

HIJACKING A NOBLE CAUSE: HOW MODERN FEMINISM HAS ABANDONED ITS FOUNDERS

By Stephanie Porowski

More than 150 years ago, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a rally at Seneca Falls, New York, taking the first steps in achieving fair treatment for women. Many scholars and political commentators view the early feminist movement as one of America's great success stories. However, in many respects modern feminism has deviated from the lofty ideals and moral underpinnings of its predecessor, with goals and beliefs that contradict those of the early feminists. Unlike the early feminist goals, modern feminism's agenda is based on a foundation of separation and anger rather than equality and fairness. Today's feminists wrongly claim kinship to feminism's founders, thereby cloaking their radicalism in the early movement's popularity and moral authority. Yet early and modern feminism are two completely different movements.

ROOTED IN BIBLICAL TRUTH

The early feminist movement began in an age of reform when widespread religious revival challenged 19th-century Americans to make America a "truly great and virtuous nation," as Stanton said¹. The command to love, not in "word or tongue, but in deed and truth,"² has inspired generations of Christians to loving reforms. Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, author and editor of *A Christian Women's Declaration*, writes, "Many of the earliest and most effective advocates of women's rights and dignity were women of faith whose convictions were rooted in Biblical truth."³ As Stanton testified, "The same religious enthusiasm that nerved Joan of Arc to her work nerves us to ours. In every generation God calls some men and women for the utterance of truth, a heroic action."⁴

Women such as Frances Willard, a leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, and Susan B. Anthony approached life with a "sense of justice and moral zeal" founded on Judeo-Christian principles.⁵ Like Willard and Anthony, typical early feminists actively participated in the temperance and abolitionist movements. Their desire for legal equality developed out of a deep commitment to justice and a need to better the world. They firmly believed that "[t]here are deep and tender chords of sympathy and love in the hearts of the downtrodden and oppressed that women can touch more skillfully than man."⁶

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address: First Women's Right's Convention," as found at <http://www.libertynet.org/edcivic/stanton.html>.

² 1 John 3:18 (NKJV).

³ Janice Shaw Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute on Religion and Democracy, 1999), 5.

⁴ Stanton.

⁵ "Biography of Susan B. Anthony," from the Web site for the Susan B. Anthony House, as found at <http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/biography.html>.

⁶ Op cit.

This belief led more than 300 women to Seneca Falls on July 14, 1848, for the famous rally that ignited the early feminist movement. These women had clear goals. They wanted women's suffrage and equal laws regarding property, marriage, divorce, child custody and education.⁷ They asked only for equality, with no special treatment. As 19th-century women's activist Lucy Stone stated, "We ask to be regarded, respected and treated as human beings, of full age and natural abilities, as equal fellow sinners, not as infants or beautiful angels, to whom the laws of civil and social justice do not apply."⁸

At Seneca Falls, the women adopted a *Declaration of Sentiments*, based on the *Declaration of Independence*, in which they declared, "All men and women are created equal." They based their argument for fair laws and equal treatment on this premise of equality. In their *Declaration* the early feminists also provided a list of grievances,⁹ summing up the unfair, often brutal treatment women received. They wrote:

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elected franchise. ... He has compelled her to submit to the laws in the formation of which she has no voice. ... He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead. He has taken from her the right to own property, even to the wages she earns. ... He has so framed the laws of divorce ... to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women. ... He has monopolized all the profitable employments. ... He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education.¹⁰

Early feminists had powerful evidence of injustices at the hand of society, and they offered clearly stated, practicable solutions. They asked for the right to vote for the laws which would govern them, as American citizens; for the control of their own property; for equal employment and educational opportunities and, finally, for the right to obtain divorce on the grounds of brutality and drunkenness.¹¹

The 1869 case of Hester Vaughn symbolizes the plight of women at the beginning of the feminist movement. At 20, Hester was deserted by her husband and left with no choice but to find work in a wealthy Philadelphia home where the man of the house seduced her, firing her when she became pregnant. Forced by poverty to give birth alone, Hester was charged with murder when her baby died. Hester had no representation at her trial and was not allowed to testify because she was a woman. An all-male jury found her guilty of murder.

After hearing of Hester's treatment, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a campaign to help her. As a result of their efforts, Hester was pardoned, and, inspired by this success, American women went on to win the fight for full equality under the law.¹² Because they grounded their aims in constitutional principles of justice and equality, women would achieve advances in property rights, employment, education and divorce and child custody laws by the late 1800s. In 1920, through a coalition of suffragists, women's social welfare organizations, temperance groups and reform-minded politicians, early feminists achieved women's suffrage with

⁷ Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 34, 35.

