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IN SEARCH OF A FEMINIST THEOLOGY OF WORK

CATHERINE ANNE BORROWDALE

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23 MAR 1989

IN SEARCH OF A FEMINIST THEOLOGY OF WORK
C. A. BORROWDALE PH.D 1988

In the theology of work women are rarely mentioned, and the issues discussed arise out of male experience. Christian writing may examine women's role as wives and mothers, but not all women have this experience, and married women themselves have other roles. There is therefore a need to examine the broad spectrum of women's work theologically. A feminist perspective is important, because it arises from women's experience past and present, and makes a person's sex a significant category of analysis and construction.

The search for a feminist theology of work begins by examining the concepts of justice and equality, which provide the language in which women's concerns are usually discussed in the theology of work. Treating women justly involves understanding them correctly, and thus looking at research into "sex differences" and what it implies for theology. The principle of equality is commonly cited, but is not effective in tackling the root causes of women's oppression. The alienation between the sexes must be healed before equality and justice can change social structures and erode sexual stereotypes.

Work has ambiguous meanings for people; it is neither wholly good nor wholly cursed. The theology of work has operated with faulty analysis, by accepting the alleged split between home and work. It must be recognized that these spheres are closely interrelated for men as well as women, if women's work is to be evaluated appropriately.

"Service" is of central theological importance to women's work. The view that Christians must serve without complaint and without seeking reward is applied specifically to women. This creates the problems associated with the "service ethic" - others are not helped to maturity, and women lose a sense of self. But it is based on a false idea of Christian love. For love does seek a response, aims to discern the needs of others, and includes love of self. These perceptions of love and service relate to our beliefs about God, and a feminist theology of work develops our understanding of God, as well as being concerned with practical Christian living.

A feminist theology of work is wholistic, integrating people's working and loving in a common concern for the flourishing of God's kingdom. It is not a separate theology, but adds a new dimension. Its insights show that the theology of work cannot afford not to be feminist, if it is to be relevant for all of humankind.

PREFACE

The search for a feminist theology of work is not an empty quest. As I have talked to women about my research, I have been encouraged by their interest. Some articulate the pressures on them from a feminist point of view, others are simply conscious that all is not well. Generally they are agreed that the importance of women's work needs to be recognized publicly, and that Christianity has not in the past treated women's work with any seriousness. Feminist theologians are beginning to examine this question, and I hope that this thesis will be a useful contribution in that area.

Combining the production of a doctoral thesis with the production of a family might seem a foolhardy enterprise, but it has kept me rooted in the world of women's work, and provided a helpful and challenging interaction. My approach to my work as a wife and mother of small children has changed under the influence of my research, and my family has influenced the themes I chose to investigate. My daughter was nine months old when I began my research three and a half years ago, my son is now seven months old; my thanks are certainly due to them for being easy-going and independent children.

As my research progressed, I tested out my ideas on relatives and friends, and both formal and informal groups. I would like to acknowledge the help of all those who have shaped my thinking, and shared their experiences with me, although I cannot mention them all by name. I would like to thank Hilary Cashman and Tracy Davis especially, since they not only discussed ideas with me,

but gave much practical help with childcare.

My thanks are also due to Ann Loades, who acted as my supervisor, and to my husband, who acted as my "computer consultant", and helped with the presentation and printing of the thesis.

References and Footnotes

Rather than putting references in the footnotes, they have been included, for ease of use, in square brackets in the body of the text. The author's name is followed by the initial(s) of the book title, as given in the Bibliography. For example, a reference to Helen Oppenheimer's **The Hope of Happiness** would appear as [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.1] References to articles will give the author's name followed by the initial(s) of the periodical. For example, a reference to Paul Brett's **Crucible** article on trade unions would read [Brett, C, p.29] The date of the book or periodical is included where there is otherwise any ambiguity.

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: THE NEED FOR A FEMINIST THEOLOGY OF WORK

A. WOMEN AND THE THEOLOGY OF WORK

When Paul Brett writes of Genesis 3:17 "The necessity of hard work is part of man's fallen state" [Brett, WATT, p.1], is he speaking of males or of humankind? For whilst hard work is a common human lot, the words which describe its origin: "cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it ...", are addressed to Adam and not Eve. [Genesis 3:17]¹ Although Adam clearly does represent humanity in Christian tradition, a number of commentators argue that there is an important and deliberate differentiation between the sexes in the consequences of the Fall, such that the pain of Adam's manual labour parallels the pain of Eve's labour in childbirth.² When Brett, like other theologians of work, bases an assessment of "man's" condition on what is said to the man Adam with no mention of what is said to the woman, the suspicion is aroused that "man" here actually means males and not humanity.

That suspicion was the starting point of this research. It led on to the broader question as to whether women are represented in the theology of work at all, for if not, there is a task to be done in assessing women's work theologically. These issues form the central theme of this thesis. In the Introduction, we explore the relation of women to the existing theology of work, and



examine the resources available for a theological analysis of women's work. Because little attention has been paid to this area in the past, these introductory explorations need to be conducted in some detail.

1. Male perspectives in the theology of work

The term "theology of work" is a relatively recent one. According to Chenu it first appeared in the nineteen fifties. [Chenu, TTOW, p.3] But Christian reflection on the character and meaning of work long pre-dates this. Brett's useful summary **Work and the Theologians**, shows how theologians "have always been interested in human work and the way in which it might be related to the work of God in creation and redemption", from the writers of Genesis through to the present day. [Brett, WATT, p.1]³ The phrase "theology of work" is used here in a general sense to include any conscious theological reflection on work. However, most references are to the theology of work in post-war Britain, which forms a recognizable corpus, much of which has developed out of Industrial Mission.⁴ Many of these writings provide good secondary sources for understanding past Christian thinking about work, such as that of Luther, Calvin and the early Puritans. This earlier material is therefore seldom used here as a primary source.

The question whether women are included in the theology of work does not yield a straightforward answer. The possibility that masculine referents such as "man" can have a generic sense means it cannot be assumed that women are only included where they are specifically mentioned.⁵ Most of the theology of work,

particularly up until the last decade, is written in he/man language, with women rarely referred to specifically. Whilst the intention may be to speak of human experience, closer examination of the texts suggests that the viewpoint is predominantly androcentric.⁶

In some cases a supposedly generic usage of "man" becomes sex-specific,⁷ indicating that the author has males rather than human beings in mind. Attempts to understand Catherwood's use of "man" as generic, for example, founder when he moves from observing that "it is the duty of the Christian to use his abilities to the limit", to the stricture that the Christian must not make his wife a widow. [Catherwood, TCIIS, p.2/3]⁸ Indeed it has been shown that "man in the sense of male so overshadows man in the sense of human being as to make the latter use inaccurate and misleading for purposes both of conceptualizing and communicating." [Miller and Swift, WAW, p.25]

The confusion engendered by the generic use of "man" has increased as writers have become aware that it can exclude women. Much of the theology of work produced since the nineteen seventies alternates between using "man" and "men and women", which makes it difficult to judge when a point specific to males is being made. However, the key issue is not that the language lacks clarity, but that it obscures the virtual absence of women from the theology of work. Whether statements are made about "man" or "men and women", the content rarely reflects women's experience. This can be illustrated by looking at two themes found in the theology of work: worth and paid work, and stewardship of the earth.

i) Worth and paid work

The increase in unemployment in Britain since the nineteen seventies has produced a considerable response from theologians. The central issue for the theology of work today is the need to find ways of valuing people outside of paid employment.⁹ But the assumption that people have always found their identity in paid employment is based on the relation of men to paid work rather than women.¹⁰ Although jobs are important for many individual women and women's waged work is vital for the economy, the expectation is that women's main role and their identity are to be found in their work as wives and mothers. It is not possible to state, as Bleakley does, that "we" are part of a generation "conditioned to regard wage-work as natural and necessary for human dignity". [Bleakley, WTSATS, p.73] Our society regards wage-work as necessary for male dignity, but not for female.

Roger Clarke, who otherwise makes an attempt to do justice to women's work, falls into a similar trap in assuming that what is true of men is true of people in general. He writes: "during the mid-life years there is a strong social expectation that as adults we will be standing on our own feet financially, not living in monetary dependence upon other parties." [Clarke, WIC, p.23] Again, this may be true for men, but a large number of women expect to spend their middle years living in monetary dependence on their husbands whilst they are raising children.

One reason cited for the centrality of paid work in people's lives is that this is a legacy of the "work ethic". Where worldly success in business or industry could be seen as the mark of the

elect, people would strive to achieve such success. Although the work ethic may have its roots in Luther's conception of daily work as a "calling", whether this was as farmer, housewife or merchant, its main application seems to have been to men's paid work. The question as to how far women's paid or unpaid work was influenced by the work ethic has yet to be adequately explored. Roberta Hamilton offers a feminist analysis of the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism in the seventeenth century which begins to answer the question, but little else has been published.¹¹ The Puritan strictures against idleness discussed by Clarke might underlie the tendency of many women to fill their spare moments with work, for example, and this would be worth exploring. Middleton [Charles and Duffin eds., WAWIPIE] observes that women in the seventeenth century were expected to fill spare moments with activities such as spinning, where men were not, and that this is still true today.

At the same time, as Harrison points out, men could see a non-working wife as an outward and visible sign of success in business. Women's God-given duty became not hard work, but being the "angel in the house". [Harrison, WWAW, p.73/4] Harrison claims that women "have been pioneers in the quest for human dignity apart from wage-work", and have stood over against the work ethic in their emphasis on community, co-operation and gift-labour. [Ibid., p.97/8] Some writers do recognize that women relate to paid work differently from men, and may advocate women's experience as a better model to follow.¹² As we shall see, this can be a profitable line to follow; but women's working patterns and the "service ethic" which constrains them raise problems which require analysis. Part Four explores this in depth.

ii) Stewardship of the earth

A second major theme in the theology of work which reflects a male standpoint is that of "man's" dominion over and responsibility for the earth. For Pope John Paul II, subduing and dominating the earth is the way "every human being" reflects the action of the Creator. [John Paul II, LE, p.14] An essential feature is that "throughout the process man manifests ... and confirms himself as the one who dominates." [Ibid., p.21] Brett discusses the importance of the creative faculty: "The growth of science and technology, affording man ever increasing control of the universe, are the proper outworking of this creative urge.

... Man can even be seen to be bringing about the redemption of the world through his work in it, humanising it as he masters it and brings it into subjection to himself." [Brett, WATT, p.2]

As John Paul II himself points out, it is man as male and female who is told to fill the earth and subdue it, and thus we might expect to interpret "man" generically here. The difficulty is that the command to have dominion has different implications for women, given that in our society women are expected to take expressive and passive roles. This will be discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters. Most theologians of work do not raise the question of sex in relation to this issue. Where they do, it may be to limit the extent of women's dominion. John Paul II, for example, goes on from his acknowledgement that women are to fill and subdue the earth alongside men, to assert that women have a specific and irreplaceable role in the family. Oldham asserts that the "crucial question is whether work conceived as the technical mastery of the external world is not a specifically

male interest and whether the activities characteristic of women's essential nature do not lie in a different field." [Oldham, WIMS, p.22]

What emerges from this brief discussion is that the issues both of worth and paid work, and of dominion, have different implications for women which are not explored in the existing theology of work. We might conclude that most authors do write from a male perspective, and that women's inclusion in the theology of work is marginal. However, whilst this remains true for the content of the main theological discussion, some writers do appear to take women's work seriously.

2. The attempts to include women

Those who attempt to take women seriously may do so in three ways. Firstly, women may be referred to in the text, usually alternating with the generic "man", and examples may be given from women's work. The difficulty here is that women and men do have different concerns and experiences of work, and naming women alongside men gives an appearance of equality that is misleading. As Dworkin points out, "'We're all just people' is a stance that prohibits recognition of the systematic cruelties visited on women because of sex oppression." [Dworkin, RWW, p.217] Bleakley, for example, uses language and examples inclusive of women. But this leads him to the misleading statement quoted above, where he speaks of "human" dignity in a context which demands that he speak of male dignity.

As we shall see, a major concern of feminist analysis is to

identify where a person's sex does make a difference. It does not mean equating women with men. Yet one response to criticisms that women are not included in the theology of work is simply to rewrite "man" as "men and women". Paul Brett, whose androcentrism is criticized by the present writer [Borrowdale, C, 1985], now attempts to use language inclusive of women, but this leaves the content of what he says unchanged.¹³ One danger in the feminist critique of sexist language is that it can evoke a cosmetic response which appears to meet the criticisms whilst leaving the central issue untouched.

Secondly, writers may acknowledge that women face particular disadvantage in their working lives either by considering women alongside other "problem" groups, or by referring to women's particular concerns in the main body of the text. This can be seen as an improvement on not acknowledging women at all, but is not completely satisfactory. If, as in Sinfield's book on unemployment, there is a separate section on unemployed women, this can suggest that they are not the subject of the rest of the text. Sinfield generally uses he/man language outside his section on women, which creates the presumption that women are not included except where they are specifically mentioned. Sinfield does at least give recognition to the problems unemployed women face as distinct from unemployed men. Keiser includes separate sections on the difficulties facing young people, handicapped people, those he refers to as "coloured immigrants", and the underpaid; but makes no mention of the disadvantages women face, nor indeed of the fact that most of the low-paid are women. We might expect that a book published in 1978 would contain some acknowledgement of a decade of feminism.

Some theologians of work are beginning to show an awareness of women throughout their writing. In **To Work and To Love** Soelle writes about human work giving equal weight to both sexes. Clarke and Walter note some points where women differ from men; but the norm for them and for most writers still seems to be male experience. Where different patterns are identified, there is little analysis of this. Clearly any one text cannot do justice to every aspect of an issue; but authors can make it clear that they are focussing on male and not human experience. It is quite legitimate to do this, and there are good reasons why the theology of work has concentrated on men's work. For the theology of work reflects a culture which equates work with paid work in the public sphere, and regards women's interests as confined to a private sphere in which they do not work. This is discussed at length in Chapters Six and Seven.

Further, Industrial Mission, from which has sprung a good proportion of the more recent theology of work, is partly a response to the "deep rift ... between the Church and the common life of the people in the industrialized areas of the country". [Wickham, TTOTC, p.7] It is particularly working-class men who are alienated from the churches, and Industrial Mission has concentrated on the heavy manual labour which is, or was, the chief employment of such men. Heavy industry also has a major visible impact on a community, and this was another reason for concentrating on an area in which only small numbers of women are employed.¹⁴

The point at issue, then, is not that the theology of work has

spoken of men, but that it has assumed that it has spoken for humanity: "There is no objection to theologizing out of masculine experience. The basic problem lies in claiming the resulting theology valid for the entire community." [Morton in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.36] Theologians of work have not realized that, as Smith said of culture, "What is ... treated as general, universal, unrelated to a particular position or a particular sex as its source and standpoint, is in fact partial, limited, located in a particular position and permeated by special interests and concerns." [Smith, WSIQ, p.283]¹⁵

A third approach to women in the theology of work is to begin with their concerns. Very little has been published in this area by British writers, and what there is generally takes the form of articles or chapters of books on wider subjects. It tends to concentrate on a factual discussion of women's work, rather than developing a theology in response to this. Dawson uses over half of her booklet **And All That is Unseen** to outline the issues affecting women's work, for example, before discussing the theological implications. Green and Langley also concentrate on women's situation in the labour market rather than theology. [Green, TFOTF, Langley, EW, Chapter 8]¹⁶ There is undoubtedly a place for this approach, especially given the lack of analysis of women's work in the theology of work in general. Some indications are given of the theological issues which need attention, for example Dawson discusses justice, stewardship and servanthood, and Storkey mentions that these are important themes. But clearly much more remains to be done, and women's work still remains on the margins of the theology of work.

3. The Application of Feminist Analysis to the Theology of Work

The answer to the question which started this chapter, as to whether women are included in the theology of work, in the end has a dual aspect. We must conclude that women have not been adequately served by the existing material, but that some of the themes could provide a basis for a theological examination of women's work. As has already been noted, the themes of worth and paid work and stewardship over the earth both have implications which need exploring for women. It is not possible to dismiss the theology of work as irrelevant for women, and then to seek to construct a new parallel theology of women's work. For this would deny an essential interrelationship between the two. Rather, what is needed is to develop a theology of work which takes people's sex seriously, and which makes women visible.

This does not just mean emphasising women's experiences, for "taking gender into account is 'taking men into account' and not treating them - by ignoring the question of gender - as the normal subjects of research." [Morgan in Roberts ed., DFR, p.95] But making women visible is necessary where they have been excluded, as Slee indicates. She points to the importance of emphasising "women's experience", which both affirms a common reality of experience and attempts

to redress the imbalance perpetuated by a system in which the dominant forms of thought and expression are determined by and reflect the needs of the socially powerful gender group and ... the needs and experiences of women are often forgotten, ignored or, at best subsumed under categories created by and appropriate to men.

She continues:

To isolate the experience of women and men is not, in this context, to deny the reality of the latter or the ways in which both interact, nor to suggest that what is said about women's lives may not have some relevance for men; it is rather to engage in the process of reclamation ... of making visible women's lives, needs and experiences, in a way which is simply normative for men. Such an act of reclamation is only a small part, but arguably a vital and symbolically very powerful part, of a total restructuring of ideas about human reality and experience, male and female, which feminist analysis in general and Christian feminist theory in particular is engaged in. [Slee, MC, p.22]

This suggests that modern feminist analysis may be of help in the assessment of the theology of work.¹⁷ For as Fiorenza notes, it recognizes that

current scholarly theory and research are deficient because they neglect women's lives and contributions and construe humanity and human history as male. Feminist scholarship in all areas, therefore, seeks to construct heuristic models and concepts that allow us to perceive the human reality articulated insufficiently in androcentric texts and research. [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.xvi]

Three elements are necessary for this reconstruction. Firstly, we need the clear "description and analysis of the omission of women as autonomous human beings" which Spender has called "one of the most significant contributions made by feminism." [Spender, MSM, p.2] Rich identifies this omission as the result of a

fundamental perceptual difficulty among male scholars (and some female ones) ... an intellectual defect, which might be named 'patrivincialism' or 'patriochalism': the assumption that women are a subgroup, that 'man's world' is the 'real' world ... that the 'great' or 'liberalizing' periods of history have been the same for women as for men, that generalizations about 'man,' 'humankind' ... 'blacks' ... 'the working class' hold true for women ... and can include them with no more than a glancing reference here and there.
[Rich, OWB, p.16]

Secondly, there is the lengthy task of restoring women to their proper place within a discipline. This may mean recovering women's history and their hitherto unrecognized contributions to science or religion. Rowbotham [HFH] and Fiorenza use this method. Or it may involve analysis of the distinct features of women's present experience, as with the writings of Oakley, Baker Miller or Gilligan. The third element requires that what is said of women is integrated into a model which speaks of humanity, men as well as women. Fiorenza indicates this:

the new field of women's studies not only attempts to make 'women's' agency a key interpretative category but also seeks to transform androcentric scholarship and knowledge into truly human scholarship and knowledge, that is, inclusive of all people, men and women, upper and lower classes ... different cultures and races, the powerful and the weak. [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.xx]

Under this model, a feminist theology of work would aim to do justice to women's work, and to highlight the concerns specific

to either sex, thus extending the range of the theology of work into new areas. It would also articulate human reality and the shared experience of both sexes. Of prime importance here are feminist thinking in general and feminist theology in particular, for both provide the perspective and resource from which a feminist theology of work must be developed.

B. FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S WORK

1. The Problems of Defining Feminism

The final perspective of a feminist theology of work will be dependent on the definition of feminism used. For example, some see feminism as requiring the rejection of all male insight and experience. This would result in a theology of work centred totally around women, and without the inclusive character called for above. Others define feminism very differently, indeed Delmar believes it is better to speak of "feminisms" rather than a single entity:

The fragmentation of contemporary feminism bears ample witness to the impossibility of constructing modern feminism as a simple unity in the present or of arriving at a shared feminist definition of feminism. Such differing explanations, such a variety of emphases in practical campaigns, such widely varying interpretations of their results have emerged, that it now makes more sense to speak of a plurality of feminisms than of one. [Delmar in Mitchell and Oakley eds., WIF, p.9]

Moreover, the development of feminism has not taken place in a vacuum. Other movements and ideas have influenced it or opposed it. For example feminism in the United States is connected with the Civil Rights movement, Wollstonecraft's ideas were formed in the ferment of radicalism surrounding the French Revolution. We cannot examine this wider context here although particular points will arise later on, but we should note its existence.

Delmar acknowledges that a base-line definition of feminism can be constructed, a belief that "women suffer discrimination because of their sex ... have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change ... in the social, economic and political order". [Ibid., p.8.] Radcliffe Richards urges the adoption of this kind of basic definition, calling feminism "a movement for the elimination of sex-based injustice", since she believes it is an advantage to have as many people as possible labelled feminist. [Richards, TSF, p.4ff] She also points out the danger of identifying feminism with a particular ideological stance, for this ties a defence of women's interests too closely to the success or failure of particular feminist theories.

Beyond the base-line definition, many different labels can be attached to the word "feminism". Lisa Tuttle, in her encyclopedia of feminism, has entries for at least fourteen types. In this thesis the term "feminism" is used in the general sense Delmar and Richards outline with an appropriate qualifier where necessary. It may be helpful to note here the two broad tendencies in feminism identified by Amanda Sebastyen. Oakley, summarising Sebastyen's scheme, comments:

The main division is between socialist feminists and radical feminists. While the former implicate capitalism as the perpetrator of women's oppression, the latter accuse men of being its prime movers and beneficiaries ... The mildest brand of socialist feminism is the equal rights variety: here there is no talk of oppression, merely of discrimination, which ... is analysed as amenable to correction by the law, education, etc. The most extreme group is that of the Wages for Housework campaign. [Oakley, SW, pp.335 and 338]¹⁸

Some would wish to make a clearer distinction between the equal rights variety of feminism, which is essentially reformist, and socialist feminism which seeks a revolution of structures. Radical feminism includes such groups as lesbian and separatist feminists.

Different types of feminism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One might hold that both "the system" and male attitudes need changing, and that legal reforms are necessary but are not the whole solution. The Christian feminism discussed below fits with this position.

Feminism in the general sense is essentially "a perspective rather than a particular set of prescriptive values", as Oakley points out. "A feminist perspective consists of keeping in the forefront of one's mind the life-styles, activities and interests of ... women." [Oakley, TSOH, p.3]¹⁹ But nevertheless to be a feminist perspective it must be based on the kind of assumptions Delmar indicates. The right-wing women in the United States whom Dworkin describes, see themselves as protecting women's interests

through urging their dependence on and submission to men. They accept that women are discriminated against, but see this as proper: "females are only inferior to men in a male sphere, where they do not belong". [Dworkin, RWW, p.204] Rather than believing that the satisfaction of women's needs demands a social revolution, they argue that women's needs are fulfilled within the traditional patriarchal²⁰ model. However, despite the explicitly anti-feminist stance of right-wing women, the fact that they do place women's interests first gives them a point of contact with feminists. Indeed French notes that since women who are anti-feminist are trying to emphasise feminine qualities in their own way, they may in the future be seen as part of the feminist struggle for a better world. [French, BP, p.472]²¹

The feminist perspective used in this thesis focuses on the activities and interests of women and accepts the basic presumptions of feminism as given above. The aim is to test whether a feminist theology of work can provide new and fruitful insights, and space will not be given to arguing the feminist case from first principles since this has already been debated at length. The main impetus within feminist scholarship today comes from the application of a previously accepted feminist perspective to particular disciplines; for example, Baker Miller in psychology, Fiorenza on church history. Midgley and Hughes may underrate the importance of the critique of patriarchy which feminism offers, but they are right to point out that feminism "is not just an eccentricity. Nor is it the only cause which will save the world. It is an element which we all need for our thinking on a great range of important matters - social, political, psychological and moral - and whose absence has always

weakened that thinking." [Midgley and Hughes, WC, p.3]

2. Feminism: the Historical Perspective

The history of women's work and the development of feminism has been the subject of much study this century, although there is by no means agreement on the details and interpretation of it. It is not possible here properly to represent the current debate but some attention needs to be given to it. In order to set the context for modern feminism, and to benefit from the long term perspective history provides, we need to consider briefly the development of thinking about women and their work. Particular heed will be paid to areas which have a direct bearing on a feminist theology of work. Historical aspects of women's work will be discussed in greater detail at relevant points later on, and are not examined closely here.

i) Proto-feminism

There are difficulties in defining what constitutes the stirrings of feminist thought, and in discovering how women themselves viewed their situation particularly prior to the eighteenth century.²² There is some material written by women which reflects the circumstances of their lives, and in some cases shows awareness of women's inequality. The earliest known politically feminist writer in English was Jane Anger, who published her **Protection for Women** in 1589. [Tuttle, EOF, p.19/20] Aphra Behn, a seventeenth century writer who presented life from a woman's point of view and defended the right and ability of women to write, has been rediscovered by modern feminists. [Ibid., p.34/5] The stories chronicled by Katharine

Moore show women acting autonomously and defying the female conventions of their time: for example, the eighth century missionary nun Leoba, the fourteenth century visionary Margery Kempe, and the seventeenth century Quaker campaigner Margaret Fell. Much feminist historical investigation concentrates on the recovery of women's history in this way, identifying women's contribution in areas such as science, religion, or literature.

It is significant that so many "women of spirit", as Ruether and McLaughlin term them, can be found within the Christian tradition. Despite the patriarchal character of the church, the Christian Gospel offered a liberating potential. Not only were male and female equal in Christ, but their calling was to obey God rather than men. Sara Maitland comments:

Every century has seen women, often even praised by their own churches, who have been able to take a stand. Some, like Joan of Arc have paid very heavily. Others, like Catherine of Siena, have wielded real political power ... these women are most likely to emerge at times of conflict: for example, during the reformation and again during the evangelical revivals of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries women claimed and were allowed to exercise ministries of real authority. It was at these times that the men they were involved with were themselves making stands of 'radical obedience' ... Outlaws and exiles from the existing authorities, they had no interest in denying that the Spirit could endow anyone with charismatic graces. ... On the whole charismatic authority in women was suppressed as soon as the group was sufficiently established to start exercising its own authority. [Maitland, AMOTNC, p.9/10]

The extent of women's leadership in the church and their importance in Christian tradition is well illustrated in Ruether and McLaughlin. Ample evidence is provided of women resisting the conventions of their time, or of creating new possibilities in existing roles.²³ Ruether notes that women who chose the ascetic life found a range of opportunities not offered by their traditional role: study, self-development and an independent life in female-run communities. Although that way of life can be criticized as anti-sexual, for Ruether the tragedy is

that in so choosing this path, accepting in good faith the ideals held out to them by the Church, they were nevertheless denied their rightful place in the Church's tradition. They were writers, thinkers, Scripture scholars, and innovators in the formation of monastic life, but because they were women they could have no public voice in the teaching Church here on earth. [Ruether in Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS, p.93/4]

Whilst women's acting autonomously scarcely constitutes a feminist movement, it does make sense to call this proto-feminism, as Tuttle points out. It is important to record that as "long as women have been oppressed there have been individuals who have resisted that oppression, some on a personal level and others quite consciously on behalf of their sex." [Tuttle, EOF, p.261]

We might suggest that proto-feminist theology exists even without a consciousness of women's oppression. Firstly, the recognition given to such writers as Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena establishes that women can contribute to the

theology of the church. Secondly, although it is not a feminist consciousness, such women often make a point of their sex. This may be derogatory: "'I am but a woman' - how familiar an apologetic opening throughout the ages!" [Moore, SFG, p.29] But it anticipates the feminist view that women do have a different perspective to contribute and that their sex is a significant factor.

Thirdly, some of the themes of feminist theology today were present in early Christian thinking. For example, medieval piety (as distinct from the mainstream theological tradition) was less androcentric in the language of prayer, and McLaughlin can speak of a "current of female metaphor and naming (which) was part of a total realm of the sacral ... heavily colored²⁴ by an affective spirituality which twentieth century Christians often apprehend as female or feminine ... nurturance ... imagery of birth, labor and growth ... the immanence of sacramentality and the mystical union." [McLaughlin in Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS, p.124/5] Both men and women write of these themes.

There is quite early evidence of contention about the position of women in society, and it has been surmised that male condemnation of women becomes stronger where women have been questioning their subordinate status. Thus Fiorenza writes of early church history that "androcentric injunctions become more detailed and numerous with the growth of the women's movement". [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.60] On the other hand, O'Faolain in her historical survey of women suggests that there is less of female rebellion than male suspicion of it. "Timidity, emotional confusion and backtracking are essential components of women's groping progress towards a

perception of their needs. To leave this out would be to falsify the story." [O'Faolain, NIGI, p.xvi/xvii] Nevertheless, there is direct evidence of the challenging of injustice against women.

Prior to the eighteenth century this is mainly in isolated instances. O'Faolain records that the late Middle Ages saw many polemics against women, mostly from clerics, but as upper-class women became more literate, and humanism spread, women's interests were increasingly defended. For example, at the end of the fourteenth century Christine de Pizan was the first female writer to address men's literary attacks on women head on, discussing women's needs, constrictions and institutionalized deprivations. [French, BP, p.182] Her writings sparked off the querelle des femmes, the debate on the role and status of women which took place in European literary circles between 1400-1789. [Tuttle, EOF, p.265] But towards the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, the rights of women to education were being upheld by such figures as Mary Astell and Daniel Defoe. They did not extend this to women outside their own class, nor expect them to be involved in productive work, but women are here treated as a group with particular rights and demands. [Hamilton, TLOW, p.43/4 and 48, Rowbotham, HFH, p.14]

We have already noted Maitland's comment about the authority given to women's ministry at times of religious revival. It is worth recording here the importance of women in the growth of the Society of Friends in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Both Huber [in Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS] and Katharine Moore describe the intrepid spirit of Quaker women preachers, and the egalitarian ideals of the early movement which appealed to

many women. But as Huber notes, after the first half-century, women's leadership was discouraged, and more conservative ideas replaced some of the early ideals. Nonetheless, Quaker women had a sense of personal empowerment which enabled them to break through old boundaries, and their experience may be a useful one for Christian feminists today.

ii) First Wave Feminism

It is primarily from the late eighteenth century onwards that feminist writing begins to flourish.²⁵ The "first great feminist statement in English" [Oakley, SW, p.4] was Mary Wollstonecraft's **Vindication of the Rights of Woman**, published in 1792, which attacked the imposition of an artificial construct of femininity upon women. The early nineteenth century saw increasing demands for workers rights and political reforms, such as those expressed by the Chartist movement. Women were involved in these campaigns, although as Rowbotham comments, their mobilisation was essentially in support of their class, rather than raising questions specifically relevant to women. Yet, she adds, these "new forms of working-class organisation provided a popular climate in which it was possible for women to insist on their right to political activity". [Rowbotham, HFH, p.35]

Women's work covered a wide range of activity, as contemporary records and subsequent discussions show. Generally receiving little reward for their labours, they worked long hours in poor unhealthy conditions, often with additional responsibilities for home and children.²⁶ Individual feminists were active social reformers, and there was concern for the lives of drudgery led by many women. But the main public thrust of feminist

activity was directed towards women's exclusion from legal and political rights. In the late eighteen forties and early eighteen fifties, women's rights groups began to form both in Europe and the United States. Oakley suggests a movement emerged at that particular time because "the contraction of women's opportunities in the early nineteenth century occurred together with the expansion of men's opportunities and at a time when generally liberal and libertarian ideas were in ascendance." [Oakley, SW, p.10/11, especially Chapters 1 and 2.]

The application of liberal ideas to women's situation is found par excellence in Mill's **The Subjection of Women**, published in 1869. It is, says Tuttle, "an eloquent, controlled argument for equal rights and opportunities for women, presenting the case that not only is the legal subordination of one sex to the other wrong in itself ... but that the oppression of women is a hindrance to the advancement and happiness of the human race as a whole." [Tuttle, EOF, p.315]

The reforms which were achieved in this period, such as the revision of women's matrimonial status, did not necessarily proceed from feminist principles. The campaign which united feminists and other women's groups from the mid-nineteenth century until just after the First World War was women's suffrage. As Cott shows, that unity was more apparent than real, a coalition for a particular purpose of women's groups who would disagree on many other issues. [Cott, in Mitchell and Oakley eds., WIF] This needs to be noted, since the campaign for women's suffrage was not identical with feminism. Nevertheless, this period of approximately 1860 to 1920 is usually identified as the

first wave of feminism.

Delmar believes that the "focus on feminism as activity, as campaigns around issues, tends to underplay the nature of the general debate about women and the extent to which feminists were involved in setting its terms." She continues: "When the women's liberation movement came into existence in the late 1960's, it emerged into a social order already marked by an assimilation of other feminisms. Feminism was already a part of the political and social fabric." [Delmar, in Mitchell and Oakley, eds., WIF, p.24/5] This may have been true in the intellectual terms Delmar describes. Women could be seen as a separate social group with needs and interests of their own, and women had been transformed "from an object of knowledge into a subject capable of appropriating knowledge." [Ibid., p.25]

A number of important studies were published in Britain in the first decades of the twentieth century which recorded and discussed women's lives: Olive Schreiner's **Woman and Labour** in 1911, The Women's Co-operative Guild's collection of letters from women about childbirth in 1915, Alice Clark's **The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century** in 1919, Neff's **Victorian Working Women** in 1929, and Pinchbeck's **Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution** in 1930. Even where these studies were not explicitly feminist, they provided (and still provide) a valuable resource for those wishing to study women's lives, and are precursors of the numerous feminist examinations made more recently.

Women's position in society and in the labour market remained

unequal although the vote was given to women over thirty in 1918, and there were other legal reforms which affected their status and opportunities.²⁷ The second women's franchise act was passed in 1928, and was regarded by many as the abolition of the "last glaring inequality in the legal position of women". [Strachey, quoted in Oakley, SW, p.24] Yet the nineteen thirties, forties and fifties were difficult times for women as Oakley points out. After both the First and Second World Wars women who had been employed were expected to give up their jobs, their status being that of a reserve labour force rather than those with equal rights to paid work. They formed around a third of the labour force (as they had done since 1850 when figures were first recorded for women), were paid half to three-quarters of the male wage, and worked mostly in unskilled jobs.

During this period, women were active in a variety of ways in the Christian community. Zikmund notes of American religious life that "beginning with the Shakers, and moving through Quaker, Adventist, Christian Scientist, Holiness and Pentecostal sectarian groups, there has been a steady pattern of female opportunity, experience and success." [Zikmund in Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS, p.221]²⁸ Hardesty Dayton and Dayton describe the Holiness movement as having a "consistent feminist thrust". [Hardesty et. al., Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS, p.241] Women moved into such sects at least partly motivated by latent or open feminist ideas. Alternative views of the deity and of marriage, emancipation within church structures and opportunities for women to lead, were attractive in the face of the patriarchalism of the mainstream denominations.

In Britain, Methodism began to emerge from the middle of the eighteenth century, and "Women were prominent in the Evangelical Revival generated by Wesley's preaching". [Ibid., p.227] John Wesley's mother Susannah had an important influence on him and thus on Methodism, and encouraged him to use women as leaders. [Moore, SFG, pp.125ff] The Society of Friends still offered more opportunities for women than the mainstream churches; the Salvation Army was jointly founded by Catherine and William Booth at the end of the nineteenth century.

Women were inspired by their faith to missionary activity, in social concern and preaching both at home and abroad. Katherine Moore tells the stories of many of these women, some of whom are well-known: Hannah More, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Mary Slessor, Josephine Butler. [Moore, SFG, Chapters 9 to 13] Such women were not theologians but "social activists whose lives and vocations were shaped and directed by their theology." [Boyd, JBOHFN, p.xv] Given that feminist theology, like all theology, must be concerned with the empowerment of God's people to live out their faith, the experience of these women is important for Christian feminists today.

It is less easy to trace the influence of Christian women in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. Katharine Moore devotes only eight pages to the period 1900 to the 1960's, mentioning the work of such women as Evelyn Underhill and Kathleen Lonsdale. Yet during these years many women were active in the Christian community, in particular through the missionary societies. Such women might not identify themselves as feminist, but the pioneering spirit of, for example, Gladys Aylward and

Lily Searle, is relevant for Christian feminism. The debate over the ordination of women, in which is centred much feminist theological reflection, did not really develop until the nineteen sixties. Feminist theology arose alongside and out of second-wave feminism, but nevertheless had its own independent roots.

ii) Second wave feminism

De Beauvoir's **The Second Sex** was published in Britain in 1953, and can be regarded as a product of the transitional period between the old and the new feminism. [Tuttle, EOF, p.287] Although there was little consciously feminist writing published in Britain between 1930 and 1960, feminist ideas are apparent in writers such as Woolf and Sayers. Woolf's **A Room of One's Own** [1928] and **Three Guineas** [1938] explored women and writing, women's relationship to male-defined culture, and the importance of economic dependence for women. [Tuttle, EOF, p.372] Sayers' essay **Are Women Human?** [1947] makes a plea for women to be treated as people. Both authors also wrote novels with strong female characters. Attention was being given in these years to sociological study of women, for example in Spring-Rice's **Working-Class Wives**, published in 1939 and Myrdal and Klein's 1956 book **Women's Two Roles**. The percentage of women in employment was increasing, and as we shall see more of these women were married, but emphasis was still placed on domesticity as their primary role.

After the Second World War, many women accepted that their role should be that of mother and housewife. The maternal deprivation theory of Bowlby, which stated that small children need the

constant attention of their mothers, was combined with pressure from returning servicemen to make this role look desirable.²⁹ Yet those at home without paid employment were prey to the dissatisfactions identified by Friedan [TFM] in the United States,³⁰ and by Gavron [TCW] in Britain.

Analysis of the objective circumstances of the housewife, and the political implications of her work have formed a large part of feminist theory, particularly for Marxist and socialist feminists. As Oakley notes, in the early years of the women's liberation movement, when "feminists began to grapple with the theoretical problem of how women's subordination might be explained, it was the situation of women as unpaid workers in the home that came to be seen as the central enigma." [Oakley, SW, p.166] The Marxist domestic labour debate began with the premise that "the housewife works for the maintenance of capitalism rather than simply being a worker for her family", [Glazer-Malbin, quoted by Oakley, SW, p.167] and this idea has been explored at length. Housework will be discussed in Part Four, although the relation of domestic work to capitalism will not be considered in detail. That particular debate is relevant to a feminist theology of work, but requires the kind of specialised study which is not possible in this thesis.

Increasing numbers of women combined the housewife and mother role with employment. In 1911, one in ten married women had a job; in 1951, one in five; in 1976, one in two. [Oakley, SW, p.147] This trend has received much attention from sociologists, beginning with early studies such as those of Myrdal and Klein, and Jephcott in 1962. The emphasis, however, has often been on

women's paid work as a problem. This differs from studies such as those of Pinchbeck and A. Clark, which described the history and variety of women's work from a more neutral standpoint. There was, says Oakley, "felt to be a need to explain why women took paid jobs, whereas, historically speaking, what really needed to be explained was the rise of the ideology, material conditions and gender relations that placed women in the home." [Oakley, SW, p. 148] It is to this question that feminists since the nineteen sixties have addressed themselves.

There are two broad fronts where the debate on women's work has been carried on. Firstly, feminists have sought to describe in detail the circumstances under which women labour. For example, Oakley documented the lives of housewives and mothers [H, TSOH, FHTM, WC] Coyle, Yeandle and Westwood have studied women in factory work; Sharpe [DI] and Harper and Richards have looked at the interface between motherhood and paid employment. These studies all contain a certain amount of analysis (although Oakley's books are divided with the record of interviews in one and the more detailed sociological comment in another), but can be distinguished from purely theoretical analyses by their use of lengthy verbatim material from women themselves. The emphasis in them has been on discovering at first hand a whole area previously omitted from sociological study, or obscured by reliance on questionnaires of limited scope.³¹

Secondly, feminists have been involved in practical campaigns on issues which affect women's employment. The problem of sexual harassment, first named in the United States, is one such issue now recognized by some trade unions. Although feminism is often

accused of being middle-class,³² there is a strong tradition of militancy amongst working-class women which increasingly uses feminist language and ideals, as Coote and Campbell show.³³

The analysis of women's working lives has been part of a much wider feminist consideration of women's situation in society. In the United States, the feminism of the nineteen sixties grew out of the civil rights and anti-war movements; in Britain, too, says Tuttle, "knowledge of radical politics combined with the experience of being excluded from meaningful action led many left-wing women towards feminism." [Tuttle, EOF, p.360] Juliet Mitchell's 1966 essay "The Longest Revolution"³⁴ was the first piece of second-wave feminist writing published in Britain. Women's groups began to form in 1968, and a national Women's Liberation Conference was held in 1970. During the nineteen-seventies and eighties, that women's liberation movement has diversified, and feminist ideas have permeated many areas.

Christian feminism grew with the women's movement. As Maitland observes:

The awareness that there was some discrepancy between the teachings of Christianity and its actual treatment of its own women members was not invented in the 1960's; but many of the buried issues surfaced into popular consciousness then. ...Understanding the authority of baptism, the gospel that Jesus preached and the clear teaching of the early Church, women were genuinely surprised and appalled at the deep resistance they encountered from their churches. They were forced to look theologically at the reality of sexism ... [Maitland, AMOTNC, p.18/19]

The non-conformist Churches in Britain had a more egalitarian tradition than the Church of England and the Catholic Church, which remained intensely patriarchal in structure. By the nineteen-fifties, Congregationalists and Baptists had been ordaining women for some time; the Methodist Church followed suit later, and has also made attempts recently to remove sexist language from its liturgy. The Quakers continue to attract Christian women with feminist beliefs. But as Dowell and Hurcombe point out:

The rejection of vocation by the institutional church has necessitated that we give a lot of thought and energy to a campaign [for women's ordination] that most of us regard with a good deal of impatience. We would really rather be celebrating women's contribution to theology than fighting for its liturgical recognition ... [Dowell and Hurcombe, DDOE, p.62/3]

But as they go on to say, the ordination issue has become "a symbol and a rallying point" [Ibid., p.63], and it has led to the development of feminist theology in specific areas. There has been examination of the authority and relevance of scripture for a delineation of women's role. The meaning of Christian ministry, leadership, and hierarchy have been subjected to a feminist perspective. Alongside this has gone discussion about the language used of God and within the liturgy.³⁵ This has been valuable; yet it could be argued that the emphasis thus far in Britain has been on responding to the exclusion of women from patriarchal structures rather than on developing theology from the standpoint of feminism. We shall examine the content of feminist theology in the next section.

iv) Evaluating feminism

It is possible to assess the impact of feminism over the last twenty years in two ways. On the positive side, Britain has legislation to enforce equal pay and prevent sex discrimination; there are few occupations not open to women. The priesthood provides one notable exception, but women can now be ordained as deacons in the Church of England, and may well be allowed to become priests in the next few years. Women have a higher profile in public life, in politics, and in the media. There is a proliferation of feminist material both in the arts, and in scholarship which makes a serious contribution in a variety of disciplines. Important psychological analyses have been made of women's need to serve and the dynamics of the relationship between the sexes.³⁶ There is a general awareness of feminist principles, and as Sharpe pointed out in 1976, "the idea that women do have rights which have been withheld from them is one with which the new generation is growing up." [Sharpe, JLAG, p.224]

Moreover, there is some evidence that men are changing their attitudes. This has happened for a variety of reasons,³⁷ but a willingness from some men to be less committed to paid work and more involved with their children has enabled some women to change their traditional roles.³⁸ Male writers have also begun to identify both the effect of patriarchy on their own lives, and the way in which they perpetuate its structures.³⁹

On the other hand, it can be argued that patriarchal attitudes are still deeply entrenched in society. Equal pay and sex discrimination legislation has not altered the basic inequalities

between women and men in the labour market or society in general.⁴⁰ Although women's ordination to the priesthood may come, women in ministry still suffer discrimination, as the experience of other churches has shown. As unemployment has increased, pressure has grown on women not to have jobs. Far from progress towards equal rights being consistent, some legislation has been introduced in Britain which creates fresh discrimination against women.⁴¹ It may not be altogether appropriate to speak of a "male backlash" against feminism, since as French points out, "no one can point to a culture in which women are subordinate yet are treated well." [French, BP, p.535] But some feminists point to an increase in violence against women and increased denigration of the female body in pornography, as evidence that men fear and hate women to an even greater degree.⁴² Women too have organised to oppose feminist ideas.⁴³

Both of these viewpoints represent part of the picture.

3. Feminism and the Theology of Work

The fact that both the above interpretations are valid is important, and will form a theme within this thesis. We shall see in Chapter Four that the equal rights argument fails to appreciate the deep-rootedness of patriarchal attitudes and structures which renders any advantages gained provisional and limited.

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicates ... that we are up against something very profound, very

stubborn, something we cannot root out simply by rearranging a few tasks and roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure. [Ortner, quoted in [Clark, MAWIC, p.423]

However it is necessary, particularly for Christian feminists, to insist that change is possible. For although sexism can be regarded as one of the "powers and principalities of historical, systemic, social evil that conditions our choices as males and females from before our birth", [Ruether, SAGT, p.182] it is nonetheless a human system. Dworkin therefore has a point: "there are no disembodied processes ... all history originates in human flesh ... all oppression is inflicted by the body of one against the body of another ... all social change is built on the bone and muscle, and out of the flesh and blood, of human creators." [Dworkin, OB, p.87] If it is a human system, then it can be transformed, for without "our many-sided cooperation with it, it could not continue to stand." [Ruether, SAGT, p.182]

Much more could be said in evaluating the history of feminism, but of particular significance here is that it sets the context of the present movement. The record counters the claim that women have been content in their prescribed social roles until the present day. Clark , for example, suggests that the modern feminist movement aims to "destroy social roles that have performed a useful function in all of past societies". [Clark , MAWIC, p.x] But his definition of women's social role as domestic, subordinate and expressive, has never been functional for all women. We shall see that women's work across cultures and through history extends far beyond a domestic and expressive

role; the feminine stereotype⁴⁴ bears little relation to the way women actually think and behave.

Modern feminists are not capriciously choosing to denigrate the worthwhile and functional institution of patriarchy, but are the inheritors of a long line of tradition. Moreover we shall see in the next section that feminist theologians can show that feminist principles are not contrary to the gospel, but are implicit and explicit features of it. This understanding of feminism raises interesting questions for the theology of work. It is convenient to excuse the androcentrism of theology before the late nineteen seventies as due largely to ignorance of the feminist perspective. The theology of work which has developed since the nineteen fifties could be said to have emerged during a period when feminist ideas were in abeyance, and women's role not a matter of debate. But if the analysis given above is correct, such a view is too simplistic.

Material was available which drew attention to the conditions of women's working lives, whether in employment or in the home. Those who looked back in time at changing attitudes to work or to study industrial history, would have found evidence of the serious impact on women's lives, had they chosen to follow this up. Moreover, although the first British writings of second-wave feminism appeared in the late nineteen sixties, it is still rare to find feminist analyses of women's work reflected in the theology of work, as has been shown.⁴⁵ Women were in a majority in church congregations, yet the theologians of work regarded this as a problem. It was the working man who was to be wooed by the churches, and a theological analysis of the working lives of

women was, and remains, neglected.⁴⁶

As we shall see, this not only excluded women, but left the theology of work which was constructed seriously inadequate.

The history of feminism together with contemporary feminist writing must be taken into account, for this sets the context of a feminist theology of work. We shall therefore be exploring particular historical aspects of women's work later on, such as the effects of industrialization on women and the emergence of an ideology of motherhood. The theological principles on which a feminist theology of work is based can be drawn partly from the existing theology of work. But the application of feminism to theology has been most thoroughly explored by feminist theologians, and it is their thinking which underlies the present thesis, and needs further consideration here.

NOTES

1. All biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
2. See for example Von Rad, GAC, p.90ff, and Clark, MAWIC p.31ff.
3. More considered analyses can be found in Antony and R. Clarke.
4. See below on the influence of Industrial Mission. Writings on the theology of work which come from an Industrial Mission background include those by: Ballard, Brett, R. Clarke, M. Davies, Dawson, Kane, Keiser, Nash, Phipps, Symanowski, Welbourn, and Wickham.
5. Feminists have labelled this generic usage "he/man language", and that shorthand will be used here for convenience. [Tuttle, EOF, p.141]
6. The same is true in other disciplines. c.f. Brown, in Barker and Allen eds., DAEIWAM; and Spender, MML, p.64ff.
7. For an explanation of the way in which the terms "gender" and "sex" are used within this thesis, see p.66f.
8. See Miller and Swift, WAW, ch.2, and Spender, MML, p.146ff for a general discussion of this point.
9. See Clarke, WIC, Welbourn, STFOW, and Walter, HOTD, for example.

10. It is not necessarily true for all men either, as Walter shows.

11. Hamilton, TLOW, Chapter 3. Harrison, cited below, also attempts this to a limited extent in her M.A. thesis, summarised in **Crucible**.

12. Clarke, WIC, p.118ff, for example.

13. Brett indicated this in a private conversation, Feb. 1986.

14. Wickham's TTOTC reflects both these reasons, and illustrates the concern of Industrial Mission with men. See especially p.18/9.

15. Some Christians try to argue theologically that the male sex does represent humanity. See for example Barth, CD III 1, p.308/9, and S. Clark, MAWIC, p.13 n. and p.25.

16. Although feminist theology in the United States is far more developed than in Britain, there seems to have been little attempt to construct a feminist theology of work. [Personal communications, Rosemary Ruether, and Sheila Briggs, 1986] There are descriptions of the injustices in women's working lives, and a call from a Christian feminist perspective for these to be eliminated, but this theology is not elaborated. The theology of work in general seems to be less well developed in the United States, and this may be one reason for the relative neglect of this area. Writers who do discuss women's work include Fischer in Weidman ed., CF, and Carmody, STA. Ruether makes a number of

references to women's work, particularly setting this in an historical Christian perspective. See, for example, Ruether, TS. There is increased attention being given in the States to such themes as service and love, which, as we shall see, are central to a feminist theology of work. See Andolsen et al eds., WCWC, for example. These writings are not widely available in Britain, however.

17. For a definition of feminism as used in this thesis, see pp.14ff

18. See Oakley, SW, pp.336/7, for a version of Sebastyen's table.

19. cf Rich "the question, But what was it like for women? was always in my mind". [Rich, OWB, p.16]

20. This term is defined on pp.63ff.

21. cf Friedan's attempt to develop positive links with anti-feminists, [Friedan, TSS] and the feminist concerns echoed by the Conservative women Campbell describes. [Campbell, TIL]

22. Some feminists postulate a period before patriarchy when matriarchy was the rule in human society. Leghorn and Parker, WW, p.244f, and Lewenhak WAW, are examples of this school of thought, which was first introduced by J.J. Bachofen in 1861. Most anthropologists reject the idea, but it has value for feminists as a symbol that patriarchy is not inevitable. However, we shall not discuss the issue here.

23. Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., WOS, especially see chapters 2 to 4.

24. American spellings within quotations will not be marked "(sic)", since their frequency would make this tedious.

25. Although the term feminism was not used widely until the beginning of the twentieth century. [Tuttle, EOF, p.107]

26. See Mayhew, LLATLP on city life for poor women in Victorian England, Pinchbeck, WWATIR for the different jobs industrialization brought to women.

27. See Oakley, SW, p.23/4.

28. Also see the whole of her chapter.

29. It is interesting to trace this theme in women's magazines of the period, as Ferguson does. [FF]

30. The modern feminist movement is considered by many to have been precipitated in the United States by Friedan's **The Feminine Mystique**, although it is more likely that she simply acted as a focal point for the feminist discontent already in existence. [Oakley, SW, p.27ff]

31. For example, Oakley shows how the question "do you like housework?" will elicit different responses from women, even though in longer interviews, they have similar attitudes. Oakley, TSOH, p.70f] This point would be lost in a short survey.

32. See p.71f.

33. See Rowbotham, HFH and Sarah Boston, WWATTUM for the history of women's trade unionism.

34. Printed in **New Left Review**, and expanded into her 1971 book **Women's Estate**

35. See Furlong ed. FITC, which reflects all these themes.

36. See Baker-Miller, Eichenbaum and Orbach, for example. This material is particularly relevant for Christian feminists and for a feminist theology of work, as we shall see.

37. See Ehrenreich, THOM, for example, and see below, Chapter Six.

38. This issue is not straightforward, however. See Chapter Eight for further discussion.

39. See Korda, MC, and Tolson, TLOM, for example.

40. For a discussion of this, see Chapter Four.

41. For example, under British immigration law, male British citizens are almost automatically allowed to bring foreign wives into the country, but female British citizens face additional difficulties if they wish to bring foreign husbands here. This is particularly the case for Black women. [Observer, 6.1.85]

42. See Dworkin, P, Brownmiller, AOW, for example. The question of male fear and hatred of women is discussed in Chapter Four.

