

## THE RISING OF THE WOMAN IS THE RISING OF THE RACE

(a line from the song *Bread and Roses*)<sup>1</sup>

This song was sung at the mill strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912; a fierce and bloody strike won ultimately by the women's action.<sup>2</sup> Justice for women and social justice in a wider context are in this song intimately related. In this essay I will also link the public or societal situation with the issue of sexism.

Is it true that the rising of the women is the rising of the race? If so, then the women's movement speaks for both women and men, for our common humanity.

"The meaning of the human" is the theme of this conference. In what follows I hope to develop further the section on theological anthropology found in the Catholic Theological Society of America's Research Report of last year (1978) *Women in Church and Society*.<sup>3</sup> I will focus on the theological question of the meaning of the human as it touches the overall society especially, rather than on its importance for the specific society of the Church.

After a few sentences on the theological method I am using and a review of the modern women's movement, I will set forth three *anthropological models* for women: (a) a dual-nature model, (b) a single nature model, (c) a transformative person-centered model. Following this, I will sketch some insights concerning sexism as a prelude to setting out three *societal models*, each of which forms the context in which some one of the anthropologic models is set. Consideration of the liberating thrust of Christian faith as it penetrates or fails to penetrate these models will accompany the reflection. I will sum up the paper by directly relating the discussion to the Christian messianic vision of faith.

### THEOLOGICAL METHOD

The theological method that I follow makes use of women's experience today and of insights from the social sciences—especially anthropology, history, sociology and psychology.<sup>4</sup> All of these are viewed

<sup>1</sup>J. Oppenheim, "Bread and Roses," song written in honor of the mill strike, quoted in B. M. Wertheimer, *We Were There, The Story of Working Women in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 353-68.

<sup>3</sup>S. Butler, M.S.B.T., ed., *Research Report, Women in Church and Society, 1978*, Report of Research Team established by Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America (Editorial Offices: Manhattan College, Bronx, N.Y.), 1978.

<sup>4</sup>The literature is extensive; it is difficult to mention all the books which have helped me. I found the following especially important: A. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society* (New York, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1972); E. Janeway, *Man's World, Woman's Place* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1971); M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

in the light of Christian faith and in dialogue with biblical revelation.<sup>5</sup> A critical approach is also emphasized in order to discern the liberating dimensions of faith and to reject the misogynist and sexist aspects of the Christian heritage, for it is recognized more and more that religion can be put to a false use and thereby betrayed. In a sense there is both a true and an untrue Christianity.

#### A REVIEW OF THE MODERN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The feminist movement in the modern world is related to the rise of industrialism and the sharp separation between the public and the private spheres which developed in the past three centuries. The patriarchal order, in which women were considered the inferior sex, is indeed older than these last three centuries, but a refinement or reshaping of patriarchy has taken place under industrialism; it is this change which has been the catalyst that highlights and exacerbates the oppression of sexism, and is bringing its injustice to full consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

Under patriarchy women were indeed the "subordinate sex," not fully in God's image like men, yet women's work and women's skills were so diverse and so necessary that women could not doubt their own importance, despite their auxiliary and secondary status. Vegetable gardens, poultry raising, milking, butchering, cooking, making butter and cheese, pickling, preserving, making beer, apple juice and cider—these were some of the daily tasks. But there was more: spinning, carding, weaving, making clothes, candlemaking, soapmaking. The homestead was a small and varied factory. Beyond these productive skills there were the arts of healing, the knowledge of herbs that cure and soothe, the help to women in childbirth and the care for the infant. Elizabeth Janeway tells of a Margaret Paston in fifteenth-century England, who did all the above and more:

1974); J. B. Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976); D. Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur, Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon, 1977); R. R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975); M. Blaxall and B. Reagan, eds., *Women and the Workplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Z. R. Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1979); and B. Ehrenreich and D. English, *For Her Own Good* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1978).

<sup>5</sup>Several Articles by E. S. Fiorenza. I would mention the following especially: "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," in W. J. Burghardt, ed., *Woman, New Dimensions* (New York, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1975, 1977); "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," in L. Russell, ed., *The Liberating Word* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); "The Study of Women in Early Christianity," in T. J. Ryan, ed., *Critical History and Biblical Faith*, College Theology Society Series (Villanova: Villanova University, 1979); "Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity and Catholic Vision," and "Women in the Early Christian Movement," in C. Christ and J. Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising* (NY, San Francisco and London: Harper & Row, 1979); R. R. Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), and *The Feminine Face of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); B. Harrison, "Sexism and the Contemporary Church: When Evasion becomes Complicity," in A. L. Hageman, ed., *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church* (New York: Association Press, 1974).

