

My guess is that the latest wave of feminism (1964-) has been good for women, though we can't be sure yet. Yet I'm convinced that its transcendentalization is bad for women, men too, everybody. But the situation preceding this wave also was bad for women. So what's good for women? (This is not quite the same as Freud's "What do women want?") I'm a man & can't answer that question: men can't. Women can't, either. It's a human question transcending gender. And, I believe, needing revelation as well as reason.

1 Since, as cultural anthropology shows, it's as natural for human beings to worship female cosmic projections as it is male, the three Abrahamic religions are unnatural in forbidding goddess-worship. And since it's improbable that anything unnatural long endure time's washing waves, how explain Jews', Christians', & Muslims' continuing antipathy to the goddess (ie, to the transcendentalized feminine) & monotheistic insistence on worship of the generic-masculine God? ("Generic-masculine," not masculine, certainly not male. What's before the hyphen warns you against conceiving of God as a sexual being, & what's after affirms he's personal--language having no nongender way to express the personal.)

2 Two shovels have dug up the long-buried goddess. One, as suggested in this Thinksheet's subtitle, is **feminism**. The other is **naturalism**, the back-to-nature movement away from the complexities, confusions, & conundrums of Western urban life today. Because our species is viviparous, the feminine is visibly closer to earth, in a wider range of biological processes: ergo, the feminine is more "natural," less historical--so "Mother Nature" is everywhere, "Father Nature" nowhere. "Mother" drags us down into nature (where we belong): "Father" drags us up above-beyond nature (where also we belong, as unnatural-historical beings). The battle here is not *of*, but *for*, the sexes, for humanity, for the glory of God through the unity of humanity in private & public relationships.

3 Now that the goddess has been disinterred, what to do? Ways to go:
(1) She stinks, rebury her. Or she'll cause at least as much trouble today & tomorrow as she did yesterday. No delay, please.

(2) Gild her, as ancient stone-or-wood idols were covered with sheets of beaten gold. Let her radiance, her glory, shine forth!

(3) Proclaim her revivification, resurrection. She's alive again, & rules!

(4) She's alive again, but rules as coregent-consort of God. This position, for many, finds warrant in the Hokmah-Sophia (Wisdom) tradition in & beyond Scripture.

(5) Hang her up as a corpse outside the temple gate, to remind the entering worshipers that her ways are the ways of death, not of life--of nature, not of history--of biology, not deity.

I'm hung between (1) & (5). (I'm resisting the temptation to add representative names to each of the five ways to go.)

4 But if we personalize the divine as masculine, what's wrong with personalizing the divine as feminine? Sounds logical, & fair. Goddess history, however, is discouraging. Mother Nature under whatever name is more oppressor than liberator of women & men. Goddess history (in history of religions, comparative religion, cultural anthropology), I say: the new goddess-mythology postulates a golden age of goddess/peace before the iron age of God/war; but the hypothesis is one part fact, nine parts fantasy. The fact part is that some isolated nature-worshipping groups seem (1) to have accented the feminine divine & (2) to have been pacific. If that was true of the early Minoan civilization, it ceased to be true (as even Riane Eisler admits) when that culture began to become aware of other civilizations.

But notice the first clause of the above ¶. Did we "personalize the divine as masculine," or did the divine so reveal itself to us through Abraham-Moses-Jesus? Voltaire (& now many feminists) say the former, I say the latter.

Here we have a confusion which, to my knowledge, has not been remarked: the radical feminist treatment of language for God, in our religion of revelation, as though ours were a religion of discovery. In a revelation religion, the divine initiative extends to language. Radical feminists argue their conclusion that they are free to invent language for God (Sallie McFague's "the Unknown") on the (false) premise that God has given us no words of address for him.

I experienced this illogic at Dennis Playhouse recently in a postmodern (postreason, postlinguistic) play by Brien Friel. In "Dancing At Lughnasa," a RC missionary priest who'd failed to convert a black African leper colony & had instead been converted to their animism & so had been sent home to Ireland, is asked to say mass. He said he would, then shocked those who'd asked by telling them there'd be no words, only dance! The play ends as the narrator, in a soliloquy, recommends "dancing as if language no longer existed, as if words were no longer necessary."....Here we have a third shovel exhuming the goddess: feminism, naturalism, now **postmodernism** (as liberation from past language & even from language itself; freedom to make up your own language, as children do--as Mary Daly childishly does with her debonair poetic flare).

Christianity, however, is a religion of revelation, God coming through the forms of our life including the sounds we make--sometimes re-forming & transforming, sometimes in-forming sound: eg, "'Ehyeh^{*}Asher-Ehyeh'....This shall be My name forever,...My appellation for all eternity" (Gn.3.14-15 TANAKH [Jewish Pub. Soc./85]; Moses is to say "Ehyeh sent me to you": God "himself is unapproachable,...but through the name he becomes approachable" [Buber, MOSES, p.6]); & at Jesus' baptism, God calls Jesus "my beloved **Son**" (Mt.3.17, M.I.11, L.3.22)...
* Also, Elohim & Yahv[w]h.

With the spate of linguistic philosophies since WWI, highly acculturated theologians have abandoned belief in audio-revelation, & this has been one reason for the decline of biblical-languages study (just now, however, enjoying a modest revival in mainline seminaries). Most sounds are profane, some are sacred (from being used nonprofanely), & a few sounds are holy (as God-given). The linguistic pathologies here are profanity (using holy or sacred words profanely) & magic (the superstitious belief that certain sounds--eg, in Arabic fiction, "Open, sesame!"--have automatic supernatural effect); the cognitive extremes are propositionalism (the rational overclaim of meaning) & mysticism (the intuitive overclaim of mystery).