43. See Dworkin, RWW, Stacey in Mitchell and Oakley ed. WIF, and Campbell, TIL.

44. We shall consider the content and implications of the feminine stereotype further in Part Two.

45. Although it is not possible to consider it here, future research might examine the attitudes of the church to women's work at key points, for example when women lost their jobs at the end of the two world wars. It might also investigate the Christian response to the revelation that women's work in the home can be soul-destroying.

46. This neglect by theologians of work occurred despite the presence of women such as Mollie Batten and Margaret Kane who were highly respected in this field. Their concerns were not feminist as such, but in Margaret Kane's case a determination to do a job in industrial mission just as capably as did men. Both women were spoken of in terms suggesting they were "honorary men". Private communication.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY

A. WHAT MAKES THEOLOGY FEMINIST?

1. Diversity in Feminist Theology

The roots of feminist theology can be found in the past. How far we are justified in labelling as feminist theology the writings of earlier generations of Christian women is an open question. According to the definition arrived at earlier, a feminist theologian will be someone who believes that women suffer injustice because of their sex, and who seeks to do theology with "the lifestyles, activities and interests" of women at the forefront of their mind. Such a definition could include those who reflect feminist ideas quite unconsciously, or even those who deliberately disavow feminism.¹ The liberating potential of the gospel inspired and empowered countless Christian women who nevertheless accepted as divinely ordained their unequal status in relation to men. Their writings contributed to, and still reflect the concerns of, feminist theology, and provide too valuable a resource to ignore.

Similarly today, some useful Christian analysis of women's domestic role comes from those who do not identify themselves as feminist. For example, both Clark in **Man and Woman in Christ** and contributors to Lees' **The Role of Women** acknowledge that women are unfairly discriminated against both within the church and in the social order, whilst maintaining that God created man as head of woman. Such writers anticipate some of the concerns of a feminist theology of work, and need to be considered. We cannot

draw a fine line between what is and what is not feminist theology, but a broad view of what can be included widens the scope of the debate.

Whilst feminist theology is given a wide interpretation here, for many people the term is synonymous with its academic form. The title feminist theologian is generally reserved for those who have made a mark in the academic world through lecturing or publishing. The United States has produced important figures such as Rosemary Ruether, Letty Russell and Sallie McFague; Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel come from Germany.² Academic feminist theology is much less well developed in Britain, with little influence in the universities, and little work published to date;³ but this situation may well change.

In addition to recognisedly feminist theologians, there are a number of others who include feminist ideas or contribute to feminist theological understanding, yet who might not wish to be identified as feminists themselves. The German theologians Jurgen Moltmann and Dorothee Soelle fall into this category, as does Helen Oppenheimer in Britain. Oppenheimer's discussions of human uniqueness and equality, self-love and flourishing, make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of fulfilment for women, as Chapters Four and Ten demonstrate. Oppenheimer herself might eschew both a feminist label, and the idea that her being a woman is significant for what she writes. Yet one can nevertheless consider her insights essential for a feminist theology of work, and any theology which takes women seriously.

It is important that each branch of academic theology -

systematic, biblical, historical and so on - should have a feminist perspective. The danger lies in restricting the term theology to the formal, systematic study of God, and the purposes of God for humankind. For it can be argued that this usage prevents ordinary Christians from developing their own theological perceptions, because they see theology as the province of academics. This is of particular concern to Christian feminists, for feminism encourages all women to articulate their own ideas and experiences, and this includes encouraging women to do their own theology.⁴ Defining feminist theology purely in formal terms fails to do justice to the informal theological reflection which underlies it.

But whether feminist theology is done formally or informally, it will arise from widely diverse theological and ideological standpoints. Feminism, as we have seen, takes a number of different forms, and theology too may be liberal, conservative, fundamentalist, and so on. Some feminist theologians have ceased to classify themselves as Christian, whilst retaining belief in God.⁵ There is a movement towards "post-Christian feminism" clearly evident in the United States, with former Catholic professor Mary Daly its most visible proponent. In Britain, Daphne Hampson now identifies herself as post-Christian.⁶

Such feminists find it impossible to accept Christianity because of its patriarchal character. Daly insists that the:

efforts of biblical scholars to re-interpret texts, even though they may be correct within a certain restricted perspective, cannot change the overwhelmingly patriarchal character of the biblical tradition. ... this ... overlooks

patriarchal religion's function of legitimating patriarchy.

[Daly, quoted in Fiorenza, IMOH p.23]

But as Fiorenza points out, Daly has "no room for an often mixed, confused, inarticulate, and only partially feminist historical consciousness and agency of women living within the boundaries of patriarchal culture and religion." [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.25] These are precisely the women we have identified as bound up with the development of feminist theology. It is simply not possible for most women to abandon either their relationships with men or their membership of a patriarchal church, in favour of an ideologically pure sisterhood; nor do most wish to. Frustration and oppression are experienced alongside love and empowerment, and a truly comprehensive feminist theology cannot exclude women living with this ambivalence.

Yet Daly does express the deep alienation from existing structures which many feminists feel. For McFague, the Goddess religion adopted by some feminists is valuable, for it is "a cry in the wilderness, a cry of pain and anger against the patriarchal model as oppressive to women, not just as irrelevant to them but as destructive of their being at every level - physical, emotional, spiritual, political, cultural." [McFague, MT, p.160] Feminists who stay within the church can identify with this, as Ruether suggests:

It is precisely when feminists discover the congruence between the Gospel and liberation from sexism that they also experience their greatest alienation from existing churches ... The more one becomes a feminist the more difficult it becomes to go to church ... Religious feminists experience a starvation of sacramental nourishment, a famine of the Word

of God/ess. The churches, the great symbol-making institutions of their traditions, operate as a countersign to their hopes. [Ruether, SAGT, p.193/4]

The difference between those who stay within the church and those who do not, is a real one. It may be less easy for debate to occur across this divide than between those from differing theological traditions. Janet Morley comments:

there is a deep conflict about what the nature of feminist theology is, and ... this conflict must urgently be admitted to and explored. Some of us are committed to 'reclaiming' the Christian tradition in its fullness, believing that it is capable, in the light of the gospel, of reclamation. Others ... have jettisoned it altogether, and are attempting, in the path of Mary Daly, to create something entirely new. I am not convinced that the two approaches can be reconciled; but they can be recognised ... I want to argue about it rather than ... pretending that we are all agreed. [Janet Morley, FTP]

It is therefore necessary to set out the particular principles of feminist theology which underlie this thesis, recognizing that other feminist theologians might have a different perspective. Nonetheless, some of the principles set out below would be seen by most people to be fundamental to any feminist theology.

2. Principles for a Feminist Theology

i) A Christian theology

The theology explored here is based on the Christian tradition.

It aims "not to construct an essentially new edifice of belief or dogma, but to reinterpret the Christian revelation in the light of the freshly perceived needs and experiences of women and men." [Slee, MC, p.20] Although critical of patriarchal theology and traditions, it does not seek to replace or destroy all the insights of male theology, as some suspect.⁷

It is assumed here that a Christian analysis must take as central a belief in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Some Christian feminists would disagree.⁸ Brock, for example, states that "Jesus Christ need not be the authoritative center of a feminist Christian faith". [Brock, in in Weidman, ed. CF, p.68.] For her, our commitment is not to a saviour who redeems by bringing God to us, but "to love ourselves and others into wholeness". [Ibid., p.69.] As we shall see, this is not completely satisfactory, for we also need some sense of God as Other, before whom we fall in awe. God cannot be contained within us and remain God. Moreover we need to find something beyond the tradition in order to know that criticism of the dominant tradition is not merely subjective, but is "touching a deeper bedrock of authentic Being upon which to ground the self. One cannot wield the lever of criticism without a place to stand." [Ruether, SAGT, p.24]

Ruether herself, along with a number of other feminist theologians, affirms a distinction between the core of faith and its patriarchal interpretation. She views the prophetic tradition as providing a central anti-patriarchal core for the Judaeo-Christian faith. She points out that the "God-language of the prophetic tradition is destabilizing toward the existing social order and its hierarchies of power - religious, social, and

economic." [Ruether, SAGT, p.26] This prophetic-liberating tradition is not a static set of ideas, but a plumb-line of truth and untruth, justice and injustice that has to be constantly adapted to changing social contexts and circumstances. [Ibid., p.27]

However, Fiorenza is critical of Ruether because she not only draws a "rather idealized picture of the biblical and prophetic traditions but also ... overlooks the oppressive androcentric elements of these traditions." She uses them as an abstract critical interpretative pattern, not a historical phenomenon, and so does not consider their patriarchal polemics and repression of Goddess cults. Ruether is right that prophetic traditions can be used as a socio-critical tradition in the interests of feminism, says Fiorenza, but we also need to know "how and in what way feminist theology can transform this social-critical androcentric tradition into a feminist liberating tradition and use it to its own ends." [Fiorenza, IMOH, p. 17]

Fiorenza is also critical of Letty Russell's distinction between theological content and historical variable in the bible. This makes it possible for Russell to "develop a feminist biblical hermeneutics that can acknowledge the patriarchal language of the Bible without conceding its patriarchal content", but makes the biblical texts historically relative. [Ibid., p.15] Phyllis Tribble similarly says that "the intentionality of biblical faith as distinguished from a general description of biblical religion is neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy, but rather to function as salvation for both men and women." [Tribble, quoted in Evans, WITB, p.32] But Fiorenza believes that Russell, Ruether

and Tribble "adopt a feminist neo-orthodox model that is in danger of reducing the ambiguity of historical struggle to theological essences and abstract, timeless principles." [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.27]

Fiorenza herself believes that a "Christian feminist theology of liberation must cease its attempts to rescue the Bible from its feminist critics and assert that the source of our power is also the source of our oppression." [Ibid., p.35] She therefore takes seriously the presence in Christian tradition of material such as the Household Codes of Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9 and Colossians 3:18 - 4:1. She endeavours to show how these codes relate to the actual situation of women and slaves in Asia Minor, and how, historically, the Church has used the codes and their theological legitimation of women's subordination. [Ibid., Chapter 7] She examines how the positive Christian vision of Galatians 3:28 fits into this historical context, rather than regarding it as timeless and abstract.

Christianity is founded on particular historical events, but, as Hampson observes, "that very particularity, that very concretion, is sexist. Christianity cannot shed that sexism so long as it retains, as it must, the historical referent." [Hampson, T, p.342] The weight of theological tradition is sexist, and the themes which promise liberation are scarcely applied to women, even though they have that potential. But it is not necessary to conclude that Christianity must be rejected, if Fiorenza is right that it is both a source of oppression and power. We need to take Fiorenza's point that any use of the prophetic-liberating tradition must not be at the cost of ignoring the ambiguity of

the historical struggle. Indeed that ambiguity remains with us. The church is always in need of reform, as is society and feminism itself. We shall explore this point later on.

Yet it is not only that identification with the historical struggle of other women can empower and inspire women today, as Fiorenza says. [Fiorenza, IMOH, pp.343ff] We also need the insight of Ruether that the Christian tradition is actively critical of, and destabilizing for, existing patriarchal power structures. A feminist theology of work is indeed rooted in the historical and social reality of women's working lives, but draws on the prophetic-liberating tradition to oppose injustice and condemn oppression.

If Scripture is to be used it will require interpretation. When theologians debate women's proper role, they generally base their arguments on the Bible and in particular on the texts which specifically refer to women. As Fiorenza has shown, this topical approach is methodologically inaccurate, since we should "translate New Testament⁹ androcentric language on the whole as inclusive of women until proven otherwise." [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.45] The topical approach is also unsatisfactory since differing interpretations can still be made. This problem is clearly apparent in Lees' **The Role of Women**, which allows evangelical Christians with differing viewpoints to put their arguments. Both sides claim to be biblical, but the question of authority, how to choose which viewpoint is valid, is left unanswered.

The debate on women's role, which includes some discussion of the work they ought to do, is unnecessarily restricted when this

model is used. For this reason, a feminist theology of work will have a more broadly based approach. It will assert, along with Julius Bodensieck, that scriptural interpretations on women must not conflict with the universal and identical sinfulness of both sexes, or the grace bestowed on both through Christ. They must stress the equal responsibility of the sexes before God, must not absolutize a given historical social order, and neither must they be based on isolated texts. They should apply to women today across different societies, in every aspect of their lives. [Bodensieck, discussed in Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.20]

ii) A feminist theology

Bodensieck's proposal entails the appropriation of general biblical themes for women, and in this respect is feminist. The critical principle of feminist theology, as outlined by Ruether, 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. Theologically speaking, ... (it) must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption.

This negative principle also implies the positive principle: what does promote the full humanity of women is of the Holy ... [Ibid., 18/19]

Ruether continues, "This principle is hardly new ... The uniqueness of feminist theology is not the critical principle,

full humanity, but the fact that women claim this principle for themselves. Women name themselves as subjects of authentic and full humanity." But in male theology this principle has been corrupted by sexism:

The naming of males as norms of authentic humanity has caused women to be scapegoated for sin and marginalized in both original and redeemed humanity. This distorts and contradicts the theological paradigm of imago dei/Christ. Defined as male humanity against or above women, as ruling-class humanity above servant classes, the imago dei/Christ paradigm becomes an instrument of sin rather than a disclosure of the divine and an instrument of grace. [Ibid., p.19/20]

Liberation, then, "must start with the oppressed of the oppressed, namely, women of the oppressed. ... the critique of hierarchy must become explicitly a critique of patriarchy." It must also see how the oppressed oppress others, [Ibid., p.32] and this point will be taken up later. There is thus a close connexion between feminist theology and liberation theology, indeed the former is one version of the latter.¹⁰

To make that which promotes the full humanity of women the critical principle for feminist theology may seem to err by making women rather than God the focus of theology. But it is necessary because many theologians have argued that God does not will the full humanity of women. This is reflected, for example, in the fourth century debate as to whether women have souls, [Redding, in Garcia and Maitland eds., WOTW, p.121] and the discussions of Karl Barth about ontological differences in the humanity of men and women. [Barth, CD Vol.III] Hampson's

application of the critical principle would dismiss such theologians, for feminists "no longer have use for a God who runs counter to all in which they believe. Our religion must be commensurate with our ideals." [Hampson, T, p.349]

But supporters of any movement might make a similar statement, and the danger of creating a God to suit one's own inclinations is very real. It is only possible to escape error if the movement itself is Christian; and for many who oppose it, feminism is a secular movement which should have no influence in the churches. Two replies can be made to this objection. Firstly, as John Austin Baker points out, secular ideas are often part of God's "kairos", introducing to the people of God new concepts and challenges. He cites the example of Israel's adoption of monarchy, or the early Christians use of ideas from mystery religions. Thus feminism may in fact be "a creative factor preparing a divine kairos", and must be assessed for what it is, rather than dismissed purely because it is fashionable in secular thinking. [Baker in Furlong ed., FITC, p.169/70] In any case, such a dismissal would be overlooking the extent to which Christian women have been part of the history of feminism.¹¹

Secondly, feminism is itself a highly moral set of beliefs, as Radcliffe Richards makes clear, for it is based on the idea that the oppression of women is wrong. Theologically speaking, it:

presumes a radical concept of "sin". It claims that a most basic expression of human community, the I-Thou relation as the relationship of men and women, has been distorted throughout all known history into an oppressive relationship that has victimized one-half of the human race and turned

the other half into tyrants ... Feminism continues, in a new form, the basic Christian perception that sin ... is not simply individual but refers to a fallen state of humanity, historically. Feminism's own claim to stand in judgement on patriarchy as evil means it cannot avoid the question of the capacity of humanity for sin. [Ruether, SAGT, p.161]

iii) The Christian/feminist critique

Feminist theory and practice must always be under the Christian critique, just as Christianity is judged by the feminist critique. This inter-relationship is important:

For Christians all ideologies must be subject to constant critique in the light of the gospel. ... Women, like other people, are often swept up in the currents of ideology, yet as Christians they remain an undependable part of liberation movements, because they must live by the horizon of the adventus and not by a blind commitment to any ideology. [Russell, HLIAFP, p.60]

Baelz confirms that the Christian gospel stands over against other beliefs. Doubtless, he says:

there is an ideological element in all theological reflection ... Nevertheless, Christian theology has its own resources for unmasking ideological distortion. There is an "otherness" about the gospel of Jesus Christ which resists ideological perversion. It possesses an undeniably transcendent character and constantly questions ideological presuppositions. [Baelz, POE, p.15]

He points Christians to the pattern of the Kingdom, "to provide both a critique of secular life and a challenge to transform it

into something more in keeping with the Kingdom of God." Things as they are are judged by the "vision of things, as, under God's providence, they might become." [Ibid., p.19] The Gospel cannot be divorced from the way human life is organised economically and politically, nor translated into political ideology or economic programmes. It "expresses an interpretative vision, whereby it brings these assumptions and criteria under judgement. To some it says a qualified 'yes', to others a forthright 'no', from all it removes any claim to absoluteness and ultimacy." [Ibid., p.20]

Feminism is particularly challenged by the Christian critique where it tends towards an idealization of the feminine, ignoring women's own sinfulness and making men the enemy. We shall explore this point in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five. Christian women know of their own capacity for sin, and know too that they cannot abandon the male half of humanity, however great the oppressiveness of the systems of patriarchy in which men are implicated. Ruether is clear that the "systems of domination ... are 'male' only in the historical and sociological sense that males have shaped and benefited from them, not in the sense that they correspond to unique, evil capacities of males that women do not share." [Ruether, SAGT, p.188/9] She points out that women's "affirmation of their own humanity as more fundamental than their sexist conditioning demands a like affirmation of the humanity of males. Separatism reverses male hierarchicalism, making women normative humanity and males "defective" members of the human species. [Ibid., p.231]

This rejection of separatism as a philosophy will be assumed to be an integral feature of feminist theology. Although feminists

may oppose males as well as the patriarchal system, they seek, in Ruether's words, "to overthrow the master as a master in order to reclaim him as a friend." [Ruether, FMTM, p.116/7]

It may be easier for people to opt for a "single-factored analysis" where the world is polarized into good and evil, elect and damned, than to face the complex ambiguity of human life. For as Ruether points out elsewhere, if oppression is recognized within the group, then this breaks up the "model of ultimate righteousness and projection of guilt upon the 'others'." We need to have a "more mature and chastened analysis of the capacities of human beings for good and evil". [Ruether, NWNE, p.132] Daniel Jenkins also affirms that:

The best radicalism is not that which thinks that you must always try to find a visible enemy in society, who can be denounced as the source of all evil and overthrown in a heroic outburst of revolutionary fervour; it is that which recognises that all our earthly societies are imperfect and that even the best of them fall far short of what a society ... should be. [Jenkins, EAE, p.162]

This will be true of any feminist utopia; for without the recognition of sin in human beings, female as well as male, a feminist society would be unworkable.

iv) A practical theology

A feminist theology needs to be practical in the sense that it must both speak and listen to present experience. In this respect, feminist theology is no different from any liberation theology which, says David Jenkins:

is an attempt to put into practice the biblical and

prophetic insight that God is to be found in what puts pressure on our humanity wherever we are and that God is active and available to move us forward, whoever we are, in the direction of justice, peace and love and so to catch us up in our particularities in the work of His Kingdom. [Jenkins, TGOF, p.16.]

Whether it is recognized or not, Ruether points out that:

Human experience is the starting point and the ending point of the hermeneutical circle. Codified tradition both reaches back to roots in experience and is constantly renewed or discarded through the test of experience. "Experience" includes experience of the divine, experience of oneself, and experience of the community and the world, in an interacting dialectic. ... The use of women's experience in feminist theology ... explodes as a critical force, exposing classical theology, including its codified traditions, as based on male experience rather than on universal human experience. [Ruether, SAGT, p.12/13]

It is important that women's experience be used in the context of the hermeneutical circle, for it is not, as Daly suggests, valid in itself without any need to "look to the past for legitimization". [Daly in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.140] Women in the feminist movement know the importance of identifying shared experience as a way of legitimating individual perceptions and encouraging collective action. If as Ruether implies, tradition is the sum of the experience of others, it makes sense to check women's present experience against it. This is the case even though Christian tradition largely reflects a male viewpoint,

when the aim is to develop a truly inclusive theology which incorporates both sex-differentiated and shared human experience.

As well as being rooted in both past tradition and present experience, feminist theology must be interdisciplinary. It may naturally incline in that direction, because women often experience their lives in a less fragmented form than do men. We shall discuss this point in greater detail in Chapter Six, but one implication for the theology of work can be noted here. Work for women is not a clearly defined category equivalent to employment, but can include notions of love and service, and motherhood and its biological meaning. A consideration of women's work, therefore, easily extends to theological and psychological discussions of love, or biological, anthropological and sociological discussions of mothering. A feminist theology of work will need to relate to these disciplines if it is to be comprehensive.

Such a procedure corresponds to what Gill refers to as "praxis theology". His description of the interaction between theology and other disciplines is helpful, although it is not the precise method used here, because it indicates how theology can offer a meaningful critique of different social issues. Gill writes that a praxis theology would

seek to unpack the social implications of varying theological notions. This would be primarily a theoretical and a theological task. It might then seek to use sociological data, techniques and theories, in order to compile a picture of the actual, possible and potential social effects of the same notions. This would ... be a

primarily sociological undertaking. Once assembled, this picture could then be compared with the claims of the Gospel as a whole and then used to assess the actual theological validity of these notions (along with philosophical and historical means of assessment). This, again, would be a primarily theological task - as would the final stage of re-assessing the social implications of these notions." [Gill, PAP, p.123]

The feminist theology of work developed here draws on different disciplines as well as feminist analysis in order to assess women's experience. It aims to provide a Christian critique of the situation in which women find themselves, whilst recognizing the importance of the feminist critique of Christianity. The theology which emerges is concerned both with Christian living, and with what God is like. A central concern for a feminist theology of work is to discover ways of serving others which do not result in self-negation and servitude, and this forms the theme of Part Four. A God who oppresses and denies women, though invoked in some parts of Christian tradition, is not the liberating God found in Christ. We need to look again at our understanding of God, for this too proves to be of key importance for a feminist theology of work.

B. DEFINITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

We have already discussed the way in which the terms "feminism" and "feminist theology" are used in this thesis; but further definitions are necessary. In particular, women have been spoken of thus far as if they were a homogeneous group, and this

assumption needs to be explored. A distinction has to be made between those things which women can be said to share whatever their circumstance, and divisions such as class, race and age which affect women as much as humanity as a whole.

1. Definitions

i) Who are "women"?

There is a sense in which women share a common culture, similar values and responses to their environment, say Leghorn and Parker. This does not mean that "all women think, act and respond to the dominant culture in the same way, but that their biology, their relationship to the economies in which they live and perhaps even their history, structures their experience in similar ways." [Leghorn and Parker, WW, p.252]

There are thus aspects of women's lives which are unique to them by virtue of being women, and a term like "women's experience" is "a convenient shorthand device" for expressing this, says Slee. She comments:

In practice, of course, women's experience is always specific to a particular social, cultural and historical situation; gender interacts with race, class, education and other social factors. ... Given such radically differing particularisations of women's experience, and the unlikelihood of being able to generalise about all of them in terms appropriate to any, it may seem highly misleading to use the term at all. ... Nevertheless, feminist analysis argues that, without denying or ignoring the complex factors which interact to produce such differing expressions of

women's lives, there remains an underlying unity of experience ... [Slee, MC, p.21/2]

Real feminism has to recognize that this common condition is shared even among those women who abhor each other, as Dworkin points out. [Dworkin, RWW, p.221] This is one reason why the idea of feminist sisterhood cannot be thought of in exclusive terms.

The underlying unity of experience provides a basis for generalizing about women, but clearly not all individual women will be included in each instance. In some cases, significant groups of women will not share the majority experience, and this will be indicated at the relevant point. Sayers' complaint must also be acknowledged. It is, she says, unreasonable and irritating when it is assumed "that all one's tastes and preferences have to be conditioned by the class to which one belongs." [Sayers, AWH, p.20] Although the focus here is on women's experience as female, the point that they are first and foremost human beings with the variety of tastes and preferences which that entails, will prove to be of central importance.

ii) "Patriarchy" and "sexism"

The words "patriarchy" and "sexism" have already been used in this thesis, and are key terms for feminism although the definitions of them vary. Here, "patriarchy" is the term used to describe the universal system of male dominance and female subordination, and "sexism" to denote particular instances of that system. Clearly men can be victims of domination, and women can be oppressors, and we shall return to this point. But the term "patriarchy" expresses the fact that all known societies are ruled and controlled by men, and that the universal political

structure privileges men at the expense of women. [Tuttle, EOF, p.242] Both feminist and anti-feminist theory have concentrated on explaining why patriarchy arose, and the main arguments are referred to briefly below. We shall not discuss them at length, although reference will be made to some of the theories later.

Some Marxist feminists link patriarchy with the capitalist political system, although since it clearly predates capitalism this argument can explain only a particular form of patriarchy. Other feminists posit a psychological explanation. Dinnerstein, for example, locates male dominance in the struggle each individual has with their mother. Evolutionary theories claim that male dominance emerged at some crucial stage in pre-history, as with Millett's suggestion that the discovery of paternity led to the establishment of male control over women. For French, the split between men and women was the result of two primary events: "the elevation of control into a governing principle, a god, in human life; and the identification of men with that principle." [French, BP, p.86] This view has connections with a theological assessment of the situation.

For Christians can interpret the story of the Fall to show that alienation between the sexes and male domination are the result of estrangement from God, and not divinely ordained. They can thus argue that patriarchy arose because of the entry of sin into the world. This is not a sufficient explanation, but it is an important statement for feminists to make, as Ruether indicates:

women cannot neglect the basic theological insight that humanity has become radically alienated from its true relationship to itself, to nature, and to God. ... sexism -

the distortion of gender (as well as other differences between human groups) into structures of unjust domination and subordination - is central to the origin and transmission of this alienated, fallen condition. Feminism, far from rejecting concepts of the Fall, can rediscover its meaning in a radically new way. [Ruether, SAGT, p.37/8]

The value in this interpretation, as with the others given above, is that it suggests that patriarchy is not inevitable in human society. This contrasts with the biological determinism exhibited by writers such as Goldberg, who locates male dominance in the male hormone, and concludes that patriarchy is indeed inevitable.¹²

iii) "Work"

One of the failings in the theology of work which feminist analysis highlights is the frequent equation of "work" with paid jobs. For example in **Just the Job**, David Field draws a conclusion from the bible that "it must be wrong to deprive a man of work", and equates this with the wrongness of denying him the opportunity of employment. [Field and Stephenson, JTJ, p.17. Original italics omitted] The unpaid work of the housewife is fitted uneasily, if at all, into this scheme.¹³ We shall discuss this issue in greater depth elsewhere, as it is of central importance in a feminist theology of work. Feminists defining "work" are more likely to follow Nash's view:

the definition of work which I wish to use is inclusive of almost all the tasks of life whether they are paid, voluntary or done in the context of home ... Perhaps that means that almost all of life is work, for I would only see as outside this definition those things which we do for

ourselves of our own free choice and the time we waste.
[Nash, MC, p.24]

This is substantially the definition used here, except that the things we do for ourselves can also be work. The word "work" will be used in its general sense of purposeful activity, and work done for a wage will be referred to as paid work, a job, or employment. The latter two words can have a wider meaning than this, but will not be used in their other senses here. Work can of course be rewarded in other forms than cash. Thus the housewife receives payment in kind in the form of her own maintenance. This is not in dispute, and again is an important point for a feminist theology of work. But for the sake of clarity, work such as that done by the housewife will be classified as unpaid, because no formal wage is involved.

iv) "Sex" and "gender"

Strictly speaking, the term "sex" should be used to refer to "the biological, anatomical differences between male and female", whilst gender "refers to the emotional and psychological attributes which a given culture expects to coincide with physical maleness or femaleness." [Tuttle, EOF, p.123] The problem here is that it is difficult to isolate biological and cultural differences between the sexes, and we shall examine this point in detail in Chapter Three. Moreover, in much feminist and other relevant literature, as well as in common parlance, the terms may be used interchangeably. In many instances, it would be more accurate to speak of "sex and gender" together, but the common usage in that context is for "sex" to encompass both what is biologically and socially associated with women or men. This

will therefore be the preferred term in this thesis, for example, speaking of "sex differences" or "sex-differentiation".

2) The Scope of the Inquiry

The key terms of this thesis, "feminist", "theology" and "work", have all been defined as widely as possible; the potential field of inquiry is therefore also wide. In order to keep the content manageable, certain constraints have to be imposed, and other limitations are inevitable. These are discussed below.

i The white British viewpoint

Feminist scholarship has insisted that no writer can be completely impartial, since sex, race and class determine a particular perspective. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the present study bears the marks of a white British middle-class perspective. Clearly there is a problem of scale in attempting to do justice to women's work in a global context, and this is one reason why the main focus here is on British society. Also, the theology of work with which this thesis begins is rooted in the British scene, and this influences the course of the discussion. Some of what is said here is of relevance to other cultures, and resources from other countries are used, most notably from the United States. But along with Ardener, we must recognize that

an English model has no ultimate theoretical or moral primacy, although it may legitimately command our interest. It follows ... that any general conclusions about women which we may wish to draw from English ... material, need to be viewed in the light of such awareness, and of experience

in other parts of the world. [Ardener, DF, p.11]

A feminist theology of work which began with the experience of Black South African women, for example, would take a different form. But the interaction between different forms of theology is potentially a very creative one; they are not mutually exclusive. Thus the insights generated by the present study might usefully be developed in another culture, and the insights of theology from other cultures offer much to a British perspective. There is evidence of this kind of interaction where women of different cultures use the common language of feminist theology to discuss different concerns.¹⁴

What Britain lacks at the present time is an adequate exploration of the relation between Black¹⁵ and white feminist theology, although much work has been done in the United States by Black women theologians. Some groups, such as Women in Theology, attempt to take this issue seriously, but there is little material to draw on which might contribute a British Black Christian feminist perspective to a theology of work. This is unfortunate, because there are indications that such a perspective would be extremely valuable.

The Black critique of feminism in general challenges feminist theology, but it also corroborates in three significant ways the theological critique of feminism already outlined. There has been an increase in the amount of material by and about Black women in Britain in recent years, and in the sharpness of their challenge to white feminists.¹⁶ It is not simply that white feminists have had to admit that their work "has spoken from an unacknowledged

but ethnically specific position; its apparently universal applicability has been specious." [Barrett and McIntosh, FR, p.25] For Black women are accusing white feminists not so much "of ethnocentrism, which could perhaps be corrected by extending the field of vision, but of a crushing, institutionalized racism which is so totally and deeply entrenched in our ways of thinking and being that we cannot see clearly how we help to justify and perpetuate it." [Ramazanoglu, FR, p.84]

Some feminists suggest for this reason that Black and white feminists can only come together over specific campaigns, [Ramazanoglu, FR 22] but such a view is too narrow. Racism, like sexism, is undoubtedly powerful; yet the two cannot easily be isolated from each other or from the systems of domination which govern human existence. For example, Black women may be directed towards the least attractive jobs in society because of their colour, but the problem is not simply racism. It is racism which places Black women at the bottom of the hierarchy, but a different system which puts whoever is at the bottom of the hierarchy into the worst jobs, and which rewards very poorly the work which is least attractive. It must be the common concern of humanity to eliminate injustice wherever it occurs, not to set modes of oppression in competition with each other. Different groups will indeed have different priorities, but the interrelationship of their struggles must be recognized if they are to be effective. Feminist theology, as we have seen, has to have this wider perspective and must resist a single-factored analysis.

This is the first area where the Black feminist critique

corroborates a theological critique of feminism, for it can support the need for a wider perspective. The interrelationship of racism and feminism is more obvious to Black women; it is only white women of the upper classes "whose only problem is the problem of being women", as Ruether points out. A woman in a minority group has to "integrate her struggle as a woman into the struggle to liberate her racial and socioeconomic group." [Ruether, NWNE, p.125] In this context, white feminist issues such as sexism in children's books seem like luxuries. The white feminist concentration on a woman's right to have an abortion appears narrow-minded to Black women who find their fertility subject to restrictions through sterilisation, abortions or contraceptives such as Depo-Provera.¹⁷

Secondly, Black women point to the fact that white women are oppressors, as well as being oppressed. They have to acknowledge their implication in the systems of domination. This is an important counter to the tendency of some feminists to idealize women which was discussed earlier. Theologically speaking, the oppressed too have to acknowledge their sinfulness:

If liberation movements are to avoid becoming new terrorisms ... then the victims also need to confess their own guilt as they struggle for freedom. Of course their guilt is not oppression; that is the crime only of those holding power. Rather, apathy is the characteristic failing of the oppressed. Thus they also share in the common human estrangement, 'sin', and must not permit themselves the luxury of claiming to be guiltless. [G.Clarke Chapman Jr. discussing Moltmann, in Wilmore and Cone, BT, p.200]

However, this must emerge out of their own consciousness.

Otherwise the oppressors can use the accusation that the oppressed also sin to avoid having to face their own guilt.

Thirdly, Black women have real political interests with Black men, and are less willing to cast men as the enemy. Although there are clearly the same unequal relations between them as between men and women generally, this does not prevent recognition of their common concerns. This parallels the theological perception that women and men do share a common humanity, and may suffer from similar pressures. Black women may also place more emphasis on the family, for as Lees points out, "oppressions based on class, race, religion or region have in common their ability to rely upon, and indeed a tendency to strengthen, family and community as forms of solidarity and resistance on the part of the oppressed." [Lees, FR, p.95] Feminism identifies sexual oppression within these very institutions, but Black women point, as do Christians, to a value and strength in them nonetheless.

ii) The middle-class viewpoint

Feminism may be dismissed because it is articulated largely by middle-class women. Two points can be made in reply to this accusation. Firstly, to some extent "all radical consciousness presupposes the social conditions of the middle-class world." [Harrison in Hageman ed. SRAWITC, p.198] The articulation of oppression is not possible where all one's time and energy are spent on sheer survival. Further, dissatisfactions are not likely to be expressed unless some likelihood of change can be envisaged. [Mitchell, WE, p.22, and Fransella and Frost, OBAW, p.34]

However, secondly, feminism is not confined to the middle-classes either in Britain or across the world. Coote and Campbell demonstrate the close association of trade unionism and feminism in Britain, [Coote and Campbell, SF] and working women in many countries have joined together to fight for their rights.¹⁸ Feminist analysis at its best is concerned about the situation of women of all classes across the world. Social class is in any case less easily defined for women, since the convention of basing it on their husband's or father's occupation is unsatisfactory.¹⁹

iii Further limitations

Firstly, the use of material is selective, since it is clearly not possible to study all feminist and all theological texts comprehensively. There is a place for this kind of systematic study, but it has not been done here. Rather, the aim has been to look as widely as possible for evidence of the way women's work has or has not been treated, and to suggest areas on which the theological discussion should centre. The difficulty is that each point of evidence could develop (and elsewhere may have developed) into a discussion in its own right; for example Barth's view of women, the context out of which **Laborem Exercens** arose, a critique of Ruether or de Beauvoir. But to concentrate on these points would be to sidetrack away from the development of a feminist theology of work which is the ultimate purpose of this study.

For a similar reason, some specific issues concerning women's work have only been touched on. For example, the question of how new technology affects both women's jobs and their reproductive

lives is a vital one for theological discussion, but is not tackled here. Nevertheless, the general principles suggested for a feminist theology of work should provide a base from which the study of other specific issues can be conducted. Those principles may also assist in the formulation and critique of specific policies. Although some policies are discussed here, the intention is to provide analysis rather than formal suggestions. For as Deem points out, "the claim that knowledge and explanation of an existing situation is of no importance unless accompanied by policy suggestions is equivalent to arguing that only a limited number of people are capable of deriving ideas from information about a particular state of affairs". [Deem, SFWW,p.2]

iv) An outline of the search

The overall aim of this thesis is to inquire what a feminist theology of work might look like, and how it might contribute to the existing theology of work. It aims to do this firstly by focussing specifically on women's work, and exploring the theological themes which relate to it. This involves listening and speaking to women, in order that they may be empowered to live out lives of faith. It seeks to take seriously the concerns specific to either sex, although male experience will not be explored in depth here.

Secondly, the emphasis on women as human, and their equal responsibility with men before God, means that attention must be given to shared human experience. A theology of work which is truly inclusive of both sexes needs to be developed. Thirdly, it begins to develop a critique. Both a theological critique of

feminism and a feminist critique of the theology of work are needed, in order that both may speak adequately to the human condition.

The search for a feminist theology of work begins with an examination of the concepts of justice and equality, which provide the language in which women's concerns are usually discussed. Treating women justly involves a correct understanding of them, and thus we need to look at research into sex differences and what it implies for theology. We then move on to a discussion of the principle of equality, and examine why its acceptance is not effective in tackling the root causes of women's oppression. These are the themes of Part Two.

Part Three looks at the meaning of work, and how the theology of work relates to women's experience. It investigates an alleged split between home and work, in order to discover whether this is helpful for our understanding of women's work.

Part Four examines the theme of service, which is of central theological importance in any discussion of women's experience. The general Christian view of service, and its particular application to women, are investigated, and the problems associated with a "service ethic" outlined. The heart of the search for a feminist theology of work is found to be the need to discover ways of serving which affirm both server and served, and Chapter Ten begins this task.

NOTES

1. Future research might trace the development of feminist theology from this point of view. It is a task begun in such books as Ruether and McLaughlin eds., WOS, but the emphasis there is on the activity of women rather than on assessing feminist perspectives in their theology. Work on this subject is not accessible in Britain to date.

2. The writings of feminist theologians from the Third World are less easily available in Britain.

3. Daphne Hampson is the best known British feminist theologian, but this is relative since her thinking has been published only in a few articles.

4. See, for example, the papers of the Feminist Theology Project.

5. This path has been followed by non-feminist theologians, of course. Don Cupitt seems to hold this position, for example.

6. Her position is spelt out in Hampson and Ruether, NB, pp.7-24.

7. For example, see Oddie, WWHTG.

8. Again, it should be noted that this may stem from a particular theological position rather than being a specifically feminist principle as such.

9. And presumably also Old Testament.

10. Clearly, the work of liberation theologians is relevant to feminist theology, but is not discussed here. The primary reason for this is that feminist theologians such as Ruether and Russell have already explored this interface, and represent the insights of liberation theology in their own work. Further work remains to be done in this area, but liberation theology is not considered as a separate topic within the confines of this thesis.

11. On this point, see Gill's general discussion of the way in which the church is thought to be following secular patterns, when the secular patterns owe their existence to the church's unrecognized influence. [Gill, PAP]

12. We shall discuss the problems of a deterministic approach in the next chapter.

13. cf the housewife in **Just the Job** whose main occupation of childrearing is unpaid, but who is paid for her "hobby" - giving music recitals.

14. See Bridget Rees report of the United Nations Decade for Women Conference, [NOW]

15. The term "Black" is used in a political sense by many women of Asian and African origin to refer to all women of colour, and this usage will be adopted here. They say that "our joint historical experience as victims of colonialism, and our present experience as second-class citizens in a racist society have created firm bonds between us which are more significant to us than any differences which may exist." Organisation of Women of

Asian and African Descent, quoted in McRobbie and Nava ed. FFG, p.130. White ethnic minority groups, such as Cypriot, Jewish or Polish, may experience some discrimination; but since racism is most seriously directed against the Black community, it is the division between Black and white experience which is most apparent.

16. See, for example, the debate in **Feminist Review** No.s 20 and 22, or the material in the **Outwrite** Women's newspaper.

17. See Bryan et. al., THOTR, and Arditti et. al., TTW.

18. See, for example, the Indian **BUILD News**, October 1982, and the **New Internationalist** book WAWR. [Taylor et. al.]

19. Oakley notes in one of her surveys that 66% of women were middle-class according to their husbands' occupation, 93 % according to their own - and 62% of these were in class III non-manual. Because women's employment clusters in the service industries, it is not possible to differentiate between them on the basis of occupation in the way that is done for men. [Oakley, WC, p.133.]

PART TWO: THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE

CHAPTER THREE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SEXES

The theology of work has attempted to take women's work more seriously in recent years, as was indicated in Chapter One. Many writers now highlight the disadvantages women face in the labour market, and see the elimination of these as a matter of Christian justice. Since the sexes are equally created in the image of God, it is seen to be unjust to discriminate against women. Roger Clarke, for example, claims that there "can be no legitimacy within the terms of the Gospel for according to women less in the way of opportunities for personal advance and self-fulfilment than is offered to the male members of our society." [R. Clarke, WIC, p.119]

The theological principle of respecting the human person is a common one within the theology in work, as indeed in theology generally. For Baelz, the harmony and justice of God's Kingdom "stem from the recognition that persons have a fundamental dignity of their own". [Baelz, POE, p76] Whilst Paul Brett writes that "Each one is made in the image of God and shares with him in being creative in the world, in making decisions and in carrying responsibility. These things ... cannot happen unless there is a substantial basis of equality for everyone and of respect for the validity of everyone as a person." [Brett, C, p.32] Brett concludes that this is why apartheid and slavery must be resisted, without reaching the logical conclusion that sexism too should be opposed.

As we have seen, it is the application of the critical principle of full humanity to women which constitutes the uniqueness of feminist theology. Feminism gains its force from the moral and theological imperative which underlies it, that it is wrong to discriminate against women. It might seem therefore, that a feminist theology of work simply has to extend the principle of the value of persons and the injustice of oppression, to women. Analysing women's work in this light should not be a controversial undertaking, since all Christians and all people of moral integrity agree that justice must prevail. The fundamental difficulty here, of course, is that the demands of justice can receive varied interpretations. Peter Baelz spells this out:

Some differences between individuals are morally significant, others are not. ... However much they may differ in intelligence, or strength, or beauty, they have the same fundamental moral rights and must be given the same fundamental regard. The presumption ... is that they are to be treated in the same way, unless the differences between them are such as to justify their being treated differently.

[Baelz, EAB, p.102. Emphasis added]

For many who discuss women's roles, the differences between the sexes are such that justice can only be done if they are treated differently.

The attempt to relate a broad vision of justice to a restricted role for women is epitomised in **Laborem Exercens**. Pope John Paul II affirms that "the Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated". [John Paul II, LE, p.7] Yet his discussion of women and work

ignores the oppression women suffer within the home, and makes only passing reference to discrimination against them in paid work. He admits that women have a responsibility with men for dominion over the world, but primarily women are to be mothers. Having to abandon the care and education of her children "in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother." [Ibid., p.70]

John Paul II acknowledges that women work in nearly every sector of life, and continues:

it is fitting that they should be able to fulfil their tasks in accordance with their own nature, without being discriminated against and without being excluded from jobs for which they are capable, but also without lack of respect for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, to the good of society. The true advancement of women requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role." [Ibid., p.71]

This passage is quoted at length because it is representative of much Christian writing about women's work. Women are acknowledged to be workers who merit equal treatment with men, but this is combined with a belief that they are fundamentally different from men both in their attitude towards paid work, and in their Christian calling.¹ Grounds for this position are

seldom provided (Clark is the exception), yet without appropriate grounding the theological reasoning of such writers is suspect. The argument that there are differences between men and women which dictate their roles is problematic; but it is also inadequate to counter this with simple statements about the equality of the sexes. Both views have their merits, but neither is satisfactory as a basis for a theology of work, as consideration of them shows.

A. NATURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SEXES

Are the differences between the sexes such as to justify their being treated differently? This is a crucial question for a feminist theology of work. Restricted roles for women are justified by reference to real or supposed differences, and this argument needs to be examined and countered. We may also wish to argue for some positive differentiation of treatment for the sexes. The difficulty here is that where feminists acknowledge such differences, they may appear to be accepting the traditional patriarchal interpretation which generally operates to women's disadvantage. We shall examine the possibility of looking at differences in a feminist theology of work later on.

But whilst "differentiation is not necessarily discrimination ... it quite clearly constitutes the preconditions for it." [EOC, quoted in Deem ed. SFWW, p.70] The attempt to prove the inferiority of women as a class is longstanding. According to Radcliffe Richards, "All dominant groups have strong motives for inventing unfounded theories about the people over whom they have the ascendancy, because in that way it is possible to carry on

any degree of oppression in the disguise of perfect moral rectitude." [Richards, TSF, p.35] But Sharpe may be right to point to the increased importance of beliefs about differences between the sexes in our present day democratic society, where:

The emphasis on people's rights ... makes it impossible formally to deny opportunity, although discrimination is still required by our social organization and division of labour. ... 'natural' sex differences help to preserve the separation of roles and thus the inequalities upon which the economic system still depends. [Sharpe, JLAG, p.62]

1. Defining What Is "Natural"

The term "natural sex differences" may encompass a wide range of meaning. Clearly there are fixed differences between the sexes which enable gender to be attributed in all but a small minority of cases.² Different genital and reproductive structures mean that it is women who conceive, carry and give birth to children, and lactate; and men who impregnate. Males and females have a different genetic make-up, and differing proportions of hormones. Many go on to assume that these biological differences give rise to particular attributes of masculinity and femininity which can also therefore be called "natural". Table 1 lists the kind of characteristics defined as masculine or feminine.

As Miller and Swift say, we "toss around words like masculine and feminine as though they described immutable characteristics that everyone will immediately recognise as the 'normal' and 'proper' endowments of male and female people". [Miller and Swift, WAW, p.57] Yet many women and men are not endowed with the appropriate

TABLE 1

<u>Masculine</u>	<u>Feminine</u>
self-reliant	yielding
defends own beliefs	cheerful
independent	shy
athletic	affectionate
assertive	flatterable
strong personality	loyal
forceful	sympathetic
analytical	sensitive to the needs of others
has leadership abilities	understanding
willing to take risks	loves children
makes decisions easily	eager to soothe hurt feelings
dominant	soft spoken
willing to take a stand	warm
aggressive	gentle
individualistic	gullible
competitive	childlike
ambitious	does not use harsh language

[Adapted from Nicholson, AQOS, p.87.³

attributes. What is remarkable, as Richards points out, is that these supposedly immutable characteristics are the subjects of great anxiety; there is a fear that men might cease to be masculine and women feminine. [Richards, TSF, p.123/4]

Christian writers often accept that characteristics of this kind have been created into women and men by God. Fiorenza explains that Catholic theology and anthropology has long operated "with the concept of the 'two natures' of humanity, according to which women and men are by nature and essence different from each other." [Fiorenza in Christ and Plaskow eds., WR, p.141] Traditional theology saw women as inferior to men, and combined this male/female dualism with a body/spirit dualism. Man is defined by his mind and reason, but woman is determined by her "nature" and sexuality. "Catholic women have either to fulfil their nature and Christian calling in motherhood ... or renounce their nature and sexuality in virginity." Fiorenza adds that the "more contemporary theological aspect of the 'two natures' concept of humanity is the assertion that women and men are equal but different." [Ibid., p.142.] This is the background to **Laborem Exercens**.

Writing from a different theological tradition, Clark believes that both theology and common sense confirm the existence of different "natures": "Men and women are different. Scripture teaches that they were created to be different, because God has a purpose for that difference. Common sense indicates that men and women are different - not only in the obvious physical ways but also in their psychological makeup." He adds that modern science supports this view. [Clark, MAWIC, p.667/8] Helen Lee believes

that women are more spiritually minded than men, and their "nature" is one of harmony, patience, and self-giving. They are also moody, prone to depression and unreasonable; negative qualities linked with menstruation and hormone imbalance. [Lee, Mission England.]⁴ These differences serve to fit men and women for specific roles: "the biological assignment was basic and simple: Eve was to be the child-bearer, and Adam was to be the breadwinner." [Billy Graham, quoted in Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.24.]

The difficulty is that the conclusions of theology, modern science and even common sense are far more ambiguous than this reasoning suggests. Moreover, it is far from clear what response even a firmly established "natural" sex difference demands from us; the "is" does not lead to an "ought" in the simplistic way the above writers assume. There are two basic questions here: is it possible to speak about "natural" sex differences at all, and what is the significance of differences, however they originate?

2) The Ambiguity of the Evidence

A great deal of research has been directed towards establishing what differences exist between the sexes. Despite the long history of such research, evidence about the specific meaning of masculinity or femininity is surprisingly inconclusive. As was noted above, there are rare exceptions even to the general rules by which gender is attributed. Other differences commonly assumed to hold true do so only on average, or under certain circumstances. For example, while on average men are stronger than women, there are many women who are stronger than many men,

and in some cultures it is women who are the main burden carriers. Moreover, the difference in physical strength between men and women is marginal and transitory, and found only in the child-bearing years. [World Health Organisation, referred to by Steinem, in Pleck and Sawyer, ed. MAM, p.134]

Other attributes labelled masculine or feminine are more difficult to measure. For example, men may appear to be more aggressive than women, but this may be because they show particular forms of aggressive behaviour. Interestingly, Black women are often stereotyped as aggressive. Moreover, under some circumstances - protecting or using violence towards children, for example - women can be highly aggressive; or their aggression may emerge in other, less overt, ways. Maccoby and Jacklin in their comprehensive review of the literature on sex differences conclude that whilst "Women share with men the human capacity to heap all sorts of injury upon their fellows. ... there is a sex-linked differential readiness to respond in aggressive ways to the relevant experience" [Maccoby and Jacklin, TPOSD, p.247]; and they believe this is due to sex hormones, particularly testosterone. But Archer and Lloyd say that while there is evidence that aggression is caused by high testosterone levels, aggressive behaviour itself increases those levels. It is not a simple case of cause and effect. [Archer and Lloyd, SAG, p.106f]

Given the range of behaviour in the sexes, it is misleading to classify attributes as masculine or feminine, as Margaret Mead points out. A sensitive boy is not "feminine", but a certain type of male who is sensitive, a lively girl not "masculine" but a certain type of female. [Mead, MAF, Chapter 6] Mead concludes:

Every known society creates and maintains artificial occupational divisions and personality expectations for each sex that limit the humanity of the other sex. ... Characteristic after characteristic in which the differences within a sex are so great that there is enormous overlapping are artificially assigned as masculine or feminine." [Ibid., p.334/5]

Thus the potentialities of both men and women are limited, and when any complex activity is limited to one sex, "a rich differentiated quality is lost from the activity itself." [Ibid., p.336]

Study of sex differences still continues, but seems unlikely to provide categorical statements about differences in maleness and femaleness. The most that recent researchers seem willing to say is that there are propensities towards types of behaviour which are sex-linked, but what we make of these depends on other circumstances.

3.) The Origins of Sex Differential Behaviour

It is not possible to draw a clear distinction between "nature" and "nurture", as Maccoby and Jacklin explain:

It is tempting to try to classify the differential behaviors as being either innate or learned, but ... this is a distinction that does not bear close scrutiny. ... a genetically controlled characteristic may take the form of a greater readiness to learn a particular form of behavior, and hence is not distinct from learned behavior. Furthermore, if one sex is more biologically predisposed than the

other to perform certain actions, ... this fact would be reflected in popular beliefs about the sexes, so that innate tendencies help to produce the cultural lore that the child learns. ... the learning of sex-typed behavior ... (is) a process built upon biological foundations that are sex-differentiated to some degree. [Maccoby and Jacklin, TPOSD, p.363/4]⁵

Maccoby and Jacklin's insistence that there are different genetically controlled characteristics in the sexes would not meet with universal agreement. There is dispute over which characteristics have a biological foundation, and as they admit, not all social stereotypes about the sexes do have this basis. But the general tenor of their argument seems reasonable. Feminists have been wary of accepting the idea of innate differences between the sexes because it has been used to justify women's subordination. There has been a substantial feminist critique of research into sex differences, with an emphasis on the way in which sex-typed behaviour is learned, and influenced by culture. Much of this critique is timely and important, although there is not space here to discuss it in any detail. But it may misrepresent the issue as a clash between "nature" and "nurture".

Feminists may feel that unless all differences between the sexes can be shown to be culturally induced, there is no hope of liberating women from restrictive roles. Yet even if there are innate differences between the sexes, some of which connect with social roles, it does not follow that these provide the most appropriate roles for all women and men. We shall examine the

logic of prescribing fixed roles on the basis of sex differences in the next section.