⁸ Mari Boor Tonn, "The *Una*, 1853-1855: The Premiere of the Woman's Rights Press" in *A Voice of their Own: The Woman's Suffrage Press, 1840-1910*, ed. Martha M. Solomon (Tuscaloosa, AL: Randall Publishing, 1991), 48.

⁹ Op cit., 34, 35.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Seneca Falls Declaration," as found at <http://www.ku.edu/carrie/docs/texts/seneca.htm>.

¹¹ Dee Jepsen, *Women: Beyond Equal Rights* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975), 37.

¹² Sommers, 33.

the passing of the 19th amendment. They firmly believed that the right to vote would prove to be the “most effective means to challenge an unjust system.”¹³

FEMINISTS AS VICTIMS

However, in the late 1960s and '70s, feminism abandoned its moral and, often, Christian heritage and became a movement based on anger and resentment. Women had achieved full equality, but remained dissatisfied. The early feminists had worked tirelessly so that women could help others, but modern feminists twisted their movement around selfish, empty pursuits. As Crouse writes in the *A Christian Women's Declaration*:

The radical feminist agenda has revolutionary, not reformist, goals. The agenda demeans the role of women past and present and seeks to restructure society. Rather than liberating women by providing them equal opportunity to develop to the fullest their God-given talents, abilities and potential, this agenda, in fact, leads to women being demeaned, their lives destroyed and their spirits enslaved.¹⁴

These modern feminists hold to a basic “pseudo-Marxist” tenet, with women as the victimized proletariat. As British journalist Neil Lyndon writes, modern feminists believe that “women belong by birth to a social and economic class which is oppressed by the patriarchal system as it is operated by a social and economic class composed by birth, of men.”¹⁵ Gender has become a “social construct,” equality now means “identical” and women are seen as “empty vessels” shaped by “patriarchy.” They are portrayed as “victims,” with exaggerations of women’s suffering becoming a research field for women’s studies programs.¹⁶ Equality is no longer the only objective of the feminist movement. Instead, modern feminists seek to overturn what they regard as the male-established social order.

This modern “victim” feminism began as part of a broader revolt, led by left-leaning academics, against the established social order. Academic leaders influenced people to see the traditional social system as defective, and this attitude of social unrest translated to the feminist movement.¹⁷ Based on this attitude, three books, in particular, led to the replacement of early feminism: Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*.

Betty Friedan, though less radical than the man-hating, anti-feminine feminists, such as Millet and Greer, established a platform on which her contemporaries would voice their opinions. In *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, she declared American housewives to be dissatisfied with their unequal lot in life and called for reform.¹⁸ She founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), a radical feminist group, in 1966.¹⁹

¹³ Web cite for The Susan B. Anthony Center for Women’s Leadership, “History of Women’s Suffrage,” as found at <http://www.rochester.edu/SBA/history.html>.

¹⁴ Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, 8.

¹⁵ Justus Causus, “Modern Feminism: A Guide to the Ideology and Literature,” as found at <http://www.cyad.com/cgi-bin/pinc/apr97/justus.html>.

¹⁶ Op cit.

¹⁷ Sommers, 19-40.

¹⁸ Op cit.

¹⁹ Web site for National Organization for Women, “NOW History,” as found at <http://www.now.org/history/history.html>.

An open lesbian, Millet agreed with Friedan's assertion of the unhappiness of the housewife, but she took Friedan's idea to the extreme in her 1970 *Sexual Politics*, declaring marriage and family to be the way that patriarchy reproduces itself. Believing every avenue of power lay in corrupt male hands, she called for an end to this "abusive" system. Millet's ideas embody the misandry, or man-hating, of modern feminists and would soon lead to the "glorification of sexual lifestyles without limits and consequences and views of marriage and family that contradicted Biblically based faith and time-tested moral behavior."²⁰

Although Friedan's book laid the groundwork for modern feminism, and Millet's work radicalized the movement, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, also published in 1970, had the greatest influence, drawing the largest audience among women and, surprisingly, men. Men were drawn to the work by Greer's assertion that a "woman has the right to express her own sexuality," proclaiming women's sexual freedom. However, Greer herself described the book as an analysis of sex oppression at the hands of men, writing of heterosexual love as a "mutual fantasy." She went as far as to advise women to "consciously refrain from establishing exclusive dependencies and other kinds of neurotic symbioses," showing her hatred of men and marriage.²¹

Other feminists would follow in the footsteps of these women, whose ideas would soon comprise mainstream feminism. Like Friedan, Millet and Greer, feminists today see themselves as victims of "mass persecution" at the hands of men. They believe that the modern woman lives in a constant state of siege. Thus modern feminists can be characterized as "articulate, prone to self-dramatization, and constantly offended."²² And, despite this attitude of resentment and self-pity, they have succeeded in changing the course of feminism.

