

A woman ought to know her place & stay in it; so should a man his. Where then is freedom? (1) In loving **abiding in God**, seeking & finding one's place now & again through him; & (2)

In refusing priority to one's particular society's gender-assignments, which fail to see the individual (who, male or female, has both feminine & masculine gifts). Abiding in God, i.e., devotion, is the Christian criterion for self-definition, social participation, & intellectual formation.

TITLE: I mean "secret" in three senses: (1) Devotion-love **within** the Trinity, the agapeic coinherence of Father, Son, & Holy Spirit; (2) Creation-love, the divine love bodying itself forth through wisdom in "the world" (the universe), & thus devotion-love (divine self-giving, supremely in-through Jesus) **from** the Trinity; & (3) Christians' devotion-love **for** the Trinity. Christian intellectual formation, the making of the Christian mind, is "devotional" in all three senses--as also is theology, which is the Christian mind systematically thinking about thinking Christianly.

OCCASION: Having been, for many long years, of the views expressed above, I am alienated by much current writing claiming to be both Christian (but lacking Christian devotion as defined above) & theological (but lacking continuous indwelling in the historic Christian mind).

As I look toward, & prepare for, Craigville Theological Colloquy XII (July 17-21, "The Baptismal Formula: Father, Son, Holy Spirit?"), I've been reading a lot of & on feminist theology. Feminist of some sort, of course; but theology? Rather, most of it fits better into other disciplines (philosophy of religion, anthropology, sociology, political science). The usual Anfangspunkt (ground & starting-point) is not **revelation** (God's self-unveiling through the prophets & the Son [Hebrews 1.1-2]), continuing in the development of the Christian mind with devotion to Deus Revelatus (God as Revealed, including the Trinity) but rather **women's experience** understood as human experience exclusive of men's experience (a shifty & shifting concept unless it means only what female bodies experience that male bodies don't--a reduced meaning for which biologists are adequate & theologians unnecessary).

As third-wave American feminism both becomes a new-religion pool & subsides into eddies, some Christian theologians are beginning to produce appreciative-critical responses to it--appreciative of the gains & critical of the unnecessary losses. Eerdmans has published two useful works here: (1) SPEAKING THE CHRISTIAN GOD: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism (ed. by Alvin F. Kimel, Jr.; 1992), & (2) Francis Martin's THE FEMINIST QUESTION: Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition (1994). The former, an anthology, I've treated of previously; the latter, by a Dominican priest, is of a mind so similar to my own in content, yet so different in form, as to tempt me to let this Thinksheet exceed one sheet. On its cover, theologian Geo. Lindbeck well says, "The most comprehensive evaluation of Christian feminism so far published...Indispensable for those who want to be *au courant* on perhaps the most vital debate in contemporary Christianity." Page references are to Martin.

1 The experience of being a male or a female is peripheral to the experience of being a human being--peripheral, & essential only in the sense that we come in two modes, viz. as a girl or a boy. If males died but females didn't, or if females drank but males ate, now that would be a significant difference. But the truth is that we're all born, we all eat & drink & die: basic human experience transcends the bifurcal experience of eitherness, either female or male. What saves my statement from banality is the fact that feminist polemic so polarizes the sexes as to convey the impression that society's (& history's!) central dynamic is a **power struggle** between the girls (who, the myth goes, had the power in the Goddess Golden Age) & the boys (who've "oppressed" the girls for all the millennia within memory): the category "basic human experience" almost disappears from view, though it's the category that the Christian mind from the Bible onward has been almost exclusively concerned with under God.

2 Cognate with polemic feminism's underplaying of the basic-human-experience category is the overplaying of recorded history's "androcentrism." The plain truth, which we boys have always known, is that the girls are notoriously difficult to keep under control, & impossible at the points of their superiority. Current instance: Bangladesh mullahs are failing at mother-control. In that & most other third-world countries, women who get money spend it on children & education; men who get money spend it on themselves; foreign aid given to governments (male-controlled) is spent to stroke the male ego both individual & collective, but foreign aid given to NGOs (in many of which women's voice is stronger than men's) is spent on constructive projects of lasting value to the whole society; & it is women, not men, who are forming the small rural banks now converting peasants into cottage capitalists. Result? The wife-mother is the de facto HH (head of the household), & the mullahs continue to preach that the husband-father, the Quranic de jure HH, should be the de facto HH (the proven inferior should manage the proven superior!).

