



## ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

### DISCUSSING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED

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### JOAN CHITTISTER EDUCATIONAL FORUM

ST. MARTHA'S, DEARBORN

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#### INTRODUCTION

Bishop Tom Gumbleton

I've been blessed in many ways in my life and, one of the greatest blessings of my life has been that for the last 30 years I've known Joan Chittister, and have cherished her as a very, very special friend. And so I'm very pleased that I have the honor of – well I shouldn't say of introducing her, because obviously you're here today because you know who she is; and as Don (Fr. Don Walker) mentioned before, it is amazing how many people are here from all over Michigan; they're here from Indiana; they're here from Kentucky; they're here from Ohio; and so Joan is obviously very, very well known.

But perhaps I can share a couple things about her that we're not so familiar with. She's been – well this you do know – one of the Church's key visionary voices and spiritual leaders for more than thirty years. Joan – as you know – is a Benedictine sister from Erie, Pennsylvania, and is an author of great note. She has written more than twenty books. What astounds me is that this year, 2006, she will be releasing four new books. I can't imagine writing one book in a year, or even five years, and she has four coming out this year. So she is an amazing author.

And you know we live in a Church where Canon Law makes it impossible for a woman to have any kind of an official leadership role – you know – by office, or to be an officer in the Church, which means: to be a leader in the Church you have to be ordained, which means: you have to be a man; and yet I'm sure that in our Church there's hardly a greater leader in the United States than Joan Chittister. [Applause] But her leadership among the Benedictines in Erie is very, very well known. I'm sure the people of Erie know Joan Chittister very well, because she was the prior of the monastery there in Erie for twelve years, during the time when renewal was going on in the Church, especially within religious communities; and the Erie Benedictines, under Joan's leadership, took a very, very large part in the renewal of that community, other Benedictine communities. And then she also served as the President of the Leadership Conference of women religious. And so her leadership role extended throughout religious communities throughout the United States. And so, in spite of Canon Law, Joan is truly a leader in our Church.

She received her M.A. degree in Communications Art from the University of Notre Dame and her doctorate in Speech Communication Theory from Penn State University. She's the founder and director of [Benetvision](#), which is a resource and research center in contemporary spirituality. It is located in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Again, I'm happy to tell you these things about Joan, but I'm sure all of you know her best of all from her writing in the [National Catholic Reporter](#), where she has an article every week that appears on their website and [From Where I Stand](#). It's a marvelous work that she does, and it reaches throughout this whole country and internationally too. Joan, I introduce to you, or present to you, as a great leader in our Church, an author, a scholar, a spiritual leader, but I am pleased most of all to say that I present her to you as my friend. Thank you.

What that man won't say when he's not under oath, huh? [Laughter] You know, he does have – I love him as much maybe, even in some ways more than you do – but this guy has a truth in advertising problem. When he called and asked me to come here, he told me – now remember, I hit the deck in Newark from Ireland last week and then, those of you who do follow the column will find out, I went straight to the First Conference of Iraqi American Women; and when Sister Maureen said, "You know, would you do it for Tom?" "Of course, what is it?" "Well don't worry about it, Joan. It's a little group of priests [Laughter] called *The Elephants in the Living Room*, and a couple – a few lay people – and I think its going to be a little conversation in the rectory. [Laughter] Well, I'm going to tell you folks, I have spoken in Uganda, Tanzania, and Botswana. I know that they are – at least until this moment, I thought – they were the elephant capital of the world; and now I know it's not true. [Laughter] It's Dearborn, Michigan!

I do like it, however, when we level the playing field and though – I mean naturally, who can hear a beautiful introduction like that and not be tempted to like it. You know, you say to yourself, I wish my mother were still alive. But I really need to get some things clarified about ... And I heard this story back home, about a priest and a rabbi who went to a prize fight together; and when the little Jewish boy got in the ring, he jumped up and down, he flexed his muscles, he banged on his chest and he went to his corner. And when the little Catholic boy got in the ring he jumped up and down, he flexed his muscles, he beat on his chest, and he made the sign of the cross. And the rabbi looked at the priest and he says, "Is that going to help him?" And the priest said, "Only if he can fight." [Laughter]

So you are all authorized to forget the introduction completely, because I come here with the sweat running down the back of my neck, because I remember the time that Fulton Sheen was speaking in Philadelphia, and they tell the story: They say that Sheen said to the organizers of his program, "Look," he said, "don't bother meeting me," he says; "I do this all the time. I'll take a limo in; I'll check into the hotel; and I'll walk over to town hall for the conference. They say it's very close to the hotel." So sure enough, Sheen did just that. He got his own cab in. He registered in the hotel. He put his clothes up in his room. He came down. He came out of a hotel entrance in Philadelphia, took a sharp left, and then a right and in about three minutes – I don't know how long it's been since any of you were in Philadelphia; but Philadelphia is that city in Pennsylvania where the concept of parallel lines is more rumor than fact. [Laughter] So he finds himself hopelessly lost in the bowels of Philadelphia, and he comes across a crowd of street kids, and he says, "Boys", he said, "Boys," he said, "is there anybody here who can tell me how to get to town hall?" The first kid looks at him and says, "What do you want to go there for?" And Sheen says, "Well, I'm gonna give a speech." Second kids says "Yeah, what are you gonna talk about?" Sheen said, "Well, I'm gonna talk about how to get to Heaven. Would you boys like to come along and learn?" First kid looked at the second kid, second kid looked at Sheen, and he said "Are you nuts? You don't even know how to get to town hall." [Laughter]