STUDY IN CONTRASTS

1. Early feminists looked at the world through reason; modern feminists see everything through a gender prism.

Modern feminists have created a generation that searches for sexual discrimination in all aspects of life. Hyperconcern has become the norm,²³ and feminists find evidence of sexism everywhere. For example, Patricia Ireland, former president of NOW, writes of her days as a flight attendant:

I thought of myself as a professional. But what I really did was go down the aisle and take people's garbage and thank them for it. That's what women have been doing. We've been taking their garbage and thanking them for it. We've got to stop.²⁴

Injustices do occur against women, as well as men, but modern feminists, such as NOW's Ireland, exaggerate their inferior position in society. As author Dale O'Leary notes:

²⁰ Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, 8-9.

²¹ Op cit.

²² Danielle Crittendon, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 20.

²³ Sommers, 40.

²⁴ Ibid., 42.

No one can deny that women have suffered, but outrage at the abuse of women doesn't solve the problem. ... The feminists offer radical revolutionary solutions when far simpler changes would suffice. ... It is true that a guillotine will solve the problem of migraine headaches, but most people would not consider it a viable solution.²⁵

Unlike feminism's founders, who devoted their time to achievable goals and legitimate equality, modern feminists complain and try to completely overhaul the traditional social order. As Crouse notes:

[These] "well-organized movements" undermine women's dignity and equality by assuming that behavior is beyond personal control and repudiating the idea of personal responsibility by oversimplified "group think" that views life as a struggle between oppressed victim groups and their oppressors, [and also by] fostering a "therapeutic view" that sees the sole purpose of human life as pleasure and self-actualization.²⁶

2. Early feminists did not view men as the enemy; modern feminists believe that men are their constant oppressors.

A second key difference between early feminism and modern feminism lies in the attitude toward men. Both men and women organized Seneca Falls, and men actively participated in the early feminist movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote, "[T]he speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women."²⁷ In fact, misandry did not become a crucial element of feminism until the 1960s. Early feminists did not self-segregate because they desired the opposite: these women wanted to live in the world of men with full equality under the law.²⁸

Even Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the founding British feminists and a radical in her time, clearly expressed the cry of the early feminists in her book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*:

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, and more reasonable mothers ... better citizens.²⁹

Early feminists, like Wollstonecraft, saw men as potential allies in the fight to end hatred and oppression. She and her allies would renounce their modern counterparts' attitudes toward men, especially as depicted in a student's statement about a classmate:

Raphael said he was a male feminist: That is an oxymoron. My deep belief is that men cannot be feminists. They have no place in *woman-centered spheres*.

²⁵ Dale O'Leary, *The Gender Agenda* (Lafayette, LA: Vital Issues Press, 1997), 14.

²⁶ Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, 7.

²⁷ Stanton.

²⁸ Jepsen.

²⁹ Patricia Alterbernd Johnson, *On Wollstonecraft* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), 52.

Raphael is a womb envier and a feminist wannabe—a poseur in our midst. [Emphasis added.]³⁰

Modern feminists have become convinced that men take every possible opportunity to exploit women by injuring them physically and mentally. They see men as guilty until proven innocent. Because of their upbringing in a “patriarchal society,” feminists are convinced that all men have a capacity for crimes against women. Feminist author Susan Brown Miller is not alone when she writes, “[A]ll men are rapists.”³¹ Another feminist author, Marilyn French, says, “The entire system of female oppression rests on ordinary men, who maintain it with a fervor and dedication to duty that any secret police might envy. What other system can depend on almost half the population to enforce a policy daily ... with utter reliability?” She continues:

It is not necessary to beat up a woman to beat her down. A man can simply refuse to hire women in well-paid jobs ... [and] pay them less. Or treat women disrespectfully. ... He can fail to support a child he has engendered, demand the woman he lives with wait on him like a servant. He can beat or kill the woman he claims to love; he can rape women. ... [H]e can rape or sexually molest his daughters, nieces, stepchildren, or the children of a woman he claims to love. *The vast majority of men will do one or more of the above.* [Emphasis in the original.]³²

Today, mainstream feminists express views like those of Miller and French. Taught to appreciate their “inferior” place in society and the joys and comforts of group solidarity, modern feminists no longer strive to gain acceptance into the world of men. Instead, they work to create a new woman-centered world, even if it comes at the cost of traditional values.³³ Regrettably, “Their influence has been greatly magnified by their work through the United Nations, their domination of non-government organizations and their powerful position in mainline denominations,” says Crouse.

