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AMPHIARCHY

I must first admit that 15 years ago when I became a member of the Literary Club I felt a little queasy about joining and supporting a club that was exclusively for men. I was comforted in that decision because my wife was involved at that time with several women's groups. I know some of you have had similar qualms.

John MacLeod, in his presidential paper on our club's 150th anniversary, seemed a little unsettled on this matter himself as he referenced two recent books, one on patriarchy, the other on feminist consciousness, and also a news article by member Alan Winkler on feminism in which Alan hoped his daughter would see its worth. He also mentions how Albert Pyle in his first paper was able to look at our gender battles and at least make us laugh, devil that he is.

Bruce Petrie was also mentioned for his delightful but fictional 1984 paper, "Mihaly's Motion" which centered on an actual motion before the club to admit the ladies. It didn't happen even in fiction. Actually, there is nothing in our constitution, or with our name, that excludes women members. Even so, I am not certain how I should vote if ever such a motion was properly before this club. But such uncertainty does not diminish at all my ease and fondness for the way things are in our fellowship.

With that said, I do feel a need this evening, to speak of that sex which our founders omitted. We all recall that Abigail Adams said to husband John, do "remember the ladies and do not put such unlimited powers into the hands of the husbands." Well, he lovingly laughed, "we know better than to repeal our masculine systems." His answer assured 144 years of masculine defiance before the constitution made it clear that sex was no barrier to the ballot box.

So let me proceed with a case for the ladies, since they don't have access to this podium.

My particular focus for their voice begins with a certain tea party, although I hesitate to elevate what that currently brings to mind. It occurred in 1848 within a year of our club's founding. Gathered for tea were four Quaker women, including Lucretia Mott, and one outsider, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton was a housewife and mother, reared in a strict Presbyterian congregation.

Stanton had met Lucretia Mott eight years earlier while Stanton was on her honeymoon in Europe and Mott was a delegate to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London. What was remarkable about that convention, which Stanton also attended, was that women, even though sent as delegates, were not allowed to participate in the deliberations. They were seated in the gallery and restricted to silence for the length of the convention.

Mott and Stanton, of course, were humiliated, especially by the clergy's arguments that women's voices would do harm to the abolitionist's world wide movement. But this event bonded the two women in their resolve that upon returning home to convene a convention that would address the unjust subordination of women by both the state and the church.

And so over tea, but a long eight years later, the women gathered, with Stanton pouring out her long list of grievances, comparing women's lot in life to slavery itself. The group decided immediately to call for a convention in order to "discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women." It would meet just ten days later, on July 19 & 20, at Seneca Falls, New York, in the Methodist Church.

Over three hundred men and women showed up for this very first convention ever held on behalf of women's rights. Many who came were already active in the abolitionist movement, but now the focus was on that devalued group that constituted half of the human population – women.

One might say the rest is history. But the woman's crusade is still not over, and some things about its beginning should not be forgotten.

The first day of the convention the women met alone. Their agenda was to discuss the "Declaration of Sentiments" a list of grievances largely written by Cady Stanton herself. The Declaration of Sentiments' opening line, patterned after the Declaration of Independence, was brilliant in its simplicity: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal."

Here is a summary of their grievances:

Married women have no independent legal standing before the law.

Women are not allowed to vote, but all have to obey the laws in which they had no voice.

Married women lose their property rights.

Most occupations are closed to them, but if employed they are paid a fraction of what men earn, and even that belongs to their husbands.

Juries to judge them are all men.

The professions such as law, medicine, theology, are not open to them, nor is higher education, for colleges and universities will not enroll them. Oberlin College was a recent notable exception.

Husbands have legal power over their wives and are able to discipline them with impunity.

Divorce laws and the custody of children favor men, with no rights to the mother.

As to morals, the women are held to a code of values, that of piety and purity, that men regularly disregard.

Men have assumed an arrogant lordship over women's will and behavior, forcing them to a life of servitude and dependency.

The churches, which women greatly attend and support, deny them leadership roles as deacons, elders, or clergy.

