

IN THE NAME OF GOD:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS PLAYED
IN THE SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN

BY

Roxann Gulick

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First Reader

Walter G. Mauston

Second Reader

Randy

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The church belongs to its hierarchy, which is men in power. Those outside the hierarchy, and especially women, are at best only renters and at worst squatters in religious territory.

Sonia Johnson (1981)

PREFACE

Religion is an English word that has a Latin root, but there is some disagreement as to whether the root word is religare, meaning "to bind together" or relegere, meaning "to rehearse, to execute painstakingly". Either word does however, make sense as a root and each type a dimension of religion (Johnstone 7).

From a purely sociological perspective, we can assume that religion is a social phenomenon; which means it is socially constructed and cannot exist without society. We can also be assured that all societies have had some kind of religious institution, which interacts in some way with other institutions.

Religion also functions as an institution that undertakes the problems that cannot come under any other institution. That is because religion specifically deals with the unknown, the central meaning of life and that which concerns us all ultimately. It strives to explain birth, death and connects the family to other parts of society. It also gives people a sense of belonging, bonding and social interaction.

Further de Toqueville explains that there is hardly any human action however particular it may be, that does not originate some very general idea men have conceived of a Deity, of his relationship to mankind, of the nature of their own souls and of their fellow creatures. Nor can anything prevent these ideas from being the common spring which all the rest emanates.

Men are therefore immeasurably interested in acquiring fixed ideas of God, of the soul, and of their general duties to their creator and their fellow men; for doubt in these first principles would condemn them in some way to disorder and impatience.

As you can see the impact of religion on society is only surpassed by the impact it has on the individual. It provides people with moral codes, values, and guidelines that help control hostilities between members of a community; and given the fact that certain human conditions exist and will always exist, and are universal, religion will remain as a part of human life.

INTRODUCTION

The main focus of the following thesis entitled "In the Name of God" is to establish a link between the traditional sexist views of the Christian Church to the subsequent subordination of women in U.S. society. Sexism, as defined here, "are beliefs that see women as inferior and defend their traditionally subordinate place in society" (Anderson).

The approach taken in this thesis in explaining the role of the Christian Church in the subordination of women will be through a feminist perspective. So that we don't mistake feminism for "man-hating", feminist theory simply stated

an analysis explaining the position of women in society. It begins with the premise that women's and men's positions in society are the result of social, not biological or natural factors. It is intended to provoke the possibilities for liberating social change; and Feminist Theology is concerned with establishing new models of religious belief founded in feminist ethics. (Anderson)

Beginning with a historical perspective, the reader will see that the Christian Church has been founded on misogynist messages which have perpetuated the myth of the inferiority of women. And this myth has become truth; so believed that the subordination of women can be felt in all aspects of

society. It is also a truth that women themselves have come to believe and act upon accordingly.

Further, it will be revealed that as a patriarchal (patriarchy, as used in this paper is defined as: institutionalized power relationships that give men power over women) institution, the Christian Church, in the U.S., has been able to maintain its sexist posture; because it has been historically and traditionally linked to all other institutions, creating a tightly woven web of white male-dominance. A dominance which is enhanced, if not promoted by Capitalistic ideologies. This can only translate into being a negative influence on women and minorities, relegating them to the status of second-class citizens.

In the final analysis it will be apparent to the reader that the Christian Church, today, in the U.S. by its very nature, cannot address the needs of women, nor can it place women in more than a subordinate role. The reason for this is:

That it denies full humanity to women and therefore, must be presumed not to reflect the authentic nature of things or to be the message or the work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption. (Ruether 18)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is difficult to grasp the immensity and significance of the extreme reverence paid to the Goddess over a period of (at least) seven thousand years and over miles of land cutting across national boundaries and vast expanses of sea. Yet it is vital to do just that to fully comprehend the longevity as well as the widespread power and influence this religion once held. (Stone)

Before we begin examining the evolution of the Christian Church and its decided role in subordinating women, we need to consider the fact that although the Christian Church establishes its male-dominance through a historical succession of events (this is the way it has always been), it has failed to take into consideration that male-dominance in religion has not always been the norm.

There is considerable archaeological evidence that women were held in high esteem within religious circles. This evidence shows that in a great many ancient societies the extreme deity was a mother goddess. Melvin Stone states quite categorically that "at the dawn of religion, God was a woman" (Johnstone 199).

In ancient Egypt, about 3000 B.C. the goddess Nut was described as having existed before anything else appeared and placed the familiar Sun God,

Ra in the heavens. Although Ra held absolute control over the Nile Valley, he was preceded by a powerful creative mother-goddess, whose name was Isis. It is also worth noting here that in early Egypt, the queen was intended to have more power than the king (Johnstone 200).

Various Eskimo tribes had a female deity by the name of Sedna. Tales relate how she sent her children across the sea to become ancestors for other cultures. When Sedna, sacrificed by her father, sinks into the sea, she becomes "Mother of the Sea Animals." And considering the importance of the sea animals in sustaining life in Eskimo culture, we can readily infer Sedna's supreme importance (Johnstone 200).

Even in the region of Palestine there were prominent goddesses, among them Anat, "The Lady of the Mountains." And there was also Aetarte, a Philistine goddess of procreation and fertility.

Approximately 1000 B.C., in India, women enjoyed comparative freedom of movement and participation in religious activities. However, by 500 B.C., the flowering of classical Hinduism caused women to become viewed as second class citizens. Buddhism also once included women into the ministry, but then later adopted the Hindu concept of dharma (everything in its place), which put the woman's role in childbearing, wife and mother. Thus, if a woman wanted to follow a monastic role, they would be going against their dharma.

The record of Confucianism and Taoism in China is much like Hinduism and Buddhism in India. There is early evidence of respect for women generally together with female goddesses and opportunities for women to participate in

religious activities. But by 500 B.C. women were relegated to a distant second behind men (Johnstone 203).

In Japan it appears that women were provided a little more formal religious involvement for somewhat longer than in other ancient Asian societies. There is considerable evidence to suggest that early Japan was actually a matriarchy, with female Shamans playing a prominent role in religious activities. But with the importation of the Confucian Ethic, the depreciation of women began, and women eventually lost their civil rights (Johnstone 203).

We also know that right after the death of Christ, early Christianity saw women on the same plane as men in having direct access to the teachings of Christ and direct access to redemption as well. There was no "middle-man." Both men and women preached and preserved the spirit and vision of Christ, which defended and vindicated the oppressed.

According to the research done by Dr. Mary Ann Rossi, research fellow at the Women's Studies Research Center, at the University of Wisconsin, in Madison; there is early evidence of women priests and bishops in early Christian Church history. There is a fresco of women blessing the Eucharist in the Priscilla catacombs in Rome, which is associated with Priscilla, a female disciple of St. Paul (Dallas Morning News, 1993).

There are inscriptions on monuments and gravestones which identify women named Lela, Flavia, Maria and Marta as priests. There is also a Roman mosaic, which pictures four bishops, one of whom Theodora, is a woman. But in the end, when all the major religions reached their maturity, including

Christianity, each resembled one another in that women were defined as inferior to men.

As we will see later in this thesis, the final definition of women was not due to a change in religion per se but instead it was due to the fact that as religious institutions became more important and more powerful, the already male-dominated institutions of education and politics seized the opportunity to influence and eventually take over religion, initiating a different set of beliefs and ideologies gathered through the male-experience.

THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

EARLY YEARS--OVERVIEW

(70 A.D. - 14th CENTURY)

"The Bible and Church have been the
greatest stumbling blocks in the way
of woman's emancipation."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

If there is a specific beginning to the history of the Christian Church, perhaps it can be said to have really begun in 70 A.D. after the fall of Jerusalem. After 70 A.D., the preachings of the Christian prophets were replaced by a historic biographical account of the gospels. This change then gave early Christians access to Christ only through an official line of apostolic teaching. No longer were common people, specifically women, privileged to carry on the traditions of Jesus. And only males could occupy the apostolic teaching offices, women were to be silent.

In the fourth century the Christian Church became the empirical religion of the Roman Empire. This was an official merger of church and state where Christ and Kingship ideology became as one. Christ had become the pantocreator (all-ruler) of a New World order. Christianity became the apex of a system of control over all those who in one way or another are "other" than this new Christian order (Ruether 125).

Under this new order women were completely cut off from meaningful participation in the church, which in turn undermined any kind of power they might have been entitled to through the states. As if this were not enough, the church/state was given a free hand to interpret the scriptures as they saw fit, leaving little room for dispute among its citizens. The ruling class was now in the position to enhance their power by nullifying the contributions, abilities and value of half of the population (women).

The church/state quickly jumped on the "original sin" bandwagon, where Eve was the temptress and responsible for the fall of man. This meant that the church could mortally make women no longer stand in direct relation to God. They were only connected to God secondarily through men. The Christian Church used the Eve story even though the Jews had long since set this story aside as no longer normative. This is not to say the Jews don't have their own fallen woman stories; we are reminded of the Lileth story (in Jewish lore this was supposed to be Adam's first wife). And even the Greeks had their story of Eve in the mythological tale of Pandora.

At this time it would seem like intelligent people would take all the above stories as what they really were, folktales and mythology. But instead the Christian Church adopted the Eve tale as part of its fundamental beliefs, which influenced most of the known world.

The Christian Church further drew on the scriptures to justify their doctrines regarding the treatment of women. An example of this can be found in 1 Cor. 11:3, 7. It states,

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. For a man ought not cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.

Again we have to remember who is interpreting these scriptures and who originally wrote and/or translated them. It is evident that this was not done by women and therefore, did not include or express their collective experiences.

St. Augustine, who was considered the greatest of the Latin Fathers and the most eminent Western Doctor of the church, in 374 A.D., did concede that a woman was redeemable, but because of her inferiority, she can only possess the image of God through man. In the Trinity Augustine writes: "How then did the apostle tell us that man is the image of God and therefore he is forbidden to cover his head, but that woman is not so and therefore she is commanded to cover hers?" (In the Catholic Church, the practice of women having to have something to cover their heads was enforced for centuries.) "The Woman", continues Augustine,

together with her own husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image, but when she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmeet, which regards the woman alone, he is the image of God as fully and completed as when the woman too is joined with him in one." (Ruether 95)

Since this was written hundreds of years ago, how can it possibly apply to present day Christianity: It can because Roman Catholic and Protestant theology are largely based on Augustine teachings. John Calvin and Martin Luther were both close students of Augustine and their combined theologies would show up prominently in the New World through both religious and civil institutions. This will be addressed more fully later in this paper.

In the tradition of a patriarchal society there was little to stand in the way of sexist revelations. The Christian Church never went so far as to completely deny women's participation in the image of God, because that would have denied them redeemability. But the church did come dangerously close to this through the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century.

Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian definition of women as a "Misbegotten male". Greek philosophy symbolized women as the lower realm of matter, or body, to be ruled or shunned. Males represented mind or reason; therefore, women, slaves and barbarians must be ruled by man. In Aristotelian biology, the male seed provides the "form" of the human body. Woman's productive role contributes only the matter that "fleshes out" this formative power of male seed. The male form is subverted when it produces an inferior or defective human species, or females (Ruether 96).

Aquinas carried this philosophy further by concluding that this inferiority of women is deepened by her original sin. He did concede that she is still a part of nature because of her role in procreation and he believed that this was the only reason God created a woman. Aquinas also wrote that "For any form

of spiritual help, man is better served by a companion of the same sex than a woman." Further, St. Thomas Aquinas stated in (Summa Theologica I q. 92 a. 1 reply 2) that

Good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.

St. Augustine and St. Aquinas were not alone in their beliefs in the subordination of women. There were many others that consisted of Church Fathers, Doctors and Saints, who had similar beliefs. For instance, in the Gospel according to Thomas the following is stated,

Simon Peter said to (the disciples): "Let Mary be excluded from among us, for she is woman and not worthy of life." Jesus said: "Behold I will take Mary, and make her male, so that she may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For I tell you truly, that every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

There is also the statement by Clement of Alexandria (Pedagogues II, 33, 2) "With woman, the very consciousness of their own nature must evoke feelings of shame" (Statements on Women 1). Another statement is put forth by Origen (on the Apparel of Women, Chapter I)

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age, the

guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway, you are the first deserter of the divine law; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to allude. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die.

St. John Chrysostom further degraded women in the following description,

The whole of her bodily beauty is nothing less than phlegm, blood, bile, rheum, and the fluid of digested food . . . if you consider what is stored up behind those lovely eyes, the angle of the nose, the mouth and cheeks you will agree that the well-proportioned body is merely a whitened sepulcher.

St. John goes on to say in (on Priesthood, VI, Chapter 8) that

There are in the world a great many situations that weaken the conscientiousness of the soul. First and foremost of these is dealings with women. In his concern for the male sex, the superior may not forget the females, who need greater care precisely because of their inclination to sin. In this situation the evil enemy can find many ways to creep in secretly. For the eye of woman touches and disturbs our soul, and not only the eye of the unbridled woman, but that of the decent one as well.

Petrus Cantor (d. 1197) considered that "the most lovely woman has come into being from a foul-smelling drop of semen, then consider her midpoint, how she is a container of filth, and after that consider her end, when she will be food for worms." Also consider the following statement by St. Albert the Great,

Woman is less qualified (than Man) for moral behavior. For the woman contains more liquid than the man, and it is a property of liquid to take things up easily and to hold onto them poorly. Liquids are easily moved, hence women are inconstant and curious. When a woman has relations with a man, she would like, as much as possible, to be lying with another man at the same time. Woman knows nothing of fidelity. Believe me, if you give her your trust, you will be disappointed. Trust an experienced teacher. For this reason prudent men share their plans and actions least of all with their wives. Woman is a misbegotten man and has a faulty and defective nature in comparison with his. Therefore, she is unsure in herself. What she herself cannot get, she seeks to obtain through lying and diabolical deceptions. And so, to put it briefly, one must be on one's guard with every woman, as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil. . . In her evil and perverse doings woman is cleverer, that is, slyer, than man. Her feelings

drive woman toward every evil, just as reason impels man toward all good. (Statements on Women 3)

Even though much of the above rhetoric seems ridiculous today; we must remember that the teachings of Aquinas, Augustine and others were very influential. Their doctrines were embraced, studied and admired by the Church hierarchy, who already had in place a strong patriarchal structure in both the theological sphere and civil sphere of society. The work of these men helped to further validate the already sexist mind of the ruling class.

THE RENAISSANCE

Rebirth of the Human Spirit

The Renaissance, which began in the 14th century in Italy, marked the beginning of the end of medieval life. It was a time of reform and rebirth. One of the most distinguishing movements during this time was the Reformation. This was in response to the corruption that was all too common within the Christian Church and the discontent that people felt due to the doctrines and practices of the Medieval Church.

