

# The renewal of CURIOSITY

Neither of these pages was written for publication, but on second thought....

This page is an email conversation about an email somebody sent me (showing sunlight shining in Latin-cross form behind a U.S. flag) & I emailed to our Andover-Newton-graduate son.

The other page is a note to our Tuesday-morning theology group, on a subject somebody (not I) brought up at the most recent session.

----- Original Message -----

**From:** OrBambooFlooring@cs.com

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**Sent:** Saturday, January 11, 2003 10:54 PM

**Subject:** Re: Fw: interesting

Yes, this photo is interesting. However, does it signify that the only true Americans are also Christian. Does it signify anything? Does it mean that those not Christian are evil? Does it mean that the good guys wear white hats and the bad guys black hats. Come on, now!

Willis Elliott III

Right on, Bill!

You segue from "'Does it *signify*...?" to "Does it *mean*...?"

If it didn't signify, it wouldn't be significant. To the person who posted the pic to us, it was significant as a sign of Christ, precisely as Constantine experienced his *In hoc signo vincet* ("By this [Cross of Christ] sign, conquer!") vision (& as consequences took Rome & eliminated crucifixion as [we'd now say] "cruel and unusual punishment").

To the *believer*, your two questions are one, i.e. synonymous.

The *unbeliever* answers yes to the first question (the sign being intrapsychic-psychological fact), & no to the second (the sign having no extrapsychic-objective facticity, actuality; & the believer's claim is only an instance of faction [i.e., fiction misperceived as fact]).

The *critic* says yes to the first question & maybe to the second. The payoff for this **openmindedness** about the second question is superior to the payoff for the unbeliever's closure. At the U. of Hawaii, I tried help my unbelieving students to advance into becoming critics, the intermediate position, which not only allows for but insists on intellectual-&-religious openness (the former necessary for progress in science, the latter for progress in personal & social religion).

Thanks, Bill, for your response. I love to hear from your heart & mind.

1.12.03

Love, grace, peace--  
Dad

Q: Aren't feminists right that men have oppressed women throughout history?

A: Controlled, using their God-given superior musculature. Fallen, males overcontrolled females--the hubris of oppression.

Q: Is it right, proper, that men have controlled women?

A: If wrong, what did God have in mind in giving males superior musculature (which female Bengal tigers have, & so control the males)?

Q: If patriarchy is wrong & the Bible is patriarchal, is not the Bible thereon wrong?

A: Egalitarians claim that patriarchy is wrong, but there's no objective evidence either that patriarchy is wrong or that egalitarianism is right.

Q: If patriarchy in heaven ("Our Father, who art in heaven") is a projection of earthly patriarchy (as Feuerbachians say), should we not question the use of masculine titles for God?

A: There's no objective evidence that patriarchy on earth is not a *downward* projection (i.e., revelation) of patriarchy in heaven. The chief ploy of Enlightenment radical autonomism (viz., that the human individual is radically free) is to declare every impediment thereto a "social construct." (I'm trying to convert a born atheist, who claims that theism itself is a social construct: the God-idea is an insult to the autonomous self.)

Q: Could not God have incarnated Godself (ugly neologism!) as a woman? Rightly, the Bible takes a dim view of religious speculations, philosophical fantasies. Please stay on the subject, which is God's self-incarnation only as a male--making the Christian religion, in the eyes of radical feminism, the worst religion; & in the eyes of less radical feminists, the world's most embarrassing religion, for which apologies must be made & allowances pleaded for (largely on the basis that Christianity is, among the world's religions, the best news for women).

Q: Since "wisdom" (in the biblical languages: Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek) is a feminine noun, & the wisdom literature of Jews & Christians plays with / extrapolates from this objective language-fact, isn't it proper to see feminine & masculine as equal in God?

A: The Bible aggressively attacks this idea, the normal god/goddess paradigm of ancient Near-Middle Eastern religion. The feminine is consistently inferior. Eve is an afterthought, since Adam wasn't satisfied to be related only to God & his fellow-creatures. In the wisdom literature of Kethuvim (the 3rd section of the OT, + apocrypha & pseudepigrapha), wisdom is a (feminine) creature of God, who in the Bible is consistently masculine in personal titles & in pronouns. The Bible is a rich jungle of logically inconsistent images/ideas: the fact that it's absolutely consistent in its (always-&-only masculine-personal) language for God should raise the question, Why the (rare) consistency in this instance?

Q: Does the Bible, then, teach that God is ontologically masculine?

A: Absolutely not. Our ideas/images/philosophies/theologies/cosmologies are earth-bound: God's thoughts are "higher" (Isa.55.9). The larger the island of our meanings, the longer the coastline of our ignorance, the greater the sea of mystery. God's masculinity is ontology #2: ontology #1 is "God beyond God" (Tillich).

Q: Since the Advent Antiphons ("O"s) converge images of Jesus, who is (in the creeds) "begotten, not made," cannot the same be said for wisdom?

A: Only liturgically (as in Advent usage) & devotionally: theologically, wisdom in no foundational text of our religion is "begotten, not made."

Q: Are we not free to "re-imagine deity," new occasions teaching new duties?

A: Of course! But not within the Christian religion, which is both a culture product & a divine revelation. The earliest Christians thought they could incorporate Jesus into deity & remain Jews, but they were soon "aposynagagōs" (rightly, thrown out of the synagogues). Language feminists will gradually leave the Christian religion, as Unitarians have. (It's unchristian to give deviants enough rope to hang themselves.)

Redesigning ("re-imagining") the biblical deity (e.g., by demasculinization [e.g., by eliminating personal pronouns]) is a futureless, cultural-conformist effort to evade "the scandal of particularity."