humanity, is clouded by its ability to totally destroy humanity and other life forms. Advances in medical technology have brought about ethical and legal questions that have no definitive answers. Industrial technologies have resulted in severe disparities in the distribution of goods and severe threats to the natural environment. Computer technology and the world wide web have altered the way we do business and relate to others.

Historically, the deep experience of evil in the twentieth century -- two World Wars, the Holocaust, Vietnam, Bosnia -- has shaken confidence in the Judaeo-Christian belief in "salvation history" in which the good will have the final victory over evil and its secular counterpart of a theory of progress based on human accomplishment and control of our destiny. Politically, we have experienced disillusionment in the leadership of our country arising from the assassinations of the Sixties, Watergate, Vietnam, and the name-bashing rhetoric of recent campaigns. Socioeconomically, the rise of multinational corporations, corporate downsizing and mergers, increased unemployment or underemployment, have destabilized our sense of security and heightened anxieties.

All these changes have deeply impacted social values and family relations. As a result, we have seen an increase in divorce, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, violence in the home,

in our schools, on the streets, as well as in terrorist activity.

Finally, Hodgson identifies that religiously, we are seeing the decline of Christianity in the First World and its growth in Latin America, Africa and Asia and the need for First World Christianity to revitalize or create new forms of faith and praxis. We also are witnessing an encounter with other Religions whose religious, theological, ethical categories and spiritual practices appeal to many as powerful ways to apprehend and organize a larger frame of meaning for their lives. Rather than abandoning one's own faith, Hodgson suggests that such encounters with other Religions should transform and enrich our faith.

RESPONSES TO THE CULTURAL CRISES

Indeed, there is little wonder why congregations, families, and individuals are confused, fearful, angry, or just numb with the sweep of such cultural change. Moreover, such anxiety becomes intensified when these cultural shifts intersect with personal and family life-cycle transitions (leaving home, becoming married, divorced, retiring, etc.) or unexpected tragedies (such as loss of a child or loss of childhood through abuse). The dynamic interaction between sociocultural changes and personal and familial transitions reverberates deeply through our meaning worlds -- often unraveling the ways in which we characteristically know, value, and believe and thus make meaning of our self-in-relation to ourselves, one another, the world and God.¹⁰

When the threads of our meaning worlds start to become unraveled, when the meaning of our lives becomes confused or lost, we may respond in three ways.¹¹ Some of us try to hold tight to the threads of the old woven pattern of meaning based upon, in Hodgson's terms, "traditional bases of authority and conventional forms of religious belief."¹² Great energy is expended in nostalgic reminiscing, defending one's position and blaming others or the world for what is wrong. In this category of response, the activity of remembering is distorted to one of trying to recapture the past without revisioning the foundational myths that could provide insight for the reweaving of a new pattern for our lives. The problem with this response is that the grace of yesterday becomes ossified in illusory absolutes.

A second response to an unraveling pattern of meaning is one of postmodern "radical

relativism in which nothing is known, believed, or acted upon."¹³ One doesn't have to be a postmodern deconstructionist to be caught in this response. Some among us may have been swept into the whirlwind of relativizing and revising our sense of self-in-relation to self and others according to the latest images provided by our culture, be they secular or religious. In so doing, we are, as Edward Casey tersely states, "mindlessly opting for the spurious lightness of forgetting."¹⁴

Continuously spinning around, these images have no staying power, and we are left ungrounded, protean women and men with a shifting sense of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. As such, there is no remembering or reweaving, just an endless revising of images that ultimately leads to cynicism, nihilism and despair. The problem with this response is that the grace of today is lost in amnesia.

The third response to cultural and personal crisis is one of courageously recognizing that old forms are dying or are dead and a new paradigm for being in relationship to self, world, God has not yet fully emerged. This recognition propels us into a mourning process that, if faithfully engaged in, will lead to new life. Individually and communally, like the Kogi Indians, we are confronted with the often long and painful task of sorting through the threads of our lives that have become unraveled in order to discern which threads need to be let go of and which hold essential truths and values that need to be rewoven into a new pattern. This sorting process requires that we honestly confront and discard the false and destructive strands of the past and present that keep us strangers to ourselves and to one another while preserving those true and liberating strands that connect us to one another and to the world in care. While intensely personal, such discernment and consequent action, when carried out with others, creates communities of possibility and courage. In this response, the grace of today empowers us to remember creatively, envision justly, and reweave boldly those threads that intimate a new pattern of meaning. I believe that as we do this in faith, we participate in a Divine Dance through which frozen absolutes or forgotten images give way to anamnesis: "Do this to remember Me".

