

Is feminism building a better society?

The feminist movement began primarily as a revolt against male domination to improve life for men, women, and children. Nine people tell what's been lost, what's been gained.

Introduction by Mary O'Connell

Feminist is a loaded word.

Some women, mostly white and many well into middle age, claim the label proudly. Younger women are apt to shrug it off. Women of color say they need to translate it into language they understand. Some men call themselves feminist, while others spit out the word with epithets ranging from bra burning to baby killing. One thing's for sure: the movement that goes by the name has transformed the lives of all of the above.

The feminist movement's sources are the revolutionary upheaval of the late 18th-century and 19th-century struggles to extend political rights beyond white males with property.

The contemporary version was launched in 1963 when Betty Friedan documented the malaise of postwar housewives in *The Feminine Mystique*.

Friedan and her friends were well-educated, middle-class women, who wanted out of the kitchen and into the world of work and politics.

Their watchword was equality. They won laws prohibiting discrimination in schools and jobs but lost the effort to write equal rights into the Constitution.

Their opponents raised silly arguments (unisex

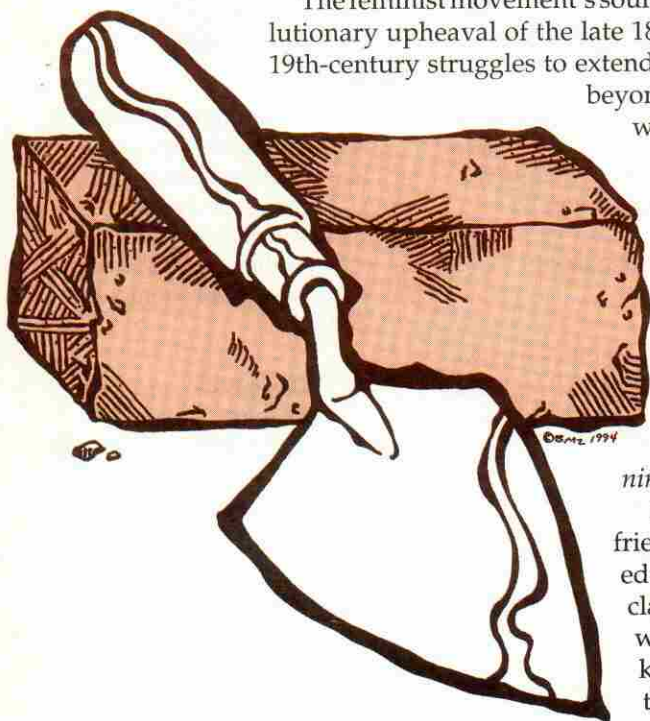
toilets?) but made a broader point: the status of women is a social, not merely political, concern and messing with it would affect the family, the work force, the military—not to mention the church.

African American and Hispanic women argued from a different perspective. Winning equal rights to go to MIT or to become a corporate lawyer means nothing to the majority of women, they said. Their struggles are more basic: poverty, violence, racism, machismo, and neighborhoods that lack day care, where the schools are failing and the children are not safe. A women's movement worthy of the name, they insisted, must put these concerns at its center, so they created their own.

Feminist organizations have taken up some of these challenges, especially family violence, rape, and day care. But much of their struggle has galvanized women who consider control over their bodies the most fundamental right; but it has alienated others, who interpret it to mean that feminism is inevitably anti-child and antifamily.

Are feminists antimale? The more radical among them certainly are; they see men as the enemy and patriarchy as the ultimate evil that engenders in turn poverty, war, and oppression. Others are less likely to say that men are inherently evil, but they are tempted to believe that women are somehow morally superior and that a society in which women were empowered would be more just and less violent. The suffragettes of the early 1900s believed the same thing: that when women had the vote, there would be no more war. The 20th century has not borne out that promise.

But there's no doubt that feminism has already wrought a number of dramatic changes. Don't just look at the Senate and the Supreme Court. Consider the little girls growing up playing soccer and studying math. Listen to the scholars who unearth long-buried stories of women in history and scripture.



Cherish the women who build communities in the bleakest inner cities. Watch the men who have learned new ways to be fathers and lovers. And worry, too, about how the family will come through this upheaval and whether the church will ever take it seriously.

Let's raise boys and girls up to better standards

Dolores Curran

Some friends of mine who opened their home to a foreign-exchange teenage student from Germany experienced a hellish couple of months before they gave up and passed him on to another family who evicted him within the month. After a third family returned him to the agency, he was sent back to Germany and his mother's loving service.

