



# FEMINISM REVISITED:

## A Brief Overview

by Dr. B. J. Seymour

Some twenty years ago, in an article in *Catholic World*, Leonard Swidler announced that "Jesus Was A Feminist." Responses to this startling affirmation were swift, varied and passionate. Whatever the image that comes to mind upon hearing the word "feminist," feminism is alive and well in our day.

Note, for example, these cover stories, all of which were published in the last year and a half: "The War Against Feminism" (*Time*, March 9, 1992); "God and Women—A Second Reformation Sweeps Christianity" (*Time*, Nov. 23, 1992); and "Women and the Bible" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1993).

Swidler offers us this definition of feminist: "a person who is in favor of, and who promotes, the equality of women with men, a person who advocates and practices treating women primarily as human persons (as men are so treated) and willingly contravenes social customs in so acting." The author believes that Jesus transparently embodied this attitude and this behavior.

Swidler's ideas were by no means new even twenty years ago. In fact, such thinking pre-dates the Civil War. Women participated in numerous reform movements in the 1830s and 1840s—abolition of slavery, temperance, women's rights. Two extraordinary women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, had met at a world anti-slavery conference in London in 1840. When they attempted to take an active part, they were voted down. As they sat on a bench at the British Museum, they contemplated the significance of their having been denied a voice because that voice was feminine.

Their concerns eventually prompted the historic meeting at Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1848—a date which may be considered the "official" launching of the women's movement. Those attending produced a document entitled "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions." Based on the Declaration of Independence, it is a fundamental document in the story of women's rights.

Mou and Stanton also organized the National Woman's Suffrage Association and for decades were leading suffragists. Neither lived to see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Some forty-five years after Seneca Falls, Stanton was the mover and shaker behind the publication of *The Woman's Bible* (ak.a. *The Feminist Attack on the Scriptures*). This two-volume work, completed between 1895 and 1898, cited every Biblical text relating to women, together with commentary. Female Biblical scholars invited to participate in the project refused to lend their expertise, however, because they feared what such collaboration would do to their professional reputations!

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## VBWIM Will Meet in November

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry will meet for dinner and program during the annual meeting of Baptist General Association of Virginia on November 9 at 6 p.m. in the Marriott Hotel, adjacent to the convention center.

Following a buffet dinner, the program will be a dialogue on the topic "Was Jesus a Feminist?"

### ***IN THIS ISSUE***

#### **Feminism**

In addition to the historical overview and spotlight on a woman who demonstrates the feminist model in her life, we include articles from a laywoman and a pastor from a church that has had to come to grips with the realities of feminist theology in church life through the use of inclusive language in worship and church music, women in the pulpit and inclusion of women in church governance as well as education.

# IN MY OPINION

## Editorial

### The “F-Word”

by Barbara Jackson

The F-word is feminism!

In newspaper columns, polite novels and other such references where the sensibilities of young children, the “fair sex” and preachers are to be guarded, “the F-word” is a euphemism for one of the Anglo-Saxon four-letter words better left unspecified. In two of the articles in this newsletter, interestingly enough, “feminism” is characterized as a dirty word to some. So it is only fitting to discuss the phenomenon of the F-word—in this case, feminism.

Recently, at a state-wide conference, Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry had a book display of titles of the Women’s Studies genre, featuring several dozen books of interest to women in religion. A group of people who were a part of a Religious Right contingent (identified by a badge on their lapel) came by to view the display. After a quick look at several titles, (including among others *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* by Phyllis Trible, *In Memory of Her* by Fiorenza, and *The Divine Feminine* by Virginia Mollenkott), one man threw a book down in obvious disgust while a woman pulled him by the arm to get away (apparently fearing guilt by association). His parting shot was, “I just want to see what train these folks are riding.

In 1988, when Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry was just beginning, organizers were reluctant to characterize the fledgling group as feminist, for fear would-be supporters be turned off. Yet, in the five years since that beginning, we have come to a why-not attitude. Why not tell the world what train we folks are riding.

Let’s be up front. We acknowledge a hostile climate for women in religious life. Why not be forthright about the struggle for acceptance, recognition and open doors. Those currently in control of the Southern Baptist Convention have been frank in affirming their “pro-family” stance.

To the Religious Right, pro-family means women subservient to men, men as heads of households and check-books, return of women from the workplace to the kitchen and bedroom, men in control of women’s bodies, men in control of congregations, pulpits, ordination and access to religious knowledge and access to the mind of God.

*(please turn to page 11)*

## Ex Cathedra

### The Mission of VBWIM

by Betty Pugh, chair, Virginia Baptist Women *in* Ministry

Feminism! Yes, I have said what is a dirty word to some, but hopefully a word of encouragement and hope to most. This edition of our Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry newsletter, SYNERGY, is devoted to a candid look at the issues and concerns of women and how feminist Christianity has brought changes to the church, to women’s experience in the world and to our theological understandings of ourselves. We have even attempted to look at how men have benefited from some of the advancements brought about by feminism.

It would be helpful to pause at this moment and reflect on how the mission of VBWIM itself is also a powerful recipient of the progress made through the women’s movement. I see many things that have come because of our awareness that women have not had the place and power given to them by God in church leadership or ministry opportunities. This awareness has given us a mission of education, from inclusive language and alternative liturgies to more informed biblical scholarship and new understandings of the psychology of women. We have all come to know ourselves and affirm ourselves more readily because of the efforts in these fields.

The goal of egalitarian, non-hierarchical relationships with colleagues is another concern for this organization. It seeks to encourage women to network, share and grow from their experiences in community. We hope that we provide such opportunities through programs, workshops, dialogs and the newsletter.

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry seeks to celebrate and expand its identity, not in response to destructive and limiting ideals and attitudes but by design, through its own positive life force, as women unite to live, teach and share the truth of God through Jesus Christ. I believe that the Jesus I know would be very much for our efforts in this day.

