

# THE NATURAL PRIORITY OF THE HUMAN MALE SUPERIORITY OF THE HUMAN FEMALE

or, I've Finally Figured Out the God-Intended Relationship Between the Sexes  
& Can't Wait to Share It With You

1 When women, who are naturally superior (as Ashley Montagu proved in a book more than 1/3 c. ago), take priority (in the sense of seizing the initiative), men become something women don't want, viz wimps. This commonplace observation reoccurred to me when Quayle said he'd be pro-choice vis-a-vis their daughter & Marilyn his woman (a.k.a. his wife) countered with a pro-life outburst. The country believes that if the daughter becomes pregnant, tough luck: she's stuck with (mama's phrase) "carrying to term." And the country chuckles at the latest emasculation, wimpification, of our Veep. Hoping to avoid this painful & pitiable syndrome, Clinton's Hillary--like Barbara Bush--bakes cookies (see one in the current NEWSWEEK): a competition in foregoing priority while practicing superiority.

2 Don't get me wrong! I thank God that women are showing more initiative, & don't think less of Bill or Hillary that she took the initiative in their relationship. Rather, I speak against hypertrophied female initiative, the woman's priority reducing her man to posteriority. We've been seeing a lot of this lately, partly as a swing from "patriarchal" male dominance, which is hypertrophied masculinity. The Good Lord deliver us from both!

3 All the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world that produced the NT taught that wives should be "subject" to their husbands. While the early Church accepted this negative, it put more energy into the positive: spouses are to "honor" each other both *kata physin* & *kata Christo* (according to both nature & Christ). Now that we know more biology-psychology-sociology, we can extend this Christian ethical principle of **honoring** in many directions. The principle becomes a critical tool for evaluating current concepts, such as:

(1) **Equality**. A legal concept of limited value when applied to the deeper reaches of human relationships in general & the sexual-commitment relationship in particular. Ironically, insisting on it in marriage pressures the marriage toward law, ie the divorce court.

(2) **Partnership**. Again, a concept of limited value in marriage, though scores of books since Betty Friedan's 1964 have striven to prove it adequate. (Among Christian authors, Letty Russell is prominent for promoting this point of view.) Partnership's essence is equality, & we're back to law--commercial law in this case, as financial partnership is the worldly model here: financial partners have equal standing before the law. But the image is of some use, & I've often described Loree & me as partners. The danger, as the danger with "equality," is in overreaching, applying the concept uncritically, as though it were an adequate description of the ideal marriage.

(3) **Mutuality** is a richer term, for it implies intimacy without confusions of identity. Hard, though, to say "We're mutuals"; makes us sound like insurance companies. But I use the adjective thereof in two ways:

(a) The mutual superiority of the sexes. It's a divine design, no doubt. Each sex is superior in some ways. But the implication seems to be that the two are equally superior, which returns us to square-one equality, with its noted problems. Further, the male's superiority--in musculature & aggressiveness--has become increasingly problematic for human-human & human-earth interactions. One aspect of this problematic is that males who've lost, or never had, priority are physically abusing females at a horrifyingly increasing rate.

(b) The mutual honoring of hormones. I've sometimes extended the Tenth Commandment to include "Thou shalt not covet thy spouse's hormones." Marital transvestitism: women wearing the pants (to use an outmoded but not entirely useless expression), men wearing the skirts. You might say "equality" is both wearing the pants & "partnership" is both wearing the skirts. In

this vein, "mutuality" is the joint discovery of the proper wardrobes of each: when in doubt, the pants on the husband (to honor his priority).

4 Because the gender-roles-debate ground has been so thoroughly trampled, anything anybody says about fe/male relations-responsibilities & masculine/feminine distinctions sounds platitudinous, repetitive, boring--or, if one is out of it, absurd. But you & I keep listening/reading in hope of hearing/seeing something fresh, something stimulative of a new P.O.V., a thought-road untraveled. Without that hope you'd probably not be reading this. I hope you're not disappointed. Please hang in & on. If I offer no new illumination, something I say may light some new lamp of the Lord in you, & you might enlighten me.