<sup>6</sup>Ehrenreich and English, *op. cit.*; also Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, and Janeway, *op. cit.*.

In the 15th Century John Paston the Second, rich in the wool trade, went up from Norfolk to London to press important lawsuits. He left his wife Margaret in charge of his business affairs at home and we know from the letters and diaries that the Paston family left that she proved a remarkable shrewd and able administrator. 'She received her husband's instructions,' notes H. S. Bennett, the English historian, 'carried them out, reported action taken and warned him of his enemies' moves with great efficiency, and at the same time was not slow in taking things into her own hands when necessary. So she negotiated with farmers, threatened lawsuits and made distrains, endeavored to placate opponents and angry tenants, sent agents to buy and sell, to hold courts, to treat with justices and great lords—in short there was little that her husband could do that she did not attempt.' In her place at home Margaret Paston faced violence from neighbors who thought a woman easier to deal with than a man, and she fought back. Her running feud with the Duke of Suffolk reached a climax when she seized seventy-seven head of cattle and declared she would not return them until their rightful owners paid rents to her, not the Duke. Hardly a feminine action but by that time her house had been three times invaded by gangs of armed men. Throughout, her letters speak not only of her perils and exploits, but also of her love for her husband and her (rather dictatorial) concern for her children. In her life, woman's place had gotten thoroughly mixed up with man's world.<sup>7</sup>

This is a picture of the lives of many women under the older patriarchal order. Women, if subordinate, were important.

But with the growth of the factories and the cities in the eighteenth century, woman's place became smaller and more private. The market had taken over women's productive work and the new professional experts, e.g. the doctors, took over the healing arts and gradually abolished midwifery as woman's work.<sup>8</sup> Woman in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries becomes the priestess of a home that has lost and is losing its concrete productive work to the marketplace. She is exalted as the nurturer and builder of unity in a home that grows more and more isolated from the world of work. At the same time, however, women also begin to work for wages, but in the poorest jobs and at the lowest pay; this wage-work gave to women a glimmer of new independence, but no real hold in the public world. It is not by accident that Freud could say that women were a puzzle to him;<sup>9</sup> they became increasingly a puzzle to themselves. The old patriarchal roles were disrupted and the new roles whether in the home or in public society were dissatisfying. But it took time for the full realization of this to come home to women.

<sup>7</sup>Janeway, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>8</sup>Ehrenreich and English, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-88.

<sup>9</sup>Towards the end of his life Freud acknowledged to some extent his lack of understanding of women. Cf. A. Rich in *Of Women Born* (New York: Bantam Books, 1977, 1st Norton edition, 1976), p. 203. She quotes from Freud's essay "On Femininity": "If you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experience of life or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information."

Ehrenreich, *op. cit.*, p. 14 also quotes, "Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity. . . . Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem—those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply—you are yourselves the problem." from S. Freud, "Femininity" in James Strachey, ed., *The Complete Introductory Lecture on Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), p. 577. Ehrenreich and English see this "riddle of femininity" for Freud not as an example of a puzzle that has a timeless and universal status but as related to the very ambivalent situation of women in the past three centuries.

The women's movement was also from the first related, especially in the United States, to the racial question. Women became aware as they fought against black enslavement that they too needed to lay claim to freedom and human dignity. When Angelina Grimke from a South Carolina slave-owning family spoke out against slavery, she and her sister, Sarah, were denounced for public speaking—it was said that they had gone beyond woman's God-delineated place. Sarah Grimke responded, "I ask no favors for my sex . . . All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks and permit us to stand upright."<sup>10</sup>

Just as women's role was privatized in the past three centuries, religion and morality have also been privatized. The public world of business, technology and politics, now the exclusively male sphere, were divorced from human values; the Christian virtues were feminized and located in the private sphere.<sup>11</sup> (See for example, R. Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.) A young student at St. John's University, now in dentistry, took a course I taught on Church and World Development. Towards the close of the semester, he made a telling remark. He said that the Christian values of love of neighbor, concern for justice, willingness to serve rather than be served, can work in the family and among groups of close friends. But to practice such virtues in our public world is to be devoured and killed; the rat race of society has no place for them. It is significant that some now say the home is also no longer a place of love and care; it has been invaded by the competition and ruthlessness of the public, larger world.<sup>12</sup>

The present wave of the feminist movement in the United States, beginning in the late sixties and continuing into the present, followed once more on the racial question, that is, the American civil rights movement and the Black Power movement of the early sixties. Many women became aware of their own second-rate status. The anti-war movements plus the development of high technology with its accompanying mechanization and impersonal rationalization of the public world, also made women aware that the values they had guarded (even though cut off in the privatized sphere) were being eroded everywhere, including the home itself. The current movement for women's liberation is marked by the growing awareness that women's oppression is not only a personal matter; it is that, but it is at the same time a structural, systemic and public question. Both the informal and formal structures of society are weighted against women. In passing, it may be added that the systemic character of the oppressions of women, of Blacks and of the poor—sex, race and class—become more and more evident today.