*The Reverend Betty Pugh is  
minister of church family life,  
Grace Church, Richmond*

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# FEATURES

## A Pastor's Point of View

### **Toward a Christian Feminist Doctrine of My Own**

by James B. Johnson II

#### **Praxis**

One of the few advantages of growing up in the parsonage was seeing ministry for what it really is, its glories as well as its foibles. Far more than people realize, the preacher's kids know who helps make church happen and who is the Judas.

In that sense then, my introduction to feminist theology was in the pragmatic arena of praxis. Many of my most significant mentors were women. They did the work of ministry. Some exhibited a queenly intelligence and grace; others courageous sacrifice and humility—and even suffering in the manner of Christ. Others carried on magnificently with a war whoop and cigar-between-the-teeth kind of faith.

In some minds, feminism has to do with equal rights. Well it should, but something else precedes. Generally, equal rights is irrelevant apart from action. For instance, that precious Baptist maxim, priesthood of all believers, was reframed for me by a friend to read: "the ministry of service of all believers." That definition avoids the stagnation of status without action.

Nobody has status in Christ's church—except the servants, and they don't care. What is killing the church is the lie that we have permission to exclude another servant. This is especially so under the conditions of the contemporary church. There is no church in my experience that is operating at full speed—and for a lot of tragic reasons. For instance, one of the thorniest questions we will have to answer at the judgment is why so many women with M.Div. degrees were working as secretaries in denominational offices. Feminism is one language in a chorus of loud appeals for "all hands on deck"—to do what God calls and equips persons to do by the Spirit.

#### **Vocation.**

At my installation at Grace Baptist Church I sat with my father and grandfather, both Baptist ministers. Dad articulated for the three of us the sense of gift we felt for the opportunity of sharing in that service of worship. He then wondered out loud if a similar occasion might present itself some years hence with our daughter Jennifer. "Rev. Jennifer," he called her, a rather pleasant notion I thought.

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## A Laywoman Reflects

### **Up From the Cheese Box:**

by Virginia Butler

The word feminist always means for me a female or a woman. I find it hard to believe that any female could object to being called a feminist. To me it means lady—loving, caring, kind but strong in convictions. Of course we do find some females who think that being called a feminist is like being called a dirty name.

My thoughts on this subject started long before I ever heard the word feminism. About the time I was five years old, I became aware of how little girls were treated differently from little boys.

My uncle was the owner of one of the first 1921 Chevrolet cars and he and his sons, ages eight and seven, rode the two miles to Sunday School. Other children walked, though at five years old the trip was a bit far for me. Uncle said that through the goodness of his heart he would allow me to ride in the back with his boys. But I was

not allowed to sit on the car seat. These boy cousins put a round wooden cheese box on the floor and told me that this would be my seat. This nice round cheese box would have

suit me just fine if I had not been told, "You are not allowed to sit on the car seat because you are nothing but just a girl."

I used to think to myself, "Well, when I grow up, I will sit on the cheese box only if I want to." I was wrong. I was always aware of where it was that others thought my place should be, simply because I was nothing but just a girl.

When I became older, my Sunday School teacher (who was male) would teach that it was the first woman in the Garden of Eden who was the root of all the evil in the world. He also taught other little messages which put women at the bottom of the list. But by this time there was an awareness within the women's group of the growing need for expressing our position. And unless we did this, we were forever doomed to sit "on the cheese box," so to speak.

Never once have I thought that women should remove men from their proper places. Men are great folks too. Our thoughts were for women to gently step up beside our men and claim our proper, God-given places on the team. Surely women have always carried at least half of the load.

*Mrs. Virginia Butler is a lay woman at Grace Baptist Church, Richmond. She is a supporter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry and has participated in several VBWIM workshops.*

## **ON FEMINISM**

# WOMEN IN THE NEWS

## New Positions and Changes

**Helen Wood** has been named missions development associate in Virginia Woman's Missionary Union. She was formerly associate director for students for the Foreign Mission Board.

**Martha Colvin** was named minister of education and youth for Leigh Street Church in Richmond.

**Saundralynn Yates** is minister of youth and music at Heritage Church in Farmville.

**Jennifer Shaver** was named youth minister at Louisa Church in Louisa.

**Julie Jenkins** of Midlothian was summer intern for the *Religious Herald* and wrote the Life & Work Sunday School commentaries for the summer quarter. She is a senior at William and Mary and is active in BSU there.

**Susan Manship** was named minister of music and senior adults for Downtown Church, Alexandria.

**Dianne Glenn** is minister of education for Broadus Memorial Church, Charlottesville.

**Kelly Sisson** was called as pastor of Glade Church in Blacksburg, Highland Association. She is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary.

**Marilyn Christian Nelson** has been named associate professor of Christian ministry at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

**Loresa P. Heyward** is minister of education and youth at Bonsack Church in Roanoke. She is a graduate of Southeastern Seminary and was ordained November 8, 1992.

Eleanor Lee was named minister of education at St. John's Church in Norfolk. She is currently in Hungary with the Virginia partnership missions program and will begin work in November.

**Brenda Lee**, formerly of Richmond, has been named chaplain at Wesley

Long Hospital in Greensboro, N.C. she has returned from her assignment with the FMB International Service Corps in Kyrghyzstan (former USSR), where she led in Bible study and in starting a church.

**Phyllis Rodgers Pleasants**, formerly of Richmond and currently at Northern Baptist Seminary, Chicago, has been named associate professor of church history at Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

## Ordinations

**Lisa Bohannon** was ordained to the ministry on July 25 by Branch's Church, Richmond. Currently youth director at Bethel Church, Midlothian, she will enter the chaplaincy of the U.S. Navy.

**Valerie Carter** was ordained to the ministry on June 12 by Mt. Tabor Church, Richmond. She is director of Hillside Center in Richmond.