As Midgley has shown, we do not need to be afraid of having a "nature". Indeed, if her analysis is correct, the notion that we have a "nature" is essential to the concept of freedom. Human beings who are moulded entirely by culture, are at the mercy of the society in which they live. [Midgley, BAM, xviii] However, to assert that human creatures, like other members of the animal kingdom, have a "nature", is not to accept that human behaviour can simply be interpreted in terms of animal behaviour. There are resemblances in specific instances, but "comparisons make sense only when they are put in the context of the entire character of the species concerned and of the known principles governing resemblances between species." [Ibid., p. 24] Many of the extrapolations from animal to human behaviour used to show that male dominance is "natural", fail at this point. They may take behaviour out of context, and are often highly selective in the material they use.⁶

We should be wary of too heavy a reliance on evidence from animal behaviour to prove differences between men and women. For this leads to seeing the ties between males or females of different species as closer than that between the human sexes; as if "Men and Women differ much as do animals and plants". [Hegel, quoted in O'Faolain, NIGI, p.290] Theologically speaking, man and woman are not "separate species with differing functions, capabilities, and value", but are "created from one substance to be 'one flesh'". [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.30/1] Both versions of the creation story put human origins as separate from the

animals. We are to consider ourselves not merely as animals who must obey the dictates of their "nature", but as individuals called to respond to God, to learn, change and grow.⁷

There is an element of truth in Katherine Hepburn's succinct pronouncement in the film **The African Queen**, "Nature ... is what we are put in this world to rise above." It is not that we should despise our "nature" - that is a heresy the Christian church has been too ready to fall into through the ages⁸- but we must not allow it to limit us. The same is true of social influences. Both culture and biology make an inevitable contribution to the development of who we are; but neither has to be fully deterministic. We can admit to being formed by both genetic and social forces without saying that these are destined to prevail. Knowing that one is "naturally" aggressive, for example, does not mean always being violent, but that one can make allowances for it. Feminists can emerge despite being brought up in a patriarchal culture. Human development is a complex process, in which our innate characteristics continually interact with our environment, culture and aspirations to make us who we are. The important question is "what the person does with what is done to him, what he makes of what he is made of." [Cooper, quoted in Ruddock, RAR, p.102.]⁹

B. FALLACIES IN THE PRESCRIPTIVE ARGUMENT

1.) That "Is" Leads To "Ought"

The principal issue is not to define exactly what differences exist between the sexes, and what causes them. Rather, the

question is why we need to examine these differences at all. What significance should they have for us? As has been noted, many Christians believe that if we can discover what is "natural" to women or men, we shall know what they ought to do. But this does not follow. Men's being "naturally" dominant, as Richards points out, "might be an excellent reason for imposing special restrictions to keep their nature under control". [Richards, TSF, p.44] If women do specialise in certain skills of nurturing, it might be in the interests of society for these skills to be used as widely as possible rather than only for a woman's own family. [Ibid., p.169ff] In any case, whether men and women are "born the same, or slightly different, or very different, we have the choice in any case of trying to make them more different, or less different, or of keeping the differences more or less the same." [Ibid., p.60]

The relationship between "is" and "ought" which is at issue here has been a key consideration in the field of philosophy, but cannot be explored in depth here. Although Hume asserted that we cannot jump from "is" to "ought", others have disputed this, and as Baelz points out, it is likely that some idea of what is good for people, and what they ought to be and do "can be gained from a consideration of human nature and human relationships." [Baelz, EAB, p.38] Helen Oppenheimer also believes we can examine what is "conceptually necessary" to the idea of humanity, because this gives an "ought". The need for communication, for example, requires a ban on falsehood. She concludes that the structure of morality can be read off from the facts, even if its details cannot. [Oppenheimer in Dunstan ed. DAD, p.18/19]

This is a useful distinction, although it means we can only expect to arrive at general principles of morality which will not give us clear indications as to what we ought to do in specific circumstances. Oppenheimer asserts elsewhere that matters of fact often do make a claim on us in some way, and "the pursuit of completely 'value-free facts' is the pursuit of a chimera." [Oppenheimer, TCOCM, p.41] But in most situations, and this is especially true where we are dealing with the way a human life is to be lived, the relevant facts are many and complex.

Stephen Clark acknowledges that "differences are but one factor that must be taken into account. Other factors include one's ideal vision of human society, and the economic, political, and social conditions of the modern world ... (differences) influence rather than determine men's and women's roles." [Clark, MAWIC, p.377] Yet later he insists that "a role difference between man and woman was 'created into' the human race", [Ibid., p.441] and outlines in detail what this means - principally that women should care for children and men should run society. But given the complexity of human social life, which he recognises, any such attempt to prescribe roles for women and men is oversimplistic.

Oppenheimer makes it clear that "the demand for a plain answer to a plain question ought always to ring alarm bells for the christian just as loudly as the attempt to evade moral issues in comfortable compromise." [Oppenheimer, TCOCM, p.79] For:

we are not promised the luxury either of making clear rules and sticking to them, nor of having leisure to 'treat each case on its merits'. We must be prepared continually to find

that human logic is too small for an established answer to apply properly to a fresh case, and yet that human loyalty is too fragile for the established answers to be safely abandoned. Neither obedience nor kind-heartedness will be adequate on its own, only an imaginative understanding which we dare not claim but cannot do without." [Ibid., p.77]

Oppenheimer offers instead the view that allegiance to Christ enables us to respond to moral situations. This involves trying "to look for the point of what seem to be God's commands; and to make decisions about fresh moral issues in terms of a personalistic faith." [Ibid., p.79] This, she says, may help us to see an answer, or to see at least why a problem is difficult. She admits the incompleteness of her analysis, but it does seem to contain guidelines which are helpful in establishing how women ought to behave.

The fallacy in Clark's argument is the assumption that what is "natural" is necessarily good. Firstly, it can be argued that civilization has developed because people have sought to transcend "nature"; for example curing disease, cultivating land, travelling between continents.¹⁰ Societies might benefit if people were encouraged to tackle their "natural" weaknesses. For example, were the theory true that males have greater visual-spatial skills, and females greater verbal ability - and Archer and Lloyd point to inconsistencies in the evidence for this - it would make sense to give remedial help to girls to improve such skills, parallel to the help boys receive if their reading or writing skills are underdeveloped.

Moreover as has been indicated, going beyond what is "natural" or comfortable to us is an essential part of the Christian calling. Women might be called to renounce home and family for the gospel's sake; men called to forgo leadership and power to become servants of all.

Secondly, Clark fails, as do others, to see the negative side of the attributes he praises as God-ordained. Women may "naturally" bear and wish to raise children, but repeated pregnancies and numerous responsibilities are hazardous for their own well-being. Men may be "naturally" aggressive, and have "a stronger tendency to exhibit whatever behaviour is necessary for attainment of hierarchical and dyadic dominance", as Goldberg suggests. [Goldberg, TIOP, p.64] But even if this is so, it can be argued that such a trait is destructive for men as individuals and for human society.

Christian writers make little attempt to tackle the issue of male aggression and violence towards women, although **Faith in the City** does raise the issue of "battered wives", and further acknowledges the relation of this to Christian thinking on male dominance and female subservience. [Archbishop's Report, FITC, p.282.]¹¹ Clark seems to encourage male dominance with little regard to its effect, asserting that Christians should value "manly" characteristics such as courage, aggressiveness (or zeal), and readiness to lead. [Clark, MAWIC, p.622f.] Mitson parallels male aggression with female creativity, suggesting that a man has the bent of hostility and aggression, and this "is part of his, just as creativity is part of woman's, essential being". [Mitson, C, p.14.]

Christianity theoretically recognises the will to dominance and aggression as sin, but seldom indicates that this is a sin to which males in our society may be more prone than women. Yet it is overwhelmingly men who are involved in sexual abuse of children, and who commit rape; and the motivation seems to be a desire to dominate and humiliate someone weaker than themselves. Women can also be violent towards men and children, but we need to ask whether the definition of masculinity in our society is implicated in men's violence. That girls and women have to be taught to fear male brutality and sexuality is a profound indictment of masculinity which the church has yet to take seriously.

It is difficult, then, to arrive at moral requirements for women or men as a class from assertions about what is "natural" to them. Clark's position, however, is not that sex differences merely occur, but that they are created into human beings because God has a purpose for that difference. The point of what he sees as God's command that women and men ought to behave in differentiated ways, is that this is functional for human happiness. Role differentiation has been useful for all previous societies, and its abandonment "could be one of the most destructive changes in the history of human society." [Clark, MAWIC, p.442] The logic of this argument is more satisfactory than jumping from a complex "is" to a simple "ought", for it follows Oppenheimer's guideline that we should look for the point of God's commands. But there are other problems with Clark's reasoning which need to be examined.

2.) That Role Differentiation Is Functional

Clark points out that people who have clear role patterns are freed from the tensions of constantly having to work at and live with differing expectations. This, he says, establishes "a stable and peaceful pattern of social life which allows communal life to flourish and which provides for the group's needs." [Ibid., p.588] It may be that if a husband and wife come to marriage and family life with clear "traditional" ideas about their roles, the organization of their lives will be easier than for those who take on non-"traditional" ones. Russell describes this in **The Changing Role of Fathers**, where he points to less marital satisfaction where childcare was shared than in traditional families. For a husband may find he feels threatened by his wife's career, or a wife may be uncomfortable when her husband takes over childcare, traditionally the main source of status and reward for women. We might expect such problems to lessen as non-traditional patterns become more established.

This point is made by Gornick and Moran, who further suggest that insistence on fixed, stereotyped roles results from insecurity about masculinity or femininity:

During a period of transition one can expect to see increasing numbers of women quelling anxiety by fleeing into a unidimensional, stereotyped femininity. As new norms gain clarity and force, more flexible roles, personalities, and behaviors will evolve. Role freedom is a burden when choice is available but criteria are unclear; under these circumstances it is very difficult to know whether one has achieved womanhood or has dangerously jeopardized it.

[Gornick and Moran, WISS, p.156/7]

Tensions generated by trying to discover new ways of living in marriage and social life can become intolerable. The increase in the divorce rate may be partly due to this factor, and women may opt out of some careers for similar reasons.¹² But being freed from such tensions is not always appropriate. Many women do anchor their ideas of self to their roles, say Harper and Richards, and an "anchorage is a stable base for self. But it also means you're not going anywhere." [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.262] To repeat the point made earlier, Christians are not looking for comfortable lives, but ones in which development is possible.

It can be argued that hierarchical role differentiation is not functional because it has resulted in male oppression of women. Writers like Clark admit this without renouncing the principle that it is ordained by God. There are various attempts to show what female subordination in marriage and society might look like as an ideal, which emphasise the heavy responsibility laid on men to ensure that women are treated well.¹³ But even in this "ideal" form, the concept is highly problematic. It takes away women's autonomy as individuals and as Christians, for they must centre themselves completely around others. This can lead to harmful self-sacrifice which has a negative effect on those around them, and which limits women's Christian calling in a way which is quite contrary to the Gospel. These points are explored in detail in Chapters Eight to Ten.

The theory that the sexes have complementary qualities and roles

is an attractive one to many people. A strong decisive male breadwinner can protect and be cared for by a gentle sensitive housewife and mother, and the full spectrum of economic and emotional needs in the family can be met. The difficulty is that real human beings rarely fit this model. Exclusive concentration on one role, whether that of breadwinner or housewife, can be highly destructive. Moreover, such role differentiation may "work" only at the cost of denigrating the human person. These points are explored in detail in subsequent chapters, since they are highly relevant to a theology of work.

Many writers conclude that traditionally defined sex-typed behaviour neither benefits the individual nor society. It may be, as Bernard suggests, that sex-role specialization worked fairly well in non-industrialised society, where each sex was mutually interdependent; although that interdependence was more to do with specialization in different tasks than different personal attributes. Whatever the case in the past, modern society with its rapid technological change and variety of social patterns, requires versatile people. It calls for "whole individuals, for individuals in which the virtues of both sexes are cultivated, the weaknesses of both muted ... well-rounded, complete individuals capable of flexibility and adaptability to change." [Bernard, WWM, p.46] Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport agree that:

in the long run the needs both of individual men and women and of the community, counting gains in terms of economic efficiency as well as of personality and inter-personal relations, are likely to be best met if women and men base their career and family choices principally on their abilities and needs as individuals and not on sex-typed or

other group stereotypes or norms. [Fogarty et.al., SCF, p.34]

Many different roles are necessary within families and social systems at different times, and individuals may perform a number of these in a lifetime. Of course, says Wendy Green, "we have to undertake certain responsibilities at certain stages, for the sake of those to whom we have promised commitment and care"; although hopefully these "will not fall too heavily on one pair of shoulders." [Green, TFOTF, p.75] But the roles they take on do not define individuals, or give them their value.

In some circumstances people have to be defined in terms of their roles, or the general characteristics of the group of which they are a member. For example, one seeks a "doctor in the house", without investigating the individual behind the qualification. Or one tells children not to accept gifts from strangers, although most strangers will be well-intentioned. In many of our interactions we accept being seen as a member of a group - customer, patient, teacher or traffic warden. What would be intolerable would be to be "reckoned always as a member of a class and not as an individual person," as Sayers points out; for it to be assumed that "all one's tastes and preferences have to be conditioned by the class to which one belongs." [Sayers, AWH, p.19/20.] This is a problem for women.

The prior question here for Richards is "why we should put separate pressures on the two sexes at all." Whilst it can be legitimate to require all women to go along with something which suits most, justification is needed for regarding women as a group in the first place. Richards argues that only if there are

universal differences can women be treated as a separate group; if the differences are only average the justification disappears. [Richards, TSF, p.126ff] Thus women could be treated as a class for health purposes, for example required to undergo screening for breast cancer. But they could not be excluded from fire-fighting on the grounds that women are not as strong as men, since some women are stronger than some men. The difference is only average, the criterion is strength rather than sex. As Mill says, "What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing. What they can do, but not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from ..." [Mill, quoted in Richards, TSF, p.101] This is important, because much discrimination against women is caused by their being judged as women, when the criterion should be quite different.

Further, the stereotyped characteristics ascribed to the class "women" are often inaccurate: "Whatever may have been the sources, historically, of these stereotypes, there is no question that in contemporary society they lack sufficient validity to make them useful predictors of the behavior of the individual persons who belong to such labeled groups." [Sears, et.al., POOR, p.442] Yet actual behaviour is evaluated in these terms, as Eichler points out, so that sex-role stereotypes "serve as a gauge for reality, rather than reality serving as a corrective for the stereotypes." [Eichler, TDS, p.66] Thus "behaviour that is, indeed, widespread and accepted as a fact of life may be classified as deviant because it does not match some abstract norm." This is the case with women's jobs, where the ideal that women should not work for pay means "a well-accepted alternative

pattern has suddenly been identified as ... a deviant pattern". [Ibid., p.52] This point is picked up by Leacock: "It is ironic at a time when from one third to one quarter of the world's households are estimated to be female-headed and female-supported that female dependence in nuclear families is being so strenuously asserted as 'natural'". [Leacock, in Lowe and Hubbard eds., WN, p.119]

Inaccurate stereotypes can persist because men, as the dominant group in our society, can determine the definitions used. Where male experience is the norm, women's behaviour can be classified as deviant. This perspective operates in language, as we saw in Chapter One. The key point is that men have power. It is, as Eichler notes, irrelevant "whether the claim made is that women are inferior, superior, or different but equal, since it is strictly a matter of power who decrees what is a criterion of inferiority, superiority, or essential equivalence." [Eichler, TDS, p.92]

It is thus significant that the debate about sex differences rarely examines characteristics which might suggest weaknesses in men, such as the greater vulnerability of male infants, and handicaps like haemophilia or colour blindness. Writers like Clark suggest that because some differences between the sexes do exist, these must be taken into consideration in social life. But as has been indicated, the way in which this is done is highly selective, and operates to keep men in control. A similar mechanism occurs when the dominant white group defines Black people as different, and denies them opportunity on that basis. As Dorothy Sayers points out, whilst there "is a fundamental



difference between men and women ... it is not the only fundamental difference in the world". [Sayers, AWH, p.33] There are many differences between people which influence their behaviour but are not used to prescribe roles, such as physical size, position in the family, and handedness. For example, whilst a high percentage of good scientists, chess-players, and tennis players are left-handed, we would scarcely restrict these occupations to left-handers alone, or discuss an order of creation in relation to handedness.

Role differentiation may appear to be functional because it preserves the status quo. But the present situation is harmful for both women and men, because it takes too little account of the variety of human personalities and capabilities.

3. That Hierarchical Role Differentiation Is Ordained By God

Anti-feminists may accept that arguments from "nature" or about what is functional for society are unsatisfactory. But they may counter this in two ways. Firstly, it can be suggested that sin has distorted human "nature", and hence the organization of society, so that role differentiation no longer appears appropriate although it is part of God's created order. Richardson suggests that without sin, people would accept hierarchically ordered roles: "it is sin (pride, grasping at equality) which puts the sting into the acceptance of one's proper place in God's created order: the irksomeness of the man's 'rule' is the result of the Fall." [Richardson, G, p.69]¹⁴

For Karl Barth, relationships between human beings and God, and

between people, are and should be structured vertically. Barth speaks of an "unequal duality of male and female" [Barth, CD III, 1, p.288ff]; but others stress an "equal but subordinate" role for women which requires a limitation of the idea that all have equal worth, to their standing before God. Thus Clark says that Galatians 3.28 is not about social equality, but tells us that all can be sons (sic) of God. There is no parallel, he tells us, with the abolition of slavery, since slavery is a human institution, while differentiation of role for the sexes is ordered by God.

Secondly, some Christians argue that hierarchical structures were ordained because of the Fall. Women's inequality may be construed as a punishment, as in Luther's view here discussed by Ruether:

Woman, through the Fall and in punishment for the Fall, lost her original equality and became inferior in mind and body. She is now ... subjected to the male as her superior. This ... is not a sin against her, but her punishment for her sin. ... Any revolt, or even complaint, against it by woman is a caviling refusal to accept the judgement of God. ... Luther's use of the doctrine of the original equality of Eve with Adam does not become a source for theological reevaluation of woman's historical subjugation. ... it simply deepens the reproach of her as one whose sinfulness lost this original equality and merited the punishment of subjugation. [Ruether, SAGT, p.97/8]

Others suggest hierarchies are necessary, even though they limit human creativity to some extent, to control our fallen "nature". Cohn describes the position of the Church Fathers who saw

inequality and slavery as arising from the Fall: "Corrupted by Original Sin, human nature demanded restraints which could not be found in an egalitarian order; inequalities of wealth, status and power were, thus, not only consequences of but also remedies for sin." [Cohn, quoted in Anthony, TIOW, p.26] We might add that because of this, "status, like sex, is an inevitable category which we must learn to cope with rather than do away with." [Key, MFL, p.51]

This argument rightly indicates that some institutions are necessary to limit people's propensity to sin. We can then see "all our hierarchies not as God-given", says Peter Clark, "(... if by that we mean 'God-approved', 'God-willed') but as provisional." They are given to us to be transformed, as is our fallen world. [P.Clark in Furlong ed., FITC, p.188] We might choose to put restraints on human "nature" in a more egalitarian way, with and more consideration for individual rights. Moreover, in many circumstances formal leadership and organizational structure are needed if large groupings in particular are to function effectively. This point has had practical implications for feminists, who are committed to non-hierarchical ways of working. There clearly are organizational forms which enable more co-operative working, and in particular avoid marked status differentials, although British society seems less willing than others to operate them.

The feminist theological critique denounces patriarchal oppression and domination as expressed in hierarchical structures. Feminist theology, for Ruether, is based on the prophetic principles which :

imply a rejection of every elevation of one social group against others as image and agent of God, every use of God to justify social domination and subjugation. Patriarchy itself must fall under the Biblical denunciations of idolatry and blasphemy, the idolizing of the male as representative of divinity. [Ruether, SAGT, p.23]

Jesus himself follows these principles, challenging his disciples to "relinquish all claims of power and domination over others." [Fiorenza, IMOH, p.148] When Jesus calls God Father, it is "a critical subversion of all structures of domination. ... liberation from patriarchal structures is not only explicitly articulated by Jesus but is in fact at the heart of the proclamation of the basileia of God." [Ibid., p.151] Peter Clark also sees Christ as exposing the godlessness of hierarchy. His "message is consistently one of God's being more at home with the poor and outcast, the dispossessed, the powerless; of a God who breaks down barriers (or reveals their unreality) and who puts down the mighty from their thrones." But Christ's followers are reluctant "to believe that God can finally be manifest in powerlessness." Thus in the New Testament "we see the foundations of a rigid hierarchism being dug from the earliest days of the Church", which is still with us. [Clark in Furlong ed. FITC, p.186] For "our instinctive drive for an order of priority is part of our fallenness", [Nixon, MC, p.31] as Nixon suggests.

Feminist theologians suggest that this is the point of God becoming incarnate in male form. It is not because the male can more appropriately represent the divine, but to reveal the emptiness of patriarchy. The Christ event is "the only scandal

that patriarchy couldn't dare to contemplate". For it "presents God as the ultimate contradiction to the worship of male power." [West, in Garcia and Maitland eds., WOTW, p.88] Given this subversion of patriarchy, the emphasis on men as created to rule over women, society and the earth is called seriously into question. The kind of power given by God to human beings cannot be understood as a mandate to use the earth or other people for one's own ends.

Feminist theologians such as Ruether are equally concerned that the earth should be respected as that people should not oppress one another, for both principles have been neglected by patriarchy. Thus:

In God's Kingdom the corrupting principles of domination and subjugation will be overcome. People will no longer model social or religious relationships, or even relationships to God, after the sort of power that reduces others to servility. Rather they will discover a new kind of power ... exercised through service, which empowers the disinherited and brings all to a new relationship of mutual enhancement. [Ruether, SAGT, p.30]

The theory that women and men should have fixed, differentiated roles proves hard to sustain when the evidence is examined. Although "natural" differences exist between the sexes, these do not establish how people should behave. Neither is there clear evidence that differentiation of role is functional in our present culture either for individuals or for society. Theologically speaking, the hierarchical pattern after which the male/female relation is said to be modelled, can be seen as under

God's judgement. Moreover, the Gospel as a whole does not allow for an individual's Christian calling to be limited by "natural" inclinations or family ties. Clearly, then, a theology of work cannot be based on the assumption that women's role is fixed by "nature" and by God.

C. INCORPORATING DIFFERENCES INTO A FEMINIST THEOLOGY OF WORK

Whilst a fixed role for women, based on a different "nature", must be rejected, it may still be possible to take differences between the sexes into account. It is the prescribing of roles which concerns us, rather than the existence of different capacities and experiences: "Feminists ... are not denying the basic biological differences between the sexes. We only ask that these differences no longer be used as the basis for judgements of superior/inferior, dominant/subordinate, wide-choices/rigid roles, vast-opportunities/limited-spheres, and the like." [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.206]

A number of feminists speak positively of some non-biological differences between the sexes. Richards argues that there may be some indirect social pressures operating on and differentiating between the sexes which are not important for feminists. She argues that whilst most feminine culture may have been bad for the equality of women, there is:

nothing inherently degrading about conventional differences of name, dress, hair styles, or even (to some extent) interests and occupations ... it is quite compatible with feminism to think it would be pleasant to have, other things being equal, a society where men and women tended to choose

what was traditionally associated with their sex, and enjoy the differences traditionally associated with the other.

[Richards, TSF, p.151]

Other feminists argue that since other things are patently not equal, and are unlikely to be so, there is little point in discussing such issues. For others, it has been important to rediscover and affirm women's traditional skills and interests.

Eichler discusses the question of sex-segregated jobs, and concludes that in a free and equal society, it would not matter if men and women chose different occupations according to their sex. [Eichler, TDS, p.13/14] There are occasions when the sex of a worker does make a difference, as some of the exemptions from the Sex Discrimination Act indicate. Indeed, people might have a preference as to who does a job in areas not at present exempted. For example, women might prefer female midwives, or men might rather be fitted by a male tailor, even though male midwives or women tailors might be more sympathetic or efficient. People might also wish to work in single-sex groupings. This would seem reasonable so long as pay, conditions of service and satisfaction (or otherwise) were equal. It would avoid the problems experienced by women or men who are in a minority in a work group of the other sex, and much employment is indeed organised in this way. A 1980 study showed that 45% of men and 75% of women worked in totally segregated jobs - i.e. no members of the opposite sex did the same thing at the same workplace. [Coote and Campbell, SF, p.52]

However, in both these cases, the barriers between men and women are reinforced, where a more sensitive programme of integration

might allow the sexes to work together in harmony. Respecting someone's wish to preserve the status quo is not always meeting their real need. It may be that until society itself is more equal, no firm conclusions will be possible in this area. Because in the past sex differences have frequently been interpreted to the detriment of women, the emphasis for a feminist theology of work at the present time has to be on equality. As Oppenheimer notes: "since human beings are so prone to get stuck in unjust inequality, we find ourselves obliged to take a great deal of trouble to establish equality before we can dare to relish diversity." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.86] Nonetheless, if we are careful how we use the concept of equality, we can at the same time do justice to diversity. We can affirm with Daphne Hampson that "Women are equal and different". [Hampson, Theology, p.342]

NOTES

1. This view seems to underlie statements of Oldham, WIMS, and Keiser, MATW. It is explicitly spelt out in Clark, MAWIC. It is interesting to trace this understanding of women in recent Catholic thought, although there is not space to do so here. The pronouncements of Vatican II are on similar lines to those of **Laborem Exercens**. See for example, pp.207, 257, and 267 of Abbott, ed., TDOVT, and Andolsen's discussion of Catholic thought in Andolsen et al, eds., WCWC, pp.7-15.

2. The study of those whose sex is ambiguous is important in the literature about sex differences. See for example the work of Money, Green and Stoller.

3. Different cultural groups in our society might have slightly different stereotypes, but still placing masculinity and femininity at opposite poles.

4. Details of non-literary sources are given in Appendix 1. Other Christian writers also emphasise the negative effects of hormones on women. For example, see Dobson, MTMAW, p.96.

5. cf Tapper's discussion of nature and gender from an anthropological perspective. Tapper, KTR.

6. For example, Tiger chooses to compare men's behaviour with aggressive male baboons rather than with more amiable male chimpanzees. See especially Chapter 10 of Morgan, TDOW, for a critique of Tiger and similar writers.

7. Animals too learn and change, as Midgley reminds us. The point here is that Christians cannot accept a biological determinism which assumes we are controlled by our genes.

8. See Strachan and Strachan, FTF. The identification of woman with "nature" meant the denigration of both. Feminist theologians like Ruether make a substantial critique of this thinking.

9. Where the context of a quotation or direct references indicates that he/man language is being used in a generic sense, it is included without comment. Since such instances are fairly frequent, it would be tedious to interpose "(sic)" after each one.

10. Of course there is a negative side to technological advance, as there may be in evolving new roles for women and men; but few would advocate ceasing all development for this reason. See Chapter Five for further discussion of this point.

11. See also Borrowdale, COEN.

12. See, for example, Cooper and Davidson, HP.

13. See Clark, MAWIC, Dobson, MTMAW, Lees ed., TROW, for example.

14. cf Kline's reference in the **New Bible Commentary** to "the re-instituted marriage relationship" being "disturbed by sinful inclinations towards abuse of its authority structure". [Kline in Guthrie et.al. ed. NBC, p.85]

CHAPTER FOUR: GOING BEYOND EQUALITY

A: THE MEANING OF EQUALITY

As was noted at the beginning of the last chapter, some theologians of work do affirm the equality of the sexes. Their approach is generally to state that women should receive equal pay and opportunity, and that their unpaid labours should be valued. Yet equality is not a straightforwardly Christian concept, as anti-feminists point out. A feminist theology of work will need to speak of equality, since as we have seen, until equality is established, diversity cannot be relished. But careful attention has to be paid to the meaning of the word, for people clearly are not, and cannot be, regarded as "all the same".

1. Equality and Sameness

A common misinterpretation of feminism is that it believes women and men to be exactly the same, meriting identical treatment. It may then be rejected because women often do not want to be like men. Equal opportunity for women to pattern their careers as men do, may lead to women experiencing the same negative consequences of stress and separation from family and emotional life. Friedan notes the concern that the women's movement comes to mean an equal freedom with men to be drafted, and to wage war. [Friedan, TSS, p.23.] She shows how this kind of thinking, along with misplaced concerns such as that women might have to share toilets with men, contributed to the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States.

Feminists do demand equal treatment with men in areas where sex is irrelevant and where men's experience is worth aspiring to. Thus whilst feminism logically allows for women to be drafted and to wage war, most feminists would assert that waging war is evil for both men and women, and therefore would not make this a demand. Similarly, where male career patterns and organizations are destructive for men, feminists will urge that these be changed rather than that women should suffer equally from them. If a low view of male experience is taken, feminists may assert that women want no part of it. Dworkin bluntly states: "a commitment to sexual equality with males ... is a commitment to becoming the rich instead of the poor, the rapist instead of the raped." [Dworkin, OB, p.12]

Moreover, since the sexes are different, it would clearly be absurd to demand that they were treated identically in all circumstances, and few feminists do so.¹ Pregnant or nursing mothers, for example, require particular facilities, and the concept of equality ought easily to be able to incorporate attention to special needs. But anti-feminists identify equal treatment with identical treatment, thus ruling any special requirements women have out of order. Several feminists have commented on the attitude: "If women want to be equal they can ... carry their own bags/ stand on buses even if they are pregnant." Here, the price paid for equality appears to be the withdrawal of even common courtesy towards women. [Hancock, DT] Given this choice, women may opt to accept inferior status in exchange for the protection and chivalry of men.

But equality is not interpreted in this rigid way in other

contexts. The principle that all citizens are equal, for example, does not prevent a state giving additional resources to those who are most needy. We might more accurately assert, with Daniel Jenkins, that human equality "is an equality in uniqueness". [Jenkins, EAE, p.21] For if this is the case, then each person has an equal claim to be treated properly, to have their individual needs and circumstances attended to. Oppenheimer develops this theme, and her interpretation of equality is particularly helpful. She writes that: "Our equality as human beings ought to be a relatively dull part of the truth about us. It hardly begins to do justice to what each one of us knows really matters about himself or herself as a unique individual." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.86]

For Oppenheimer, "the whole point of persons is precisely that they are not equal. One is not as good as another. No human being is worth less than another in God's sight, not because they are all worth the same, but because each one is irreplaceable." All are loved differently. "Persons are not units of value. No one can adequately stand in for another. If one is lost, the loss is irreparable." [Ibid., p.81] This does not mean deeming everybody else as good as me. To say that is better than nothing, but it misses the point: "nobody else is as good as me; nobody can replace me; I am completely special; and I cannot replace anybody else; every single person matters uniquely." [Ibid., p.82/3] What is irreplaceable is the particular person "good or bad, complex or simple, interesting or dull, normal or abnormal". [Ibid., p.84] It is more difficult to accept the irreplaceability of the drunken tramp. But when God says of the tramp "But I loved that one. I did not want him lost", God's other children must try to

see the point" - as we would if a human mother said it. "'All men are equal'" is too easily despised as a simple falsehood. 'Each of us is irreplaceable' is both truer and more exhilarating." [Ibid., p.94]

The notion of irreplaceability combines the belief that persons are of equal value with an affirmation of their uniqueness. It allows us to state that women are indeed equal and different. But their differences are as much due to their individuality as to their membership of the class "women", and are not prescriptive.

2. Rights and Responsibilities

Equality has been an important concept for feminism because if women have equal value and capabilities in relation to men, they can demand equal rights. There is undoubtedly a place for emphasising women's rights, and we shall return to this later. The danger in the language of individual rights is that these may be insisted on with total disregard for the needs and rights of other people. Anti-feminists are quick to accuse feminists of selfishness in this respect. For example, Horna-Perman and Perman suggest that women's fulfilment is pursued at the cost of their children's needs:

children are now often described as irritants, hindrances in women's professional fulfilment ... These women ... seek to unload the hourly burden of child care on surrogates and give priority to a search for satisfaction of their intellectual, emotional and material needs in the world outside of the family on terms of equality with men - in other words, they want to be unburdened of the

responsibilities of protracted nurturing of children ... There is no certainty that the competition between the rights of the adults and the needs of the children has been resolved to the permanent advantage of the children. [Horn-Perman and Perman, P, p.202]

There is a strand in feminist thought which lends itself to this interpretation. Along with many other groups, feminists have stressed the need for personal fulfilment, individuality and independence.² It is true that "one person's pursuit of authenticity" can be "another person's blasted possibility." [Martin quoted in Johnston, WNTF, p.26] The aim of feminism, with its concern for wholeness and cooperation, cannot simply be to gain rights for individual women. Women's happiness and fulfilment is not unimportant, but it is not to be gained at the expense of men, children or the good of the whole community. This is not to say that women must always avoid causing suffering, for the destruction of patriarchy is bound to be painful. But if the goal is the reformation of relationships between the sexes, men cannot be treated with contempt. Our freedoms and rights must always take into account the freedoms and rights of others; for "Freedom to live as one chooses" is the ideal of the man who recognizes few obligations." [Edwards, in Jenkins, EAE, p.184]

Edwards use of the word "man" is appropriate here, for women, by and large, are characterized by their attention to obligations. Countless numbers of them have subjugated their own needs for the sake of husband, children or dependent relatives without complaint and without reward, as Part Four discusses. As was indicated in the introduction, Western feminists have at times

pursued middle-class goals which appear as personal luxuries. But many women across the world lack the basic human rights of access to food, shelter or education, as well as the right to control their own fertility, or to vote. It is therefore misdirected to charge women with the selfish pursuit of their own rights, when it can be argued that this is a failing men more frequently demonstrate, and for which they receive little censure.

Friedan shows that it is wrong to polarize family responsibilities and equality for women, since "virtually all women today share a basic core of commitment to the family and to their own equality within and beyond it, as long as family and equality are not seen to be in conflict." [Friedan, TSS, p.219] Women are likely to justify choices about a career or an abortion in terms of doing it for the family, although if the choice is presented as career or abortion versus the family, they are likely to opt for the family. [Ibid., p.225f]³

When anti-feminists decry women's demands for equal rights, they may suggest that the answer is to give up individual rights in favour of devotion to the needs of others. This may be couched in terms which sound Christian, but which are in fact the antithesis of the Gospel. We shall explore this theme in much greater detail in Chapters Eight to Ten. Here, we should note that individual rights do not have to be opposed to the needs of others. Rather, we can seek a way of talking about rights which includes our obligations. Once again the notion of irreplaceability is helpful. Each unique individual has a responsibility towards themselves, as well as towards others: "Liberation does not mean that we can all do only what we please all the time. It means

that our choices are made in the light of our responsibility to God's Kingdom, not in response to social pressures and stereotypes." [Sakenfeld, BBOB, p.233]

3. Affirmative Action

If we are responsible for and to other people, we may need to favour particular groups or individuals. This may seem unfair, but Christian morality is not about fairness, as Helen Oppenheimer points out. We attach importance to fairness, but the Christian Gospel goes far beyond this, demanding that we turn the other cheek or go a second mile. [Oppenheimer, TCOCM, p.21/2] Indeed the Gospel message is more akin to affirmative action, as Sheppard shows. His remarks are in the context of racism, and he seems blind to sexism as an issue, but logically they do apply.

He speaks of the need for "action, which affirms the abilities people have, and determines to intervene in order to offer them equal opportunities. ... a proper bias to those who have been robbed of equal opportunities". [Sheppard, BTTP, p.71] God's justice does not leave the advantage with those who already have it, but hesedh "topples over on behalf of those in direst need. This justice is not the same as fairness, as though everyone started from the same line." [Ibid., p.72] This is one reason why it does not follow that because women have been treated favourably through reverse discrimination in the past, it is now the turn of men. Richards argues this point. It is not unfair to men if women are favoured, she says, since women are worse off than they should be. There is no case for advancing men since they are there in any case. [Richards, TSF, p.114]

But she is hesitant about reverse discrimination unless a person's sex can be made a legitimate requirement. For example, if having female doctors was desirable, they could be recruited despite having lesser qualifications than men. [Ibid., p.112] Unfortunately Richards misses the point here. It is not a question of appointing women who are less capable of doing a job, but it may mean adapting the requirements in order to advance otherwise capable women who could not meet them. For example, age barriers discriminate against women who have devoted several years to childrearing, and could be waived. Moreover, women may need explicit encouragement and support to counteract social pressures which deter them from doing certain jobs.

Affirmative action programmes such as those instituted in the United States can increase the representation of women in particular areas, and there undoubtedly is a place for formal measures to improve women's position. But legislation can backfire, and its implications need proper consideration. For example, equal pay legislation may price women's jobs out of the market. Moreover, such measures do little more than provide cosmetic improvement of women's situation, because the attitudes they challenge are so deeply ingrained. Alongside structural change must go the reform of personal relationships, as Ruether points out. We cannot assume "reorganized social relations on a structural level will automatically produce the new humanity", she says. But neither can we think that simply by "building up an aggregate of converted individuals ... society will be redeemed without any attention to the structures of power. ... we must enter into a process in which the liberated self and the transformation of social systems are inter-connected." [Ruether,

in Weidman ed. CF, p.26] In order to do this, we require an understanding of the present state of tension between the sexes.

B. ALIENATED RELATIONSHIPS

According to traditional Christian theology, the Fall results in the dislocation of human relationships. Hick, for example, writes:

Sin ... is a disorientation at the very centre of man's being where he stands in relationship with the Source and Lord of his life ... That vertical relationship affects all our horizontal relationships within the created realm, so that our sinfulness expresses itself in various kinds of broken, distorted, perverted, or destructive relationships to our fellows and to the natural world ... [Hick, EATGOL, p.300]

At the centre of the story of the Fall is a description of how a harmonious male/female relationship deteriorates to one of domination and distrust. Yet this theme has not been developed at length within past Christian tradition, which instead generally accepted that "even in the original, unfallen creation, woman would have been subordinate and under the domination of man." Her subjugation "is both the reflection of her inferior nature and the punishment for her responsibility for sin." [Ruether, SAGT, p.94/5]⁴ The equality of man and woman in Christ was not denied by the dominant Christian tradition, but it was interpreted "in a spiritual and eschatological way that suppressed its relevance for the sociology of the Church." [Ruether, SAGT, p.35].

Feminist theology has been quick to see in this story a

condemnation of the present unequal relation between the sexes:

Where once there was mutuality, now there is a hierarchy of division ... the woman is corrupted in becoming a slave, and the man is corrupted in becoming a master. His supremacy is neither a divine right nor a male prerogative. Her subordination is neither a divine decree nor the female destiny. Both their positions result from shared disobedience. [Trible, GATROS, p.128]

If we accept that both woman and man have been corrupted so that they cannot relate to each other with the mutuality for which they were intended, the present state of affairs between them is illuminated. Christians can recognize that "the prevailing symbiosis between women and men has something deadly wrong with it." [Dinnerstein, TROTC, p.230] This is evidenced by the destructive attitudes men and women have towards one another.

These attitudes are important for a feminist theology of work, because they affect the organization and performance of work in our society. In subsequent chapters we shall explore their implications. It should be made clear that the attitudes set out below are less distinct in practice than in theory. Inevitably they are generalizations. Individual people may hold them unconsciously, if at all, or they may co-exist with other contradictory views. For example, in company with their own sex, women and men may denigrate one another, but nevertheless have harmonious individual relationships. We might say that such attitudes are part of our consciousness, which come to the fore in particular contexts. They are serious because the stereotypes they are based on often become accepted wisdom within society. This is particularly the case with the male stance towards women,

because men largely control which values prevail in our culture. However, women do stereotype and misunderstand men, and we shall consider this in the next section.

1. Woman as the "Other"

Russell notes that in the story of the Fall "woman emerges as the Other rather than the helper." [Russell, HLIAFP, p.152] Many writers, both male and female, comment on the way in which men regard women as "Other", creatures who are quite different from themselves. De Beauvoir develops this theme in **The Second Sex**; and the emphasis on differences between the sexes, which we considered in the previous chapter, is another manifestation of it. Korda, in his valuable study of male thought processes, explains that when "most men look at a woman they do not see before them an equal human being. They see an enigma, a challenge, a mystery; the person is obscured by the sum total of their feelings and experiences about women, by a hundred thousand years of legend, myth, comedy and domestic uneasiness." [Korda, MC, p.3/4] Men may take refuge in this idea; for if by definition women "represent a kind of monstrous puzzle that God has created for men to wrestle with hopelessly", then they "can even be proud of not understanding them, for the failure to understand women is the ultimate proof of our masculinity." [Ibid., p.165]

Whatever else women are seen as, they are not admitted to share common humanity with men, as D.H. Lawrence points out:

Man is willing to accept woman as an equal, as man in skirts, as an angel, a devil, a baby-face, a machine, an instrument, a bosom, a womb, a pair of legs, a servant, an

encyclopedia, an ideal or an obscenity; the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being, a real human being of the feminine sex. [Lawrence quoted in Russell, HLIAFP, p.148.]

This is why, for Oakley, "the desires of men and women are incompatible." Not only can women not find whole human beings in men, but "the whole human beings women are are not what men have been led to believe they want." [Oakley, TILAW, p.121] In our society, as in most others, the emphasis on differences between the sexes obscures their shared humanity, and this leads to division and fear.

i) Male fear of women

Karen Horney refers to "men's secret dread of women", which means that however much a woman "may wish to render herself pleasing and non-threatening ... (she) will still to some degree partake of the feared aspect of Woman". [Quoted in Rich, OWB, p.71] This was Korda's point above. He believes that:

There has always been, in men, an instinctive fear ... that women are in fact a more successful artifact of nature than men. The complexity of their biology, their miraculous ability to give birth to another human being, the early imprint of a mother's power on every man, all conspire to produce in men a slight feeling of awe about the potentials of women once they are unleashed. [Korda, MC, p.148]

Ruether makes a similar point in a religious context, where, she says, stories of Eve, Lilith or Pandora see the female as the enemy of harmony. There is thus "a tremendous male fear of woman's suppressed power, which, having been once unleashed, overthrew original paradisal conditions and introduced disease,

mortality, hard work, and frustrating struggle for survival in place of what was ease and happiness in the midst of spontaneous plenty." The original paradise, Ruether suggests, was a mythologizing of early infancy, where the mother is scapegoated for the male's loss of childhood plenty. [Ruether, SAGT, p.168]

The idea that male fear of women is related to the experiences of early infancy is a common one in feminist thought. Rich believes that "the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of dependence on a woman for life itself, the son's constant effort to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is 'of woman born'." [Rich, OWB, p.11] Dinnerstein develops this theme in detail. For her, the "crucial psychological fact is that all of us, female as well as male, fear the will of woman." We have a terror of sinking wholly back into the helplessness of infancy. [Dinnerstein, TROTC, p.161. Original italics omitted] "Woman is the will's first, overwhelming adversary." [Ibid., p.166] Jean Baker Miller suggests that men resist emotional sexual involvement because they fear it "will reduce them to some undifferentiated mass or state ruled by weakness, emotional attachment, and/or passion and that they will thereby lose the long-sought and fought-for status of manhood." [Miller, TANPOW, p.23]

Dinnerstein's analysis makes sense, but we should be wary of reducing patriarchy to a single factor as she does. She believes that shared parenting would end the exploitation of women. For if unjust blame and spite "were directed simply at parents, not just at female parents (and subsequently their gender as a whole), it could be more consciously identified for what it is - a childish,

out-growable feeling - and endured, forgiven." [Dinnerstein, TROTC, p.173] But whilst this could well influence attitudes, patriarchy is unlikely to be ended simply because early parental figures are male as well as female.

The fact that men were once mothered by women is nonetheless an important dynamic in their adult relationships. Men may expect women to provide for them the kind of care mothers give children, and women often infantilise men, as we shall see.

ii) Male denigration of women

Women are both denigrated and idealized in our culture. This dichotomy is more drastic for women than for other oppressed groups, observes Daly, because men and women are closely tied together. Men identify with "their women", who thus cannot be totally bad, as well as seeing their "otherness". [Daly, BGTF, p.62]

One reason for male fear and denigration of women may be that men are conscious of their dependence on women. For example, men complain about marriage, but benefit from it considerably. There are, as Bernard points out, "few findings more consistent, less equivocal, more convincing, than the sometimes spectacular and always impressive superiority on almost every index ... of married over never-married men." This contrasts with the finding for women. [Bernard, TFOM, p.16/17] She suspects that "the verbal assaults on marriage indulged in by men are a kind of compensatory reaction to their dependence on it." [Ibid., p.18]

This is not to say that all male denigration of women is

compensatory; the oppression of women is structural, and patriarchal society benefits from it: "Whatever the few drawbacks of power", says Richards, "it is on the whole a good thing to have, and it is excellent that there should be a class of people on hand among whom one can generally be found to be acquiescent, available, and a general provider of personal comforts." [Richards, TSF, p.143] But the fact that men depend on women as well as oppressing them is important. Although male attitudes have been considered under separate headings here, in reality they merge into one another. Thus while Germaine Greer can write that women "have very little idea of how much men hate them", [Greer, TFE, p.249] that hatred is mixed with veneration. There is a clear history of male denigration of women, in which the feminine comes to represent what is despicable and evil. Yet this image of women exists alongside the idealization of the feminine which we discuss below.

Negative male attitudes towards women have been described by a number of sociologists. Whitehead, for example, describes relations between the sexes in the Herefordshire village she studied as characterised by a lot of teasing, obscene talk, sexual consciousness, and hostility which included physical attacks. [Whitehead, Barker and Allen, ed. DAEIWAM]⁵ Male hostility to women is documented most clearly in feminist studies of pornography and rape, for example in the works of Brownmiller and Dworkin. Rather than standing out against such attitudes, the Christian tradition is a prime repository of misogyny.⁶ Strachan and Strachan argue that women symbolized the body, and the vitriol of the Church fathers against women is more precisely vitriol against the flesh. [Strachan and Strachan, FTF, p.125]

However, as they say, this explains rather than excuses that attitude.

McFague sees the roots of the Christian denigration of women in "the alienated consciousness of Western religion in which man, alienated from God, has projected the pattern of subject-object dualism down the line with woman - as man's most significant human 'other' - the chief repository of his alienation." [McFague, MT, p.148]⁷ This accords with Korda's idea that male chauvinism is "not a result of ruthless strength and selfishness on the part of men, but the sign of inner weakness, fear, frustration". A male chauvinist is "a man who cannot accept the responsibility for the failures in his own life and therefore assigns them to women." [Korda, MC, p.47] If, for example, men value self-control as a part of being masculine, the more unpredictable feelings associated with sexuality or aggression will cause concern. Women may then be blamed for causing these feelings by sexual provocation or capricious behaviour. Thus it would be failure to accept their own physicality which led men such as the Church fathers to identify women with "nature" and its evil consequences.

Whatever form it takes, directing undesirable feelings at another person may provide "a temporary respite from having to face the reality that everyone is both good and bad, including yourself." [Skynner and Cleese, FAHTST, p.138] But unless the real ambiguity of the human condition is faced up to, evil cannot be challenged and good cannot be advanced. This theme is explored further in the next chapter.

iii) Women as "carriers" of virtue

It is not only negative traits which are projected onto women. Men may regard themselves as unregenerate by "nature" - aggressive, sexual or unemotional - and assign the virtues of tenderness, control or sensitivity to women in the way described below. Or men may make a virtue of aggression and unemotional behaviour, seeing women's sensitivity as a weakness. Carroll, for example, asserts that "the future of our culture is hopeless without some restoration of manliness", which requires that man approaches woman with some harshness. [Carroll, G, p.244] Our task, he says, is "to arm ourselves against ... the values of compassion, nurture and tenderness." [Ibid., p.245] Stephen Clark also follows this line, although he finds it necessary for society that women embody these values. Key describes this common phenomenon:

both sexes project those qualities they admire and desire on the opposite sex. ... people glorify these qualities in the opposite sex out of all proportion. Men deny themselves sensitivity and gentleness, but desire these qualities in their women. Women deny themselves assertive and authoritative behavior, and demand these qualities of their men. [Key, MFL, p.28]

Anderson shows how emotional roles can be distributed in a family in a way which, whilst personally destructive, preserved a balance of power in the system. He identifies four roles: being right; being the bearer of righteousness; doing wrong; being bad. In a traditional marriage, husbands were usually right (Father knows best) but a little bad (men will be men). Wives were bearers of goodness and righteousness but basically wrong (just

like a woman). [Anderson, TFAPC, p.88/9] But as we shall see, this kind of characterization is not only personally destructive, it has a negative effect on society.

Rich suggests that the idealization of women is focussed in the dangerous archetype of "Mother":

the source of angelic love and forgiveness in a world increasingly ruthless and impersonal; the feminine, leavening, emotional element in a society ruled by male logic and male claims to 'objective', 'rational' judgement; the symbol and residue of moral values and tenderness in a world of wars, brutal competition, and contempt for human weakness. [Rich, OWB, p.52]

Theologically, the requirement that women be virtuous is linked with their part in the Fall. The American Tract Society asserted in the 1830's: "she who was first in the transgression, must yet be the principal earthly instrument in the restoration. It is maternal influences ... which must be the great agent in the hands of God, in bringing back our guilty race to duty and happiness". Rich adds that the "mother bears the weight of Eve's transgression ... yet precisely because of this she is expected to carry the burden of male salvation." [Ibid., p.44/5]

There is less emphasis today on women making recompense for the sin of Eve, but many writers stress women's role as guardians of moral values and tenderness. Goldberg, in a statement somewhat at odds with his claim to scientific, objective rationality, writes that "Few women have been ruined by men ... (but) Many men ... have been destroyed by women who did not understand, or did not care to understand, male fragility." [Goldberg, TIOP, p.194] Men

in every society "look to women for gentleness, kindness, and love, for refuge from a world of pain and force, for safety from their own excesses." [Ibid., p.196.] Similar views are found in many Christian writers, who fail to see how much they denigrate the human person. They may speak about the sexes in terms of complementarity, asserting with Ruskin that: "Each has what the other has not; each completes the other. They are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving what the other only can give." [Ruskin, quoted in Richards, TSF, p.125]⁸

Baker Miller comments on this kind of thinking, saying that "in the course of projecting into women's domain some of its most troublesome and problematic necessities, male-led society may also have ... delegated to women not humanity's 'lowest needs' but its 'highest necessities'." [Miller, TANPOW, p.25] The areas of life 'relegated' to women are important, and men want these things nearby, even while they deny owning them. But whilst women are carriers of virtue in this way, men can avoid developing their own emotional potential, creativity and co-operation. [Ibid., p.47] As Dinnerstein says, there is a need "for men to embrace within their own sensibility the values they now count on charming women to embody." [Dinnerstein, TROTC, p.224]

Problems are created for women because they cannot live up to this idealization. Their responsibility for the personal world involves having a responsibility which neither male nor female is adequate to bear, says Harrison, and is as much a source of women's discontent as is their exclusion from the male world. [Harrison in Hageman ed. SRAWITC, p.207/8] For feminine symbolism

and imagery is "sometimes utterly exalted, sometimes utterly debased, rarely within the normal range of human possibilities." [Ortner, quoted in French, BP, p.95]

iv) Becoming men

Some societies use elaborate rituals to initiate men and women into their appropriate male or female roles. Menstruation and childbirth serve to mark women as feminine, but, says Mead "the recurrent problem of civilization is to define the male role satisfactorily enough." [Mead, quoted in Gornick and Moran, WISS, p.189] Mead points out that many societies "have educated their male children on the simple device of teaching them not to be women, but there is an inevitable loss in such an education, for it teaches a man to fear that he will lose what he has, and to be forever ... haunted by this fear." [Mead, MAF, p.286] Chodorow explains this process for Western culture:

For children of both genders, mothers represent regression and lack of autonomy. A boy associates these issues with his gender identification as well. Dependence on his mother, attachment to her, and identification with her represent that which is not masculine ... A boy represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world.

... boys define and attempt to construct their sense of masculinity largely in negative terms. Given that masculinity is so elusive, it becomes important for masculine identity that certain social activities are defined as masculine and superior, and that women are believed unable to do many of the things defined as socially important.

[Chodorow TROM, p.181]

Women's fight for equality therefore poses a threat to men. If women are equally intelligent and able, do the same jobs, excel in sport, and even take up arms and fight, what is left for men? It may be particularly threatening where women combine these capabilities with marriage and child-rearing, for they demonstrate that masculine activities are compatible with, rather than opposite to, the feminine role.

Fiorenza notes Johannsson's point that the threat is most real for middle-class men, and links with the historical denigration of women in theology and culture:

the misogynist polemics of male writers, theologians, and historians must be understood as expressions of middle-class men whose psychic and economic reality were heavily determined by daily competition, and who therefore sought to maximise the 'natural' difference between women and men in order not to be replaced by women.