This 17-year-old refused to demean himself by doing "woman's" work in his host households. He wouldn't even pick up his clothing when he undressed. Worse, he scorned the children in the households who did their normal chores and engendered enormous resentment when they had to pick up his slack.

I think of this boy when any discussion turns to post-feminist child rearing. American boys are emerging far less helpless than their grandfathers in meeting daily survival needs, and American girls are not taught to serve their brothers as they did a couple of generations ago.

Division of labor in the home is just one small area in changing parenting practices. To girls, parents are giving messages formerly reserved to boys: you are equal; you can do or be anything you want if you work hard enough; you are strong; you have rights that you must protect; and you are responsible in fiscal matters and in supporting any children you may have. Messages to boys are more muddled mainly because men lag behind women in coming to terms with changing sexual roles. For example, boys may be taught that it's okay to show their feelings or to be scared, but when they do, they feel parental disapproval.

Much depends on the father's attitude and behavior. If a father is emotionally available and comfortable with shared family responsibility, his son will have less difficulty in learning to be whole because boys model their behavior on their dads.

Frank Pittman, author of *Man Enough*, holds that when little boys begin the process of differentiating themselves from their mothers, they see nurturing and loving as women's work and unfit for a man. If

they've never had an adult male express to them a gentle and nurturing side, boys will show their masculinity by refusing to do those things, and they can become violent and antisocial.

We are into our second post-feminist generation, and while we're seeing more young men who are egalitarian and respectful of women, it is clear we've done a better job in opening the world to our daughters than in opening relational changes to our sons. We're seeing many confused and angry young men who are afraid of commitment to marriage because of role and expectation confusion.

The one exception with girls is the mixed message from their parents that they can take on all that their mothers did and add what their fathers did without losing themselves in the process.

Whenever a culture goes through significant social change, the norms are fuzzy and rules unclear. The buck stops in the home where parents must make decisions on whether to rear children by traditional or changing standards. Either way, the children are going to face interaction with those reared differently. The German student hit it head-on because roles in his culture have not changed as rapidly as in the U.S.

American boys are emerging far less helpless than their grandfathers, and girls are not taught to serve their brothers.

So, while child-rearing practices have undergone immense change in some families, faiths, and parts of the country, they have remained fairly static in others. On the hopeful side, we are beginning to see more healthy egalitarian families who serve as models to those struggling with role transition in parenting. There is a widespread interest in how these parents operate, and out of these models new rules are emerging. Whether these rules will be reserved to a few or become adopted by the majority remains to be seen.

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Has feminism helped women in the church?

Diana L. Hayes

One of the most important movements of this century—because of its impact on both the Christian churches and Western society—has been the women's liberation movement, in both its political and theological forms. With roots in earlier move-

ments: abolition (19th century), suffrage (1920s), and civil rights (1960s), it witnesses the "coming to voice" of women of all races and ethnicities, and it comes as a decided shock to many, especially those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo in the halls of academia, the offices of the corporate world, or the sanctuaries of the Catholic Church.

The women's movement, however, is the natural result of an continuous struggle for liberation that first came into the forefront in the aftermath of World War II. Freedoms and opportunities once achieved are rarely rescinded without a struggle, and today's women have no intention of retreating from gains made. Their efforts to free themselves of stereotypical roles and characterizations to gain greater responsibility in all walks of life is in keeping

Women are even serving as pastoral administrators, which means that they are the "pastor" in all but name.

with other liberation struggles around the globe where usually women have been the hardest "laborers in the vineyard" but have reaped far from equal rewards.

Within theological circles, especially the Roman Catholic Church, this movement has empowered women to recover their own voices and to speak for themselves from the depths of the anger, frustration, and love they have toward their church. As the literal backbone of the church—for women make up the majority of the faithful—they have called upon the church to renounce its demeaning patriarchal attitude toward them. Relying upon interpretations of sacred scripture, tradition, and church doctrine, which emerge from their own lived experiences as women, they are demanding greater participation at all levels, including that of the ordained priesthood. Their demands are supported by their theological scholarship, which reveals for the first time the critical roles that women have played since the early church. This knowledge, hitherto unknown and unacknowledged, for whatever reason, has given them the courage to speak out against the failings of the hierarchical and institutional church.

Women of color have also participated in the movement toward breaking the shackles that have enslaved women in the church for so long. Sadly, they have had to engage in a two-pronged assault against the racism and sexism of the church and the racism, conscious or unconscious, of the feminist movement that repeated the same mistakes in their attitude toward and lack of inclusion of women of color in their midst. Today, the womanist move-

ment (that of women of color) and the feminist movement are engaged in much needed dialogue as they seek to present a joint assault upon religious institutions that attempt to proscribe their roles and delineate their responsibilities while they continue to recognize and overcome their own failings.