**Loresa P. Heyward** was ordained November 8, 1992. A graduate of Southeastern Seminary, she is minister of education and youth at Bonsack Church in Roanoke.

## Honors and Accolades

**Roberta Damon**, minister of counseling at First Church, Richmond, was named president of the Southwestern Seminary alumni association at its annual meeting in June.

**Donna Hopkins** of Chesapeake, student at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, received the Hickerson Greek Award in the May graduation ceremonies.

## Appointments

**Amy Mathis** of Fairfax was appointed by the Home Mission Board, SBC, as associational missions minis-

tries director in Warsaw, N.C. She is a graduate of Southern Seminary.

**Kim Jessie** was appointed by the Home Mission Board, SBC as director of church and community ministries for the Norfolk Association. She is a graduate of Southern Seminary.

**Kim Chafee** and husband Scott of Chesapeake were appointed as missionaries by the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, to serve in Zambia.

**Rose Credille** and husband Brian were appointed missionaries by the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, to serve in Indonesia.

**Rebecca Threatt** and husband Gary were appointed missionaries by the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, to serve in Ethiopia.

## Seminary Graduations

### Baptist Seminary at Richmond:

**Gail Durvin** of Richmond, MDiv; **Vicki Lumpkin** of Manassas, MDiv; and **Rachel Lynch** of South Hill, MDiv.

### New Orleans Seminary:

**Carol E. Hancock** of Salem, MA/Christian Education; **Kathy G. Webber** of Woodstock, Assoc/Div.

### Southeastern Seminary:

**Shirley A Fuller** of Bluefield, MA/CE; **Sharon B. Haigler** of Chesapeake, MDiv/CM.

### Southern Seminary:

**Ruth L. Davison** of Virginia Beach, MDiv; **Elizabeth A. Fowler** of Vinton, MCMus. **Sandra L. Fralin** of Richmond, MCMus. **Mary L. Francis** of Norfolk, MDiv; **Kimberly G. Hopkins** of Moseley, MSW; **Catherine B. Keever** of Martinsville, MSW; **Jennifer K. Law** of Mechanicsville, MA/CE; **Elizabeth H. Smith** of Culpeper MDiv; **Kerri S. Thompson** of Ft. Myer, MSW.

### Southwestern Seminary:

**Cynthia G. Harris**, MMus.

## Judy Bailey: campus minister, UR “Through the Lens of Feminism”

Interviewed by Betty Pugh

I have had the privilege and honor of knowing Judy Bailey for the past 12 years. It was in her professional ministry, working as the Baptist campus minister at the University of Richmond, that we came in contact with one another. She delivered the charge to the candidate at my ordination and officiated our wedding. All of this to say that my respect and admiration for Judy as a friend and colleague has spanned many years of my life’s journey.

Besides the personal experiences we share, there is another reason to celebrate Judy Bailey. She, along with a group of other visionary women, began the organization that we today know as Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry.

Judy is a native of Tennessee. Although she grew up within the Methodist tradition, she later became Baptist. She graduated from Lambuth College in Tennessee and did her theological training at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, with extra study at Union Seminary in Richmond and Wesley Seminary in D.C.

She is presently serving as the Baptist campus minister at the University of Richmond, where she has ministered to the university community for 16 years. Judy is a wife and mother of two daughters. She confides that much of her concern and awareness for feminist issues is focused on providing a safe and healthy environment for her daughters.

When Judy and I came together to talk, I encouraged her to speak on three categories of discourse: doctrine,

liturgy and ministry/leadership. How has feminism affected these areas? I found, as I hope you will, an informative and intriguing window into the mind and heart of Judy Bailey through her reflections on feminism.

So, what is feminism? “Feminism is the belief that one’s gender does not determine one’s role in society—it is a willingness to let a person’s talents and gifts direct one’s life. Feminism is just common sense,” Judy responded. She affirmed that each of us comes to an understanding of feminism in our own way and based on our own experiences.

### Doctrine.

“Feminism is a minority report of sorts when it comes to doctrine,” said Judy. “In many ways I see more of a set-back, especially in the areas of the priesthood of the believer, the gifts of the Spirit, and the democratic nature of Baptist polity.” But there is always room for the exception. “Some woman, in almost every context, is often the exception. She ends up doing something or succeeding in a way that once was thought impossible.”

The dangerous areas of church doctrine for women are the concepts of the image of God and of servanthood. Judy encourages a “hermeneutics of suspicion” when dealing with doctrines that limit God’s image to the male gender or those that tend to codify a woman’s role as servant more easily than it would a man’s role. Doctrine as related to the Biblical text is difficult because of a dearth of female role models. Our ideas become formed out of both the absence of women and a blatant hostility toward women. Judy claims

nevertheless, “I will not give up God or have God co-opted by a limited view.”

### Liturgy.

Each time a woman enters worship, a number of things can happen. Usually, because the liturgies are not inclusive of the people or the nature of God, the

experience can be frustrating. “I wish that I could worship without getting angry,” she said. “I feel as if I am beyond using only male language. When we really get to the crux of the matter, God is at the same time all and none of the metaphors that we employ.” When there is inclusiveness, when a woman preaches or the language is appropriate, Judy revealed that a deep

part of her aches and she usually ends up crying because that particular well has been empty for so very long.

When she sings, she often changes the words, but that too can become tiresome. New hymns and songs are wonderful

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**“...get to the crux of the matter, God is all and none of the metaphors that we employ.”**

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additions to our worship opportunities. “I even think that, considering the imbalance of so many years of using exclusive male imagery, to emphasize the female more is totally appropriate.”

It is clear that liturgy and worship in Baptist churches need a great deal of attention. Present practices not only denigrate women but limit God as well.