I want to talk a little bit about what I think it will take to get to Heaven, and I don't want to confuse it with town hall. I'm speaking not simply to women or about women; I'm talking about women and men, but I admit that I'm talking about this subject out of the perspective of a girl camel I met. This little girl camel said to the mother camel, "Mother, why do we have these webs between our toes?" And the mother camel said, "Darling, camels have these webs between their toes so we can walk in the sand without sinking." She said "Oh!" She said, "Mother, why do we have these very long eyelashes?" And the mother camel said, "Darling, camels have very long eyelashes to protect their eyes from sandstorms in deserts." She said, "Oh!" She said, "Mother, why do camels have these humps on our backs?" The mother camel

said, "Well darling, camels have humps on their backs so they can cross the desert without needing extra water." The kid said, "Oh!" She said, "I have a problem." She said, "If we have webbed toes so we can walk in the desert, and we have eyelashes so we can see in the desert, and we have humps on our backs so we can have enough water in the desert, would you tell me what in God's name we are doing in the San Diego Zoo?" [Laughter] Now that's what I see as the problem for women in the church. [Laughter and applause]

We've got everything it takes girls, but they've got us in prison. However, I must admit that there are some other things that provide the context for today's presentation, and that is: an old Chinese proverb that says, "If we stay on the road we are on, we will surely get where we are going." And the Zen master says, "The purpose of life is to see." Finally, Jonathon Edwards also wrote once, "Saints do not see things others do not see; on the contrary, saints see just what everyone else sees, but they see it differently." The question is: what do we see in our time, and how do we see it, and what does that have to do with being a woman and a Christian; or to put it another way – a better way – what does that have to do with being a Christian, whether you are a woman or not.

The situation which we are required to see, I think, is a vast, complicated, crucial and obviously skewed one. Two hundred million animals a year are being wantonly destroyed for research. Two thirds of the hungry of the world are women. Two thirds of the illiterate of the world are women. Two thirds of the poorest of the poor of the world are women. That cannot be an accident! That's a policy! [Applause] Somebody, somewhere, has decided that that's the way life should go together. Today's question is: why? How do you create policies like that, that you can hear, when you hear them, are wrong? The ozone layer, the placenta of the earth, has been ruptured. The polar ice cap is melting and raising the water levels of the world, while at the same time, the lands of the poor are turning to dust and stone. Chemicals, which once activated the soil, are now depleting it. And fertilizers, used to energize our land, are now polluting our rivers and lakes. Water, air, forest and land are being destroyed everywhere! Bread baskets, rain forests, tropical gardens, oceans and great lakes have been raped, ravaged, spoiled, soiled and poisoned. Nuclear weaponry threatens the very existence of the planet, now as it never has before; and they have the effrontery to call it defense. And all the while, a world filled with church goers is also filled with the obscenely poor. Go figure!

Clearly, we have not reached the point of seeing differently. It is possible that we have not reached the point of seeing at all? The question is then: what relationship, if any, is there between theology, ecology, women and world peace? What's the underlying the conflict among those things? How does it affect the way we go on telling the story of God, women and world? And what is now demanding their conjunction? In 1960 Lynn White, Jr. wrote an essay that shook the theological givens of the period, but which is now recognized as a classic statement of theological concern. The major problem - the major problem facing the modern world, Lynn White argued in the essay *The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis* is that the Judeo-Christian ethic justifies domination. The major problem facing the modern world White argued is that the Judeo-Christian ethic justifies domination. What people do and fail to do about ecology of life issues depends, White posited, on what people think about creation, think about themselves, and think about their relationship to the things around them.

For instance: if water has no value of its own, then it's no problem. I can dam it up. I can drain it off. I can drown it in oil and waste and tin cans until it chokes the fish and poisons the children without even so much as the grace to blush. And we have! And we are! What our western religious tradition teaches us to think, White said, is: hierarchy, superiority and domination. The question is: why? And the answer I believe is because we have chosen, as Christian churches,

to emphasize one creation story over the other, and use the second one to prove the first; and as a result, we have, in that process, lost our balance and forgotten our way. The fact is that given this interpretation, Christianity is the most anthropomorphic of all religions. It begins by centering on the creation of humanity. It proceeds by glorifying it and it ends concerned solely with the redemption of humanity alone.