The preparation for this movement was long and hard fought. John Wyclif led a dissident movement long before the Renaissance began. John Huss in Bohemia followed John Wyclif and was eventually burned at the stake. But the influence of both of these men would be carried out by others, thus the movement for change would go on.

With the appearance of Humanism (a movement that concentrated on the individual, studying the classics, critical thinking and studying the Bible) religious reform was inevitable. Men like Lorenzo Villa and Erasmus steadily attacked the abuses of the Christian Church, but it was Martin Luther who finally broke the yoke of the Medieval Church. He did this by posting his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg on October 31, 1517. Thus, the Medieval Church began to crumble.

With meaningful reforms beginning to materialize, this would have been a perfect time to come full circle and repair the damage done to women by the

church. One would have also thought that Martin Luther would be the one to initiate change in the way the church treated women. But we must remember that Martin Luther was a scholar of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. In fact, it was Luther's contention that

women through the "Fall" and in punishment for the "Fall", lost her original equality and became inferior in mind and body. She is now, within the fallen history, subjected to the male as her punishment for her sin. It is the expression of divine justice that any revolt, or even complaint against it by women is a caviling refusal to accept the judgement of God.

(Ruether 97)

Luther further took up the cause of subordinating women by reaffirming the rule of husband over the wife. He believed that man also rules home and state, and the woman is like the nail, she sits home and looks after the affairs of home. In this way Eve is punished (Ruether 97). And Eve certainly was punished, while all of Europe was awakening to the idea of freedom, the expansion of the human spirit, and the chance to dictate one's own destiny; almost a million women were being murdered during the Spanish Inquisition, all "In the Name of God". Their human rights nullified, their chance for free expression and will burned out.

If anything good came out of the Reformation, it was that women as well as much of the lower class had a chance to follow others that spoke to their needs. And as the Medieval Christian Church splintered, several theologians

took up leadership roles and Protestantism was born. These early splintered sects were of course, Lutheranism and then Calvinism, whose churches were called Reformed on the continent, and Presbyterian in the British Isles. There was also what was called Evangelical Churches, that were much more radical than either Calvinism or Lutheranism.

We will see in the next portion of this thesis how Calvinism, in particular, did give women a chance to partake of religious experiences in a meaningful way, if only for a short period of time.

JOHN CALVIN

Other than Martin Luther the Reformation produced another influential reformer by the name of John Calvin. In 1536 John Calvin published a book called The Institutes of the Christian Religion. This book ended up being over a thousand pages long and was the most influential book of the Reformation (Flowers 60).

Calvin believed that God was immense and unknowable and that man was small and frail. Therefore, God's revealed word--the Bible, "must be our final authority, not only in religion and morals but in history, politics, everything." Calvin believed that people were so disobedient and inclined to sinful acts that they could never deserve eternal happiness in heaven. Jesus' death was a sacrifice that provided salvation, but not for all. Only a few, whom Calvin referred to as "the elect" could be saved. Calvin believed that "the elect" were chosen for salvation before they were born, and that there was nothing anyone could do to obtain it (Flowers 61).

In Calvin's words,

We say rightly that God foresees all things, even as he disposes of them: when we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things have always been and eternally remain under his observation . . . we call predestination the eternal decree of God, which he decided what he would do with each man. For he does not create them all in like

condition, but ordains some to eternal life, and others to eternal death. (Flowers 62)

To have a better understanding of Calvinism it would probably be helpful to take a closer look at Calvinist Theology. This is important because it is this theology that the Puritans would bring with them to the New World.

There are basically five points of Calvinism and can be easily remembered by the acrostic TULIP.

The first point of Calvinism is Total Depravity. This does not mean that man is totally depraved, but that the effect of the Fall upon man is extended to every part of his personality. Therefore, man needs to come to the knowledge of God, to have any chance to be saved.

The second point of Calvinism is an Unconditional Election. This is what we previously discussed as predestination. But it goes further than simply being one of "the elect". The elect are saved unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). Thus good works will never bridge the gulf between man and God that was formed in the Fall, good works are a result of God's saving grace. This is what Peter means when he admonishes the Christian reader to make his "calling" and "election" sure (I Peter 2:10). Bearing the fruit of good works is an indication that God has sown seeds of grace in fertile soil.

The third point is Limited Atonement. This is a doctrine that says Christ did not die for all people. Rather Christ died to atone for specific sins of specific sinners.

The fourth point is Irresistible Grace. The result of God's irresistible grace is a certain response by the "elect" to the outward call of the Holy Spirit. When the outward call is given (by a minister) the word of God, those whom God elected will come to a knowledge of Him.

The fifth and last point is Perseverance of the Saints. This is a doctrine that states that the saints (those who God has saved) will remain in God's hands until they are glorified and brought to abide with Him in Heaven (Dabney 1-3).

It should be noted here that Calvinist Theology did not distinguish the "elect" to be one gender or another. Because in theory anyone can be one of the "elect". Therefore, one might be led to believe that Calvinism would be the one religious sect that would elevate women to a position of equality in all aspects of church practices. But such was not the case, in fact, just the opposite happened. This is really not too difficult to understand when we have the opportunity to examine the basic beliefs and intentions of those who were followers of John Calvin. Those people were called Puritans.

THE PURITANS

The Puritans were English Protestants who wanted to "purify the English Church and rid it of all elements they considered Roman Catholic." The Puritans believed in the Calvinist doctrines, especially predestination and election. The Puritans emphasized the direct authority of the Bible, whereas Lutherans and Anglicans believed they could do anything that was not prohibited in the Bible. Puritans believed that they could do "only" those things that the Scriptures specifically ordered or allowed (Flowers 104).

In England, Puritans were willing to acknowledge Queen Elizabeth as head of the Church in England, but historians Will and Ariel Durant say, "In their hearts (Puritans) rejected any control of religion by the state, and aspired to control the state by their religion" (Flowers 105). Queen Elizabeth saw the Puritans as a threat to the power of the throne, and she made it very uncomfortable for these people. Eventually, many Puritans fled to the more tolerant country of Holland.

Later to fulfill their quest for religious freedom, the Puritans immigrated to what would be called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They were neighbors to the Pilgrims, a much smaller and more radical group. But both of these groups were looking for the same thing, religious freedom without persecution. Ironically, both of these sects were very intolerant toward any and all other religious groups.

Before we move on to the New World, there are a couple of points that should be considered. Since the Puritans emphasized direct authority of the Bible, women, by this very practice were put in jeopardy. The reason for this was that the Bible was written and interpreted and communicated to others through the male experience, essentially leaving women on the outside of the Church hierarchy.

Another point to be considered is the fact that the Puritans wanted the Church to control the state. By controlling the state religious doctrines would eventually infiltrate such institutions as the family, education and economics. With women already treated as outsiders, without a voice or any kind of power, it would set the stage, in the New World, of a rigid patriarchal society where women would remain second-class citizens.

When the Puritans landed on the shores of the New World, they were met with a harsh wilderness. Every tree was seen as hiding demons and every Native American was seen as the shadow of Fallen man. Therefore, the Church was even more steadfast in its pursuit to provide the means of redemption for its people, even if it was at the expense of personal freedom. Of course the ones that were most adversely effected by this were the Native Americans and women.

