

society. Feminism, too, partakes, even if unawares, of this same cultural pattern in which the denunciation of systems of injustice, and their supporting ideologies, and the announcement of a new vision of liberation, and a historical project of change, are appropriated and applied to the issues of sexism, patriarchal ideologies of women's inferiority, and hopes and prospects for a new humanity of women and men liberated from gender hierarchy.

But this language of ethical struggle and judgment presupposes an alienated world in conflict between a distorted and evil present reality and a lost option pointing to an imagined future. By contrast, those "nature" religions suppressed by biblical religions and dubbed by them "pagan"... often seem to preserve elements of a mode of being where humanity and nature, body and mind, male and female, have not parted company, but remain in the dreaming innocence of an unfallen world. In those religions, the cycles of the seasons and the planets, the rhythms of the body, are the clues to harmonious relationship with ourselves, each other, and the world around us, and with the Great Mother who sustains us all. Harvest homes, winter and summer solstice celebrations, vernal and autumnal equinoxes, puberty and menopause rites, sustain a world where ritual harmonizes rather than dichotomizes the relationship to the reality in and around us.

A feminist liberation theology needs to be able to speak both words. Since patriarchy with its many forms and expressions of alienation and oppression, still very much shapes our minds and social systems, one cannot pretend to live in an innocent world of the childhood of humanity where all that is is good. One needs to engage in the struggle against evil and to have an ethical language for our denunciation and our hope. But one needs also those foretastes of unalienated life that allow us to enter into the promised land and to taste its presence. The feminist dialogue between biblical and pagan spiritualities seems to me to be seeking a way to bring those two modes of being into right relationship with each other. In so doing, it perhaps seeks to heal the most basic and ancient split of human culture and existence.

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#### Some Feminist Liberation Theologians

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#### Some Books on Feminist Liberation Theology

Letty M. Russell, *Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989)