Now this is “Sister” talking! I am going to list a series of concepts and I want you to tell me if you ever heard these, because I would argue that the progression of our conceptual teaching is very clear:

1. Creation Christianity teaches is a process of stages. Each plane of creation is higher than the last. Have you every heard that? – Tell Sister: “Yes or no.” [Laughter] Thanks for the Catholic kids in the room. [More laughter] From this viewpoint, humanity outranks the universe in splendor and achievement. It is therefore moral – Godly – to put our needs above the needs of other creatures, to drain our marshes, and clear our forests and displace animals everywhere, and in the end, ironically, to jeopardize what we ourselves need most.
2. Man – the male – we learn, is the crown of creation – and we know that’s true, because men have told us so. [Laughter] Therefore, what women think or want or need, is at best, secondary, without priority, and what men say women think or want or need becomes a women’s place, the law of the land, the will of God for them. Or to put it another way, everything that’s ever been written about us, is written without us. [Laughter and applause]
3. God planned the world for human benefit, we insist. You, the story teaches, can have everything in the Garden. Creation, the traditional redaction implies very clearly, is simply a cornucopia of creature comforts designed to satisfy the unlimited desires of humankind, while pollution circles the earth in eleven days now, and whole forests are disappearing daily.
4. Man, like God, we are told, transcends nature and has it for his use, and all for nothing: no cost incurred, a free lunch of immense proportions. Therefore, number...
5. The function of physical creation is to serve man’s purpose, whatever its scope. And finally, we can then assume with confidence number...
6. Humans are above nature. We’re not nature! Despite the fact, that as the top of the food chain, we will be the first to go if pollution continues at its’ present rate.
7. Finally, because we are made in God’s image, we argue, we are also God’s agents on earth: free, autonomous, unrestrained, and right.

It’s a very neat and tidy picture. It’s incomplete, but it is clever indeed. Tidy, but unfortunately enough for the rest of the world, as 30% of us consume 80% of the worlds resources, it is most partial as well. But, fill the earth and subdue it, ruler over every living creature, we repeat to ourselves again and again and again. No caveat given. No caution entertained. No balance struck. And that lesson, I will argue, has been very well learned!

Those who have the resources to dominate, dominate the resources. And those who lack the power to dominate become a resource. No morals lost; no ethic spoiled; no sin sinned. The conclusions and application of that kind of thinking are painfully, dangerously clear now. Gone are the sacred groves. Nature has no reason for existence except to serve human existence. Time is linear and a process of perpetual progress. Time becomes eternity, yes, but the eternal is meant simply for the replenishment of time. In a world such as this, a sense of enough-ness is a sign of mental aberration. A desire for more-ness is the sign of real human progress. How many times in how many homes is this kind of conversation played – the father to the mother:

What the devil are you talking about? What do you mean he has decided to major in elementary education? For God's sake he's not gonna make any money there. She wants to be a voice major. Is she mad? The money's in computers; it's in business; it's in banking. Where did we go wrong? [Laughter]

In a world such as this, a sense of enough-ness is a sign of mental aberration, a desire for more-ness is the real sign of human progress. Humans are superior to nature and men – males – the crown, the pinnacle, the divine pride of creation, are superior to women. Or to be more direct, women are other than men, and therefore, lower than men. A help mate fit for man, we translate Genesis to say. Now I want to tell you something honey, [Laughter] if you believe that one, you have just bought into the greatest ecclesiastical scam of all times. [Laughter] How can you be sure? It's easy, David Freedman, writing in the *Biblical Archeological Review*, January-February 1983, Page 56 – so you can add it to your store of useless information – says that the Jewish words *etso leonegdo* are used approximately thirty times in the Hebrew testament, and in twenty-nine of those times, they are translated as some form of power-equal; in the thirtieth time, guess where *etso leonegdo* in Genesis is translated as a help mate fit for man. Now what if Genesis said that Eve was created as a power-equal to man? How would that change the world? How would that change your mind? How would that change the structures of this Church and every church around us? Now think about it! I'm just going to let the women sit here and puff up a bit, [Laughter] and realize what words mean to the structures of institutions. As a result, help mate only – not leader, not thinker, not visionary – has woman therefore been allowed to be. In the hierarchy of creation women, obviously, the philosophers taught, and the churches theologized, were suited for things of the body, things of nature – natural things. Men on the other hand, whose bodies were not suited for anything inherently creative, [Lots of laughter] must, they figured it out, be clearly suited for the things of the soul, the things of the mind, of course, the spiritual things of life, obviously. Man – the male – was closest to God, male theologians following Aristotle argued, because it is the mind that reflects the essential attribute of God, which is spirit. In the hierarchy of creation then, instead of gaining because they have both creative body and rational soul, women have been defined by their bodies, and robbed of the quality of their souls.

We have a theology, in other words, that says that God made pink and blue souls, [Laughter] and they whirl around out there, and the pink ones leak. [Laughter] They can get some of the graces, but not all of them; and they sure can't give any of them away – so spake Augustine, Origen, Thomas Aquinas. Quote: "Not in the body but in the mind," Augustine wrote, "was man, sic, made in the image of God; and woman, they argued, who was derived, they said, rather than as Scripture says clearly, formed from the same material – bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh – was made in the image of man. But if you read the Hebrew – and you read it well - you find out that until Eve is created, there is no Adam. There is only *ha adam* – the human stuff. Christianity too then, has a simultaneous creation. *Ha adam* becomes Adam, the man, when Eve becomes the woman. But so spoke them all and so speak them still. The thought process is plain, isn't it? God – spirit – is the ultimate; and so nature – matter – is without value. Nature loses, you see, and woman loses; and so ironically, society loses.