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# NEWS BRIEFS

**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship** coordinator Cecil Sherman reported in CBF newsletter (June '93) that CBF is moving toward the future, "forgetting what lies behind." Plans must be laid for a support system, he said. For instance, a summer program for youth and a philosophy of Christian education consistent with our ideas about the Bible, church growth and conversion. "The places where once our ideas were aired are now closed to us, and our ideas have been replaced by new ideas on church growth and theological education." Also, theological education consistent with our ideas of a servant model (as contrasted with pastor as ruler of the church) must be supported on a higher priority.

**Southern Seminary will not** sponsor a conference on women in the church because the topic is controversial. The conference "Toward Solidarity: A Conference on Women and the Church," scheduled for next March, is sponsored by a consortium of theological schools in Kentucky and will feature Letty Russell as keynote speaker. The other schools will go ahead with plans. SBTS president Albert Mohler withdrew sponsorship because of the speakers and workshop topics, saying, "The scope and nature of the program was slanted ... and not sensitive to the concerns of evangelicals. (APB)

**"Groups Friendly to the CBF"**  
The heads of various moderate groups which have come into being in the last decade met in an informal gathering recently to hear what each organization is doing and talk about mutual interests. The group included representatives from: Alliance of Baptists, Associated Baptist Press, Baptist houses of study at Duke and Emory universities, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (the lone holdover), Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Smyth & Helwys,

and Whitsett Baptist Historical Society. Spokesmen for each entity reported on activities, progress, and growth. Cecil Sherman of CBF said, "We need to see the interlocking nature of groups in this room. We all need each other." (*Baptists Today* 9/30/93)

**SBC leaders Morris Chapman and Ed Young** met with President Clinton in September to discuss abortion and gay rights and to urge Clinton to appoint a born-again Christian to a staff position. Though the meeting was amicable, Clinton laid out his views on the rights of women to make choices. (ABP)

**Glenn Hinson**, professor at BTSR, said at an American Baptist convention in San Jose, Calif., that the Baptist tradition is fading except in the smaller conventions. As a result of inroads of fundamentalism, the SBC is Baptist in name only and not in reality. There is no likelihood of recovery of the Baptist tradition for the denomination.

**The Labyrinth**, a canvas replica of the maze pattern on the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral in France, will be featured in two locations in Richmond this fall. (See Calendar.) The Labyrinth was used at UTS and at UR earlier this year as focus for an exercise in spirituality. The experience of the walk through the labyrinth is likened to a pilgrimage, one of its historical uses in the cathedral as a substitute for a journey to the Holy Land. Although the history of the labyrinth pre-dates Christianity by about two millennia, the imagery is that of the human reality of life's uncertainties and complexities, and thus as a concept transcends culture and time.

**Mary Adelia McLeod** of Charleston, W. Va., has been elected the first woman to head a diocese of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. McLeod, rector in Charleston, will become the

third woman elected as bishop in the Episcopal Church. Bishop Barbara Harris and Bishop Jane Dixon are suffragan (asst.) bishops in Mass. and D.C., respectively. When congratulated for breaking through the stained-glass ceiling, she protested that she was a shepherd not a trailblazer. After her career as homemaker and mother of 5 children, she and her husband entered seminary and have served as co-rectors for 10 years.

**The Religious Right** is mobilizing to appeal to mainstream Republicans with a broad-based platform focusing on economic and health care issues. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition in July announced plans to mobilize to counter the president's budget, health care and welfare reform. "The pro-family movement has limited its effectiveness by concentrating disproportionately on issues such as abortion and homosexuality.... To win at the ballot box and in the court of public opinion, the pro-family movement must speak to the concerns of average voters in the areas of taxes, crime, government waste, health care and financial security." Heretofore, a spokesman said, "our message has been directed too much to our activists and donors, not to our voters."

**SEBTS alumni magazine Outlook** (Summer '93) reported an address to men students by Dorothy Patterson, wife of seminary president Paige Patterson. She affirmed what a Godly wife needs from her husband: headship and love. Headship, she explained, means the husband provides servant leadership in the home and the wife's natural response is submission. "No one can bring your wife to excellence any better than you can." In an accompanying profile, the reporter characterized "Mrs. Dorothy," who holds several degrees and is working toward a second doctorate, as wife, mother, author, counselor, public speaker, activist, and a person committed to building godly families.

# A LITTLE HUMOR

(Judy Bailey...from page 5)

## Ministry and Leadership.

Asked about the influences of feminism on ministry and leadership, Judy honestly shared that most of the encouragement for women to do what they enjoy and feel called to do comes from outside the church.

The windows of opportunity that opened with the societal changes of the 60s and 70s began an exciting chain of events. Judy was the first woman to be ordained by Four Mile Creek Baptist Church and the first to be confirmed by the Dover Association.

As she sees it, the goal for women in ministry and in leadership within churches is to be allowed to lead in ways that may be different from men "I don't think that women have to act like men in order for them to have positions in leadership." Women have been leaders but too often, of course, always behind the scenes and usually behind a man.

Even considering the hostile environment, there are still women who are being ordained by self-directed, truly autonomous Baptist churches. When asked why she thought that this was happening, Judy responded, "I really don't know. I know that women go into the ministry because of a sense of call, but I don't understand why the same church that ordains women will not call them to pastoral leadership."

## Finally.

For Judy Bailey, feminism is a natural faith progression. In her life's journey, faith has accompanied her and comforted her in her middle years and her continued changing as a child of God. "When it comes to speaking of God, less is better. God is spirit, beyond our words. I would rather have minimal words and lots of quiet as I encounter the Holy Other."

In the natural development of mature and genuine faith, we want others to be free to admit what is important and significant for faith. This is the call of feminism for the church.

This is the claim of feminism for Judy Bailey. This is the prayer that she offers for those who seek to understand and grow into a more authentic relationship with the Divine and into a greater understanding of purpose on earth.