Since the rise of industrialism, there has been a significant change or refinement in the patriarchal order; some have called this change in patriarchy by the name "masculinist" meaning that the public world in

<sup>10</sup>S. Grimke, *The Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* (Boston, 1838), p. 10. Quoted by E. Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York: Atheneum, 1974; Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 47.

<sup>11</sup>Harrison, *op. cit.*, and Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth*, pp. 186-211.

<sup>12</sup>C Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World, the Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

the past three centuries has been made by men alone and not by men and women together. It is this development that set off the successive waves of the feminist movement of the last two centuries; it is also why the awareness of sexism has arisen first in the industrial countries. The emancipatory interest of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the hidden leaven of the Hebrew and Christian prophetic vision will also have played a role. However, the immense study, scholarship and literature which continues to grow around women's history and women's oppression now reaches back behind the modern "masculinist"<sup>13</sup> age to assess the older domination of the long patriarchal order itself.<sup>14</sup>

### THREE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODELS FOR WOMEN

#### (a) *The Dual-Nature Model*

Christian theology and anthropology have for many centuries accepted a "two-nature" concept of humanity, that is, a permanent difference of role and function was ascribed to the two sexes. "Equal but different" or "the complementarity of the sexes" has been the traditional way of expressing this concept. In reality, of course, just as the Blacks in the South experienced, when this phrase was applied to them, "equal but different" always results in "different and unequal." As Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has written, "This attempt to see human nature and Christian discipleship expressed in two different modes of being human led in tradition and theology to the denigration of women and to the glorification and mythologization of the feminine."<sup>15</sup> Ultimately in this view women are not only different from men but inferior to them—as the examination of both Church and society's traditions concretely illustrates. The dual-nature model has often seen women as weak in mind (a lesser order of creation) and prone to evil or, on the other hand, it has exalted women and put them on a pedestal. Inferior to man or seemingly superior—but in neither case fully human. It is the latter approach, i.e. placing women on a pedestal, that has marked the past two centuries in many parts of the Western, industrialized world. Women have been honored as the nurturers, the moral guardians, the bringers of love and harmony, the ones who care. At the same time, they have been cut off from the world of real life and relegated to the private sphere in order that the home may become a "haven in a heartless world." This is the dual-nature model understood in romantic, idealistic fashion. As Phyllis McGinley has written describing this pedestal model for our time—and agreeing with it—

<sup>13</sup>"Masculinist" is the term that B. Ehrenreich and D. English use, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-18 and *passim*.

<sup>14</sup>Patriarchy has had many forms over the centuries. I accept here that definition of it given by V. Muller: "a social system in which the status of women is defined primarily as wards of their husbands, fathers and brothers," and in this system wardship has economic and political dimensions. V. Muller, "The Formation of the state and the Oppression of Women: Some Theoretical Considerations and a Case Study in England and Wales," *The Review of Radical Political Economics* 9,3 (Fall 1977), 7.

<sup>15</sup>E. S. Fiorenza, "Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity, and Catholic Vision," *Womanspirit Rising*, p. 141.

By and large . . . the world runs better when men and women keep to their own spheres. I do not say women are better off, but society in general is. And that is, after all, the mysterious honor and obligation of women—to keep this planet in orbit. We are the immolators, the sacrificers, the givers, not the eaters-up of life.<sup>16</sup>

This is what most Catholic women will have heard when they were young girls. It can sound ennobling, a call to heroic sacrifice and giving, but does it not ultimately encourage selfishness and insensitivity on the part of one-half of the human race? Does it not at the same time lead to a false servitude and diminishment for women? It is not a genuine image of mutuality and equality.

(b) *The One-Nature Model*

The dual-nature model understood in romantic, idealistic form was therefore one solution to the newly arisen feminist questions. But there was another solution, which emphasized one-nature, that is, that the sexes were more alike than different and it is the likeness which must be stressed. I tread carefully in delineating and evaluating this model for it is capable of two interpretations. It can be understood in a one-sided, rationalistic fashion, so that it becomes an assimilationist model, assimilation to the powerful, ruling male sex. Or on the other hand, it can be understood to point beyond itself to personhood, thereby affirming that each woman and each man is a complete person and moral subject in her or himself. It is the former or assimilationist meaning that I will reject here. The CTSA Report *Women in Church and Society*, while accepting the one-nature model also rejects this rationalistic, assimilationist understanding of it.