5 AN ANALOGY: Because I'm more impressed by Christians' unity in Christ than I am by our differences, the latter hold little interest for me, irritate me, bore me. Because we human beings are more similar than different, I prefer to relate to others through our common human unity (eg, that we all hurt & fear & love & hope) instead of accenting our differences of sex, gender-preference, gifts (abilities & propensities). I say this as a defensive corrective to anyone's overreading of this Thinksheet's title. But the Zeitgeist impels me to deal with the two current distorting exaggerations, viz (1) women & men are so different they can't understand each other, & (2) men & women are so much the same that they should all be treated as autonomous individuals with equal responsibilities & rights. Let's put the truth this way: the differences are profound though not fundamental. Since they're profound, we need to pin them with verbal flags such as "the mutual superiority of the sexes" or the bipartite phrase that's this Thinksheet's title. Again, please do not overread! If you don't like my flags, think long enough about them to replace them with better ones. Don't stop at rejecting mine; that would defeat my Thinksheet purpose, to get you to do your own thinking.

6 Another caveat: In human hierarchies, distinctions are directional. Bottom-up distinctions (made by underdogs) are experienced on top as *threatening*: top-down distinctions (made by topdogs) are experienced underneath as *oppressive*. Since I'm a white male, blacks tend to feel my black/white distinctions as oppressive & women tend to feel my fe/male, masculine/feminine distinctions as oppressive. This tempts me to say little about such distinctions, but my natural-born-&-reared garrulousness successfully resists the temptation. I call 'em as I see 'em, knowing that everybody's seeing needs corrective lenses. But sensitivities are now so high & public discourse on important issues so low that PCness (the social pressure to be, in speech & other behavior, "politically correct") forbids topdogs from saying anything mutually differentiating about their underdogs & encourages underdogs to howl against topdogs. Peter Drucker rightly calls this "an upsurge of tribalism." The result is a solipsistic multiculturalism in which everybody feels victimized & Jefferson's secular-political religion of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is becoming an ever weaker common American glue. Of his latest film, UNFORGIVEN, Clint Eastwood (2 Aug 92 PARADE) says "we're all victims." Ethnicity (eg, "African-American") is "offensive, making everybody else a scapegoat," all of us members of the "fall-guy generation." "We can move ahead, but not if we wallow in self-pity." It's worth giving some thought to how this spirit of suspicion, umbrage-taking, we-against-them is befouling wo/men relationships. "Can't we all get along" as males/females in play, study, work, sex, marriage, parenthood, friendship?

7 The Bible does not teach "the natural superiority of the human female," but it displays many women in situations in which they are clearly superior to the men on stage. One good thing about the current feminism is that it checks our former overlooking, or slighting, of these women. I think immediately of Abigail (& that great U.S. first lady, Abigail Adams), clearly superior in the situation to her husband Nabal & her husband-to-be David (1Sam.25). Did the biblical authors consciously exalt these as women, or was that only incidental in their minds? Good if the former, even more powerful a witness if the latter. (Some recent books may be overdoing the consciousness theme--eg, Andre LaCocque's THE FEMININE UNCONVENTIONAL: FOUR SUBVERSIVE FIGURES IN ISRAEL'S TRADITION [Fortress/90],

which claims that the Suzanna, Judith, Ruth, & Esther documents were protest literature objecting to women's second-class citizenship or, worse, status as disposable goods. Even if such books err as modernizations, they serve well for consciousness-raising.) (So far, I think, no book on the Bible's femme fatales, the man-destroyers--eg, Delilah's undoing of Sampson, Jael's murder of Sisera, Judith's murder of Holophernes, et al--yes, many in the postbiblical period.)

8 Radical feminism rejects, as captive to patriarchy, the drawing of feminine/masculine distinctions: the very project of this Thinksheet, according to this premise of nondifference, is false. From this premise one would think that this school of thought would try to construct an asexual **language world**, but such is not the case. Rather, these thinkers are at work on a sexual-alterative discourse which some of them call thealogy (Goddess talk). This is construed as permanently or transitionally the priority of the female by some, but more of them stop at the aggressivity equality of the female.

The project, in any case, is radically flawed. (1) Since when the boys did their thing the girls were degraded, how will the boys not be degraded when the girls do their thing? The obverse of patriarchy may be an antithesis toward a synthesis, but the literature is not encouraging on this point. (2) Can we really believe that the creation of an alternative language-world will improve fe/male relations instead of only installing one more wall between the sexes? (3) The history of attempts to construct new language-worlds is dismal. The French Revolution's Goddess of Reason replacing the Notre Dame crucifix + the thoroughgoing rationalism of the Diderot ENCYCLOPEDIA led to a mere bloodbath of the old & a new, more oppressive despotism. The Marxist language-world promised progress through a revolution of consciousness by a new vocabulary, but produced regress.