Because Native Americans were thought of as being sub-human by the Puritans, they were not even considered part of their society, therefore, were subjected to a number of injustices. Women, on the other hand, were believed capable of being in the image of God, were accepted but only as the lower part

of society. They were considered the lower part of society because they still carried the stigma of original sin. As such, the Puritans believed she must be in the control of males. Women were still considered lustful, carnal and naturally insubordinate, so would likely be a tool of the devil.

It was this kind of thinking that precipitated the Salem Witch Trials. And it was not only the old, wrinkled woman who was the victim. Other victims were single women, healers, women who had property and women who did not conform to Puritan life. If these women were not executed, they were persecuted, and in the case of Anne Hutchinson, banished to the wilderness. This type of persecution was very effective in keeping women in their places.

Generations of sexist theology became truths and can be found in much of colonial literature. In John Winthrop's journal, he gives an account of a woman gone crazy, it went as follows:

The loss of her understanding, which had been growing upon her diverse years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing and had written many books. For if she had attended her household affairs and such things as belong to woman, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger etc., she had kept her wits.

(McMichael 48)

It is easy to see how frustrating it must have been for women, living in this rigid, sexist society. But what must be realized here is that these sexist

attitudes, which were based on theological doctrines, would ultimately become institutionalized in U.S. society.

THE PURITAN/CALVINIST ETHIC: THE MAKING OF A NATION

To understand how sexist theology, as practiced by the Puritans could possibly become institutionalized, we need to look at some determining factors. First, when the Puritans landed in the New World, they had a common goal, freedom to practice their religion without government intervention, because church and state were the same in Puritan society. They also had a common heritage, common language and were steadfast in their determination to colonize, giving their efforts a sense of not only permanence but urgency.

In overcoming hardships and simply surviving, the Puritans were able to bring in more people and also increase their numbers within their community. It did not matter that other groups came to this New World, because the Puritans were already established and were a cohesive society.

Other grounds did not have the influence of the Puritans because they either did not survive, did not intend to establish a permanent community (trappers, explorers), or their numbers were too small to make a significant difference. As we have previously seen, the Puritans had no trouble ridding their community of Quakers, Catholics and other groups that did not fit into their community. So in the end the Puritans had a cohesive productive, prolific society which had common goals and a common historic past. The result was that the Puritan influence was very much established in this New World.

Another factor that we need to explore are the beliefs and principles, based on religious doctrines, that ultimately created a value system and code of

behavior that ruled Puritan society. Previously we discussed the basic concepts of Calvinism; but Calvinist theology, as practiced by the Puritans would have a profound effect on all societal activities and institutions in the new frontier. Remember that the center of Calvinism is the concept and goal of the "glory of God". Everything people do should somehow add to God's Glory. God does not exist for people, but rather people exist for God.

Of course, there is the doctrine of Predestination; which has the implications of people having to proceed all alone down the path of life to meet the destiny decreed for him or her. No other human can assist or change a person's destiny. Even if followers do not feel that they are among the "elect", they still should belong to a church and participate in following all the rules and laws because such activities glorify God (Johnstone 164).

A social consequence of this was the encouragement of a rather extreme kind of individualism. Not only are you on your own but you must be careful in becoming too involved with commitment to friends, neighbors or family because that could take you away from glorifying God (Johnstone 165).

We now add one more element to complete what Max Weber saw as the foundation for the Protestant (Calvinist) ethic. That element is the concept of the calling. This concept taught people not to despise or belittle their job or role in life. It taught them instead, to see their work as a "calling" by God. Puritans really picked up on this concept and placed an even greater emphasis on hard work (Johnstone 166).

With the combining of all of these theological elements we can see how a Puritan could be placed in a very uneasy position. He or she was to glorify God by working to the fullest of his or her calling, all the while aware that he or she had been predestined; but not knowing what the predestination was, eternity in heaven or an eternity in hell. How would a practicing Calvinist know if he or she was one of the "elect"? Of course no one could tell for sure one way or another: but they certainly could make inferences from essentially empirical evidence. Would God more likely work through a lazy, shiftless person or one that worked extremely hard and obeyed all the laws of the Church?

The answer is relatively easy, if one was a hard worker, then it could be inferred that they may be one of the "elect" therefore, Calvinists produced a tremendous drive toward action. This action resulted in a life of very strict discipline. We have seen evidence of this in early colonial writing, such as the autobiography of Ben Franklin. Franklin tried keeping a journal to keep a strict routine in order to enjoy the fruits of being a very disciplined person. Even though Franklin was not considered a particularly religious person, he did follow the "Protestant Ethic". And that ethic was solidly ingrained in colonial America during Franklin's time.

So what is the best way to discipline oneself: If hard work in one's calling is a glorification of God, then it is also the best way to become disciplined. It can also be a means of guarding against a sensual and immoral life. Now time, and good use of time is also very important. People must avoid

idle conversation, unproductive recreation or more sleep than was absolutely necessary.

The consequences of this is, if you work harder than those around you and if you live frugally and ascetically, you will more than likely be more economically successful. This is not bad, in fact it is good, in two ways. First, this success would infer that you are one of God's "Elect" and second, God is being glorified.

But now you may become rich from all this success. If that should happen those riches cannot be used for personal sensual pleasures, and certainly it can't be used for early retirement. What alternative is there then? The answer is investment, investment of capital to produce more goods, which is the heart of entrepreneurial capitalism. The option of giving away all surplus to the poor was seldom used because it distracted the poor from doing their duty in their calling (Johnstone 166).

It is Max Weber's conclusion that although Calvinism did not create capitalism it did serve as an important stimulating and reinforcing function for capitalism. This of course is not the only factor that encouraged capitalism; the American Revolution and a democratic form of government were not incidental to capitalistic aspirations.

We can therefore, safely conclude that through the combination of Calvinist theology and Capitalism, a society was born, which glorified individual accomplishments and applauded material gain. This coupled with the fact that

U.S. society was controlled by white males; women could find little comfort, profit or position in any of the already established social institutions.

For instance, women were not allowed to enter universities, limiting their access to meaningful participation in all aspects of society. They were not allowed to hold political office or vote, which completely cut them off from any political power. By being discouraged from doing anything that was not of a domestic nature, women were left with almost no economic opportunities in their own right.

It has already been established that Calvinist theology was dependent, in part, on the idea of using a person's material success as an indication of being one of the "elect". And this had a very negative effect on women. Although women were not considered unequal in the image of God, their very position in society and their lack of opportunities did not make them a likely candidate for being of the "elect". Thus, we can see how sexist theology through the effectiveness of Puritan colonization and the ensuing sequence of events that marked the evolution of U.S. society institutionalize the way women would be treated for decades to come.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE FEMINIZATION OF RELIGION

"The public carefully circumscribes women within the narrow circle of domestic interests and duties and forbids her to step beyond it."

de Touqueville

By the nineteenth century, the witch hunts were over and the demons were exorcised. It was the Age of Romanticism and a second Great Awakening; where women were being viewed as more spiritual and more naturally prone to religious observances and were said to have more piety than men (Andersen 229).

Women's traditional roles were therefore, exalted as they were defined as the keepers of the private refuge of the home; where piety and the religious spirit were to prosper. In turn this concept became the basis for early feminists to construct social changes; through organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the National American Women Suffrage Association (Andersen 228).