Single or widowed women with property face taxation without representation, the same injury that led to our revolution and the founding of our country.

Such were the conditions of women when our Literary Club was founded. Such inequities seem almost unimaginable to us today, except perhaps in Saudi Arabia.

On the second day of the convention men were invited in, with Mott's husband chosen as the moderator. It was still culturally unacceptable for a woman to convene any deliberative body that included both men and women. The grievances listed in the sentiments were stated again, and, based on them eleven resolutions were proposed and voted on.

All were passed unanimously except the ninth which demanded the woman's right to vote! The abolitionists felt that would be the kiss of death to their movement. Even Stanton's husband thought its proposal so radical he skipped the meeting so he would not have to face voting on this ninth resolution which was primarily championed by his wife. Even Mott cautioned Elizabeth, "Lizzie, thee will make us look ridiculous."

The motion for woman's suffrage seemed doomed, but Frederick Douglass, the only Afro-American at the convention, came to Stanton's defense. In his booming oratorical voice, he claimed that women, like slaves, had the right to liberty. And only through the vote will any other rights come about.

The resolution narrowly carried and, sure enough, it did bring out an avalanche of disgust and ridicule from the press and the pulpits around the country. The criticism was so severe that many of the 100 signers of the twelve resolutions would soon remove their names.

Still, the convention had not been ignored and Stanton relished in all of its notoriety. The leaders quickly decided to follow up with another meeting which led, in 1850, to the founding of the National Woman's Rights Convention. At this period in the movement, Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony began their amazing fifty years of collaboration.

Biographer Lori Ginzberg's describes this incredible couple. "Stanton was more intellectually courageous, had a remarkable fluency with writing, and was physically and intellectually exuberant; Anthony had a prodigious talent for organizational detail, strategic planning, and plain old hard work."

Stanton was indeed an intellectual giant but no one appreciated her mind or exploited that talent more than Anthony. They needed each other. Philosophically, Stanton would load the gun and Anthony would fire it off.

Anthony never married, except, as she said, to the cause of women's suffrage. Stanton was married to Henry Stanton but never let her high esteem of motherhood or the raising of children keep her from what she felt was her first calling - the liberation of women. Henry mostly kept out of her way and, conveniently his work as a journalist kept him on the road. He came home occasionally, thus Cady's seven children. But they really had different goals in life.

But Stanton had a life long partner in Anthony of whom she said, "In thought and sympathy we are one, and in the division of labor we exactly complemented each other...She (Susan) supplies the facts and statistics, I the philosophy and rhetoric, and together, we have made arguments that have stood unshaken through the storms of long years - arguments that no one has answered."

One notable difference in this wonderful relationship was that while Anthony never took her eyes from the goal of woman's suffrage, Stanton had a broader vision for women. She looked at everything patriarchy had robbed of women's worth and spoke out against it. Cady wrote in her diary, "Lucy (Stone) and Susan alike see suffrage only. They do not see woman's religious and social bondage."

"Stanton," writes Ginzberg, "was the first person to devote her considerable intellect solely to developing the philosophy and promoting the cause of woman's rights."

The National Woman's Rights Convention, with Anthony organizing it and Stanton presiding, would meet yearly with huge crowds for the next ten years leading up to the Civil War.

One of those years they met in Cincinnati in 1855 filling the Smith and Dixon Hall. Perhaps someone in the club did a paper on issues raised at that meeting.

The two of them also took to the road, developing local affiliates, addressing local and state agencies, and would speak wherever they could get a gathering. The stories of their travels across the United States as the evangelicals of women's suffrage are an inspiration in themselves.

I love the account when Cady Stanton was in Nebraska, when a man in the audience interrupted, declaring that his wife had borne him eight children, and wasn't that "a better life-work than that of exercising the right of suffrage?" Stanton slowly viewed him from

head to foot: and replied, "I have met few men, in my life, worth repeating eight times." I suppose that would be considered male bashing today but then it was just another blow for women's equity.