In discarding the dual-nature, traditional model, many of the early feminists in both the nineteenth century and the twentieth, deeply aware of the injustice of sexism, sought freedom, initiative and independence for women by stressing that women must enter the public world, taking on the language, skills and some of the life styles of men.<sup>17</sup> The one-nature model, so understood, tended therefore to have for its norm the male sex, leaving little room for the validity and meaningfulness of female experience and the long history of women's growth, despite all oppression.<sup>18</sup> This is in modern form the old temptation of some of the Gnostics, who emphasized that the truly spiritual woman became as a

<sup>16</sup> Cited by E. Janeway, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41, from Phyllis McGinley's book, *Sixpence in Her Shoe*.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who wrote *Women and Economics*, ed. by C. N. Degler (New York: Harper & Row, 1966, originally published in 1898). Ehrenreich and English, *op. cit.*, see her as "one of the most radical rationalist feminist thinkers of the century," pp. 290-91. They would also include Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Olive Schreiner, the South African feminist as tending in this direction. They emphasize that these feminists, even in the nineteenth century, were fully aware of the need for a political program as well as individual changes. See pp. 23 and 24 of Ehrenreich.

<sup>18</sup> R. Reuther and E. McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit, Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), gives several examples of women's growth despite all oppression.

man;<sup>19</sup> this approach finds an echo in some of the prayers in the Mass for virgins, which stress that in coming to sainthood women became as men; they had "manfully" overcome woman's naturally weak nature. Though I would assert that women and men are indeed more alike than different and that each is a full person in her and himself, there is nevertheless a long valuable history of women's experience that cannot be discarded in favor of a simplistic, one-nature model, that is, a one-nature model in assimilationist form. Assimilation to the male sex as the norm for the human is a static concept denying the riches of women's history while at the same time locking men into the present understanding of male human nature. In reality men must change as well as women.

(c) *The Transformative Person-centered Model*

A third model for human life and for the sexes is struggling to come to life today—a model which transforms and transcends the old gender roles but which cannot become a reality without at the same time transforming the social and cultural structures of our world. Both the dual-nature model and the one-nature model described above strive to fit society as it was or is, and if there is to be change the emphasis is placed on personal or individual change. Because as Francis Schüssler Fiorenza has written, we need "a socio-linguistic understanding of personal identity,"<sup>20</sup> this third model envisages a change that is at once both personal and public. This transformative person-centered model receives an impetus to growth from some changes in our world that have already occurred; it receives an impetus also from Christian faith itself.

*Changes in our world.* Women today are no longer required to have many children in order that the race may survive. In past times twelve births were often needed so that even two would come to maturity. In addition, women are now living much longer so that the average age is close to 77. Woman's identity can no longer be so totally identified with that of wife and mother, inhibiting the development of all other capacities. And the development of high technology has relieved work of much physical burden for men, so that men's strength is not needed in quite the same ways as in the past. It becomes more possible now than previously for men to care for and nurture the new generation along with women. Would this help small boys to value love and tenderness rather than aggression and war? New concrete, public possibilities like these would enter into the making of any transformative person-centered model.<sup>21</sup>

*An Impetus from Christian Faith.* An impetus for this transformative model comes from Christian faith. Both women and men are made

<sup>19</sup>E. S. Fiorenza, "The Study of Women in Early Christianity," p. 57. Note 38 cites the *Gospel of Thomas* the *Gospel of Mary* and *Pistis Sophia* as Gnostic texts that the spiritual woman becomes like a man. See also the collect for a virgin martyr from the Missal: "O God, who, amongst other marvels of thy power, hast given even to weak women the triumph of martyrdom...."

<sup>20</sup>F. S. Fiorenza, "Critical Social Theory and Christology," *CTSA Proceedings* 30 (1975), 102-03.

<sup>21</sup>Oakley, *op. cit.* See Chapter 8, pp. 189-210.

in the image and likeness of the one God. "God created mankind (*adam*) in his own image . . . male (*zakar*) and female (*nequebah*) he created them" (Gen 1: 27).<sup>22</sup> Both woman and man are in God's image and their primary bond is to this God and to cohumanity. They are equal persons distinguished from all the rest of creation in "being modelled or patterned after God"<sup>23</sup> i.e. in the image. As Phyllis Bird writes, "That Israel rarely lived up to this vision is all too apparent, but the vision should not be denied."<sup>24</sup> In the New Testament the God revealed to us by Jesus who called him "Father" is one who has come near to human beings and is with them in the struggle of life. To be like to this God is to grow in love, compassion, mercy, peace, service, care and community. This is the personhood that all are called to, both women and men; it is not the one-half personhood of complementarity which usually results in a relationship of domination (as already signified in Gen 3: 14-19, wherein alienation and evil show man as woman's ruler rather than her friend). It is a personhood of equality and mutuality, breaking through the narrow boxes and categories of sex and race and class.