3. Early feminists saw marriage and motherhood as privileges; modern feminists see the family as a prison.

As their attitudes toward men changed, feminist attitudes toward the relationship between men and women in marriage also changed. Prominent early feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, George Eliot, Angelina Grimke, Ernestine Rose, Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had loved and married men, though not always successfully. Although early feminists believed that, often, as Susan B. Anthony said, the “culture forced women to sell themselves cheap in marriage, sex, and motherhood,”³⁴ they also knew that family life can strengthen women as individuals and allow them a means of influencing society. Early feminists firmly believed that women’s suffrage would benefit the family, whose interests, they believed, would be better protected by wives and

³⁰ Sommers, 37.

³¹ Causus.

³² Op cit., 43.

³³ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Without Illusions* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 11-17.

³⁴ Web site for The Susan B. Anthony List “Susan B. Anthony,” 3 December 2001, as found at <http://members.tripod.com/~danwe/susan.html>.

mothers.³⁵ Susan B. Anthony reflected, “Sweeter even than to have had the joy of caring for children of my own has it been for me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally.”³⁶

Modern feminists could not have more opposite views. They believe men use marriage and families to suppress women. Patricia Ireland writes of her own “liberation” from the institution of marriage:

As my understanding of women’s second class legal status ... grew, my point of view about the contract of marriage itself changed dramatically. I couldn’t believe the state could impose terms on our relationship that made me unequal to James within our relationship and against our beliefs. I stopped wearing my wedding ring. ... Now that I knew that the loss of a woman’s name at marriage signified the loss of her very existence as a person under the law, I took back my family name.³⁷

Not only do modern feminists believe that marriage holds women captive, they believe that a devoted mother and wife cannot possibly be an intelligent, successful woman. Betty Friedan states this belief: “I never knew a woman, when I was growing up, who used her mind, played her own part in the world and also loved and had children.”³⁸

According to feminists today, one can achieve “liberation” only through a renunciation of the role of wife and mother. In fact, The Feminists, an organization established in the late 1960s, asserts that “marriage and the family must be eliminated.” For only then, according to modern feminists, can women escape this “slavery-like practice” and “bizarre heritage of oppression” that marriage represents.³⁹

4. Early feminists saw abortion as exploitation of women; modern feminists see it as a solution to the problem of exploitation.

Because of the low value they place on marriage and children, modern feminists strongly advocate abortion, saying, “Birth control and abortion contradict the notion of woman as chattel or woman as childbearer—and nothing else. If we can control our reproduction, we can control our lives. ... [I]t is this *freedom* that is at the heart of the abortion debate. [Emphasis in the original.]”⁴⁰ Modern feminists see abortion as an aspect of “liberation,” the freedom to choose the role of mother. They see abortion as an escape from the “oppressive” roles of housewife and mother and, thus, an escape from exploitation at the hand of men.

Not surprisingly, most early feminists held an opposing view. They saw abortion as a symptom of the problem of exploitation, rather than a way to escape from oppression. In fact, Alice Paul, a prominent early feminist, considered abortion to be the

³⁵ David Reardon, “The Changing Face of Feminism,” *Celebrate Life* May-June 1994, as found at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PROLIFE/FACESFEM.TXT>.

³⁶ Frederica Matthews-Green, “Susan B. Anthony: Pro-Life Feminist,” *Focus on the Family*, as found at <http://www.family.org/fofmag/sl/a0024084.cfm>.

³⁷ Patricia Ireland, *What Women Want* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1996), 75.

³⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), 75.

³⁹ Patrick F. Fagan, Robert E. Rector, Lauren R. Noyes, “Why Congress Should Ignore Radical Feminist Opposition to Marriage,” as found at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/bg1662.cfm>.

⁴⁰ Ireland, 166.