For Judy, being a Christian means being a feminist.

*The Reverend Betty Pugh  
is minister of church family life at  
Grace Church, Richmond*

During an ecumenical gathering, someone yelled, "The building is on fire!" The Episcopalians formed a procession and marched out. The Presbyterians appointed a chairperson to appoint a committee to look into the matter and make a written report. The Baptists jumped in the water. The Quakers praised God for the blessings of fire. The Lutherans posted a notice on the door declaring the fire was evil. The Roman Catholics took up a collection cover the damages. The fundamentalists proclaimed, "It's the vengeance of God." the Christian Scientists agreed that there was no fire.

You know you live in a small town when: —You don't use your turn signal because everybody knows where you're going. —You dial a wrong number and talk for fifteen minutes anyway. —You write a check on the wrong bank and it covers for you. —You miss a Sunday at church and you receive get-well cards.

A digital computer is someone who counts on her fingers.

The difference between gossip and news is whether you hear it or tell it.

(James Johnson.. from page 3)

There is more involved here than the musings of a doting father and grandfather or visions of nepotism in ministry. In her infancy I brought Jennifer to the office to play or sleep while I worked or to accompany me visiting. Why? Necessity's sake, of course. But necessity gave birth to a new hope: that she would know from the first her inestimable worth to her Daddy and to the very last the supreme value in serving in Jesus' name. I hope she realizes the vocation for which everything was intended at the creation: the knowledge and service of God.

Feminism is just one voice alerting us to the fact that not everyone is prepared or released to serve. It is the bell signaling the session has begun in which we teach and make change—in order to prepare women and men for their ultimate vocation—together, because we are one body.

## Loyalty

The first requirement in ministry at our place, Grace Baptist, is loyalty. It's a two-way street, of course. For my part, loyalty is defined as constancy and faithfulness in support of the two ordained women on our staff, Betty Pugh and Wanda Sauley Fennell, whose gifts and callings and potentialities are different from mine. I am called to be loyal in support of their most Christ-like response to their opportunity in ministry, because Christ and the church and

I so sorely need them and need them to do their best work.

When Betty arrived as our Minister of Church Family Life someone exclaimed to her, "I am so glad you are here to be Jim's helper." Betty recoiled, and upon hearing about it, I about lost my lunch. On the other hand, perhaps she is just that, just as she is an enabler for all the ministers of this church, clergy and laity alike. I am so thankful for the blessing I find Betty and Wanda to be. However, of this I am certain: I am called to be their helper in ministry, both Betty's and Wanda's, as I am called to be helper to the people of this church.

Don't get me wrong (ask them), we don't always agree, and I expect we sometimes callously or unintentionally wound one another. But loyalty means we stick it out, believing that people learn from one another, just as "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17). So feminism is the call to allow everyone into my circle, our circle, the circle, and to stay there. As vulnerable as it may make me feel sometimes to really hear them out and set them free, in the last analysis, it makes not only them better, but me better at what I am called to do.

"Feminism. n. 1. a doctrine..." begins my *Funk & Wagnall's*. Interesting theological notions in that doctrine.

*The Rev. James B. Johnson II is pastor of  
Grace Baptist Church in Richmoni*

# SAINTS AND HEROES

## MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT(1759-97)

In this space we feature women who were forces in their own day, yet are relatively unknown outside of theological or historical circles. Because history has ignored women in favor of the activities of the larger society, men and women working in feminist theology have sought to recover the voice of women in the church, and to bring to light women who made contributions in service, spirituality or intellectual depth.

by Barbara Jackson

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is often included in anthologies of "books that changed the world." She was a product of the Enlightenment and was influenced by the ferment of intellectual ideas current during that time. Seminal thinkers all, Wollstonecraft, from England, is included along with John Locke and Adam Smith, the Frenchmen Rousseau and Voltaire, and the Americans John Paine and Thomas Jefferson.

Born into the English middle class, Mary Wollstonecraft was the daughter of a silk weaver, whose inherited income was squandered through extravagance and incompetence. Her father sought solace in drink and was brutal to his wife and tyrannical with his family. Mary left the violence and poverty of her early life at age 19 to seek a livelihood as companion and later governess and teacher.

Her first writings advocated models of Christian virtue, but as the French Revolution unfolded, her thoughts

turned to reason and reform. She came to believe that women and men were created equal, endowed with the same potential talents and abilities. From this followed that women should be given an equal education and opportunities in business and professions as well as a voice in government. Rejecting the traditional premise that woman's and man's natures were different, she likewise rejected the traditions which confined women.

Mary Wollstonecraft determined to support herself as a professional writer. In France during the Reign of Terror she wrote a history of the beginnings of the French Revolution. She published a volume of correspondence documenting the lives of poor working women in Scandinavia, as well as a novel, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1796).

The social philosopher William Godwin, one of the most radical writers of the times, became Wollstonecraft's mentor and lover and husband. In 1797 Mary Wollstonecraft gave birth to a daughter, Mary, and died in childbirth.

Their daughter later became Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* and wife of the poet Percy B. Shelley.

The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a sensation upon publication. Translations in French and German circulated widely. The book shocked and scandalized and was termed an offense against decency. Her suggestions for educational reform were momentous and revolutionary for their time. Her contributions to the principle of education for citizenship instead of sex subordination, to civil rights and equal prerogatives are of great importance.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is truly one of the important documents in the history of women's rights. Wollstonecraft's work is "the first feminist theory to put the claims for women's rights and equality in the context of a broader liberationist theory for all of society and to separate such claims from the religious arguments" hitherto used. (Lerner, p.211)

For further information, see *A History of Their Own*, vol. II. by Anderson & Zinsser; *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. II; *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* by Gerda Lerner.