Too, with that theology, the foundation is laid for the science that came out of that theology too. You have to realize that up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all science – the purpose of science – was simply to prove the assertions of theology. Science was not an independent discipline. Its purpose was simply to show, which is why Galileo was under house arrest, because the science he came up with contradicted the theology they were teaching. Science and theology were the same thing until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. And science, asserted the subjugation of nature that followed from that theology. The destiny of the human race, and the fate of the planet with it then, was

sealed by a science, rationalized by theology, and predicated on a divine male domination that was embodied in male human agency. When Francis Bacon, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, introduced the experimental method to science, this gathering of data to gain power over nature, he based his justification on the process on the unarguable – he based his justification of the scientific method on theology. There was no doubt about his premise. Bacon wrote, “Man fell,” he said, “and lost dominion, but he can regain it through scientific study.” You don’t have to believe me; go home, take your bedside copies of Thomas Aquinas and Francis Bacon on science: anything you find in either book won’t be much worse than anything I say today.

As a result of this, the new high priests of the time became its scientists, and Bacon concluded, “Nature is to be bound into service like a slave”. The premise of a science, based on the theology of domination, therefore, led to the obvious. Since there was no spirit in nature, there was nothing in nature to respect. And after that, dear friends, we move like lemmings on our way to the sea in scientific free fall. Descartes enthroned dualism and named matter subservient. Newton said matter was only instrumental. And the mechanists regarded matter as just an inert stage for human activity. And that made the coup complete. Nature was lifeless, manipulable, valueless, eternally subordinate. And woman, of course, was nature. Clearly, science and theology were not natural enemies. Never allow anybody to tell you that science and theology are natural enemies. They aren’t now, and they weren’t then.

Science and theology made for the perfect marriage. The theologians rested everything on the superiority of spirit, and the scientists concentrated on the subjugation of matter. And then everything fell into place, marched in time, merged into one great spiritual, scientific, social system. Darwin introduced the idea of the survival of the fittest. And the social Darwinism of the Industrial Revolution, colonialism and the development based on science became its necessary and dangerous corollaries.

Clearly it was true now – and we could see it now – our philosophers and theologians were teaching us now that it’s all about us. It’s all about the male pyramid; and so we can do whatever we want with anyone less human and anything less human than we. Indians, for instance; aborigines, for instance; blacks, for instance; women, for instance; gays and lesbians, for instance; Iraqis and brown people everywhere, for instance. We can take what we want from everywhere. We can squeeze the earth dry of what we want anywhere, and make the rest of the world those lesser human beings sinfully poor, because its all been made for humans – for us, for the fittest – and therefore for the fittest of us. And the fittest of us were clearly not brown and were clearly not women. Now theology, ecology and sexism were of a piece.

After all, religion said that the order of creation was determinate, was biblically inviolable. Man, they said, was created first, before woman and was therefore clearly superior – no mention of the gorillas that preceded him of course. [Laughter] Or how it got to be in that case that woman created last was not clearly God’s final and perfect achievement. [Laughter] No, hierarchy was a given: men were on the top of the pyramid and women were the bottom of the bottom. And science confirmed what theology taught: that women were natural, by virtue of a physiology designed for birthing rather than thinking. So woman now becomes defined as the incubator – a mobile incubator – who will bear his baby.

In the 70s I remember opening a newspaper with some hunk pointing out and the big headline for the movie says, “He wants her to have his baby,” and feminists drove it out of the papers; and people like you and me – real nice people, good priests, fine sisters, obedient lay people – said “Tsk! Tsk! Tsk! Oh, aren’t those feminists just hysterical.” [Laughter] “My God!” we said, “they’re mad! they’re mad; and the next thing you know they’ll want are pronouns.” [Lots of

laughter] Then, something happened that they had feared for at least 100 years; and then, by God, it was there. In 1820 – you know you have to ask yourself: how is it that she looked mouthy? She does not look mouthy. Does this woman look mouthy to you? Why is it that all of a sudden now, you and your generation – white haired ladies – you should be ashamed – are making a mess in the Church? [Lots of laughter] You know, for 2000 years women didn't say a word about this, did they? And then we got this crew. My God! No wonder the collections are going down. [Lots of laughter] What happened? What happened? I'll tell you what happened: the invention of the microscope – 1827 – for the very first time they discovered what they were afraid was there all this time. The ovum! The ovum! [Laughter] She wasn't just a walking potted plant. It wasn't just the sperm that got deposited. If you don't believe me, that's okay. You leave here, you collect a little sperm, plant it someplace, [Lots of laughter] and see if anything grows. [More laughter]