“ultimate exploitation of women.”⁴¹ In 1869, Mattie Brinkerhoff, another early feminist, said, “[W]hen a man steals to satisfy we may safely conclude that there is something wrong with society—so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged.”⁴² Likewise, in an 1875 speech, Susan B. Anthony discusses abortion and postnatal infanticide, along with rape and prostitution, as male crimes against women.⁴³ These women recognized that, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton said, “When we consider that women are considered as property it is degrading to women that we should consider our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit.”⁴⁴

Stanton and other early feminists had a keen awareness that fair treatment applies to all humans, even the unborn. Early feminists realized abortion means that, in a world hostile to women, the special contributions that women make to society through pregnancy and motherhood have become nothing more than a burden. The early feminists could see nothing as degrading to women as abortion.

5. Early feminists fought for access to the academic world; modern feminists work to destroy that world.

While the early feminists fought against abortion, they battled fiercely for equal education. However, today modern feminists work unknowingly to undo the achievements of their predecessors. They believe that women must move away from “male reason” to “richer,” more “spiritual” subjects exclusive to women. Thus they fail to recognize that the founding feminists based their plea for education on the equality of their minds with those of men.⁴⁵ Author Karen Lehrman writes of feminist university classes today:

In many classes discussions alternate between the personal and the political, with mere pit stops at the academic ... with the student’s feelings valued as much as anything the professors or texts have to offer. ... A hundred years ago women were fighting for the right to learn math, science, Latin—to be educated like men: today, many women are content to get their feelings heard, their personal problems aired, their instincts and intuition respected.⁴⁶

Feminists want a complete transformation of the academy, starting with changing words such as seminars to *ovulars*, history to *herstory*, theology to *thealogy* and elevating more “emotion-based classes,” such as art and writing, above more reason-oriented studies, like math and science.⁴⁷ These women aim to alter reality, which they see as a “social construct subject to change rather than an object for analysis.” They want to change the very concept of knowledge itself, arguing that “knowledge is socially

⁴¹ Web site for Feminists for Life, as found at <http://www.feministsforlife.org/who/>.

⁴² Web site for Feminists for Life, “Voices of our Feminist Foremothers,” as found at <http://www.feministsforlife.org/history/foremoth.htm>.

⁴³ Web site for The Susan B. Anthony List, “Susan B. Anthony,” as found at <http://members.tripod.com/~danwe/susan.html>.

⁴⁴ Op cit.

⁴⁵ Sommers, 67.

⁴⁶ Karen Lehrman, “MotherJones SO93: Off Course,” as found at http://bsd.mojones.com/mother_jones/SO93/lehrman.htm, originally published in *Mother Jones*.

⁴⁷ Sommers, 56, 57.

constructed and is influenced more by the sex of the knower than by the object of knowledge.”⁴⁸

This relative concept of knowledge has led to the current women’s studies programs, now mandatory on many campuses, where professors teach an ideology based on the “oppressor/oppressed-class paradigm” rather than truth. Radical feminist ideas rapidly spread beyond these classrooms in universities where feminist scholars have key influence, especially in English, French and history departments, and in law and divinity schools.⁴⁹ These feminist academics use their influence to overthrow the classic curriculum. They attempt to rewrite history so that it includes more of women’s contributions, often placing emphasis on minor female figures while ignoring major male leaders and historical events.⁵⁰ Some simply want to exchange the literary canon of the West for “less oppressive writings,” but the most radical extend this revisionism into the sciences and mathematics. Modern feminists, such as Sandra Harding, Alison Jaggar and Evelyn Fox Keller, maintain that, because men have determined the facts and conducted the experiments, the present knowledge of math and science is distorted.⁵¹

Women’s studies programs are a stronghold for this ideology. A model course developed by professors at Rutgers University was established to “challenge and change the social institutions and practices that create and perpetuate systems of oppression.”⁵²

In this course students would receive 40 percent of their grade by:

- Performing an outrageous and liberating act outside of class and sharing feelings with classmates.
- Keeping a journal with narratives of personal experience, expressions of emotion, dream accounts, poetry, doodles, etc.
- Forming small, in-class-consciousness-raising groups.⁵³

This program embodies the ideas behind the modern women’s studies program. Ironically, these programs support traditionally accepted women’s capacities for intuition, emotion and sentiment while devaluing their capacity to reason. In fact, according to Crouse, some academic feminists view logic as a matter of “making it fit for what you believe.”