### (News Notes.. .from page 6)

The Gallup Poll has developed a profile of the successful pastor, using a people-oriented approach rather than a bottom-line approach. The program subscribes to the idea of "calling," recognizing that innate gifts are factors, i.e., that God would not call people to roles for which God has not gifted them. The profile attempts to evaluate the "successful priest" through 14 themes in three categories (ability, motivation, work

style), as determined by responses to a carefully administered questionnaire.

The 14 themes include: ability, presence (or the awareness of God's action in one life and the lives of others), relator, enabler, empathy, courage, motivation, mission, hope, loyalty, community, ego awareness, work style, focus, arranger, omni (the acceptance of ambiguity), conceptual (able to articulate meanings from scripture).

The model is different from the Myers Briggs or psychological screens in concept

and usefulness. It is recommended as a tool for pastor searches, for job recruitment, for selecting training candidates (i.e., before seminary) and for personnel management. Its usefulness lies in the emphasis on practicing one's strengths, rather than being set up for failure.

(abstract from *Christian Century* (June-30-July 7, 1993) "Gifted For Ministry: Setting Up Pastors for Success" by Victoria Rebeck.)



# BOOK REVIEW

## The War Against Women, by Marilyn French

Reviewed by Barbara Jackson

Marilyn French, feminist scholar and author of the novel *The Women's Room*, and the nonfiction *Women, Men, and Morals*, presents the reader with a shocking analysis of the historical repression of women.

In a portrayal of institutionalized patriarchy, French demonstrates that “whenever and however men subjugated women, they justified it by declaring god or nature made women subordinate to men—by endowing men” with certain good traits, such as reason, logic, intellect, and by endowing women with negative traits, such as emotionality and unbridled sexuality.

Her treatment is organized into four parts. Part I, systemic wars against women, describes overarching international economic and religious systems. Everywhere in the world women have the burden of childrearing and maintaining the home—activity which is not recognized as work and is not rewarded monetarily or otherwise. The effect is to deprive women of leisure, political voice, or economic power—or even recognition that they exist.

### (News Notes ... from page 8)

A report from MARC, a mission strategy organization based in California, on “Women and Mission” (by Bryant Myers) notes the critical importance of women in effective community development in the developing nations. Because of the feminization of poverty (women get less food, less health care and less education) and because women are made invisible to outsiders, it seems that women are best able to breach the barriers. The simple act of helping women learn to read is associated with lower child mortality, improvement in nutrition, literacy in succeeding generations, and improvement in family income.

Conclusion: empowering women is a key to transforming the larger community.

In a comparison of this phenomenon of development work with spiritual transformation, the report acknowledges some gender differences in religious conversion.

Religion is a vehicle for subjugation of women and functions by treating woman's body as evil (controlling dress and appearance) or by focusing on women's role in propagation.

The second part deals with institutional discrimination, mainly in the U.S. or the Western world. She shows how certain professions (legal, medical, business, etc.) serve to keep women from economic self-sufficiency, political voice, and control over their own bodies (the reproductive function). Part III offers examples of woman hatred in culture, language and the arts. Part IV discusses assaults on women's bodies through domestic violence.

French defines “feminist” as any attempt to improve the lot of any group of women through female solidarity and a female perspective (p. 12).

Throughout the book, French marshals impressive statistics and examples to demonstrate the truth of her thesis.

The section dealing with religious systems is particularly devastating—and particularly interesting to this reviewer. French asserts that all major world religions are patriarchal, even though religious impulse knows no sex. Because many churches have attempted to change and become more inclusive of women the, response in some quarters is a rigid

Women's image of God is relational (father, soul-mate); men view God as law-giver, king. Women think of sin as failed relationship; for men sin is law-breaking. For some women conversion is a form of liberation from oppressive fathers and husbands; for men conversion is often reaction to injustice. Tentative conclusion is that gender plays an important role in conversion.

Implications for mission strategy: it is necessary to recognize the importance of women as a responsive entry point for resistant peoples; and recognize the importance of women as the ones most likely to have access to unreached women and to present the gospel in ways they understand. The author cites Gilligan's *In A Different Voice*.

As a corollary, the author posits the need to give preference to recruiting, training and supporting far more women if we are to reach the unreached.

(Abstract from MARC Newsletter, Sept. 1993)

patriarchalism that has come to be known as fundamentalism. Though Jewish and Muslim thinkers insist the term does not describe new movements in those religions, journalists have dubbed all zealous right-wing religious movements “fundamentalist”—a recognition of an underlying unity in subduing women with strong male control.

The religious war against women is examined in **Protestantism**, particularly fundamentalism; **Islam** as expressed in black Muslims in the U.S. and by the revocation of women's rights in the Middle East; **Judaism** in extreme orthodox antipathy to women's free movement and civil rights in Israel; and **Catholicism** in its adamant position on birth control and abortion, particularly the pro-life campaign now in sway. Another avenue of female control, particularly prevalent among the native cultures is female genital mutilation, clitoridectomy and infibulation. Read the book to learn the actual dimensions of such a horror.

French's graphic discussion of fundamentalism is of particular interest. She describes its main tenets and gives a brief historical summary. Contrary to most analysts who view fundamentalism as an intellectual or theological response to modernist biblical criticism, evolutionary theory or social science, or to those who see the movement as a reaction to significant changes in American society due to industrialization, urbanization, immigration, consumer economy and World War I, —French maintains that a significant contributing cause for the rise of fundamentalism was the changing sex roles of women. Remember, fundamentalism arose during a period of feminist activism, growing female independence, employment, and the suffrage movement—all a threat to the social order. Fundamentalist activity in the recent past is described as well, including the split in the Southern Baptist Convention (p. 65).

The other chapters in the book are equally shocking and devastating in their descriptions of institutionalized discriminations and personal horrors. To read the book is to become aware of the far-reaching extent of a male-dominated global society with its “aim of destroying, subjugating or mutilating women.”