During the Civil War the Women's Rights movement set aside their annual meetings and formed the Women's National Loyalty League to work for the Union, for emancipation, and for the 13th Amendment which would end slavery. After these achievements, however, the women divided over the 15th Amendment that would give the vote to blacks but not women. Two suffrage groups were formed, one headed by Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony and it excluded men. They refused to support the 15th amendment feeling that to allow black suffrage to occur without women's suffrage was an obscene injustice.

The other group was led by the formidable Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe. Men were welcome and they supported the 15th Amendment. It was the less radical of the two groups. They remained separated for 24 years until merging together in 1890 as the National Woman's Suffrage Association, with Cady Stanton as President.

It was a little sad, but understandable, that Stanton, with her often single minded obstinacy, could not support black suffrage without women's suffrage. She would argue asking how could the uneducated blacks have a vote before such as herself and the other gifted women of her movement?

You may suspect by now that I admire Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but I certainly thought her to be wrong to oppose the 15th amendment, and her racist arguments to be most unfortunate. But Stanton felt sexism, as many felt with our last political contest, was more deeply ingrained in white males than racism. At her best, she knew both a form of evil.

Stanton, however, was quite close to many blacks and was a special friend to Frederick Douglas. Cady supported racially mixed marriages, including that of Douglas'. But her remarks deeply hurt him. What was marvelous is that Douglas did not denigrate in kind. When asked to respond to her remarks he offered a more transcendent spirit, "There is no name," he said, "greater than that of Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the matter of woman's rights and equal rights."

On July 4th and the 100th anniversary of our nation's founding Stanton and Anthony's American's suffrage group held a major convention which concluded with these words primarily of Stanton's pen:

"We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever."

Make no mistake; Stanton believed that men were the problem. She believed, with support of some anthropologists at that time, that there was a time in primitive history when woman reigned supreme. Such a society has not been proven but she claimed it

and termed that happy time the Matriarchy. It ended with the rise of Patriarchy which has been a long period of barbaric history.

At their convention in Washington soon after the awful Civil War she described the results of patriarchy in no uncertain terms: “The male element is a destructive force, stern, selfish, aggrandizing, loving war, violence, conquest, acquisition, breeding in the material and moral world alike discord, disorder, disease, and death. See what a record of blood and cruelty the pages of history reveal! Through what slavery, slaughter, and sacrifice, through what inquisitions and imprisonments, pains and persecutions, black codes and gloomy creeds, the soul of humanity has struggled for the centuries, while mercy has veiled her face and all hearts have been dead alike to love and hope.”

Yes, where was love and hope? The only recourse was to emerge into a new world order which she called the Amphiarchate, a social system which men and women rule as equals. If you look that word up you won't find it except as a reference to Stanton. It's not in the dictionary because it has never existed and that, she would say, is exactly the problem.

Stanton was true to her cause: not matriarchy, not patriarchy, but certainly, amphiarchy! And who can argue?

Early on in their suffragist movement, in an oblique reference to Jesus' parable of the badgering woman who effected justice only because the judge wanted to get rid of her, Stanton also stood her ground. “The great truth that no just government can be formed without the consent of the governed we shall echo and re-echo in the ears of the unjust judge, until by (our) continual coming we shall weary him.”

Well, Congress finally became weary, and with Tennessee's ratification, on August 18, 1920, the 19th amendment giving women the vote, was passed.

It took 72 long years of intense and courageous campaigning and yet we can hardly imagine a time when women were not as they are today. We were 27 years behind New Zealand in women's suffrage, but eight years before Great Britain, and a hell of a long way before Saudi Arabia which still allows no women's franchise or even their right to drive a car.

With the 19th Amendment, the women's franchise, the first wave of feminism had reached its peak. Two women's groups still active in our city surely identified with its results. Stanton and Anthony's suffrage association reconfigured itself into the very respectable and active League of Women Voters. And the Cincinnati's Women's City Club was organized in 1915 to push for women's suffrage, and continues to bring its voice into our city's public square. Both are housed at Mt Auburn Presbyterian Church, where I joyfully served until becoming its pastor emeritus. Cady Stanton, who gave up on Presbyterianism, would be pleasantly shocked at that.