Conclusion? U.S. foreign aid should figure out how to bypass the men & get the money to the women. I put it that starkly not as a feminist but as a pragmatist: feminism is prescriptive, pragmatism is **corrective**. And both sexism (presumptive male superiority) & polemic feminism (presumptive female superiority) are antipragmatic ideologies, impedences to more humane behavior. Thank God for third-wave feminism, for sexism needed--& continues to need--confrontation by women & men in the name of justice, love, & hope for a better society & world. But we have the devil to thank for the hubris of an ultrafeminism as sinful on its side as sexism is on its.

3 As sexism correlates with misogyny (antipathy to women), so ultrafeminism with misandry (antipathy to men). Ultrafeminism disallows not just the excessive patriarchy of sexism but patriarchy itself (though patriarchy is a social expression of the male-hormonal, androgenic drive); & it directs its animus also at the Patriarch of heaven, the Heaven-Father, whom the Bible never addresses as "it" or "she" but always as "he." Though every human being has both female & male hormones, most leaders will be men (men having more androgens) & most nurturers will be women (women having more estrogens). The ultrafeminist dogma that nurturing/leading are culturally rather than hormonally determined violates biology to favor power-equality. As ultrafeminism's horizontal projects fail, so will its effort to demasculinize God.

4 The Christian vision of God puts love, not power, at the center (e.g., M.10; & the Cross). This models for the husband, who is to lead in love, not power (347-59). Martin touches on all the relevant passages in the NT "Paul" books; 357: "There is still an order in marriage, but it has been transformed to be centered now on the well-being of the wife, just as Christ's care is for the church, his body. Because of Christ (the new Adam) and his bride (the church), every Christian man [sic] and wife are enabled to recover God's plan for Adam and Eve."

Two characteristics of Martin show themselves here: (1) Male abuse of power has subverted love & made marriage a battlefield, & feminism was & is needed to expose this oppression (though much feminism fails to transpose from power to love, i.e., to go beyond adversariality); & (2) The biblical analogies (here Christ/church, husband/wife) are not free-floating, disposable-replaceable metaphors but participate in revelation, have a privileged revelational status (at radical odds with Sallie McFague & her multitudinous ultrafeminists followers). (In the Trinity, Father/Son are not arbitrary domestic metaphors but revealed homologous Names.)

5 In the early development of Christian theology, women played a far more important role than the written records, which are almost exclusively as the "church fathers," would lead the ordinary reader to believe. Then, till late in the middle ages, nunneries as well as monasteries were centers of learning. But when in the late 12th c. the universities began to appear, & increasingly took over from the monasteries & convents as primary intellectual centers, women's access to intellectual life was greatly reduced. The university's sociomodel was the order of knights (all male), & personnel (administration, teachers, students) were clergy (again, all male). The consequences were horrendous, a series of **splits**: women split from men, contemplation from intellection, theology from philosophy, heart from head, worship

from study, grace from nature, faith from reason, devotion from doctrine, piety from what's now being called "secular humanism." The music of the medieval synthesis had degenerated into a cacophany continuing to this day.

6 This splitting of women off from intellectual life deprived both, widened the distance between clergy & laity, distorted female/male relations, created an artificial gulf between public & private life, & oppressed women by restricting their activities to much the smaller (the private) sphere. How women were deprived is easy to see. Not so easy to see is how intellectual life was deprived--my special concern, how theology was deprived of what women could have contributed.

7 Following the late middle ages, the Enlightenment exacerbated the faith/reason alienation (e.g., the placing of the Goddess of Reason on the altar of Paris' "Our Lady" cathedral, 1789) & restored the pagan (pre-Christian) Greek denigration of women. Note: The modern (i.e., Enlightenment) age was bad news for both faith & women. (One inference I draw from this is that potentially, what's good news for women will be also good news for faith, & vice versa.)

8 The earliest American universities sprang up to create home-grown (not-oldcountry-educated) clergy: reason in the service of faith. But Harvard & the others were soon subverted by the European-university model of reason split off from faith. So America tried again: we created a new type of educational institution, the theological seminary, with reason in the service of faith. But these seminaries increasingly aped the higher-status universities, now dedicated as they were to Enlightenment (rational-critical) style of the increase of knowledge. Several of these seminaries actually became universities: the University of Chicago (whose Latin motto means "As knowledge increases, life unfolds"!) had its roots in the Chicago Baptist Seminary. Next: As the seminaries assimilated to the university mind, new seminaries came into being to return theological education to reason-in-the-service-of-faith (& I taught in four of these, as well as in colleges & universities).