*Why the Dual-Nature Model in Romantic, Idealistic Form Won out until Now!*<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile it is important to note that since the first deepening awareness of the woman question, one might have thought that the one-nature model would have won out in these past two hundred years. Instead, however, the dual-nature model in extreme romantic form has held the day and has been shored up by all kinds of psychological, medical, sociological and other professional advice. Why is this? Perhaps because of the long tradition behind it, perhaps too because both women and men recognize the importance of the so-called "feminine virtues." With the rise of industrialism, the larger world grew ever harsher, more impersonal, mechanical—a place of warmth, of love, of healing, of nurture and relationship was needed. Who would do this, who would keep the planet in orbit, unless women did? But in the past two decades it has become evident that the dual-nature solution in romantic form (or in any other form) no longer works. More and more of the concrete work for the family has wandered off into the marketplace and is sold in commodity form. At the same time women have tasted, even if in second-rate jobs, the wider world of today and have recognized that they must know the public sphere at first hand and have full education if they are to grow to full human potential themselves—and if they are to help their children grow. A deep sense of the inadequacy and narrowness of the home when cut off from the public world has come over multitudes. With this has come the willingness to study, reflect and raise to consciousness; not only this first dissatisfaction, which Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* has called "the sickness without a

<sup>22</sup> P. Bird, "Images of Women in the Old Testament," in R. Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Ehrenreich and English, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-26 and 282-92.



name,"<sup>26</sup> but to bring into the open for full discussion the subordinate, subservient status of women not only in recent times but throughout history, reaching back to reclaim, where possible, woman's story in the past millenia under the rule of the patriarchs.

*From the Personal to the Public*

In the feminist movement it is often said, "the personal is the political" but the deep interrelation of these two is not easily probed in depth.

At the personal level women must claim their own identities. Too often they are merely identified as wives and mothers, receiving their place from biological function or from the family unit. Man is seen as the norm of the human; woman is identified as the "other" the friendly helper, the supportive one.<sup>27</sup> To transform gender roles women must not only enter men's world of work and education, but men must enter women's world of nurturing and parenting, and of care for the household. To bring about this change, public structures of work and leisure need re-ordering.<sup>28</sup>

To envision genuine equality and mutuality between woman and man in marriage and the family, the religious symbols that anchor the relationship in inequality from the first need to be challenged.

God	Christ	Man
Israel	Church	Woman

Christ, Man on the one side set over against Israel, Church and Woman on the other side, surely presents an unequal relationship—with man always on the God side of the equation. And the marriage laws of many of the States, which bind women to follow the man's domicile and give her little possibility for economic independence, make for a relationship of inequality that becomes evident at the time of divorce or separation. As Rosemary Ruether writes, "A fully realized partnership marriage would revolutionize our traditional conceptions of what the pact of marriage means."<sup>29</sup>

In order that men may take an equal part in parenting from the very first, in order that women may have sufficient economic independence all through married life, vast public changes are needed. For example, it is clear that often there is not equal pay for equal work, but it is even more significant that whole ranges of work are closed to women. It is the lowest paid jobs that women fill.<sup>30</sup> And working women have a double burden—the work at home, the work on the job. This is true in all the socialist countries also; women in Eastern European socialist countries

<sup>26</sup>Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 17.

<sup>27</sup>S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* trans. and ed. by H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964, originally published in French in 1949), see pp. 49-52 and 69, also *passim*.

<sup>28</sup>Dinnerstein, *op. cit.*, especially Chapters 9 and 10, pp. 207-77.

<sup>29</sup>R. Ruether and W. Roth, *The Liberating Bond, Covenants—Biblical and Contemporary* (New York: Friendship Press, 1978), p. 57.

<sup>30</sup>N. Cornblath-Moshe, ed., *Women, the Poorer Sex*, A Report of the National Council on Women Work and Welfare. (201 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.), May 1978. An account of the poverty population, the income levels of women, the poverty of women who are the heads of households, pp. 1-8.

are complaining of the double burden.<sup>31</sup> That women are absent from the better jobs and higher paid fields is no accident, for they have no access to the male homosocial world, what has been called the "old boys' clubs" where most frequently the really important decisions are made. As Jean Lipman-Blumen writes, regarding this job segregation, "Merely by ignoring the existence of women outside the domestic, sexual and service realms the male homosocial world relegates women to the sidelines of life."<sup>32</sup>