But radical-feminist thinkers are hard at work & are helpful in providing a discourse-position (as Stokeley Carmichael did vis-a-vis M.L.King). I'll mention one of them, Mary McClintock Fulkerson of Duke Div.Sch. Building mainly on male philosophers & theologians, her "Sexism as Original Sin: Developing a Theocentric Discourse" (JAAR Winter/91) complains that the male language-world makes "sin discourse depict reality as needy, harmed, and only repaired by a relation with God" (659). Sin to Niebuhr is the pride/anxiety that produces "a constructive refusal of theocentric dependence." But (here she follows Valerie Saiving) "women manifest the deconstructive aspects of sin and rarely its constructive and aggrandizing expression"--so traditional theological discourse on sin is not universal, not generic, but rather "exacts a social cost, the selfhood of women. Feminist discourse about sin in the work of Daly and Reuther builds on these insights" (660). All true, so far. In this Thinksheet's vocabulary, the historical-theological priority of the male now needs psychological-sociological-theological corrective from the feminine side. Corrective, not replacement: that is the point of my opposition to radical feminism.

How does Fulkerson press on out into radical feminism? Her insistence on building a feminist language-world leaves her exposed to the slide Mary Daly took down from traditional + feminist (which F. calls "theo/a-centric") to gynocentric projects clear out of Christianity, & the forming of a new religion around her. Discourse, said Foucault, is constitutive of community. The social denouement of radical feminism, willed or not, is a new religion-&-community, alienated from the language-world (& thus community, church) against which it progressively reacted. Every language-world has essential signifiers the loss of which results in the loss of the language-world. Eg, in Christianity "Father" (as Jesus' central signifier for God) & "Lord" (the early church's central signifier for Jesus) are essential signifiers --& their loss, which is far advanced in some church circles, will lead either to a conversion of churches out of Christianity or to the formation by the language deviants of a new religion, or at least a new "church." I am deeply concerned that so many "inclusive-language" fans are naively unaware of this slippery slope.

Reformation, yes; revolution, no. And God grant that his people become aware of the difference between growing in awareness & conforming to "the world" (Ro.12.2).

9 How is "**patriarchy**" related to the natural priority of the human male? At

the minimum, the two are identical. But hypertrophied patriarchy is male tyranny over the female, reinforced by the quasi-divinizing of maleness (cp. the macho traditions rightly now under heavy fire in the U.S. military). The natural superiority of the human female should carry an authority to be as honored as the natural priority of the human male, & the creative intermeshing of the two comes close to being the definition of a good marriage. Elements of such marriage are scattered throughout Scripture. And the divine patriarchy in the Bible combines the best of both: "the divine initiative" correlates with male priority, & "God is love" correlates with female authority.

But celibate RC sister Mary Daly, in her classic BEYOND GOD THE FATHER (written before she abandoned the Faith & the Church), will have none of patriarchy. And since she was convinced that Christianity is essentially patriarchal, her logic soon drove her to have none of Christianity. While I accept her minor premise, I reject her major. The fact that the Bible is patriarchal is, I believe, to be worked with rather than around; trying to work around it, ie to desexize or androgynize, would produce such a bowdlerizing rewrite as soon would become an archival curiosum. But the attempt is being made by some who, though in a trough of single-issue myopia, imagine they're riding a wave of the future.

10 While the Bible honors a number of women who seized the initiative, it is generally doubly patriarchal, assuming male initiative in continuity with the divine initiative. This priority, like the chosenness of "the chosen people," is one of responsibility-accountability, not one of privilege. But is this priority natural (as I think) or cultural (as radical feminism claims)? History weighs in on the side of the former, but is that because of global male dominance throughout history (as say radical feminist historians who claim Goddess-women dominance in prehistory)? Male dominance throughout history argues for male priority, & it takes clever mythizing to counter with prehistoric female dominance. Genetics to the rescue? Dawkins' THE SELFISH GENE hypothesizes a headstrong male gene & a cautious female gene. Caution preserves the headstrong to fight again another day; & the headstrong innovates, risking ridicule & even life itself, thus producing processes-tools-products that enrich & preserve & promote human being & well-being. (The radical-feminist counter-argument that men have kept women from innovating holds some, but little, water.)....ROWING analogy: The (male) stroke moves the boat forward, but the (female) return-rest makes the next stroke possible. Since humanity is the rower, it's silly to argue that the stroke is more important than the return-rest, or vice versa. Of course sometimes the woman is the stroke: what a great PM Meg Thatcher made! And the first female president of the U.S. will be among the handful of great presidents. Commonsense & the gospel are for the discovery & release, regardless of gender or any other factor, of the gifts (genes, hormones, et al) God has given each human being. That should be the fundamental organizing principle for church & state, education & work.

