On the journey towards joint partnership

THE FALL/ *That Eve is responsible for the Fall is a view that is unlikely to be held by those more perceptive, men included.*

by John Valk

Ms. Hurley's response to my January 22 article reveals a clear anger, bitterness and frustration. With the same brush broad strokes are used to dismiss all men who embrace Chirstianity. There is not much room here for dialogue, just anger, accusation and vituperation.

Perhaps nothing I say will impress Ms. Hurley. So be it. Nonetheless, I do wish to make a few comments.

Ms. Hurley states that "of all the i*sms* mentioned, chauvinism, communism, materialism, hedonism and capitalism, Dr. Valk has chosen to speak against the least powerful and the least understood, feminism". A reading of even a few of my articles in *The Brunswickan* of the last five years will reveal that all the other *isms* have also not escaped my commentary.

Further, I do not speak *against* feminism, though I'm not surprised Ms. Hurley interpreted it that way. A careful reading of what I said will indicate that I asked for dialogue; a fruitful exchange of thoughts and ideas, of listening and speaking. In addition, my appreciation of feminism is, I think, somewhat greater than her appreciation of Christianity, the church and those who give it leadership.

Ms. Hurley appears to feel that the "standard popular understanding" represents some "gospel truth". But does it? For centuries after Copernicus, the populus continued to think the earth was flat. But was it? Those more enlightened and well-read knew otherwise, as do most today. That Eve is responsible for "the Fall" of the human race may indeed still be a "standard popular understanding". But is she? Such a view is unlikely to be held by those more perceptive and more academically inclined, men included.

The notion of a "stupid" Adam, rather than a solely temptress Eve, *does* indeed emerge from a feminist. But it is from a moderate feminist, who sensed, along side thta of many men, that responsibility for the "Fall" of the human race falls on *both* Adam and Eve (men and women). The notion that Adam and Eve operated *in concert*, to plunge humanity into chaos and distress rather than joy and celebration, is not new. That this notion has been affirmed and *developed* by (moderate) feminists speaks for itself, and is an advance in the discussion. Keen insight and academic precision are not the exclusive domain of men, nor muddled thinking that of women. Both genders are blessed, and burdened, with them equally, I would think.

No doubt "holiness, like power, has long been considered the exclusive perserve of the priesthood and clergy". But few, in my tradition at least, affirm that today. Clergypersons, male and female, are people, and hence as likely to be unholy as the next person. Thank God the pedestal has been smashed.

I am not anxious to support or defend the power of any gender group, male or female. Power positioning has no place with those who wish to follow the teachings of Chirst. Power ia a tool, often used to dominate, abuse and distort. That men have done this is obvious. That women are capable of the same is undeniable. Sin — abuse, oppression, intolerance, arrogance — infests both genders.

I am also not anxious to support or defend a church based on partriarchy. Neither am I excited about a church based on matriarchy, though the thought does intrigue me. The salvation of the church as an institution lies no more with women than it does with men. What does excite me, however, is a joint partnership: joint leadership and joint responsibiltiy.

It is in such a joint partnership, where equal opportunity prevails, that humans — men and women together — can more fruitfully become image bearers of God. No doubt we have a long way to go, and the feminist critique has greatly assisted in pointing all of us in a new direction. This, in my view, is just one more indication to all that if those who dominate positions of leadership do not listen, God "will raise up" new leaders. In other words, women *must* occupy more positions of leadership in the church, so there is fully a joint partnership.

That the church is not listening to the pain and frustration of women may indeed be the case with the Roman Catholic Church. It is not the case, however, with other churches. Most Protestant churches, as a rule, are not hierarchically controlled, nor do all have exclusively male clergy. Democratic representation, rather than hierarchical dictation, constitutes the decision-making process. In many of these churches women do become members of the clergy, and in some hold top administrative positions. Furthermore, inclusive language and gender balanced committees, boards and councils are increasingly the norm.

No doubt the situation is far from perfect in these churches, but the momentum is clearly there. There is no turning back. That such a situation is developing is to the credit of women who have worked from "the inside", and persuaded men that the church, as well as themselves, will be the better for it.

That the Catholic Church has not or will not move in that direction is unfortunate, especially for all those who feel it must. But a blanket condemnation then of *all* churches, and of Christianity itself, is not warranted. Perhaps a little time spent with some local non-Catholic churches might reveal to Ms. Hurley that the place of women in Christianity has indeed changed significantly. If Ms. Hurley finds the Catholic Church too frustrating on these issues, I invite her to journey with us in the Protestant sector of the Christian community.

It is not good enough to remain on the periphery, hurl aspersions at existing church institutions, and refuse to join with others. "We are called to give visible expression to our love for God and for each other. That is not always easy, but do it we must. And, a church by definition is not a building, an institution, a set of dogmas or doctrines. It is where "two or more are gathered in [Jesus'] name.

I am not sure where those who do not associate themselves with an existing church go to strengthen each other regarding love for God and for each other. Nor am I sure where they gather on a regular basis to support and encourage each other regarding ultimate meaning, value and prupose in life. Do they go to shopping malls, sporting events, social clubs, business gatherings and therapy groups?

In churches, many men and women, as broken, arrogant and impure as they may be, humble themselves to express ultimate allegiance to God and solidarity to-

Continued on page 10

The Wimmin's Room

In other words, you stink

DOUCHING/ *Television commercials tell wimmin that female odor is unnatural and it should be masked.*

by Liz A. Lautard

Who hasn't been sitting and watching t.v. with friends or family members and had the pleasure of watching a commercial about douching? Have you seen the one where the mother asks her daughter what's wrong? The daughter hesitates and the mother encourages her by saying: "Come on, I used to change your diapers." And she utters that infamous line: "Mom, sometimes I just don't feel fresh."

Well, let me tell you that's just what a wimmin needs to hear (not to mention everyone else in the room) to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or disgusted. Who are the people in these douching commercials? Are they for real? Do mothers and daughters actually talk like that? However, that's not what I want to discuss.

My problem is with douching and the message these douching commercials convey. Douching commercials tell wimmin that female odor is unnatural (not to mention disgusting) and that it should be masked, preferably with their product. In other words, you stink. Do something about it. The douching business makes a fortune around the erroneous belief that female odor is unpleasant. And selling you the solution to your (wimmins') problem: their douching product.

However, anyone who has taken a Human Sexuality course or talked to a doctor can tell you that the vagina cleanses itself. As well, soap and water is all that is necessary to keep the external genital area clean (even during one's menstrual cycle). Douching is not necessary! In fact if one douches too often one may increase one' chances of infection by disturbing the natural pH of its (vagina's) environment.

As well, douching is not a form of birth control. In fact, it may actually help the sperm reach the opening of the cervix easier. One should also remember when using a vaginal spermicide to wait an appropriate amount of time (six hours) following sexual intercourse before douching. Failing to do so may result in infection as douching will push the spermicide up further into the body. Finally, if one has an infection or a bacteria is present in the vagina, douching may help to push the infection or bacteria up further into the body. Therefore, any unusual or unpleasant odor should be checked out by one' doctor. If one douches and thus covers up an unpleasant odor, one may be delaying treatment for an infection.

Continued on page 10