*A Question of Power; A Question of Domination.* In this new refinement of patriarchy, this "masculinist" society, women have been shorn of the immense productive work which was once part of the home, and, though they have entered the job market in great numbers they are overwhelmingly in the low-paying, low-prestige jobs. Power to be heard and noticed, power to be in some measure economically independent, power over one's own body and one's sexuality, power to obtain a good education, power to develop a good self image—all of this is important for every human being, but is most frequently denied to women. Powerlessness means a kind of servitude, which can only achieve some dignity through subterfuge and wiles. In 1944 Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma* compared the virtues extolled in women with those extolled in black servants. Both groups were singled out for their smiling faces, their charm, responsiveness, intuition, deference and where necessary deceptive wiles.<sup>33</sup> Are these the virtues developed by second-class citizens? They are truly important qualities, but when practiced in dependency they are frequently despised. The other side of powerlessness is domination and tyranny, self-will and insensitivity. These vices do not help any human beings, whether they be men over against women, or whites over against blacks.

If we look closely at the situation of women throughout the world, it becomes clear that women are the marginal of the marginal, the poorest of the poor everywhere. Recently a poor Indian woman in Mexico was asked why she had killed her newborn daughter. She replied that she wished her parents had killed her as a baby—so miserable had her life been as a woman and as a destitute woman.<sup>34</sup> This poverty of women is true also in the United States.<sup>35</sup> Women along with Blacks are the last hired and the first fired. Even though single-parent heads of many families, they are in the poorest jobs, doing work that men would not do. Women too have little control over their own bodies, their own sexuality. They are on the one hand encouraged by the state to have more children to bolster the workforce or supply the army; or on the other

<sup>31</sup>Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), pp. 46-71 and 191-220, also throughout.

<sup>32</sup>J. Lipman-Blumen, "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions," *Women and the Workplace*, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup>G. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944, 1962), see Appendix 5, "A Parallel to the Negro Problem," pp. 1073-78.

<sup>34</sup>Unpublished lecture of Leonor Aida Concha, "The Indigenous Woman in Latin America," given under the auspices of *Mujeres para el Dialogo*, Puebla, 1979.

<sup>35</sup>Comblath-Moshe, *op. cit.*

hand, as in Puerto Rico, among the American Indians and Black women in the South, they have been sterilized without their knowledge or consent, so that their unwanted children in these cases would not disturb the economy. Gradually it becomes clear that the oppression of sex must be related to the other oppressions of race and poverty if an unjust world order which puts profits before people and destroys the resources of the earth is to be challenged and changed.

### THREE SOCIETAL MODELS

As one reflects on the constant interrelationships of the personal and the public, it becomes clear that the anthropological models are not merely formal, conceptual and individualistic, but are from the first embedded in and related to a social context, however imperfectly or summarily that social context can be described. Persons have always had a socio-linguistic identity<sup>36</sup> though this has not always been acknowledged. In what follows, I will briefly sketch three societal models, each of which is the social context for some one of the anthropological models outlined above.

#### (a) *The Hierarchic-Elitist Society and the Dual-Nature Model*

This is a model of traditional society, especially since the rise of the state.<sup>37</sup> It is probable that male domination was already present to some extent in primitive-tribal societies, but it is more certainly established with the growth of private property and the development of a ruling class as the state developed. Some now owned more wealth than others, had control over others and over government generally, and were in addition accorded greater honor and prestige. This hierarchic-elitist society has been present, in various forms, throughout much of the world within known history and is present in many places today. The English Revolution of 1688 and the French and American Revolutions of the late eighteenth century marked a break with it. This hierarchic-elitist society is summed up in the rhyme regarding everyone remaining in his or her rightful place or station, being content to remain in the place and station in which God has put one.

Bless the squire and his relations  
And keep us in our proper stations.

Christian faith spoke indeed of all being equal in the sight of God, but stratification according to sex, race and class was completely accepted by Christian states. Stratification was accepted for the "right ordering" of things in this world; however different things might be in that other world after death. The Christian movement in its first beginnings did indeed challenge this cultural ordering,<sup>38</sup> but made peace with it early on and embraced it under Constantine.

<sup>36</sup> F. S. Fiorenza, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Muller, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> E. S. Fiorenza, "The Study of Women in Early Christianity," especially pp. 39-50.

(b) *The One-Dimensional Society—and the One-Nature Model*

This model is a product of the modern world and is perhaps best understood as inaugurated with the English, French and American Revolutions. The watchwords here were freedom, equality and brotherhood and everyone was called to equal citizenship. Democracy, the power of the people was stressed; rank and estate as found under the *Ancien Régime* were abolished.