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960's and we all have lived through it. It included:

President Kennedy convening a Commission on the Status of Women, naming Eleanor Roosevelt as its chairwoman.

Betty Friedan's 1963 publication of *The Feminine Mystique* depicting life beyond homemaking.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sex.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission began its watchdog work.

The National Organization for Women, (NOW) was founded.

And 1972, the Supreme Court in *Roe v Wade* gave back most of the control of a woman's body to the woman.

But this second wave of feminism was not enough to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. That amendment, which Alice Paul drafted back in 1923, simply stated, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

It took forty-nine years for Congress to pass it in 1972. But, unfortunately, it remains unratified, having fallen three states short.

Last month, columnist Ellen Goodman ended her forty year career covering the women's movement, and listed all of its achievements in the last four decades. One thing that bothered her was the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. Besides the fear that it meant unisex only toilets, it failed "because people were scared into believing that women could end up in combat. Now nearly a quarter-million women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, 120 have died, 650 wounded. But still no ERA." Her grade for the woman's movement up to now? An incomplete.

Goodman also posed a pertinent question for the women's movement: "Who will take care of the family?" She realized that question has not been successfully answered, but, I would add, that is not a question for women alone to address.

In a similar spirit, lawyer Wendy Williams asked "Do we want equality of the sexes – or do we want justice for two kinds of human beings who are fundamentally different?" These two questions will continue to shape the future of gender issues and they will demand deep, deep, thought.

There have been and will be dissenters to the woman's movement. And in fact, a gathering for a Seneca Falls type meeting for men will be held at Wayne College on Staten Island this April. The goal is to establish the first college Men's Studies Department to offset the hundreds that exist for women.

Regardless, the consensus is that we have now moved into the third wave of feminism, and it is an international movement. Gender issues in the United States today are still a concern, but they are not quite the life and death concerns as in other large parts of our world

In 1979, the United Nations approved CEDAW, acronym for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. CEDAW serves as an umbrella for a host of gender rights initiatives far more extensive than I can share in this paper. It is a great story, yet full of tragedy, because of the still too pervasive belief that women and girls are less important than males.

A conservative estimate is that three million women and girls (and a small number of boys) are presently enslaved in the sex trade. And other statistics are overwhelming as well of forced labor and prostitution, honor killings, female infanticide, mass rapes as weapons of war, needless maternal mortality, and genital cutting.

Unbelievably, in the last nine years, in just two of the cities in Pakistan, five thousand women and girls have been doused in kerosene and set alight by family members or in laws – or, perhaps worse, been seared with acid – for perceived indecent behavior.

It is estimated that 122 million women around the world are eager for contraceptives but can't get them. The result is millions of unplanned or unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, and wives contracting AIDS from unprotected sex with their husbands.

Misogyny continues to be the world's oldest prejudice.

As U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said, "Men must teach each other that real men do not violate or oppress women – and that a woman's place is not just in the home or the field, but in schools, and offices and boardrooms."

One aspect of this third wave of feminism has a religious component. Two recent news stories have highlighted it. One from The Elders, that eminent group of retired international leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela to share their aged experience. They recently published a position paper "Equality for Women and Girls". In it they bluntly assert that "we believe that the justification of discrimination against women and girls on grounds of religion or tradition, as if it were prescribed by a higher authority, is unacceptable."

A second news story is from Nicholas Kristof of the NY Times. He began his column last month asking, “Religions derive their power and popularity in part from the ethical compass they offer. So why do so many faiths help perpetuate something that most of us regard as profoundly unethical: the oppression of women?”