PROFOUND EFFECTS

Early feminism and modern feminism have profoundly affected today’s society. Because early feminism helped to achieve full equality for women under the law, women have gone on to make important contributions in areas to which society denied them access 150 years ago. Today there are numerous “new traditional” women—women who remain dedicated, like so many of the early feminists, to Judeo-Christian principles. In the words of pro-family activist Connaught Marshner:

Who is the New Traditional Woman? She is the mother of the citizens of the 21st century. It is she who will more than anyone else transmit civilization and

⁴⁸ Nellie Smith, “The Feminist Politicization of the University,” as found at <http://www.mugu.com/cgi-bin/upstream/issues/fem/fem-pol.html>.

⁴⁹ Christina Hoff Sommers, “Sister Soldiers,” as found at <http://www.mugu.com/cgi-bin/upstream/people/sommers/SISTER.htm>, originally published in the *New Republic*.

⁵⁰ Sommers, 58-60.

⁵¹ Smith.

⁵² Sommers, “Sister Soldiers.”

⁵³ *Ibid*.

humanity to future generations, and by her response to the challenges of life, determine whether America will be a strong, virtuous nation. . . . She is new, because she is of the current era, with all its pressures and fast pace and rapid change. She is traditional because, in the face of unremitting cultural change, she is oriented around the eternal truths of faith and family. Her values are timeless.⁵⁴

Crouse, too, reflects on women, past and present, dedicated to eternal truth:

Because we are created in God's image and the Grace of God is extended equally to women, we can join the company of those women who first wept in the shadow of the cross and later rejoiced at the empty tomb. Because the Bible is the most effective force in history, we can join the historic succession of women whose Christian faith is forged from biblical truth and whose lives are shaped into Christ's image on the anvil of obedience.

As women we are beneficiaries, not victims, of our Christian faith, despite its imperfect outerworking in history.⁵⁵

Great Christian women, like many of the early feminists, have achieved much without sacrificing traditional values. Their influence can only help this nation to continue to grow and thrive.

However, early feminism has had an unfortunate effect in modern feminism, a movement that seeks to destroy rather than preserve traditional moral values. Modern feminism has forsaken the objectives of the founding feminists in its quest for power and "liberation" rather than equal rights.⁵⁶ *The Christian Women's Declaration* describes the devastating consequences of this abandonment:

We are especially concerned about the effects on women of contemporary cultural trends. We decry the erroneous thinking about human nature, sin and utopian expectations of society that have produced a pervasive sense of emptiness. The notion of women's autonomy—including absolute control over our own bodies—leaves us with an unrealistic sense of human power and an exaggerated sense of independence from the consequences of our attitudes and actions. The denial of the transcendent God who orders the universe and directs our lives leaves us with societal chaos and the absence of any objective sense of meaning. Most especially, it is the authority of the one true God, in whose image male and female are made, that insures the dignity and equality of men and women.⁵⁷

And, today, the effects of this abandonment of traditional values are glaringly evident as education suffers and society has devalued the family, the traditional woman's role and human life, itself.

⁵⁴ Jepsen, 63-64.

⁵⁵ Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, 4.

⁵⁶ Alicia Colon, "We Need a New Women's Movement...Now!" as found at <http://www.geocities.com/~aliciacoln/cwfa.htm>, originally published in the *Staten Island Advance*, 10 December 2000.

⁵⁷ Crouse, *A Christian Women's Declaration*, 12.

In academics, radical feminists work tirelessly to ensure that women's studies programs will continue in their destructive mission. Christina Stolba tellingly concludes her extensive research on this issue, by saying, "As its textbooks demonstrate, the field of women's studies has turned 'rooms of their own' into intellectual prisons presided over by matriarchs of mediocrity who mistake ideology for learning and scholarship."⁵⁸ Because "vindication and liberation of women are more important than objective analysis" in these programs, women's studies lose legitimacy.⁵⁹ Many students and teachers recognize that women's studies classes have become just another "easy credit" and cannot be taken seriously.

Moreover, feminist rewriting of history and literature harms the entire educational world. For example, standards of knowledge have fallen sharply in history classes. History books now place emphasis on the achievements of minor female figures while ignoring major male leaders and historical events. A 1989 study indicated that while 83 percent of the students surveyed recognized Harriet Tubman, only 53 percent had heard of Joseph Stalin, and only 39 percent recognized the characteristics of the Renaissance.⁶⁰ Making itself ludicrous as an educational experience and spreading its radical, unfounded ideas into the rest of the educational world, the feminist classroom fails to adequately prepare women to survive in the world of work and culture.