Women of the upper classes "were expected to substitute for men during times of war or death", but "middle-class men did not depend on the loyalty and resources of women of their class" in this way. [Fiorenza IMOH p.90/1] Thus "temperamental and occupational similarity between women and men threatened the economic, psychological, and social security of middle-class dominated families." [Johannsson, quoted in Fiorenza IMOH p.91]

Boys and men need to be able to establish a masculine identity without using the feminine as a negative referent. But this is difficult, as feminist parents have discovered.⁹ Discouraging

traditional boyish behaviour may leave a child isolated amongst his peers. Trying to eliminate sex differences may make children conform more to the distinctions they can establish, and create anxiety over gender roles, as Coote and Campbell point out. [Coote and Campbell, SF, p.182]

Yet it is imperative to discover new ways of expressing masculinity. It cannot be defined over against femininity, where this leads to men seeking to dominate and denigrate women. Moreover, as Rich says, a number of men are now seeing that patriarchy "in degrading and oppressing its daughters, has also at some less overt level failed its sons." [Rich, OWB, p.78] Korda, for example, writes that men can only justify male chauvinism by saying that it is a social custom too deeply ingrained to be eradicated, and that it works. But, he goes on, "it doesn't. We pay the price for our assumptions in unhappiness, divorce, bitterness, the constant sense of being ourselves prisoners of some system that has separated the species into warring camps." [Korda, MC, p.222] Men who do not fit the traditional pattern may distance themselves from it by redefining their masculinity. Transsexual men are an extreme example of this. Although in some instances there is genuine biological ambiguity, in others, transsexuals "have an excessively narrow image of what constitutes 'sex-appropriate' behaviour." [Eichler, TDS, p.75]¹⁰ Rather than seeking to change the norm, they opt for surgical alteration. Whether male homosexuality is related to over-rigid definitions of the masculine role is an open question, not discussed here.

The problem is not just that relations between men and women

prove difficult on an individual level, but that the values associated with masculinity are writ large in society. Leghorn and Parker express this strongly, but there is some truth in what they say:

Today's world is being run predominantly by men who are totally immersed in male culture and values and who have grown up with a profound sense of male entitlement. For any one group of people to live their lives with the conviction of their natural right to women's subservience and of their own isolation from the sphere of nurturance, sensitivity, and daily maintenance of life work, is appalling. If the world seems to be on a suicidal course, it is because it is being run by people socialized into patriarchal values - insecure, irrational, aggressive, competitive, self-serving, and acquisitive people. [Leghorn and Parker, WW, p.285.]

2. Dismissive Female Attitudes Towards Men

i) The denigration of men

We have noted some male attitudes towards women which are symptomatic of the alienated relationship between the sexes, but women in their turn can treat men with contempt. The most obvious manifestation of this is in the feminist critique, which points out how destructive patriarchal values and behaviour have been for women and for the world at large. Although it is feminists who are accused of hating men, it may rather be that they express openly the contempt for men already present in women's culture. As Arcana points out, mothers tell daughters that men are sources of trouble, and not to be trusted: "We are taught to consider men brutal, insensitive, emotionally inadequate and highly needful of

nurturing and pampering, requiring special handling like babies or convalescents; we are shown how to trick them, demonstrate false affection and/or sexual passion, trap them into giving us money and social security", and even to disguise our bodies, because men appreciate the false image. [Arcana, OMD, p.47]

In our society, many women still need men to provide economic security and to father their children. This may be disguised by talk of love and marriage, but few men are able to satisfy women's emotional needs,¹¹ and men's practical contribution may be all that is left. Sharpe describes some essays written by girls in 1968, looking into their future. Most predicted having children; but 37% then recorded the death of their husbands, after which they could get on with their lives. Sharpe comments "It may be that male fears and insecurities about the protection of their power and indispensability are more well-founded than is generally thought!" [Sharpe, JLAG, p.219] There is a growing trend today for women to opt for single-parenthood, and some feminists have chosen artificial insemination in order to avoid a sexual relationship with a man. Again, it is not that feminism has caused women to despise men, where formerly they would have loved them. Rather, it is an indication that marriage has not been primarily a romantic or affectionate union, but an economic and biological necessity.

This view of marriage underlies the position of anti-feminist women, as Ehrenreich shows. She writes that in the New Right's vision of the world "the battle of the sexes calls for a permanent state of war: the interests of the sexes are irreconcilably opposed; the survival of women demands the

subjugation of men; the most intimate relationships must be used as instruments of a larger coercive scheme." [Ehrenreich, THOM, p.168] Women confine themselves to their traditional roles because they accept "the most cynical masculine assessment of the heterosexual bond: that men are at best half-hearted participants in marriage and women are lucky to get them." [Ibid., p.149] The crime of feminism is not hating men, but "trusting them too well". [Ibid., p.152] For inherent in the New Right position is "a profound contempt for men". All are presumed to be weak, and "maintained in working order only by the constant efforts, demands and attentions of their wives." [Ibid., p.162]

Some societies and communities feel it is necessary to view marriage in a functional way, rather than seeing it in terms of romance or companionship. Arranged marriages in the Asian community in Britain, for example, have some advantages even whilst they can be criticized for limiting women's choices. As Asian women have pointed out, such marriages may well be more stable, and allow more time for teenage girls to develop their skills without their white sisters' total absorption in romance. [Sharpe, JLAG, p.286] Christian writers may stress this view of marriage for similar reasons.¹² But even if a marriage is based on economic necessity and the desire to raise children, the Christian principles which govern ordinary human relations still apply; respect for the other person is essential. If Arcana is right that women regard men as brutal, insensitive and emotionally inadequate, requiring special handling like babies or convalescents, there is a serious problem. Christians should challenge this stereotyping of men, not adapt their view of marriage to accommodate it.

ii) Women treating men as children

Rich points out that "one of the most insidious patterns between the sexes is the common equation, by women, of man with child. It is infantilizing to men, and it has meant a trapping of female energy which can hardly be calculated." Yet women reinforce this attitude in each other. [Rich, OWB, p.213] In mature relationships, based on interdependence, either partner may wish to be "mothered" at particular moments. What is harmful is a relationship between two adults which is permanently based on the parent-child relation, so that one partner never takes responsibility for their own life. Stephen Clark talks about men being "feminized" in a similar context, but infantilize is more appropriate. It is not that men act like women, but that they are not being adult, a fault into which women also fall.

Women treat men as children by adopting a protective servicing role which assumes male helplessness and vulnerability.¹³ This is quite different from a division of labour within the home because it allows men to escape their proper responsibilities by making excuses for them. For example, many mothers in McKee's data on father participation in childcare were

"easy" on their husbands, praising their involvement even where it was minimal, accepting reasons for low involvement such as male inexperience, tiredness, disinterest, incompetence, physical unsuitability (clumsiness, large hands), and psychological unsuitability (rough, quick-tempered, impatient, squeamish) - reasons that would not stand up if applied to women. [McKee, in McKee and O'Brien ed, TFF, p.130]

Women may collude in a similar way with men's excuses for avoiding other domestic responsibilities. It is true that many men have not learned to look after their own or others' physical needs, but basic maintenance skills are not hard to acquire. One woman comments on the incompetent way her partner attempted housework: "All this pretence at ignorance ... is an exercise in defiance. Men can't really be that stupid." [Fransella and Frost, OBAW, p.132] One reason for women's infantilizing of men is that this puts them in a position of power, albeit in a limited sphere. Boulton comments on how a woman may exclude her husband from childcare to "maintain her sense of special skill and expertise in her own and her husband's eyes". [Boulton, OBAM, p.159] Oakley too recognizes that "women have conspired among themselves to deny men the rights of full-citizenship in a female world, and this exclusion has sometimes been a powerfully conscious activity". [Oakley, SW, p.339]

It can also be argued that women make excuses for men's moral failings because they accept the view of men as unregenerate. According to Mary McIntosh, the ideology of male sexual needs sees male infidelities or promiscuity as expressions not of major moral failings, but features of a world in which boys are expected to be boys. [Evans, SDB, p.80] Thus, as Callahan points out, men are "excused a multitude of sins for which women would be ostracized". [Callahan, TIOE, p.107] We shall see that a characteristic sin of women is failure to take responsibility, and this includes failure to challenge men about their behaviour.

iii) Women protecting male vulnerability

Women may treat the male ego as psychologically vulnerable,

accepting that men need to feel superior to women. Under this system, men are "completely dependent upon women's co-operation in a game of ego-bolstering to reassure them that they are indeed superior and dominant." If a woman plays the game, the relationship is built on a lie; if she does not, she wreaks havoc upon his ego. She will suffer because she knows that her man "is dominant only because she humors him into believing he is." [Morgan, MP, p.131/2] Gornick and Moran make this point strongly:

There are few trauma greater than ... the wife's discovery of her husband's dependencies ... of her own gut-superiority in a thousand hidden crannies of the relationship; than the realization that in many situations his judgement is no better than hers; that he does not really know more than she; that he is not the calm, rational, nonemotional dealer in facts and relevant arguments ... Equally ... serious is her recognition that she is not really the weaker vessel, that she is often called upon to be the strong one in the relationship. These trauma^[sic]/are the more harrowing because they are interpreted as individual, unique, secret ... not even ... to be admitted to oneself. [Gornick and Moran, eds., WISS, p.92]

The man too will suffer if he realises he is not really dominant, for this leaves him acutely vulnerable to the woman who knows him. Yet many women are reluctant to hurt men by exposing the lie, and Christian women may be encouraged to protect men's ego in this way. Advice on how to "manage" men is prevalent in both Christian and non-Christian literature for women. In 1975, Bernard described the tenets of Fascinating Womanhood, an American movement with strong biblical underpinnings, paralleled

in Christian writings today:¹⁴

make your husband feel like a man, he must be number one; though marriage is a democracy, the man must be president; the ideal woman must be feminine, have a lovely character, find happiness in being a good homemaker and mother; retain a certain amount of childlikeness. Combined with complete understanding of her husband, these rules will help her find complete love. She fascinates, amuses, enchants him, and arouses in him a desire to shelter and protect her. Both the meek and the overbearing husband undergo complete change under the influence of her new subservient behavior. No longer threatened, he becomes more tolerant and understanding himself. [Bernard, footnote, WWM, p.179]

As we have seen, attempts are made to relate male headship to a "natural order", but it is in any case said to be commanded by God. This poses a problem for women whose husbands have no leadership abilities, or who know themselves to be more intelligent and capable than their husbands. They are nevertheless instructed to submit to their husbands. Thus Barth states that man's role is to stimulate, lead and inspire. Woman must grant him this place gladly, even if he acts or leads wrongly and this causes her suffering. [Barth, CD, III, 4, p.169ff] Although women must not appear superior, they can try to influence their husbands' decisions and behaviour. This is, however, a highly manipulative way of conducting a relationship.

Undoubtedly it works in a limited sense, because both sexes can retain belief in their own superiority. Husbands may allow their wives to manage them inside the home because it is clearly men

who control the wider society.¹⁵

Korda admits that men quickly learn to trade minor decisions for major ones, "conceding to women whole areas in which they can make the decisions ... in order to preserve the areas of decision we care about for ourselves." He adds: "because men still control most of the areas of temporal power, we have placed ourselves in a winning position, from which it is possible to offer small concessions and compromises without abandoning our central concerns." [Korda, MC, p.212]

Women too gain a sense of power, because they see how vulnerable men really are. Women have had to develop knowledge of men, as Miller explains: "Subordinates ... know much more about the dominants than vice versa. They have to. They become highly attuned to the dominants, able to predict their reactions of pleasure and displeasure." She points out that the "'mysterious' gifts (of 'feminine intuition' and 'feminine wiles') are in fact skills, developed through long practice." [Miller, TANPOW, p.10]

Women can also draw prestige from what Hughes calls "a common dignifying rationalization of people in all positions of a work hierarchy except the very top one", that "'We in this position save the people in the next higher position above from their own mistakes.'" As Hughes comments, the "notion that one saves a person of more acknowledged prestige and power, than one's self from his mistakes appears to be peculiarly satisfying." [Hughes, MATW, p.46]

If more honest relationships are to develop between the sexes, women must cease to regard men as incompetent children. For men "cannot be our brothers until we stop being their mothers."

[Dinnerstein, TROTC, p.90] Women must, says Rich, "put down the grown-up male children we have carried in our arms ... and move on, trusting ourselves and them enough to do so ... we will have to expect their anger, their cries of 'Don't leave me!', their reprisals." [Rich, p.215/6.] This means ceasing to treat men as if their "egos were of eggshell, or as if the preservation of a masculine ego at the expense of an equal relationship were even desirable." [Ibid., p.217] They must expect men to behave as equals without being thought special. Men may see this as hate, and say that they will "perish emotionally without our constant care and attention". [Ibid., p.217]¹⁶ But instead of perishing, men can discover their own emotionality, and discover it to be something the world desperately needs. This course is a hard one for both women and men to follow, but it does offer the hope of a mutual interdependence more akin to the Christian ideal.

C. THE WAY AHEAD

Given the degree of alienation between the sexes, it is not enough merely to assert their equality. Moreover, although we will demand that women and men are treated equally in many circumstances, the emphasis must be on the uniqueness of the individual and their needs. What must not be lost sight of, however, is the extent of the problem which we are facing:

The oppression of women is not something that can be thrown off like a raincoat when the weather changes: it is an internal malignancy that has to be painfully dug out and destroyed. Total liberation from the constraints of a divisively feminine upbringing in a decidedly sexist culture implies such an unrealistically optimistic view of the human

capacity to change that it is probably never possible. We can excavate and eliminate the main source of the disease, but various hidden tributaries remain. [Oakley, TSOH, p.195]

This chapter has shown that the present relationship between the sexes is flawed; both men and women suffer from the malignancy which is patriarchy, on an individual and a structural level. The dualistic thinking identified above underpins a particular view of work which obscures key features of its meaning in our society. The destructive attitudes the sexes display towards each other underlie the problems associated with the "service ethic" outlined in Part Four. Christian theology, because it has lacked a perspective which takes a person's sex seriously, has not been able to offer an appropriate critique of these areas. A feminist theology of work needs to explore them in depth, however, and these are the themes of the rest of this thesis.

NOTES

1. The exception would be those who argue, with Firestone, for women to be freed from reproduction.
2. We might note, however, that these are essentially Western concepts. Asian society, for example, may stress interdependence. See Khan, in Barker and Allen eds., DAEIWAM, and Katoppo, CAF.
3. Gilligan, in IADV, shows this thinking in women considering abortion.
4. There were exceptions to this interpretation. See above, p.102ff.
5. Willis, LTL, and Wood in McRobbie and Nava ed. GAG, give accounts of these attitudes amongst boys.
6. See Morgan, THC and Pape, GAW, for illustrations of this. Daly's work discusses this in depth.
7. Such dualistic thinking is discussed further in Chapter Seven.
8. Barth argues on this basis, for example. Barth, CD, Vol. III. See also Tournier, TGOF.
9. See Arcana, EMS, for example.
10. See also the work of Stoller and Green.

11. See Baker Miller, TANPOW, and Eichenbaum and Orbach, WDW

12. For example, Clark, MAWIC, 645f.

13. As we see in Chapter Eight, this model of childcare is suited only to highly dependent children. Generally, the emphasis should be on encouraging independence.

14. For example, see King, HDYFTT, and Mitson ed., C. Scanzoni and Hardesty criticise this approach. Also see Ehrenreich's discussion in THOM Chapter 10, and Friedan, TSS, p.53ff.

15. Black or working-class men who actually have little power in society nevertheless benefit from being male in a patriarchal culture.

16. cf Goldberg, op.cit., p.128/9.

PART THREE: THEOLOGY AND THE MEANING OF WORK

CHAPTER FIVE: THE AMBIVALENCE OF WORK

In the previous chapter, dualistic thinking was identified as a major element in the patriarchal world view. Characteristics are identified as masculine or feminine, and the sexes are judged different and opposite on this basis. As we have seen, in reality individuals have a mixture of characteristics within them, both good and evil, but facing up to this reality is uncomfortable. Schaef describes what she calls the "White Male system" as dualistic. It sees things in either/or terms and has little understanding of paradox, she says. [Schaef, WR, p.147ff] This approach has long been apparent in Western thought, but it is only recently that feminists have identified it as a peculiarly male way of thinking. Both Schaef and Gilligan suggest that women base their reasoning on a more integrated view of the world. It may be true that women are less ready to accept the dualism inherent in much Western thought - hence the stereotype that women are illogical - but we must be cautious about such generalizations.

Other cultures have different values. For example, Desmond Tutu speaks of the African sense "of the corporateness of life, of our rejection of hellenistic dichotomies in our insistence that life, material and spiritual, secular and sacred, ... is all of a piece". [Tutu in Wilmore and Cone eds., BT, p.484] Further, as Schaef recognises, many of the major religions emphasise that paradox and ambiguity lie at the heart of life. [Schaef, WR, p.147] One must lose one's life in order to find it; good and

evil grow together until the end of time. Although the Western Christian tradition in particular has often expressed itself dualistically, many theologians have criticized this, as we shall see. Schaef points out that dualistic thinking can be very efficient, but it can also limit creativity and cause confusion. [Ibid., p.151] The contention here will be that the theology of work has suffered because it has wrongly accepted a dualistic understanding of the categories with which it works, and failed to come to terms with ambiguity and paradox.

In particular, the theology of work has accepted a division between home and work, and thus excluded much of women's work experience from its deliberations. We explore the implications of this in the next chapter. Further, its concentration on men's experience of work has led it largely to equate work with employment, and this has limited its understanding of the real meaning of work. This is clearly evident from a consideration of the major themes dealt with in the theology of work.

A. DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN APPROACHES TO WORK

Paul Brett identifies four attitudes which Christians can take towards work, the seeds of which can all be found in Genesis 1-3. In this section, we also look at two additional elements found in the theology of work, which Brett refers to but does not treat separately.¹

1. The "Natural" State is Leisure

In Genesis 1:29, writes Brett, God gives Adam the earth and

plants for food. Here work does not seem to be necessary, for the "natural" state is leisure: "Man is to look for his fulfilment outside his work." [Brett, WATT, p.1.] This attitude has been held in past societies, as Welbourn shows in **Shaping the Future of Work**. The Romans, for example, saw work as the occupation of slaves, and Christians echoed this when they saw contemplation as the highest form of life. In medieval society, there was more emphasis on leisure - even serfs got eight weeks holiday. [Welbourn, STFOW, p.39] Brett suggests elsewhere that if we hold the view that leisure is man's "natural" state, "we may not be too unhappy to see the place of work in our society grow less and less". [Brett, T, p.187] A recent trend in the theology of work is to stress that fulfilment is possible outside work.²

This interpretation of Genesis, however, is suspect. The gathering of foodstuffs requires work, even if this is less arduous before the Fall. Moreover the concepts of leisure and work are inadequately defined. The work envisaged in Genesis cannot be equated with paid employment, nor can the twentieth century meaning of leisure be read into the text. Moynagh has a more helpful view, that the original meaning of work in the Bible is to do with mastery of the laws of nature. Thus he can call work anything which involves doing: learning, exercising, mastering any kind of activity or process. The biblical distinction as he sees it is between work and rest, rather than work and leisure. [Moynagh, MUW, p.96] This may make more sense for women, who have rarely had the same access to leisure as have men, since family maintenance and childcare are continuous responsibilities.

2. "Getting on with it"

A second theme Brett isolates in the theology of work, is the characterization of work as "part of the natural terms and conditions of life ... It is there and man just gets on with it. Even in his leisure time, away from his paid employment, man continues to work for it is natural to him." [Brett, WATT, p.1.] Clearly this is true on one level; we work because we expect to do so, and want some kind of purposive activity in our lives. People often accept unpleasant work or conditions without protest, and this is particularly true of women's unpaid work. Pahl comments that most women's conception of work has been close to "a necessary and pragmatic activity essential to getting by"; [Pahl, DOL, p.84] and this corresponds to the importance women attach to coping.³ We shall see in Part Four that the attitude that work must simply be "got on with" can create problems, if no limits have been set to it.

This view of work is helpful as a counter-balance to more elevated claims, such as those made by theologians who see work as an act of co-creation with God. Anthony believes that too much importance has been attached to work, so that it cannot live up to our expectations: "Man can be regarded as alienated from his work only when he has been subjected to an ideology of work which requires him to be devoted to it". [Anthony, TIOW, p.304.] He therefore hopes for a return to "a more cynical, a more realistic view, that work has to be done, that its performance often produces rugged and admirable qualities but that the search for deeper satisfactions must be conducted in other directions". [Ibid., p.312] But some people do find deeper satisfactions in

their work, and for many, employment provides a range of benefits not always fully appreciated until their jobs are lost or under threat. This is true for women who have left the labour force to be mothers and housewives as well as for those who are formally unemployed.

The idea that work is part of being human is useful in that it avoids identifying work with employment. The danger is that this may result in work being robbed of any theological significance. Work is not just something we "get on with", it affords possibilities of growth as well as of misery: "There is no true justification through work but there is creative and, at times, enjoyable service in fellowship with others." [Eaton, C, p.111] Christians need to affirm some aspects of work and criticize others, recognizing its ambivalent character. The positive and negative aspects of work are noted under 3 and 4 below; the problem then is that these may be taken to be mutually exclusive.

3. The Curse on Work

The third attitude towards work which Brett isolates is that which sees work as "toil or labour ... hard and relentless and unremitting. It is part of the curse of sin, a punishment for sin. The necessity of hard work is part of man's fallen state." [Brett, WATT, p.1] We saw in Chapter One that Brett's use of "man" is confusing here, since it is not clear whether it is humanity or males who are cursed by relentless toil. It is to Adam, the male, that God's words are addressed: "cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you ...

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken". [Gen.3.17-19, RSV] Many commentators therefore limit the meaning of this text to men. Von Rad, for example, explains that the "woman's punishment struck at the deepest root of her being as wife and mother, the man's strikes at the innermost nerve of his life: his work, his activity, and provision for sustenance." [Von Rad, GAC, p.90/1]

Yet in practice, we know that women have always played a part in wresting a living from the land; indeed, the gathering of foodstuffs has often been primarily women's work. Moreover, women in industrialised societies often do the least attractive work, and clearly experience the thorns, thistles and sweat which characterise it. This can be especially true for Black women, who speak of having "no other prospect than to fill the jobs which the indigenous workforce were no longer willing to do", [Bryan et.al., THOTR, p.25] with consequences of bad health, low pay and poor working conditions. [Ibid., p.92]

Some theologians recognize this. Westermann acknowledges that for both sexes work is always linked with toil and effort:

every area of work throws up its thorns and thistles which cannot be avoided; every worthwhile accomplishment demands sweat ... We must gratefully accept the progress of technology which has lightened many of man's burdens, in the factories, in the cultivation of the soil, for the housewife, and in so many other places. But this does not alter the fact that in all work which is undertaken seriously and enthusiastically, worthwhile results presume difficulty, thorns and thistles, sweat. [Westermann, C,

Other writers, such as Calvin and Cassuto, mention that the curse on the ground affects both sexes, but do not develop this at all. Pope John Paul II recognizes that women's work involves sweat and toil, but applies this especially to their duties as mothers.

The idea that work is cursed for both women and men is an important one, because of its implications. If we hold this, says Brett, "we may accept it as something of a misery to be endured and look for fulfilment elsewhere, or we may seek ways of changing it, redeeming it, so that its curse is somehow lifted." [Brett, T, p.187] Workers may be counselled to accept injustice or pain in their daily work as a "sharing of the sufferings of Christ himself", [Richardson, TBDOW, p.42] and this is the basis of the "service ethic" discussed in Part Four. Or work may be regarded not just as "a misery to be endured", but as a punishment for sin. This also results in leaving poor working conditions unchanged. Thus slavery could be seen as appropriate to the lower orders, or conditions in nineteenth century factories as acceptable, says Brett, because work was not expected to be other than hard and painful. Today, he adds, those on social security are condemned, for work is seen as a punishment "man" cannot, or should not seek to escape. [Brett, WATT, p.2] Similarly, when women's suffering in childbirth was seen as a punishment, offering pain relief was seen as an offence. Today, women who seek to escape the negative consequences of motherhood are condemned, as we shall see in Chapter Nine.

Some work clearly is alienating and painful. The direct

descendants of the curse on work in this sense are those men and women who eke out an existence in a hostile environment, and die if their crops fail; or those in an industrialised society whose work is oppressive, unskilled and low-paid. Marxist analysis identifies the working-classes as those whose labour is alienated and exploited; and to be Black, or female can heap additional burdens on the worker. Soelle suggests that most people "are forced to live beneath their own level of physical, emotional, rational and spiritual endowments"; [Soelle, TWATL, p.57] and that the "vast majority of workers learn to suppress their personalities and aspirations because they simply cannot afford to forfeit the next paycheck." [Ibid., p.64]

This should be a matter of utmost concern to Christians, she says, yet:

Disobedience, rebellion, and critical protest are excoriated as the chronic symptoms of idleness and therefore of sin, while mere functioning, emptiness, mindlessness, and listlessness, which truly insult the creator of life, are ignored. And by virtue of their socialization, women, more than men, have been injured by a system that rewards passivity and punishes the desire to experiment and innovate. [Ibid., p.66]

A feminist theology of work takes passivity and emptiness in women very seriously, and is concerned that women should fulfil the potential given them by the creator of life. We shall examine this in Chapter Ten.

As well as being alienating, there is often an element of drudgery and monotony in work, as Oldham notes: "there will

always be jobs in which the satisfaction lies not so much in the doing of them as in having done them and got them out of the way." [Oldham, WIMS, p.50] However, it is not possible to characterize all work as a negative experience, in some sense cursed because of sin. Human life is not universally marked by a struggle for survival. Both natural environment, and inequalities in the distribution of wealth, mean that some people need to do very little work for a high standard of living. Indeed the oppressors who might be thought to deserve punishment are the ones who can force others to work for them. Once again, this suggests that work has an ambivalent character, and cannot be defined as a single entity.

4. Work as Creativity

The fourth attitude Brett identifies is based on Genesis 1:28, which shows "man being creative and exercising control, sharing with God in the further development of his creation." Work is creative and fulfilling, through work "man brings new things into existence and dominates his environment. It is the means of the completion and perfection of the world as a whole." [Brett, WATT, p.2.] As we saw in Chapter One, Brett says that science and technology can be seen as "the proper outworking of this creative urge. ... Man can even be seen to be bringing about the redemption of the world through his work in it, humanising it as he masters it and brings it into subjection to himself." [Ibid., p.2]

This interpretation is common. For example, Welbourn speaks of "technological man", who like Adam before the Fall has dominion

over the earth. Since the technology which should have been a creative tool is oppressive, technological man must try to become like the Man, says Welbourn, working to build a world where he can put his marvellous skills to their proper use. [Welbourn, STFOW, p.50ff] As we saw earlier, there is some difficulty with the use of "man" here. Presumably the generic sense is to be understood, since the command to have dominion is addressed to both sexes. Yet women have not been to the forefront in inventing and using technology, and have limited opportunities for exercising power and control.

It is important to stress that women are included in the command to have dominion. Both sexes were given a "cultural mandate", write Scanzoni and Hardesty: "Agriculture, animal husbandry, education, industry, government, commerce, the arts - every human being is equally responsible under God for all aspects of life on this earth." [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.25] But for women to play their part in this, a re-ordering of society is required. Indeed, women may take issue with the interpretation of dominion and creativity as power and control.

5. An Ethic of Work

Brett states that these four themes are intertwined in most later thought on work and theology. The history of Christian thinking about work is not discussed here, since it has been adequately done elsewhere.⁴ But we need to pay some attention to the work ethic, as it has been a highly influential concept. It springs partly from the notion that work is cursed, seeing work as a penitential discipline rather than as creative development, says

Brett. [Brett, WATT, p.4] But there is also a more positive element, that sees work as a calling and a means of spiritual progress.

The origins of the work ethic can be traced back to the Reformation era, as we saw in Chapter One. Luther affirmed that God could be served in daily life and not just in a religious vocation. For Calvin, God could be served through a vocation in the secular world. God was glorified through commercial and economic activity, and success in business was a sign of being one of the elect. [Ibid., p.3] For Puritan thinkers like Baxter, work was a means of discipline and good in itself. Idleness was the great sin. [Clarke, WIC, p.176ff] This belief is still seen today in attitudes towards unemployment. People fear that "young people who have never had paid work may never learn 'good', i.e. time disciplined and submissive, work habits ... if they do not experience the joys of paid work, they may become so misguided as not to want it." [Walter, HOTD, p.39]

But how far were these ideas thought to affect women? Again, it was noted in Chapter One that little attention has been paid to this question. Morgan comments that Weber's thesis linking the Protestant ethic with the rise of capitalism can be seen

as a study of masculinity ... that was intimately bound up with the developing social formation of capitalism. The main character traits of the ideal - typical puritan, self-control, discipline, rationality, methodicalness - are traits which would probably be defined as 'masculine' by many people.

It is not "mankind", but men who are Weber's focus. [Morgan, in

DFR, ed., Roberts, p.93]

Harrison discusses women's relation to the work ethic at greater length. Before the Industrial Revolution, she says, ideals of thrift and hard work were applied to all members of the family. Sunday schools, for example, taught that idleness was a danger. [Harrison, WWAW, p.71] But concepts "of the central importance of work as a human activity which had religious roots in Puritanism were pressed into the service of economic and industrial aims in forming the attitudes of the future work force." [Ibid., p.72] Individualism was embraced by men as a religious spur to economic enterprise, but this had a hollow ring for women: "both integrity and soul-saving were hedged in by the duties of obedience to their husbands and suppression of their own feelings, preferences and insights." So, concludes Harrison, women slipped out of the scope of the work ethic into "a form of subordination dressed up as duty which channelled their relationship both to God and to wider society through the men on whom they were economically dependent." [Ibid., p.74]

Vanderkloet picks up the idea of individualism when he writes that work is not motivated by a Protestant work ethic, but "controlled by a humanist work ethic which had its roots in the Renaissance faith that nothing can stop autonomous man from conquering the world by means of his own genius." [Vanderkloet, in Marshall, ed. LOL, p.27] This ethic is apparent in society today, where value is placed on individual achievement, private enterprise and self-help. Ehrenreich and English discuss this for the United States, where, they say, the highest value is placed on "material self-interest in a world of scarcity". [Ehrenreich

and English, FHOG, p.290f] Similar trends can be observed in Britain, and are reflected, for example, in Beatrix Campbell's discussion of Conservative women. [Campbell, TIL] The emphasis on autonomy can be useful, as feminists have found. But any ethic based on success, whether in business or in individual fulfilment, militates against those who cannot succeed, and whose lives offer little opportunity for choice. Unfortunately, many women find themselves in this position. This is examined further in Chapter Ten.

Although women do not appear to have the "job ethic" which is the present day version of the work ethic - see below - there are two different elements of the work ethic evident in their lives. Firstly, in the original understanding of the work ethic, men knew themselves to be God's elect because their business prospered. Similarly today, women may look to success in childrearing and family relationships as a sign that they are good Christians or simply good women. We shall consider this in more detail in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Secondly, the work ethic demands that people work hard and avoid idleness - people today may regard the "workaholic" as an extreme example of this. Yet whilst women may be regarded as outside the scope of the work ethic, many of them have clearly internalized the strictures against idleness, and across the world women work for longer hours and for less reward than do men.⁵ Partly because most women have domestic responsibilities, their "spare time" is often filled with domestic tasks, and they have little real leisure. Many women find it difficult to stop work in this sense.⁶

Welbourn points out that most people today operate with a "job ethic" rather than a work ethic, [Welbourn, STFOW, p.40] but women may not relate to paid work in quite this way. "While men have no alternative but to work and are considered asocial if they refuse to do so", wrote Myrdal and Klein in 1956, "this same ethical rule has not been widely applied to women." [Myrdal and Klein, WTR, p.88]⁷ The same is true today, for there is not the same onus on women to take jobs, especially if they are married or have dependent relatives. Women who have a job may complain that there is pressure on them to be housewives, and this is reflected in legislation.⁸ In their turn, housewives and mothers frequently complain that there is pressure on them to get a job;⁹ and it may be that the influence of feminism is altering expectations about whether women should have jobs.

But this perception of pressure may be related to the strains of the housewife/mother role identified in Chapter Eight, rather than to actual demands made by the women's movement. Most feminists advocate choice in this area. For example, Sharpe says the choice whether or not to have a job is one of the few choices left to women, and requiring all women to take jobs in the absence of other changes simply narrows the parameters of their lives. [Sharpe, DI, p.242] Many women do not even have this choice.

6. Unemployment - the Central Issue

The growth of unemployment has led many theologians in this country to look for new approaches to work. A number have recognized that women have a different experience of working

life, and have turned to this as a possible model for the future.¹⁰

Walter notes that there are both men and women who do not wish for paid work, and who can use their time creatively for other purposes. At a time of high unemployment, he argues, it would seem reasonable to allow these people to opt out of the labour market in order to leave the jobs to those who need the benefits employment can provide. For "if all men were freed to consider the possibility of being homemakers and were given the right by society not to work if they so chose; and if all women were freed to have as much right to a paid job as men, then the problem of unemployment would be very largely solved." [Walter, HOTD, p.107]

Katherine Whitehorn makes the similar point that we should be grateful to those who are willing to make a go of the "workless life". If housewives "actually want to stay home and get their breath back - why on earth shouldn't they? ... even the bits of a housewife's day that don't strictly count as work are keeping one person contentedly off the workforce; and if she's happy baking cakes ... then we should be delighted". [Whitehorn, O, 1985]

There are a number of difficulties here.

Firstly, those who desperately want employment may not have the appropriate skills for the jobs on offer, while those who want to opt out may be the ones who do have those skills. For example, if a female nurse leaves the profession to bring up a family, her job is not directly available to a man made redundant from the local steelworks. A manager might wish to take early retirement, but could not be replaced by a school-leaver.

Secondly, jobs vary greatly in their content, pay, conditions, rewards and frustrations, and people relate differently to them. Some would find it difficult to make a long-term choice about employment. The women described by Harper and Richards choose to spend intermittent spells in the workforce. This enables them to gain the benefits of paid work in the short term, but stop when the pressure becomes too great because of poor employment conditions or because they also have responsibility for children. [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.228] Fagin and Little's suggestion that there might be a right to be unemployed, akin to that granted to those on sick leave or maternity leave, might be more appropriate in such cases. [Fagin and Little, TFF, p.15]

Thirdly, Walter does not appear to appreciate the problems even those committed to home-making have to face. A life centred around the home, particularly with small children to care for, can engender stress, isolation and frustration, as we see in Chapter Eight. Women who have opted out of the labour market have also at times opted out of their responsibilities to wider society, and accepted a life which does not fully use their capabilities. A man or woman may be happy baking cakes at home, but if they have other skills which the world needs, we might question whether they are behaving correctly. This is a point Radcliffe Richards develops at length, and it is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Ten.

None of the difficulties listed above is insurmountable, but they do indicate that Walter's argument is over-simplistic. He is right to distinguish between formal unemployment and being without paid work, but neither of these is wholly good or wholly

bad. Walter does not pay sufficient attention to the ambivalent character of work in both its paid and unpaid forms. He does, however, recognize that people relate differently to work, and that reactions to unemployment vary according to how people felt about paid work, what their last job was like, how they lost that job, and whether being unemployed was normal or deviant in their community. Unemployment does not have automatic consequences. Some people cope with it, some do not, and some have even improved through it. [Walter, HOTD, p.3] Some people leave paid work to be mothers, or to take retirement, or for a new calling, and they thrive, he says. The problem is of being unemployed, "a very special kind of being without paid work." [Ibid., p.6]

Walter points out that theories about the importance of paid work are deficient, because they do not recognize that many people without it are alright. [Ibid., p.98] This deficiency arises because of the equation of work with employment which we noted earlier. For example, Fagin and Little say paid work gives: a) a source of identity; b) a source of relationships outside the nuclear family; c) a source of obligatory activity; d) the opportunity to develop skills and creativity; e) a factor which structures psychological time; f) a source of a sense of purpose; g) a source of income and control. [Fagin and Little, TFF, p.28]¹¹ Certainly paid work can provide these benefits, but they can also be obtained elsewhere, through unpaid work and relationships for example. Theologians of work may fail to make this point. Bleakley, for example, quotes Mumford: "The function of work is to provide man with a living: not for the purpose of enlarging his capacities to consume but of liberating his capacities to create. The social meaning of work derives from the

acts of creation it makes possible." [Mumford, in Bleakley, WTSATS, p.72/3]

Unemployment is seen to be bad for people because it cuts them off from creative work: "It stunts their freedom to grow as persons, it breaks up their fellowship as groups". [Brett, T, p.183] As we have already seen, theologians of work assume that people previously found their identity in paid work, and therefore proclaim that the task today must be to find ways of valuing people outside their employment. Thus Peter Baelz writes:

A deep sense of human dignity and worth which is not tied to economic achievement needs to be fostered. Undoubtedly, paid employment plays an important part in the lives of many people, in establishing their sense of worth. This is what makes involuntary unemployment so destructive and provides the motive for the demand for full employment. But living is more than working for a wage. Attention must be given to other aspects of human life, such as education, leisure, unpaid work and service, which, together with paid work, can contribute to the sense of human dignity. ... new patterns of community living need to be evolved which will give men and women a sense of individual worth and of importance to the community whether they are young or old, healthy or ill, in work or out of work. [Baelz, POE, p.78]

This concern for human dignity and worth is admirable, but needs extending to take account of women's situation. Women have not generally looked to economic achievement for their identity. Of course there are many women for whom paid work has an important meaning, and we shall explore this in the next chapter. But

women's feminine identity is not tied to employment in the same way that masculine identity is for men.¹² A large number of women such as housewives, full-time child-carers, or those in short-term or part-time employment, do not derive their identity from this source. They fit oddly into the usual categories for discussing employment and unemployment. For example, one wonders whether Bleakley has housewives in mind when he writes: "Those who by lack of ability, infirmity or other mishap are unable to fit into this framework (of paid work) are deemed not to be 'industrious' and run the risk of being given a social exclusion order by society." [Bleakley, WTSATS, p.73/4] For it is difficult to describe the complex factors which make millions of women unpaid housewives as "lack of ability, infirmity or other mishap."

Women do face the problem of being "given a social exclusion order by society", but this is related to their status in society generally, rather than being a simple result of unemployment. Mothers of small children who do have paid work can still suffer social exclusion and disapproval. The key point is that it has been hard for women to achieve a sense of identity and worth whatever their situation. The social attitudes outlined in the previous chapter make it difficult for women to feel affirmed whether they are in paid work or not. Even women who are successful can suffer from this.¹³ It is not enough for the theology of work to state that all people should be valued, without also examining the factors which hinder establishing a sense of worth. A feminist theology of work recognizes differences between the sexes here, and draws attention to the link between masculinity, worth and employment, and to the

reasons for women's lack of self-esteem. These issues are discussed over the next few chapters.

B: AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK

A number of inadequacies in the theology of work have been pointed out. In particular we have noted the failure to come to terms with women's experience of work. Faced with changes in employment patterns, theologians are beginning to look for new approaches, but they are hampered by a tendency to think dualistically about work. It has already been suggested that they pay insufficient attention to the ambivalent character of work, and accept a division between home and work. These points need further examination.

Work, whether paid or unpaid, has the potential to be fulfilling and alienating. It is part of life, and shares the ambivalent character of all life in a fallen world. Von Rad notes that work itself is not a punishment, but

that it makes life so wretched, that it is so threatened by failures and wastes of time and often enough comes to nothing, that its actual result usually has no relation to the effort expended - that the narrator designates as a dissonance in creation which is not accounted for by God's original ordinance. [Von Rad, GAC, p.92]

If this is so, we can define work as basically good but given an ambivalent character by sin. This point is made by Francis Fiorenza, who states that an imperative of good theological reflection on work is to reflect on "the ambivalence and

ambiguity of work both within the religious tradition and within societal praxis." The religious ambivalence, he says, arises out of the knowledge that work is creative and a service to the community, but at the same time is a punishment for sin. In society, work is important for an individual's self-concept, yet many have an instrumental attitude towards it, working for rewards and not for the work itself.[F. Fiorenza, in Baum ed. WAR, p.98]

Clearly people are often ambivalent about the place of work in their lives. Roger Clarke notes that there are elements of hate in the most valued jobs, and of love in the worst. [Clarke, WIC, p.157] Moreover, it can be difficult assessing true attitudes towards work, since people often respond by giving the expected answer. This is illustrated by Oakley's study of housewives. She found that working-class housewives reported that they liked housework, whilst middle-class women said they disliked it. Yet in extended interviews, both groups of women had similar views of the negative and positive aspects of housework.

This mixed response to work is evident in society at large. There is a cultural denigration of work which may, for example, be seen in a place of employment, where people are united by the sense that they are all getting on with the unpleasant task of earning a living. This is reflected by daytime radio disc-jockeys, as Michael Atkinson astutely observes. There the week begins with sympathy for the fact that it is Monday, and builds up towards the freedom from work that the weekend offers. [Atkinson, C, p.98.] Ironically, many listeners are housewives, for whom the weekend is equally occupied by work. The girls Sharpe describes

will discover that housewives too have negative experiences of work, but as they face their particular socio-economic conditions, work is "not seen as attractive but as an unfortunate necessity of life and therefore the apparent opportunity to avoid it seems one of the advantages of being a woman". [Sharpe, JLAG, p.209]

Anthony fails to appreciate this expression of a negative attitude, for he speaks of "a reluctance to confess that one's work is tedious and disliked when there is a general assumption shared by questioner and questioned that one's value is determined by one's work; to admit to hating one's job is to admit to hating one's life." [Anthony, TIOW, p.274] For those in secure employment at least, it is quite permissible to admit to dislike of one's job. Anthony's point is, however, more appropriate during a period of high unemployment, when jobs are seen to be valuable in themselves regardless of their content.

Welbourn highlights this in his description of workers in Sunderland, when he points out that someone whose job is under threat will try to cling on to it, even if they spoke of that work negatively whilst their job was secure. [Welbourn, STFOW, p.32/3] Interestingly, radio disc-jockeys can launch campaigns against unemployment, at the same time that they reflect negative attitudes towards working. Work, whether paid or unpaid, is seen here as an unpleasant necessity. Yet as we shall see in the next chapter, paid work brings many benefits. People are usually conscious of these even when they complain about their job, or having to work at all.

It is not possible, then, to isolate a single attitude towards work, and neither can we characterize it as inherently good or evil. Terrible working conditions may give rise to revolutionary solidarity amongst the oppressed. What seem like the most saintly actions can have negative consequences - for example, as we see in Chapter Nine, it may not be good to be a recipient of another's self-sacrifice. Similarly, science and technology can have a negative impact. At the same time that our creative urge drives us to new inventions and greater mastery of the earth, the potential for disaster grows. Splitting the atom in theory provides cheap clean energy. It also gives long term problems from contaminated waste, and gives human beings the power to devastate the globe. West also makes this point. He stresses that saying "all work completes creation", as Moltmann and John Paul II do, fails to recognize that work can be dehumanising and underestimates human sin. The achievements of modern technology are ambiguous; the effect of sin is not just to make the execution of work toilsome, but its results are ambiguous or evil. [West, MC, p.12/13]

If it is not possible to make categorical statements about the meaning of work, how should it be viewed? Although Preston is talking about moral achievement rather than work, he provides what looks to be a more promising framework. He says that Christians have no a priori grounds either for pessimism or optimism. "No limits have been set by God to human achievement if humanity responds to his call", but neither is there any assurance "that humanity will become more obedient, or that there is any built-in process leading to a better world." Each generation has "to make its own the moral advances made by its

predecessor, and if possible extend them". If it fails, "the disastrous effect of the collapse of something superior is more than that of something less so." So, concludes Preston, "Good and evil may well grow together until the end of time. What we know of the recalcitrance of human beings makes us cautious, just as what we know of their potentialities of goodness makes us hopeful." In hope we make the affirmation that "history will not ultimately defeat God's purpose (but not that that purpose will be achieved in the continuities of our present historical order), and that no human effort to work for the good of humanity is wasted." [Preston, RATPOC, p.146/7]

If we take this framework and apply it to work, we are able to affirm the potential for deeper satisfactions that some work affords, without denying that it can also be destructive. We can point to advances that have been made in conditions of employment, such as health and safety legislation, shorter hours, and mechanization of repetitive tasks. We can strive to make still further improvements, for example putting right some of the injustices women or Black people suffer in the workplace. But we recognize that we can never achieve a perfect society, and further that alongside our new advances go new opportunities for failure. Sheppard stresses that even when whatever system we oppose has been destroyed, "evil will still be there in us. The new structures of society which are then developed will also be penetrated by sin, and will constantly need to be criticised and reformed." [Sheppard, BTTP, p.155] For this reason, writers like Stephen Clark who point to dire consequences if women and men take up less differentiated roles are not wholly wrong. Christian feminists who are true to the Gospel must take account of human

potential for sin, and accept that the advances procured in a more egalitarian society will inevitably bring with them problems as yet unknown.

In Soelle's terms, we must acknowledge both our frailty, that we are made from dust, and that we are "born into the process of liberation. ... That we are willed, needed, projected, and formed by God is the greatest affirmation we can bring to our lives. ... affirming our createdness means embracing both sides of the dialectic." [Soelle, TWATL, p.29] A theology that ignores our being made from dust - our biological, socioeconomic reality - is an idealistic flight from reality. [Ibid., p.32]

The reality of work is that it has an ambivalent character, but it is not easy to live with this tension. Instead we may speak of work either as positive or as negative, and this may lead to insistence on a rigid split between home and work. Men may cope with alienating conditions of employment by regarding their home as a haven. Women who are frustrated with life as a housewife may idealize paid work, or seek employment as an escape from the home. In either case, the real problems associated with each sphere are left unchallenged.

The theology of work has failed to confront the split between work and home; indeed this is part of a much larger problem in theology and the Church as a whole. Religion itself has been privatised and associated with the narrow "feminine" sphere of the home.¹⁴ Gillett is one of the few theologians of work to make this point, although he does not develop it. He states that a contemporary theology of work must take seriously the

separation between worker and family, the world of men from the world of women. The fact that Christians accept this split as "the way things are", he says, "is an indictment of the deep and chronic inability of modern Christianity to take the workplace seriously." [Gillett, THE, p.140] Industrial Mission, which does take the workplace seriously, is both marginalised within the Church, and itself accepts the split between work and home.¹⁵ Gillett is therefore right to conclude that the churches "face the challenge of reuniting the family and the workplace in their theology and praxis." [Ibid., p.140]

A feminist theology of work has to relate the spheres of home and work because many women do not experience a divide between the two. This sows the seeds of a theology of work much more integrated with theology and human life. Although Brett follows the male perspective of the rest of the theology of work, his conclusion stands: "there is no single ethic of work which could give us the right answer to all our problems ... We face ambiguity and uncertainty; we act in faith. The problem about unemployment and work is part of the problem about life and human activity as a whole." [Brett, T, p.188]

NOTES

1. Particular theologians of work might emphasise one element rather than another; for example, Wickham stresses the positive view of industry associated with 4. below. The theology of work could be analysed in this way, but this is not the focus here.

2. See Walter, HOTD, and Clarke, WIC, for example.

3. See Finch and Groves eds., ALOL, and Backett, MAF.

4. For example, see Anthony, TIOW.

5. See Taylor et.al., WAWR, and Seager and Olson, WITW.

6. This point is picked up in Chapters Eight and Nine. Further research might investigate whether there is a difference between women's and men's occupations in this respect. Do they provide different opportunities for "idleness" within the job, and how do the sexes react to this? Unfortunately this question cannot be pursued here.

7. By "work" they here mean employment.

8. Aldred discussed how legislation operated against women in 1981. Aldred, WAW, p. 50/1. Changes since that time have added to women's disadvantage. For example, there are stricter requirements before women with children can register as unemployed or receive benefit.

9. The letters pages of popular women's magazines provide evidence of this.
10. See Rothwell, for example, and R. Clarke's use of her article in **Work in Crisis**.
11. Also see Jahoda, NS.
12. Within particular cultural groups this may vary. For example, Black women may see supporting their families as part of being a good mother.
13. See Cooper and Davidson, HP, for example.
14. This theme has been taken up by feminist theologians, see Ruether, NWE for example, but is not discussed here.
15. See the Church of England report **IM: An Appraisal** for discussion of this point.

CHAPTER SIX: SPLITTING HOME AND WORK

In order to construct a feminist theology of work which integrates work with the rest of life, we need to consider the historical and ideological factors which have created the separation of these two spheres.

A. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is customary to point out that before the Industrial Revolution changed the western world, the home was the base unit of production, and men, women and children had to work in order to survive. Industrialization then separated home from work, and left women idle and idealised in the home. There is some truth in that picture, since as we shall see, industry did affect the organization of life for many people. But the facts are much more complex. Neither the split between home and work today, nor the unity of home and work in pre-industrial days, are as clear-cut as has been supposed.

Clearly there was a change in the organization of work, as fewer people worked on the land, and the demand for wage labour increased. In 1750, two out of three people worked in agriculture; by 1850, the figure was one in five. [Oakley, SW, p.142] But this was not a sudden change, and some communities were affected more than others. A dichotomy between work and family "did not occur at the same time for all families (or all family members) in all industries or in all places." [Kamerman, S, p.632 note.] In particular, the effect of the changes wrought by capitalism and industrialization on women have been

oversimplified in much literature on this period. A number of issues need to be highlighted in order to gain an historical perspective on the present situation.

1. Women's Work and Family Life

Although it may be true to say that the home was the centre of production in pre-industrial England, this does not mean that either women or men were confined to the home. As Charles points out, men often worked away from home, for example as journeymen or apprentices. Or they were involved in activities outside the house such as sowing, reaping, harvesting, ditching, mining or peddling. Women's work too took them out of the house, for example as street traders or as workers on the land. Pinchbeck and Alice Clark have shown the wide range of non-domestic work done by women prior to and during the Industrial Revolution. We must not, therefore, overestimate the identification of home and work, writes Charles, even if it was stronger for women because of their domestic work and childcare. [Charles, in Charles and Duffin eds., WAWIPE, p.15]

It is common to assert that women's work was more easily compatible with child-rearing in the pre-industrial setting. Thus the "severance of work from the sphere of child-raising ... immediately created disadvantage and hardship for both child and mother." [Rich, OWB, p.48.] Again, there is some truth in this, but as Charles points out, we should not assume that it has ever been easy to combine childcare with other responsibilities. [Charles, op.cit., p.18] Firstly, we have seen that women's work often took them outside the home, and in that case children would

have to be left with whatever arrangement was possible. De Mause gives examples of how babies were swaddled or doped to pacify them whilst their mothers got on with their work. Secondly even domestic activities inside the home are complicated by the presence of small children. There is reduced space in the home, danger for the children, and it increases working hours, as Middleton points out. Children did help with some of the processes, but "we cannot blithely assume that women's domestic industrial labour could be readily accomodated to her other functions." [Middleton, in Charles and Duffin, op.cit., p.199]

Women have always fitted childcare around whatever work was deemed appropriate for them in their particular culture. In many cultures, says Oakley, motherhood is "a taken-for-granted aspect of a woman's adult life: it is something most women are expected to be, just as they are expected to continue with their productive agricultural or other work." [Oakley, WC, p.192] Children have sometimes suffered because of this, but equally they can suffer where mothers make childcare a full-time occupation.

Pre-industrial patterns of childcare do seem to have been different from more recent ones, since a woman "was rarely if ever alone with nothing but the needs of a child or children to see to." [Rich, OWB, p.47] Attitudes towards children also differed. Life expectancy was shorter, many children died in infancy, and as soon as children were able they were put to work - minding younger siblings, learning skills from father or mother, contributing as much as possible and as soon as possible to the family's needs. There has been speculation as to whether

parents loved their children, given the harsh childcare practices documented by writers such as De Mause, Badinter and Hardyment. It is likely that parents regarded their offspring with the same mixture of affection and resentment which is apparent today; the new feature which arose in the nineteenth century was the ideology of motherhood. As we shall see, this ideology directed mothers exclusively towards their children.