5 In Friel's play (above, §4), the priest's conversion to African animism retrieves for him the ancient Irish (Druidic) animism, of which "Lughnasa" (Gaelic for the festival of the god Lugh) is a continuing relic. Radical feminism's retrieval (in this Thinksheet, exhuming) of the goddess is (1) freeing some old sounds, as the goddess spits the dirt out of her mouth, & (2) occasioning the invention of new sounds ("womanism," "woman church," R.R.Reuther's "God/ess," Rita Gross'"God-She")--besides adapting terms from wicca, & accenting certain biblical nouns with fem. endings (& even feminizing some neuters, as Gk. for "spirit")....I have known a number of scientists who named their discoveries (eg, "plutonium," which RHD² dates 1940-45 & I know to have been 1942). That is the proper use of "invention" of words, viz to signal objective discoveries. But Eliz. Schüssler-Fiorenza (IN MEMORY OF HER et al) pseudoscientifically "invents" words to speak of "Her" (the goddess). She's a competent biblical scholar but is prostituting her skill on this bogus project. Besides the disastrous intellectual results, the practical effects are even worse. Theologian Thos. Oden (16 Aug 93 CHRISTIANITY TODAY, p.18) narrates the one time his conscience scrupled him out of taking communion. The minister "offer[ed] the Lord's Supper in the name of the goddess Sophia...and invited all members who did not agree with her to look for another church. She was apparently oblivious of the fact that in the name of inclusiveness she was practicing exclusion....We were invited to Christ's table, but only in Sophia's name." If this doesn't justify the cry of "Heresy!"--what could?

6 In §1, I said the generic-masculine for the divine ("generic" meaning the genus "deity") is unnatural. Now, since I believe it to be revealed, I'll add that it's normal. It's normal to use the Eng. generic pron. "he-his-him" in speaking

of God. It's true that Eng. is defective here. A full language would have masc., fem., generic (a separate form), & neuter (of the four, Eng. lacks the third & lamely uses the first "generically" for the third). But because the generic-masculine for God is revelational ("God," "Father," "Lord," "King," "Judge," "Husband"; "Son"), the Eng. defect does not appear in speaking of the biblical God.

What, then, is to be said of those who prefer ugly, unliterary repetition of "God...God...God" to the use of "he-his-him" & justify this on the ground of the Eng. defect? They are ignorant, & have let the goddess dry up their normal biblical speech. And they are, by bad modeling, teaching others to look down on the Bible as "patriarchal" (of course it is) & "androcentric" (of course it isn't, it's theocentric).

7 "A" in this § is my "answer" to some common claims:

(1) The Bible's masculine deity is a projection of male dominance (sexism).

A: Were the neighbors of the Israelite-Jewish-Christian communities less sexist? Certainly not! Why, then, did they project divine couples instead of the generic-masculine "God"?....(2) Today we are struggling for the equality of the sexes & must not preach the monotheism of a male deity. A: The Bible does not preach a male deity, a concept that exists only alongside of a female deity. The Bible preaches a transsexual deity under the revealed aspect of the generic-masculine "God."....(3) Why not under the aspect of a generic-feminine deity? A: You'd have to ask Him. My guess would be that it's the testosterone factor: in all human bodies, the androgens initiate (which the biblical God does in creation, redemption, & consummation) & the estrogens nurture (an equally important, but implicit, divine activity). No straight line can be drawn from this as to who, woman or man, should lead in any particular situation! To prefer the man as male *is* sexist & in violation of the spirit of Gn.1.27 & Gal.3.28. Besides, true leadership (dominion) excludes dominance, the dominating attitude....(4) The reason the Bible has only a male god is that this was the cosmic-political dimension of the people's identity (as self-definition & group-maintenance) over against their polytheistic neighbors. That's the only reason; otherwise they'd've been worshipers of a divine couple....A: What do you mean, "only"? Revelation is historical, & history is subject to "what if" & "if only" only as playful, speculative fantasy. But I'm not surprised at your statement: radical feminism buttresses itself by such fantastic revisionisms. While you're at it, why not convert our spiritual ancestors into agreeing with their neighbors (as, in the drama, the Irish priest converted to his social context)?....(5) Under conditions of modern global pluralism, why should we be bound by the prejudices of our spiritual ancestors? A: We shouldn't. Everybody's ancestors were prejudiced, all descendents are prejudiced. But prejudices are not revealed: the biblical devotion to the generic-masculine "God" is by revelational conviction in the eyes of us devotees. Those who once agreed with us & no longer do have in effect abandoned their-&-our spiritual ancestors & adopted some others. Those who flip out of biblical religion would do best (if I may advise them) to flip into Buddhism, a move that would unburden them of history (as it's ahistorical) & of the personal God (& therefore of the deity-gender controversy), compassion being the bridge. This conversion would be more honorable than to carry on a radical-feminist crusade with Christianity or Judaism, a crusade doomed to leave a trail of wreckage till it dies.

8 **Metaphors matter.** The therapy of neurolinguistic programming: The therapist tries to help the client shift from a negative or stuck metaphoric domain (eg, war) to a positive one (eg, play). Language both mirrors & structures the mind, which has the power to change its operating metaphors....The Bible's metaphoric domain for God is masculine, so masculine that all feminine metaphors for God are excluded, only similes being permitted: metaphors illumine the whole subject, similes are points of tangency with some aspect of a subject.

9 God is absolutely transcendent & only relatively immanent: the goddess is radically immanent. Transcendence, the holiness of God, is now imperiled: Father God is out, Mother Nature is everywhere in, the Creator has disappeared into creation (which then is not creation but only nature), so everything's sacred, even divine. Christianity & radical feminism are fundamentally incompatible.