The women's movement has given women of all races, ethnicities, and classes a *locus theologicus* from which they can continue to call the church to live up to its teachings of the equality and co-createdness of all of God's people with voices that cry to heaven and will not cease. It has also given women at all levels in the church an opportunity to be a voice in the church. It has enabled them, because of changes, such as inclusive language in the worship service, to see their place in the church as one becoming more valued.

Leadership roles for women, especially on the parish level, have multiplied, so today we see them not just as eucharistic ministers but as liturgical ministers, parish-council presidents, and pastoral assistants. Women are even serving as pastoral administrators, which means that they are the "pastor" in all but name.

Diana L. Hayes is a professor of theology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Does anyone care about house and home anymore?

Mary O'Connell

"Women's work" today means everything from firefighter to forensic technician. That's great; nobody should set limits on dreams for silly reasons such as gender. But in our rush to compete for the jobs men used to do, we've had to give up a lot of the work women used to do. And we've lost something along the way.

Take my mother and me, for example. My mother's house is always clean. Mine isn't, except on the day after the cleaning woman comes. She always has the fixings to feed drop-in visitors: turkey sandwiches, oatmeal cookies, hot tea. I phone for a pizza. She watches the sales and finds bargains on tablecloths and towels. I'm so rushed that I buy what's available at whatever the price tag says. She takes care of things and passes them on in good repair. I, too often, consume them.

She has worked all her life: keeping hot meals and clean laundry coming on schedule; teaching

little people how to use a knife and fork and how to understand the difference between right and wrong; buying birthday presents and going to funerals; keeping track of which family moved into the house on the corner and whose husband had a heart attack; holding together family and community. That's been her work, and she's still at it. My daughter, back from college, remarked that a visit to Grandma's "always makes me feel everything is all right with the world."

Of course, my mother also held a "job" at various times as a secretary. That same ability to rise above chaos and beat back disorder—combined with shorthand, typing, spelling, and manners learned 60 years ago at St. Mary's High School—made her a first-rate one. It was another form of "women's work," of course, and it gave her a little extra money in her later years. But her priorities were always with her other "work."

Women of my generation seek a different balance. Ask us what "work" we do, and we name the jobs corporations pay us to do. Even women who stay home with babies tend to see those years as an interruption of their "real" jobs.

We haven't exactly given up on women's work; we share domestic tasks, such as cooking and child care, with our husbands, which is healthy all-around. But there have been losses. Fewer meals are cooked at home or shared by the family. More children spend their infancy in day care. Our houses are dirtier. We spend money to make up for lack of time, celebrating birthdays at fast-food restaurants to avoid the hassle at home and sticking elderly people in institutions because we have no space in our own lives for them.

We've made the trade-offs, and we've learned not to feel guilty about them. We've stopped trying to be Superwoman. But, like most things feminine, "women's work" was undervalued, and the stresses so evident on our families and communities give us some glimpse now of what it was worth. I, for one, am getting a bit worried about growing old in this brave new world.

Mary O'Connell is a Chicago-area writer.