I like him; he's a hunk, but I'm gonna tell you something: he's not the life giver; we are; we both are. Life giving is what we do together. Neither of us without the other. He's not superior because of his life giving sperm, like seeds in mud. Then, did you notice, they hardly got into the ovum till they began to count sperm [Lots and lots of laughter] Is that sick? We now have medical journals with a thousand essays on the number of sperm that a man ejaculates everytime – someplace between 10 and 25 million sperm per ejaculation. Now, I know; I know when I am suppose to recognize Tarzan, right? He's swinging in on a vine over there – right now! She gets one ovum a month – 200 in her whole lifetime – he gets 20 million anytime he wants. But, I have to tell you, I have thought about this. [Lots of laughter] And I figure, if it takes 24,999,999 sperm to chase around one little ovum, I'm not impressed. [Lots of laughter and applause]

You see how you're thinking? You see how your thinking changes all of a sudden? You see how the quality of the population changes. You see how the environment among us changes? We need one another. We're equal to one another. It's in different ways. It's in different ways. And we can't do without her! And we can't do without her any more in the Church than we can in the family or the government. But once you buy into that other thinking – that women are nothing but mobile incubators – then a woman becomes a symbol of what every culture uses, needs, depends on, and devalues: nature itself. Mothering becomes defined as a lifelong process, despite the fact that most women now live on the average of 40 years after their youngest child leaves the home. You say, "Listen! I saw so and so in the chancery the other day. She was so lovely;" and then, "she's so motherly. I don't know what we'd do without her in the office. Wait! Do you know she bakes cookies for all the seminarians... I mean, she is just wonderful – you know – she's motherly." But when we talk about him, we say, "He fathered two children" – if he remembers. [Laughter] Mother becomes the human definition; father becomes a momentary, isolated event.

And so now it's easy to reason that women, naturally, belong in the home, and men, naturally, are the proprietors of religion and politics of culture and thought. Women are particularistic the philosopher, Levi Strauss theorized; but men, on the other hand, he said, physically free of natural tasks, are universalistic. Men surmount the particular, he said; they transcend the mundane. I don't know exactly how that translates, but I think that he means: men don't do socks! [Laughter] or toilets either, I'll tell ya, starting with the seat. [Lots of laughter] Woman is symbol using. Yes, they can read and write – we know that – but inferior, intermediate, instrumental, glorified potted plants. And they said so! They said so! Philosophers and theologians alike over and over again were so sensitive. A woman could be educated, but only for the advancement of her husband – enter the trophy wife. John Mills said, "A woman could be educated, yes, but only in order to be fit to maintain the social standards set by men."

And so now, men are instructed in our Catholic boys' schools to marry women worthy of them. And women are taught in our schools to marry up. Levi Strauss said, "A woman could be educated in order to maintain the domestic system on which men depend to control the public one." Do you know when that was written? Do you know when that was written? Now I'm looking at you and I know how old you are. That was written in 1969, and nobody in here sent a single postcard saying, "I beg to differ."

But those are the philosophy texts that were being taught in colleges and seminaries. They were being preached in classrooms and pulpits every Mother's day, every marriage ceremony, everywhere, at all times. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they published a chemistry text in England that said that a woman needed enough chemistry to keep a pot boiling, and enough geography to find their way around the house. [Laughter] And the Brits in that same era published a biology text that said, "Yes, women can be taught, but you have to be very careful what you teach them, because: 'Learning renders a woman sterile'." [Laughter] Now there's a birth control method that they forgot to condemn!

And Pope John Paul II, and again our present Pope Benedict, as Cardinal Ratzinger, wrote that women had "a special nature for a special purpose," – guess what? – to maintain the home, but not the theology, the ministry and the sacraments of the Church – in a sacramental Church that is losing them. Forced to choose between maleness and sacraments, we are choosing for maleness.

Woman – the spirit woman, the thinking woman, the leading woman – is invisible even in our pronouns yet. The patriarchal world view that follows from those premises is a clear one: it is hierarchical in structure – some of us are on top. It's dominative in essence – the fittest rule. It's dualistic in its evaluations – men trump women and reason trumps nature. And it is male in its norms and values.

Clearly, what underlies the conflict in theology, ecology, women and world peace is the theology of domination – the notion that some of us were made to be – meant to be – better than the rest of us; that God put some of us in charge of the human race – and we know who we are. That is the theology of domination. But if you are sitting there right now, if you're in this room right now, in this chair, and that church right now, and you're saying, "Well! I mean, well! You've got to admit it sounds logical, but it can't be right – it can't be right! – I mean – it's been this way for so long, this is the way that must be right. If you are sitting there, right now, and you think that then I'm going to tell you something that you need to contemplate on for the rest of your life, you, yourself, are one short step away from the extermination of Indians, the lynching of black people, the napalming of yellow people, and the gassing of the next generation of Jews. [Applause] They're gonna come, and they're gonna give you a reason. They gave you a reason for this beautiful woman (a member in the audience). They have medical journals in which they measured the space between her eyes, and the size of her cranium, and the depth of her jaw, and they said that proved that she wasn't as human, as bright, as white people. And we bought it! And they'll do it again – they'll do it again! They may not be bold enough to do it to blacks in this country so soon, but they'll be somebody. They'll come with the color, and the size, and the language, and the Koran; and we'll know that they have to go, because they are a danger to the fittest of us.