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

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How then do we speak of the Divine Dance in the context of our Judaeo-Christian world view? With whom are we to be partners in remembering, revisioning, and reweaving? The cultural crisis of today has deep resonances with that of ancient Israel during their time of exile. Not only do the Israelites experience geographic dislocation, but also, according to biblical scholar Walter Bruggemann, they experience cultural, liturgical, and spiritual crises as their meaning world becomes unraveled.¹⁵ Their old narrative of faith no longer works. God's presence to them is experienced as bitter absence. In their profound disillusionment, the Israelites find themselves where they were during the years of their Egyptian captivity: powerless, oppressed, without hope. They are left mourning, waiting, and, perhaps wondering if this would be the end of their story. In Second Isaiah, the poet of the exile calls the people to remember dangerous memories. Such arduous working through memory as it informs present faith and behavior meets with resistance. The people would rather be forgetful, amnesic, and hold on to their, what Bruggemann calls, "convenient establishment memories".¹⁶ Like the Israelites in Exile, we must be urged to go further back to our most elemental and definitional memories: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn" says Isaiah (51:1) echoing the Pentateuch's reprimand to the forgetful people of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:18: "You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God that gave you birth" (Dt.32:18). "Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you, for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him and made him many." (Is. 51:2)¹⁷ Again and again, the Israelites are commanded to remember what Yahweh has done throughout their shared history - to remember that God has initiated this dance with creation that God loved into being, and that God is faithful. Bruggemann points out that such remembering did its own powerful work in the community. It aroused faith in the power of God to work a newness.¹⁸

When this happens, dangerous memories then become connected to dangerous promises. Yahweh remembers and breaks silence in cries of labor pains: "For a long time I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail... I will lead the blind by a road they do not know...I will turn the darkness before them into light...and I will not forsake them." (Is 42:14, 16) Through the poet of the Exile, God utters words of comfort -- words that hold out the hope of healing broken hearts, of freeing those in captivity and suffering from oppression,

and, of rebuilding ancient ruins and repairing the devastations of many generations (Is. 61:4). Such promises are dangerous, says Bruggemann, because they invite exiles "to dance toward a future not even discernible in their present reality."¹⁹ As they dance, they "sing to the Lord a new song" (Is.42:10), a song based upon the conviction that God is faithful to God's own promises. When the Israelites sing these songs, they, like the Kogi Indians, are chanting themselves back into attachment with their old story in a new way. Their new vision, new song, releases new energy for the ongoing work of reweaving a new pattern of faith and life until their homecoming. "Do this," we can imagine Yahweh saying, "to re-member me."

The heart of Christian faith is a threefold encounter with the living God. Out of the abundance of love itself, the one holy mysterious God dares to become entangled in the threads of our world and our lives through human embodiment in Jesus the Christ. Metaphorically, Jesus stands at the edge of our graveside winding himself into the threads of our shroud -- our joys, successes, and our goodness as well as our brokenheartedness, blindness, and lameness. Through his words and deeds, Jesus begins to unravel those threads that bind us in destructive self-righteousness or debilitating guilt-riddenness. His is a love that revels in feasting with outcasts in inclusive table community, touching and being touched by the unclean, feeding the hungry, blessing the children, and healing the sick.²⁰ In just anger he overturns tables in the temple, in friendship he speaks to the Samaritan woman, in compassion he heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, breaking the social norms and rules of his day.²¹ Through these actions and his imaginative stories of God, he unravels our frozen patterns of living, and invites us to revision a new way of being in relationship with our selves, others, creation itself, and with God. Such revisioning, however, threatens to undermine the authority and patterns of life of those in power.²² So they nail the revisioner of life on a tree, and rip open his heart, from which flows Spirit- life.

This enlivening Spirit inspires a new and dangerous song in the community, heard and sung first by the women who went to the empty tomb. "He is not here, but is risen" (Lk. 24: 5). Metaphorically entwining themselves in the threads of the shroud of Jesus the Christ, they sing and dance the good news. In the power of this Spirit, theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes,

"Jesus now takes on a new communal identity as the risen Christ, the body of all those women and men who share in the transformation of the world through compassionate, delighting, and suffering love."²³ Indeed, from generation to generation, Christians continue to dance in the pattern of the dying and rising of Jesus the Christ, guided through the indwelling Spirit by a "paschal imagination." According to biblical scholar Sandra Schneiders, it is the paschal imagination that constructs the Jesus-image of faith (the proclaimed Jesus) that in turn shapes the paschal imagination of the believers.²⁴ "Do this to re-member me" thus becomes the refrain of the song that inspires our dance steps as we reweave new patterns of living in communities of freedom and solidarity with others, creation, and God.