Two of the premier leaders in the above movements were Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who challenged the Bible as divinely inspired. They saw the Bible as another ploy, a male-dominated society used to control women. It was this belief that inspired Stanton to publish The Women's Bible. Unfortunately, this publication was not well received by a

majority of women and fell into obscurity until the 1970's, when the second women's rights movement took place (Andersen 230).

Apparently most women, who were enjoying their elevated status in the home and a greater participation in religious institutions; radical approaches to traditional religious beliefs were seen as detrimental to women's positions in society, by women themselves.

But although this elevated status was positive, it should be remembered that religion at this time was a less important sphere than political and economic development. And we also should be aware that women did not play a part in political and economic development because they did not have the right to vote, they also were not allowed admittance to most institutions of higher learning and were denied access to economic development as well. Religion then became their only means of meaningful participation in a growing capitalistic society (Green 542).

Of course, one might argue that the status of women in the home, where their role of mothers and wives were held in great esteem, was also of great importance to U.S. society. But that importance, while essential to capitalism (since the family was a unit that promoted consumerism on an individual level), was still a patriarchal situation, which gave the power in the family solely to the male. This power was sanctioned by society as a whole and mortally sanctioned by almost all religious institutions (Andersen 149).

Unfortunately by the end of the nineteenth century another movement was taking place that would again distance women from religious participation,

which met their needs and in which they could identify through a feminine perspective.

This movement came out of a growing apprehension by many men, of what was called "the crisis of American Masculinity", due to the "feminization" of religion. This was a reaction to changing social and cultural conditions. There was fear that urbanization and the disappearance of the frontier would end masculinity. The still patriarchal power structure was convinced that "inferior" immigrant stock, and the expanding influence of women contributed to the feminization of society as a whole.

President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard reflected the anxiety of the age in his response to the growing criticism of football. He said that "effeminacy and luxury are even worse than brutality." In 1893, Teddy Roosevelt said "No sweetness and delicacy, no love for the appreciation of beauty can possibly atone for the lack of the great virile virtues."

As a result of this type of thinking fraternal organizations became popular, and it was also at this time that the Boy Scouts came into existence. Among American churchmen such concerns were apparent in the interest of muscular Christianity, which resulted in an athletic program known as the Y.M.C.A. Most males embraced the concept of virile Christianity (Rotundo 813).

It should be noted here that there were actually three concepts of masculinity and most middle-class men living outside of the South fell into one of these three following categories.

First, was the concept of Masculine Achiever. The concept materialized with the rise of commercial capitalism. It de-emphasized such traits as emotionalism and a sense of collective social responsibility, and encouraged accomplishment, autonomy and aggression in the service of an intense competition for success in the market place.

It is easy to recognize the implications that this concept had on the status of women in relationship to their roles as mothers, wives and homemakers. The main implication is that men emotionally and physically distanced themselves from the family, placing the importance of the work place above the importance of the family.

Therefore, the role women played in the home was minimized and since there were little or no opportunities outside the home for them, they had to sit back and see whatever power they had slip away. Also the aggressive nature that was expected of the men as they pursued outside opportunities reinstated their patriarchal power in the home, which led to many mental and physical abuses to both women and children. I say women and children because both carried the same subordinate status in the home.

The second concept was the Christian Gentleman. This was a reaction against the excessively competitive and individualistic character of the Masculine Achiever. It stressed love, kindness and compassion; virtues that were consistent with a measure of concern for others and that expressed themselves in philanthropy, church work and an active commitment to family.

Although this concept was more positive in its effect on women, it did however, push women out of positions in the Church and limited their ability to initiate social change. This also reestablished men as definite heads of the household. At best women were only second-in-charge.

The third concept was the Masculine Primitive. This was increasingly popular and reflected fear of a debilitating weakness among American males. It emphasized the importance of cultivating such natural characteristics as instinct, vigor, strength, energy and determination, that were deemed vital both to the individual man and society.

This concept was embraced by white males as well as minority males and again would distance themselves from women; making women look weak by comparison, not only physically but mentally. This virile determination was basically a strategy to de-emphasize any contributions women had already made in society and undermine further attempts to make social changes through the female experience (Rotundo 812).

Within these three concepts of masculinity we can see how male-dominance was reestablished (not that it was ever far away) under the guise of a renewed vitality; substantially invading all aspects of society, leaving women decidedly on the outside of the mainstream. And because of the demand for virility in society and specifically, in the church, women themselves turned down leadership positions in the Church as to leave those places to men (Green 543).

This type of submission by women, did not, unfortunately, end in the Nineteenth Century. It is still well established in the minds of women in the Church today, as we will discuss later in this paper.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: BATTLES WON, BUT THE WAR GOES ON

"A true woman is as yet a dream of the future."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Into the Twentieth Century there was still a demand for virility in religion, and religious leaders continued to express concern about the "feminization" of religion. Manliness and virility became prominent themes in the Protestant sectors (Historian 543).

This call for virility was not however, part of the Catholic Church. Being ultra-conservative, rigid and historically male-dominated, there was not the see-saw battle that was indicative of the Protestant churches; that would not come until late in the Twentieth Century.

During the first part of the Twentieth Century one prominent minister stands out in the push for virility in religion; it was a man by the name of Billy Sunday. He was a former baseball player for the Chicago White Stockings (now the Chicago White Sox) and he was such a powerful evangelist that he drew tens of thousands to his revival tents. He believed, as others did in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, that women were of keener perception when it came to things spiritual and moral, than were men (Historian 552).

Billy Sunday also supported Women's Suffrage; although he did not see suffrage in terms of women's natural right. Instead he saw suffrage as a way women could raise politics to the level of public virtue, just as they raised the

level of domestic virtue. He also linked suffrage to prohibition, for he could not see how whiskey soaked men had the right to vote when upright Christian women were not given that same right.

Yet, like other Protestant preachers, Billy Sunday sought to energize the church by way of manliness and the virility that would accompany it. He often, as an ex-baseball player, incorporated into his sermons references to baseball and other sports in general, drawing the attention of the men in the congregation.

This Christian virility was so popular that a man by the name of Bruce Barton is quoted as saying that

People have been misled by artists who have painted Jesus as soft and frail. Instead Jesus is like an athlete, strong and muscular. He chased the moneychangers out of the church and spent forty days and nights in the wilderness without food or water. (Green 543)

After the 1920's, attitudes towards women and their roles in society and in particular their roles in the church, changed again. It came on the heels of a noted fundamentalist radio-preacher by the name of John R. Rice. He was also the editor of "Sword of the Lord", a weekly revivalist journal.

His book Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives and Women Preachers heralded the general approach to gender issues, an approach emphasized above all, wifely submission. Rice made little distinction between mothers and daughters; both were under the authority of the husband/father. Rice concluded from the

New Testament writing of Paul that male authority was essential to Christianity. In matters of duty, even to God, the wife is to be subject to her husband (Green 552).

An example of Rice's beliefs is a story he told of a wife, "who in deliberate rebellion against her husband's orders, left her home to attend Christian services. She thought she was pleasing God, no doubt . . . but she was not a better Christian by being a disobedient wife." Moreover, he asserted, "if those women would only give up their willfulness in religious matters, their husbands' hearts would find religion" (Green 552). Rice further contended that "the truth is that men know that which is so plain to all nature, that God did not intend women to be in authority over men. It is unnatural and inefficient."

So after the 1920's, the solidifying hostility to women's authority within the Church extended beyond actual preaching or ordination. The decades that followed saw the loss of much of the autonomy of women's organizations within the Church. Evangelical seminaries cut back sharply on women's enrollments. So Rice and his generation ended up devaluating women's domestic authority and their religious influence in a single stroke (Green 554).