Barbara Jackson is editor of Synergy

## Seymour.. .from page 1

One other little-known but remarkable woman must be mentioned. Katherine C. Bushnell was a woman of exceptional gifts: linguist, medical doctor, reformer, temperance evangelist. A committed and careful student of the Bible, she wrote a series of Bible lessons which were published in book form in 1921 and entitled *God's Word to Women*. She expressed her grave concerns that the Bible had been seriously misinterpreted and distorted. She wrote, "At no point is faith in the entire Bible being so viciously and successfully attacked today as at the point of the "woman question," and the Church ... assumes that the interests of merely a few ambitious women are involved, whereas the very fundamentals of our faith are at stake."

It is also noteworthy to recall that the American Association of Women Preachers was organized in 1919 and was publisher of the journal *Woman's Pulpit*.

Following two decades of turmoil in which citizens endured the Great Depression and World War II, the woman's movement resurfaced in the 1960s. Some scholars suggest that the "rebirth" of feminist theology was Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968). Daly maintained that the Roman Catholic Church has distorted its true essence in denying women full rights and responsibilities.

By the decade of the 1970s, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Northern and Southern Presbyterians had joined the Methodists in opening the door of ordination to women. On the other hand, the Southern Baptist Convention in 1984 resolved that the church should encourage women in all areas of service "other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination."

And who can forget the comment about women's ordination by W. A. Criswell. When Bill Moyers asked, "What about women who believe God has called them (to ministry)?" Criswell responded, "Well, they are mistaken."

Feminists have refused to be intimidated by such arrogance. The influx of women into divinity schools has greatly increased over the last few years. The number of ordained women has also risen significantly, and women are filling significant posts in university departments of religion. In 1987, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza was elected the first female president of the Society of Biblical Literature. In November

of this year, Phyllis Trible of Union Seminary in New York will fill that post.

### Current Issues

To complete this overview, I refer to the work of several major feminists of faith whose efforts represent current issues and interests of women in religion.

One of the most recent publications in the biblical field is *The Women's Bible Commentary* edited by Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe. Each biblical hook is introduced by a general look at the purposes and context of the document, followed by commentary upon the issues raised. This work is a major accomplishment in biblical studies and represents the research of many leading feminists.

I turn, finally, to the work of three individual scholars, while acknowledging the profoundly important work of many who cannot be mentioned. A genuinely original work in biblical theology is Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her*. Fiorenza reconstructs early Christian history and theology from the early Jesus movement, where she finds a "discipleship of equals," to the patriarchal models of the second century. She insists that we remember all of biblical women's experience, both as victims and as leaders.

Further, she maintains that it is possible to retrieve this history—and our inheritance—even though sources were biased by patriarchy. (See also her more recent *Bread Not Stone* and *But SHE Said*)

Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk* re-thinks, from a feminist point of view, a wide range of issues of concern to women: Christology, anthropology, images of God, community, and others. And she articulates the sources, methods, and norms of feminist theology. In answering the question "What is feminist theology?", she asserts that its critical principle is "the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive."

In a later book, *Women-Church*, she discusses women's need for "intentional communities of faith and worship." Women-church, she believes, is an exodus community from patriarchy. Included in the book are many rituals/liturgies designed to support women's passage through critical life experiences.

Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror* recounts the malicious man-handling of several biblical Hebrew women. She argues for a close attention to and reading of these texts, insisting that they then will "speak for themselves," i.e., they will leave us horrified by startling us to encounter what has been heretofore neglected or unnoticed because of the way we have "always read them."

Another crucial issue which is necessarily a part of biblical work is that of language and translation. In her groundbreaking work on the creation stories (especially Genesis 2), Trible utilizes her expertise in Hebrew language and literature to provide incredibly enlightening alternative readings of the texts.

Careful attention must be paid to the fact that language is a powerful tool in the hands of translators; all translation is, to some extent, interpretation. Biblical language about God, for example, is clearly androcentric.

At least two official efforts have addressed the language issue. *The Inclusive Language Lectionary* was issued in 1983 and, as expected, met with resistance from many quarters. In 1990, the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible was published. Although this version corrects the mistranslations that refer to human beings (e.g., "humankind" rather than "man,"), it does not address the problem of gender and language about God.

Through this brief look at the achievements of feminists, one thing becomes transparently clear: for them, the Christian enterprise—biblical, theological, pastoral, educational—has left its patriarchal "home" and can never go back again.

Mainstream Christian feminists do not wish to substitute a female-oriented religion for a male-centered one, but, rather, the goal is the acknowledgment and achievement of the full humanity of all persons.

Anne Bennett reminds us of what we are really all about: "Christian women wonder what the human community might be if we flew on two wings (female and male) rather than with one clipped wing that keeps all humankind grounded."

Amen to her dream.

*Dr. B. J. Seymour is professor of religious studies and chair of the department at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland.*

# RESOURCES

## The Book Shelf

### Feminist History

compiled by B. J. Seymour

**Christian Feminist Perspectives on History, Theology and the Bible**, by Fredrica Thompsett

**What's Right with Feminism**, by Elaine Storkey

**Women in American Religion**, by Janet Wilson James, ed.

**The Women's Bible Commentary**, by Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, eds.

**The Woman's Bible** by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, et al.

**Sexism and God-Talk**, by Rosemary Radford Ruether

**The Woman Question, Vol.2, Social Issues**, by Helsing, Sheets & Veeder

**Religious Issues in 19th Century Feminism**, by Donna Behnke

### New or Notable

**The Beauty Myth**, by Naomi Wolf. Doubleday, 1991. Along with an analysis of work, sex, and violence, she shows how religion plays a role in seducing or enslaving women through shame and guilt for Eve's sin and with purification rites and taboos related to woman's biology. Her new book, **Fire with Fire**, (Random House, 1993) is a manifesto on the future of feminism.