In the solidarity of this interdependent community, Johnson notes, Christians experience "that their own lives and the whole earth are gifts, at once tenacious and fragile, freely given from an unspeakably rich source of life that they mirror in their own creative generativity."²⁵ Christians learn to perceive Divine Love flowing in and through all forms of life, claiming the goodness of their realization and fulfillment even while they sense the Absolute Holy Mystery of the ancient and ever new Primal Matrix of Life.²⁶ Borrowing from T.S. Eliot,²⁷ Johnson notes, "Without this still-point of the turning world there would be no dance, and there is only the dance; without this silence there would be no music or word, which is where (God) can be heard."²⁸

At the heart of Christian faith, therefore, lies a threefold encounter with the living God in its character of being transcendently mysterious, historically mediated, and liberatingly immanent.²⁹ As Christians, we are invited into life-giving relationship with this living God encountered through Jesus in the Spirit. Such an invitation to dynamic relationship and our response to it makes us and all of creation, in Christ, partners in the Divine Dance "according to God's own purpose and grace." (2 Tim. 1:9). In faith and through grace, therefore, we are partnered with the triune God -- the God who creates and remembers "that it is good;" the God who redeems and revisions new ways for the brokenhearted, the lame, the poor, the outcast to be healed and included in the dance; the God who vivifies and reweaves all of creation in ever new patterns of interdependent community.

We are partnered, not with three gods, but with the one living God in the Divine Dance.

The idea of *perichoresis* may help us to imagine the unity of this God with whom we are partnered. *Perichoresis* is a Greek term that signifies a circling movement, like a dance in the round.³⁰ It was used first by the Greek theologian John Damascene in a christological context to emphasize the interdependence of the two natures of Christ.³¹ Later, the notion of *perichoresis* was adopted in trinitarian theology to stress the coinherence and immanence of the three divine persons in the Trinity. The metaphor of the divine dance conveys a dynamically relational, mutual and reciprocal community of persons in an unfathomable relation of love in God's very being. In their interaction, according to theologian Catherine LaCugna, "the dancers (and the observers) experience one fluid motion of encircling, encompassing, permeating, enveloping, outstretching. There are neither leaders nor followers in the divine dance, only an eternal movement of reciprocal giving and receiving, giving again and receiving again....The divine dance is fully personal and interpersonal, expressing the essence and unity of God."³² While it is important to theologize about the inner relationships within God's being (i.e., the immanent Trinity), I agree with LaCugna that the concept of *perichoresis* should first be located in our encounter with and faith experience of the mysterious, liberating, and vivifying love of God in our world, (i.e., the economic Trinity).

LaCugna aptly notes that: "Everything comes from God, and everything returns to God, through Christ in the Spirit. This *exitus* and *reditus* is the choreography of the divine dance that takes place from all eternity and is manifest at every moment in creation. There are not two sets of communion --one among the divine persons, the other among human persons, with the latter supposed to replicate the former. The one *perichoresis*, the one mystery of communion includes God and humanity as beloved partners in the dance."³³

PASTORAL MINISTRY

How then may we speak of being partners with this triune God in remembering, revisioning, and reweaving in pastoral ministry? How do we learn to dance with others in ways that foster respect for and appreciation of diversity, mutuality, and community?

One Memorial Day, while in Washington D.C., I went with a friend to visit the Lincoln Memorial. We arrived late afternoon that Spring day and walked leisurely around the massive

stone block upon which the sculpted figure of Abraham Lincoln rests in his chair. We paused frequently to gaze upward, studying the pensive features of his face while recalling stories of his enduring legacy. Little did we realize that a crowd of people had gathered on the front steps of the Memorial until the sudden blasts of trumpets announced some event was about to take place. Curious, my friend and I joined the crowd. Standing on the uppermost steps behind the crowd, we could see the U.S. Naval Band move in precise formations as they played various patriotic songs. They continued to play until dusk when the music stirred to a crescendo and quickly faded into the evening. Only the precise dance-like steps of the band's close order drill could be heard beating on the pavement. Then suddenly without warning, a multiple gun salute pierced the silence. Just as suddenly I heard a man shout out in anguish: "Oh, God what was that!! What's going on?" The crowd moved away from him, staring at him in horror. He screamed again in torturous agony: "Where am I? What's going on? Help me, Help me!" With this scream, he turned and I saw his face. Deep red gouges and scar tissue stretched taut the features of his face, the horror of which was intensified by his sunken eye sockets. Truly it was a face of terror, once again terrorized by the sound of gun shots.