Kristof, with his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, have just published their new book, *Half the Sky, Turning Oppression Into Opportunity For Women Worldwide* a title gleamed from the Chinese Proverb, “Women hold up half the sky.” They describe, first hand, the injustices throughout the world against women as described above, much of it abetted by religious dogma. They document that in those cultures where women are marginalized, injustice, extremism, and terrorism are more likely to perpetuate. The emerging consensus for change is to educate and empower girls and women directly. If you want to read a book that personally and even handedly describes the life and death struggle for woman in the world today, as well as how to help, this would be the book. I believe George Clooney right. “It’s impossible to stand by and do nothing after reading *Half the Sky*.”

Many religious institutions are helping, but what would be most helpful is that they also look within and change their own gender discriminating practices.

Of course, religion has not been alone in the historical devaluation of women. We recall Aristotle’s view of women as a deformed male, an unfinished male. Plato thought women had no souls. Yet, in their long evolution, most all the major religions of the world have held views and practices that deem women less worthy than men and unfortunately some of these views are still embedded in their Sacred Scriptures.

Which is a good place to return to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, rightly called, “The founding philosopher of woman’s rights in America.”

Stanton was approaching 80 when she published *The Woman’s Bible*. It was not like what Jefferson did with the Bible. He dealt with just the New Testament and he simply cut and pasted, removing all the texts he deem erroneous or not up to the pure teachings of Jesus, which he loved.

Stanton’s Bible was a gutsy effort, to review all the pertinent passages in the entire Bible that dealt with women and re-interpret them through feminine eyes. To accomplish this novel effort she gathered 25 women willing to risk contributing their views, but, typically, Stanton herself wrote most of the commentaries.

The Woman’s Bible, which I just recently discovered and became the stimulus for this paper, sold well enough, but was highly denounced – by most of the clergy, of course, but also from many of the younger suffragists. With its publication, Cady’s own Suffrage Association, of which she was still its honorary president, voted 53 – 41 to declare they had no official connection to it. Susan B. Anthony pleaded against such a censure on but to no avail. That of course hurt Cady, but it was not enough to keep her silent.

Cady Stanton knew the Bible well, especially how it was used to justify the subordination of women. She felt that reading the Bible from a women's point of view would not diminish its great truths but, properly understood, actually enhance and elevate women.

Stanton begins by pointing out what is often overlooked that the Book of Genesis has two different accounts of the creation. That is because the book is an uneven compilation of four competing story tellers with different views.

She begins with the first account in Chapter I which clearly states: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female." There! Stanton exclaimed. It is clear we are all on equal footing. No one, male or female, is subordinate to the other. We are both fully made in the image of God.

As to the second account of creation, chapters 2 and 3, which describes woman created from Adam's rib; that woman was an after thought only created to keep Adam from being lonely; that Eve was the primary sinner; that women's punishment was forever to bear children in great pain; that the woman will always desire her husband, and must accept his rule over her - these thoughts, Stanton said, could not have come from "The Spirit of All Good" which was her favorite definition of God. Obviously they were only from some obscure Hebrew writer who hated women, erroneously believing males the superior sex.

But Cady was just as hard on the Christian scriptures pointing to such texts in the New Testament as:

The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband. I Cor. 11:3,

That women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is any thing they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. I Cor. 14: 34, 35

Cady pointed out the obvious errors in these texts and described how they were contrary to the spirit of Jesus who befriended women. She also pointed out that many women became Jesus' disciples and in the early church many became ministers, elders, and bishops until patriarchy rose up in the church.

Actually Cady, in her early teens, had a bad religious experience after listening to one of the more famous clergy of that day, Charles Finney. His preaching was so effective that she felt sure she was an immediate candidate for that bottomless pit in Hell. It took her months to recover and there after she would doubt those who declare the word of God, especially from male preachers. Yet, she studied religion and like to discuss it.

Once she was asked if she believed in reincarnation. She said it was appealing to her because it allowed her to hope that all those wicked Democrats in Congress who have opposed women's suffrage will return to the earth as women!

Cady's firm belief was that God was androgynous, equally male and female, and ought to be addressed in prayer as Father and Mother of us all.

Out of my own experience, let me inject how gender attitudes have changed the simple rite of marriage in the church. Although Cady Stanton shocked those in her day by refusing to say obey in her wedding vows, it would shock us even more if a woman today would declare such.