The theology of domination is, in other words, a recipe for conflict, for struggle, for suppression for oppression and revolution, and we are in it, and it is everywhere. We can surely see that at

least. There is no doubt about it, my dear friends, we need a new world view, and we need it now! Why? Because this whole world is shifting. If the earth's population were a village of a hundred people, remember, we, our country, as well as our Church and our race, would only be a miniscule part of it. If the world were a village of a hundred people, there'd be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 8 Africans and 14 from North and South American combined. By the year 2050 – in the lifetime of your grandchildren – there will be no majority race in the United States of America. If the world were a village of a hundred people, 70 of them would be non-white, 70 of them will be non-Christian, 70 of them will be illiterate, 50 of them will be malnourished, and only 1 of them has a college education and owns a computer – that thing we call the gateway to the future. And 50% of the entire wealth of all the world would be in the hands of 6 people, all of whom would be white, male Americans – no wonder those 6 buy so many guns.

Point: the world is, as we speak, tilting and tipping and is terribly out of kilter. But how are people like us – you and me – gonna build a new world view; and where can it come from? In fact, what is it? And how can we make it happen? In the first place, to take its place in building the new world view, science, theology and feminism will have to be reconciled. And theology – God-talk, religion – will be its cornerstone. We need a new theology of creation. Christianity, must remember, that God pronounces all of creation good – not some of it good and some of it best. Christianity must realize that human responsibility for the earth requires care, not sovereignty. Not even God, in the gift of free will, requires sovereignty. Christianity must revive its sense of sacramentality – a consciousness that all things and all people reveal the created presence of God. Christianity must begin to honor human finiteness – that humans too are simply part of creation – it's most contingent, it's most vulnerable; it's most fragile part indeed. All the rest of creation, in fact, can live without humanity. It is only humanity that is totally dependent on the rest of creation for its existence. Doesn't that tell us anything?

Christianity must come to see – as the rabbi's taught – that it is the Sabbath. It is the putting on of the contemplative mind – the mind of God about the world – that that is the crown of creation, not man. It is the Sabbath, contemplation of the mind of God for creation; that is the ultimate in creation. And finally Christianity must rediscover Genesis 2 – the companionship story – and begin to see it differently. The truth is that in Genesis 2 – remember it with me – God remember, brings all the animals to Adam to be named. Remember that! Remember that! We don't hear it much, but you do remember the scene. Sister used to have it up on the corkboard in the picture [Laughter] – brought, in other words, to be known – brought in order to be brought into relationship with. Now the traditional excises of that story is that God brings the animals to Adam to be named, because, when we name something, we get power over it. You've heard that, right?

Anybody in here ever have any children? [Laughter] Did you name them? [Laughter] Did you get any power kids? [Laughter] No? None? Less by the day? You know it and I know it; it only makes sense. It's our life; we can reach out and touch it. No one looks into the eye of an animal, names it, and then kills it. We name domestic animals, the ones we take into the family, the ones we take responsibility for, the ones we relate to on an individual basis.

Surely it's Genesis 2, the companionship story, that puts Genesis 1, the stewardship story, in perspective. The scripture is astoundingly clear about it: by bringing the animals to the human for naming God demonstrates that it is relationship – not domination, not individualism – that makes humankind like God. Individualism, science shows us, is theologically bankrupt. The common good includes all of creation, including the non-human. But if that is the case, males are hardly autonomous; and they are certainly not the universal norm of anything. Sexism, therefore, is heresy. [Applause] Sexism is nothing but pathological pride. It is hubris raised to

high art. You see, it isn't what sexism says about women that's wrong. I mean, you're sitting there saying to yourself, "Well, yeah! I mean, yeah! I'm sure women are okay; but if she knew the women I do, [Laughter] they are petty; they are irrational; they are hysterical; and I know you are right. I'm sure you're right, because God made 'em just like the men. [Laughter and applause] It isn't what sexism says about women that's wrong; it's what sexism is saying about God that's wrong. Sexism is saying that the God who parted the seas, drew water from a rock, and raised the dead to life, goes absolutely impotent in front of a woman. Femaleness is the only material – we are teaching – that God cannot and will not work through. Tell me that that sounds like good Catholic theology to you, honey, and I want to see what Baltimore catechism you were using!

The truth is that science has rediscovered theology for us, and calls it ecology. Science knows now that everything is interrelated, that humanity is only one aspect of the fabric of life. That connectiveness is infinitely complex, and that having poisoned the globe and polluted the air, we're now on the verge of extreme natural degradation and irreversible natural changes, if we do not see this sin, and call it that. The anthropocentric – the human centered world view – has failed us. It has left us spiritual orphans. The andocentric – the male centered world view – has destroyed us. It has left us spiritual amnesiacs. The andocentric – the male centered world – view has destroyed. It has left us spiritual amnesiacs, has put us in contention with ourselves – men with women and women with men, with the universe, and with God the creator. Do you know any greater sin than this? The world does not exist for us alone. Diversity is necessary. Its diversity we degrade. Its diversity we destroy. But it is simplification that is entropic. It is simplification that kills. We know – my God – we're sitting in the Midwest; if we farm only one product, the land dies. If we insist on only one social system, creativity dies. If we honor only one culture, whole traditions of peoples, and their wisdom, die. And if we suppress one sex, if we denigrate feminine men and destroy masculine women, the fullness of humanity dies. We'll get macho, not manly. We'll get weakness, not womanliness. And we'll get war, not world peace.