Get it right from the moment of birth

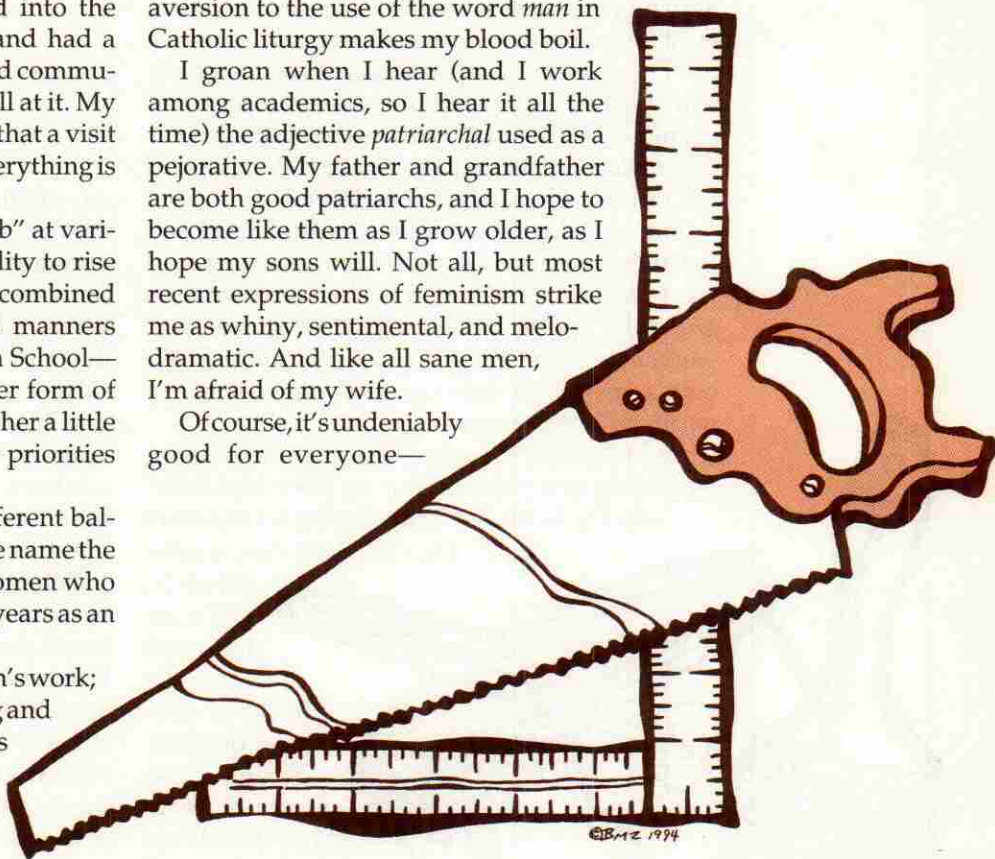
Michael Garvey

A confession is in order at the outset: I think

gender-inclusive language is really dumb, and most guys I know who are fastidious about it treat women like doormats. The recently fashionable aversion to the use of the word *man* in Catholic liturgy makes my blood boil.

I groan when I hear (and I work among academics, so I hear it all the time) the adjective *patriarchal* used as a pejorative. My father and grandfather are both good patriarchs, and I hope to become like them as I grow older, as I hope my sons will. Not all, but most recent expressions of feminism strike me as whiny, sentimental, and melodramatic. And like all sane men, I'm afraid of my wife.

Of course, it's undeniably good for everyone—



men, women, and children alike—that public institutions increasingly avail themselves of the services and ideas of women, that boys with a healing touch can now grow up to become nurses, and that girls with a passion for justice can now grow up to become judges.

As for the feminization of the military, I'm confident that women will soon prove themselves to be every bit as adept at killing as men, though it's hard to see how that benefits anyone at all. I wonder how many female executioners there are in states with the death penalty and whether or not it matters.

But even I, patriarchal scumbag that I am, must acknowledge one cultural shift that feminism quietly accomplished sometime during my adolescence: birth has finally become a feature of marriage.

Don't get me wrong—obviously spouses have been making love and babies for millennia. But until fairly recently, the moment of birth radically differed from the moment of conception in that the husband, while permitted enthusiastic participa-

tion in the latter, couldn't have anything to do with the former.

In the movies, an anxious John Wayne fidgeted with his ten-gallon hat at the bedroom door while an officious midwife ordered him to boil water, or Fred MacMurray paced alone in a hospital lobby and stammered charmingly at preoccupied personnel. In real life, well, just ask any North American male born before the Korean War what a placenta is. If he knows, he's a doctor.

But nowadays, the father has been invited into the delivery room to accompany the mother, and most of those fathers who decline the invitation are, quite appropriately, regarded by men and women alike as wimps. What was unthinkable only a very short time ago has become a sort of marital rite of passage.

A father now "coaches" a mother in breathing techniques and pushing during labor and delivery. He holds her hand during a Caesarean

birth. He commiserates, exults,

quarrels,

and wonders with

her as the

miracle of pro-

creation trans-

forms their

whole mar-

riage. He bellows

and giggles and

weeps and freaks

out, supplying all sorts

of material for a televi-

sion comedy and for the

far more civilized folklore

of the water cooler at the

office, the locker room, and

the saloon.

But quietly, to himself and to

his wife, and perhaps one day to

his child, he will say what has re-

ally happened. He has been a helpless witness to the awesome power of Eve as it transfixed and transfigured the woman he loves, and he has seen firsthand the astonishing emergence of the body and soul that he and she and God have made together. He has seen grace at work, and no man or woman on earth will ever be less than an astonishment to him.

We should be grateful to feminism for such fathers.