Rice's insistence on the submission of women in two spheres where they had once exercised authority and autonomy--the home and the Church; was part of a general devaluation of women's authority that extended well beyond the fundamentalist movement. Women's loss of moral and spiritual authority occurred during the same decades as the secular devaluation of domesticity. By the 1940's the home had lost its political function of republican

motherhood, the crucial role of mothers in rearing good citizens for the nation (Green 555).

The economic productivity of the home and consequently the wife's prowess as a homemaker had been undercut by the culture of mass consumption and mass production. Recalling that religious and domestic values were closely identified in the mid-1800's, the era of highest domestic prestige, it is not surprising that the two sets of values slumped simultaneously.

Religious leaders sought to dissociate themselves from domestic and feminine values as a way of arresting the slippage of religion's prestige. These religious leaders had no reason to alter the image of womanhood. It was the role of men in the Church they sought to change. Yet when changing one aspect, it required a corresponding change, and in this case, the change in the role of women (Green 555).

A WOMAN'S PLACE . . .

Today, women as the designated half of the human species, must reach for a continually expanding definition of inclusive humanity, inclusive of both sexes, of all social groups and races. Any principal of religion or society that marginalizes one group or persons as less than fully human diminishes us all. In rejecting androcentrism (males as norms of humanity) women must criticize all forms of chauvinism. Norm would not be defined by the ruling class but rather by a mutual agreement that allows for different ways of being human (Ruether 20).

This does not mean that women should simply scapegoat males for historic evils, in a way that makes them seem like helpless victims. Women also cannot lift themselves up at the expense of males because that would only compound the problem and replicate what men have always done.

Instead women should use the existing social system to their advantage; which means they have to take the initiative in establishing their self worth individually, and their value to society collectively. This would involve taking established systems of critical thought developed by males, shaped by sexist assumptions and looking at these systems through a woman's experience. These systems of thought are Liberalism, Romanticism and Marxism. Using a feminist approach these systems translate into the following:

First, there is Liberal Feminism, which seeks to make women "equal to men" within the public sphere. Secondly, we have Romantic Feminism, which

gives women qualities that are as, or more important than those of traditional masculinity. Finally, we have Marxist Feminism, which encompasses the belief that equality comes from a social restructuring of both class and gender hierarchy in the work place.

Yet in many schools of thought liberalism is deformed into the ideology of bourgeois capitalism. Romanticism would reflect the ideology of Fascism and Marxism would look like bureaucratic communism (Ruether 45). How then, can women avoid such defeats? Feminism should not seek to take one or the other of these traditions, but combine all three.

If we were to combine these three systems of critical thought, we are looking at women who have a public platform to address their needs, a sense of self in which they will be viewed as a valued part of humanity and economic freedom to back their challenge of this patriarchal society. This type of critical thing can result in opening up new pathways in reversing sexism in male-dominated theology (Ruether 45).

Although Ruether advocated using the three established systems of critical thought to combat the inequities of a patriarchal society; her approach is still considered very radical and does not necessarily reflect the ideologies of all feminists. This division of critical feminist thought is not unlike the division between earlier feminists such as the radical beliefs of Susan B. Anthony which were opposed by a great number of fellow Women's Rights activists.

While Ruether attacks the very foundation of this patriarchal society (referring to U.S. society), liberal feminists insist on using those same

institutions to initiate change. Liberal feminists feel that when women are admitted to existing economic and political systems, gradual reforms will take place. And they are willing to wait for these changes (Andersen 338). Liberal feminists understand the oppressive conditions that women face, but do not challenge the fundamental structure of existing institutions.

Whatever approach women choose to take in addressing the inequities served up by religious institutions, in particular, the Christian Church; it remains that, as critical and educated thinkers, women, with or without a degree in theology, can go page by page throughout the Bible and find numerous places where theological thought was based on mythology, folk tales and assumptions. The Bible should be approached as a cultural artifact, not as a religious object. And we must take the position that Biblical literature was produced by and for an androcentric community (Exum. 11).

And if we look at the New Testament in a realistic, critical way; it doesn't take much to see that this part of the Bible was written for women. Jesus treats men and women simply as individuals, equally. Jesus also associates with outcasts and marginal people of the day (Johnstone 204).

Jesus also rejects not only the use of religion to sanctify dominant hierarchies, but also the temptation to use prophetic language simply to justify the revenge of the oppressed (Ruether 29). Christ said that the meek shall inherit the world, the last would be first. If Christianity, by its mere definition is symbolized by the Christian Church, then all persons should be privy to the pulpit. So it stands to reason that along with a change of attitudes towards

established religious doctrines and the intrusion of women in the hierarchy of the Christian Church; the church might begin the process of healing and repairing its corrupt foundation.

COMING OF AGE

Twenty years ago there were almost no women in the seminary; now women make up thirty percent of students in the almost 300 member Association of Theological Schools and this represents about eighty denominations (Dallas Morning News, 1993).

The tradition of women actually being ordained had its beginning in the latter part of the 1800's when, as we have discussed, women were considered of a better moral and religious part of society. In 1856 Antoinette Brow, a Congregationalist, was ordained in New York. Olympia Brow was also ordained in 1863. In 1956 The United Presbyterian Church began to ordain women. In 1970 the Lutheran Church began, in small numbers, to ordain women. The Episcopal Church began in 1972 at the same time Reform Judaism had women becoming Rabbis. In 1986 Conservative Judaism began ordaining women followed by, in 1987, The Church of England (Johnstone 204).

These Protestant and Jewish women have found themselves much better off than their Catholic sisters. One Catholic woman was heard to say, "There is something strangely perverse about priests being required to have certain anatomical equipment and then being forbidden to use it" (Dallas Morning News, 1993).

The Catholic hierarchy justifies its stand by arguing that there is no precedence for women priests in Church history. But as was discussed earlier,

there is a lot of evidence that women did occupy high positions in the church as well as priestly positions. Needless to say the Vatican press was not about to publicize these findings. And in 1988 Pope John Paul reaffirmed the ban against women priests (Dallas Morning News, 1993).

It is important to note that although there is a significant number of women in the seminaries; women that actually have their own parishes are very low (Johnstone 214). But there is clear evidence that once a female minister is allowed to carry out her activities as a minister, people generally evaluate her performance as satisfactory.

Yet two-thirds of church-goers will say they prefer a man, even going so far as to believe that their female minister is an atypical success, a woman with special abilities (Johnstone 215).

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE BLACK CHURCH

The intense frustration of Catholic women cannot be said of non-Catholic Black women, when it comes to participation in the church. To better understand the positive influence the Black Church has provided for its sisters; we need to look at the Black Church through a historical perspective. A history that begins when the first slaves disembarked the first slave ships.

It was very important for slaveholders, as well as all those who dealt in the slave trade to convert the Africans to Christianity. By converting the slaves to Christianity, it accomplished three things. First, it was a means of subduing and pacifying the Africans. Secondly, it made the slaveholders look like charitable Christians, who were taking care of these poor, heathen souls. And these slaveholders used the Bible to legitimize the idea of slavery. Therefore, in their minds they were doing God's work. de Touqueville addressed this matter very aptly in the following excerpt: "White Americans had to have moral faith in themselves to be assured they were innocent of brutality and sin even if they had to tell themselves that were so." And finally, the conversion to Christianity was part of a de-culturalization process along with separating family members, tribal members, which in turn caused them to also lose their language. Thus, these African people ended up losing most of their culture in less than a generation (Johnstone 246).