By contrast, in the traditional situation "mothers are usually the most important people in their children's lives but to some extent they share their children, right from birth, with others - not only with fathers and grandmothers but with aunts and older siblings, neighbours, workmates, servants and friends." [Dally, IM, p.278] Fathers could have a close relationship with their children, particularly through teaching sons to do men's work. Where work was seasonal, fathers might spend long periods at home. According to Lummis this was the case in communities such as East Anglian fishing villages. [Lummis, in McKee and O'Brien eds., TFF]²

Because of this, and because women's labour was valued in a society where few households could afford to keep any of their members idle, some argue that women themselves had a higher status. But although women's work was recognized as essential, pre-industrial society was nevertheless patriarchal in structure, and negative attitudes towards women prevailed as they do today. Moreover, women's lives were overburdened because their responsibilities for childcare and family maintenance had to be fitted around their other work. Even in their spare moments they were expected to occupy themselves, spinning for example, whilst

men could relax. [Middleton, op.cit. p.198]³

We should not fall into the trap either of assuming that life was better for women, or that women and men were equally downtrodden. We have no reason to suppose that life in pre-industrialised Britain was substantially different for women than it is in non-industrial societies today. Seager and Olson, introducing their atlas of statistics on women across the world, comment that:

everywhere women are worse off than men: women have less power, less autonomy, more work, less money, and more responsibility. Women everywhere have a smaller share of the pie; if the pie is very small (as in poor countries), women's share is smaller still. [Seager and Olson, WITW, p.7]⁴

Capitalism and industrialization changed the conditions of women's oppression, they did not create it. Roberta Hamilton discusses this point in her important analysis of this period, which is of particular interest to theologians. She links the rise of capitalism and Protestantism not through a work ethic but in terms of their effect upon women. It is worth paying close attention to her argument because it attempts to explain crucial aspects of the split between home and work.

2. Protestantism and Capitalism

i) The impact of capitalism and industrialization on women

Hamilton concentrates on women's work in the seventeenth century, the period of transition from a feudal to a capitalist economy. She discusses whether it is capitalism or the Industrial

Revolution which is most important for understanding the changing role of women. Sociologists paint a picture of "the mother forced to neglect her children in order to work inhumanely long hours in the factory", she says. [Hamilton, TLOW, p.17] But this was not a new situation, since by the time of the Industrial Revolution "there was a virtual army of people totally dependent on wage labour employed in agriculture, manufactories, in their own hovels or in domestic work ... both the wage-earning family and the bourgeois family were well established long before the Industrial Revolution." [Ibid., p.18]

Hamilton considers the Marxist analysis which asserts that capitalism separated people from the means of providing for their own families. In doing this, it introduced a number of opposing concepts, alongside which went the sexual division of labour particular to capitalism. She defines these as follows:

a) Production/consumption. Feudal families, whatever their type, were self-sufficient economic units. They "ate most of what they grew and grew most of what they ate, made most of what they used and used most of what they made." Men were not identified with production and women with consumption. [Ibid., p.25]

b) Work/home. In feudal society "Family life and work life were part of the same round of activity in the same locale." When young people left home to be servants or apprentices, it was to join other families. This was changing at the beginning of the seventeenth century. [Ibid., p.25]

c) Work/housework. There was a division of labour between women

and men, but not one thought to correspond to "natural function" and "real work" respectively. [Ibid., p.26]

d) Public/private. Privacy was not regarded as a prime need in feudal society. But it "has become the compensation for alienation from one's labour." [Ibid., p.27]

When the landless poor were forced to rely on selling their labour power, women had the choice of selling their labour at half price, or staying at home with their children and risking starvation. For male wages were too low to support a family. [Ibid., p.39/40] Thus, says Hamilton:

The family ceased to be the economic unit of production. ... the decline of family and domestic industry ... shattered the interdependent relationship between husband and wife ... (and) led to the identification of family life with privacy, home, consumption, domesticity - and with women. [Ibid., p.18/9]

Further, marriage "became a liability for men while, at the same time, women's dependence upon it was increasing." [Ibid., p.40] Many wives were deserted. Capitalism did not cause women to be treated badly, but "their role in the centre of this narrowly domestic scene did arise directly out of the separation of capital and labour." [Ibid., p.44] Hamilton's conclusion is that the "fundamental changes in the family occur ... not with industrialisation, but with capitalism." [Ibid., p.18]

The Marxist analysis on which Hamilton bases the first section of her book would not meet with universal agreement. Middleton warns that it is over-simplistic to state that early capitalism

restricted women's work and lessened their economic importance, and her strictures should be heeded. [Middleton, op.cit. p.203]⁵ But Hamilton is undoubtedly right to say that while patriarchy precedes capitalism, feminists must take seriously "the enormous differences in life-chances between women at different points in the mode of production." [Ibid., p.104]

Further, we need to appreciate that a variety of factors are involved in any historical movement. Alexander offers a different perspective on the idealization of the home, pointing out that the British Industrial Revolution did not take place in a neutral political context:

Its formative years, 1790 to 1815, were years in which England was engaged in counter-revolutionary war against France. Jacobinism ... and industrial discontent were fused by England's rulers into an indiscriminate image of 'sedition'. Any political or industrial activity among the working-classes was severely repressed. Out of this repression emerged the distinctive features of Victorian middle-class ideology - a blend of political economy and evangelicalism ... While political economy asserted that the laws of capitalist production were the laws of nature herself, evangelicalism sanctified the family, along with industriousness, obedience and piety, as the main bulwark against revolution ... The woman, as wife and mother, was the pivot of the family, and consequently the guardian of all Christian (and domestic) virtues. [Alexander in Mitchell and Oakley eds., TRAWOW, p.61]

ii) Protestant ideology and the place of women

As has been pointed out, we cannot assume that women were regarded as fairly equal partners with their husbands just because they were equally economically productive. The Catholic church at this time was stressing women's "evilness, their potential threat to men, their general uselessness to men except in procreation". [Hamilton, TLOW, p.19] Hamilton notes that "at a time when the family was the economic unit of the society, the best the Catholic Church could find to^{say}/about that institution was still ... that 'it is better to marry than to burn'". [Ibid., p.19/20]

Protestantism rejected the idea that women were evil, partly because the family was given a new moral and spiritual status, and partly through a redefinition of sexuality. The Protestant world view which advocated a life in the world and married life, could not use Catholic teaching about the evilness of women. [Ibid., p.20] The Protestant's new ideas about women both improved their position and more closely limited their role. Those ideas did not, of course, put an end to the denigration of women. [Ibid., p.64] A wife was required to submit to the spiritual authority of her husband, and it was believed that the "nature" of women suited them to a life of submission. [Ibid., p.69]⁶ The majority of women, therefore, were offered a way out of evilness as godly helpmates to their husbands. [Ibid., p.74]

But the Protestant image of women as an "army of modest, hardworking, loyal and godly wives" was aborted as Protestantism "crossed historical paths and became entwined with capitalism." [Ibid., p.95] For "Protestant teachings on women and the family

had been patterned on the household of the yeoman or craftsman", but they were picked up by those whose experience in family life was bourgeois. Once the home was stripped of its productive functions, it became a place for private emotions, children, women, and ironically, religion. [Ibid., p.96] In Oakley's words the home "came to be the apotheosis of retreat, salvation and restoration in the harsh competitiveness of the commercial and public world." [Oakley SW, p.7] This image persists today, and is discussed further in the next section. The Protestant idealization of the home was "given substance by the capitalistic division of the world into work and home, public and private. The pale Victorian lady ... was scarcely the Protestants' idea of a worthy helpmate, yet her genesis owed much to their redefinition of womanhood." [Hamilton, TLOW, p.22] By the end of the seventeenth century, women of the rising bourgeoisie were increasingly idle, status symbols with an image of helpfulness, loyalty, domesticity and purity.

So, says Hamilton, in the course of one hundred years, forces were set in motion which changed the mode of production and brought a new form of patriarchy:

The partnership of marriage, economic and spiritual, and sweetened with love, had been the Protestant ideal of marriage. With the decline of the economic functions of the home, the spiritual partnership underwent a parallel erosion. Men were spending most of their time in a world untouched by religion, and their image was changing to suit the world of work, business, politics ... Spirituality ... became transposed into a quality of the dependent and powerless female member. [Ibid., p.102]

With the separation of work and home, religion was seen as separate from the economic system: "Moral and ethical principles were shunted into the home, the arena for private life. Men were told how to treat their wives, their children, their parents, but not their workers, their business partners or their customers." [Ibid., p.103]

If Hamilton is right, the Protestant emphasis on women's calling within the home was never intended to exclude them from productive labour, or to give them a unique spiritual role in the family. The Protestant intention, says Hamilton, was that the home should be "a moral and industrious place in the midst of a godly commonwealth of men ... Instead, stripped of its productive functions, the home became a spiritual retreat, in need of protection from an, at best, amoral world." [Ibid., p.97] Women's identification with the home and men's association with the world, led to a reversal of the Catholic view of male spirituality and female carnality. It was women who became the symbol for unfallen humanity, and Protestant thinking had paved the way for this. Yet they "had not believed that women were naturally saintly. Virtuous behaviour was a continuous struggle for everyone". [Ibid., p.99] Hamilton's analysis of the theological background to these changes is inevitably simplified,⁷ given the length of her study, but her general point stands. Its important implications are explored in Chapter Seven.

3. Women and work in the Nineteenth Century

The difficulties faced by women, and especially by mothers of small children, were exacerbated by factory work which demanded

working long hours to a rigid schedule, often in appalling conditions. But as Pinchbeck points out, the proportion of married women in factories was very small. Moreover, although conditions there were bad, they were far worse in other occupations. Lace-makers or dress-makers in London, for example, might work for 18 to 20 hours in insanitary over-crowded cottages, for very low wages. [Pinchbeck, WWATIR, p.308] Yet public attention in the nineteenth century focussed primarily on the employment of women and children in factories and heavy industries. It was these women who were to be rescued from lives of drudgery, in order to perform their proper function in the home. Whilst many of those who supported restrictive employment legislation may have had altruistic motives, this disguised the fact that male interests were being protected rather than those of the women and children. Concern was expressed over female or child employment mainly in those industries where they were in competition with men for a limited number of jobs.

Thus the concern to protect women and children from going down the pits did not extend to providing for families which lost a large proportion of their income when "protective" legislation was enforced. Nor did it extend to other dangerous or harsh occupations. Appalling conditions of work for both sexes were obscured by the concentration on women and children. The objectors did not see, says Lewenhak, "that the evils lay less in women and children going out to work than in the greed and exploitation on the part of employers and sub-contractors, for after all they themselves depended on a growing army of low-paid women domestic servants". [Lewenhak, WAW, p.154]. Alexander suggests that it "was not that the Victorians did not expect

women of the lower classes to work. On the contrary, work was the sole corrective and just retribution for poverty; it was rather that only those sorts of work that coincided with a woman's natural sphere were to be encouraged. ... no-one suggested that sweated needlework should be prohibited to women". [Alexander in Mitchell and Oakley eds., TRAWOW, p.62/3]

An era which strongly idealized women's place in the home was nevertheless undergirded by female labour. In 1850, 30% of the market labour force was female, and 27% of women were employed, and this figure remained fairly constant for the next hundred years. [Oakley, SW, p.142] Women were not only in menial jobs. Copelman discusses London's women teachers in the period 1870 to 1914, and shows that they were from both lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds. Interestingly, many were married and continued teaching through childrearing. [Copelman in Lewis ed., LAL] Women were by and large doing their traditional tasks. By 1901, domestic service accounted for 40% of employed women [Sharpe, JLAG, p.25]. Where domestic service or factory work was not possible, women were companions or governesses, or took on outwork, washing, or childminding, Society was equally dependent on female and male labour, but women's contribution had ceased to be visible.

Women also contributed through their unpaid labour, as they do today. Indeed, Patricia Branca has suggested that we should not simply accept the myth of the idle Victorian woman. She says that most families would not have been able to afford several servants, but would more probably have had one young untrained servant, and the turnover would be high. This would leave an

important active role for the Victorian middle-class woman in her family, Branca concludes. [Branca in Hartmann and Banner, eds., CCR, p.181ff] With the growth of an ideology of motherhood, women began to find an important role in devoting themselves to their children. Hardyment suggests that increased education meant that the middle-class woman was "a thoughtful creature who had to find something to do or die of leisured boredom". The most popular activity was "diving deeply into the responsibilities of motherhood, righting the wrongs of society by rearing quasi-perfect children". [Hardyment, DB, p.33.]⁸

Etiquette or good works were other possibilities for them, says Hardyment, and many middle-class women were able to turn their attention to other concerns. They did much to try to alleviate poverty, forming a vast unpaid volunteer army. Summers points out that the introduction of the welfare state was predicated on the basis of their activities. Interestingly, because women had to leave home to go visiting, they were accused of neglecting their families, and "experienced the problem of reconciling their family relationships and domestic identity with their work for a wider social good." [Summers in Burman ed., FWW, p.59] Women were also able to gain education, and the first wave of feminism arose during this period, as we saw in Chapter One.

4. Into the Twentieth Century

A key change for women since the Industrial Revolution has been that it is no longer efficient for them to perform many of their traditional tasks in or around the home. The processes of producing food and making clothing, of education and of nursing,

have gradually been taken over by the state or manufacturing and service industries: "The combination of technological advances that so changed the housewife role and made jobs available also made it more economically efficient for the woman to work and use her money to buy a product than to make the same product at home." [Hoffman and Nye, WM, p.84]⁹

Those Christians who speak of women's traditional role being in the home generally take insufficient account of these changes, and would confine women to the home despite the limited opportunities available there. Rich comments that when nineteenth century women were urged to "stay at home", the "home thus defined had never before existed". For the first time, she says, "the productivity of women (apart from reproductivity) was seen as 'a waste of time' ... The welfare of men and children was the true mission of women." [Rich, OWB, p.49] This kind of thinking is still apparent today, although as we have seen, it is a misinterpretation of the original Protestant teaching.

Stephen Clark does appreciate that women's traditional home-centred functions have moved into the world of employment, and suggests women might take jobs in these areas: "Women have a natural tendency toward teaching and caring for smaller children and toward certain secretarial positions." [Clark, MAWIC, p.658] This is still inadequate, but at least recognizes women's traditional contribution through productive work.¹⁰ For as Hoffman and Nye make clear:

Women have always worked to produce goods and services for themselves and their families. In almost every society this work has included the processing and preparation of food and

clothing, household care and repair, and similar housekeeping tasks. In most societies it has also included agricultural and collecting tasks in which some of the goods to be consumed in the family were produced directly by women.

In addition many women have also sold their labour in the variety of ways described above. The issues, Hoffman and Nye continue, "are hardly whether women shall work, but rather at what tasks, for how many hours a week, in or away from their homes", and how full-time employment away from the home should intersect with responsibilities for child care. [Hoffman and Nye, WM, p.1/2]

Yet the theology of work has accepted the association of men with work, and virtually ignored women's contribution. It has concentrated on combatting the waning influence of a work, or rather job, ethic no longer appropriate in today's society, but has not realized the harm done by the persistence of the ideological notion of the separation of home and work. This separation most obviously harms women, but in fact affects all people in our society, as we see in the next section.

B. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF HOME AND WORK

As we have seen, the assumption that home and workplace were once united but are now separate, is an oversimplification. Finch writes that treating work and the family as analytically separate spheres which are assumed to arise from industrialization, "is empirically unsupportable ... theoretically naive ... not merely is it not useful as an analytical tool, but it serves actually to

obscure certain important features of social life." [Finch, MTTJ, p.4] Piotrkowski too reports that "to treat work and family life as separate worlds is to impose on dynamic and interconnected social relations impermeable boundaries that may, in fact, not exist." [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.16] Both writers have done important work illustrating the interconnections between home and paid work, which are examined below.

1. Wives' Incorporation into their Husbands' Jobs

Janet Finch has highlighted the way that wives are incorporated into their husband's jobs in a "two-person single career".¹¹ Although a wife does not receive a wage from an employer, and works in the domestic setting, she may be contributing to the processes of social and economic production vicariously through her husband. Firstly, this is because most men arrive at their workplace fed, rested and clothed through the work of their wives, and without this support their jobs would be more difficult. [Finch, MTTJ, p.80] Secondly, in some jobs, such as those of clergy or public figures, husbands and wives are regarded as a team, although only one wage is paid. Occasionally the wife is the job-holder, and her husband is expected to contribute, but the reverse is more commonly true. Thirdly, wives may be identified with their husbands' occupation. For example, in the 1984/5 miners strike, questions addressed to the wives of striking miners by the media began "you're on strike". Further, Supplementary Benefit payments were withheld from women and children, who were regarded not as individuals in their own right, in need of food and clothing, but identified with their striking husbands.¹²

It is difficult evaluating the work done by wives, says Finch. The wife who types a report for her husband, is obviously contributing to production. But what of the wife who takes on additional child care so that her husband can type the report? To say this does not count is unsatisfactory, since "the end result is the same: the intensification of the wife's labour enables more of the husband's work to get done." Thus, Finch concludes:

the conventional productive/domestic and paid/unpaid distinctions have comparatively little significance for wives who are incorporated in their husband's work. They are part of the productive process even if they never leave the home for the purposes of work, and their labour is contributed although there is no direct wage relationship between them and the employer for whom, effectively, they work. Thus the productive and the domestic spheres are inextricably linked, and there is, for wives, no straightforward relationship between performance of productive labour and receipt of a wage. [Ibid., p.108/9]

It is the "designation of non-paid activity as non-economic activity" which obscures wives' contributions to production via their husband's work." [Ibid., p.109]

The law recognizes that a wife can contribute to her husband's career, by ordering that she should receive maintenance after a divorce in certain circumstances. Maintenance is more usually granted for children, since there is opposition to the idea that an ex-wife might have a "meal-ticket for life". But a wife may have sacrificed her own career prospects for the sake of her husband's job and the raising of their children, and her

contribution needs to be recognized.¹³

Many women do weigh up the costs and benefits of making an investment in their husband's work, and decide it makes good sense. Although someone else benefits from their labour, and other more satisfactory arrangements might be possible, "most women do not experience their incorporation as unwelcome or alienating". [Ibid., p.122] Finch outlines why this is so.

Firstly, she says, "whether or not marriage is unequivocally the best economic option for most women, once in a marriage, it usually makes economic sense to stay in it and to invest in one's husband", for "the chance of developing an independent economic base equal or superior to one's husband is remote." It is better for wives "to invest what they can in their husband's work, in the hope of improving his position, and thereby their own". Secondly, social life is organised on the assumption that most wives are married to the job. There is little publicly provided child care, for example, because it is assumed that most children have mothers at home full-time. The wife who does not wish to be married to the job is seen as "deviant, is placed on the defensive and has to justify herself, and will meet major obstacles in trying to organise her life so as to avoid incorporation." It will therefore seem easier for her to accept this role. Thirdly, being married to the job "smooths routine social interactions" because it offers a way of being seen as a good wife. Indeed rejecting this role seriously challenges the partnership model of marriage, so that the woman is scarcely seen as a wife at all. [Ibid., p.168/9]

2. The Interaction of Home and Employment for Men

Not only are wives drawn into their husband's occupations, but those occupations impinge on the home in a number of ways. Women in similar employment have similar experiences, but men are the focus here because it has often been assumed that they separate the spheres of home and employment. We shall see evidence of the extent to which women relate the two in Chapter Eight.

i) The impact of men's jobs on the home

For a number of men, home and workplace are inseparable. Publicans, clergy, rural policemen and farmers commonly live where they work. Small businessmen, self-employed craftsmen, writers, and journalists often work from home. The home is a partial workbase for managers, civil servants, teachers, and academics. [Ibid., p.53] A man may seek an occupation of this type, since flexibility of hours, "the ability to exercise a degree of control over your own work schedule and being able to work from home if you wish ... are all features of work organisation which create a working setting which is more congenial". But, says Finch, these "are the precise features of work organisation most likely to hedge in his wife, leave her little room for manoeuvre, and to elicit gratuitous contributions from her." [Ibid., p.133] For many other men, there are hidden carry-overs from workplace to home which have a profound effect. Piotrkowski has documented this in her important book **Work and the Family System**. Her study begins with the recognition that whilst men say the spheres of home and paid work are separate, there are in fact important interconnections.

Piotrkowski identifies three patterns: a positive carry over, as with the man whose family converge around him when he returns home happy; a negative carry over, where men worry over their jobs at home; and an energy deficit, where the man is not directly bringing feelings home from the workplace, but is not available to his family because he is too tired and strained. [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.60/1] The man who has a job he does not like tries to use his home as a haven, but this means others must adjust around his needs: "the family system paid a price in energy deficits that were expressed in dissatisfactions and estrangements ... the home as haven may have its costs." The woman finds it difficult to play her role as nurturer, while her husband is too bothered about his work to attend to her needs. [Ibid., p.48]

The effort to maintain a separation between home and job, says Piotrkowski, arises from a desire to escape work stresses. Some men feel they may be destroyed if they cannot protect themselves from what happens at work. [Ibid., p.93ff] Not talking about it at home

appears to be part of the active process whereby workers try to manage feelings of anger, frustration, and powerlessness generated by their work experiences. ... When someone tells us that his work life is divorced from his family life, he may be making a statement about a value, a wish, or a struggle. [Ibid., p.105]

She comments that although in Young and Wilmott's study, 69-75% of the men they questioned said work did not conflict with home, they did report tiredness. This suggests a pattern of energy depletion which they did not recognize. If men want to believe

that they can separate home and work, they will under-report the conflict, and other members of the family need to be asked about the wage-earner's availability. [Ibid., p.276/7]

ii) "Working fathers"

There is an increasing amount of material which examines how men deal with conflicts between paid work and fatherhood. That there is a conflict has not always been recognized. Land states that "there is a conflict between a woman's responsibilities towards other members of her family and her activities in the labour market, whereas for most men there is not." [Land, JOSP, p.260] And Moss asserts that apart from "a greater propensity to work shifts and overtime, parenthood still has a minimal impact on men's employment circumstances and experiences." [Moss in Moss and Fonda eds., WATF, p.67] It may be true that, as Richards says, "a man does in general have a family while still leaving the broad outlines of his life unchanged", [Richards, TSF, p.248] but his experience of employment is affected by his home life. This is becoming increasingly evident as men are encouraged to play a greater part in the rearing of their children.

A common view of fathers is that they have until recent times been distant authoritarian figures, but now have an equal role in caring for their children from birth onwards. Historical studies of child-rearing suggest that a number of fathers have always been involved in the routine care of their children. What may be new today is the public importance attached to fathering. Fathers are expected to attend the birth of their children, play with them, and at least show willingness to perform routine childcare tasks. Mothers in Backett's study felt that parenting was shared,

because their husbands were willing to do anything, although in fact the men did very little. [Backett, MAF, p.78ff] The effect has been to suggest that equal parenting is the norm, whereas in fact mothers still bear the major responsibility. Men may play with the children, or put them to bed, but this takes some of the rewards of childcare from women. Peace to do household chores is gained at the expense of satisfaction with childcare. Also, as Sharpe points out, men may gain power from their partner which adds to their status from paid work. But women may have lost power at home with no compensation available from the low-status jobs available to them outside. Childcare at least gives women the social credit of being "good mothers". [Sharpe, DI, p.186]

Men are encouraged to play a greater part in childrearing not only because of a growing emphasis on equality, but also because of the dangers of "paternal deprivation". This concept has been used to indicate a connection between absent or deviant fathers and anti-social behaviour in children. We should be wary of attributing poor behaviour to a single factor, especially as there are many possible reasons for the absence of fathers. There is likely to be a different impact on a family according to whether the father's absence is caused by his job, desertion, death, or prison. A father may also be absent emotionally, whilst still physically present. Rich lays much blame for the "pain, floundering, and ambivalence our male children experience" at the doors of traditional fathers who "even when they live under the same roof - have deserted their children hourly and daily. We have to recognize ... that most of our sons are - in the most profound sense - virtually fatherless". [Rich OWB, p.211/2]

Men may use their jobs to escape from the excessive demands of children, absenting themselves from home on business, or working late until the children are in bed. They justify this as being done for the family, although they may alienate themselves from that family in the process. Oakley suggests that although it is true that a husband with a demanding time-consuming job has little time for his family, we could ask "why a man in this situation chose this kind of career if he really wanted to share child-rearing and housework with his wife?" [Oakley, TSOH, p.141] But this may overestimate the degree of choice available to most men, particularly at a time of high unemployment. Moreover, the increased financial needs attendant on having children mean that men may need to take on extra work or less flexible jobs. It seems likely that this accounts for Bell, McKee and Priestly's finding that fathers of young children did three times more overtime than young married childless men, [Bell et.al., FCAW, p.9] rather than men simply desiring to absent themselves from family life.

Men may also truly believe they are contributing enough to homemaking through their wage-earning, and "odd jobs" about the house. McKee and O'Brien suggest that most couples believe that one of men's chief roles in infancy is to provide financial security for the family. [McKee and O'Brien, eds., TFF, p.134/5] O'Brien found that for many working-class men "work meant breadwinning, and successful breadwinning fulfilled most (although not all) of the requirements associated with being a 'good family man'". [O'Brien in Beail and McGuire eds., F, p.226] Because the wage is won in the face of harsh conditions men feel they are sacrificing themselves for their families. That this

leaves them with little emotional energy to invest in the family is proof of how demanding the masculine breadwinning role is.¹⁵

O'Brien reports that middle-class fathers perceived a higher degree of work-family conflict than did working-class fathers. For the latter "seemed to perceive their work as being for the family", where middle-class fathers demarcated the two, believed that they should share childcare, and therefore felt guilt and regret about the lack of family time. [Ibid., p.222] Ironically, the working-class fathers might actually do more household tasks, but felt this made them "more involved than ... was proper"; the egalitarian attitudes of the middle-class male were not put into practice. [Ibid., p.223] Although lone fathers were particularly likely to feel a conflict between family life and work, O'Brien concludes that "a significant proportion of all the men reported high levels of work-home conflicts." [Ibid., p.230] She suggests that there is "an uneasy fit between employment and family responsibilities for fathers where the dominant work model - life-long, 5 days a week, 8 hours a day - continues to be seen as the only 'proper' job for a man." [Ibid., p.231]

Many men feel they have no option but to put their employment first in any conflict, and are likely to experience social pressure to do so. In a study of motherless families in 1972, George and Wilding found that while it is usually thought important for children to be cared for at home, 78% of their sample believed that fathers of pre-school children should have jobs, and 96% thought fathers of school-age children should do so. [George and Wilding, MF] Attitudes may have changed since that time, but Finch and Groves do report in 1983 that single

male carers gave a high priority to their jobs, and hardly ever took time off. By contrast, women in the same position were under pressure to give up their jobs, and regularly took time off for care reasons. One male clerk said: "If she ever gets so that I need to give up my job, she will have to go into a home." [Quoted in Finch and Grove eds., ALOL, p.100] There is a difference between caring for one's own children, and for an older dependent relative, but clearly the expectations differ as to how women or men are to resolve employment/ home conflicts.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that men are rejecting total commitment to their jobs. A 1979 survey in America found the majority of men "valued personal growth, self-fulfilment, love and family life more than making money and getting ahead." [Green, TFOTF, p.73] And in another study referred to by Sharpe, 90% of married manual workers rated "good family life" above enjoyment of work life. [Sharpe, DI, p.222] For working-class women and men in particular, jobs are less intrinsically rewarding than their families. Nonetheless, if men put family concerns before paid work, they may be perceived as weak, since they are rejecting the traditional masculine attachment to employment. Some men are prepared to do this, as the Equal Opportunities Commission report **Fathers, Childcare and Work** shows. Bell, Mckee and Priestly describe how some men changed or left their jobs when those jobs proved incompatible with family life. They point out: "It is usual to think of fathers having a stronger attachment to the labour market because of their role as the family breadwinner. Here, we have evidence of at least a few fathers who have withdrawn from work in the interests of their families." Their survey does not indicate how prevalent this is,

or what type of employment is rejected, but it does happen. [Bell et.al., FCAW, p.25]

The authors also discuss paternity leave, and find that the majority of men of whatever class wish to spend time with their wives when children are born. Yet provision is poor. The report concludes:

We believe that attempts to reconcile employment with responsibility for very young children must be made without discrimination as to the gender of the employee and that every parent should have the right to choose the course of action most appropriate to his or her own needs at or around the time of childbirth. [Ibid., p.76]

Men do experience home/work conflicts, and find it difficult to leave their personal lives at home. Stress in relationships, sleepless nights with small children, housing problems, or any difficulties experienced in the home, can be carried into the workplace.¹⁶ If home life brings stress and additional responsibilities, as it invariably does, the situation becomes increasingly strained. One solution is to regard employment as an escape from domestic troubles, and we shall examine this later on. Another is to avoid emotional involvement at home in order to be able to regard it as a haven.

3. The Home as Haven

We have already observed some of the factors which led to the idealization of the home. Zaretsky gives a lucid account of the way in which the family, as the realm of personal feelings, comes

to be set against the realm of economic production. He begins by observing that while there was "an intense division of labour within the family, based upon age, sex, and family position, there was scarcely a division between the family and the world of commodity production" before the nineteenth century. Society outside the home was also composed of family units. [Zaretsky, CATPL, p.28/9]

In the past, personal fulfilment and development was restricted to the leisured classes, or to such people as artists. But it comes to be seen as a possibility for the masses, which takes place in the family. [Ibid., p.30] The family is the only place where the individual self is valued for itself, and it is women who are given the responsibility for "maintaining the emotional and psychological realm of personal relations". [Ibid., p.31] This is related to the rise of the factory system, and its demand for a disciplined workforce. Machinery required human beings to be like automata, with no place given to sentiment or family responsibility. Whilst Puritanism asserted the unity of economic and spiritual life, Methodism, the religion of the bourgeoisie and working-class, preached rigid division between repression and discipline in daily life and Sabbath emotionalism. The family comes to be seen as a haven, a sacred place, a domain of the spirit, separated from the realm of production. [Ibid., p.48 and 51]

The role of women in the home was also idealized. Victorian resistance to female equality, says Zaretsky, arose because the family was seen as the last refuge from capitalism. The emancipation of women would degrade all society. The proletariat

came to see the family as the place where they could realize personal identity. This comes out most clearly in the twentieth century, but has earlier roots. [Ibid., p.54ff] Zaretsky continues: "The organisation of production around alienated labour encouraged the creation of a separate sphere of life in which personal relations were pursued as an end in themselves". [Ibid., p.66] Because a shorter working-day is a prerequisite for establishing a personal life, capitalists have extended limited leisure to the proletariat. [Ibid., p.67] But today, the "combination of waste, under-employment, and rationalization has come close to destroying people's understanding of their part in an integrated system of social production." [Ibid., p.71] It has reinforced a tendency to look to social life for meaning, yet capitalism has also spread to this by developing "mass-produced specific forms of personal life, and of individuality". [Ibid., p.73]

Friedan suggests that this is why there is resistance to feminism today. If the family is seen as the final frontier of privacy and autonomy, any perceived threat to it imperils basic human values. [Friedan, TSS, p.208] The family, for both sexes, "is the symbol of that last area where one has any hope of individual control over one's destiny, of meeting one's most basic human needs, of nourishing that core of personhood". [Ibid., p.229] Women may accept this symbolic value for the home, even though it does not function as a haven for them. Feminist analysis has highlighted the depression, frustration and violence women can experience in the home. Women may be scared to go out alone at night, for example, but the majority of men who attack women are known to their victims, and a high proportion of attacks take place in the

home itself. According to the CIS report **Women in the Eighties**, 25% of all violent crime is wife assault.

The family appears to be the only form of escape, not just for the individual worker, but as a refuge against the harsh realities of a competitive world. Michael Korda expresses men's understanding of this:

we staked everything on the notion that man would give, woman receive, creating together a domestic fortress that would protect us against the outside world, forgetting that no precedent existed for such an attempt, that for most of human history and in most cultures ordinary women have always been deeply involved in the reality of life. [Korda, MC, p.157]

It is a fantasy, he says, to think men can "go out" to work in the real world and come home to a haven of peace and content, yet men have sold this to themselves as the "natural" order of society. It is not surprising that women revolt, or that men feel that "women took advantage of us ... they got the better part of the bargain, and now aren't even grateful for it". [Ibid., p.160] Men argue that they tolerate employment for the sake of their families. Thus it is disturbing "if the recipients of all this unwanted sacrifice are in fact not happy at all". [Ibid., p.86] Eichler comments on the fact that men who are frightened at having to cope with technological change in their jobs, may try to "make of their wives an island of stability in a sea of change." A husband may then encourage his wife to have old-fashioned views which he ridicules or uses as an excuse: "the wife won't want to move". This makes him seem more amenable and

adaptable to change than he really is. [Eichler, TDS, p.44]

Piotrkowski explains that, because of negative carry-over, "the very conditions of occupational life that require paid workers to find havens in their families makes it difficult for families to serve this function." The emotional needs of the wage-earner are pitted against those of other family members - and the household worker can find no haven in the home: "the 'myth of separate worlds', by obscuring these connections, encourages people to blame themselves and each other when their needs go unmet rather than recognizing the role that their work lives may play in hindering fulfillment of personal and familial goals." [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.275] Here again work shows its ambivalent character. Jobs which are regarded as essential for material and emotional well-being, and which are done for the sake of families, in fact hurt people emotionally, and sap the vitality from their personal relationships. French comments on the double bind this causes for men, "expected to find identity and a satisfying life in pursuit of power, and to scorn and deny the very elements that could bring them felicity and contentment." [French, BP, p.265]

4. Masculinity and Paid Work

Whereas women's proper sphere is thought to be the home, masculinity has particular associations with the sphere of employment. The theology of work, along with much sociological literature, has frequently spoken of men and paid work, but neglected to study masculinity and paid work. Because the distinction between man as male and man as normative human being

has not been clearly made, a precise analysis of what work means to males has been missing. There are now a number of sociological studies which treat this question, but a theology of work which takes masculinity seriously has not been clearly set out. This task is one which a feminist theology of work can begin, because it makes a person's sex an issue in the debate.

i) The masculine world of paid work

Masculinity is tied to paid work in a way that femininity is not, and this is a crucial point for understanding the relationship between men and work. More specifically, this association depends on paid work being non-feminine, since men cannot prove their masculinity by doing tasks of which women are equally capable. The wage packet is the "particular prize of masculinity in work", says Willis, "held to be central, not simply because of its size, but because it is won in a masculine mode in confrontation with the 'real' world which is too tough for the women." [Willis, LTL, p.150] This is a key reason why there is opposition to women doing certain kinds of work, and segregation of the sexes within the workplace. The link between masculinity and paid work is made explicit in traditional male working-class jobs, but is also present in white-collar and professional jobs, as we shall see.

Paul Willis discusses this link for working class lads. They are attracted, he says, by the prospect work holds out of being "real men", even though they see the evidence around them that this life is often hard and unrewarding. Physical labouring comes to stand for and express masculinity and an opposition to authority:

It expresses aggressiveness; a degree of sharpness and wit; an irreverence that cannot be found in words; an obvious

kind of solidarity ... (it) demonstrates a potential mastery over, as well as an immediate attractiveness to, women: a kind of machismo. [Ibid., p.104]

Willis points out that the will to work hard and to finish the job is also part of the "machismo of manual work":

The toughness and awkwardness of physical work and effort ... takes on masculine lights and depths and assumes a significance beyond itself. Whatever the specific problems ...of the difficult task they are always essentially masculine problems. It takes masculine capacities to deal with them. ... Discontent with work is hinged away from a political discontent and confused in its proper logic by a huge detour into the symbolic sexual realm.

The brutality of the working situation is partially re-interpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task. Difficult, uncomfortable or dangerous conditions are seen not for themselves, but for their appropriateness to a masculine readiness and hardness. They are understood more through the toughness required to survive them, than in the nature of the imposition which asks them to be faced in the first place. [Ibid., p.150]

Thus patriarchy is not "an unexplained relic of previous societies, it is one of the very pivots of capitalism in its complex, unintended preparation of labour power and reproduction of the social order." [Ibid., p.151]

But as Willis points out elsewhere, this can be problematic at a time of high unemployment. There is, he says, "an element of self-sacrifice in men's attitude to work - a slow spending of the

self through the daily cycle of effort, comfort, food, sleep, effort." Because this is done for the home, "there is dignity and meaning, even in sacrifice." But this may be linked to a masculinity which becomes aggressive in the absence of the "sacrifice - reward - dignity" pattern, in order to resolve a "gender crisis". "Male 'power' may throw off its respectable cloak of labour dignity. It may give a physical, tough, direct display of those qualities not now guaranteed by doing productive work and being a breadwinner." [Willis, NS, p.13] If Willis is right, then there are implications here for theological writings about unemployment which need to be explored.

The association between middle-class masculinity and employment may be less overt, but is equally real. Michael Korda's description of some of the mechanisms by which men block women from progressing in particular occupations indicates the extent to which white-collar employment is a male preserve. The women managers interviewed by Cooper and Davidson report on the difficulties they have as women in a traditionally male world. This is discussed further below.

ii) The "breadwinner ethic"

The male role in our society requires that a man be able to support his family, and if he cannot perform that role, he can feel truly emasculated. This seems to hold for men in all walks of life although it may be that for some groups beset by chronic and long-term unemployment, masculinity is proved in other ways than through employment. Ehrenreich discusses this willingness of men to marry and support their wives. Much of our sense of social order, she says, "has depended on the willingness of men to

succumb in the battle of the sexes: to marry, to become wage earners and to reliably share their wages with their dependents." [Ehrenreich, THOM, p.3] But since men cannot be forced into this and "considering the absence of legal coercion, the surprising thing is that men have for so long, and, on the whole, so reliably, adhered to what we might call the 'breadwinner ethic'". [Ibid., p.11]

There were pressures on men to maintain this role, however. In the nineteen fifties and sixties, psychiatry had "a massive weight of theory establishing that marriage - and, within that, the breadwinner role - was the only normal state for the adult male." [Ibid., p.15] Great importance was attached to maturity, responsibility, and heterosexuality. [Ibid., p.17] Thus if adult masculinity "was indistinguishable from the breadwinner role, then it followed that the man who failed to achieve this role was either not fully adult or not fully masculine." [Ibid., p.20] The fear of homosexuality kept heterosexual men in line as husbands and breadwinners, but underneath this lay a contempt for women. [Ibid., p.26]

Reaction against this was strong in the United States, with the American woman being blamed for emasculating the male. Home became a forbidden territory, and the corporation a haven, where men could build their own masculine world. [Ibid., p.37ff] Ehrenreich does not examine how the male rejection of home life relates to the idealization of the home as haven. It may be that both are methods of resolving the conflict between employment and home. Many women consciously seek employment in order to escape from domestic stress, yet can still regard the home as an

important symbol in the way described above. However, this question requires further study which cannot be attempted here.

Playboy magazine, which first came out in the nineteen fifties, reflected the reaction against domesticity. It was anti-marriage and pro-male pleasure, and emphasized that being immature meant having fun. By the early nineteen sixties it gave a programme for male rebellion: "If even a fraction of **Playboy** readers had acted on it in the late fifties, the 'breakdown of the family' would have occurred a full fifteen years before it was eventually announced." [Ibid., p.50] This was not the voice of sexual revolution but of male rebellion; it offered escape from the bondage of breadwinning. Playboys did not have to be husbands to be men. [Ibid., p.51]

In addition to this, from the late fifties to early seventies coronaries were being linked with stress, and this revealed the breadwinning role as a lethal trap for men. Cardiology gave supporting evidence for an attack on "the homemaker as public health hazard". [Ibid., p.86] "The promise of feminism", says Ehrenreich, "that there might be a future in which no adult person was either a 'dependent creature' or an over-burdened breadwinner - came at a time when the ideological supports for male conformity were already crumbling." [Ibid., p.116] Ehrenreich's thesis is a fascinating one, not least because of this identification of forces which led to family breakdown some years before the advent of the latest feminist movement. It is evident that there have been parallel struggles against the systems binding men to paid work and women to men: the male revolt against a breadwinner ethic, and a feminist revolt against

restrictive feminine roles as housewives and mothers. This is positive in that both sexes have recognized these systems as oppressive, but because the other sex has been cast as (and may indeed have been) the enemy, it has been difficult to make the changes which are required.

iii) Male superiority at work

For some husbands their being the principal breadwinner, and having a wife with lower economic power, "is a crucial expression of their masculinity and evidence of successful fulfilment of the male role. ... if their wives start to become more economically independent this can seem very threatening and their achievements and success can shake male confidence and security." [Sharpe, DI, p.171] This is why some women give up their own jobs when their husbands become unemployed, in an attempt to maintain their husband's ego.¹⁷

It is this side of the equation which is picked up by Helen Lee. She represents a common strand of evangelical thought which tells women that men need to find their masculine fulfilment through paid work, and women should not earn too much lest this should undermine their husband's masculinity. [Lee, Mission England.] Lee also argues that women should not seek fulfillment in a paid job, because only God can satisfy their needs. But this ought logically also to be applied to men. Lee leaves men's relation to paid work unquestioned, failing to ask whether men should look to paid work to prove their masculinity. Walum's point is important: "Although a man may receive a psychological lift from the taken-for-granted inferiority of his wife, such a personality dynamic only underscores how brutalizing and dehumanizing work is for

many men." [Walum, TDOSAG, pp.166]

It is clear that for men as well as women, home and work are closely interrelated. The fact that this interconnection is obscured has profound consequences for individuals and society, and we examine these effects in the next chapter. Insofar as the theology of work has accepted the separation of the two spheres, its analysis of the work of both sexes has been inadequate.

NOTES

1. The same problems are found today by housewives and homeworkers. See Oakley, H, Sharpe, DI, p.108, and Crine, THA.
2. He is writing of 1890-1914, but the same would have been true in the pre-industrial era.
3. Middleton comments that today, women sew or knit in front of the television, whilst men just sit. Cf the point made in the previous chapter about women, the work ethic and idleness.
4. They give statistics on women's work on pp.13ff.
5. This chapter makes an important contribution to the debate on capitalism and women's work. See also Braverman, MR; Kuhn and Wolpe, FAM; Malos, TPOH; and Zaretsky, CTFAPL.
6. These views are echoed in the evangelical Protestant tradition, as we saw in Chapter Three.
7. For a more considered analysis of Calvin's view of women, see Douglass, WFAC.
8. The ideological meaning of motherhood is discussed further in Chapter Eight.
9. However, current government thinking aims to restore some of these tasks, advocating "care in the community" for disabled people, for example. Since the home and local community have

changed considerably, this approach creates problems, as we see in Chapters Eight and Nine.

10. The difficulties of talking about "natural tendencies" were discussed in Chapter Three; the problem with limiting women's work by this narrow view is discussed in Chapter Ten.

11. This can be problematic, as women begin to do more jobs formerly confined to men with supportive wives. Cooper and Davidson's **High Pressure** illustrates this. The terms "husbands" and "wives" are used here, but much of what is said would also apply to couples living together in stable relationships outside marriage.

12. See also Porter, in West, ed., WWATLM, p.128ff.

13. Whitehorn suggests that maintenance or resettlement payments should be made by the man "not because of what she has done for him, but because of what he had stopped her doing for herself." [Whitehorn, O, 1981]

14. Interestingly, a similar problem was identified in 1842 by the Rev. J. Abbott, who wrote that "Paternal neglect is ... one of the most abundant sources of domestic sorrow. The father ... eager in the pursuit of business, toils early and late, and finds no time to fulfil ... duties to his children." [Abbott, quoted in Hardyment, DB, p.34]

15. See below, section 4.

16. The experience of women industrial chaplains, as discussed at a meeting of the Women's Issues Group of the Industrial Mission Association in 1985, is that men in industry are very ready to talk about their home situations. Whether this results from a narrow perception of the women chaplains' interests, or from a genuine need to discuss home life, is difficult to say; but the conversations seem genuine. Yet Industrial Mission has discouraged what is seen as a personal and pastoral element in favour of industrial and structural issues. This ignores the interconnectedness of the spheres of home and work, and is a weakness in Industrial Mission theory and practice.

17. Walter reports that men who are unemployed are less likely to have wives in paid employment. 59% of employed husbands have wives in jobs, 29% of unemployed husbands. [Walter, HOTD, p.105]

CHAPTER SEVEN: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE HOME/WORK DIVIDE

A: THE EFFECTS OF SPLITTING HOME AND WORK

The separation of home and workplace as respectively the province of women and men has serious effects which need to be examined.

1. The Devaluing of Women's Work

Where the meaning of "work" is confined to paid work, what happens inside the home cannot be defined as work, and this devalues much of what women do. Talcott Parsons labels women's role "expressive" and men's role "instrumental", for example, and Buytendijk explains that:

work means an activity that proceeds from an intentional act in which the consciousness is directed toward a proposed goal ... Work is masculine in character ... Care ... is feminine in character ... Within the act of care as such there is no directedness toward a goal to be achieved.

[Buytendijk, quoted in Clark, MAWIC, p.390]

But these descriptions not only obscure the physical labour of women in the home, they also deny the interlinking of expressive and instrumental roles, the fact that caring is hard work. This has serious consequences as we shall see in Part IV.

Since women's sphere is assumed to be the home, their actual contribution through paid work is obscured. The ideology that women should not have jobs can prevail despite the fact that they form some 40% of the labour market. They are thought to have a looser relation to employment than men, opting in and out of paid

work according to circumstances because their main occupation is as mother or housewife. But this view neglects to take account of the kind of jobs available to women, and the difficulties of combining responsibility for childcare with paid work. Women's different relation to the labour market is a function of their situation rather than their femininity. Given favourable circumstances, women are as likely to be committed to their jobs as are men.

This is a point emphasised by Purcell, in the context of her researches into women's involvement in trade unions in the engineering and clothing industries. Both women and men, she says, "join and express support for unions and engage in widespread action according to the traditions of their industry rather than according to sex." [Purcell in Burman ed., FWWF, p.122/3] Thus:

Women's militancy and acquiescence, both at work and in the home can be argued to be a function of their experience as workers rather than as women. ... Women's market situation is frequently restricted and prescribed by gender, but men similarly situated in the labour market behave in the same way. [Ibid., p.130/1]

Where women are classified as unreliable employees, this may be related to the character of the work rather than the traditional view that women with children take frequent absences. Indeed, Hoffman and Nye report that "Sobol (1963) and Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) found that women with children show higher levels of work commitment than do those without". [Hoffman and Nye, WM, p.68] There was a slight difference for absenteeism in

Hunt's survey in the 1970's, which showed that men lost an average of 10 days and women 10.6 days over the year. But women more often took their time off for sick families, where men gave no reason; women and men were similar in time taken off for their own sickness. [Sharpe, DI, p.56]

Although women as a whole do not show significantly higher rates of absenteeism than men, many employers fear that their female staff will become pregnant, and leave the job either temporarily or permanently. Paid maternity leave creates additional administrative problems, and employers may be reluctant to train staff who are likely to leave. They are often unwilling to implement maternity provision beyond the statutory minimum for these reasons.¹ But making it more difficult for women to combine childrearing with employment results in their skills being lost. Some employers are therefore taking steps to encourage mothers to return to their jobs.²

Employers' objections to paid maternity leave may be based on the view that pregnancy, unlike other "disabilities", is a voluntary condition. Yet leaving aside the fact that pregnancy is sometimes the result of an accident, and that some reproduction is necessary for a society to continue, this thinking is rarely applied consistently. Men may need sick leave because of a voluntary but dangerous activity - if they break a leg playing sport, for example. Or companies may expect their male employees to leave in order to advance their careers. Further, Barrett comments: "research has shown that the rate at which women cease to practise (medicine) is no greater than the rate at which men leave the profession through emigration or involuntary removal

from the medical register". [Barrett, WOT, p.75] Because women are still not regarded as belonging to the sphere of employment in their own right, any deviations from the norm of male behaviour are highly visible. Yet the problems associated with women - unreliability, absenteeism, not being worth training - can also be identified amongst male employees. Once again, both sexes have a similar experience of employment which is obscured by the separation into "masculine" and "feminine" spheres.

2. Preserving the Male or Female Sphere

Roger Clarke believes it is men's fear of being unemployed which leads them to ignore the needs of others, and to reject equal opportunities for Black people or for women: "fear fractures fellowship". [Clarke, WIC, p.69] This may be an element, but men discriminate on the basis of sex and race regardless of the employment situation. A key reason for this discrimination is the need to preserve a sphere for "superior" masculine activity, uncontaminated by "inferior" creatures, be they female or Black.³ Korda expresses this well, and is worth quoting at length:

This baroque structure of myths constructed over the centuries, is the means by which men cling to their masculine pride while sitting at their desks doing a job that a woman could ... do just as well or better ... But if she could, then who the hell are we? ... To ask men to allow women into this dream castle ... is to ask them to dismantle it, to admit that man has finally been domesticated, that the dreams and illusions are over and done with, that nothing is taking place in this office, at this desk ... but work without glory, without special significance. Man's

world is no longer infinite, but limited, no longer special, but ordinary, no longer a heavy burden with earned privileges, but merely the same world as every other human being's ... As women push into man's world, making their way through the loopholes of the crumbling structure of men's dreams about themselves, demolishing the ancient prerogatives, they are destroying man as God, reducing him to human proportions. [Korda, MC, p.63]

Smart and Smart add to this two further underlying reasons for male exclusion of women: "First, that women should continue to serve men in the domestic sphere at home, and second, that they should not swell the ranks of competitors at work." Male intransigence is not a cultural relic, they say, but "the expression of persisting self-interest which may be expected to spawn ever-new rationalisations." [Smart and Smart eds., WSASC, p.39]

There are a number of ways in which men can block women's participation in the labour force, and maintain its masculine identification. Walum discusses three structural components of occupations in the United States which operate against women.

a) Hierarchical networks, which are difficult for women not taught to use power.

b) A sponsor-protégé system which looks for those of like background in terms of sex, class and race.

c) Socio-Emotional Bonding - what might be called the "old-boy" network. An occupation can become associated with masculine rituals. [Walum, TDOSAG, pp.155ff]

We should not just assume that women drop out of competition in

the workplace for family or personal reasons, since there can be obstacles placed in their way simply because they are not men, or are not able to "work the system" as men can.

There may or may not be a conscious desire to exclude women, but as Mead says, when women try to enter previously male jobs, "the whole pattern of thought, the whole symbolic system within which the novice must work, facilitates every step taken by the expected sex, obstructs every step taken by the unexpected sex." [Mead, MAF, p.339] Cooper and Davidson indicate the kinds of strains and pressures faced by professional women in token or lone positions which dominant members of the organization do not have: increased performance pressure, visibility, being a test case for future women, isolation, lack of female role models, exclusion from male groups, and distortion of women's behaviour by others to fit them into pre-existing sex stereotypes. [Cooper and Davidson, HP, p.58] These factors operate even where women have been welcomed into a male-dominated profession.⁴

In their turn, women may block men's participation in the home. They may encourage infantilism in men in order to maintain their own status, as we saw in Chapter Four. Thus the man "regresses to childhood dependence in those areas in which he depends on the woman to serve him", says Ruether; the "woman is helpless in the public realm to which she is denied access and for which she lacks the skills of survival". But, she continues:

her dependence is much more serious because the two realms are not at all comparable in power. Without access to public power and skills, woman cannot survive alone, whereas man's control of power and resources means that woman's services

are more readily replaceable. Yet the basic humanity of both is fundamentally truncated. [Ruether, SAGT, p.174]

3. Obscuring Shared Experience

Whatever differences exist between the sexes, they share a common humanity. The separation of home from work, the "feminine" from the "masculine" sphere, obscures areas where the sexes face similar pressures or obtain similar rewards in their work. This prevents a proper understanding of work itself, and makes it difficult to establish any differences in the way men and women relate to it. Without a correct analysis, it is not possible to make the changes which would improve working life for both sexes.

The question "why do women (do paid) work?", and the effect of mothers' employment on their children, are still major areas of debate:

People still ask why women work, especially those with children, despite the everyday evidence of millions of women doing so to combat continual price rises and economic pressure; despite research which indicates that large numbers of housewives and mothers prefer work to the isolation of home; despite, too, the lack of consistent evidence to show that working mothers are depriving their children. [Sharpe, DI, p.15]

The effect of concentrating on this issue is to render women's employment problematic, whereas men's relation to paid work is left unquestioned. Yet the questions raised about women's employment have a much more general relevance. We need to investigate how employment impinges on family life and vice

versa, and we need to ask what ties people to jobs which may offer little reward either financially or in terms of satisfaction. The evidence suggests that women and men share many of the same reasons for wanting paid work, as well as having reasons particular to their sex.

i) The Need for Income.