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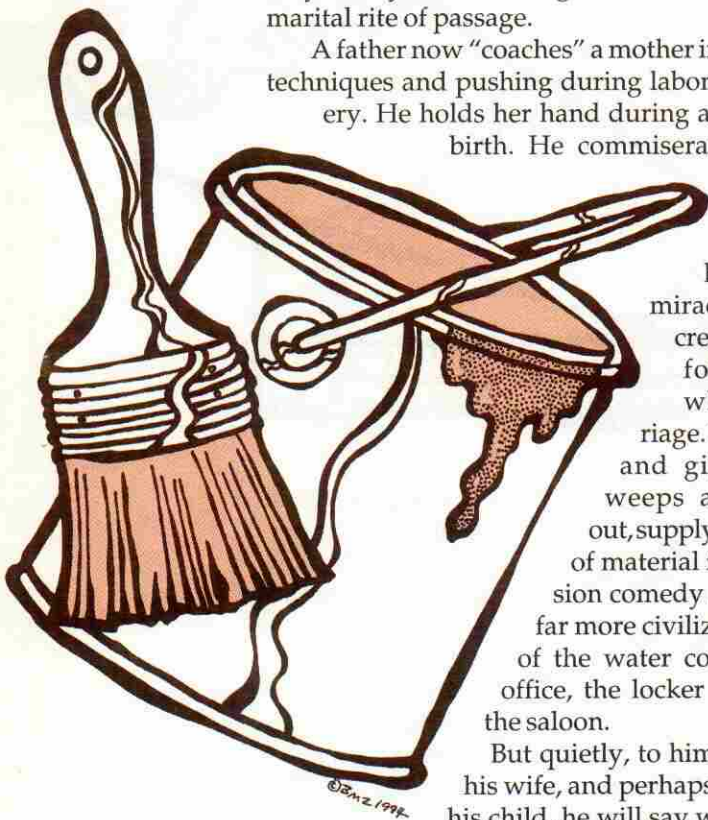
Who's minding the children?

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

Are feminists anti-children? Do feminists hate men? Did feminists really burn bras? These odd questions belong in the same camp. They are all stereotypical but telling queries attached to feminism. Unfortunately while they capture a bit of the flavor of feminist struggles, they sorely miss the substance. Consequently these labels tend to falsify history and deter us from accurate understandings of difficult problems and more adequate solutions. It is time for feminists to speak a resounding "No" to questions about anti-children sentiments and to provide better explanations.

Feminism has served and continues to serve nicely as a lightning rod for problems that, at their heart, do not lie entirely on feminism's doorstep. The modern nuclear family with its rigid, narrow gender roles would have come under increasing stress with or without a feminist critique. With industrialization, men spent more time away from the home, and women lost to industry central economic and social roles. With post-industrialization, people in general spend less of their adult lives with children in the household, and ideals of democracy that long defined the American public domain are now radically challenging the private realm. Even women who do not actively demand equity at home or at work object to Saint Paul's imperatives to be submissive to their husbands.

In feminism's role as midwife rather than instigator of these massive social changes, there are problems that it did not anticipate. Few issues are of graver concern to many young women of diverse class, race, and educational backgrounds than the dilemma of how to mediate the demands of work and the desire to be a nurturing parent. Few anticipated the deep emotional and cultural resistance to genuine equality in the home and changes in the workplace that would allow for greater domestic equity. The front-page news continues to report that the "new man" is no more willing to pick up a broom than his father, that many women work a double shift, and that national statutory parental benefits are next to nothing. Even more troubling, very few foresaw that the "success" of some women, usually white and



upper class, in meeting work and family responsibilities would often be built on the backs of other women, often of a different color and socioeconomic class—baby-sitters, housekeepers, cleaning help, day-care staff, and teachers.

In a society driven by the marketplace that devalues the taking care of children, elevates material productivity, places in jeopardy those in significant care-taking roles, and forbids men serious concern over friends, children, family, and domicile, we should not be surprised that mothers and children have neither been factored in nor fared well. Nor should we be surprised that when women sought liberation, the first order of business was not to secure the needs of mothers and children.

Feminists have had good reason to feel reluctant about speaking up for the values of rearing children. For too long men left the relentlessly repetitive chores of cleaning up after men and children to women. Women have paid, and continue to pay dearly, for nurturing children.

From a faith perspective, the problems lie in the general failure to reconstruct more adequate models of human fulfillment. And the solutions will have to involve further theological reflection. Many people today lament that our children are in trouble. However, I would argue, the family predicament today is not centered so much in the declining well-being of children and the rising individualism of adults, although these are related concerns, but in the internal struggles to democratize the family and the external struggles to create social and economic policies that support democratic families and the care of dependents—not just children but all those with special needs.