**The War Against Women**, by Marilyn French. Ballentine, 1992. A survey of systemic and institutional discriminations, in such areas as work, politics and violence. She affirms that "Religions are major vehicles for subjugating women."

**The Creation of Feminist Consciousness** by Gerda Lerner. Oxford, 1993. Follow-up to her previous book, **The Creation of Patriarchy** (1986), Lerner documents the discontinuity of

women's history and the absence of generation to generation transmission of knowledge.

**Outercourse**, by Mary Daly. Harper, 1992. Autobiography documenting her transformation from good Catholic to radical feminist.

**The Politics of Prayer: Feminist Language and the Worship of God**, Helen H. Hitchcock, ed. Ignatius. Collection of essays critical of feminists who advocate change in the language of piety and prayer. Challenges concept of inclusive language.

**Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism**, by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. Crossroad, 1992. Revealing odyssey of author from fear-driven theologies to empowerment by one divine Source. Explores divisive issues, such as religious language, gender constructs, and procreative autonomy.

### The "F Word" ... from page 2

What train are we riding? Well, it depends on what kind of feminist you are talking about. There are about "57 varieties" of feminists. Among them are today's women achievers in business, academia, science and the arts, who don't necessarily have a religious orientation but fight the glass ceiling in whatever sphere they move.

Then there are the Radical Left of the 60s, commonly known as "bra-burners," who wanted to revolutionize the whole culture and had no room for religion at all. And who could forget the suffragists of an earlier era who fought for the vote. Then there are today's political activists.

Women in religious life fall into several categories as well. Did you

know that the women's missionary societies of several denominations grew out of 19th century feminism, the same movement that impelled the suffragists? Such women continue to be the backbone and mainstay of church life, without whom churches would not function.

At the other end of the train, radical feminists have abandoned Christianity as hopelessly patriarchal and seek other avenues of spiritual fulfillment. Some have sought to create a woman-church (as described in the article by B. J. Seymour). Some are creating new religions or are resurrecting old ones, such as goddess worship, Wicca (witchcraft) or Earth-Mother religions, or experimenting with Native American spirituality.

Most of us, however, are not radicals. We simply want to be treated as human beings and acknowledged as God's creation. We want to be taken seriously, given opportunities for education and advancement and ministry.

Yes, we have an agenda. I refer you to Betty Pugh's *Ex Cathedra* column. Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry offers hope and community. We seek to educate and elevate. We affirm the presence of women—we are here and we won't go away. Churches cannot do without us. Let us help churches to know what to do *with* us. Let's all ride that train together.

*Barbara Jackson is editor of Synergy*

# CALENDAR

## Oct. 18

### Hosea. Fall Bible Study. Dr.

Samuel Balentine, professor of Old Testament at B TSR. University of Richmond, Cannon Chapel. 9:30-2:30. Chaplains' office: 289-8500 for reservations.

## Oct. 19

Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth*, will analyze literature, mythology and the mass media to show how the beauty myth affects women's personal and professional relationships. University of Richmond, 7:30 p.m., in Cannon Chapel. Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program.

## Oct. 28

**The Labyrinth**, a canvas replica of the Chartres labyrinth (c. 1220). Workshop to introduce the symbolism and lead participants in the experience of walking as a metaphor for the spiritual journey. Sponsored by Women's Resource Center. 289-8020. UR, Keller Hall, 7-10 p.m. \$20. Also, on Dec. 1 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, no workshop (no charge).

## Oct. 29-31

### "Compassion and Woundedness"

retreat at Richmond Hill, led by Dr. Andrew Purves, associate professor of pastoral theology and spirituality at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Richmond Hill, 6 p.m. Fri.-2 p.m. Sun. \$100 donation. 783-7903.

## Nov. 9

### VBWIM dinner and program.

Marriott Hotel, 6p.m. \$21. For reservation, call 353-0134.

## Nov. 17

**"Sequencing: Having It All, But Not All at Once"** workshop. Women's Resource Center, UR, 7-9:30 p.m. \$25. 289-8020.

## Nov. 19-20

**Jean Shinoda Bolen**, author and Jungian analyst, will lecture on Fri. p.m. on "Ring of Power," addressing issues of power and love. On Saturday, she will lead a workshop using myths and stories to explore the realms of mystery and meaning. Co-sponsored by Women's Resource Center and Jungian Ventures. Friday: UR Keller Hall, 7:30-9:30 \$20. Saturday: UR Brunet Hall 9:30 a.m.-4:40 p.m. \$45. For reservations, call 289-8020.

## Dec. 1

**The Labyrinth**. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 800 Grace St. Richmond. Allow 45-60 minutes for individual walk. No workshop. (See above).

1994

## Jan. 24-26

Sprunt Lectures, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond. Lectures by Brian Genish, University of Chicago. Preaching by Laura S. Mendenhall, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas.

## Feb. 11-12

**VBWIM Steering Committee.** Retreat at Camp Piankatank.

## Feb. 28-29

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship OF Virginia.

## Feb. 28-29

**Ministers' Discussion Group** at Roslyn Conference Center, Richmond. VBWIM is co-host. Speaker: Dr. William Willimon.

## April 8-9

**Women's Retreat**, led by Miriam Therese Winter, professor at Hartford Seminary, liturgist, medical sister, and author of *WomanPrayer*, *WomanSong*.

## April 22-23

**VBWIM Spring Workshop.** "Working Together: Women and Men In Ministry"

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry  
4200 Dover Road  
Richmond, VA 23221

It is not Christianity, but priest craft that has subjected woman as we find her...How many women are there now immolated upon the shrine of superstition and priest craft, in our very midst, in the assumption that man only has a right to the pulpit, and that if a woman enters it she disobeys God, making woman believe in the misdirection of her vocation."

—*Lucretia Mott (1854)*