But in many directions, things have not been going well of late for the Enlightenment & its spawn, including the industrial revolution (which changed towns into high-drive, male-dominated cities): modernism has been yielding to postmodernism (a grabbag term for disappointments with, & efforts to get beyond, modernism, including modernism's suppression of faith in favor of reason). Some hopes, now, that we'll achieve a new synthesis, a healing of the splits. One solid piece of good news is that intellectual life is once again fully open to women, who are now very much present (in administration & as teachers & students) in higher education (colleges, universities, seminaries, graduate schools, technical schools).

In 1850, Tennyson began his longest poem, "In Memoriam," with a hopeful prayer to Jesus: "Strong Son of God, immortal Love, / Whom we, that have not seen thy face, / By faith, and faith alone, embrace, / Believing where we cannot prove." Faith over reason, revolt against the Enlightenment. And Christian submission: "Our wills are ours, we know not how; / Our wills are ours, to make them thine." And cultural transcendence: "Our little systems have their day." But then, concession to the Enlightenment's faith/knowledge split: "We have but faith: we cannot know, / For knowledge is of things we see." But--& here, at the heart of the poem's introduction, are words I've often quoted for 60 years--"Let knowledge grow from more to more, / But more of reverence in us dwell; / That mind and soul, according well, / May make one music **as before**, // But vaster." I've boldfaced the words referring us to the times before the Renaissance & the rise of the universities (though we should remember that many Reformers, who lived the "one music," were university teachers).

9 Check back, please, to this Thinksheet's title. The **predicate** is Christian theology (God-study) in one supraconcrete word: the Trinity is not an abstraction (like a head x-ray that shows only the skull) but rather the full-light-range "view" of God's face insofar as he's revealed it in the biblical story, supremely the Incarnation-Resurrection-Pentecost-Diaspora segment of that story.

The **subject** of the title strikes the Thinksheet's primary note: God, especially as the Trinity, is a skull unless continuously known-thanked-praised-obeyed in private & public Christian devotion. As metaphysics is the ghost of God, philo-

sophy is the skull of theology; & without continuous participation in Christ's church-constituting Spirit in Christ's Body the church, theology (devout contemplation on revelation) deteriorates into philosophy (abstract intellectual speculation).

Let me get personal: I can, have been trained to, philosophize; but I do so in the service of theology, through which I seek to love God "with all my mind" (Mt.22.37, M.12.30, L.10.27; the Heb. source, Deut.6.5, includes the "mind" meaning). This includes prayerful self-giving (Lat., "devotio") to the Holy Trinity whom I address each morning as I awake, thus: "In the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit; glory be to the Father & to the Son & to the Holy Spirit,...." Then I indwell the Christian mind, prayerfully studying Scripture & works of spiritual & intellectual contemplation. This spiritual & intellectual formation continues as I meet with my fellow-believers for worship, study, & fellowship. If I were to drop these practices, would I continue to believe in the Trinity? Of course not. Without that doctrine, the church would not make sense; but that doctrine does not make sense outside the church & the Christian mind.

10 I hope it doesn't sound blasphemous for me to say that Christians "do" the Trinity as theologians "do" theology. But many in our liberal church have never done, or have stopped doing, the Trinity. Now untrafeminists preach that we all should stop doing the Trinity, & instead do some other Threeness than "Father, Son, & Holy Spirit," or maybe give up on Threeness & join the Jews in only Oneness.

Note the trajectory: (1) Modernism stopped doing the Trinity; (2) Lazy non-modernists stopped doing the Trinity; (3) Energetic ultrafeminists try to persuade the Christian public still doing the Trinity to stop it, on the ground that the Trinity's "Father" & "Son," as non"inclusive," is an insult to females. (At the same nonsensical level is the new UCC hymnal's elimination of the words "dark" & "darkness" as an insult to darkies. Both inanities deserve, but aren't getting, Alan Dershowitz's "giggle factor.")

11 Speaking to the universities' split away from faith & the liturgy's split away from the people (who'd become distanced from the clergy, & who didn't understand the doctrine or even the language of the liturgy), Martin (53-54) rues the split of theology off into a mere "intellectual discipline, taught in the universities, no longer considered dependent upon a personally appropriated faith, making little contribution to the life of worship and thus lacking a doxological dimension of its own, and too remote from the people to gain from their faith experience or contribute to it." Consequently, theology "had become too narrow a pursuit to be equal to the challenges which the next four hundred years [into the modern world] were to offer it." I must add that the resulting timid theology, instead of engaging the world, rather more reacts, & makes concessions to, the world--e.g., now, ultrafeminist "theology"'s concession of "Father," "Son," & the unwavering biblical & historical pronominal addressing of God as "he."