At the center of family turmoil are not problems with families per se—divorce, single mothers, pregnant teens, neglected or problem children—as difficult as such phenomenon are. At the heart of family turmoil is the very difficult problem of establishing, much less maintaining, genuinely democratic family forms and dynamics.

Despite the sexual subordination in both New Testament and Hebrew scriptures, despite the patriarchal character of the ancient Israel and the Roman and Hellenistic cultures in which Christianity arose, and despite the ways in which the Christian tradition has perpetuated ideals of male dominance in the centuries since, current scholarship continues to confirm important streams of thought at variance with these assumptions. Just, democratic, egalitarian relationships of radical mutuality in families and elsewhere are not only

the intent of human creation but also the promise of the Christian gospel itself.

Over against social convention Jesus kept egalitarian premises at the core of the breaking in of the kingdom. To work and to love and to have an integrated vocation and family life are grace-filled gifts equally due both women and men.

Jesus also reminds those who would hurry along elsewhere in search of something deemed more important that something revelatory lies within the child. Many men who teach and write in theology and ethics seldom live according to the pace of children. Yet the voices of children and of mothers are central to this work. Theological and moral reflection cannot offer realistic standards of human fulfillment without making way for the young and for those who truly care for them.

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We are all created in the image of God

Juli Loesch Wiley

If an adult female were a brick chimney and a human embryo an infestation of insects, nobody would have a problem with abortion. Bring in the exterminator, scrub it out, and have done with it.

But what everyone knows (although not everyone will acknowledge) is that adult females and human embryos, together with toddling daughters and half-grown boys, vivid young women and fading old men, are a living part of US—"us" meaning the human race.

And as such, our stock rises or falls together. If woman and man are somehow sacred, then so, automatically, will be the fruit of woman and man uniting. On the other hand, if a man is but a naked ape, then apish are his mate and his hairless whelp as well.

I am arguing that the human race is, in this sense, indivisible. It is quite impossible to say, for instance, that women are nice, and men are lice,

Just, democratic, egalitarian relationships of radical mutuality in families and elsewhere are not only the intent of human creation but also the promise of the Christian gospel itself.

and our young are either nice or lice, depending. The dignity we have simply by virtue of our shared humanity is an all-or-nothing thing.

For a time it may appear that you can value one race, one sex, one segment of the bright band of human lifespan while devaluing another. But in the end, either your high view will raise everyone's valuation (if he or she is precious, then so is the partner, the progeny, the brother and the sister and the friend, the friend of the friend . . .) or your low view will drag everyone down.

Or, as one university doctor, a teacher of abortion techniques, explains: "I can do it as long as I repeat to myself that fetuses are pieces of meat—and women are animals."

We can choose life or death for the Least One. Whatever we choose, we do. Whatever we do, we become. What are we becoming?

As it has been revealed to us, we were created in the image and likeness of God, "A little lower than the angels." But we've sustained a disabling and disfiguring fall since then. So disfiguring that we sometimes look at each other and wonder, "What are you?"

When we come into existence, we come into a predicament. We all have to figure out what we are (Lords and Ladies? Landfill?) and take some responsibility for what we are becoming.

Thus abortion is a horrible thing for the human race, not only—perhaps not even principally—because of what it does to the cut-off young (they'll be recompensed, I trust) but also because of what it does to all the rest of us.

Because abortion makes a man sexually feckless and a spiritual runt: a non-father, non-knowing, nonloving, and non-serving, his posterity blown away in flecks and foam.

Because it makes a woman harden within when what should have been her honored firstborn babe is tweezed out like a chigger.

And the rest of us? We're forced to make a choice. We can work in solidarity "with everyone," man, woman, born, unborn, struggling to serve and save all; or make a tacit alliance with Death and become "normal," "acceptable," "reasonable," "sensible," and damned.

Into this mess, came God. Came to be a guest in a woman we called "blessed," to become embryo, fetus, nursling, toddler, lad, youth, grown and dying man. And to tell us that whatever we do to the Least One, we do unto him.

We can choose life or death for the Least One. Whatever we choose, we do. Whatever we do, we become.

What are we becoming?

Juli Loesch Wiley is a mother of a 4-year-old and an unborn baby and is a freelance writer in Johnson City, Texas.

Are women especially moral?