Like the university, the family, the foundation of society, has taken a tremendous hit from modern feminism. The number of marriages continues to decline, dropping nearly 50 percent since 1950.⁶¹ At the same time, the divorce rate has increased dramatically, doubling since 1960 and reaching its peak in the 1980s. In fact, recent findings published by the Beverly LaHaye Institute (BLI), the research arm of Concerned Women for America (CWA), expect more than half of today's marriages to end in divorce.⁶² Astonishingly, the U.S. Census Bureau found that, in 2000, only 73 percent of couples with children were married, a sharp drop from 91 percent in 1960, before the radicalism of the modern feminist movement.⁶³ BLI reports that, in 1980, there were 10 times as many women cohabiting with men as in 1960. Moreover, over one-third of American children are born out-of-wedlock.⁶⁴ These statistics are even more troubling considering the harm often inflicted on all family members by divorce, the benefits of a two-parent home, and the emotional, physical and health benefits of marriage proven in numerous studies.⁶⁵ In undermining the importance of the family, feminists are aiding society in its own destruction.

Feminist destruction of the woman's traditional role has been a key factor in the family's decline. Modern feminists teach today's women that, when she settles for the role of wife and mother, she subjects herself to an inferior position. Phyllis Schlafly, who helped to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, correctly states, "The women's liberation ideology teaches women to seek their own self-fulfillment over every

⁵⁸ Christina Stolba, *A Room of One's Own* (Arlington, VA: Independent Women's Forum, 2002), 32.

⁵⁹ Smith.

⁶⁰ Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 61.

⁶¹ Bridget Maher, editor, *The Family Portrait* (Washington, DC: Family Research Council, 2002), 2.

⁶² Janice Shaw Crouse, *Gaining Ground: A Profile of American Women in the Twentieth Century* (The Beverly LaHaye Institute: 2001), 41, 43.

⁶³ Op cit., 14.

⁶⁴ Op cit., 38.

⁶⁵ Op cit., 6-9.

other goal. Those who choose to establish that as their priority are free to make that choice. But that goal is simply incompatible with a happy marriage and motherhood.”⁶⁶

Sadly, too many women take the feminist message to heart, contributing to the decline in marriages and a considerable drop in the birthrate. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the birthrate has decreased by 43 percent since 1960.⁶⁷ This drop reveals an alarming truth. In the words of Alicia Colon:

In our quest for equality with men, we have lost supremacy in what matters most in life—the care of the young entrusted to the sex that was designed to bear them. ... [O]ur physiology is specifically designed for the protection of the future civilization. ... This awesome responsibility was granted to us but we no longer deserve that honor. We can't handle it.⁶⁸

Abortion, the ultimate denial of the role of child-bearer, symbolizes all that has gone wrong in current society. Since the 1973 feminist victory in *Roe v. Wade*, there have been more than 43 million abortions reported in the United States. Every year, about 1.33 million take place. Approximately 48 percent of pregnancies are “unintended,” and, of these, half result in abortion.⁶⁹ To many Americans, abortion is simply another form of birth control. They have bought into the feminist lie about the insignificance of millions of humans—the unborn.

In 1973, theologian Francis Schaeffer predicted that legalized abortion would start the nation on a downward spiral, culminating with increased cases of infanticide and legalized euthanasia. He wrote, “Will a society which has assumed the right to kill infants in the womb ... have difficulty in assuming the right to kill other human beings?”

Today, his prediction has come true. The “Right to Die” movement, and even some leading scientists, have openly embraced infanticide and euthanasia.⁷⁰ The number of babies intentionally killed before their first birthday has increased by 36 percent for white babies and 51 percent for black babies since 1980.⁷¹ Oregon law permits assisted suicide, while the Netherlands and Belgium allow assisted suicide and euthanasia. Everyday, women—and men—consumed with the idea of self-fulfillment, allow the sanctity of human life to slip further down the spiral.

THE COST OF MODERN FEMINISM

Women are becoming increasingly aware of the cost of the feminist ideology on society. In 1991, 65 percent of college freshman felt that abortion should be legal. Today, only 55 percent agree.⁷² According to the “Money and the American Family” survey, 81 percent of adults view marriage as an absolutely necessary part of a successful life.⁷³ Recent studies have shown that a large majority of women prefer the role of

⁶⁶ Jepsen, 63.

⁶⁷ Op cit., 16.

⁶⁸ Alicia Colon, “Are We Women or Wusses?” as found at <http://www.geocities.com/aliciacoln/wusses.htm>, originally published in the *Staten Island Advance*, 21 August 2001.