I moved quickly to his side and took his arm in my hand to stop him from spinning around again. I said that I was here with him and that the Naval Band had just done a multiple gun salute and were continuing to do certain formations. With this, he regained his composure and told me that he had once been in the Navy. He then asked me to describe in detail the formations of the band since he was blind. As I did so, he shared with me the meaning of each step. Gradually the people began to gather back around us. The man and I continued to do our own kind of dance in this unique exchange until the concert ended at which time he said simply "Thank you, I'm going home now." Several people from the crowd lingered afterwards and approached me with words of gratitude; but no one was more grateful than I for the gift received that evening.

Through this Memorial Day observance, I found myself drawn into the Divine Dance in which remembering, revisioning, and reweaving took place on multiple levels. My friend and I were engaged in recalling aspects of the vision and legacy of the man who abolished slavery as these related directly to our own personal and ministerial experiences in the present. As we

revivified a piece of our past history as Americans, we simultaneously revitalized the struggles and hopes pertaining to oppression and freedom in our own lives as Christians. As Edward Casey puts it: "We sense(d) ourselves to be fully engaged in an ...activity having its own formative, indeed transformative power."³⁴ Such reminiscing became the subtext in the commemorative ritual taking place at the foot of the steps of the Memorial.

Joining the group of people gathered on the front steps below us, we entered into an explicitly communal experience. Casey notes that "whenever commemorating occurs, a community arises. Not only is something communal being honored, but the honoring itself is a communal event, a collective engagement."³⁵ This particular communal event, however, occasioned a collision of remembrances that severed the community.³⁶ The more placid patriotic remembrances of the crowd collided with those of a victimized participant whose traumatic memories were being reenacted in the present. Thus, when the cries of the man in anguish pierced the silence, those nearby moved away from him in fear. Because his tortured face and screams evoked a sense of "otherness" that the people could not comfortably tolerate, the man was shunned. Dis-membered from community, he became the stranger in our midst. Indeed, such "otherness" in whatever guise -- be it unfamiliar behaviors, ideas, skin color, gender differences, or disowned aspects of our own personalities -- is often perceived as a threat to our habitual ways of relating to ourselves, others and the world. We want to stick to the dance steps we know and the dance partners we choose.

Those persons alienated from the dominant culture, those overwhelmed by fear or intrusive painful memories -- those suffering in body, mind and spirit -- call out to us to be remembered, to be partnered with in the ongoing dance of pastoral ministry. Moved by the spirit of compassion, I wound myself in the threads of this man's shroud and became his partner for a brief time. All he needed was for me to hold the threads lightly, to hold the pieces of his shattered world until he could regain his composure and reweave them again. Such an attentive, listening presence created a sacred space where a new word or song emerged in the mutual exchange between partners. As I described the dance-like steps of the Naval Band's close drill, I became the blind man's eyes, while he gave me insight into the meaning of those steps. Even more, this mutual exchange empowered me to revision "the other" as a partner in caring, rather

than the recipient of my care-giving. I can only assume that such revisioning was taking place by those persons who gathered back around us or else they would not have so acted. As they did so, they began to reweave a pattern of community that included the stranger, the marginalized, the other in their midst. Simple words of gratitude expressed by some of the witnesses suggested that they too apprehended new possibilities for remembering, revisioning and reweaving in their own lives in solidarity with community. Indeed, during this commemorative event, frozen or forgotten images gave way to anamnesis: "Do this to re-member me."

Anyone involved in pastoral ministry today knows the depth of pain, doubt, and anxiety as well as the extent of beauty, hope, and courage of those persons and communities who are endeavoring to remember, revision, and reweave their lives as they deal with critical issues in the context of our changing world. Although every act of pastoral ministry implicitly incorporates the interwoven activities of remembering, revisioning, and reweaving, the needs present in the pastoral situation itself suggest which activity is most appropriate at any given time. Regardless of which activity that may be, the critical task of pastoral care is to heighten our awareness that in remembering, revisioning, and reweaving the pattern of our lives, we are partners in The Divine Dance itself. As Elizabeth Johnson³⁷ reminds us, that dance may not be as smoothly predictable and repetitive as is a dance in the round. In our steps we may whirl and intertwine in unusual patterns circling each other and the world in seemingly chaotic ways in diverse rhythms, sometimes stumbling awkwardly, other times moving wonderfully in supple motion. Nonetheless, we must be able to feel deep in our bones the rhythm of the music that inspires our steps in The Divine Dance. That rhythm, I have suggested, is one of dying and rising, of letting go and reappropriating, of leaving behind and passing over. While this rhythm can be heard in all created reality, the awareness that it is the music of The Divine Dance can only be known through revelation -- the encounter with and faith experience of the living God present and active in our world. Through personal prayer and meditation on our Judaeo-Christian scriptures as these scriptures intersect our lives, the Spirit of God forms, informs, and conforms our paschal imagination according to the pattern of passover, exile and restoration, and, for us Christians, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. We gather together in worship to hear and proclaim that song which we have heard in faith and through grace: "This

