

THE RADICAL-FEMINIST ALIENIZATION OF THE BIBLICAL GOD

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The "radical feminist" either **rejects** the biblical God or **converts** him into an androgyn (eg, "Father-Mother," "God/dess") or female ("Goddess"). In the latter case, while the masculine "God" may be accepted as generic, the specifically male titles ("Lord," "King," "Father," "Son," etc.) are jettisoned along with the masculine pronominals for God ("he-his-him-himself"). Both forms of radical feminism are subversive of biblical religion & should be fought by church & synagogue. It's the latest form of victimizing God--in defense of victims (women), of course!

1 At dinner in our home last evening were a number of mainline-church (but not UCC) members, all of them devout & churchly. When one of them who'd just begun to read #2680 said, "What is inclusive language?", it became clear that what's a giant issue in my denomination is almost unknown in theirs. Their pastors are not drawn from seminaries where a big deal has been made of the feminist challenge to the church's language.

2 After WWII, Rosie the Riveter didn't just go home, she also went to seminary. The year after the war ended, a book came out that convinced her she should be ashamed of herself if she didn't "make something of herself" beyond the home, & seminary was one place she went to with her Betty Friedan "The Feminist Mystique" liberation message.

From my personal experience I can document the stages of religion-feminism that led finally to Sophia worship at the WCC "Re-Imagining" conference (Minneapolis, Nov/93):

Stage 1: No women in seminary. Before WWII, I participated in a sitdown in my seminary to open it to black men (the seminary was in the Great Southland), & we radicals--including Clarence Jordan & Gordon Cosby--integrated that school even though it was against state law. But I recall no one suggesting that black women be let in, or even white women. A Protestant seminary, but as exclusively male as the Vatican. The Bible was in danger of being abused by both modernism & fundamentalism, but not by feminism.

Stage 2: Women students permitted, but not teachers. Teachers began to make concessions to strident feminist students, the moreso as the prosperity & even the existence of some seminaries became dependent on having women students. Not all the concessions were dangerous to the Faith: in speaking & writing, we should forego the generic pronominals "he-his-him-himself," & in the Bible we should give more attention to the presence of the feminine.

Stage 3: Women teachers were hired to bring "balance" to faculties. These had even greater influence on the male teachers than had the female students. The more responsive males formed an informal more-radical-feminist-than-thou wedge to radicalize seminaries traditionally considering themselves avant-garde, especially seminaries without benefit of any ecclesial control.

Stage 4: Feminist-dominated seminaries, now spewing forth silliness in two forms, viz literature & graduates.

3 While it's masculine in appearance, in reality **Christianity is feminine**. Hear what Jas. M. Wall (555 XnC 1-8 June 94) said at a recent seminary commencement: "The challenge is to determine which perspective will govern our lives--the success-oriented, achievement-driven, judgment-rendering [**masculine**] perspective of modern society, or the mysterious God-centered worldview of a [**feminine**] religious faith governed by love, forgiveness and understanding." Yes, this makes the contrast too stark, as though nothing were to be said for "money, power and glory," "riches, rank or a resumé"; & as though "love, forgiveness and understanding" were not as corruptible--as though the Faith as movement were pure & as institution unholy.

Paradoxical anomaly: The most feminine religion is now most attacked by the radical feminists, & the designated enemy is that religion's God, whose language-existence is in the unexpurgated, unrevisionized Bible--the God who more than any other says that hurting people need to be held, sinning people need to be forgiven, crippled

people need to be helped to wholeness, & everybody needs to be understood & affirmed....A man dirty & slovenly of dress & speech came to church today with a Father's Day card in his hand. When I asked him what it was, he beamed & showed it to me, with the signature of his only son, who lives far away. He opened the card & held it to my ear so I could hear it say "Happy Father's Day, Dad!" That card was for him a sacramental door & a plea that he, a recent widower, be affirmed by the people of the Sacrament. He beamed when I invited others to greet him & hear the card. Now, our Christian faith requires us to see Christ in this man, this "little one," Christ who loves him & who judges us as to our treatment of him. This discernment & this caring is so much at the heart of the Faith that to have let him leave with himself & his card unrecognized would have made a mockery of the Faith & of our church.

Question: Would changing how we speak of our God, removing the alleged sexism of the biblical way of speaking of God, improve Christian compassion for children, women, & men in need? I doubt it.

4 In NYC two weeks ago, an engineer for whom Eng. was the fourth language was struggling to say something construction-technical in my first language. I thought of radical-feminist clergy, women & men, who are struggling to speak of the Christian God **bisexually** & **genderlessly**, the effect being, as in the case of my engineer, to call attention more to the medium than to message. Meanwhile, almost the entire Christian world carries on its devotion, education, evangelism, & missions oblivious of this Newspeak & without the burden, the impedence, of it. The so-called mainline churches, already weakened in witness by other factors, are now further weakened by this new hesitance, awkwardness, almost a slurredness strangely comparable to that of that pitiful man in church this morning.

5 Contrast the Christian speech Walter Brueggemann seems to be calling for in his Forward to the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries' 1993 book **AFFIRMING EVANGELISM: A Call to Renewed Commitment**: "Evangelism must have the use of a distinctive vocabulary rooted in the narratives, songs, and images of scripture. As evangelists we must relearn the ways in which our mothers and fathers talked faith, before we learn too many languages other than our own." The liberal church "will need to recover its own inimitable talk that is not adequately translatable into the idiom of the world. Our 'mother tongue' of faith is so important, indeed indispensable, because it permits and requires rhetoric that lets God be a live character in our narrative." Our Christian talk, "the primal rhetoric of God-evoked transformation," is the verbal-oral medium of evangelism, which requires "bringing one's whole life under a new obedience."

Obedience? What biblical words of address to God demand obedience? "Lord-King-Father." Can "nonsexist" surrogates equally demanding of obedience be found? I know of none. The pathetic efforts to translate this Biblepeak into radical-feminist Newspeak are extensively detailed in **SPEAKING THE CHRISTIAN GOD** (ed. by Alvin F. Kimel, Jr., Eerdmans/92).

6 Radical-feminist Newspeak, to the extent it succeeds in desexualizing or bisexualizing "God," **alienizes the biblical God**, victimizing him by turning him into an alien, a diety of distance from radical-feminist speech & thus from the radical-feminist fellowship. As some churches acquire this quaint, ephemeral speech-style with its taboos & neologisms, members &--moreso--their children will, upon opening an unbowdlerized Bible, feel that the God of the Book is alien, is an alien, to them. I have a copy of Jefferson's rewrite of the NT: how quaint it seems, with its project of eliminating all but the ethical! And how quaint will soon seem inclusive-language lectionaries & Bibles, with their project of eliminating "patriarchal" & "sexist" language!

7 This radical-feminist alienization of God is one item in the category of human behavior that alienizes God. First was disobedience to the divine word (Gn.3), next was murder (next chapter). Of course this alienization process is reciprocal: Adam & Eve, Cain, radical feminists, all become aliens to God in the very act of making God an alien, ostracizing the biblical God from speech & life. The divine word becomes an unknown tongue.