That's why feminism confronts androcentrism, the male centeredness of life. Feminism confronts this simplification of life to a one gendered viewpoint only. Why? Because sexism, because the simplification of human development, isn't good for anyone. It's not good for women. It's not good for the planet. And it's not even good for man.

Do you understand? Do you ever stop and reason and think about the messages that we and our entire society gives little boy children? They grow up hearing the worst of emotional spiritual messages. They know at the age of five, that they're to provide, pay, produce and be perfect – know it all, do it all, get it all; provide, pay, produce, and be perfect. Know it all! Do it all! Get it all! That five year old stands at the casket of his father, and people come into the funeral home and say what to that boy? "You're the man of the family now." And that's when he learns his first failure. And that's when his confidence goes to nothing. You're not building that child up, you're destroying him, because he stands there helpless and powerless; and he stands in front of everything for the rest of his life. "You should be able to handle to handle those bills. You should be able to build this house. You should be able to get a better car." And women buy right into it. "My brother-in-law has. My father did. I thought you could." And he's back by that casket. He's back there looking into this thing. She says, "I'm trying to encourage him," but he knows inside – he knows – he's not encouraged. He's the priest who's being told: "Now, you're in charge of everything. You're in charge of the school. You're in charge of the water fountain. You're in charge of the pizza. And don't ever let a pizza maker tell you how to make it. You just insist." [Laughter] And every year the guy feels less and less about more, and more and more and more about less and less. This is isolating men emotionally. It becomes a very lonely

demanding world for women, yes? But it's an even lonelier more demanding world for men. Let me give you an example: It's Thanksgiving; the whole family's home; they're all around the table, right? There are 3 year old twins, Terry and Theresa. They're listening to the conversation at the table from the steps up above. Something happens and they slip, push one another, fall, and they both come tumbling down to the bottom screaming their heads off. What happens? Everybody at the table jumps up, runs over picks up Theresa, says, "Oh! Oh! Oh! Poor little princess, my baby, oh honey; it'll be all right. Here comes daddy. Daddy give you a little horseyback ride? Here comes grandma. She's got a little piece of more pie for ... oh, such a.. such a sweet ... Our princess, isn't she brave? ... Isn't she?... Isn't she wonderful? ... Oh, look! Here's a booboo ... Oh, grandma's gonna kiss the booboo... make it well... Oh, and look at the nice little ... look it here these... these little bows on her little panties, aren't they cute?... Oh, they're so cute [Laughter].

Over here is Terry. He's screaming his head off. What do we say to Terry? "Little men don't cry. And anyway... aw for.. would you straighten up Terry? You're a big man now! Now, I know you cut your leg, but it won't take more than thirty or forty stitches to close it." [Laughter] And when he's 40 years old, and he gets to his first shrink, and she says to him "How do you feel?" He says, "What's the matter with you? I don't feel! What do you mean feel? What's feel? I don't know what feel is, because if I had been allowed to feel, I'd have stopped." He remembers when he went home to his wife and said "Hey, you know, honey, they want me to ... they want me to become the floor manager. I'm a CPA. I don't wanna be..." "You're not going to take the promotion? You're not going... You'll get a raise in salary. We can use that money. That fence hasn't been painted for years." He says, "But I know I can't do it. I mean, I'm just not good with people. I'm only good with numbers. I'm..." "My God, I'm so ashamed of you! Don't tell the children! I wouldn't want them to know how ridiculous their father is." And he takes the promotion, and he fails in it; or he does it, and he's unhappy for the rest of his life. And there is nobody he can tell where he hurts, and how he doesn't want it, because he's been told at the age of three that he has to be strength for everybody – he's gotta provide, pay, produce and be perfect; he's got to know it all, do it all, and get it all. And every time we have a marriage ceremony, we tell the next generation of men the same thing. Sexism is distorting men socially. It's overdriving them physically. It's making impossible demands on them psychologically, and all in the name of privilege. And when they get it through their heads that that's what's happened to them, sexism will be over in six months. [Laughter]

Androcentrism is unspiritual, because it ignores the spiritual value of the other half of the human race; and it's immoral, because it's exploiting the rest of creation; and it's unchristian, because it's failing to find God incarnate in everything. That's why feminism and female are not synonyms. I know a lot of feminist men. They are proof to me that the will of God can come – that we can be church together. That's why women deny the universalization of male experience. Women know that they see differently; and they want that vision honored for the sake of the human race.