But while slaveholders took pride in their success in controlling the slaves with the idea of Christianity, the slaves used Christianity for their own

purposes. It became a way of communicating between various tribal groups, through Negro Spirituals. While the white man listened to these songs they had no clue as to their real meaning. These Spirituals communicated escape routes, times and places and people to contact, by way of the underground railroad.

This is not to say that the slaves did not come to believe in Christian ideologies, for they certainly sought freedom in the hereafter, while trying to deal with the lack of freedom in the here and now.

After Emancipation the Black Church took on a very important function among Black Americans. The prominent leader and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois states,

That once Blacks assumed complete control over their church following Emancipation, the local church became the center of its members' social life, the primary medium of communication and information exchange, and even the organizer of entertainment and amusement.

Because the Black Church is the one institution over which Blacks have complete control without the intrusion of whites, it has become an important source of social cohesion in the Black community (Andersen 230). Evidence of the importance of the Black Church to its members can be seen in its many roles. First there is the economic function which helps members financially in times of crisis. The Black Church has also played a significant role in

education, raising money for scholarships and running their own private institutions of learning.

Probably the most important social function of the Black Church is their political involvement in society. The Black Church was instrumental in initiating and supporting the Civil Rights Movement. And today it is estimated that 83% of Blacks are affiliated with the Church in some way. Therefore, it has become a formidable force in the Black community as well as U.S. society as a whole.

The role that African-American women play in the Black Church is significant. They not only constitute the majority in attendance but also are considered the backbone of the church. In the church these women have an equal voice and equal treatment. This equal treatment is not particularly by design, but rather a result of the status both men and women held during the era of slavery. Both genders held equal status as they lived and died in bondage.

Even though Black women have more freedom in the church than their white counterparts; they still have to deal with strong patriarchal influences. Their role may be considered central to the Black Church, but they too have had instances where they have been excluded from positions of authority and leadership (Andersen 231). There are many reasons for this shift, but high on the list is the fact that many Black men have become part of the white patriarchal infrastructure and are part of the capitalistic, male-dominated society.

RADICAL, REVOLUTIONARY AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Religion is an instrument the ruling class uses to justify its own power and to pacify the oppressed. This makes religion, not the means of redemption, but the means of enslavement. The very nature of religious knowledge is seen as prompting alienation rather than integration of the human person. (Ruether 42)

Among various proposals for resolving the issue of traditional inferior roles and status for women in the major world religions, and Christianity in particular, we shall focus on what seems to be the two major options, religious exodus and the resort to witchcraft.

The spokesperson for exodus is Mary Daly, who advocates turning one's back on the old and creating the new. This exodus aims to: (1) Destroy the credibility of sex stereotyping. (2) Create a new definition of God. (3) Invalidate patriarchal religion. This is anti-church in the sense that institutions called church remain sexist and webbed in patriarchal religious concepts.

It is church itself as it becomes a community "with a mission to challenge the distortions in a sexually unbalanced society." It is an exodus community that goes away from the land of its fathers (Johnstone 218). Mary Daly calls for the death of God in her book, Beyond God the Father, as he has been known within the Judeo-Christian tradition, that is, as a male. This concept should be

replaced with one of God more like that proposed by Theologian Paul Tillich, "Ultimate meaning and reality, a process more than a person. When you can say NO to the institution, you can begin to say a clearer and more effective yes to real movement, the movement of your sister's past, present and future" (Johnstone 220).

Another alternative is Witchcraft. Naomi Goldberg sees Witchcraft as a solution to the ancient problem of the subordination of women religiously and otherwise. Witchcraft is defined essentially as religion turned upside down, where the female is superior. They have an inner divine power (superior to men). In witchcraft there is a rage and defiance against traditional religions. There is also a radical break from the traditional view of religion which implies an "other"--a god or other supernatural forces or power (not a new idea, one thinks of pantheism, deism and Reform Judaism) (Johnstone 220).

Although Witchcraft is a very radical departure from traditional religions; revolutionary proposals regarding women in organized religion is of course not new. Take for instance Early Shaker teaching (late 1700's), which viewed God as both male and female and said that Ann Lee, the founder of Shakerism, was co-savior with Christ (Johnstone 221).

Another radical departure from traditional religious practices is seen in the Church of Christ Scientist, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879. The Church holds that its faith comes solely from the works and words of Christ. They do not believe in the "Fall"; but instead believe that sin originates from a misunderstanding of the true nature of God. There is no clergy, only readers

who are elected periodically by the congregation. There is also the service of healing by those that are specially trained for the work.

We have previously discussed the lack of movement in the Catholic Church in relinquishing any substantial power in the hierarchy of the Church. But recently many Catholic women, including nuns, have tried to change traditional thought, using the same scriptures and church doctrines that have been used by the male-dominated clergy, from the parish priest to the Pope himself.

What these women concentrated on was the role that Mary, the mother of Jesus, played in the establishment of the Christian Church. In Mary, the church existed before even a single apostle had heard the Messiah's voice. Mary is not simply a symbol of the Church. She cannot be reduced to an imaginative analogy. We existed in her before we were born. She concretely embodies who we are. She is queen even of the twelve apostles. As stated by Sister Kathryn, "Mary, the woman, the Church learns that every act of grasping, control, pride and ambition distorts the feminine body which is the Church" (Sister Kathryn 2).

Using Mary, who is at the very least, a Saint in the Catholic Church as a symbol of the importance of women in the Church, there seems to be a trend to involve women, more in the church activities. They help in giving the sacraments, visitations and other things that have traditionally been carried out by men.

In 1994 Pope Paul seemed to waiver on the stand that the Church should take in ordaining women into the priesthood. He said, "The Church itself has no authority to confer priestly ordination on women, but that judgment should be held by the Church's faithful." Perhaps the pressure of educated and reasonable thought that is present today regarding women in the priesthood, is having an effect on the hierarchy of the church, which includes the Pope.

Like Protestant women, some Catholic women have opted to seek religious alternatives such as the Chicago Women Church. This is an egalitarian faith community whose members are women with Catholic backgrounds, but does not exclude women with other religious backgrounds.

In their liturgies, they seek spiritual growth through many philosophies and religious practices. In their protest they work for women's equality. Their mission statement states: that they are a sacred circle of loving and powerful women; who respect individual differences, encourage creativity, honor, and encourage the Spirit in each other and allow no boundaries to be placed upon them that hinder or limit their individual self-expression.

They are, in short, a community whose roots are intertwined and growing in many directions that want to be identified as part of many social and political movements.

ANOTHER BATTLE?

ANTI-FEMINIST MOVEMENT: THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

"What I find so offensive about the moral majority in terms of Christian Dogma is that it plays on fear, not love."

Marilyn Waring

It is true that there indeed has been positive movement within many Christian denominations to include women in a productive way. They are entering the seminaries in large numbers and some have achieved the goal of ascending to the pulpit.

Religious doctrines try to avoid misogynist messages, and there is a real attempt to treat women equally in all aspects of society. With all that said, there is still another attempt by the far-right to again put women in their place in the guise of Christian fellowship.