⁶⁹ Web site for Christian Life Resources, as found at <http://www.christianliferesources.com/cgi-bin/home.pl?statsGeneral>.

⁷⁰ “Abortion’s Impact on Society,” CWA Policy Concerns, April 2000, as found at <http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=1421&department=CWA&category=life>.

⁷¹ Janice Shaw Crouse, *Strengthening American Families: What Works and What Doesn’t Work*, The Beverly LaHaye Institute, remarks delivered at the World Congress of Families II, Geneva Switzerland, 17 November 1999, 4.

⁷² Maher, 173.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9.

housewife to that of career woman. One such study by a New York tracking firm revealed that two out of four of the 3,000 women polled preferred to stay at home with their children rather than remain in the workplace.⁷⁴ Another study found that the number of working women who believe that a career is as important as being a wife and mother has fallen 23 percent since the 1970s.⁷⁵

Virginia Haussegger, a successful ABC television journalist, reflects:

[T]he truth is—for me at least—the career is no longer a challenge, the lifestyle trappings are joyless, ... and the point of it all seems, well, pointless. I am childless and I am angry. Angry that I was so foolish to take the word of my feminist mothers as gospel. Angry that I was daft enough to believe female fulfillment came with a leather briefcase.⁷⁶

As they recognize the emptiness of a life based on feminist ideals, more and more women turn to religion and traditional morals for fulfillment. The Center for Gender Equality, led by Faye Wattleton, former president of Planned Parenthood, found that the number of women “embracing” religion grew from 69 to 75 percent from 1997 to 1999, in just two years. Disturbed by the results, Wattleton added her insight, “It is clear that women are becoming more conservative on a number of social issues as they become more involved with religion.”⁷⁷

Consequently, the number of women who fail to identify with the modern feminist movement have grown. When asked if she would call herself a feminist, Gabrielle Molnar, a former Young Businesswoman of the Year, told the WomenSpeak 2003 conference, “No. I don’t think it supports our cause [the cause of women].”⁷⁸ In the September 2000 issue of *George*, supermodel and mother Cindy Crawford stated her dislike for the word “feminist,” saying, “It has such a negative connotation to me. It’s like man-hating. I want a guy to open a door for me. ... I like being treated like a woman. I don’t want to be equal in every way.”⁷⁹

A 1999 CBS poll shows that, like Crawford, many women are growing increasingly uncomfortable with the lesbianism, bitterness, radicalism and very liberal politics that accompany the current feminist movement. The poll revealed that, while, in 1992, 31 percent of women considered themselves feminists, seven years later, only 20 percent of women called themselves feminists. In fact, three out of four women polled described the word feminist as an insult.⁸⁰

These results say it all—most women no longer support the ideas of radical feminists, and turn, in increasing numbers, to traditional values, embodied in Scripture and reflected in the Judeo-Christian values of many early feminists. These women have recognized that traditional morals elevate them, and that only through the Christian life

⁷⁴ Linda Bowles, “Feminism is Dying, We Can Only Hope,” TownHall.com, 21 June 2000, as found at <http://www.townhall.com/columnists/lindabowles/lb000621.htm/>.

⁷⁵ “Feminist Follies,” Fall 1999, Clare Booth Luce Policy Institute, as found at <http://www.cblpolicyinstitute.org/fall1999.htm>.

⁷⁶ Virginia Haussegger, “The sins of our feminist mothers,” *theage.com.au*, 23 July 2002, as found at <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/07/22/1026898972150.html>.

⁷⁷ Op cit.

⁷⁸ Virginia Haussegger, “Has feminism let us down?” *theage.com.au*, 23 April 2003, as found at <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/04/22/1050777253817.html>.

⁷⁹ “Feminist Follies,” Fall 2000, Clare Booth Luce Policy Institute, as found at <http://www.cblpolicyinstitute.org/fall2000.htm>.

⁸⁰ Poll: Slow Progress for Women,” CBSNEWS.com, 1999, as found at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/1999/12/20/opinion/printable141757.shtml>.

can they become complete—in Christ, empowered and truly free. The Christian legacy of social reform inspired the early feminists to action, and that same reform-mindedness should motivate Christians to rectify the abuses of modern feminism. Conservative Christians must seize this opportunity to wrest the culture from the weakened grasp of the modern feminist movement. Christians must combat the feminist lies with all-powerful truth, with the reality that only through Christ can women *and* men find fulfillment.

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