That's why feminism denies that rationalism is the only way of knowing. Women know that feeling is not non-thinking. Feeling is another way of thinking. Women know that they feel differently about a lot of things, and they want those feelings factored into decisions for the sake of the human race. Otherwise, Hiroshima's will go on being necessary; and the holocaust of humanity will continue to be reduced to the logistical problem of what to do with the bodies. Women know that they're different physically, and they want those bodies valued, honored and listened to in all the questions of life, not simply the biological ones; and they want it not for themselves, they want it for the sake of the human race. Feminism rejects hierarchy and

domination, not for itself alone, but for sake of the human race. In fact, eco-feminism – a feminism that will integrate Genesis 2, science and the fullness of humanity – is also, and must also, re-conceive feminism itself.

A human rights feminism that simply wants what men have already is not enough. A radical feminism that seeks separatism and divides the human race – men from women, women from men – on the pretext of bettering it, is not enough. A Marxist feminism that seeks equality by concentrating on classicism only, rather than on sexism, as well is only one more instance of gender blind ignorance in history, that assumes that what is good for one half of the human race is equally good for the other half as well; and that is not enough. A socialist feminism that concentrates on what is good for humans, but takes no account of nature is, not enough. It's not enough to be blind of heart to everything but the self. Feminism itself must also not fall into the trap of being anthropocentric – only human centered. Feminism – real feminism, Christian feminism – is a new world view. It transcends male chauvinism. It rejects female chauvinism. Scripture will never justify that. It embraces creation and rejoices in nature and sees the image of God in equal grandeur in both female and male – in the cosmos and the totality of creation. Real Christian feminism is not male bashing. It cares as much for the development of the male as it does for the female. It is not opposed to males. It is opposed to the patriarchal system in both church and state, in both state and church.

Eco-feminism is a new world view. It's awareness, immersion, reverence and real consciousness of all things in God, and God in all things, which is the oldest message of all the mystics that we have in the Roman Catholic tradition. Eco-feminism does not patronize and call that equality. Eco-feminism does not enslave and call that God's will. Eco-feminism does not divide, and call that liberation; and it does not exclude, and call that the natural law. Eco-feminism brings humanity to wholeness, wholeness to religion, and integrity to a science, which having proved that there is no one species on earth that is the only one that counts, does, in that instance, give the lie to the anthropocentric to the andocentric, and to the oppression and invisibility in the public arena of women as well. Obviously, no matter what anybody else tries to get you to believe, eco-feminism is not rebellion; it's not religious infidelity; it's not male bashing; and it's not female narcissism. It is only the spiritual culmination that comes with the scientific awareness that life is not a ladder. Life is a weave of differences in concert.

The din of racism, the sin of genocide, the destruction of the globe, in the name of commerce, and the discord of sexism, however justified, however maintained, begins to pale, when as Christians, we begin to see Genesis 1, the stewardship story, forced to intersect with Genesis 2, the companionship story. When, in other words, we begin to tell the story of God, women and the world differently. It's an awareness that's deep in the human heart. This awareness of connectiveness is at the base of every major revolution. It's the climax of consciousness that fueled the democratic revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the emancipation and the suffrage movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the animal rights legislation of the 1990s, the rise of liberation theology, and the produrance over centuries of feminism itself. And it's crying out loud now for a new way of thinking and seeing. It's calling us to realize and to insist that autonomy is an illusion. We all need one another – that rationality is an insufficient measure of value – that women are no closer to nature than men, and men are no further removed from nature than women – that dominion is destructive of the self, and that the human is called to be cultivator of everything God called good.

We must begin to challenge the inhuman treatment of the non-human. We must refuse to see sexism as a theological given. We must see ourselves as part of nature, not outside of it. And we must begin to see God as in nature, even while above it as Trinity, as Sophia, as mystery,

rather than the kind of power that makes our misuse of power holy. Religion itself must take responsibility for our irresponsibility on this globe. We're here surely to become together, not to destroy one another. One day the Buddha was threatened with death on the road. First the Buddha said to the bandit "Sir, would you honor my last wish and cut the branch off that tree." "Well there," the bandit said, "whatever good you think it will do you now?" "That's correct," said the Buddha, "so would you please put it back on the tree again?" And the bandit said, "You must be crazy to think anyone can do that." "Oh no! On the contrary my friend," the Buddha said, "it is you who are crazy, if you think that you are mighty simply because you can wound and destroy. The mighty are those who spend their strength to create and to heal."

Saints do not see things others do not see. They see exactly what everyone else sees, but they see it differently. We – you and I – small people on the ground – must begin to see that domination is the way of the weak, no matter who attempts to lead us into it. Our world, our entire world, its yellows and blacks, its women and men, its plants and its animals, as well, all have need of empowerment now; and we must begin to see differently if we really want to be holy. We must begin, you and I, to put the tree of life back together again. Why? Because if we stay on the road we are on, we shall surely get where we are going. Why? Because the Zen master has warned us: the purpose of life is to see. Why? Because time changes nothing; people do. I've come here today to beg you, for the sake of the people, for the sake of the planet, for the sake of women everywhere, change something now for women. [Applause]

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