As for the question, 'If there is any reason why this man and this woman should not be joined in Holy Matrimony, let them now speak or forever hold their peace,' it simply is not asked. Marriage is indeed the decision of the two individuals and theirs alone – not the parents or not even God.

And hopefully no minister, priest, rabbi, or imam in our day would ask, 'Who gives this woman to be married to this man?' since it is the natural right of every woman to decide to whom she gives herself.

Stanton's next effort was to write her own biography, *Eighty Years and More* which she dedicated to Anthony, her "steadfast friend for a half of a century."

It is a delightful memoir written in her 84th year. She describes how her whole life seems to have pivoted around an event that happened when her only brother, having just graduated from college, came home to die. Gathered around the casket in their living room, her father seated in silent grief, Cady finally moved over to him, climbed in his lap to console him, but no words were said. She writes, "At length Father heaved a deep sigh and said: 'Oh, my daughter, I wish you were a boy! Throwing my arms about his neck, I replied: 'I will try to be all my brother was.'"

Of course, she determined then and there that she would be good, if not better, than any other man around – and that would be true.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a person who hardly felt incompetent. She firmly believed that self-development to be a higher duty than self-sacrifice. In one of her biblical commentaries she suggested when it came to self-sacrifice it was always the men who demanded it, but they were hardly great exponents of it themselves. She offered as example when men threw overboard the tea in Boston Harbor, which was the favorite drink, not of men, but of women. She wondered why they didn't throw tobacco and whiskey in the bay which were more heavily taxed than tea. The answer was obvious, she said.

It was not that she was in any way a more selfish person than most, and she certainly felt we must care for one another. But self-reliance, she claimed, was demanded of all. In her stoicism she believed a person needed to earn their merit and not claim it by heritage or special privilege.

Cady Stanton's own concern for gender equality was for a society where every person was seen as a total being, in and of themselves. As Joan of Arc declared facing the flames, "All that I am I will not deny," Stanton wanted women not be ashamed of themselves, to deny in any way their full humanity – equally made in God's image.

Stanton, along with Anthony and the other suffragettes of her generation, had arrived at the truth that a person's soul, or truth itself, or morality, or a person's natural worth had nothing to do with sex; that human virtues have no gender. Yet, it was their sex alone that kept them from exercising their whole being. They finally came to realize that only with the vote could they build by law a level playing field for both sexes – an amphiarchal society.

In reality Cady Stanton was a celebrant of life, and was always at the center of any social gathering. Her 80th birthday was held at the Metropolitan Opera House attended by all of the prominent suffragists from every part of the country. One newspaper called it the "Event of the Century". And one magazine was not entirely far off when they wrote she was "the greatest woman that the world has ever produced."

Because she was so outspoken, she was not as easily embraced as was Susan B. Anthony. But more recognition came several years after her death in 1903. There is a statue of Anthony, Mott, and Cady together in the capital, and a battleship was named after her in WWII, and the Episcopal Church has placed her on their all saints calendar, July 20th.

Concluding, I believe her greatest speech was called the "Solitude of Self" which she first delivered to the members of congress and to her own organization when she resigned as president.

"The strongest reason," she declared, "why we ask for woman a voice in the government under which she lives; in the religion she is asked to believe; equality in social life, where she is the chief factor; a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread, is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because, as an individual, she must rely on herself." "Who, I ask you, can take; dare take on himself the rights, the duties, the responsibilities of another human soul?"

Yes, who?

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, mother of seven, who lived an outrageous life in the most conventional way, who, according to her best collaborator Anthony, was also "one of the finest housekeepers" she ever knew, was in her own self a great story. But Stanton was more – she was the very heart and mind of a great liberation movement whose effect continues to this day

It has been said that the 19th century's moral challenge was that of slavery. And the 20th was the battle against totalitarianism. But now that the 21st is before us, and if shalom is to ever be possible, we must continue to work for gender equality and the natural rights of all persons around the world.

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