11 So we've arrived at a formula: Male priority **without dominance** over women, female superiority **without subordination to or domination over** men. If on first reading of this Thinksheet's title you thought its two assertions offensive &/or absurd, I hope you can see now how nuancedly, how specially, I'm using both "priority" & "superiority." I'm not trying to be overnice: the reality is, I believe, as complex as the formula. ("Formula": a compressed symbolic expression of a fundamental truth, principle, reality.)

12 I've been blessed & cursed by feminism. The curse is in its excesses. One of those excesses is the false guilt in many hearts, female & male, over the Bible's masculine priority. When I proposed that the new UCC hymnal be titled DAVID'S HARP, someone cried "Sexist!" But "David" means psalm-song-music (as "in David" [Heb.4.7], trd. in REB as "the Psalms"). All the Bible's personal symbols are male: Adam = humanity, Abraham = faith (but see, in TEV fn. of Heb.11.11, that Sarah also had faith, which made her "able to conceive"), Moses = torah (teaching, law), Joshua = conquest, David (as we've seen), Solomon = wisdom, Elijah = prophecy, Jesus = salvation, etc. A few biblical women are

credited with hymns, but "David" *means* hymnody! Anyone offended by a man's symbolizing hymnody may also be offended by a man's symbolizing salvation, & indeed some do try to play Jesus down in doing their theology....I've told this story of DAVID'S HARP to show to what ridiculous lengths of oversensitivity excessive feminism has taken us.....I still hope DAVID'S HARP "plays" as our hymnal title.

13 I've related male priority to the androgens' greater aggressivity than that of the estrogens, but an allied fact is that the androgens produce a stronger **musculature**. In some of her books & articles on feminism, Rosemary Radford Reuther deals with the superior male muscular strength in extenso. (The Olympics are on, & I remember that four years ago the East German women took 13 of the 15 swimming prizes because they'd been so shot with androgens that their muscles bulged out & they grew beards [which, of course, they kept shaved].) Her account goes something like this. Male/female relationality became distorted when male group-egoism saw the female group as "other," therefore threatening, therefore to be controlled by protective oppressions (ie, oppressions protecting men). Only the male group was capable of inflicting its form of threatened selfhood. The male self became objectified, in line with the male body's superior force-potential. Culture, including language, became male-dominated, & further dualisms & hierarchies appeared. Instability-fallibility is the human potential for sin, & sexism was an inauthentic way of providing males with relative stability in freedom from bondage while holding women & children in bondage. Sexism corrupted males with constructive idolatry & females with deconstructive idolatry....This account of the origin of original sin is a very modern myth mixing physiology, psychology (the insecure ego), & sociological scapegoating.

Curiously, unlike the Bible, Reuther finds the origin of sin in the corruption of gender relations. Adam & Eve, by contrast, aren't having any gender problems in the Fall (Gn.3). All the radical-feminists' antisexist myths making sin-sexism universal & pervasive are so factually thin as to make them believable only by those otherwise radicalized in feminism. Against such mythizing, Fulkerson (673) proposes "a new universal, the genderization of fallibility," "a new feminist term which marks off sexuality as a danger zone" for sin.

I have never heard/read any feminist's raising of the question of what God had in mind in making the male musculature capable of greater short-term force or the female musculature capable of greater endurance (long-term force). And I've often encountered resentment, even the smell of misandry (yes, the antonym of misogyny) & envy, against the male musculature, almost as though the very use thereof were in itself sinful. Indeed, discourse on "sexism" tends to obscure physiological differences &, to that extent, to be unreal & even dishonest. It's because of this character of "sexism" discourse that such a phrase as "the natural priority of the human male" seems so offensive.

Given the technological decline in the need for muscle-power, what if anything is left of the natural priority of the human male? Is the male's psychic need to lead in any way(s) independent of society's decreasing need of his muscles to protect & control women & children? Too early to tell. While social evolution may produce partnership males (without the need to lead women & children), we know that presentday males function poorly if this need is not respected: they become either violent (misusing their superior musculature) or absent (withdrawing from situations in which they feel unneeded & thus humiliated). My view includes some hormonal determinism: unhonored hormones take vengeance on society. They are one aspect of the "daemon" (in Goethe's sense: the individual's unique, inborn, developmental, biopsychospiritual force, which is one of Goethe's five basic elements in human destiny--the others being chance, love, necessity, & hope).