do, to re-member me."

1. Keynote Address presented at The Harvard Divinity School Annual Alumni/ae Day, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA., May 7, 1995.
2. While Sullivan provided the basic description of this funeral ritual in his Keynote Address, further pertinent information was obtained from his book (*Icanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 504-506.
3. Further amplifying this conceptualization, Anthropologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff states: "In an all-important cosmic vision, complementary to that of the spindle as a world axis, the Kogi conceptualize the earth as an immense loom on which the sun weaves the Fabric of Life." "The Loom of Life: A Kogi Principle of Integration," *Journal of Latin American Lore*, 1978, 4:1, p. 15.
4. G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Ibid.*, describes how this concept is patterned after the Kogi's empirical observations of the solstices and equinoxes: "Spiraling back and forth the sun weaves day and night, on both sides of the cloth, a dayside and a nightside, light and darkness, life and death."
5. For a more detailed description of the symbolism of the act of unwinding, see G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, "Funerary Customs and Religious Symbolism Among the Kogi," in Patricia Lyon (Ed.), *Native South Americans: Ethnology of the Least Known Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), p. 299.
6. The conical shape of the spindle was of key significance to the Kogi who also considered the earth and every tomb to be a uterus. G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Ibid.*, p. 297, elaborates on this symbolism in the burial rite: "The dead person returns to the uterus, in a flexed foetal position, wrapped in the carrying net which represents the placenta, and connected with this world by an umbilical cord which is cut after nine days, after which follows rebirth into another world."
7. For a broader discussion of death and South American religions, see L. Sullivan, *op. cit.*.
8. See L. Gilkey, "The New Watershed in Theology," in *Society and the Sacred: Toward a Theology of Culture in Decline* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 3-14; "Events, Meanings, and the Current Tasks of Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1985, Vol. 53, pp. 717-34.
9. Peter Hodgson, *Revisioning the Church: Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm*

(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 11-19.

10. For a more thorough analysis of the dynamic interaction between cultural change and personal and familial transitions, see Martha Robbins, *Midlife Women and Death of Mother: A Study in Psychohistorical and Spiritual Transformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

11. Following Hodgson, *op. cit.*, I outline these responses as three separate categories. However, in *Midlife Women and Death of Mother*, I articulate a more complex process of dealing with change wherein these three responses represent different phases inherent in the process of mourning and transformation. Nevertheless, it is still possible to become "stuck" in the one of these phases or types of response.

12. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 4.

15. Walter Bruggemann, "Disciplines of Readiness," *Occasional Paper No. 1*, (Louisville, Ky: Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1988).

16. *Ibid.*, p.10.

17. All biblical citations in this paper are taken from Bruce Metzger and Roland Murphy (Eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, (New York: Oxford University Press).

18. Bruggemann, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

20. Examples are found respectively in Mk.12:15-17; 1:40-45, 5:25-34; 6:32-44; 10:13-16; 1:29-34 and parallel passages.

21. Mk.11:15-18 and parallels; Jn.4:1-25; and Mk.3:1-6 and parallels.

22. Mk.11:18-19; 12:12; Mk.14:1-2 and parallels.

23. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 213-214.

24. Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp. 137-138.
25. E. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
26. M. Robbins, *op. cit.*, pp. 253, 255, 257. In suggesting the metaphor of God as the Primal Matrix, I am drawing upon the notion of God as source and ground of all being. See also Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk: Toward Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 70-71.
27. T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1971), p.67.
28. E. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 198. See also Douglas Ottati, "Being Trinitarian: The Shape of Saving Faith," *Christian Century*, November 8, 1995, pp. 1044-1047.
30. For a fuller discussion of the notion of "The Divine Perichoresis," see Catherine LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp. 270-278.
31. *De fide orthodoxa* 8.
32. LaCugna, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
34. Casey, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-36.
36. I am grateful to my colleague, Robert Ezzell for this insight.
37. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.