Men are rarely questioned as to why they want jobs, since breadwinning is an essential component of the masculine role, as we have seen. Even where a man could be supported by parents, wife, or income from other sources, it is felt to be "natural" that he should enter employment. Women are not cast in the role of breadwinner, unless they are single or in exceptional circumstances. But as has often been pointed out, married women's earnings play a vital part in supporting their families above the poverty level. Regarding a husband as the principal earner, and assuming his wife merely provides "extras", reflects a particular ideology rather than the important contribution both are likely to be making to the family's finances. Moreover, a substantial number of families rely on a woman as their sole breadwinner.⁵ Indeed for some groups of women such as those of West Indian origin, it is part of the female role to be a good breadwinner.⁶

Because women have so often been said to work for "pin-money", it has been necessary to emphasize the vital part women's earnings play in supporting their families. Yet this disguises the other reasons involved. As Sharpe comments:

the current economic situation has hung women's employment on a convenient and justifiable hook - women work because they have to. Clearly money is a crucial element here and

women's income is often essential to the family budget or integral to maintaining the standard of living. But there is more to it than this ... [Sharpe, DI, p.15]

For women, like men, relate to employment in complex ways. Harper and Richards comment that it is unreasonable to assume that women must work either for money or for interest. It is also unrealistic to assume that women stay in one category, since they may start a job for one reason, but continue in it for a quite different one. [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.105/6]

Welbourn notes this more complex attitude towards employment. When asked why they are in their jobs, he says, most workers reply that it is for the money. But when questioned further they speak of job satisfaction, getting on with other people, and a sense of purpose. Saying you are only there for the money may be a product of the job-type; if the only reward you get from a job is money, that is all you are there for. [Welbourn, STFOW, p.32/3] Where it is assumed that men have to earn to support families, their other reasons for doing jobs are obscured. Women, who are not expected to need incomes, are assumed to want jobs for other motives. Rather than simply asserting that women, like men, only do paid work for the income, we should say that both men and women find a variety of benefits from their jobs.

Sharpe makes it clear that "money alone is insufficient to describe the meaning of work in women's lives", since if this were so, no woman would want a job if she did not need the money. Yet in **Double Identity** she illustrates the sheer persistence of women in doing paid work despite the lack of rewarding jobs, and the many accommodations they have to make in order to take up

employment. She points out that a 1979 *Woman's Own* survey found that only one fifth of employed mothers would not work if they did not need the money. [Sharpe, DI, p.17] And fewer than one in ten employed mothers in Sharpe's survey would have given up their jobs. Some would have liked a break or a change, but did not want to give up completely. [Ibid., p.90] Salaman's findings bear this out for men. All but one of the architects he studied, and 58% of the railwaymen, said they would stay in their jobs even if they did not need the money. [Salaman, SR, p.402] Young and Wilmott also report this. More than two thirds of the working-class men they interviewed said they got more out of their job than just an income, and the figure was even greater for the middle-class. [Young and Wilmott, TSF, p.150]

Sharpe concludes that the "view that money is the most important or only justification for working is too simplistic and ignores the historical and psychological role of work in women's lives and its effects on their independence and self-identity." [Sharpe, DI, p.219] Paying women to stay at home is not a solution, for it is economic independence and separate identity achieved outside the home which is important. Voluntary work is not adequate as an alternative to paid work for this same reason. [Ibid., p.91] This aspect is rarely picked up by Christians who discuss whether married women should have jobs. The usual answer, illustrated by Helen Lee, is that this is perfectly acceptable as long as the woman really needs the money, but not if she takes a job for other less materialistic reasons. [Lee, *Mission England*] A more consistent Christian approach might suggest that God provides for material needs, but that Christians have a duty to use their gifts and talents, and to serve other people; and this

should apply equally to both sexes.

ii) Work and identity

Both sexes gain a sense of identity and worth through paid work, although this may take different forms. We have already discussed the affirmation of masculinity which men can find through their employment. Much attention has been paid in the theology of work to the relation between men's identity and paid work, although it has not been defined as such. But women too gain an identity from having a job. In particular, they value the autonomy it offers them. Harper and Richards say of the women they interviewed: "The actual work performed was often far less important to self-image than was a setting within which they could pursue the always active process of self-construction". [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.276] Employment also offers a chance for women to make a recognized contribution to society. We shall examine both these points further in Chapter Ten. It is worth noting here that those who advocate jobs for women only if they need the money, have failed to take account of the other benefits paid work confers.

iii) Social relationships

Women often value the social aspects of their jobs, and may give the desire for company as a reason for wanting paid work. This may be interpreted as indicating a low commitment to employment, but men too look to their jobs for friendship and emotional satisfactions. Indeed this is a central feature of the masculine culture of employment. Sharpe reports that in a study of male manual workers, 45% rated social relations as the best thing about work, possibly because a friendship group compensates for

the lack of other rewards. [Sharpe, DI, p.228] Klein says that it is in bonds with workmates and friends that "men experience most fully the emotional satisfactions which social life affords; it is with other men that they are at their most relaxed, at ease and emotionally expansive." [Klein in Anderson, ed., TSOTF, p.70] Willis shows clearly that the social culture of the factory floor is an essential part of the meaning of work for men, just as Westwood describes this for women. [Willis, LTL, and Westwood, ADED]

Having a network outside the family is vitally important for both sexes, and a key component of paid work, according to Jahoda. Loss of a job not only means financial hardship, but the loss of companionship and support. Human beings are social creatures, and Mayo goes so far as to say "man's desire to be continuously associated in work with his fellows is a strong, if not the strongest, human characteristic." [Mayo, quoted in Oldham, WIMS, p.15/6] For this reason, we should be wary of suggestions that solve unemployment or childcare problems by suggesting that either women or men should be isolated at home caring for dependents, or making their home their workplace.

B. The Implications for a Feminist Theology of Work

As we have seen, not only women but religion comes to be associated with the sphere of home. The ideology places woman in the home as caring, expressive and spiritual, the "angel in the house", in contrast to the harsh masculine world outside. Work is the fallen sphere, home the higher, and "Women, shielded from history, are less fallen than men." [Ruether, SAGT, p.105] They

must stay at home to preserve their goodness, for femininity and Christlikeness "are both defined into a private realm of altruistic other-worldliness which, while appropriate for redemption, is inappropriate for the exercise of public power, even in the Church". [Ibid., p.129] The Church too is domesticated and "relegated to the private, supportive role of the female", [Ruether, MTFFOTC, p.61] which "furthers an identification of women with spirituality, morality, and piety, over against the secular masculine sphere of materialism, work, and scientific rationality." [Ruether, NWNE, p.76]

The Church has often tried to reject this identification with the private and feminine sphere. This is one motive for Christian involvement in social, political and industrial issues, as well as provoking concern over the small numbers of men in church congregations. Some theologians recognize the seriousness of the privatization of religion. Newbigin writes:

The Church has lived so long as a permitted and even privileged minority, accepting relegation to the private sphere in a culture whose public life is controlled by a totally different vision of reality, that it has almost lost the power to address a radical challenge to that vision and therefore to 'modern western civilisation' as a whole ... this failure is the most important and the most serious factor in the whole world (missionary) situation ... [Newbigin, quoted in BMU/PWM, TASFM, p.9]

We cannot examine here the debate about the privatization of religion and the responses to it, but we should note that feminist theology has an important contribution to make to it.

For the privatization of the feminine goes alongside that of the Church, and the two cannot be discussed in isolation. It is not simply that the Church has been assigned to the "wrong" sphere, and needs to assert its relevance to both. Rather, the division of life into separate spheres is wrong, and has been destructive to society as a whole.⁷ The theology of work has recognized the problem;⁸ yet whilst it has stressed Christianity's relevance to both public and private spheres, it has neither fully recognized the interrelationship of those spheres, nor objected to their definition as respectively masculine and feminine.

Industrial Mission theory and practice has been particularly at fault here. It has reacted to the "feminization" of Christianity by concentrating on the public, masculine, structural sphere, and failed to see that women are an equally important part of the labour force, and that personal issues cannot be separated from those faced in employment. For example, the Archbishop of York is quoted in the 1959 report **The Task of the Church in Relation to Industry**, and his words reflect the thinking of Industrial Mission since that time: "The world in which the worker lives is not his home, nor his parish but the vast yard or workshop. There is his community, his culture, his pattern of thought, and the gulf between it and all that is done, talked or thought in the parish church is enormous." [BSR, TTOTCIRTI, p.7]

A feminist theology of work offers fresh insights in this area. Firstly, it stresses the feminist slogan "the personal is political". This statement asserts that family life "is defined by power relationships just as much as the state". Women have been identified with the private sphere and men with the public,

but masculine power "is reinforced most strongly precisely through the most 'personal' institutions of marriage, childcare, violence, love and sexual relationships, and only when the personal is treated as seriously and critically as the public can the roots of sexism be found." [Tuttle, EOF, p.246] Thus the theology of work must not only take patriarchy seriously, it must see how it is reinforced within the home and personal relationships as much as in public life.

Secondly, as we saw in Part One, the feminist perspective allows for a person's sex to be taken into consideration where it is relevant, but also recognizes shared experience. This chapter has emphasized a number of areas where women and men share a common relation to work, and we have also identified experiences particular to one sex or the other. But in view of the current unrealistic attitudes towards women's work, we need to stress that people are equally affected by the ambivalence of work, even where the type of work they do varies. It is vital that the common humanity of women and men is recognized here, as Sayers makes clear: "Work is notoriously a curse - and if women liked everlasting work they would not be human beings at all. Being human beings, they like work just as much and just as little as anybody else." [Sayers, AWH, p.27] This is what Christians must affirm over against the idealization of women in the home and the devaluing of their labour. As we shall see in the next chapter, the failure to see women workers as human beings leads to their exploitation.

Thirdly, a feminist theology of work insists on the interconnections between the spheres of home and work. Because

the personal and public realms interrelate in women's experience, any Christian concern to combat sexism must extend to providing a critique of the oppression women suffer in the family. Yet the Church today is increasingly emphasising the home as haven, and the importance of "family values". Those theologians of work who look to increased time within the home, whether doing productive work or at leisure, as a good model for the future, also fail to address the negative aspects of domestic life. Human experience of personal relationships and the domestic sphere is ambivalent, just as is the experience of work. But this is disguised by the separation of the two.

Maintaining a division between home and work clearly enables people to cope with a situation which might otherwise be overwhelming, as Piotrkowski shows. It also makes it possible to avoid confronting the ambivalence of work, by regarding one sphere as a haven and the other as stressful. But damage is still inflicted on individuals, and the ordering of society which helps to create these problems is left unchallenged. For example, men may "use their wives as opiates to soften the impact of the forces they have set into motion against themselves", as Slater suggests. [Slater quoted in Eichler, TDS, p.43] Or the position of women in the home may allow "the frustration and anger that men should direct toward organizational action at the work place to find an outlet in the privacy of the home through petty tyranny and verbal abuse, neglect and promiscuity, wife beating and child mistreatment." [Leacock, in Lowe and Hubbard eds., WN, p.113]

Instead, both women and men need to question "the basic

organization of productive life and household structures, as well as the distribution and allocation of resources and the use of human time and energy." [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.285] We have to realise that:

Working mothers, or indeed working fathers, are not the problem. That lies in the failure of family life, work life and society in general to have yet developed the means to enable these roles to be comfortably combined, without penalising one or more of the participants, be it fathers, mothers, children or employers. [Moss and Fonda, WATF, p.8]

Clearly much more could be done to ease this problem. However as we saw in Chapter Five, patriarchy was not created by a separation of home and work. It cannot be ended by reaffirming the connections between the two, or by easing the conflict between them, however important these things are. The separation of the spheres of home and work offers a chance to avoid the ambiguities of these important areas of human life. It has been suggested that the theology of work has too easily accepted this separation, and its analysis has suffered as a result. For those ambiguities are avoided only at great cost to individuals and society. A system which demands that "women be 'scripted' for nurturing and support roles while men be destined to realize their worth through money and power", says Ruether, "keeps men from fostering lives of intimacy and community, and it even prevents them from finding real pleasure in work itself." [Ruether, FMTM, p.65] The fact that women are "scripted" for nurturing is a key influence on their working lives, and creates substantial problems. It is this which forms the theme of the next section.

NOTES

1. Paternity provision is virtually non-existent in Britain, despite widespread support for it, and maternity entitlements have been reduced in recent years.
2. See Sharpe, DI, for a discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of this approach.
3. White women may exclude Black women from a similar desire to preserve the status of a particular job.
4. See, for example, Borrowdale, "Being a Woman in Industrial Mission".
5. In 1981, 18% of West Indian households were headed by women, 3% of white and 4% of Asian. [Barrett and McIntosh, FR, p.31]
6. In one survey, 76% of employed Black women referred to themselves as being successful mothers because they were good providers. [Myers, in Millman and Kanter eds., AV, p.247]
7. Elshtain gives an important feminist analysis of the public and private spheres in the context of Western political thought, in her book **Public Man Private Woman**.
8. See, for example, Phipps, GOM.

PART FOUR: SERVICE AND WOMEN'S WORK

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SERVING ROLE

The predominant characteristic of much of women's work is service. Women's work often involves the direct meeting of other's needs whether this is in the home or in paid employment. Since the requirement to serve is also an essential part of the Christian gospel, this would seem to be a key issue for a theology of work which takes women seriously. This chapter therefore looks briefly at four areas of women's caring work, motherhood, caring for disabled dependants, housework and employment. These relate to one another, and may be carried out in conjunction. There has been much feminist and sociological research on these issues, with the exception of caring, over the last fifteen years or so. It is only possible here to sketch the ways in which women's serving role is carried out, but it is clearly important for a feminist theology of work to be based on a proper understanding of these areas.

A. MOTHERHOOD

It is through motherhood that much of women's oppression comes to them: "Women's mothering is central to the sexual division of labor, Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power." [Chodorow, p.11] The writer of Genesis 3 showed insight in recognizing that women are in some

sense cursed through their bringing forth of children. Because women are mothers, they are perceived to be maternal "by nature": caring, nurturing, self-sacrificing. This is then extended to cover all aspects of women's work. But this picture bears little relation to women's actual experience of mothering, and the requirements of the other work they do. For "the emotional and social relation of mother and child is actually such that hate is engendered as well as love, and selflessness, subordination of self to the child's needs, is only imperfectly and with difficulty achieved." [Oakley, TILAW, p.286]

1. What Makes a Mother?

To become a mother is to take on a role which affects a woman's entire life, her career, her leisure, her opportunities. In this respect it is fundamentally different from the other relationships which exist among human beings. People are also fathers, daughters, cousins or grandparents, but these relationships do not prescribe a particular pattern of life. Family ties do bring certain responsibilities, but for the mother, the relationship automatically presumes a role. This is particularly the case whilst children are small, and it is this aspect of being a mother which is the focus here.

There is no necessary connection between the two, however. The mothering relationship is related to, but does not have to involve, the routine tasks of childcare. What makes a woman a mother is the fact that she stands in a particular relationship to a particular child or children, not the tasks she performs for them. A disabled mother may be able to do few childcare tasks, or

a wealthy mother may employ a nanny, but they are still mothers. Equally, whilst the routines of childcare can be used as a way of interacting with a child, the person who does them may have a poor relationship with that child. Many people claim that a maternal instinct in women fits them to be the exclusive caretakers of small children: God "has imprinted in the hearts of all living beings an instinctive love for their offspring", wrote Gilibert in the eighteenth century. "Woman, like all animals, is under the sway of this instinct." [Gilibert, quoted in Badinter, TMOM, p.156] But this is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as Badinter has shown, many mothers through history have ill-treated or simply not been interested in their children. Mothers in our own society can neglect and abuse children emotionally and physically. Many mothers felt, and feel, fiercely loving towards their children. But there are too many exceptions to be able to postulate a universal maternal instinct which automatically attaches all mothers to their children, or makes them the best guardians for their own offspring: "Maternal love is a human feeling. And like any feeling, it is uncertain, fragile and imperfect." [Ibid., p.xxiii]

Secondly, although some mothers feel an instant rapport with their infants, others grow to love their children slowly, and some never feel particularly close. The evidence is that there is a readiness to respond to a baby which is often triggered in mothers by giving birth, but fathers can also bond with their babies, as can adoptive or foster parents. Chodorow comments that whilst psychoanalytic theory places the foundation for mothering on a woman's relationship with her own mother:

the foundation for parenting is laid in a boy's early relationship to his mother as well. The early relationship generates a basic relational stance and creates potential parenting capacities in everyone who has been mothered, and a desire to recreate such a relationship as well. [Chodorow, TROM, p.90]

Evidence indicates that mothering is learned behaviour, and those who have been inadequately "mothered" themselves, will not be able to care for their own children properly unless shown how.

2. Motherhood as a Job

Although we earlier made the distinction between the relationship and the role of mother, for most women the two are combined. Even mothers with full-time jobs are expected to look after their families' domestic needs. For some women, the housewife/mother role is regarded as a full-time (but unpaid) job. This idea is a product of affluence, as Bernard points out: "Until recently and even now in most parts of the world, able-bodied adult women have been too valuable as workers to be spared for the full-time care of two or three small children." [Bernard, WWM, p.71] However, the idea of motherhood as a job is popular. Cobb, for example, says that the "career of mothering" is "at least as worthwhile as being a teacher, social worker or car mechanic, and a good deal more valuable than most jobs". [Cobb, p.17] And Leach writes:

Being a mother is probably the most exhausting job which exists in Western society. Hours on duty and on call add up to twenty-four per day. There are no overtime payments, time off in lieu, money for unsocial hours. No weekend or holiday breaks are provided, and you only get a tea break if you

make the tea yourself. The pay is usually atrocious. No union would stand for it. [Leach, quoted in Hardyment, DB, p.281.]

Leach and others like her seem to take a perverse pride in a schedule that has wrought havoc with the health of many mothers. No union would stand for that kind of job, whether paid or unpaid, because it would recognize the damaging consequences. If the job of caring for children is as important as Leach and Cobb suggest, it deserves to be rewarded and structured much more generously. This is discussed further in Chapter Ten. It is difficult to see how a worker isolated in the kind of job described by Leach could produce work of a high quality whatever the field. Where the job involves creating a balanced, sensitive human relationship, the task seems impossible. Margaret Hebblethwaite argues that even a good relationship between mother and child can be "ruined by excess":

truly does the mother grieve who sees too much of her child, whose eyes are dimmed with fatigue, whose ears are deaf with the sound of crying, who is driven to hate what she most loves, to lose what she has most longed for, and who on top of this can barely forgive herself her inadequacy. [Hebblethwaite, MAG, p.69]

Here it is precisely the conditions of the job outlined by Leach, rather than the fact of being a mother, which create the problem. As Sharpe points out, full-time mothering at home, "often takes place in conditions that amount to severe social deprivation, where women may be cut off from other adults, from outside interests, from adult conversation and other stimulation, and are

potentially vulnerable to depression and other psychological disorders." [Sharpe, DI, p.40] We know that meeting people and being with others is important to women, she says, yet "motherhood, the ideal to which they are supposed to be oriented, and the role supposedly central to female identity, is spent predominantly in isolation." [Ibid., p.32]

Some argue that though dull and frustrating, the job of the housewife/mother is no worse than most others. Thus Dobson says that "practically every other occupation" is boring and monotonous. [Dobson, MTMAW, p.154] The difference is that it is possible to take a break from these jobs, the housewife/mother has continuous responsibilities, with little opportunity for escape. Further, there may be some degree of choice over which jobs other people take up; women are assigned the housewife/mother role because of their sex, and their identity is assumed to be bounded by that role.

3.The Emotional Aspects of Motherhood

For some women, the pleasures of childrearing are a more than adequate recompense for the stresses involved. For example, the mothers in Boulton's survey enjoyed their children's dependence on them, and especially being essential to babies. [Boulton, OBAM, p.105] Boulton also found that working-class mothers were less conscious than middle-class mothers of a loss of identity. Children expressed their individuality rather than undermining it. [Ibid., p.100/1] For Rich, motherhood brings out "the tenderness, the passion, the trust in our instincts, the evocation of a courage we did not know we owned, the detailed

apprehension of another human existence, the full realization of the cost and precariousness of life." [Rich, OWB, p.280] ¹

Kitzinger suggests that being a mother is an exciting occupation which demands "all one's intelligence, all one's emotional resources and all one's capacity for speedy adjustment to new challenges." [Kitzinger, WAM, p.272] Certainly many women regard entry into motherhood as a sign that they have reached mature womanhood. The idealization of motherhood has its dangers, but Badinter's historical point about it still stands. It allowed, she says, many women:

to experience their motherhood as a source of joy and pride and to find fulfillment in a universally honored and acknowledged activity. Not only did women have a set role, but each and every woman was irreplaceable. In this way, motherhood allowed women to exteriorize an essential aspect of their personality and beyond that to enjoy a respect that mothers had previously never known. [Badinter, TMOM, p.221]

However, whilst it is reasonable that such a profound experience should be valued, it should not be allowed to exclude the other achievements and maturing experiences possible to women, whether they are mothers or not. For it can hardly use all the various capabilities of all women. This point is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

Motherhood is also associated with guilt and anxiety. As we saw in Chapter Four, mothers can be idealized so that they become "symbols of, and carriers for, the motive of altruism in human social organization." [Oakley, WC, p.286] She points out that it "is this idealization of motherhood and its ramifications that

constitute the greatest problem for women in becoming and being mothers today." [Ibid., p.284] For women inevitably fail to live up to this high ideal. Indeed, the failure of confidence in being a mother "is such a familiar syndrome in the West that we hardly comment on it any more," says Kitzinger, "anticipating that the new mother will be awkward, unsure of herself, anxious and readily distressed." ²² Yet as Kitzinger notes, this particular psychological reaction to motherhood is almost unknown in other cultures, where the new mother has much more support. [Kitzinger, WAM, p.191]

Bakewell explains that when the profound human experience of having children is harnessed to a "highly competitive, technically diverse and specialized society", it "becomes at once a specialized skill, a profound way of life, a chance to excel as parents ... a subject for expert psychiatrists and sociologists ... a source of oppressive anxiety, even neurosis". She concludes, in "no other aspect of human life are our aspirations so high. We are bound to fail". [Bakewell in Radl, MDIO, p.xv/xvi]

Part of the anxiety springs from the weight of responsibility which rests on a mother who is the sole caretaker of her child. An unforeseeable accident or small mistake can have tragic consequences, since small children are highly vulnerable. The feeling may be more acute because of the mother's emotional involvement. Many people in their daily work bear great responsibility over the lives of others, but it is recognized that in order to do such jobs effectively, a certain amount of detachment is needed. A surgeon cannot grieve over every patient he or she is unable to save, for example.

Mothers may also be blamed for any behavioural or physical difficulties in a child. This may even include blaming the mother's activities or emotional state in pregnancy.³ Yet a variety of factors affect a person's development. Not only mothers but fathers, environment, and cultural expectations have an influence. Moreover children have their own autonomy, and also influence the way their parents behave. Where blame is laid predominantly at the door of mothers, despite inadequate evidence, women's feelings of anxiety and guilt are increased.

4. Maternal Employment and Guilt

Motherhood has a profound effect on women's employment, for it restricts the opportunities available to them. Oakley points out that "even if full-time and relatively uninterrupted ... (employment) will be ... determined by the extent to which she is able to solve the problems of her life as a mother." [Oakley, WC, p266/7] This is borne out in Stone's discussions with Black women, the majority of whom "were of the opinion that having children rather than their sex, membership of a racialised group or lack of qualifications was the most important restriction on their choice of employment". [Stone in Phizacklea ed., OWT, p.48/9] As one of the key features of women's employment in recent years has been the growth in the numbers of married women, and therefore mothers in the labour market, increasing numbers of women are affected by this. This is illustrated by Table 2.

As well as the practical difficulties of combining employment with childcare, many mothers are subject to feelings of guilt. For it is widely believed in our society that a mother's constant

TABLE 2

MARRIED WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE LABOUR FORCE

1921	1951	1961	1971	1981	1986
3.8	11.8	16.3	23.1	25.9	27.2

[Source: Department of Employment Gazette]

WORKING MOTHERS 1984

Mothers aged 16-59 by age of youngest child

The % of mothers

whose youngest child is	Work full-time	Work part-time	All economically active
----------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	----------------------------

0-2	4	19	28
3-4	8	28	41
5-9	12	41	60
10 yrs. and over	27	41	71
All with dependent	15	33	53

children

[Source: General Household Survey 1984]

presence is of crucial importance to her children. Not all cultural groups share this view. West Indian mothers believe that shared care is good for a child, and are less likely than white women to be concerned with theories of maternal deprivation. [Stone, op.cit., p.42f.]⁴ The most important figure in this debate was John Bowlby. Bowlby's work in the nineteen fifties with deprived children led him to believe that children needed the "provision of constant attention night and day, 7 days a week and 365 days in the year" from their mothers. [Bowlby, CATGOL, p.75/6] For this reason, he felt that "the mother of young children is not free, or at least should not be free, to earn." [Ibid., p.105]⁵ Bowlby did do important work, and contributed to the well-being of children in care, but the use of his arguments to oppose mother's employment, or short separations of mother and child has been shown to be unsatisfactory.⁶

Much research has been done in this area, and the evidence suggests that small children are not harmed by their mother's employment, providing that good alternative care arrangements are made and they have a good relationship with her when they are together. The 1972 report of the National Child Development study concluded that "many of the accusations laid at the door of the working mother are ill-founded. Such effects as have been noted here are relatively small." [Davie et.al., FBTS, p.47] But it is difficult to isolate the maternal employment factor from other variables such as social class, full-time versus part-time employment, age and sex of the child, the mother's attitude toward her employment, and the quality of care provided. Sharpe comments that "relationships between mothers and their children are better when the mothers are satisfied with their general

situation. Whether or not they go to work makes little difference". [Sharpe, DI, p.151]

Britain offers little public daycare provision for small children, and the alternatives can prove unsatisfactory for parents and stressful for children.⁷ The care provided by mothers at home full-time can also be unsatisfactory, but as Harper and Richards show, it is not the quality of care which is important so much as the need to appear a good mother. They point out that "nobody felt guilty about being less than a good mother because she stayed at home", [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.116] even if this caused other problems for children. Friedan, for example, commented in 1963 on the

strange new problems ... in the growing generations of children whose mothers were always there, driving them around, helping them with their homework - an inability to endure pain or discipline or pursue any self-sustained goal of any sort, a devastating boredom with life. [Friedan, TFM, p.27]

Selfishness is a key issue here, according to Harper and Richards, in "comments on mothers working, 'selfish' and 'guilty' are prominent labels". [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.43] Yet while mothers who have jobs for selfish reasons (i.e. for "fulfilment" rather than just for the money) were seen as bad mothers by the women in their survey, mothers at home could "selfishly" enjoy their free time, and still be seen as good. Only a few felt guilty about being lazy. [Ibid., p.154] Once children are older, however, mothers may be regarded as lazy if they stay at home. There are, say Harper and Richards, two

stereotypes available to women: "If you stay at home you are dreary and boring; if you work you are harried and selfish. ... You can be a dull person or a bad mother." [Ibid., p.30]

Harper and Richards work is important, because they show that the real issue is not the deprivation of children, but how mothers are to be judged:

While the idea that 'mother's care is best' is based on the children's needs, the exceptions suggest that it is the mother's own self-image that is threatened more often than the child's welfare. It is, by implication, her guilt, not the child's deprivation, that is the evil to be avoided.

This means that if a mother has to take a job to support her family, it is acceptable for her children to be cared for by other people. It is as if children are not hurt if the need is real. [Ibid., p.111/2.]

Interestingly, Harper and Richards say that women who worked part-time felt more guilty than those who stayed at home or who worked full-time. Given that part-time work is the way in which many mothers solve the problem of combining motherhood and employment, this point needs attention. It appears that mothers who do part-time work still accept the principle that "children need their mothers", and therefore feel guilty that their jobs prevent them from giving full attention to their children. Mothers with full-time jobs are more likely to accept that children can be satisfactorily cared for by other people. [Ibid., p.59]

B. CARING

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the situation of carers, those who look after disabled or elderly dependants. It is estimated that there are some 5 million carers in Britain, the majority of whom are women.⁸ Carers face many of the same problems that mothers of small children experience: isolation, the weariness of being continually on call, the frustration of always having to sacrifice one's own interests, and so on. But these problems are exacerbated because whilst most children become increasingly independent, a disabled person requires care for the rest of their life. Where the disability is pronounced, there is a need for 24 hour a day care, which can last for many years. Caring for twenty, thirty, or even fifty years is not uncommon, say Briggs and Oliver. Some 50% of carers have an outside job on top of their caring responsibilities. There are also fewer options open to carers. Adult dependants are not easily amused whilst carers chat, like mothers with children. Nor is it a simple matter to take an elderly or disabled person out. The physical strains are intense, since carers have to lift and manage the weight of adults who may weigh upwards of thirteen stone. [Briggs and Oliver, C, p.112/3]

Few carers object to the work involved in looking after their dependants, but most find the conditions under which they are expected to do it very difficult. There is some state help for carers, in the form of day care centres, home help, and nursing care in the home. But this is not always appropriate to the needs of individual families. Brass Tacks estimated that 10 % of carers get no help at all. Further, women carers receive less support

than do men, since they are assumed to be able to cope. In one study of 172 carers, 75% of sons and 68% of husbands got a home help service or informal support from neighbours. Only 4% of mothers, 20% of wives and 24% of daughters received this. [Equal Opportunities Commission, WCFTC, and CFTEAH]⁹ Wright reports that if sons are caring for mothers, those mothers are more likely to undertake tasks of cooking or cleaning for them than they are for daughters, even if this takes them many hours. [Wright in Finch and Groves eds., ALOL, p.96/7]

Caring is not explicitly idealized in the way that motherhood is, although it is underpinned by the concept of sacrificial service, as we shall see in the next chapter. Rather than being based on a publicly romanticized image, caring is a hidden service performed by individual women, but euphemised as "care in the community". The concept of "care in the community" seems admirable, since it allows for people who might otherwise be in institutions to stay with their families, and to be cared for in familiar surroundings. But in practice the burden of care falls disproportionately on women, and on women with the least resources: "it is the daughters of working-class elderly people who are bearing the brunt of informal care in the community." [Walker in Finch and Groves eds., ALOL, p.124] Difficulties are compounded where there is bad housing, poverty, isolation, or language difficulties. Yet "Trained or not, fit and healthy themselves or not, they are expected to be able to provide sensitive and loving care to their dependants, and to do so without reward". [Rimmer in Finch and Groves eds., ALOL, p.135]

Bringing up small children does offer rewards as the child

becomes more independent and responsive. But a disabled dependant is likely to become progressively less responsive, and "the circumstances of caring so frequently eventually kill love, replacing it with resignation or a sense of duty." [Dorothy in Briggs and Oliver eds., C, p.120] Although it may be entered into freely, out of love, this labour of love "can very quickly become labour quite devoid of any of the feelings of affection which are meant to be its cornerstone." [Finch and Groves, ALOL, p.10] This can lead to feelings of guilt, for the only way out of a stressful situation is the end of the caring relationship. Either the relative has to go into hospital or institutional care because the carer can no longer cope, or release comes when the person cared for dies. Wishing for relief from the situation is therefore wishing for the death of a loved person: "I want to be free, will be free only when you die, therefore I wish you dead." [Briggs and Oliver, C, p.113]

Carers are thus placed in an extremely difficult situation, as Briggs and Oliver make clear:

Carers speak so often of 'being in second place', 'putting their own needs last' and so on, and it is easy to see that this self-denigration, loss of self-esteem and effacement is a concomitant of the caring role. If the carer has never had any attention paid to her needs and has had to carry on tending even when she herself is ill or would wish to be elsewhere, the end result is that she is a doormat, without ability to assert her own personality and make choices for herself. In the end, even the most normal of desires, for privacy, self-determination and respite, can seem to both dependant and carer as selfish and uncaring. [Ibid., p.112]

One woman speaks of how she eased her situation when she was able to articulate her own needs. In her caring for an elderly, disabled mother, she at first saw herself "as a cross between Florence Nightingale and an early Christian martyr - nursing and caring for my mother, keeping the home spotless, washing, ironing, cooking, shopping, gardening, yet always available with a sympathetic ear and practical help for my husband and sons ... and of course, always smiling bravely!" [Val, in Briggs and Oliver eds., C, p.16] Accepting that this was not realistic, and that her own needs were important was a stepping-stone for growth, and this point will be discussed further in Chapter Ten.

C. HOUSEWORK

1. The Nature of Housework

Housework as we know it is a recent phenomenon. In previous centuries, houses were cleaned infrequently, clothes and persons washed less often. House-keeping is simple in pre-literate societies where all the energy goes on producing food, and is not always the province of adult women. Davidoff points out that in some societies the easier tasks are left to the young and the old or handicapped. [Davidoff in Barker and Allen eds., DAEIWAM, p.123] In our own society, because housework is not paid it is not recognized as work, and does not form part of the Gross National Product. There is a substantial amount of material on housework as production, particularly from within a Marxist Feminist perspective. There has also been a campaign for wages for housework, although this now seems to have little support amongst feminists.¹⁰ Housework is said to be productive, because

it produces workers for industry: a woman's "husband with his clean clothes, well-filled stomach and mind freed from the need to provide daily care for his children"; and the children as future workers themselves. [Oakley, SW, p.166] This aspect of the housewife's work was noted in Chapter Six.

Although we might define housework as the work involved in running a household, and looking after the needs of all those in it, the matter is more complex. Housework involves doing a variety of tasks, as Maynard points out, and not all play an equal part in social reproduction. [Maynard in Deem and Salaman eds., WCAS, p.147] Moreover, as Pahl says, a woman ironing a shirt at home for example, may be doing so in any of a number of different contexts - as a homemaker, for herself to wear to her job the next day, for her husband, for a friend and so on. These are the social relations in which a work task is done: "It is these social relations of work that produce exploitation. The circumstances under which the ironing was agreed to be done and the relative balance of power between the woman doing the ironing and her significant others would need to be known and understood before the particular work task could be appropriately categorized." [Pahl, DOL, p.125] This is important when we come to discuss the theological significance of the work being done.

Childcare needs to be included as part of the work of a housewife, but also resists simple definition. Some aspects of childcare are enjoyable and are not experienced as work.¹¹ Women's hobbies, such as knitting or cooking contribute to household production, but may not be classified as work. Thus it can be difficult to assess how many hours are spent on housework.

Oakley found that the average hours worked in the nineteen seventies was 77, [Oakley, TSOH, p.92/3] while Young and Wilmott gave a figure of around 40 hours; but their sample was of an older age group than the one Oakley interviewed, and therefore less likely to have children at home. [Young and Wilmott, TSF, p.110ff] Coote and Campbell include a wide range of activities in this list of women's unpaid work:

Women take care of planning meals, shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, mending, equipping and ordering the household, clothing and 'caring for children ... remember to pay the milkman; they listen, soothe, praise and comfort their menfolk and their children; they anticipate needs, watch for signs of ill-health or distress, remember where things are, keep spare light bulbs, telephone relatives, and pop in to see the old lady round the corner ... [Coote and Campbell, SF, p.81]

But this very difficulty in defining the hours and meaning of housework is at the heart of the problems associated with it. If housework is a woman's job, equivalent to her husband's earning of wages, it needs to have limits set about it. Myrdal and Klein discuss this. They point out that many housewives are proud to say that "a woman's work is never done", but this is true of most work unless a full stop is put to it at some point. This means leaving one's desk, or shutting up shop, or downing one's tools until the next day, even though the work is not completed. However:

This discipline is ... much easier to maintain if home and workplace are separated and the unfinished work is not kept under one's eyes. ... Housewives, whose home is identical

with their workshop, are ... still in the pre-industrial phase ... they live in a world in which most other work is done in eight-hour shifts and in a five to five-and-a-half day working week, and where leisure activities are organized on that basis. ... some of the top-load of their work falls into periods which are the leisure time of people with more regulated working hours. [Myrdal and Klein, WTR, p.38]

Oakley points out that whilst employed workers' hours are decreasing, urban housewives added seven hours a week to their working time between 1951 and 1971. Improved technology does not make housework easier, since housework tends to expand to fill the time available to do it, and standards rise. [Friedan, TFM, p.211] In fact, says Cyrus:

Modern conveniences plus modern high standards, while freeing women from ... back-breaking physical labor ... have increased enormously her petty cleaning-up tasks. The number of things which modern women have to wash and polish and starch and iron and sterilize, and the number of times they have to do it, have multiplied until many housewives spend most of the time cleaning one thing or another. [Cyrus, quoted in Hoffman and Nye, WM, p.45/6]

The question of standards is important, since they vary for different families and individuals. It is possible to spend very little time on housework, or to spend many hours a day, and this is one reason why many object to wages for housework.

Because housework involves caring for husband and children, it can be regarded as essentially an expressive role rather than work very much akin to paid labour. We may "consider the work of

the woman in the house as essentially feminine, and fail to see that, as work it is exactly like any other kind of human activity, having the same limitations and the same possibilities." [Gilman, in Malos ed., TPOH, p.75] The recognition that housework is work enables a better evaluation of its satisfactions and dissatisfactions, which mirror those of the office or factory. This is highlighted by Oakley's pioneering sociological studies of housework. [Oakley, TSOH, p.59] 75% of the housewives Oakley interviewed reported monotony, which indicates that they have more in common with assembly workers than with skilled factory workers. [Ibid., p.182] Like manual work, housework combines the maximum of attention and the minimum of involvement, says Comer, and days are "shaped by endless petty necessities". [Comer, WLW, p.87.] Although the housewife may be envied her apparent autonomy, the reality is that her days are structured by the continuous cycle of family needs. She is also subject to her husband's work - where they can live, what they can afford, his hours and the type of job he has.

2. Housework and Childcare

Housework and childcare are difficult to separate. Indeed the "occupational description sanctioned by society for a woman who is at home looking after children is not 'mother' but 'housewife'." [Oakley, TSOH, p.172] But there is substantial conflict between the two, for they have different goals, and this is a major source of frustration for women trying to get household tasks done, or trying to give time to children. Children see the house as a play space, the housewife is trying to keep things clean. Housework often involves the use of

chemicals, machinery and utensils which can be dangerous, and it is thus difficult to do housework whilst children are around. As Oakley points out, "to express warmth, to be constantly person-oriented and conciliatory, it is clearly 'necessary' that the housewife-wife-mother not be occupied with such ... tasks as cleaning the house, budgeting the housekeeping money, laundering the clothes, and throwing out the rubbish". [Oakley, TSOH, p.28]

Piotrkowski gives a detailed and fascinating case study of the ways in which the conflict is experienced. Her comments arise out of the situation of mothers of small children, but many of her points are also applicable to carers. The problem is compounded because there is no escape. Normally a worker will minimise role conflict by reducing communication and contact with those perceived as the source of stress, she says, but this option is not open for the mother with small children. [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.257] Further, the housewife cannot vent her anger or her frustrations at her work, for she is constantly with those towards whom she feels angry, and is supposed to love them. Paid workers can bring their anger home, or share it with colleagues, but there is no legitimate object for the housewife's anger. When she does resent husband or children, she feels guilt. [Ibid., p.234] It is recognized that professional carers need to maintain an emotional detachment if they are to do their work properly.¹² Yet women are closely bound emotionally to those for whom they care, and this affects how they care, and their feelings about it.

3. Stresses and Rewards in Housework

Dissatisfaction with housework may be assumed to be just a

middle-class phenomenon, but as we noted in Chapter Five, Oakley shows that it is far more widespread. Ferree disagrees with the assumption that working-class women like housework and find fulfilment in it because it is better than the jobs they could get outside. She doubts whether housework meets nonfinancial needs even for unskilled women. [Ferree, SP, p.432] What makes it difficult to recognize the frustration housewives face, is that there are "systematic social mechanisms for the concealment of dissatisfactions". Depression in housewives is treated as medical. A complaining housewife is seen as nagging or hysterical; an unsatisfied housewife is a maladjusted mother and wife. [Oakley, TSOH, p.193]

Housewives may be criticized for complaining that they are bored, yet boredom denotes alienation; the stunting of personal growth, meaningless labour, the need for social stimulation or support, and frustration at lack of autonomy. [Harper and Richards, MAWM, p.136] Alienation in other circumstances, such as that experienced by men in their paid work, is taken seriously; but housewives are presumed to react in a peculiarly feminine way to their situation. Yet, says Quarm, the housewife role involves meeting the needs of others and reacting to them, and this causes uncertainty and lack of control. We should expect depression amongst people "who have a great number of stresses of life demands with which they must cope, and at the same time the fewest possible actual possibilities for mastery over them." [Quarm, in Borman et.al. eds., WITW, p.192] Again, we need the reminder that housework is work done under certain conditions which would cause men to react in the same way. In this context, it is worth noting the parallel between the lives of housewives

and unemployed men. In terms of Roger Clarke's table, [See Table 3] housewives share much of the experience of unemployment, for they too are denied involvement in the outside world.

The plight of unemployed men is taken seriously, particularly by writers on the theology of work, but housewives raising the same issues are seldom heard. Indeed, the housewife may be held up as a model for unemployed men to follow, for she is assumed to find satisfaction in a life at home. Where such models of a home-based life are being constructed, it is particularly important for women to point out the problems which they experience. This is not to deny there are also satisfactions in the life of a housewife. At the most basic level, she receives a reward for her labours - a roof over her head, food and clothing, even if these vary in quality. And some of the mechanisms by which housewives structure their work can import value into it, alongside the satisfaction of fulfilling other people's needs. Oakley noted the tendency of housewives to "raise standards and elaborate routines so that self-reward may continue to be achieved." This reflects a similar pattern of job enlargement and setting higher standards in industry in order to raise the level of interest in the work. [Oakley, TSOH, p.110] This is interesting, since ability to supervise oneself is an important attribute in the labour market, but not recognized as a skill housewives have learnt.

On the other hand, Piotrkowski found that organising housework so as to gain extra time can have the effect of making it more boring and more routine. Not organising can be a way of rebelling, and not getting into a rut. [Piotrkowski, WATFS, p.230] People can quite rightly point out that housewives could

TABLE 3

WORK	UNEMPLOYMENT
Power	Powerlessness
Access to Goods and Services	Relative Poverty
Dignity and Social Honour	Stigma and Social Unease
Structure to life	Structureless lives
Purpose in life	Purposeless lives
Satisfaction of being a contribution to society	Enforced dependency on the state
Sharing life with others	Socially isolated lives
Having a voice	Voiceless position in society

[Clarke, WIC, p.28]

do their work much more quickly and effectively. But this fails to understand the relation between the housewife and her work. Housewives, like other human beings, need to feel they are doing something worthwhile, and to fill their days. This is recognized by Anthony in a general context: "if we are asked to engage in any continual and exhausting activity, no matter how tedious, our survival and our sanity may depend upon our conferring some dignity on it and, thence, upon ourselves." [Anthony, TIOW, p.286]

Women can gain a sense of worth from having a clearly marked area of responsibility in their domestic role, which gives some power and control: "In staking out and defending their sphere in this way women are also asserting their separateness, which despite its lack of status in the external world, does not necessarily feel inferior." They may agree in theory with men doing more, but in their own situations do not want them to. [Sharpe, DI, p.183] They take pride in successfully combining domestic and other work. This is why women may exclude men from the domestic sphere in the same way that we saw men blocking women in employment.

Moreover, as Sharpe points out, women care about the members of their families, about husbands who do long hard jobs, and are reluctant to heap domestic tasks on them:

Servicing husband and children is part of a mother's traditional role, and therefore on top of their own jobs, women still carry home the shopping, clean the house and put the dinner on, often before men even step through the front door. It is hard to change this pattern because feminine identity generally incorporates a high level of sensitivity to other people's feelings and needs, especially those they

love, and whatever their attitudes and principles may be, this aspect makes it harder in practice for them to make a lot of fuss about equality at home. [Ibid., p.184/5]

This element of love is a key contributory factor to the problems women have with the "service ethic", as we see in the next chapter.

Further, says Sharpe, "it can become too much effort and too much like nagging continually to be requesting help. Women ... want their homes to be loving and harmonious. To create issues around things like washing and Hoovering may appear on the surface as petty and insignificant, provoking conflict about something which has always been seen as women's work." [Sharpe, DI, p.195] "I'll do it for you" may appear as the easiest short-term option, although women pay for it through encouraging the belief that women are always available to service men and children.

D. Women's Service in the Labour Market

Women's caring and service in the areas described above are reproduced in particular ways in the labour market: "The domestic stereotype of women playing the auxiliary and service role in relationship to men ... conditions paid female labour on every level." [Ruether, WMAP, no page numbers.] Women's jobs may require them to perform tasks usually done at home on a larger scale. Thus women predominate as cleaners, in laundries, in catering (though not as creative chefs), teaching or caring for small children, the clothing trade and nursing. As we have seen, domestic service itself was a major source of employment for

women in the past. Within this range of jobs, Black women are likely to have the least attractive work. Asian women are over-represented in textile and clothing, repetitive assembly work and as homeworkers. West Indian women tend to be in low-grade professional work and service industries.

The type of jobs suitable for women may be defined in terms of their "natural" characteristics: "A sphere for genuinely feminine work exists wherever sensibility, intuition and adaptability are needed, and where the whole human being needs attention, whether it has to be nursed or educated or helped in any other way, perhaps by understanding it and assisting it to express itself", says Edith Stein. [Stein, quoted in Clark, MAWIC, p.392] But this assumes that women work for love of it rather than for reward, or that they gain reward from the work itself rather than wanting status or pay. The fact that women are often involved in voluntary work is important, says Sharpe, because it gives rise to the belief that "people (usually women) who do caring jobs like nursing and social work should do so more for the intrinsic rewards than for financial gain." [Sharpe, DI, p.229]

Leghorn and Parker relate this to an ideal of love which

allows women to be convinced that their nurturing work should be done for free. The demand for wages for women's work in the home is seen as cold, mercenary, and unwomanly. Those extensions of this work for which women can earn money ... are paid very little, because it is done for free in the home and is supposedly part of women's nature. ... When women work for money it is mercenary; when men earn money they have a career. [Leghorn and Parker, WW, p.114]

Rowbotham believes that the idea of women's work as an extension of their role in the family serves to conceal its hard and dirty character: "the problem with most women is not to make them work harder but to stop them breaking their backs for a pittance." [A woman trade union official, quoted in Rowbotham, WCMW, p.97] . Further, it enables employers to retain paternalistic forms of control over their women workers. [Rowbotham, WCMW, p.90] If women's primary work role is seen as meeting other people's needs in various ways, they may be "restrained from any uncompromising or threatening action on their own behalf for fear of negative repercussions on other individuals toward whom they stand in a protective role." [Adams, in Gornick and Moran eds., WISS, p.404] Strikes are starting to happen in service industries, although significantly the motivation for strike action is often said to be the preservation of a high standard of service, rather than individual gain. Women potentially have much power because their service work is so vital, yet the need to serve others is deeply ingrained, and often prevents them from exploiting that power.

Women may have a special relationship with an employer which also contributes to acceptance of poor conditions of work. Mothers in employment place great emphasis on the convenience of their job, as Sharpe's **Double Identity** makes clear. They are likely to appreciate an employer who is flexible when children are ill, or arranges hours to suit a woman's domestic responsibilities. Women may welcome employment in a small firm which projects a family image. Management may be paternalist in style, with the women workers as "the girls" who relate to a male "father" boss figure. A female supervisor may play a "mother" role. Within this family

set-up, employers can have special arrangements with women employees about commitments to children. Such firms are usually anti-union, but this may suit the women, since unions are not good at getting the kind of flexible arrangements they want.¹³ The employer in such a case benefits substantially by having a loyal and hard working workforce who will accept lower wages. Because women are grateful and feel they have a personal relationship with their boss, it is difficult for them to do anything to improve pay and conditions.

For some Asian women, their only opportunity of getting a job may be in a firm with family connections, and the problems described above may be more intense. Hoel discusses the appalling conditions some of them face in clothing trade sweatshops, with long hours, poor pay and poor safety standards. The fact that the women have got their jobs through family or community relationships makes it difficult for them to make any complaint, and their employment may be structured so as to prevent any dissatisfaction being expressed. Hoel points out that this is not just a case of men oppressing women, but has to be seen in the context of the Asian community as a whole coping in a racist society. [Hoel, in West, ed., WWATLM, p.80ff]

The employment pattern for many white women, offered to them by prevailing values and opportunity structures is a relatively rigid three-stage model: full-time work up to marriage and then afterwards until shortly before the first child is born; more or less full-time domesticity until the youngest child is 5 years old, then part-time work in a job compatible with home duties. [Oakley, SW, p.162]

West Indian women are more likely to be supporting their families through their earnings without a break, and Asian women less likely to be earning at the relevant stages.¹⁴ Although many women do not follow this pattern, deviation from it can meet with social disapproval and thus feelings of guilt.

It appears from this model that all that is required of mothers is that they sacrifice a few years out of a long life in the labour market for the sake of their children. But the effect is more far-reaching than that. The whole of a woman's employment life is influenced, her levels of achievement and her earning potential are reduced by years at home. [Sanders and Reed, KSOS, p.132] Some women "who have held down quite responsible jobs before marriage discover they have lost their skills, their competence, their ability to concentrate or organize their time or thoughts properly. They have spent too much time in petty detail and interrupted work patterns." [Nicholson, THOM, p.17] It can be difficult for women to retrain when they feel this kind of inadequacy and loss of belief in themselves. There are now many courses which aim to help women to make the transition from home to employment, but the options facing women are still limited:

The world of work entered by mothers returning to work is qualitatively different from that of most other women and men. It offers only a very limited number of occupations, most of which are in the service sector. These jobs are usually semi-skilled or unskilled, are low paid, enjoy low status, are insecure and have few prospects ... [Sharpe, DI, p.48]

As Land says:

it is important for us to recognise that, if we ascribe to women the primary responsibility for providing domestic services for other members of the family, their daily lives are structured in a way which profoundly affects their opportunities in the wider society in general and the labour market in particular. [Land, JOSP, p.259]

E. MEN AND SERVICE

The main focus of this chapter has been the service women perform not because men do not serve others, but because service is particularly attached to the feminine role, as we saw earlier. However, it may be worth noting here some areas where men's service is justified by an ideology which obscures the type of work being done. We cannot discuss these in detail here, but they suggest once again that what is said in a theology of women's work has a far wider application. Men might wish to develop this theme, although it should not detract from the particular way in which the ideals of Christian service have been applied to women.

Firstly, there are many parallels between the situation of male ministers and women's caring role. Indeed, the "service ethic" outlined in the next chapter applies in most respects to men in this kind of work. In addition, a number of men choose lives of self-sacrifice out of religious motivation. But freely chosen self-sacrifice is a different matter from requiring that women should serve as part of the feminine role. Secondly, there is a sense in which men may perceive their masculine breadwinning role as sacrificial service of wife and children. But whilst this can be service, it is not subject to the constraints of the Christian

ethic. That is, men are not expected to work without complaint, without reward, and in disregard of their own interests.¹⁵

The same applies to the type of middle-class masculine service Tolson describes: a "notion of 'privilege', tempered by 'duty' and 'service', supposedly inherent in the masculine character. A man is born to lead, but also, paradoxically, to serve those he leads." [Tolson, TLOM, p.35/6] The crucial difference between the service of men and of women is that men do receive reward and privilege, whereas women's service leads to their exploitation.

However, thirdly, there is one area where men are subject to a service ethic which leads ultimately to their destruction. This is in the ideology which surrounds war. Men in the armed forces are encouraged to believe they are defending their country, their women and children, and that to sacrifice their lives for this purpose is glorious. Christian values are evoked either explicitly or implicitly, in the manner of the well-known hymn:

I vow to thee my country ... the service of my love:

The love that asks no questions, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best,

The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,

The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

[Cecil Spring-Rice. *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*, no. 579]

The reality of war and its political machinations are obscured by this kind of language. Although it might be debated whether this ideology is as strong today, studies of the Falklands war suggest that it is. Carr and Tinker both clearly demonstrate that it is not a glory to die or be incapacitated for one's country. [Carr, AS, and Tinker, AMFTF.]

NOTES

1. Hebblethwaite also reflects the positive side of motherhood.
2. This is reflected in magazines for the mothers of young children, for example.
3. Cf Rheingold: "If the pregnant woman is emotionally disturbed (or perhaps even harbors negative attitudes), the foetus is adversely affected ... and a life is launched with impaired developmental potentialities." [Rheingold, quoted in Fransella and Frost, OBAW, p.158.] Recent developments suggest that the actions of the pregnant woman could lead to her prosecution for child abuse. In 1986 a Californian woman was prosecuted for contributing to her son's death by taking drugs during pregnancy. According to the British Standing Committee on Drug Abuse, "the logical outcome ... was that there should be an investigation every time a child was born with some mental or physical defect to see if the mother was at fault." [Observer, 5th October 1986.] Hubbard discusses the implications of this kind of thinking in Arditti, et.al., ed, TTW. The issues raised here are far-reaching, and worthy of serious theological study, but it is not possible to deal with this subject adequately within the scope of this thesis.
4. Asian women did however think a child needed its mother in the first five years. Some Black women have felt guilty that they could not provide the customary standard of shared childcare in

the British situation. See Bryan et.al. THOTR.