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

When feminists suggest, as many do, that women are in some way morally superior to men, they are drawing upon the venerable tradition of separate spheres that assigned women to the home and men to the worlds of business and politics. Accordingly, women were naturally suited to raise children, tend the ill, and generally provide an antidote to the competitive struggles of capitalism.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, women reformers frequently argued that they should bring the values of the domestic sphere into the public sphere to clean it up—to make it safe for women and children. And they sometimes called their efforts social housekeeping. There is, nonetheless, some irony in the uses to which these ideas have been put by contemporary feminism. For women's moral superiority was normally taken to derive directly from their attentiveness to and empathy for the weak and vulnerable, which is to say from their traditional female roles.

Many women still cherish the notion that women have special responsibilities to children and a special affinity for the claims of morality as against those of profit, for the claims of selflessness against those of self-promotion. Yet the driving force in contemporary feminism has been precisely to free women from those claims. Women, feminists reasonably claim, should be free to compete equally with men in the worlds of work and politics. Women should feel free to enjoy their sexuality, express their anger, and engage in the competition of power, prestige, and profit.

And, in a world in which so many women do have to support themselves or contribute to a family income, they have an important point. They would further, again not unreasonably, argue that women have the same right as men to realize their talents and their ambitions. But, if they insist that women should be able to feel and behave the same as men, why they insist that women will also continue to feel

and behave differently from them remains puzzling.

Feminism began as primarily a revolt against male domination, but as women have begun to make substantial gains in the men's world of work and politics, many have tended to feel wrenched between career and family. It is now less often men than children who stand in the way of women's complete freedom, and it looks more and more as if the struggle for that freedom is taking the form of a revolt against children—and beyond children, against the moral work of society.

From many feminists' perspective, the care of the weak and vulnerable was imposed upon women by men. They conclude that, to throw off male domination, women must throw off those responsibilities. They do not normally say that feminism means a revolt against morality, but it is difficult to see what remains, under the new conditions, of women's traditional association with morality—for that morality, which had less to do with how one felt than with the work that one did and the sacrifices one made, was explicitly elaborated and valued as the direct antithesis of competitive individualism.

Women are as entitled as men to enjoy the benefits of unfettered individualism, but if that is what feminism stands for, it remains difficult to understand how women's morality will differ from that of men whose immorality they are so ready to condemn.

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Getting to know the women in the Bible

Sister Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J.

The women's movement has helped to rediscover women in the Bible. Historical investigation through texts, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological materials has yielded many new insights about women in the ancient world. A closer look at some of the evidence has raised serious doubts about some of our traditional assumptions about women in the biblical world.

An idea favored by Christians and still often heard is that Judaism's treatment of women was inferior to that of Christianity, even to the surrounding Greco-Roman world. Christianity, ac-

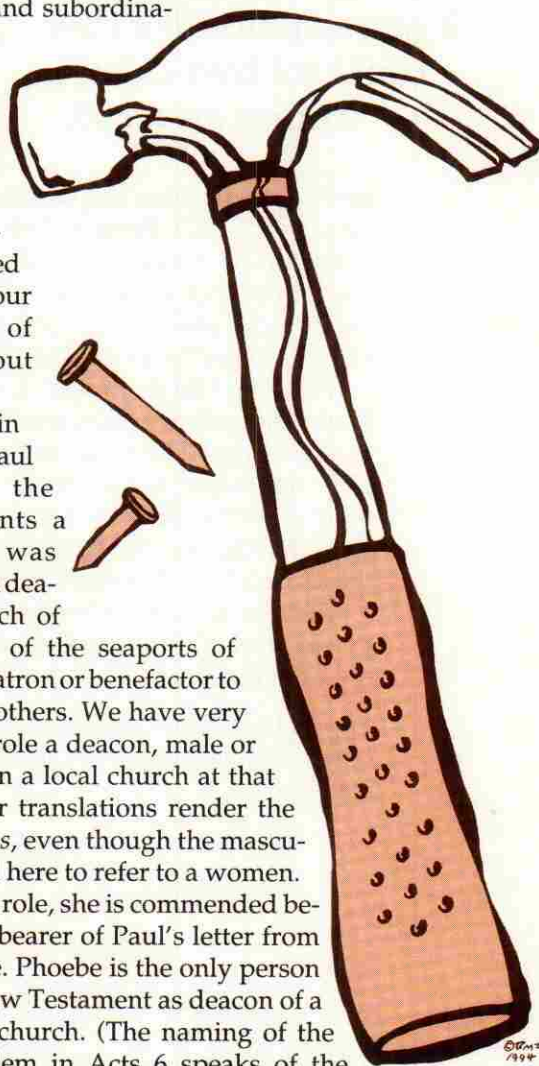
ording to this idea, liberated women from the depersonalization and mistreatment that was theirs in both Judaism and paganism. Jewish scholars have called our attention to the bias built into such interpretations. More recent studies, based not on religious bias but more strongly on the historical evidence, argue in favor of an inclusive tendency at work in some levels of society in the first century, to which both Judaism and Christianity responded while still repeating some of the traditional mistrust and subordination of women.