What's all this got to do with biblical religion? When you worship the Lord your God "with all your mind," you study how God is dis/honored through his creatures, & you set yourself for what honors the creature (body-soul-spirit-society) & against what dishonors the creature--both actions to the praise of the Redeemer-Creator. The Savior delivers us from abuse of ourselves, one another, society, & the biosphere. We sin, but God eagerly awaits to make our repentance effectual.



14 In this Thinksheet's title, "**natural**" is not a hunting license. Female superiority & male priority are natural, but not sacred. Behavior on either basis may be wrong, even pathological. The male lead in "Raisin in the Sun" is disastrously wrong in seizing the initiative. The central character in MOLL FLANDERS wickedly, then obsessively, outwits her men--& the fact that her first man raped her tempers the reader's sense of guilt in enjoying her flaunting of her superiority. **Hypertrophy** is the chief psychosexual pathology of both male & female. Each sex uses its distinctive powers to take sinful advantage of the other sex. It's two sexismes, not one--just as there're two racismes, white & black. (But of course underdogs claim that only topdogs are guilty of isms. This blaming claim lets underdogs feel righteous, thus deferring or at least distorting dialog. Yes, I do intend to imply there're some crossover values between the battle of the races & the battle of the sexes.)

15 Your skin will suffer if you overdo scratching an itch. Society suffers when on any front **supersensitivity** subverts rationality. Some schools are so afraid some students will be offended by free speech that they've enacted speech-restricting codes & are in jeopardy for civil-rights violations. The current polite ideal is multicultural offenselessness, mandated by punishments because administrations do not trust the normal social sanctions to work. "The politics of sensitivity" Chas. Sykes calls it in his A NATION OF VICTIMS (St.Martin's/92; summarized in July/92 IMPRIMIS as "The Politics of Sensitivity": not Big Brother but Big Nanny). The shift from suffering wrongs (a biblical virtue of cruciform living) to shouting rights. And since while the residence of the wronging is in the wronger but the residence of the rights is in the individual-&-group ego, almost everybody's become so thin-skinned that one touch & they bleed. No wonder we're suffering from the false gospel of no-touch: sin is saying anything anybody might find offensive. I can't play that game: I'm true-gospel committed to honest speech in search of solutions inoffensive to reality. No great courage there: I'm out of reach of institutions that could punish my free mouth....A few quotes from Sykes' article: PC is one form of "the larger transformation of society reflected in the ascendancy of psychological over political terminology": "taste, feelings and emotions are paramount." Our therapeutic culture is now developing "therapeutic politics," in which moral, ethical, & religious questions are replaced by medical questions assuming sinless sickness & legal questions allowing for "the endless elaboration of grievance and psychological fragility." Injustice becomes primarily a subjective experience, so "each group is trapped within its own experience and sense of aggrievement," & ethnic groups are "balkanized" (yugoslavized). Outsiders' criticisms are read as "disrespect and (of course) insensitivity," so society develops into (Leon Botstein) a "culture of forbidden questions." "The fear of hurt has trumped the search for truth." The sensitivity revolution has gone so far that (Harv.prof.H.Mansfield) "white students must admit their guilt so that minority students do not have to admit their incapacity." Proscribed attitudes: "ageism" (oppression of young & old by the middle aged), "ableism" ("o. of the differently abled by the temporarily abled"), "lookism" (o. by "a standard of beauty/attractiveness"). Guidelines to nonsexist language: "kingpin" to "key person," eg. "Sensitivity" has metastasized from behavior to attitudes, a new "totalitarianism, the effort to control not only the behavior of citizens, but the thoughts and feelings of persons" (says black prof. Julius Lester). As has racism, sexism has metastasized--or I'd not be jumped-dumped on for suggesting "David's Harp." Totalitarianism breeds terror, & many a liberal-church pastor is in terror of verbal slips such as refering to God as "he." (It's painful for me to hear such creatures preach, after making a pitiable mess of the lections as they try to clean up the Bible. Wanting to appear wise & with it, they come across as wimps. And not all of such are male. Sentimentalists, they flinch not at sacrificing truth, & the integrity of text, to "love," "caring," "equality," yes "sensitivity.")

16 In this sick new politics of **oppressorism/victimism** (two new isms!), the inner-directed gyroscope is replaced by outer-directed emotional radar, says David Riesman. The dogma forbids me, as male, to mention "the natural priority of the human male." As you have seen, I listen to a different drum.