5. Hardyment, DB, discusses why Bowlby's work assumed such importance.

6. See Rutter, MDR, and Schaffer, M.

7. See Jackson and Jackson, C, and Sharpe, DI.

8. Some 20,000 are under the age of 18, and a few of these are as young as 11. Source: **Brass Tacks**, BBC TV May 1987.

9. Until a recent E.E.C. ruling, married women who gave up their jobs to look after disabled dependants were not eligible for the allowance available to men in the same situation. Again, the assumption was made that such caring is "natural" to women.

10. See note 5, p.212. These aspects of housework are not discussed in detail here.

11. cf the mothers in childcare magazines who list looking after children as their hobby or one of their interests.

12. See Campbell, PTC.

13. This analysis is drawn from Harriet Bradley, at a Sociology seminar at Durham University, 1985

14. This is reflected in the percentages of women of different ethnic origins participating in the labour force. In 1981, 23% of

white women, 42% of West Indian women and 25% of Asian women were in full-time work. 17% of white, 14% of West Indian and 5% of Asian were in part-time. [Barrett and McIntosh, FR, p.30]

15. Men may complain vociferously about marriage, and having to support a family, but as Bernard has shown, they benefit substantially from it. [Bernard, TFOM, pp.16ff]

CHAPTER NINE: THE SERVICE ETHIC

A. THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The meaning of Christian service is clear, according to the many theologians who have written of it: it is to take Christ as our model and to minister to others in the form of a servant. This means, says Torrance, to "be merciful without any hope of return and without ever looking for any return, to go on being merciful in the face of unremitting unthankfulness, and always to make every act of ingratitude, no matter how bitter and obdurate, the very occasion for mercy". [Torrance, in McCord ed., SIC, p.10]

This definition of service corresponds with what is generally meant by Christian love, and we might define service as love in action.¹ Nygren's classic study of Agape identifies Christian love with selfless and entirely uncaused giving. The meaning of Agape, he says, is "to offer and to give where there might seem to be little rational justification for doing so." [Nygren, AAE, p.64] He continues: "Christian love has its pattern in the love manifested by God, therefore it too must be spontaneous, uncaused, uncalculating, unlimited, and unconditional." [Ibid., p.65] The philosopher Hannah Arendt pushes the idea of not looking for any reward further by suggesting that:

the moment a good work becomes known and public, it loses its specific character of goodness ... Goodness can exist only when it is not perceived, not even by its author; whoever sees himself performing a good work is no longer good, but at best a useful member of society or a dutiful member of a church. [Arendt, THC, p.74]

As we shall see, these views misrepresent the true meaning of Christian love and goodness.

A number of writers extend the principles of Christian service to daily work. W.A.Whitehouse writes that to "work in the personal service of another human being is ... the least coveted role in human society",² and gives examples of young apprentices, shop assistants, bus conductors, personal secretaries and domestic servants. Jesus interpreted his own role and that of his disciples in terms of servanthood with, says Whitehouse, "the personal service of the table-waiter firmly in view." Those who follow Jesus, then, "must spend themselves in direct personal service to any who call upon them, without calculation and without any safeguards of dignity." [Whitehouse, in McCord ed., SIC, p.151] This model can, however, cause problems, where Christians apply it to service jobs. We shall explore this further below, but it is an error into which Richardson appears to fall.

He suggests that Christian workers must "be dutiful and obedient, and must render godly respect and honour to their masters." [Richardson, TBDOW, p.41] For the "patient bearing of injustice in the sphere of daily work is a sharing of the sufferings of Christ himself." [Ibid., p.42] Richardson declares that:

When a man turns to Christ ... his whole life is sanctified, including his life as a worker. What had formerly been done as sheer necessity, or perhaps out of a sense of duty, or even as a means of self-expression and fulfilment, is now done 'unto the Lord', and becomes joyous and free service and the source of deep satisfaction. [Ibid.,p.47]

For the Christian worker filled with the joy of serving Christ, such things as injustice, drudgery and hardship, have lost their power. Richardson makes no suggestion that Christians might have a duty to fight injustice.

A recent re-working of the theme of service and work is that of Roger Clarke, who wants to affirm a Contribution Ethic:

a belief that our humanity does find fulfilment in doing things for others. That God is glorified through our being of service to our fellows whether that be through employee/customer relationships in the paid economy or whether that service, that giving of ourselves, is manifested ... quite outwith the paid economy. [Clarke, WIC, p.196]

Welbourn too emphasises service, saying that it "is in the service of others that man most closely associates himself with the creative activity of God, whose end ... is to create a universal community of love." [Welbourn, STFOW, p.58]

Clarke also wants to affirm "gift exchanges, in which we do things for others out of love, affection or concern ... These interactions and activities of the gift economy create and sustain the sense of community and of genuine care within the social order." [Clarke, WIC, p.198] For John Davis, an awareness of others is the key to "working with love". No matter how simple or tedious the job, the Christian "is to see behind the task itself people being served; brothers and sisters in the family of God". This is important, but he goes on to suggest that working with love requires a total emotional commitment, since in Gibran's words it is "to weave the cloth with threads drawn from

your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth ... Work is love made visible. For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man's hunger." [Davis, ICF 1985, no page numbers.] As we shall see, this is a particularly problematic requirement for women's work.

Clarke recognizes that service does require adequate rewards, in the form of social recognition if not necessarily through being paid. [Clarke, WIC, p.192] He is more aware of the issues surrounding women's work than most writers in the theology of work tradition, but he too fails to appreciate that women stand in a different relation to service than do men, and thus his conclusions have a limited value for women's work.

B. WOMEN AND SERVICE

The ideals of Christian service have a special importance for women because service and caring are integral to the feminine role. Jong sums this up in her "glorious image of the ideal woman" who

always turns the other cheek. She is a vehicle, a vessel, with no needs or desires of her own. When her husband beats her, she understands him. When he is sick, she nurses him. ... She cooks, keeps house, runs the store, keeps the books, listens to everyone's problems ... scrubs the floors, and sits quietly ... while the men recite prayers about the inferiority of women. She is capable of absolutely everything except self-preservation. [Erica Jong quoted in Nilsen et al. eds., SAL, p.117]

Christian women in particular are encouraged to find their

calling in submissive service. But as Jong indicates, and as we shall see, this can result in a destructive loss of self.

1. Women's Need to Serve

Whether women are doing paid or unpaid work, in the home or outside it, their role is characterized by service. They are expected to care for others, lovingly and with little or no reward. According to Graham, "'Caring' becomes the category through which one sex is differentiated from the other. Caring is 'given' to women: it becomes the defining characteristic of their self-identity and their life's work. At the same time ... not-caring becomes a defining characteristic of manhood." [Graham in Finch and Groves eds., ALOL, p.18] For women:

the experience of caring is ... the medium through which they gain admittance into both the private world of the home and the public world of the labour market. It is through caring in an informal capacity - as mothers, wives, daughters, neighbours, friends - and through formal caring - as nurses, secretaries, cleaners, teachers, social workers - that women enter and occupy their place in society. [Ibid., p.30]

Miller confirms that the need to serve "is not central to a man's self-image ... Once he has become a man, by other standards, he may choose to serve others." [Miller, TANPOW, p.69]³ But "Serving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized ... women have been led to feel that they can integrate and use all their attributes if they use them for others, but not for themselves." [Ibid., p.60]

Miller notes that many women "truly cannot tolerate or allow themselves to feel that their life activities are for themselves." [Ibid., p.62] Instead, they may feel compelled to "translate their own motivations into a means of serving others." [Ibid., p.63] Walter believes that people in general seek to translate their desires into needs, and calls this the new morality. [Walter, AYLIN, p.3] But he fails to note the differences between the sexes in this area which have been identified by feminists. Gilligan shows how women contemplating abortion are likely to make their decisions on the basis that they should avoid hurting others, rather than pursuing their own self-interest. [Gilligan, IADV. pp.116ff] Gilligan points out that the moral imperative for women is an injunction to care, to ensure that no-one should be hurt. [Ibid., p.100]

Women realise that if they do reject this moral imperative, others will suffer. They cannot walk out on their responsibilities of caring for others if this means children will go unfed, or those in trouble uncomforted: "Children need one now ... The very fact that there are needs of love, not duty, that one feels them as one's self; that there is no one else to be responsible for these needs, gives them primacy." [Olsen, quoted in Spender, MML, p.221] This appeal to women's altruism is made on a larger scale by Christian writers. John Selwyn Gummer, for example, when arguing against the ordination of women, suggests that the Church of England "must wait and trust that out of the self-denial of women, not for the first time, will come the visible unity we seek." [Gummer, **Daily Telegraph**, 19/6/86]

The expectation is that women's lives should be "other-directed"

in two senses. Firstly, they are to direct their lives towards serving other people. In particular this applies to husband and children, but extends to other relatives, employers, the Church and so on. Giving attention to their own needs is seen as selfish, and that is an accusation most women are anxious to avoid. Secondly, women's lives are to be directed by others: "her life is oriented toward his in such a way that direction for her life comes through him". [Clark, MAWIC p.24] The needs of husband and children dictate what employment women can take, for example. This contrasts with the expectations for men. They may be praised for directing their lives towards service of others, but the man who allows his family to dictate his approach to his job will meet with disapproval.

2. Women and Christian Service

Pat King's book **How Do You Find the Time?** is typical of the kind of thinking which applies Christian ideals of service to women in a particular way. King writes that "God has given women great talents and abilities. Our intelligence is equal to men, our stamina and emotional endurances often greater. God does not want us to bury our capabilities but He wants us to use them for the job we've been called to do." And married women should channel those gifts into their marriage. She admits that giving up their own plans for their husbands may cause suffering, but notes that St. Peter calls such suffering part of the work God has given them. It will also be beneficial, because "a happy, unthreatened husband who knows he is the head of our house and first in our lives is easy to live with." [King, HDYFTT, p.33]⁴

The job women are called to use their capabilities in is not only

being a wife but also being a mother, since this is the way in which they fulfil their "(biblically) most distinguished task, that of bringing new life into the world." [Otzen et.al., MITOT, p.53] As we have seen, the idea that motherhood is women's primary role is a common one in our society. It is in this domestic arena that women are to serve Christ, and the ideals of Christian service are given a narrow application:

our calling most likely will be to the mundane job of dinner on time day in and day out. It becomes that great, unselfish sacrifice that enables us to lay down our lives bit by bit and follow Jesus who totally laid down His life for us. And He has promised that whenever we lose our life we find it. [King, HDYFTT, p.100]

When we have a family:

Each of us is called by the Lord to holiness. Isn't it amazing that so many of us answer that call through something as everyday as dinner and the dishes? The evening meal is the great paradox of our homemaker lives. It looks ... so unimportant when we consider all that there is to be done for the cause of Christ. But when we answer this calling to lay down our lives every day at 4.30 with a conscious love for the Lord ... how can it be anything but important and utterly worthwhile? [Ibid., p.101/2]

Some writers suggest that women are particularly privileged to be able to serve in this way. For Stott, women's subordinate, ministering role enables her to show Christ-like humility and self-sacrifice: "Should not the wife even rejoice that she has the privilege of giving a particular demonstration in her

attitude to her husband of the beauty of humility which is to characterize all members of God's new society?" [Stott, in Lees, ed. TROW, p.28] Indeed, women may be said to have the easier role. According to one Reformed pastor "The whole of Scripture witnesses with one accord that to man is confided the heavy task of ruling, to women the beautiful task of serving". [Quoted in Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.171]⁵

Literature on women's Christian service makes a sharp distinction between women's calling to mundane activity, and men's calling to creative mastery of the world; what Comer describes as "making men climb mountains and women climb stairs and making grown men put away childish things and women put away children's things." [Comer, WLW, p.2] This limitation of women's creativity is clearly illustrated in Mitson's **Creativity**. She observes truly that women are too "absorbed in giving themselves in service to others, to have time to use their creative gifts in the way that they would like to." [Mitson, C, p.13.] But women's creative gifts are to be extended, according to the chapter headings, only to the home, the spiritual life, the arts, new living structures, education, personal appearance, and relationships. Thus Anona Coates writes: "We are all creative beings, and we have been created in God's image ... We create either a good impression or a bad impression ... a warm welcoming environment or a cold unfriendly one." [Coates in Mitson ed., C, p.18]. And Pamela Brawn suggests women can honour God "by looking good. Of course God judges us by what happens in our hearts, but ... he wants to redeem every area of our lives, including the way we dress". [Brawn in Mitson ed., C, p.105]

It may not seem necessary to take such books seriously, yet they are highly popular amongst Christian women. Because of the failure of theologians to take women's work seriously, this literature is the nearest approach to a theology of women's work which we have. Unfortunately it serves only to compound women's difficulties and to restrict their horizons, and the problems associated with it are discussed below.

C. A PROBLEMATIC SERVICE ETHIC

Christian theology clearly teaches the importance of self-sacrificial service, and as we saw in Chapter Eight, large numbers of women are prepared to deny themselves in order to care for other people, whether they are paid or not. It might seem obvious to make a connection between these two things, by concluding that women are a virtuous and more Christian sex than are men. We have already seen that this conclusion is in fact drawn within some strands of Christian tradition. But quite clearly this is theologically untenable. We have no grounds for supposing that women are any less sinful than men, even if we do assert along with some feminist theologians, that their sins take different forms. The equation of women's serving work with Christian service not only prevents a proper understanding of that work, but is based on a misinterpretation of the meaning of Christian service. It provides spurious theological justification for women's oppression through what we might describe as a "service ethic".

The service ethic asserts the value of the wholehearted giving of oneself in service, without complaint and without seeking reward.

This ethic is not problematic because love and self-sacrifice are wrong, but because these are not necessarily the appropriate virtues to emphasize for women: "It is simply not Good News to someone trying to break out of the 'servant class' to hear that God has called her to be a servant." [Russell in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.48] As Daly comments, the traditional theory of virtue "appears to be the product of reactions on the part of men ... to the behavioral excesses of the stereotypic male." Men place a theoretical emphasis on charity, meekness, obedience, self-abnegation, sacrifice and service, yet it is not men but women who accept these ideals, and this reinforces their abject situation. [Daly, in Christ and Plaskow eds., WR, p.60]

The service ethic, then, gives rise to particular problems, which need to be examined.

1. Serving without Complaint

As we have seen, the common view is that for service to be properly Christian, it must be done without complaint. The worker who is angry about working conditions or frustrated in their job, is not being a good Christian, a good person, or a good worker. A good Christian accepts suffering as a share in the suffering of Christ. A good person would not dream of criticizing others. A good worker obeys without question what their employer asks of them. For women there is the additional stricture that the archetypal good woman is quiet and self-effacing. A man who is angry and complains is following an accepted masculine pattern. A woman is unfeminine when she does so, and may be labelled either strident and aggressive, or neurotic and whinging. This problem

may be exacerbated for West Indian women in white society, because they are stereotyped as aggressive, and thus even further from the ideal of femininity. The need for approval is strong, and may lead to women bottling up any resentment where venting it is a sign of failure to be "feminine". But difficulties arise where women strive to serve without complaint.

i) The happy slave

Women may be unwilling to admit to any problem in their lives, since this indicates failure to fulfil the conditions of selfless service. For Christian women, difficulty in the serving role can indicate that they are not in the will of God. Pat King, for example, suggests that women who follow Christ are enabled to cope with difficult lives. She writes: "if God who is the lavish giver of time has called us to follow Jesus, then there will be enough time to do everything He has called us to do", whether we are housewife or missionary. [King, HDYFTT, p.21] Thus stress and feeling harassed - features already identified as common amongst mothers and carers - can point to failure in a woman's Christian life rather than a failure of social organization.⁶

Women in general may feel they must show themselves to be fulfilled in their caring role. According to Russell, women often have an attitude which can be characterized as the "happy slave". A woman "sees herself as fulfilled in the accepted roles of mother, secretary, servant, sex symbol." She may go to great lengths to convince other people that all is well with her even if life is difficult at times. [Russell, HLIAFP, p.118] Jessie Bernard reflects on the contradiction that women say they are happy in marriage, yet their mental health is bad because of it.

She wonders whether this is because they are told that happiness depends on marriage, and therefore feel they must be happy, or whether they say they are happy when they are merely reconciled to it? [Bernard, TFOM, p.50] Women have adjusted to marriage, she says, but "Human beings have enormous capacity to adjust to almost anything, and, in the past, have done so." [Ibid., p.280] This is shown where women across the world have had to accept inequality and oppression as they struggle to survive and to support their families. They can be happy, rather than angry or defeated, because they know there is no alternative. [French in Taylor ed., WAWR, p.191]

Christians may point to women's evident fulfilment in serving others as a sign that this is their proper role. It may even be suggested that women are privileged to be allowed to serve, as we have seen. In the face of this, any complaint seems like selfish cavilling. As de Beauvoir points out: "Woman is asked in the name of God not so much to accept her inferiority as to believe that, thanks to Him, she is the equal of the lordly male; even the temptation to revolt is suppressed by the claim that the injustice is overcome." [De Beauvoir, TSS, p.633] But if women have no choice about serving others, and cannot easily express any dissatisfactions, it is scarcely possible to attribute their sacrificial actions to Christian virtue.

ii) Acceptance of injustice

It may only be possible to survive a harsh situation by accepting it fatalistically, and some Christians will see in this the virtue of serving without complaint. But as Soelle points out, acceptance of suffering is not necessarily the proper Christian

response. The Christian cult of suffering, she says, "has been shamelessly exploited to justify injustice and oppression", [Soelle, S, p.103] but "goodness is not mixed with a toleration of injustice." [Ibid., p.133] Both devotional books and serious theology urge Christians to accept and be transformed through suffering, but portraying this as the Christian ideal means that a person cannot rebel against it and refuse to endure. [Ibid., p.17] According to Soelle, we cannot regard suffering in this rather apathetic way, but need to confront it. The most important question to address to suffering is "whom it serves, God or the devil, becoming alive or paralysis, passion for life or the destruction of this passion." [Ibid., p.134]

A service ethic which emphasises refusal to complain, and acceptance of any personal cost as suffering for Christ's sake, leaves unjust working conditions unchallenged. Unless love for others includes a concern for justice, the ethic of service is used to legitimise oppression and to maintain an unjust status quo. Forgiveness and love are vital, says Ruether, but when "Christian virtues are preached in this way they become a slave ethic, inculcating servility and enforcing acceptance of powers and principalities. Christianity becomes the religion of Caesar and ceases to be the Gospel of liberation." [Ruether, FMTM, p.109]

2. Dealing with Anger and Frustration

Campbell points out that it is dangerous where people have no legitimate outlet for their feelings of frustration, anger and resentment. Christians, he says, are encouraged to "bottle it up

for God", but:

Because we have sought always to be loving and considerate, whatever the provocation we have received, we can suffer from physical illnesses associated with stress, or we can feel resentful and unappreciated, or we can be so depressed that we are incapable of love of self or of others anymore.

[Campbell, TGOA, p.50]

These problems are all common ones in women, although Campbell does not specifically discuss a difference between the sexes here. Interestingly, the service ethic is strongly at work in pastors, who similarly are not expected to display resentment. Augsburger refers to this as a problem of "chronic niceness". [Ibid., p.60]

Eadie also notes that Any "anger, hostility, or even competitive self-assertion ... must be rigorously controlled and, if possible, rejected. These impulses, which are apparently in conflict with 'Christian' values of self-denial and non-aggression, are rejected by striving to attain the ideal of being a loving person." [Eadie, quoted in Campbell, TGOA, p.61] The idea that proper Christian service must spring from pure motives presents an additional difficulty, for any feelings of resentment render the service ineffectual. Tasks done with indifference or resentment, are equivalent to baking bitter bread "that feeds but half man's hunger." [Gibran, op.cit.]

Feelings of resentment and anger which are not faced up to are liable to emerge elsewhere. Women may project their anger onto other people. Thus Dworkin believes that women "cling to irrational hatreds, focussed particularly on the unfamiliar, so

that they will not murder their fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, lovers, the men with whom they are intimate, those who do hurt them and cause them grief." [Dworkin, RWW, p.34] And Friedan sees the violent energy and hate of women who are anti-abortion as a transferring of their own rage and resentment at being vulnerable women onto other women who seem to challenge this. [Friedan, TSS, p.318] This, for both writers, is why some women are so strongly against the feminist movement and liberal thinking in general.

Anger may also be turned inwards, as Campbell suggests, and this is one reason for the self-deprecation and chronic feelings of inferiority found in many women. A number of feminists have discussed the low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and diffuse feelings of guilt, anxiety and overdependence which are common features of women's psychological existence in our society.⁷ The question posed by Jean Baker Miller needs attention: if they "are all so good, why do women feel so bad?" [Miller, TANPOW, p.56]⁸ One answer is that, as we saw in Chapter Four, women as a class are blamed and denigrated, and this leads to a sense of guilt. They suffer from what Schaef calls "the Original Sin of Being Born Female", and goodness and right actions are not enough to absolve them of this sin; there is no justification by works. [Schaef, WR, p.27]

But women also feel guilt because they can never be good enough, given the circumstances under which they serve, and the idealistic definitions of Christian service which are applied to them. There is no legitimate outlet for any anger they feel, and this adds to their sense of being wrong, says Miller. They "have

been prepared to stand ready and willing to accept all that evil. Women are thus caught with no real power in a situation militating toward failure. They not only feel like failures but come to believe that failure further confirms their evilness." [Miller, TANPOW, p.57/8] They may therefore try to expiate their guilt by embracing the sufferings self-sacrifice involves, or seek to earn justification by their works. These strategies can only be temporarily effective.

i) Making expiation

The story of the Fall suggests that women's pain in childbirth results from the entry of sin into the world. A common theological interpretation of this has been that such sufferings are a punishment for sin:

"groaning in pain, cramped in travail, humiliated, overburdened, care-worn, and tear-stained" (W.Vischer) ... Whence these sorrows ... this degradation in the woman's life? It is not a small matter that our narrative absolves God's creation of this. Here a primeval offense receives its consequences, which faith recognizes as a punishment inflicted by God. [Von Rad, G, p.90/91]

Tertullian suggested that women should "dress in humble garb, walking about as Eve, mourning and repentant ... that she might more fully expiate that which she derives from Eve - the ignominy and odium of human perdition." [Tertullian, quoted in Pape, GAW, p.181]

"Bringing forth children in sorrow" could also be interpreted more widely to apply to the raising of children; and women's suffering in motherhood, their acceptance of punishment, could be

the means by which they expiated the sin of Eve. Badinter explains the significance of this for nineteenth century Christians:

limitless devotion, "expiatory suffering" par excellence, was analogous to the suffering that transfigured Eve into Mary. Never had giving birth in sorrow been so literally interpreted and revered as absolute dogma. Since "giving birth" was now considered as applicable to the entire period of the child's growth, from fetus to adult, maternal suffering was prolonged. God's curse on Eve had never covered such a long stretch of time ... [Badinter, p.236]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, motherhood was discussed only in terms of suffering and sacrifice. In religious terms, the sufferings of motherhood could be seen as "the wages paid to gain heaven", and the mother's sacrifice was "evidence of her election as a 'saint'". [Badinter. p.234]⁹ Such a theological interpretation of God's words to Eve is rare today, although Richardson's comment on Genesis 3 that the "woman's child-bearing is a sharing of the redemptive burden that must be borne", [Richardson, G, p.75] seems to hint at it. Yet this view of the sufferings of motherhood can have a negative effect on children, who know that their mother regards their care as a sentence she must carry out, or as a cross which she must bear.

There is still a tendency today to assume that women should suffer. This is partly due to the fatalistic acceptance, noted earlier, that there is no alternative. But there are also other elements. Amrit Wilson points out that in Indian and Pakistani families mothers-in-law tyrannise their daughters-in-law,

reminding them "I suffered in my time, now it's your turn". Wilson concludes: "To serve and suffer is considered not only a woman's lot but right. If a woman is suffering, things are as they should be." [Wilson, FAV, p.7] Women may think that if they accept suffering uncomplainingly, they can expiate the guilt they feel. But as Schaef points out, they will be taken advantage of, and still feel their original unease and wrongness. [Schaef, WR, p.29]

ii) Justification through childbearing

In the past, according to Badinter, children's behaviour could be used to judge whether their mother had properly expiated her sins. Thus successful childrearing could confirm a woman's status before God. If, as in Calvinism, good works "are not a way of attaining salvation, but ... are indispensable as a proof that salvation has been attained", [Tawney, RATROC, p.117] the mother who produces "good" children shows that she is saved. Some Christians give theological support to this idea by translating 1 Tim. 2:15, a notoriously obscure text, as "women will be saved through child-bearing", and interpreting this to mean that motherhood is women's primary calling. Marshall, for example, says that woman "will be saved in her role of bearing children", and that this statement is particularly necessary "in a society where the lack of maternal care ... is detrimental to the welfare of children." [Marshall in Lees ed., TROW, p.192]

The idea that women are justified through childbearing is also reflected in the popular belief that "good mothers don't have bad children". A mother is judged according to how well her children behave, but this has difficult practical and psychological

implications. If children are made responsible for their mothers' standing in the eyes of her community and indeed of God, an intolerable burden is placed on them, for they must succeed in order to justify their mothers' sacrifice. This adds to the difficulties all children have of establishing their own identity in the world, and making their own mistakes.

A mother may measure herself against her neighbours, insisting that her methods of childrearing are better than those of others, because this enables her to feel superior. It is clear from the histories of childrearing that many different methods have been tried, and each has its own merits and demerits. Whilst mothers can provide a positive environment for children which will help them to develop into mature adults, there are always likely to be stresses within the family or outside which hamper that development. The ideology of motherhood may speak of the possibility of problem-free parenting, if the right methods are followed, but quite clearly children are never perfect:

Having children is risky. To try to be sure we'll have the 'right' kind ... is likely to increase the chances that we'll go wrong. ... we have the best chance of successful parenthood if we are prepared to accept our children, whoever they are, and do the best we can to help them accept themselves ... [Hubbard, in Arditti, ed. TTW, p.342]¹⁰

3. Being Served

Clearly there are increased pressures on children who are the means to fulfilment for a mother who lives through their achievements. They have to succeed in the world in order to show

that the woman has done her job well. Yet whilst the grown man whose mother will not leave him alone is a stock comedy figure, such behaviour can cause great psychological damage. There are also other difficulties created where women dedicate themselves to unreciprocated service.

i) Others fail to learn to serve

Those who are continual recipients of a woman's service may themselves fail to learn to serve. Human beings may express a desire to be looked after totally, both physically and emotionally, but this is not conducive to personal development. According to Vanstone, children are spoiled by taking as a right what should be received as a gift. [Vanstone, LELE, p.47] It may also be harmful for children where a mother is always patient and self-sacrificing, since the child then dominates the household, and fails to learn that limits have to be set. [Hebblethwaite, MAG, p.52] Men or boys may also be deterred from incorporating serving characteristics if there are always women and girls around to do this for them, says Miller. [Miller, TANPOW, p.70]

ii) Inappropriate dependency

Women's service of others may involve what C.S. Lewis speaks of as "Gift-Love", a love that needs to give because it needs to be needed. He includes maternal love in this category. The proper aim of giving is "to put the recipient in a state where he no longer needs our gift." [Lewis, TFL, p.49] But this is difficult since Gift-love tries to "gratify itself either by keeping its object needy or by inventing for them imaginary needs." It does this ruthlessly, because it thinks it is being unselfish. [Ibid., p.50] This, then, is a further problem created where women

sacrifice themselves for others, and it can happen both in paid and unpaid caring situations. A housewife or mother may seek to feel indispensable by making and keeping husband and children dependent on her. Professional carers too, may seem totally altruistic, giving up their own comforts in order to serve. But, says Campbell, they may need to be needed, and it may be that "hidden rewards are so great that this seeming selflessness is a form of self-assertion, which seeks to deny the reciprocity in all acts of caring and to keep the helper firmly in the ranks of the strong and need free." [Campbell, ML, p.106]

Unfortunately women may believe that their own needs will be met if they concentrate on other's needs, and that they will be loved because they are serving others so much and so well. But love is not engendered by such service, even though dependency may be. Men and children may resent that very dependency, and hate the person who is taking care of them. [Miller, TANPOW, p.65]

4. The Loss of Self

We have seen that Christian teaching stresses the virtues of humility, service and self-sacrifice, and that women in particular strive to achieve them. Saiving points out that male theology defines the human situation in terms of estrangement, pride, and treatment of others as objects, and therefore sees redemption as "restoring to man what he fundamentally lacks (namely, sacrificial love, the I-Thou relationship, the primacy of the personal ...)". [Saiving, in Christ and Plaskow eds., WR, p.35] But women's situation, says Saiving, is

better suggested by such items as ... lack of an organising

center or focus; dependence on others for one's own self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to respect the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality ... in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self. [Ibid., p.37]

Self-negation has been recognized by feminists as a key problem for women. The kind of caring work women perform often leaves them unable to consider their own needs, as Sharpe notes: "Almost all the careers for women that involve intensive care and service of others contain the implicit contradiction that the very aspect of the job that makes it worthwhile can also wear away or suffocate women's sense of individuality". [Sharpe, JLAG, p.166/7] Saiving points out that not only is it "impossible to sustain a perpetual I-Thou relationship but ... the attempt to do so can be deadly." Where self-giving is not balanced with personal enrichment, a woman can give of herself "so that nothing remains of her own uniqueness; she can become merely an emptiness ... without value to herself, to her fellow men, or, perhaps, even to God." [Saving, op.cit., p.37]

Thus feminist theologians have seen women's self-negation not as virtue but as sin: "The sins of the oppressed are not pride and aggression but apathy and self-hatred." [Ruether, FMTM, p.108] This insight is not peculiar to feminist theologians. Cox for example, writes that "man's most debilitating proclivity is not his pride ... it is his sloth, his unwillingness to be everything man was intended to be." [Cox, ONLITTS, p.ix] He continues, "the traits of obedience, self-abnegation, docility, and forbearance can be expressions of sin." [Ibid., p.xiii] Cox says that Eve's

sin is one of "acedia", sloth, because she surrenders her position of power and responsibility over one of the animals, the serpent, and lets it tell her what to do. [Ibid., p.xiv] But he fails to recognize that this is a sin into which women in particular fall.

It is true that, as Carmody points out, to "say that in the past women were brought up to worry overmuch about selfishness is not to say that even healthy women do not continue to be selfish." [Carmody, STA, p.86] Nevertheless, women do often fail to value themselves or to develop their capabilities fully, and are encouraged to believe that this self-denigration and self-sacrifice are virtuous. The ideals of the service ethic can lead them to feel that giving in the face of ingratitude, or devoting themselves to a small number of people, represents the height of virtue precisely because it is difficult to justify.

5. The Confusion of "Service-as-Work" with "Service-as-Love"

There is seldom proper analysis of the service women undertake, and serving others is regarded as virtuous whatever the conditions and motivation under which it is performed. "Service-as-work" is confused with "service-as-love", and therefore takes on an emotional significance which makes it harder to do. For example, serving the dinner on time is identified by Pat King as an opportunity to lay down one's life for Christ's sake. It thus ceases to be a routine task, but is a way for a woman to say "I love God", "I love you", "I am a caring, self-denying and virtuous person." The woman who fails to serve dinner on time has failed in all these other areas, and thus additional burdens are placed on her.

As we have already noted, professional caring jobs incorporate a certain amount of detachment, but where service-as-love is confused with service-as-work this is impossible. It becomes difficult to set limits, and to stake out personal time when the person serving is unavailable. This is particularly true for women working in the home, but is also experienced by those in caring jobs which they do from a home base - clergy, or some doctors, for example. When a request for help is refused, it is taken as a denial of love rather than recognized as legitimate limit-setting. Women's difficulties are exacerbated because they are emotionally involved with those for whom they care, and unlike clergy or doctors, cannot shut the door after they have dealt with their "clients".

A further difficulty is that Christian love is assumed not to require response or reward. Thus women's service work in the home is unpaid, and the service jobs in which women predominate are poorly paid, as we saw in Chapter Eight. They may also be expected to serve without looking for any response from the one served, but this is unhelpful since to be the object of indiscriminating love is not an affirming experience, as we shall see. A love which makes no demands leaves others in their neediness. It may also be necessary for those served to acknowledge the value of the service they are receiving.

Moreover, if all that women do for others is viewed as service, offered because that is women's "natural" role, they are robbed of the chance of freely offering service as love. When the service offered is expected or required, it cannot be identified with freely given love. Doing away with the expectation that a

woman will iron her husband's shirts, means she may, once in a while, be able to iron a shirt to show love. We have to learn "to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love." [Federici, in Malos, ed., TPOH, p.258] Both these points are discussed by Anna Briggs, one of the few Christian feminists to articulate the problems inherent in the service ethic.

Briggs begins by agreeing with Vanstone's assessment of Nygren, that a God who bestows love as a favour and does not need love in return is unhelpful. [Briggs, in Garcia and Maitland eds., WOTW, p.107] She adds that love must be given freely, not expected as a duty: "Though you can sometimes do something out of a sense of obligation, if an action is always carried out for this reason, or because of fear, eventually love goes out of it ... the action becomes empty of meaning." Creative loving, she suggests, "does not have to be endlessly tolerant and can involve using conflict creatively, make demands and stand up to unreasonableness; but its aim is to drown self-fear and self-hatred in the overall security of the relationship." [Ibid., p.108]

She continues, women "learn that the creation and maintenance of love is our province and our duty. Our love is not to be given freely, but a part of the 'contract' of a relationship." [Ibid., p.109] But if love "is natural for women it cannot be given freely; it is expected, only the absence of it will cause comment." So women feel taken for granted, and this can turn to resentment: "the givers often despise and resent the people whom they serve for not seeing the love behind the actions, for not reciprocating. ... Through a power structure and culture which

sees women's selflessness as a natural characteristic, it is possible to avoid recognizing our actions as a conscious expression of love." [Ibid., p.110]

Because forgiveness is an obligatory virtue, women feel guilty when they fail to forgive or are unwilling "to keep on bearing impossible behaviour". But as Briggs points out, forgiveness loses its healing power "if the person you are forgiving thinks either that he hasn't done anything that needs forgiveness, or that if he has it was your fault anyway." She concludes, with women "being sorry for more than we are responsible for, and men for far less, there is no chance for forgiveness to be part of growth in male/female relationships." [Ibid., p.112]

The strictures of the service ethic must be resisted not for selfish reasons, but because they prevent liberation, life and growth. That women are aware of the needs of others is no bad thing, but they need to know how to serve aright. It is when love and service and caring are identified with women's "nature" that they become oppressive, as qualities shared by humankind they could be liberating: "Service is clearly a central part of the Gospel message of liberation. We are set free for others and made more fully human just because of our servanthood, according to the Gospel." [Russell in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.54] Christians might echo Jean Baker Miller's concern that one of "the major issues before us as a human community is the question of how to create a way of life that includes serving others without being subservient." [Miller, TANPOW, p.71] The next chapter represents an attempt to respond to this concern.

NOTES

1. For the purposes of this chapter, the two will be treated as if they were identical. We shall see that "Christian love" is not necessarily different from any other kind of love; but the phrase will be used here to describe what Christians have understood by love.

2. It could, of course, be argued that women do covet the personal service role, since this is the essence of the work of the housewife/mother.

3. For the relation between manhood and serving, see p.253/4.

4. One cannot help thinking that most dictators are easy to live with, as long as their every wish is respected, but this is hardly a good model for an intimate relationship.

5. C.S. Lewis makes the same point about the burden of male headship. [Lewis, TFL, p.98]

6. This may be slightly unfair to King, who does offer some practical suggestions about how to manage time for mothers with small children and conflicting duties.

7. For example, see Eichenbaum and Orbach, WDWW; Miller, TANPOW; Chesler, WAM; and Chernin, W.

8. The self-image of West Indian women may be much stronger than that of white women, given their history of having to take

responsibility for their families, and combat racist attitudes. On the other hand, any sense of inadequacy may be reinforced for Black women living in a society which denigrates them, as Amrit Wilson shows in **Finding A Voice**.

9. We might note, however, that maternal and infant mortality rates were high, and this theological interpretation appeared to make some sense. For example, the maternal death rate in 1915 was 1 in 250, comparable with the present-day 1 in 7000. [Harrison, WAW, p.34]

10. She writes in the context of the debate on genetic engineering, which holds out the prospect of perfect children. See also "Better Babies", **Observer**, 26th April 1987.

CHAPTER TEN: REDEFINING SERVICE

As we have seen, the service ethic which underlies women's work is both destructive in its effects on women and on the people they serve, and prevents women from offering proper Christian service. Both theologians and philosophers have discussed what it means to serve others.¹ But the starting point of the debate has been men's experience of service, and this differs from women's experience in three significant ways, as Chapters Eight and Nine indicate.

Firstly, whilst serving is an integral part of the feminine role, not-caring is a mark of masculinity. Secondly, it is women who predominate in service and caring work, whether in employment or at home. And thirdly, a large proportion of women's work is unpaid, whereas for most men, work means paid work. The result of this is that men have few opportunities for caring and relating to people on a personal level. Men in professional caring jobs, such as doctors or clergy, are able to serve other people, but the status attached to these jobs may keep them at a distance. Fatherhood allows an increasing number of men to show care and nurturance, but this is still not viewed as an integral part of the masculine role. This may be one reason why men have wanted to stress the importance of service, contribution and gift relationships.

Because of their different relation to both service and work, men are less likely to confuse the two. Their concern is rather to integrate both elements, to work with love, and serve Christ in their daily work. This is an admirable aim, but as we have seen,

male theologians are more likely to emphasise a particular form of service and love; that is, self-sacrificial love which makes no complaint and seeks no reward. Feminist theologians - and others - have taken issue with this, and a feminist theology of work needs to ask whether there is a more appropriate understanding of Christian love which can help women to serve God in their daily work.

A. THE CHARACTER OF LOVE

1. The Need for a Response

A key feature of the kind of love described in Chapter Nine is that it looks for no reward or recognition. In Torrance's words, Christians are to "be merciful without any hope of return and to go on being merciful in the face of unremitting unthankfulness". [Torrance, op.cit] But whilst love may not be withheld merely because it is not appreciated, it does seek to elicit a response. This point is well made by Vanstone, who writes that "love needs, though it does not seek, recognition: that it needs, for the completion of its work and for the good of the other, a recognition which it will by no means demand or compel." When "the other has grasped the meaning of its gifts and recognised them as symbols of love, then the work of love achieves its triumphant completion of self-giving." [Vanstone, LELE, p.94] Love must be valued not according to how self-effacing it is, how little it asks for; but how demanding it is, how much response it expects.

i) An affirming love

Our love for others is modelled on God's love for us, and as Oppenheimer points out, this does ask for a response. A wholly self-giving undemanding Agape is unsatisfactory, for "to be loved and have literally nothing asked of one, and to be made to feel that there is no way in which one can ever give back anything of value, is to be made a pauper." [Oppenheimer, IAI, p.185] This emphasis is in danger of being lost in Christian writings about work and worth which stress that the value of persons is not dependent on what they do, but on God's love. According to Roger Clarke "each man or woman, as a child of God, has a value, dignity and worth that is absolutely independent of their utility within the economy". [Clarke, WIC, p.192] For Helen Lee, women's status is not dependent on work, education, capabilities or attractiveness, but on what God thinks of her, and God thinks as much of the senile person in hospital as of anyone else. [Lee, Mission England].

There is some truth in both these statements, but more must be added to them. Firstly, it is not appropriate to make a complete separation between a person's worth and what they do. Theologians of work are right to criticize the way in which our society makes occupation the sole criterion for judging worth, but our work is an important part of us. Oppenheimer suggests that people's doings relate to their real selves rather as the tip of an iceberg to what is below the waves: "What someone does is only a small proportion of the person but is continuous with the whole." Achievement, she continues, "is that important but limited aspect of the real human being that rises up above the waves and can be seen. It is not imaginary or flimsy ... though it gives

very little idea of how much more there is." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.89]² We might suggest that the same is true of women's role as wives and mothers. Being a mother or wife is very important to them - and many reject feminism because they perceive it as devaluing this aspect of their lives - but it represents only a small proportion of what women are.

Oppenheimer also points out that ignoring the complexity of personalities is unsatisfactory because people do not want merely to be tolerated, but appreciated. [Ibid., p.119] She notes elsewhere that "I accept you whatever you are like" sounds godlike, and "I find you congenial" sounds selfish. But this could be understood as "I don't mind what you are like", and "there is no-one like you". [Oppenheimer, IAI, p.186] Genuine love does care what the other is like, and will seek to change what is harmful or unlovable. God does not love us so that we can go on being miserable sinners, but in order that we might be changed. [Ibid., p.185] Whilst love is not conditional upon such changes, it must continue to seek for such a response, for the sake of the other.

The difficulty, as Oppenheimer indicates, is that it "seems too dangerous to say that love can expect a response, for fear of letting ourselves suppose that affection either needs to be or can be earned." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.119] Thus because we are afraid that one person might turn out to matter more than another, we discount individuality, and call indiscriminating regard praiseworthy. But, she says, people's "real selves are through and through layers of characteristics which we rashly discount in the name of unconditional love." [Ibid., p.85]

Christian love values individuals by "loving everyone in particular", [Kierkegaard, quoted in Outka, A, p.20] making each one feel valued and affirmed for themselves. Such affirmation is especially important for women, who frequently suffer from low self-esteem.

ii) The recognition of love

The fact that loving service is completed by receiving a response is important in the context of women's work. Many housewives, for example, complain that their families do not notice what they do, and are frustrated by the lack of appreciation. This reaction can appear petty, but is in fact legitimate. For appreciation indicates that the meaning of the gift has been recognized. In Backett's study, it was most important to the mothers that their husbands voiced awareness of their problems. [Backett, MAF, p.68ff] Although the division of domestic labour was unfair, couples coped by saying that husbands were willing to help. Men might not in fact do anything, but in this way they appeared to be recognizing the burden placed on their wives. This allowed the women to feel their labours were appreciated.

The danger here is that people may feel that appreciating a service is a sufficient response. In some situations this may be the case, but as in the above instance, it can serve to mask injustice, and to hide the harsh character of the work being done. As we have seen, in the field of paid work women may be expected to serve more for the intrinsic rewards of the job itself than for monetary recompense. Being thanked or idealized may take the place of a reasonable wage for the secretary or nurse, for example. The fact that many women do such tasks

voluntarily contributes to this situation. Voluntary work, both formal and informal, plays a vital part in providing for needs which would otherwise go unmet. Yet it can suggest that those who do ask for wages for similar work are being mercenary.³

It might be that work which is done only for material benefit is inferior to work where there is a genuine wish to serve others. Some labour is alienated in the sense that workers have no opportunity to feel that they are contributing to the process, and theologians of work rightly urge that conditions should be changed in order to allow people to see their work as service. As we shall see, this is quite different from suggesting that alienated labour can become joyous service simply because the worker does it for God.

It might be suggested that service must receive the appropriate recognition. In our society, value is generally expressed in financial terms. Being paid for a job gives recognition to the value of the work, and this is one reason why housewives feel devalued. Much is wrong with the present system, wage differentials are extreme, and often bear little relation to the value of a piece of work to society as a whole. However, in principle it is reasonable to reward skills, and to pay for services which are of value to society. Theologians and others have discussed how this might be done in accordance with Christian values. Some suggest that a social wage should be paid to everyone regardless of what contribution they make.⁴ This is a complex subject which cannot be discussed here. What must be established, however, is that it is not unchristian to receive a return for serving others. This may mean receiving a wage or can

involve an exchange of labour such as might occur in a local community. Offering payment for the services neighbours perform for one another would contravene the spirit of the arrangement, yet some reciprocation is expected.

Many of the problems experienced by women in their service work arise because there is a mismatch between the response they expect or desire, and what they actually receive. For example, women may perform a task with the intention of showing love, but find their service is taken for granted, and this leads to frustration. On the other hand, women may feel uneasy because they are idealized for performing tasks such as childcare, which they perceive as a duty. Idealization of this kind causes many problems, as we saw in Chapter Four, and prevents women from freely choosing to perform acts of love.

Given the attitudes towards women in our society, it is difficult to alleviate this problem. It is necessary that women be seen not as saints, but as human beings, with all the virtues and vices humanity shares. One way of enabling this to happen is for women to learn to articulate their needs and motivations. If a loving act only receives its full meaning when it is recognized, it may be necessary to draw attention to what has been done and why. Christians may instinctively feel that this is contrary to the Gospel, believing that to draw attention to a good work is to devalue it. In some situations, it may be appropriate for good works to be performed anonymously; but in the context of a relationship love needs to declare itself. For example, children who learn many years later that their mother sacrificed her health in order to look after all their needs are likely to

respond: "why did we not know?" Oppenheimer's point is relevant here also, that to be unable to respond or give anything in return for loving service is to be made a pauper.

Clearly to have a response demanded of one may be debilitating. Where service is undertaken only in order to gain love or gratitude it can lead to emotional blackmail, and this is the basis of the stereotype of the Jewish mother. Service and sacrifice need to be made visible in a way that leaves others free to respond or to reject. This is the model offered us by Christ, who does not compel recognition of his sacrifice, yet whose work would be meaningless if people were unable to understand and respond to his life, death and resurrection. The service offered by Christ, as Russell points out, "was not a form of subordination to other people, but rather a free offering of self and an acceptance of service and love in return". [Russell in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.55] Anna Briggs makes an important point in this context: "Living a loving life (as Christianity says) is costly and makes us vulnerable; and one thing that the women's movement has to do is make the costliness visible - end the old myth that love is part of our biological make-up ..." [Briggs, in Garcia and Maitland eds., WOTW, p.115]

Just as service does not have to forgo a return in order to be Christian, so it does not have to be unlimited. As we have seen, many problems arise where people are not able to have time off, or have to work in poor conditions. It is particularly difficult for women working at home to set limits around what they do, but we can establish that it is not unchristian to do so. Indeed, without proper limits, both their own health and the efficiency

of the task being done are negatively affected. As we saw in Chapter Eight, if housework and childcare are important, though unpaid, jobs, they must be subject to the same conditions. Insisting on reasonable pay wage and fair conditions of work is a matter of justice.

Because women's jobs often involve personal service of others, it can be as difficult for them to set limits in their employment as it is in the home. For example, Carmody tells of a secretary who was cross because people did not treat her work seriously, interrupting her lunch, or getting papers to her late. [Carmody, STA, p.116] Korda discusses this issue, pointing out how hard it is for women "to take a stand for their own interests without seeming obstinate or ill-tempered." They therefore pull back rather than discuss the limits of a job. But not to make clear "what is expected and what is voluntary - makes it possible to ask someone to do anything and to resent it if they object." [Korda, MC, p.23/4]

2. Discerning the Needs of Others

A love which recognizes the individuality of the other may be more difficult to attain than the spontaneous, uncalculating, unconditional love of which Nygren speaks, for it must exercise discernment over how love is shown. Thus Ferré writes:

The nature of love is to bestow freedom on the other while still having complete concern for him. Merely to let live is not love. Always to do for the other ... is not love. Agape is complete concern for the other while allowing him to be genuinely free. Therefore agape acts or refrains from acting

according to the need of the other. [Ferré, in Kepley et.al. eds., TTAPOAN, p.250/1]

Christian service, then, may mean refusing to meet a particular need, for the sake of the other.

The only motive for withholding service is love, as Vanstone makes clear: "That which love withholds is withheld for the sake of the other who is loved - so that it may not harm him, so that it may be used for a more timely service or so that it may mature into a richer gift." [Vanstone, LELE, p.44] This has important implications for the service ethic.

i) Enabling others to serve

As we have seen, always being served is harmful. If service is important, it must be a capability taught to both sexes and all ages. This may mean not doing things for other people, to enable them to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves. In terms of family life, Anderson states that each member "has an equal responsibility to adjust to the claims of others ... If only one person does all the accommodating, no one else learns how to go about it." [Anderson, TFAPC, p.67] Therefore one of the greatest services women might perform for sons or husbands in particular is not to do everything for them.

Women may find it difficult to state their own needs, and to give others the chance to serve and minister to them. This may be because they put too low a value on themselves, and this point is discussed below. But it is also important to make others aware of one's own needs as part of the lesson of mutual responsibility. This insight is illustrated by Val, who speaks out of the

experience of caring for a disabled mother. "We don't let our children become selfish because it destroys friendship and ruins their lives in this life and the next," [Val, Briggs and Oliver eds. C, p.19] she writes, and neither should the elderly be shielded from the reality of the tiredness and unrealistic demands they make. [Ibid., p.18] Val found her mother's dignity as a human being returned through learning to do more for herself. [Ibid., p.17]

In Moltmann-Wendel's terms, Christians "must learn a love that makes others mature." [Moltmann-Wendel, E. in Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann, HIG, p.120] Jurgen Moltmann picks up this point, saying the idea that Christians must exist solely for others, is a concealed form of domination: "Only as those who delight in life with others do they then, when the need arises, also sacrifice themselves 'for others' ... Not even Jesus came to fetter human beings to himself by his ministry, to make himself indispensable for them". [Moltmann in Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann, HIG, p.122]

ii) Establishing priorities

It may seem that where another person is in need, the Christian is under an obligation to meet that need. But as Walter shows, the language of needs has become problematic. He suggests that people misrepresent desires as needs, or fail to ask what a need is for. [Walter, AYLIN, p.74] What makes some needs good things "is not the fact that they are needs, but that we approve of the goal for which they are needed and that there are no other more preferred means to that goal." [Ibid., p.105] If Walter is right, it makes sense for women to ask what is the purpose of the particular sacrifices they are making.

It is also necessary to establish priorities, since no individual can meet all the needs with which they are confronted. Women have assumed that serving children and husband is their most important task, and as we have seen, they are encouraged in this belief by a number of Christian writers. Thus Pat King suggests that those women who feel "called" to be mothers should concentrate on this, since "Taking care of our children is the Lord's work ... the day-by-day constant caring for her children (is) ... accomplishing something great in the kingdom of God." [King, HDYFTT, p.39] Clearly most women have obligations towards their families which they must fulfil. Society rightly puts pressure on people to fulfil their responsibilities, since children or disabled relatives must not be neglected. But this does not mean that women must provide all the care themselves. Responsibilities can be discharged in a variety of ways. Women need to evaluate their caring work critically, rather than assuming any sacrificial service is worthwhile.

Janet Radcliffe Richards discusses this point in depth. She notes that whilst the work of a housewife may use some of her particular gifts, "domestic work cannot make the best use of the abilities of any highly able woman, and few achievements of any housewife are comparable with what a gifted woman could achieve outside." [Richards, TSF, p.166] She takes issue with the suggestion that looking after children is the most worthwhile work anyone can do, since sacrificing not only your own status but the satisfaction of using your abilities to the full ought to be commendable. For, she says, if it is valuable to bring up your own children properly, it is even more valuable to make sure all children are brought up properly: "if it is important to see that

your children get a good education, it is even better to make sure that the whole school system works well". [Ibid., p.169]

Richards concludes that:

no woman should be persuaded to stay at home, if she is capable of more, on the grounds that that is where the most worthwhile work is to be found irrespective of what her abilities are. The most worthwhile work is what does most good to most people, and for most women it will certainly not be found within the confines of their homes. [Ibid., p.169]

The difficulty is that most women cannot pursue this course because it would mean abandoning family responsibilities. But the principle Richards establishes is an important one. It brings to our attention that "there is something radically wrong with a system which forces so many women to choose between caring properly for their children and using their abilities fully." And as Richards concludes, even non-feminists should "be delighted at the prospect of the reorganization of life and work which would allow women to do more ... good things." [Ibid., p.171]

Women, then, must consider how their energies might best be used: "A decision to devote oneself to the service of someone else, with no consideration of whether he is worth serving or whether something else is more worth doing, is not the highest goodness but a total abnegation of morality." Richards does recognize that:

Women should ... be willing to make sacrifices when this is the best thing to do. They may willingly sacrifice status if the best work to be done is by its nature hidden or undervalued, and they may sacrifice their personal

satisfaction if they can do more by not using their whole abilities than they could by using them to the full in other areas.

But, she says, women may reasonably be suspicious when their sacrifices seem only to foster the comfort and status of men. [Ibid., p.174]

iii) Fighting injustice

We have already noted Soelle's point that "goodness is not mixed with a toleration of injustice", and that Christians need to confront suffering rather than passively accept it. She believes that suffering must be expressed, for if it is not, people are either destroyed by it or swallowed up in apathy. [Soelle, S, p.76] The Christian has a duty to fight against injustice for the sake of those who are oppressed by it.

