

Reprinted from the Christian Science Sentinel, March 6, 2000.
All rights reserved.

The Glass Sunroof

By Elise L. Moore

A trend of the new millennium may well be the increasing voice and leadership role of women. Faith Popcorn, a respected authority providing hundreds of businesses with accurate predictions on future consumer trends, told an interviewer that female-run companies already "employ more people than all the Fortune 500 companies together employ globally."¹

In *Religion Today* (October 4, 1999) a study conducted by the National Foundation for Women Business Owners noted that "in the United States overall, there are about 9.1 million women-owned businesses, which is about 38 percent of the total number of businesses in the United States." Furthermore, it noted that in the past decade "the number of women-owned firms has doubled, their employment has quadrupled, and the sales of women-owned firms has increased five times."

Certainly, there is still need to remove barriers to women's progress in corporate, religious, and private sectors, not only in the United States but around the world. But we can appreciate the progress made thus far, and rejoice in every evidence of limitations being lifted. The glass ceiling of the 80s and 90s may well be a sunroof in the twenty-first century, moving back to allow freedom of movement upward.

This removal of the glass ceiling reminds me of the story of Jacob's ladder in Genesis (see 28:10-19). Cultural traditions of the time limited Jacob's economic opportunities because of his birth order. Jacob was the second son, although his twin brother Esau preceded him only by minutes. Like women placed by tradition in a restricted role, Jacob chafed at the injustice of his older brother's receiving their father's inheritance and blessing. He saw his secondary status as limiting the possibilities for his own financial progress and success—a typical glass ceiling scenario.

Jacob wanted equal access to economic opportunity and plotted how to obtain a majority share of the family business (herding). He manipulated Esau, negotiating for a larger portion (see Gen. 25-27). Jacob's mentor, his mother, Rebekah, also arranged to have him blessed as if he were the first son. But in this process of breaking through the glass ceiling, he shattered his relationship with Esau, deceived his father, and was forced to abandon any inheritance he might have received, fleeing for his life. Human means failed him. Bereft of family, friends, and other human resources, Jacob had a vision while sleeping alone under the stars. He saw a ladder reaching to heaven with "the angels of God ascending and descending on it." God spoke to him, assuring Jacob that He was with him and would help him to prosper, saying, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." This promise was fulfilled. As Jacob increasingly turned to God for guidance in his business and personal affairs, he prospered. Through divine inspiration he was eventually led to a peaceful and happy reunion with his estranged brother, Esau (see Gen., chaps. 32-33). Where human planning failed, divine guidance succeeded. Tradition couldn't limit Jacob when he turned wholeheartedly to God, divine Mind. And the infinite blessings of God, divine Love, were sufficient to provide good in abundance for both Esau and Jacob.

I love the imagery of the angels, or inspired messages, from God ascending and descending. To me, this indicates the absence of any glass ceiling or limitation for anyone when thought turns Godward. Might not the angels ascending represent our sincere and trusting prayer, uplifting our thought to receive our heavenly Father-Mother's inspiration and divine guidance, which would be the angels descending to us? Christ Jesus used the same word-picture with his disciples when he prophesied, "Verily verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). Perhaps Jesus was encouraging his disciples to expect that as they relinquished religious preconceptions, they would receive the Holy Ghost, or divine understanding, bestowed on humankind through Christ. The fulfillment of this prophecy was later seen in the effective healing, preaching, and teaching accomplished by Jesus and his disciples. There is no limit to the effectiveness of one's prayer. It reaches the very heights of heaven, of divine harmony, and the abundance of God's goodness descends to embrace us. The glass ceiling of human limitations is moved aside as the heaven of God's harmony is opened.

There is no limitation to God's holy communication or to one's individual demonstration of freedom. God does not bless some while ignoring others. All are equally able to turn humbly to God and to perceive and receive the outpouring of divine Love. No one is a second-class citizen in God's kingdom. Regardless of race, nationality, or gender, each one has unlimited access to the blessings of divine Mind. As the Scriptures assure us, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

With divine Love, one individual's progress doesn't deprive another. As one of the first women in a large male sales force, I'll never forget the patience and kindness of several colleagues when they realized I was undertrained. I had been praying daily for God's guidance. At a regional sales meeting, this prayer was abundantly and tangibly answered when male colleagues selflessly spent the evening answering questions and helping me learn the products and their applications. When less than two years later I became regional sales representative of the year, almost to a person they rejoiced with me. Many of them had increased their own sales as well. We all thrived together.

Mary Baker Eddy, who established this magazine, certainly experienced the power of God to remove traditional barriers. At a time when few women were speaking to mixed (including men and women) public audiences, in the mid- to late-1800s, she preached and lectured throughout New England, in Washington, D.C., and even in Chicago. And although religious tradition prohibited women from performing significant roles in church and disregarded women's religious insight, Mrs. Eddy wrote a book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, sharing her spiritual inspiration and the results other God-governed healing practice. The book became a bestseller and has sold over nine million copies. Mrs. Eddy founded a church, which has branches in seventy-four countries, and served as its first pastor. She influenced Christian theology as perhaps no other woman has, through her writing, teaching, and healing, as well as through the gender-neutral religious organizational structure she established for the Church of Christ, Scientist. Her lifework demonstrated the present power of God to remove restrictions and set the glass ceiling aside through divine rather than human means.

It is love that removes barriers to human progress. Love for God and man opens the window of inspiration and establishes the ladder of divine

communication on a firm spiritual basis. Mrs. Eddy wrote in her autobiography, *Retrospection and Introspection*: "The spiritually minded meet on the stairs which lead up to spiritual love. This affection, so far from being personal worship, fulfils the law of Love which Paul enjoined upon the Galatians. This is the Mind 'which was also in Christ Jesus,' and knows no material limitations" (p. 76).

As we enter the twenty-first century, let's remove limitations through reliance on God and the power of divine Love. Let's relegate political maneuvering and competitive selfishness to the annals of the twentieth century. Each of us has a divine heritage to claim and infinite blessings to enjoy. Let's support the efforts of humankind to elevate men and women to their equal status as firstborn of God, and let's promote the progress of individuals to discover their God-given freedom and ability to experience spiritual goodness and abundance.

¹ Robert Deitz, "Faith in the Future," *Spirit* (October 1999).