Perhaps we see this model especially at work in the United States where all immigrants were called to forget their past in order to make up within one generation a citizen body—all becoming one in the melting pot of American life. Despite much that is inspiring in this vision, freedom, equality and fraternity remained largely abstract goals, realizable in some measure for the immigrants but mainly the privileges of the powerful and the wealthy. Under the cloak of democracy, the real ruling groups have been hidden. Kings and monarchs were visible power holders in the hierarchical society, but in this new model for society the real controllers are much less identifiable. Blacks and Indians and women had no voice; most men were and are also without a voice that matters. It is an upper elite, white male, prosperous and mostly of Protestant heritage who are the rulers, but this is seldom said.

The one-nature anthropological model has kinship with this one-dimensional society. All seem equal, but in reality women are told to assimilate to the norm of the human which is male. It is, therefore, one type of person in the male/female relation that is the paradigm; it is one grouping of people in the societal picture, i.e. the upper elite, that is the paradigm for all the people. No less a person than Oliver Wendell Holmes gives voice to this understanding in the nineteenth century when speaking about the American Indian. After saying that the white man will hunt down and wipe out the red man, he says that the canvas of America will then be "ready for a picture of manhood a little more like God's own image."<sup>39</sup>

(c) *The Transformative Model for Society and the Transformed Person*

Can the one-nature model and the one-dimensional society be renegotiated and transformed? If so, this is the dream of a non-authoritarian, non-competitive, non-hierarchical society in which leadership is fully accountable to the people. Many are searching today for a society organized around human needs, a society in which nurture and care is a priority, a society in which wisdom and skill is shared, a society in which leadership is shared and responsible while at the same time fulfilling its true function. Many recognize too that it is important to nurture, to be patient, supportive, affiliative, expressive, flexible. Because people are important, it is important to be there for others; life becomes inhuman, as it has in so much of our world today, when love, support, care and generosity are lacking.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup>Cited by R. Ruether, *The Liberating Bond*, pp. 71-72. From the book of T. F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken, 1965), p. 243.

<sup>40</sup>Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

These are the so-called "womanly" virtues. And as we look more closely, we recognize that these so-called "feminine" virtues are akin to the praxis and witness that Jesus gave: his inclusion and care for the outcast, the despised, the distressed; his coming to serve and not be served, which goes counter to all domination. Do not these virtues therefore belong to the whole human race—to women and to men? It is true, however, that they have been practiced especially by women and are related to women's experience and history throughout the centuries. Today many see that these virtues must hold a primary place in any new society. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English write, "The market with its financial abstractions, deformed science and obsession with dead things, must be pushed back to the margins. And the 'womanly' virtues of community and caring must rise to the center as the only human principles."<sup>41</sup>

That this may happen, however, a critical task is essential.<sup>42</sup> Without a probing of societal and church structures to root out oppressive dependencies, a simply static affirmation of these virtues can only lead to a false solution. We need the gifts of fortitude, knowledge, initiative, understanding and counsel in order to challenge and point out the personal and systemic aspects of injustice and evil in society. These gifts have often been seen as male attributes; they are needed today especially in prophetic guise. They are needed by both women and men. Put in religious terms, metanoia and conversion are essential not only for individuals, but also at the institutional levels of Church and society. There is no easy road to the transformed society or the transformed person. Evil must be rooted out and destroyed if we are to build and to plant.

Is this transformed society purely utopian? Despite how far we are from its realization, it is desperately needed today. More than fifty years ago, W. H. Auden wrote, "We must love one another or die."<sup>43</sup> This is evident to the woman or man in the street today. Survival itself is pressing us.

<sup>41</sup> Ehrenreich and English, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>42</sup> The importance of this critical task has been highlighted for me by the work of Francis Schüssler Fiorenza in study his articles, especially "Critical Social Theory and Christology"; and through the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, particularly her article, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation." Both articles are cited in the notes above.

Discussion of the critical theory has led to further study of the critical theory in the following books and articles: M. Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, trans. by M. J. O'Connell and others (New York: Seabury Press, 1972). These essays first appeared in Germany prior to World War II; M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown & Co., 1973); R. Siebert, "Max Horkheimer, Theology and Positivism I and II," *The Ecumenist* (January-February 1976 and March-April 1976); recent work of Johannes Metz such as *Zeit der Orden?* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1977) and the German Synodenbeschluss "Unsere Hoffnung," *Gemeinsame Synode der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1976), pp. 84-111.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted by R. McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence, A Primer for White Americans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 100.

*The Liberating Thrust of Christian Faith*

The nuclear bomb, the population explosion, the hunger of multitudes, the depletion of the earth's resources, the sense of emptiness and meaninglessness in the more affluent world—all these show the urgency of building a more human world.

But these concrete realities and the immensity of the task require a vision and a faith if human beings are to have courage for the long haul—and if they are to persevere despite failure. Can Christian faith speak anew to our day?