As we have seen, women are frequently oppressed by their labour, exploited and unable to break free because of their powerlessness. In this context the assertion that Christians must fight such oppression has little relevance, for to resist can mean losing one's livelihood or causing others to suffer. Further, one way of coping with suffering is to import meaning into it, and as we saw in Chapter Nine, women often take this course. Nevertheless, it is important for Christians to say that such a situation is wrong. Accepting injustice as a personal share in the sufferings of Christ, as Richardson does, ignores the responsibility each Christian has to the rest of humankind. Morton makes this point in a discussion of sexism: "The shalom woman cannot do those whom she forgives the disservice of allowing them to remain in anti-shalom positions." [Morton,

quoted in Katoppo, CAF, p.64]

Campbell observes that the model of Christ as the Lamb dumb before its shearers, or the suffering servant, does not give the whole picture. Christ himself is prepared to engage in conflict; the Lamb is also wrathful. [Campbell, TGOA, p.46/7] He recommends that anger be expressed in a constructive way, so that it can lead towards freedom from what oppresses us. [Ibid., p.49] This means "naming the enemy", so that people can move from a diffuse sense of anger and helplessness to "a direct and unashamed expression of what they want from others, especially from those closest to them." [Ibid., p.97] This is especially difficult for women, given the mechanisms which, as we have seen, prevent them expressing their anger. Nonetheless, it is important if change is to take place. As Ruether says, anger and self-esteem are theological virtues "that empower us to rise out of the present situation and set us on the way to a newly redeemed humanity." [Ruether, FMTM, p.109]

Expressing anger and frustration aids the recognition of the structural problems which must be addressed if any changes are to be made. As Soelle suggests, we should not concentrate on the individual, but see the work as the source of alienation. The solution to this problem is "communal, concerted action to change the conditions of work." [Soelle, TWATL, p.70] If we believe in God, we believe things can change, and we do not need to be passive in the face of threat.

Christians seek a reformed society, rather than merely the salvation or satisfaction of individuals. Baelz, for example,

discusses the ideal of a just, participatory, sustainable society:

If it is to be just, it must not allow inequalities, of whatever kind, to militate against that fundamental human dignity which belongs of right to all members, whatever their natural endowment and their individual attainment. If it is to be participatory, it must encourage its members freely to accept responsibility, not only for their own lives, but also for the ordering of the society and the institutions to which they belong. If it is to be sustainable, it must both create wealth for the present and preserve resources for the future. [Baelz, EAB, p.77]

Such language is reflected by many other theologians, but rarely applied specifically to women. Writings for Christian women concentrate on their individual responsibilities. They may also acknowledge that what women do in their families can affect the whole of society⁵ But they do not advocate women's rights, nor that women should take responsibility for wider society directly rather than through husbands or children. Feminist theology has the important emphasis that women are equally responsible with men for creation and human society. This means seeing the structural implications of women's service work.

3. Christianity and Love

Christianity has traditionally approved of those who renounce their rights, their privileges and their family relationships for the sake of the Gospel. There is a place for personal sacrifice of this kind, although it must take account of the effects upon

others in the ways described above. In the context of work, workers might take a wage cut in order to help a company in financial difficulties, or mothers might accept having no time to themselves whilst their children are small babies. The point here, however, is that there is an element of choice. It is recognized that under normal conditions, workers have a right to a fair wage, or mothers to time off.

There is thus a distinction to be made between what is done freely and what is done under obligation. It is inappropriate to equate forced sacrifice with a genuine act of service. According to the service ethic, the Christian worker ceases to see the obligatory character of work, so that what was formerly done "as sheer necessity, or ... out of a sense of duty ... is now done 'unto the Lord', and becomes joyous and free service". [Richardson, op.cit.] Eaton reflects the same values when he suggests that those "who are given worth at work will begin to see work as service, and not as obligation or necessity or drudgery." [Eaton, C, p.110] Yet most work is obligatory, and remains so whatever the spirit in which it is done. Christian service does not mean pretending that work about which we have no choice is really "joyous and free service". Work is "good work" because it contributes to the flourishing of God's creation, not because it is done by Christians. It is not the case that "Who sweeps a room as for thy laws/ Makes that and the action fine", [Herbert, **Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised**, No.337] unless sweeping the floor is a worthwhile action in the context. If a job involves drudgery, alienation, and is dehumanizing, then as we have seen, Christians must struggle to change conditions.

Christians have sometimes talked as if true love and service can only be offered by Christians. A doctor in **Just the Job** reports a concern amongst some Christian doctors as to "how to shine when our non-Christian colleagues are clever, hard-working and compassionate", perhaps to a greater degree.⁶ [Field and Stephenson eds., JTJ, p.76] Clearly the ability to serve others aright is not confined to Christians, and neither can we suggest that the love Christians do show has a special quality. We can affirm that the human desire to relate in love to one another reflects the God in whose image we are made. What will differ for Christians is the context in which they set their service. For them, it will be a means of maturing a relationship with God, and a means of fulfilment and flourishing.

Christians are called to serve by their faith, and Christ calls his followers to go beyond what is normally expected. But as Baelz points out, we must beware of making love "an extra and especially laborious kind of duty." This kind of love cannot be engineered. First we must see life in a new way, so that a new response is evoked from us. [Baelz, EAB, p.87] Oppenheimer makes a useful contribution to this debate. She notes that people in general often do go beyond what is expected of them, and find satisfaction in so doing. A morality that goes beyond justice in this way has a character not of strictness or nobility but of spontaneity; responding to a situation rather than imposing a moral ideal. [Oppenheimer, TCOCM, p.83/4] Christian morality springs out of our relationships with other people, and is thus is "grounded in allegiance". [Ibid., p.87]

In **The Hope of Happiness**, Oppenheimer considers the idea that Christians are called upon to love others, but not necessarily to

like them. Human beings, she says, claim from us not just a cool respect but a warm regard. Morality is based on the fact that people need love: "our very existence involves valuing and being valued by one another." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.76] Separating loving from liking does not produce this kind of goodwill. But there is "a way of meeting the world with a readiness to be pleased, which is at least as much within our power as behaving as if we were pleased when we are not." Learning to like requires effort, but it can be done, especially if we believe that God's creation is good. [Ibid., p.125/6] There are dismal and evil people in the world, but boredom and even repulsion "are better overcome than tolerated", and we must strive for Christian forgiveness. [Ibid., p.127] There are people whom we dare not like because they are evil or violent, but in that case, we should not talk about loving them. The most we can do is refrain from hate, and leave them in God's hands, whose love encompasses them where ours at present cannot. [Ibid., p.130]

Christianity, then, requires that we love even our enemies with a genuine and all-encompassing love. But it also allows us to recognize that such love cannot ever be perfectly achieved. Though made in the image of God, we can only imperfectly mirror God's love. Our relationships with one another are distorted, and it is difficult for care and affection to be properly reciprocal. This particularly seems to be the case with the relationships between the sexes, which we discussed in Chapter Four. Acknowledging the imperfections of human love is important, for it introduces a necessary note of realism into the debate. Women

have suffered through being idealized, as if mothers or wives were able to satisfy all the needs, both material and emotional, of their husbands or children. Their inevitable failure here leads to guilt and frustration, as has already been noted. If we can recognize that no human being can provide perfect care for another, we can free women to be appreciated for doing the best they can.

The realization that sin distorts service should lead us to be careful how we speak of it. Just as with work in general, there is ambivalence in service. Genuine attempts to manifest love in service can easily lead to the problematic restrictions of the service ethic. A better understanding of what love means may help to prevent this, but however accurately we define it, service will still at times lead to exploitation. Moreover, actions which do in fact spring from love may be misunderstood, and this is particularly likely to happen where women withhold their service for the sake of the other.

4. The Love of Self

For many Christians, stating one's own needs and making demands on others, are products of a sinful self-love. Nygren classically expresses this view: "Christianity does not recognize self-love as Christian", for it "blocks the channels of self-spending and self-offering, both towards God and towards man." [Nygren, AAE, p.170] Other theologians suggest that there is a right self-love, and Oppenheimer's analysis is particularly helpful here. She explains that to learn to put God first, others second, self last "is so far from being the answer to our problems that it is

itself our problem." If we knew how to put God first, we would be "home already", and "For most of us, the conscious attempt to put self last could make us at best difficult to live with and at worst eaten up with spiritual pride." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.102]

In any case, she says, self-denial can never be an end in itself, since if "any creatures are to be loved and cherished, then sooner or later we ourselves are likewise to be loved and cherished." [Ibid., p.103] "If we can love other people as ourselves, we can cope with the fact that they will be apt to love us as themselves; so our fulfilment and theirs need not and should not be separated." [Ibid., p.116] It is, says Oppenheimer, an insult to God and to our fellows to treat ourselves as negative, we cannot opt out of being lovable. [Ibid., p.117]

If we ourselves are to be loved and cherished, then self-fulfilment must be important. Oppenheimer doubts whether "to talk about self-giving entirely separately from fulfilment does justice to the love of God or man." [Ibid., p.107] We need to reunite agape and eros, in Oppenheimer's striking phrase, in "a love that is not nervous of being made happy." [Ibid., p.109] Rather than "choosing self-giving for ourselves and self-realization for others, we ought to be trying to understand how these are related, for us all." [Ibid., p.115]

This is an important point, since for women in particular, self-giving has been set against self-fulfilment. This is the theme of Gilligan's study, referred to earlier. She writes that although "independent assertion in judgement and action is considered to be the hallmark of adulthood, it is rather in their care and

concern for others that women have both judged themselves and been judged." [Gilligan, IADV, p.70] As we saw in Chapter Eight, this is particularly the case for mothers in employment, whose major concern is not to appear selfish. Thus the "conflict between self and others ... constitutes the central moral problem for women." [Ibid., p.70/1] They believe that a moral person is one who helps others, and therefore the struggle is to meet "one's obligations and responsibilities to others, if possible without sacrificing oneself." [Ibid., p.66]

Gilligan concludes that we need to integrate rights and responsibilities. The concept of rights, she says, "changes women's conceptions of self, allowing them to see themselves as stronger and to consider directly their own needs." When assertion is no longer dangerous, they come to see relationships as interdependence: "The notion of care expands from the paralyzing injunction not to hurt others to an injunction to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connection." [Ibid., p.149] Acting autonomously and caring for others are not mutually exclusive, for neither is possible without the other, as Oppenheimer points out. One cannot give from emptiness, and neither relentless competitive unselfishness nor selfish fulfilment are satisfying. [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.115] A feminist theology of work seeks to integrate the two, for without this, women's work will continue to be judged by the restrictive terms of the service ethic.

The key, in Oppenheimer's terms, is "flourishing". [Oppenheimer, TCOCM, p.95] Human beings are created to grow and prosper, yet women have often been unwilling to foster this in themselves. The

circumstances of their lives often make it extremely difficult for them to do so, as we have seen. Yet even within these constraints, women can start by owning what gives them pleasure. As we saw earlier, women may feel the need to recast their "selfish" motives as altruistic. This can result in difficulties. For example, a woman may cook an elaborate meal because she enjoys cooking, but present it to her family as if they required such a high standard. If her family did not want that meal, they will be unappreciative, and resent her for making them feel guilty. If on the other hand, the woman can own to herself that she performed the task for her own pleasure, she will not require any other return.

B. SELF-FULFILMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. Self-fulfilment and Developing Talents for God

David Welbourn's table [See Table 4]⁷ places self-fulfilment and creativity as the goal to which human beings should aspire, once their basic needs of survival are met. Self-fulfilment has been highly valued in Western society in recent years. There is an emphasis on self-help and overcoming misfortune which has a positive side, but which can deny the importance of caring for others. This point is made by Ehrenreich and English in their discussion of the impact on women of the Human Potential Movement popular in the United States in the nineteen seventies. [Ehrenreich and English, FHOG, p.272ff] Browning points out that self-actualization implies putting the realisation of one's own potential before that of others, and this can only work in a harmonious world where people's ideals do not conflict. This, he

TABLE 4

* * * * 5 *	5. Self-fulfilment, creativity
----- * 4 *	4. Acceptable self-image, confidence.
----- * 3 *	3. Need to communicate, interact
----- * 2 *	2. Economic security
----- * 1 *	1. Basic human functions, eat, sleep, rest etc.
* * * * *	

[Welbourn, (after Maslow) STFOW, p.44]

suggests, is where theology has a contribution to make, because it treats disharmony and sin with moral seriousness. [Browning, Pastoral Studies Conference] It can also remind us that people have "many potentials, to be tyrants as well as ... saints", [Walter, AYLIN, p.117/8] as Walter reminds us in his discussion of growth psychology.

Given the low expectations many women have of themselves, the exhortation to fulfil and advance oneself could provide a positive impetus. However, the application of the self-help theme to women has been limited, as Ferguson suggests. She illustrates how British women's magazines of the nineteen seventies and eighties advocate self determination as "desirable, feasible, and obtainable through the exercise of just that much more control and effort on a woman's part". [Ferguson, FF, p.50] The "perfection-achieving variant" of the self-help theme directs women to more perfect production of and presentation of self. But the self is to be determined only within "the primary occupational category - the business of being a woman." [Ibid., p.52] The choice is in reality limited to a narrow range of possibilities of appearance, partner, home and work. Writings for Christian women often reflect this theme in urging women to excel at femininity, as we saw in Mitson's book.

As we have already noted, women who seek self-fulfilment outside their traditional confines often meet with moral censure, and are compelled to translate their motives into serving others. Yet some degree of self-fulfilment is necessary for mental health, in women as much as in men. Friedan points out that women's mental health has improved dramatically during twenty years of the

women's liberation movement, although there are some signs of stress amongst younger women, for equality "in general is good for mental health. Getting out of poverty, out of dependence, having some control over your own life, some measure of autonomy, independence and mastery of your life is good for people". [Srole and Fischer, quoted in Friedan, TSS, p.78] Ann Dally confirms that a "sense of an independent self, capacity for achievement and satisfaction, motivation, independence combined with good personal relationships, and a capacity to recognize and make choices and adapt to changes are what women need for success in the modern world." [Dally, WWF, p.106]

Having a job is an important means of self-fulfilment and development for many women, as we have seen, and it is essential that women should have the opportunity to take employment. Yet they are often limited in the choices available to them. Clearly most people in our society have only a limited number of options from which to choose, and seldom feel in control of their own destinies. Individual choice must in any case be balanced against the needs of society, and the most desirable jobs or roles will always be limited. [Fogarty et.al, SCF, p.37ff] But choice can still be exercised within these limitations, and as French remarks, freedom "is the sense that we are choosing our own bonds". [French, BP, p.542]

Men may choose a life of self-sacrifice, or one which is constrained by a form of the service ethic, but it is a choice only a minority of them make. The fact that self-sacrifice is understood as a normal component of women's role means that they are not choosing their own bonds. Women suffer because they have

fewer options open to them than do men in similar situations. Moreover, the choices given to women, as Midgley and Hughes point out, are not only "not genuine alternatives, but ... they are not the choices that women would choose to present to themselves." [Midgley and Hughes, WC, p.52]

Women are not encouraged to believe that they should make choices in order to develop their own interests, and in any case do not have the same amount of free time as do men, to use for personal development:

In freeing others from the hum-drum necessities of life, women have placed at the disposal of men and children ... a wealth of leisure time to be spent with some choice, beyond the hammering necessities of everyday existence ... The amount of time woman has saved for others ... has been paid for at great expense to herself ... While time was used by men and children for personal growth, education, socializing and planning beyond immediate needs, women were chained to the demands of the physical requirements of life ... Time is a birthright we're all given. But women give up much of this birthright to men. [Warrior, quoted in Leghorn and Parker, WW, p.202/3]⁸

Dally writes that:

In our present world of choice the majority of women are not educated to make choices, do not wish to choose, and frown on their sisters who do. The fact that there is so much choice either frightens them consciously or drives them to hide from it and try to find a way of life that ignores choice. [Dally, WWF, p.9]

It is, she adds, "difficult to feel a sense of achievement in coping with difficulties and miseries if others think you brought them on yourself or could choose to step out of them altogether." [Ibid., p.13]⁹ Thus many women "felt more secure in being certain that they were the weaker sex than in being aware that they are not." [Ibid., p.14]

Yet growth involves having some choice in and control over one's own life. As Gilligan points out, the essence of moral decision is choice, and accepting responsibility for that choice. If women feel they have no choice, they may also excuse themselves from responsibility. [Gilligan, IADV, p.67] As we have seen, a characteristic sin of women is to avoid their responsibilities, and one remedy for this is to encourage them to make autonomous choices. The need for such autonomy is recognized in general by many Christian writers, but it is rarely applied overtly to both sexes. Thus Simon Phipps says "Man is given ... the chance ... to feel after God and find Him, and through repeated situations of choice, after the pattern of Jesus, to grow more and more over to God's will and make it his own." [Phipps, GOM, p.18] Similarly, the idea that human beings should fulfil their potential is common in the theology of work, but seldom applied to women. For example, Catherwood writes that "it is the duty of the Christian to use his abilities to the limit of his physical and mental capacity. ... He has a duty to train himself and develop his abilities ... to the limit that his other responsibilities allow." [Catherwood, TCIIS, p.2.]

Some Christians specifically limit women's capacities to their relationships with men. For example, Jean Holl states that a

woman "owes it to her husband to be an attractive, interesting and informed companion as well as a homemaker and spiritual partner". [Holl in Mitson, ed., C, p.63] This thinking finds expression in academic theology in the writings of Karl Barth. He suggests that because Woman "is the glory of man and marks the completion of his creation, it is not problematical but self-evident for her to be ordained for man and to be for man in her whole existence. ... She would not be woman if she had even a single possibility apart from being man's helpmeet." Woman is not to find herself through choice, but "chooses herself by refraining from choice; by finding herself surrounded and sustained by the joyful choice of the man, as his elect." This, says Barth, "does not involve anything strange, or humiliating, or detrimental, or restrictive of the true humanity of woman", [Barth, CD, III 1, p.303] but as we have seen, the denial of choice is destructive for women, just as it would be for men.

Scanzoni and Hardesty comment that:

Self-actualization for women is discouraged in much Christian writing. Somehow women are supposed to be different from men, being able to live through someone else (husband, children) and to find their fulfilment through self-effacement and vicarious experiences rather than through direct participation in the world. When women complain about this and ask to be able to achieve as men do, they're called 'selfish' and are told they are rebelling against God. [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.103]

Yet the Gospel calls both women and men to follow Christ, use their talents, and to act responsibly and creatively in the world. In this context, Barth's view contradicts the general

thrust of Christ's teaching.

Scanzoni and Hardesty make this point strongly: "It's foolish to say that half the human race, made in God's image and possessing talents he has bestowed, should have no part in the world he has placed in our hands." Both men and women "need to rethink the matter of 'vocation' and formulate a 'theology of work' that views all of us as being in charge of God's world and responsible to him for what we do with it." [Ibid., p.188] Christians sometimes think being a good wife and mother should be women's greatest contribution, they say, but all Christians are called to serve the Body of Christ with whatever gifts they have. Women will be judged if they have wasted their talents. [Ibid., p.177/8] As Russell states: "Regardless of the structures of society or the church which stand in our way, our calling in Christ is to use the gifts God has given us as co-partners in Christ's work, so that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven." [Russell in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.59]

Russell points out that the role of helper or servant in the Bible is not to be subordinate, but is "a role of privilege and responsibility to take part in God's work of service in the world." [Ibid., p.55]¹⁰ This is what Christian women want, Scanzoni and Hardesty say; to be persons "free to give the world all that our individual talents, minds, and personalities have to offer. ... We ask for the right to make our own choices, to define our own lives, not out of selfish motivations but because God calls us and commands us to develop the gifts he has given us." [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.206] Although these gifts may be used in marriage and the raising of a family, such

relationships cannot be an end in themselves. Anderson makes it clear that whilst the family is important, since it "is that agency in creation that has as one of its purposes the continuity of the human community", [Anderson, TFAPC, p.26] its demands are not absolute. For "to be a disciple of Christ is to recognize ever-enlarging communities of concern. Christians are obligated not to take the family too seriously lest it impede our service in the world for Christ's sake." [Ibid., p.122]

Throughout Christian history, there have been women who have rejected marriage and family life in order that they might follow their Christian calling. As Fiorenza points out, women are supported in this by the model of sainthood in the Catholic tradition. This has its problems, but does at least contradict "the middle-class cultural message that women's Christian vocation demands the sacrifice of one's life for the career of a husband and the total devotion of one's time to diapering babies or decorating one's living room." [Fiorenza, in Christ and Plaskow eds., WR, p.140]¹¹ Individual women have left husband or children "for the sake of the Gospel", but this is generally seen as unchristian behaviour.

Men may expect that their relationships will take second place to their vocations. C.S.Lewis's remark is acceptable applied to men, but far more difficult if taken seriously by women:

in the last resort, we must turn down or disqualify our nearest and dearest when they come between us and our obedience to God. Heaven knows, it will seem to them sufficiently like hatred. We must not act on the pity we feel; we must be blind to tears and deaf to pleadings."

[Lewis, TFL, p.114]¹²

A common Christian criticism of feminism is that it might encourage women to reject their family relationships, yet the Gospel too can have this implication.

It may be especially important for women to allow themselves time for reflection and peace. This is a simple human need, as we saw in Chapter Eight, but also necessary for women who wish to follow Christ. Sharpe appreciates the difficulties this may cause women, not only because of the practical demands on their lives, but because they have internalized women's roles in caring for and servicing other people, especially those whom they love, and it takes an effort of will and of organization to say: "Right, this is my time. I want to be left alone to do what I like with it, and this must be respected." Many feel that they have little right to expect this, and few have the opportunity. [Sharpe, DI, p.79]

We should note however, that the assumption of the importance of privacy and personal autonomy is predominantly a European one. Angela West makes this comment, and adds that for most women in the world, "individual freedom and personal transcendence must seem like a hollow and deceitful dream." [West, in Garcia and Maitland eds., WOTW, p.85] This does not invalidate the notion, although her point must be taken into account.

However, opposing self-fulfilment and serving others is a false dichotomy, and this was Oppenheimer's point above. Although women are often presented with this choice, it is necessary to resist this formulation. Women have, in Miles' words, to recognize both our "aloneness and our connectedness", for only then can we "do a

decent job of loving other human beings in their aloneness and connectedness". [Miles, in Giles ed., TFM, p.97] It is then a question of women establishing that their priority is to serve God not man. This point was ably made by Margaret Fuller, writing in the 19th century:

I wish woman to live first for God's sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man her god, and thus sink to idolatry. Then she will not take what is not fit for her from a sense of weakness and poverty. Then if she finds what she needs in Man embodied, she will know how to live and be worthy of being loved ... [Fuller, quoted in Chesler, WAM, p.219]

2. The Importance of Connectedness

Feminist theology does not wish to deny the importance of connectedness in its stress on women's need for self-fulfilment. Indeed, good relationships are vital if women are to be fulfilled, just as they must have a secure sense of self if they are to love others aright. The fact that women are sensitive to the needs of others is good. It is problematic because women's own needs are not recognized, and they may find it difficult to receive care from another even where it is offered.

Eichenbaum and Orbach provide an illuminating discussion of women's needs in this respect in **What Do Women Want?** They note that dependency is a basic human need since "achieving autonomy and independence rests on the gratification of dependency needs". People have to be confident that they can depend on others if they are to be independent. Women are stereotyped as dependent, and learn to behave dependently, they say, but women are also

"raised to be depended upon for emotional support and nurturance". [Eichenbaum and Orbach, WDW, p.19] In fact, "men's emotional dependency needs are ... more consistently catered to than women's, and ... this fact has a direct correlation to men's ability to be more 'independent'." [Ibid., p.19/20] Women will only be able to throw off their crippling dependent behaviour traits and stereotypes, when they "receive gratification of the very human needs of human interdependency." [Ibid., p.20]

Men's emotional needs are met first by their mothers, and later by their wives or other women. But girls "learn early that in the most profound sense they must rely on themselves, there is no one to take care of them emotionally." [Ibid., p.25. Italics in original] This is one reason why women are sensitive to others: "Her neediness, her desire to be understood, to be taken into account, alerts her to such need in others." She represses her own needs, in order to respond to those of others. [Ibid., p.53] Yet she suffers because her dependency needs have not been sufficiently tended to, and in her relationships is always "looking to ... take in the nurturance she needs so that she can move on and become her own person." [Ibid., p.55] Women may look to their children for emotional nurturance, but this can be crippling for the child. What women need, Eichenbaum and Orbach conclude, is to have good adult relationships, since "it is only through satisfaction of our dependency needs and the security of loving and nurturing relationships which provide us with an emotional anchor that we can truly feel autonomous." [Ibid., p.229]

It is of profound theological importance that we recognize the

connections between self-fulfilment and self-giving, autonomy and relationship. David Jenkins expresses this well:

Dependence seems to me to be the one great hope of mankind and to be the only promise which has any promise of real fulfilment. Independence is not a reality now, nor is it a viable possibility for the future. It is an illusion that we can exist on our own and 'do our own thing'. It is ... an illusion which if persisted in and acted upon can produce only destruction and not liberation.

Unfortunately, he continues, "much of the dependence that we now know is in fact part of a series of dominance/dependence relationships which we are discerning more and more to be humanly crippling, at the psychological, the social and the political levels." [Jenkins, foreword to Moltmann, TAJ, p.6] If love, dependence and freedom are connected, we need to discover the sources and resources of redeeming and liberating dependence and love found in God in Jesus Christ. [Ibid., p.7]

The model for this may be found in parental love, which at its best fulfils the emotional dependency needs of children, but strives to achieve their independence. It has expectations of children and looks for reciprocation. This picture is found throughout Scripture.¹³ This kind of love is duplicated in our other relationships, as we shall see. The traditional separation of love into different forms, often based on the different words for love used in Greek¹⁴ has obscured the fact that love has the same characteristics in every situation. Donnelly makes this point:

Over centuries the integrating power of 'love' ... has fallen prey to theories that smack strongly of the

dualistic, split-level operation. Classic distinctions ... divide 'love' into eros as longing for the beloved, agape as sacrificial love for God and humans, philia as friendship, and libido as sexual desire. Yet all these are aspects of the thrust to oneness of human love rather than four flavors from which to choose. [Donnelly, in Giles, ed., TFM, p.128]

This is why we must resist the idea that the normal expressions of family relationships need to be replaced by self-sacrificial agape which looks for no return. Our adult relationships also ideally follow a pattern of interdependence and reciprocity, which seeks to make the other mature. Partners may play different roles at different times, according to need and circumstance. Thus Dally comments that a "desire to serve the loved one ... and give up one's own interests for his may be a temporary and enjoyable phase in a sound relationship or it may be the preparation for a lifetime of slavery, lack of development and self-destructiveness." [Dally, WWF, p.104]

Weingarten discusses how reciprocity rather than slavery can be established in marriage:

To sustain a balance of giving and taking, husbands and wives must individually assume the responsibility of monitoring their own behavior. Maintaining 'gave/got' tally sheets is not the best way to effect the balance. A genuine desire not to exploit one's partner is much more likely to result in reciprocity.

Reciprocity may not be perfect over a week, a year, or even a lifetime, but if couples "accept a wide range of behaviors in each other, communicate openly, and wish to share, a balance of

one sort or another can be reached." [Weingarten, in Rapoport and Rapoport eds., WC, p.157]

3. Work as Relationship

The drive for connectedness is expressed partly through a desire to serve others. According to Elizabeth Nash, we can define all our daily work in terms of relationships. For work is doing things for others, whether this is cooking or making steel. It can be judged according to whether it builds up human relationships - through personal care, or freeing them from drudgery, for example. Creativity in human work is also important, but again, it must aim to build up relationships between human beings and God: "The glory of creation is a sideline to the far more fundamental creativity of relationships between God and human beings". [Nash, MC, p.25]

The theology of work has been quick to recognize that human creativity is a reflection of God's image, as we saw in Chapter Five. But we must also emphasise that people were created to love and serve one another, and this too mirrors God's image. Christians cannot simply affirm that industry and technology are good because they allow human beings to master the world. Clearly not all work is "good work", and Christians have condemned the manufacture of arms or some trends in genetic engineering for example. Moreover, as we have seen, even acts which are good in themselves can be inappropriate. Work must be judged according to whether it allows creation to flourish, and relationships to be built up.

We might wish to suggest that service at its best always seeks to establish a relationship. Thus our daily encounters with the people who service our needs - the bus conductors, doctors, shop assistants, and so on - can become a means of flourishing when some human contact is made in the transaction. The way a person does their job can have a substantial effect on those being served, even when the contact lasts only a short time. The experiences of women giving birth are often moulded by the attitudes of medical staff, for example.¹⁵ John Davis is right to stress the importance of seeing behind the task the person being served, although in other respects his analysis is inadequate, for this enables a relationship to be formed.

Recent writers on the theology of work, like Davis, often fail to stress the importance of reciprocity. As was noted earlier, Roger Clarke advocates a "Contribution ethic", "a belief that our humanity does find fulfilment in doing things for others". [Clarke, WIC, p.196] But whilst he is right that God is glorified when we are of service to others, we need to understand that service aright. Clarke lays himself open to the problems associated with the service ethic because he implies that giving is good in itself, without considering its context. A feminist theology of work does not deny the value of Christian writing which affirms the importance of service. But it does require that we pay close attention to what we mean by service, if our humanity is indeed to be fulfilled through our serving relationships with others.

If work in general can be understood as "doing things for others", then women's service does not have a special character.

It is work like any other. We have to resist attributing special value to the tasks women perform, just as we must resist labelling the feminine as virtuous. Women's work, like men's work, is good where it builds up relationships, whether the task is undertaken in the community, the factory or the home. Christians have often seen jobs which directly serve others as more "Christian" than, for example, work in industry. Yet both are necessary for the building up of human society. The Reformers recognized this: "If a person was justified by faith in Christ, then in that status or relationship to God any work was God's work, whether it was ploughing the field, milling the corn, sweeping the house, or bringing up children". [Atkinson, discussing Luther, in McCord and Parker eds., SIC, p.84] This is an important emphasis, although such work still needs to be evaluated properly, as Marshall points out: "Christians were to be farmers, housewives, and merchants, but never really asked whether being such was really such a fruitful and just service under the prevailing conditions." [Marshall in Marshall et al eds. LOL, p.13]

Marshall continues: "Our calling is to obediently serve in the healing, renewing, and unfolding of God's good creation; to love God, to live before his face in praying, raising children, doing justice, making chairs, building, playing, eating, sleeping; to do all things to his honour and glory." Vocation is not to a particular task, "but to be Christian in all our relationships in God's creation." [Ibid., p.16] This more integrated vision corresponds to the ideals expressed in a feminist theology of work, which seeks to relate work to the whole of life.

NOTES

1. For example, see Dent's consideration of duty and inclination in **Mind**, or McCord and Parker's **Service in Christ**.
2. Ballard makes a similar point. [Ballard, TACTOW, p.50]
3. There are structural implications in the work of the voluntary sector which cannot be explored here.
4. See Clarke, WIC, and Walter HOTD.
5. This is the role of woman as guardians of virtue for society, discussed in Chapter Four. Stephen Clark gives a long list of the destructive effect of women's liberation in MAWIC, p.442/3.
6. No answer is given, other than to suggest the problem is eased as doctors in general become less Christian.
7. One could argue that the need to relate comes before the need for economic security, however.
8. See, for example, Taylor, WAWR for the meaning of this for women in different parts of the world. Also see Deem's discussion of the impact of others' leisure on women in Deem and Salaman ed., WCAS.
9. This is one reason why mothers lack support in our society.
10. See also Russell's discussion of ezer, or "helper", as a

model for women's service. [Russell in Hageman ed., SRAWITC, p.54ff] Tribble gives a similar interpretation. GATROS, p.90.

11. See also Ruether and McLaughlin, WOS.

12. cf Rich's comment that women have to cease supporting men, and ignore their pleadings. op.cit p.141.

13. For a review of the biblical material on the motherhood and fatherhood of God, see Lewis, ed., TMOG.

14. See C.S.Lewis, TFL, for example.

15. See Oakley, WC and FHTM. Whitehouse makes some useful points about the relation between those in service jobs, and those whom they serve. [Whitehouse, in McCord and Parker eds., SIC]

PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER ELEVEN: A FEMINIST THEOLOGY OF WORK

In Chapter One, we saw that a feminist theology of work aims to do justice to women's work, to highlight the concerns specific to either sex, and to articulate human reality and the shared experiences of both sexes. [p.13/4] A major contribution which feminism makes to any subject is to introduce the issue of a person's sex into the debate. In this context we have seen that whilst women and men share a common humanity, they experience their lives in different ways. Thus the concerns reflected by men in the theology of work are ones which women share, but women approach these concerns from a different angle. The focus on women's perspective is intended to extend the range of the theology of work, and does so in two ways. Firstly, it brings an added dimension to the traditional themes in the theology of work; and secondly, it draws attention to issues with which theologians of work do not normally engage. When both these aspects are taken into account, they pave the way for a theology of work which is much more integrated with the whole of life, as we shall see.

The focus on women's experience also raises a critique of the patriarchal character of the existing theology of work. Theology is not made feminist simply by the addition of women's concerns, but must also involve a radical reappraisal of what has gone before. A major concern of feminist theology has been to re-examine our understanding of God. The idea that the Godhead is expressed most accurately through the image of a male King or

all-powerful Father has been shown to be inadequate, especially for women, but also for humanity as a whole. A feminist theology of work contributes to our understanding of God, and although there is not space to develop them here, those contributions need to be acknowledged. These are the issues which this concluding chapter discusses. We shall here investigate what the feminist perspective with which this thesis began, has to offer to the theology of work. This will be done through a consideration of the central themes of the thesis: justice, the meaning of work, and service.

A. EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Part Two examined the demands of justice. We discovered that it is not enough to repeat a call for justice and equality, since both concepts need careful elucidation. The theology of work has sometimes operated with a particular view of women's "nature", and prescribed a specific role to women on that account. But we have seen that there are fallacies in the prescriptive argument. We cannot require women or men to behave in sex-related ways, even if their experiences shape the lives of both sexes in different ways. True justice takes full account of the needs of individuals and of society; it is not concerned with applying a mathematical concept of equality. Although we will demand that women and men are treated equally in many circumstances, the emphasis must be on the uniqueness of the individual and their needs. A feminist theology of work demands that justice be based on sound analysis of the human condition, and on women's own experience and articulation of their needs. This can lead to the relishing of diversity which is our final aim, but on which it is

not yet appropriate to concentrate.

Taking account of a person's sex does not mean merely analysing where women are oppressed, and urging reform. Any discussion of equality and justice must take seriously the degree of alienation between the sexes; it is not enough simply to assert their equality. Centuries of patriarchy are not overcome by good intention, and we must face up to the deep-rooted misogyny at the heart of our culture. At the same time, we must acknowledge the dismissive attitudes women adopt towards men. However, slow progress towards better relationships between the sexes can be made where women and men see each other primarily as persons who share a common humanity. Christian theology is implicated here, for it has upheld a dualistic view of male and female. Indeed, both the denigration and idealization of women in our culture are directly related to, and supported by, the Christian view.

It is true that many Christians do accept the principle of the equality of the sexes. Some also recognize that the demands of justice entail special measures to oppose the oppression of women. But few churches actively try to reform relationships between the sexes or to transform social systems. This is a serious failing, as Daniel Jenkins recognizes in a slightly different context - his use of "men" is unfortunate:

Churches as institutions need to see clearly that ... the chief contribution they can make to the realisation of true equality is by their example and not simply by their precept. To say that all men are equal in the sight of God is a statement which does not register significantly in anyone's experience unless it makes a difference to the way

in which people deal with each other. [Jenkins, EAE, p.171]

The challenge to the Church of its own preaching is recognized in many other areas - *Faith in the City* contained numerous recommendations to the Church as an institution, as well as to the Government. Although it sidestepped the question of women in the church, it did proclaim:

It is only when the church itself is sensed to be a community in which all alienation caused by age, gender, race and class is decisively overcome that its mission can begin to be authentic among the millions who feel themselves alienated, not only from the church, but from society as a whole. [Archbishop's Report, FITC, p.60]

But acceptance of discrimination against women is enshrined both in churches' own legislation and in their exemption from the Sex Discrimination Act: "churches are one of the few important institutions that still elevate discrimination against women to the level of principle." [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.202]

The theology of work cannot speak effectively of justice and equality for women while the Church remains patriarchal in every area of its life.

B. THE MEANING OF WORK

In Part Three we explored the character and meaning of work. It was not the intention to develop a comprehensive feminist critique of the theology of work. Rather, a number/^{of} representative themes were examined to see how appropriate they were for a feminist theology of work. It became apparent that whilst some aspects of the existing theology of work were useful in

reflecting on women's work, they were limited because their main focus and starting-point were male experience.

1. Worth and Work

One example of the limited application of the existing theology of work is its emphasis on the need to establish worth apart from paid work. For whilst women share the need to have their worth affirmed, that affirmation often needs to take a different form because of the chronic lack of self-esteem amongst women in our society. A feminist theology of work has to begin by examining what causes women's lack of a sense of worth. It recognizes that being without paid work contributes to this, and that having a job is important for giving women a sense of independent value. For men who have been valued only for what they do, separating work from worth is an important emphasis. The link between the two also needs to be weakened because it rests on a false association of masculinity and paid work. But for many women, the sense of worth they gain from employment is more complex. As we have seen, it can give them autonomy, and an identity apart from their family role, as well as recognizing the contribution they make, through provision of a wage.

This is not to suggest that a work ethic should be resurrected for women. It has been shown that women often seek justification through their children; it would serve no purpose if they were instead encouraged to find justification through employment. But it might be suggested that whilst people's worth should never be dependent on the work they do, recognition of that work, through a wage or other means, is one way in which worth can be affirmed.

Following Oppenheimer, a feminist theology of work suggests that what we do is an integral part of our personalities, though only a small part of what we are. For women who have been confined to being rather than doing, and whose labour has not been recognized as work, the identity which goes with doing a job remains important. The theology of work needs to pay close attention to this point, for it has too readily accepted that women gain fulfilment outside the labour market, and not appreciated the problems they experience.

2. Defining Work

A key element in this is the fact that theologians of work generally define work as employment, and speak of a work ethic where a "job ethic" would be more appropriate. It is clear that the theology of work must adopt a more comprehensive definition of work if it is to take into account the meaning of work for women. In doing so, it will also become more relevant to the lives of men. Work can be set in the context of the whole of life, rather than being confined to industry or the field of employment. It can be seen to concern how we relate to other people and respond to the challenges of human life. But however work is defined, it is essential that we recognize its ambivalence and ambiguity; that it can be both creative and tedious, and have different meanings for different people, or at different times in people's working lives.

We might here follow Francis Fiorenza, and suggest that we should not seek a single theological formulation to apply to work, but should rather use "the criterion of appropriateness of

application" which is "intrinsic to the theoretical formation of a theology of work." Fiorenza points out that theological affirmations "of the positive meaningful nature of work can serve to minimise the de facto negative qualities of work ... It can overlook the lot of the poor, or men and women on the assembly line and in impersonal service positions." On the other hand, it may be a means of judging the dehumanizing fragmentation of much human work. [F.S. Fiorenza in Baum ed., p.98] Negative religious statements about work can make it seem unchangeable when it should be resisted, or they may help people to survive in social structures where work is alienating, by giving independence and autonomy. [Ibid., p.99]

We must define work broadly, admit its ambiguous place in our lives and in society, and recognize that what women do is work of this type. Religious statements about women's work have frequently idealized it, and whilst this may have helped women to accept the position in which they find themselves, it is not an appropriate response. Women like men, experience work as ambivalent, and also like men, are a mixture of good and bad. Their work is a particular form of human work, rather than a different activity altogether. It must be included within the definition with which the theology of work operates, otherwise it will be idealized or marginalized, and the exploitation of women will go unchallenged.

3. Relating Home and Work

Chapters Six and Seven showed how the theology of work operated with a false division between home and work, public and private,

and that this faulty analysis diminished the effectiveness of its reflection on the work of both sexes. By starting with women's experience, which clearly crosses the boundaries between home and work, a new perspective can be gained on the experience of men. The feminist perspective indicates that a theology of work must extend its horizons to take account of the interrelationship between the spheres of work and the rest of life. Integration of these spheres makes it less easy to attach to each area polarized values, associated with either sex. The acknowledgement that there are not rigidly separate masculine and feminine realms may help women and men to see more clearly what each has in common, rather than regarding the other sex as opposite and "other". This has an impact, too, on our knowledge of God; for we learn to see that God is concerned with the whole of life, and every aspect of our experience. The fact that we cannot polarize masculinity and femininity as opposite "principles", reflects the God in whose image both sexes are made.

Chapter Seven outlined how the split between home and work preserves the barriers between men and women, and obscures their shared experience. A number of conclusions were drawn for a feminist theology of work. Principally, we saw that the interrelationship of the spheres of home and work must be central in a theology of work. This involves taking seriously the reinforcement of patriarchy within the home and in personal relationships, as well as its manifestations in public life. A feminist theology of work must also emphasize the shared experience of work for both sexes. Issues which have a particular relevance to women or to men, can nevertheless be explored in the context of a shared humanity. They do not have to

be seen as the result of a peculiarly masculine or feminine "nature".¹

C. LIBERATED TO SERVE

The central contention of this thesis is that women's lives are constricted by the application of a service ethic, which demands that they serve others sacrificially, without complaint and without reward. This is an ethic which applies to women more strongly than to men, because caring for others is a fundamental component of the feminine role. Chapter Eight drew attention to four areas where women's work can be characterized by service: motherhood, housework, caring, and in the labour market. A comprehensive discussion of women's service jobs was not attempted, but this is an area which would repay future study. For example, the disputes and frustrations apparent in both the teaching and the nursing professions in the nineteen-eighties, are related to expectations formed by Christian ideals of service. It is no coincidence that both professions are numerically dominated by women. The analysis of the service ethic offered here, and the alternative definition of Christian love outlined in Chapter Ten, offer a tool for theological reflection on such issues, and this detailed work remains to be done.

The idea that all should be able to contribute is central in much recent theology of work. But whilst women do wish to contribute to society, a feminist analysis suggests a different emphasis is required for them. It is not enough for the theology of work to stress the importance of service, without exploring the content of the word. It must include a discussion of what service means

in different circumstances, and relate this to the political and social dimensions which have been obscured in the past by its confusion with sacrificial love.

The concerns of a feminist theology of work again lead us to reflect on our understanding of God. We come to see that God's love liberates women and men for flourishing, and creative service, rather than viewing it as a totally self-giving but ultimately debilitating Agape. It is crucial that we reject the notion that service of others and self-fulfilment are antithetical, for God's love encompasses both. Instead we must challenge the social attitudes and organization which force women to choose between their own well-being and their responsibilities to others. Here too we follow Oppenheimer's point that self-denial cannot be an end in itself, since if "any creatures are to be loved or cherished, then sooner or later we ourselves are to be loved and cherished." [Oppenheimer, THOH, p.103] Self-fulfilment and self-giving are not in opposition. This insight is being developed by feminists in other spheres; it must also be affirmed in a feminist theology of work. We are able to serve others without being subservient because our own interests and those of others are inextricably bound together. All of us are to partake of the flourishing which is the hallmark of God's kingdom.

This assertion may sound idealistic, since in a fallen world, interests do inevitably conflict. However, it is important to make a common flourishing our goal, rather than calling Christian a solution which favours the interests of one side, but takes no account of the cost to the other. Men have not experienced a

conflict between self and others in quite the same way as women, yet it is important for them too to be able to harmonize service and self-affirmation. Both sexes need to find ways of being whole people, discovering how to be both creative and loving in work and in relationships. Discussion of this formed the basis of Chapter Ten, and it raises important points for a feminist theology of work.

1. The Importance of Personal Relationships

When women are not constrained to oppose self-giving and self-fulfilment, they are more easily able to state their own needs. Women have traditionally valued personal relationships, but this has sometimes been regarded as a weakness. Feminist analysis, such as that by Eichenbaum and Orbach, has made it clear that both sexes have strong dependency needs. It is only when women's emotional needs are properly met, that they will be able to play their full part in the world.

It can be argued that self-fulfilment is not possible without the mutual support of others. Women who are isolated, whether in traditionally male jobs, or within the home, need bonds with other women. It is only in discovering a common perception of oppression that women are able to tackle sexism effectively; and this is where feminism makes a powerful contribution, as Oakley points out:

A major - perhaps the major - tool of feminist revolt is a comprehensive understanding of the way in which women "internalize their own oppression". ... structures which oppress women cannot be altered unless there is a prior

awareness among women of the need for change. [Oakley, TSOH, p.195]

But equally, women need their bonds with men to be transformed. Liberation will not be complete unless women are able to serve men, as well as receive service in return. Both sexes need to be able to acknowledge their dependency needs, and discover how these can best be met without one partner exploiting or manipulating the other. Both sexes need to recognize the humanity which they share, rather than projecting onto the other, undesirable or idealized qualities. Once again, it is this emphasis on our common humanity which points the way forward:

when women do not need to live through their husbands and children, men will not fear the love and strength of women, nor need another's weakness to prove their own masculinity. They can finally see each other as they are. ... Who knows of the possibilities of love when men and women share not only children, home, and garden, not only the fulfilment of their biological roles, but the responsibilities and passions of the work that creates the human future? [Friedan, TFM, p.331]

3. Creativity, Growth and Liberation

The theology of work stresses the need for liberation. In the past its' emphasis was on liberating the working-man from the alienation of his environment; today, it is more likely to speak of "liberating an underclass of men and women from economic manipulation, restoring them to a place of proper dignity and contribution". [Davies, quoted in Sedgwick, NCFE, p.2] People

are to be liberated in order to fulfil their potential as co-creators with God. But whilst liberation and fulfilment are important themes for both sexes, the implications are different.

Liberation for women has a different meaning from the liberation of human beings in general, because of the sexism inherent in society. Similarly, liberation for Black people has a specific meaning because of racism. This must be taken into account, and means that general statements about liberation for all people are oversimplistic. Liberation for women means freedom from being prescribed only a narrow range of roles, and freedom to develop their capabilities in the context which is most appropriate for them.

Because of the position from which women start, reaching one's full potential and taking responsibility over creation also have different meanings for them. A feminist theology of work which asserts these values issues a challenge to women who have previously seen their role as essentially supportive and expressive. However, when women take these responsibilities seriously, they bring to them a concern for human relations which has often been missing in the masculine world view. Women might wish to emphasize human relationships as another means by which humankind shares in the creativity of God. This is not to argue that women "by nature" are caring, whilst men are not. We have already seen that such statements are problematic. But women have learnt the value of nurturance and the importance of human relationships with each other and with creation, and this is a major theme in feminist theology.

A statement that women must take responsibility over creation does not imply that every individual woman must do work which has an impact on the wider world. It is possible to fulfil one's potential within the family or a local community, although there are points where responsibility to society at large will be exercised. As we have seen, feminists do not oppose individual women working full-time as housewives/mothers if they so choose. What is objected to is the notion that this is the proper role for all women, and the one through which they contribute the greatest good to society.

If people require elements of choice in and control over their lives in order to grow, prescribed roles and strict role differentiation are counter-productive. A theology which is to encourage women in their daily work must eschew simplified restrictive formulae about "women's place". Instead it must recognize that, to repeat Scanzoni and Hardesty's words, women want to be "free to give the world all that our individual talents, minds, and personalities have to offer". [Scanzoni and Hardesty, AWMTB, p.206] As Francis Fiorenza points out, a theology of work must demonstrate belief in emancipation and redemption. Since questions of power, authority and domination have shaped the meaning of work, theology has to reflect on societal structures of domination: "For a theology of work, the crucial question ... becomes whether religious values reinforce or hinder an unequal, exploitative or oppressive distribution of labour." A theology of work must have "a critical and emancipatory function." [F.S. Fiorenza, op.cit., p.99]

D. MAKING THEOLOGY FEMINIST

Women's work has been on the margins of the theology of work. The feminist perspective adopted here focusses on women's work, but rather than this resulting in a new and separate feminist theology of work, it reveals how central "women's issues" are to the theology of work which already exists. It adds new dimensions to the concepts under discussion which must not be ignored. Indeed, we might suggest that no theology can afford not to be feminist in the sense of taking a person's sex seriously. Moreover, given that women's experience has been missing in the past, it may be that theology today must also be feminist in the sense of beginning with women's experience.

A theology of work needs to be practical, and make a difference to the attitudes which people have towards their work. A feminist theology of work offers a proper analysis of women's work, and points to areas where change is necessary. The critique it offers springs from the affirmation that women are human, and must be viewed in the same way as are men, and that only as fully human people can they express what it means to be female. This principle provides a tool to evaluate women's work in other cultures, although the focus here has been on women in Britain.

The challenge of feminism to the churches is its view that Christianity is itself an instrument of oppression for women. This is particularly evident where Christianity has reinforced women's subordination and constrained them by the service ethic. The theology of work must also recognize the historical struggle of women (and some men) against the patriarchalization of

Christianity. Theology today is not simply responding to a new movement when it takes account of feminism. It is uncovering an important, though ambiguous, historical relation between Christianity and women.

Applying feminist insights to the theology of work is not an unproblematic academic exercise. Implicit in it is criticism of the predominantly male theologians of work for perpetuating the oppressive patriarchal tradition. This critique must not be lost sight of, for feminism and Christianity cannot easily be integrated without conflict. The process may reflect what Beker says of the church responding to Black Power demands:

Reconciliation must pass through the revolution of the cross ... Reconciliation in the race issue has simply been translated as integration. Whereas the church should have recognized that integration which bypasses 'Black Power' demands means a resurrection without a cross. [Beker, in Wilmore and Cone, eds., BT, p.570]

The mark of a theology of work which is truly feminist is that it integrates work with the rest of life, and speaks to both sexes jointly as well as in their particularity. Soelle makes it clear that work is not confined to a private realm, but what "happens to us in our work and in our relationships shapes our life with God and is therefore inseparable from our religious life." [Soelle, TWATL, p.115] That we should work and love, and accurately perceive the relations between the two, is of fundamental importance. Soelle illustrates this in Table 5, in her description of ecstasy and trust, wholeness and solidarity, the four interconnected dimensions of love and sexuality. [Ibid.,

TABLE 5

Wholeness

To Love Is to Be Whole

Multidimensionality

Integration of our physical potencies

psychical

intellectual

aesthetical

emotional

spiritual

Trust

To Love Is to Be at Home

Consolation

Reliability

Regressive drives

Vulnerability

Ecstasy

To Love Is to Lose Oneself

Delight in being alive

Mutuality

Progressive drives

Self-transcendence

Solidarity

To Love Is to Know

The inseparability of love and justice

The inseparability of the private and the public

Relatedness to others

Political dimension of eros/agape

[Soelle, TWATL, p.144]

p.143] Soelle is here uniting agape and eros, and showing how this kind of love can express our wholeness. Self-fulfilment, and dependency needs, creativity and vulnerability, all have a place. If our daily work is to be an expression of love, through our service of others, it too must partake of this character. The vision of a feminist theology of work is that in our work as in our loving, both women and men might discover wholeness, trust, ecstasy and solidarity.

Such a vision may seem idealistic. Certainly, we must not underestimate the difficulties of working towards this goal. But this integration of work and life is the key message of a feminist theology of work, and despite the deep-rootedness of patriarchal culture, we must believe that change is possible. Soelle believes that hope lies with women more than with men, to discover a more holistic sexuality, and to integrate their emotions into relationships. They must not give up on this hope which perhaps they alone carry inside them. [Ibid., p.148/9]

Patriarchal attitudes are deep-rooted in individuals and in society, so that all attempts to change them can only be partial. Our knowledge that it is only in the new order of the Kingdom of God that this and all other oppressions will ultimately be overcome gives us hope, while it also puts our efforts into perspective: "Realism about sin should not lead us to cynicism about altruism and justice, or pessimism about the possibilities of collective organisation and communal caring." [Jenkins, TGOF, p.16.] The difficulties we face do not relieve us from our calling, as Preston indicates:

While finality is not available, either now or ever (so long

as God permits us to exercise our ingenuity within the universe he created for us), some signposts have been discovered ... Our task is to seek out and give weight to the interests of fellow men and women, either living now or yet to be born. The name by which we conceive of this task is justice. The concept is clear in outline: we continue to wrestle with its details. [Preston, WOD, p.37]

Since the Christian faith offers us the theological virtue of hope, we are forbidden defeatism. Soelle reminds us of Augustine's insight that hope has two daughters, [Soelle, TWATL, p.161] and these can empower us to move forward as we seek to make use of a feminist theology of work:

Anger, so that what cannot be, may not be;
and Courage, so that what must be, will be.

NOTES

1. Oakley gives an example of this approach in her study of women's experience of childbirth, **Women Confined**.

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APPENDIX 1

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