The religious right sees the church as the defender of public morality, perceiving feminism, liberalism and humanism as threatening to Christian values of family life and as violating the hierarchy of God. Women, they believe should be subordinate to their husbands. The Eagle Forum, a national organization of women and men headed by Phyllis Schlafly, defines itself as a group "who believes in God, Home and Country, and are determined to defend

the values that have made America the greatest nation in the world" (Andersen 241).

One of the reasons the right has been so politically effective is that they have the support of conservative Protestant and Catholic churches. The support of evangelical churches makes available a massive communication network through television preachers, which aide the mobilization of voters (Andersen 241).

The power of the religious right is not to be taken lightly, especially when it comes to the abortion issue. Traditionally, the Catholic Church has fostered the opposition to abortion as part of Church doctrine, but now fundamentalist Protestant women have also taken up this cause.

The anti-abortion movement is closely linked to the anti-feminist movement in that both of these movements has as its followers women with strong traditional backgrounds. These women, according to Andersen, had high school educations (some with little college), were married, had children and were not employed outside of the home (Andersen 242). These women also have close ties to church organizations and attend services more often than not.

Again, we see how the Christian Church has imposed its power in so many aspects of a woman's life; but what is puzzling is that so many women have endorsed those beliefs at the risk of losing all the strides women have made in the past, in U.S. society.

Right now we are faced with a movement that may be responsible for setting women back fifty years. This movement goes by the name of the "Promise Keepers". The "Promise Keepers" are intent on carving God's masculine face back onto the spiritual tableau where they believe the model of divine fatherhood has eroded.

This organization, as of 1996 has boasted a revenue of 87 million dollars. And that kind of money generates a lot of power and influence in all areas of society. They are not a church, but yield tremendous influence in religious circles, using Biblical scriptures and long standing traditions to reach hundreds of thousands of men. I say men, because women are not welcome to their gatherings.

This organization is out to retake male responsibility and reestablish male leadership. In the words of Promise Keepers founder, Bill McCartney "Men need to be united with other men in a vital relationship to become godly influences in their world" (Stodghill 4).

Some patriarchal fervor has already set off political alarms. Dedicated watchdogs are wary of these men who have found a very male god. This sounds a lot like the movement by Billy Sunday, which we discussed earlier, who wanted to make religion more masculine, because women were beginning to take a more equal part in all parts of society.

Today with more women working and working in good paying jobs and demonstrating the ability to be independent and economically solvent on their own, has again prompted another attempt to put women in their place, as

second-class citizens. The National Organization for Women has passed a resolution declaring Promise Keepers "the greatest danger to women's rights" (Stodghill 5).

The Promise Keepers also believe men have a spiritual make-up that differs from a woman; a spiritual leadership role. McCartney stated, "that the Bible says, respect your husband and the way to do that is for the wife to let the husband take the lead" (Stodghill 5).

The Promise Keepers also believe that by having all male gatherings, men will be more open and honest. But one might ask if these men cannot be open and honest in front of their wives, then they are missing the point. If families are to be united together in Christian communion, it only makes sense that they (wife, husband, children) enter this communion together. I believe that we can safely conclude that this organization is just another ploy to lull women into a sense of well being while their rights are being eaten away.

Yet, many women are great advocates of the Promise Keepers. Hilary Clinton has praised the Promise Keepers in her book It Takes a Village. A group of conservative women from main line Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches denounced NOW for its attack on the Promise Keepers. A woman from this conservative group stated that "we believe that the feminist fixation on power has sadly missed the point of the present cultural situation" (Stodghill 6).

Also, the wives of the Promise Keepers don't seem to be complaining much about their husbands. Of course one of the wives interviewed was being

beaten by her husband and after his arrest, he went to a rally and was said to have stopped hitting her (this was after one year). While this is, of course good, the lasting effect is yet unknown.

In the end we should keep in mind that any time people are excluded from those things which effect them the most, there are usually negative consequences.

The support, by women, given to the Promise Keepers is not very surprising because of their traditional, conservative roots and their strong affiliation with tradition, conservative religious organizations. This fact was made more evident through a survey I conducted of twelve Protestant women and 13 Catholic women.

All of these women were in the Educational field and all had at least a B.A. or B.S. degree. Their ages varied from 25 to 58. They were also all white and middle-class. The results of this survey were as follows:

When the Catholic women were asked if women should be allowed in the Priesthood, they all said "NO". They felt very comfortable with male priests. They also all agreed that the treatment of women in the Catholic Church followed tradition and they thought that that was all right. None of these women really had read the Bible much so could not see any gender bias. Their position on the Promise Keepers was that they didn't know much about them but it sounded like a good organization for getting families together. All but two of these women attended church on a regular basis.

After surveying the Protestant participants, the results were as follows: Five of the women were already enjoying the turn of events that put women in the pulpit. Four of the other women said that having a woman preacher would be all right with them. Three of the more conservative women, who not only belonged to conservative sects but also attended church regularly, did not really feel comfortable with the idea of a male minister. All of these women did concede that the Bible was written and interpreted with a gender bias. The more liberal Protestants questioned Biblical lore and believed that religion did have, in some ways, a very negative effect on women. Some of the more radical responses from this group were from women who did not belong to any church at the present time, did not attend services at all or seldom attended or participated in religious activities.

This survey seemed to reinforce what has been proven in other studies, that women who belong to conservative religious sects are most likely to be satisfied with traditional female roles and completely distance themselves from the feminist movement. And because of the political power of the religious right, it is no wonder that there is a definite stagnation in the Women's Movement.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that as a socially constructed institution, religion is very important to all societies. It functions as a cohesive force, bringing groups of people together for a common purpose. Religious institutions also provide guidelines for social and moral behavior.

But religion can also be looked upon as a form of social control which has both positive and negative consequences. While this institution meets the spiritual needs of a given society, it can also isolate and alienate portions of that society depending on class, gender, race or national origin.

In U.S. society, the Christian Church is the dominant religious institution. It is traditionally and historically linked to all other institutions, because like all other institutions in U.S. society, it is white male-dominated. Therefore, it is understandable as to how religious practices can mirror the same injustices found in politics, economics, education and the family unit.

Although the Christian Church is represented by hundreds of different sects; they all share a common characteristic in that they all at one time or another have played a role in the subordination of women. This is due, in part, to the misogynist messages given by respected theologians in the formative years of the Christian Church. Further the reliance on Biblical scriptures written and interpreted exclusively through the male experience validated the sexist attitudes toward women, not only in the church, but in all other aspects of society.

We have also seen how these sexist attitudes found their way into the New World through Calvinist theology; and coupled with a democratic form of government and the onset of capitalism, women found themselves stripped of basic human rights. In the name of God they assumed second-class status in a supposed free society.

Even when women were given elevated status, in the 19th century, as keepers of the faith and home, it was short lived. And again they were bounced back to a subordinate role, with no more power or respect than what was given to a child.

Although the Women's Rights Movement had been going on for more than a century, it wasn't until the 1970's that women began breaking down barriers, which allowed them a legitimate claim to the hierarchy in the church as well as a viable part of the mainstream of society. Today women face another battle, a battle again initiated by the conservative faction of the Christian Church.

It is this religious right that is responsible for not only stalling advancements for women in U.S. society, but in many cases erasing some of the advancements women have already made. And what is so disturbing about the religious right, is that a lot of women are part of this movement.

Therefore, it is imperative that feminists stay the course and keep working for equal representation in religious institutions as well as other institutions. It is only this persistence that women will realize their goal of true

equality in all of society. And in the words of Susan B. Anthony "FAILURE
WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE".

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