12 As "school prayer" is symptom & metaphor for something deeper, so also "inclusive language for God," which is more about excluding (the masculine pronominals, & some titles) than about including (some feminine notes). I've no objection to addition, but severe objection to subtraction, since I consider normative the Bible normal forms of divine address. But it's not "normal" for those unhabituated to, or dehabituated from, the Bible's usual ways of talking about God, to use this language "naturally," in daily conversation or even in church. They live in a culture, & if in liberal churches also in a subculture, washed over by two waves of **linguistic stigmatization** of God-referencing. The first wave was secularism, which represses God-talk.

The best way to learn a language is to go live where it's spoken. You want to learn to speak Bible God-talk naturally, normally? Go where it's spoken--which I did by joining a fundamentalist church & then attending an evangelical college. But extremely few of my UCC colleagues have ever been exposed to, & acquired, that "language of Zion." When they hear it, they tend to dub the speaker a fundamentalist, a stigmatization throttling to the timid. What little Bible God-talk there is dries up & becomes, at both ends, *embarrassing*.

The second wave of linguistic stigmatization, viz. ultrafeminism, is now wash-

ing over us in the liberal churches. (When recently I said this in a lecture during an ecumenical clergy retreat, a Pentecostal minister shouted "Thank God, not over us!") The first wave was subtle, the second is blatant (including cow bells to press the stigma's tabu on Harvey Cox whenever, a decade ago, he violated the exclusive-language code; no cow bells for inclusive language, i.e. language including some feminine ways of speaking of God). On McNeil-Lehrer last evening, Harvey expressed far more hope for the gospel through the Pentecostals than through the mainline churches, where self-censoring out of the Bible's normal God-talk is now expected, & the fear of offending ultrafeminists is so strong as to diminish God-referencing, even the public reading of Scripture (except in "inclusive language" bowdlerizations) being perilous.

13 In God-talk, what ultrafeminism most stigmatizes, has staked the strongest tabu against, is the masculine pronominals (he/his/him[-self]) for God. The result is tragicomic. If you are speaking much of someone, all except the first time, the naming, is expressed anaphorically, by "she" or "he," else how would you know whether a single person or a string of persons were being referenced? To see the silliness of the present ultrafeminist practice, now general (in my experience) in my own denomination, consider this crippled composition:

"Lincoln was a lawyer in Lincoln home state, Illinois, where later Lincoln was a circuit judge in Lincoln's county. Every month Lincoln made the rounds of Lincoln's route within Lincoln's court-established territory." We'd laugh if a standup comedian pulled this in a nightclub: shouldn't we laugh when it happens in church?

14 We live in the Bible's **language world** only to the extent that we talk Bible talk, use the Bible's language, especially the Bible's language for God. If church talk became a dead language, Christianity would be dead. But the language & the faith are alive & continue to have some influence in liberal churches & beyond.

Today, Holy Saturday, Cape Cod's daily's person-in-the-street section quotes 6 people, 4 of whom use the phrase "organized religion," 3 of them using it as a distancing phrase: thanks, but no thanks. This: "I don't belong to an organized religion....If I want to talk to God I talk to him [sic]. I don't have to go to church to do so." And this: "Religion is very important. I live it daily. I don't go to church but I try to live by the golden rule. I don't belong to an organized religion. It's not for me." But then also this: "Religion for me is not the issue. It's having a relationship with Jesus Christ. That is my entire life. The word religion connotes following a system of rules. True Christianity is not just following rules. It's a total way of life and a relationship with the resurrected Lord. Jesus Christ is alive within the believer. That is what Easter is all about." This 1 of the 6 lives in the Bible's language-world, with a devotional praxis that makes radiant sense of the Trinity. For him, the Bible's & the church's historic God-talk is a glory, not a problem. When I read that, I buzzed him & discovered a man whose heart ("intellect and will") & soul ("the vitality of selfhood") are set to love God to full might ("capacity")--the quoted meanings in Deut.6.5 are in the footnotes *in loco*, in the superb HarperCollins STUDY BIBLE: NRSV, 1993.

15 As I write, my best friend of 60 years lies dying of cancer, so on my mind is cancer (& his canonical-classical Christian devotion). Let's take physical cancer as metaphor & instance of a human characteristic, viz. **expansionism**. Physical: The exploding human population, with no crash in prospect, is a cancer on the biosphere. Politico-military: Tribes expand, cannibalize other tribes, form nations, empires, are cancers till confronted by internal crash or external clash. Intellectual theories: Science cancerously expands into scientism, cannibalizing devotion to the transrational reach of spirit. Activity: Work expands to fill time (Parkinson's Second Law). Social movements: Feminism expands into cancerous (biblical-God-eating) ultrafeminism.