At the very center of the Christian vision lies the hope and the trust "that earthly horror does not possess the last word,"<sup>44</sup> that Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Vietnam and the Gulag are not the meaning of human life, that misery and evil do not ultimately outweigh the good, but that human beings are called into community with God and with each other.

This vision speaks of a kingdom of justice and peace which leads to the questioning of oppressive structures and relationships, whether sexist, racist or classist. Renewed reflection on this liberating tradition of faith, coupled with critique of the false aspects of Christian history and heritage is essential. The scriptural model tells of an original justice, a fall into historical evil and sin, the need for repentance and the making of the new creation. This model told in story gives a prophetic and messianic vision of life's meaning. It is a vision not meant only for the end of time, nor merely for "another world" but is also a call to life and action in the present. It affirms the possibility of the new. It understands God as the Lord of the world as well as the Lord of the human heart, thus linking intimately the public and the private spheres.

Each human being, whether man or woman, is a complete person in him or herself, called to reflect the image and the likeness of the God who is one, the God who is not divided into male and female in the heavens.<sup>45</sup> This faith tells of Jesus Christ who revealed the greatness of human personhood for both women and men, a personhood that is linked both in solidarity with God and with all other human persons.

No mere static affirmation of the human and Christian ideal of mutuality and equality is sufficient in order that the Christian vision may be at least partly realized. Solid and penetrating criticism of unjust structures, unjust personal relations and unjust history is essential. Repentance for the individual Christian, repentance for the Church as institution, repentance for society itself is a condition for true growth. I think that this cannot be emphasized enough. It is at the heart of the critical theory spoken of by the Frankfurt School in sociology, but at a more profound level it is at the heart of faith. Persons and structures are not what they could be, but are sinful and unjust. Metanoia or conver-

<sup>44</sup>Horkheimer, in Foreword to Jay, *op. cit.*, p. xii. Max Horkheimer held this hope throughout his life, though he had little grounding in religious faith, or at least explicit religious faith, for it.

<sup>45</sup>From an unpublished lecture by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza given at St. John's University, July 13, 1978, New York City. Given at the Workshop on *Feminist Theological Perspectives on Religion, Sexuality and Work*.

sion is central for the individual person, for the Church (e.g. the public confession of sorrow for the treatment of the Jewish people voiced at Vatican II), central also for governments and for society as a whole.

The new person, the new society and the new creation become possible through such metanoia. The Scripture tells human beings of a God who has come close, who is with women and men in the struggle of life, who is with them to the end and out beyond death. Indeed the very core of Christian faith is the belief in Jesus' resurrection. This Jesus by his words and deeds and death called all human beings into community—a community without status distinctions, without domination. "In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female" (Gal 1: 27). This is one of the oldest Christian baptismal confessions and has been called a *magna charta* for the Christian community.<sup>46</sup> It has never been easy to realize and therefore it was relegated to the life hereafter. In the modern era by those who followed a secularized form of this messianic vision, it was looked for on earth—in the future.<sup>47</sup> In renewed reflection on this central thrust of Christian faith, the promise of the Kingdom, it combines both a work in this present world and a hope that reaches out beyond this world, to encompass both the dead who have gone before and the generations yet to come. It is rooted, like the work of Jesus, in the cross and suffering; it does not ask for sacrifice in the sense of appeasement or mere self-control, but calls for a serving, risking, disciplined, enduring love for the sake of the Kingdom.

In conclusion, it is essential to stress that the public and private realms in society and in the Church can no longer be separated, giving the public to men and the private to women. The human values cultivated by women must rise to the center of our society as virtues for all; but the gifts of fortitude, rationality, understanding often attributed especially to men must be used in critical, prophetic fashion to root out what is evil and unjust.

The liberating vision of a more human world is often found among non-Christians; Christians have grounds in faith itself for holding to it, not, however, with the certainty of logic and mathematics, but in trust—not in arrogance and false comfort but in hope. For the believing community it is grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit who makes it possible for women and men to be more fully human and therefore more truly in God's image. It is this Spirit who makes possible "communication without domination" and a solidarity among human beings which overcomes the false barriers of sex, race and class.

The rising of the women is the rising of the race—so this essay began. It is a rising of women to full personhood so that both women and men may be genuinely moral subjects in their own right. It is a rising of

<sup>46</sup>E. S. Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," p. 41.

<sup>47</sup>E.g., Emmanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx—the whole current of the Enlightenment. Liberal theologians as well as more secular philosophers embraced a "this-worldly" fulfilment (not always to the exclusion of "another world").

women to full participation in both the public and private world of Church and society, so that the world may be more human for everyone.

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