Exegesis informed by better knowledge of the original text and of the social environment has yielded new results in our understanding of some texts about women.

For instance, in Romans 16:1-2, Paul commends to the letter's recipients a woman who was named Phoebe, a deacon in the church of Cenchreae (one of the seaports of Corinth) and a patron or benefactor to Paul and many others. We have very little idea what role a deacon, male or female, played in a local church at that time. Most older translations render the word as *deaconess*, even though the masculine form is used here to refer to a woman.

Whatever her role, she is commended because she is the bearer of Paul's letter from Corinth to Rome. Phoebe is the only person named in the New Testament as deacon of a particular local church. (The naming of the seven at Jerusalem in Acts 6 speaks of the apostles' service as *diakonia*, and the seven implicitly will replace them at this activity. But the text does not actually call them deacons.)

But Phoebe is also a *prostatis* to many, including Paul himself. This feminine form of the Greek word for patron or benefactor has been rendered "she has looked after" many (Jerusalem Bible); she has "come to the help of" many (New Jerusalem Bible); she is a "helper" (Revised Standard Version); and she has "been of help to many" (New



American Bible). Of these three translation groups used for Catholic lectionary reading in the United States, only the New Revised Standard Version and the revised New American Bible properly translate *benefactor*, a term that means not helper in a subordinate sense but patron of superior social status who supports lesser clients—of whom Paul acknowledges himself to be one. Yet this impor-

From the 13th century on, it was assumed that Paul could not have called a woman an apostle.

tant passage is completely omitted from the Roman lectionary.

Among many names of persons singled out by Paul for special

greeting in the same chapter are Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7). Until the 13th century, all commentators on this passage understood the second name to be that of a woman, Junia. Both she and Andronicus, presumably her husband, are spoken of as “noteworthy among the apostles.”

From the 13th century on, it was assumed that Paul could not have called a woman an apostle, so the name must be instead the grammatically possible masculine name Junias. Today, however, most recent translations restore the woman Junia, including the New Revised Standard Version and the revised New American Bible.

Thus we see in only a few lines of a Pauline letter the presence of women as deacons and apostles in the New Testament.

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Feminism has made me a better man

Gregory F. Augustine Pierce

The women’s movement has made me a better and happier man in many ways. Here are three of them:

1. I’m a lot better father to my 6-year-old daughter, Abigail. If it weren’t for the changes over the last 30 years in how men and women think about and relate to each other, I am sure that she and I would not be as close as we are.

Because feminists successfully challenged the 1950’s stereotype of male-female relations, I have dealt much differently with Abby than I might

have. For example, she and I can play dolls or Nintendo together with equal ease. We can either dance or roughhouse around the living room as the spirit moves us. We talk together about anything under the sun, read books, draw, study arithmetic, even go shopping together. Abby plays both soccer and baseball with me—just like her brothers do. All this father-daughter togetherness has made Abby and me a lot closer than we would have been had I still viewed little girls as dainty little creatures somehow alien to the world of men and boys. The women’s movement has allowed Abby and me to become good friends, and that has made me very happy.

2. I am much happier in the workplace and, I think, a much better worker because of the changing roles of men and women there. I have spent many years working for female bosses; I have had several women as employees and colleagues; and for the last five years I have been partners in a business with a woman, Mary Buckley. These women have not only contributed to creating an enjoyable and stimulating work environment, but they have also helped me make a good living and have taught me much of what I know about business.

If the women’s movement had never taken place, many of these women might not have been in the work force at all—at least not in positions of authority and influence. I then would have had to spend my entire work life surrounded by men, which would have definitely been my loss and made me very unhappy.

3. The women’s movement has made me appreciate the critical role that women play in the church. I now understand that without women, the church would be a very strange institution, indeed. This has led me to conclude that the Catholic Church must ordain women if it is going to continue to be a fun, interesting, and effective organization.

Just as the presence and equality of women in my family and workplace has made me a better and happier father and worker, the leadership of women in my church has made me a happier and better Catholic.

For all this, I have the women’s movement to thank. Now, about all those diapers I’ve had to change and dishes I’ve had to wash. . . .

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