But is expansionism inherently cancerous, evil? Surely not: Love grows by loving, the more you give away the more there is. But is that truly an exception? Narcissism & nymphomania, e.g., are cancerous forms of love.

Spinoza's treatment of the problem was (1) to state expansionism as an existential fact, that (to use a recent wording of Huston Smith) "things tend to enlarge their domains until checked by other things," & (2) to suggest attitudes & strategies

for (a) being alert to overexpansions & (b) taking appropriate action against the evil.

16 The Christian mind was unprepared to check the expansion of humanism into secularism & of feminism into ultrafeminism. Except for intellectually &/or politically feeble fringes, the Christian mind capitulated to secularism, & the leadership of the mainline Protestant churches has now capitulated to ultrafeminism. I'm old enough to remember the modernist élan in liberal churches 65 years ago (& its disdain for the opposition), & I hear the same progressivist-triumphalist note in today's preachers of "comprehensive inclusive language" (& note the same disdain for opponents). What now is the appropriate action against this evil? First, to become aware of it as an evil, & alert to its present & prospective devastations. Second, throw Thinksheets (like this one) at it. Third, preach & teach against it. Fourth & always, pray against it. Fifth, outthink it (hermeneutically, philosophically, theologically, etc.). Sixth, laugh at it (mock it, satirize it, giggle--but the solemn preachers of ultrafeminism, & some others, would condemn this as "unloving"). And seventh, weep.

17 Are women & men more alike in loving than in thinking--in devotion than in philosophy? Yes, so men & women are closer to each other in devotion to, than in philosophizing on, the Trinity. But even that generalization should be tempered by the reality of transposition: "There is a male way of being masculine and feminine, and a female way of being masculine and feminine" (Martin 397; fn mentions, on fe/male complementarity, Prudence Allen's use of Bucky Fuller's tetrahedron; odd that Martin never mentions Jung's anim-a/-us).

18 Implicit in this Thinksheet's title is my observation that merely thinking the Trinity impales one on the horns of ancient Greek philosophical dilemmas, but the thinking makes necessary & even luminous sense as an aspect of living, indwelling, praying to, loving, & thus (§10) "doing" the Trinity. This canonical-historical **fullness** can be illustrated almost ad infinitum from pre-Enlightenment Christian literature. E.g.:

Diodochus (d.468): "Nothing is so destitute as a mind philosophizing about God when it is without him" (Philocalia 254).

Evagrius (d.600; Nilus, in *Patrologia Graeca* 79.1179): "If you are a theologian (θεόλογος), you truly pray; if you truly pray, you are a theologian."

19 Martin's central criticism of feminist thinking is that it remains trapped in the Enlightenment's **split** of thinking off from the rest of human being (Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Schleiermacher). This neo-manicheanism deprives feminist hermeneutics/theology of the right side of the brain (though feminism complains that "androcentric theology" is left-brained!) & cuts the living connection between revelation's form (e.g., God as only "he") & content (the Enlightenment's representationalist error, that human language can represent only experience, not what is experienced).

20 Faith, the interplay of trust & belief, is itself a mode of knowing; & the knowledge that is faith-channeled is **revelation**. You cannot know the furniture inside unless you enter the house of faith. Augustine's *Credo, ut intelligam* (I believe so that I may know/understand, or with the result that I know/understand) states a general principle of psychology in the context of Christian theology. *Fiducia* (trust & confidence in God) & *assensus* (intellectual agreement, "assent") are mutually reinforcing....Long ago I became liberated from, "enlightened" about, the Enlightenment-sanctified, scientific-scientistic dogma that experience is the only valid way of knowing: I devoured W.P. Montague's THE WAYS OF KNOWING (Mac/25/36). And when feminist hermeneutics came along, I recognized its first principle--that the Bible is to be trusted only where it comports with "women's experience"--as the latest instance of Enlightenment reductionistic **empiricism**. When I said so in a CHRISTIAN CENTURY review of a Eliz. Schlüssler-Fiorenza commentary, I was--what else?--accused of sexism. Such feminist exegesis is incompatible with biblical faith.

21 Now, to §10 & §18, I add praising, the action that most invigorates faith in the Trinity: "The highest mode of theology is doxology" (Yves Congar, THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT [H&R/86], 5). "GLORY be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Spirit....!"