

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT GOD GAVE GOD'S

ONLY BEGOTTEN CHILD"--John 3.16 1977 UCC General Synod bowdlerized version

1 The **silliness** of that double distortion of Jn.3.16 is amplified by what, in the official records of that Eleventh General Synod, immediately precedes: "...many people have committed to memory John 3:16--...." You'd be closer to the truth if you were to strike "many" & insert "nobody": can you even picture anybody teaching a child to memorize that extreme-inclusive-language rendering of "one of the best-known and often-quoted verses in the Scripture"?

2 That silliness entered the official records of the UCC twenty years ago. On the foundation of that mentality, our denomination has spewed out a flood of literature, including the BOOK OF WORSHIP &, notoriously, THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL. Two decades ago, not enough of us were laughing at this new-speak to rid the UCC of it; & those of us who were laughing were counter-laughed off as "sexist" &, at a tonier level, "misogynistic troglodytes." But I'm still laughing (& weeping), as this Think-sheet shows.

3 To the charge of woman-hate (in Gk., "misogyny"), I counter-charge man-hate (in Gk., "**misandry**"). Consider how hundreds of millions have memorized Jn.3.16 (KJV): "For God so loved the world, that **he** gave **his** only begotten **Son**." Both before & after 1611 (the King James Version), all English translations & versions have these three masculine words--except, of course, a few recent stabs at an inclusive-language rendering....The Greek? The original has four masculine words, including the article & noun for "God"....The English versions & translations also have four masculine words if you include "God" (the opposite of "goddess"). As far as I know, nobody has carried gender-sensitivity so far as to use a substitute for "God"--such as "The Deity so loved the world...."....NOTE to counters in Gk.: While the second verb only implies the subject "he" (anaphoric to the masculine subject of the first verb), the reason the Gk. count remains at four is that the second verb's object, viz "**Son**," is masculine (in contrast to the bowdlerized "child").

4 What is the proper grammatical term for "**child**" in UCC official usage for the past two decades? It's not a translation: the Gk. wd. *never* means "child," though metaphorically it can mean "descendent" or "follower" or "pupil." It's not a version: a version continues a translation-line (as, eg, the King James Version is a take-off from the Geneva (English) Bible. It's not a paraphrase: a paraphrase restates a text's meaning in another form--whereas, clearly, "**child**" is another meaning. But grammarians do have a name for "child" as a rendering of υἱός *huios* son: it's a bowdlerization, a rendering with the deliberate intent to change the meaning by omitting or modifying in the interest of a cause--in this case, gender feminism. (In Mr. B.'s case, the cause was eliminating from Shakespeare his "bathroom" & "bedroom" words.)

We face, here, the issue of honesty & common decency. The few words that form this Thinksheet's title doubly **suppress** the masculine by degendering both "God" & his "Son." This shameful, ridiculous project is carried out woodenheadedly in THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL, which regularly misrepresents hymnists' gender-usage.

With this systematic disrespect for textual **truth**, is it not disingenuous, if not hypocritical, for UCC publications to prate of **love**?

5 Further **disrespect for the text** of Jn.3.16 appears in the political spin given the word "world." Clearly, ὁ κόσμος *ho kosmos* in this context means "people"--some of whom (not others) will have "eternal life"; what's in view is precisely not human solidarity (with political implications) but human division. Reversing this meaning, the 1977 Synod "Resolution on Political Education and Sensitivity" (from which I took this Thinksheet's title) says that the Jn.3.16 meaning is "the world; i.e. the whole people." The rest of the Resolution uses this bastard scriptural sanction to motivate for a good cause, viz participation in (& encouraging/training for participation in) the political process. Irony: The Bible is abused in the cause of reducing the political abuse of the public....(CEV well renders as "the people of this world.")

6 Not to use the Bible is not as bad as misusing it. "The greatest treason," said T.S.Eliot, "is to do the right thing for the wrong reason." I support many UCC causes, but despair of its cavalier, ideological **violations** of the Bible.

This Thinksheet's MESSAGE is on p.1. But in case you want to hear more about **Jn.3.16**, I'm adding some notes:

1 Taking into account the whole of the verse (rather than only the 1st 2 clauses, as on p.1), the traditional Gk. text yields eight masculine-personal words (one a generic). That number remains at eight in critical texts such as the United Bible Societies', though (literally) "the one-and-only Son of him [God]" becomes "the Son the one-and-only"--but "his" is implicit not only in this specific context but in the John (Fourth Gospel + the 3 Letters) literature's central referencing of the divine, viz Father/Son. Further, the articular "Son" (viz "*the* Son") so implies "his" that translators & versioners (eg NRSV) regularly render as "*his* Son."....If you've a taste for this technical stuff, it's nowhere more accessible than in Raymond E. Brown's Anchor Bible THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN, i-xii (Doubleday/66).

2 The tight **Father/Son** relationship is most intimately set forth in Jn.17 (Jesus' prayer for himself, his disciples, & all believers). Not only in the John literature: Mt.11.25-27 (& L. parallel), only 3 vv., has "Father" 5x & "Son" 3x (on which see p.319 of Benj. W. Bacon's THE GOSPEL OF THE HELLENISTS [H.Holt/33]). So central to the NT is "Father/Son" that (1) it's not surprising to find these as two of the three terms in the Trinity, & (2) eliminating them, as the UCC officialdom tends to do, moves toward abandoning the Faith in favor of *a new religion*.

3 In our verse, the effectuality of God's **love** is conditional upon one's believing in (trusting) "his one-and-only Son." In my library are Bacon's two classics on this: the one I refer to in §2, & THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN RESEARCH AND DEBATE (Moffat, Yard/1910). On p.536 of the latter: "What significance for the human race has the person and career of Jesus?....the life which first made the filial relation to God actual in itself....The story of God in Christ, 'changing the relation of the world to himself'....should be so told [by "modern historical research" & "philosophic thought"]...that men 'may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and in believing may have life through his name'."

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