

The God/[d]ess loves me, this I know,
For the relationalists tell me so.

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In a Buddhist temple I found a hymnal with this parody:

Buddha loves me, this is know, / For the sutras tell me so. I was more amused than miffed by this outcropping of Neobuddhism's efforts to mock up Amida as a competitor of Jesus. But my above parody of the Christian children's song does not amuse me. For while it's one thing for an alien religion to ape Christianity, it's quite something else for Christians to give birth to a **new** & antiChristian **religion** along with some exChristians & nonChristians, which is now happening. The new religion is yet unnamed. I refuse to call it "feminism," for only radical feminists are in the new religion. At least for this Thinksheet, I'll call it relationalism, for its emphasis is on what women are better at than are men (though some men put forth the effort to get good at it, & a few are naturally relational).

To illustrate the new religion, I'll use an article of a UCC clergywoman, June C. Goudey, "WORSHIP AND GENDER: Toward Liturgies of Care," PRISM Fall/93 64-87.

1 The author's 86 endnotes show her mental-spiritual formation on the subject to have been influenced by the major secular & religious feminist thinkers, the spread I've seen in seminary bookstores. "You become what you eat" is a bromide applicable to mind & spirit as well as body. Here are two indicators that the mainline churches are in a swelling crisis of "consciousness": (1) 3/4 of the books in the "Women" section of seminary bookstores are radical-feminist; (2) In mainline seminaries, the % of women students is steadily rising. Now we have only a few Ms. Goudeys out there, but soon there will be many & the churches will (I hope) **revolt**....Can we expect the seminaries to refuse to hire radical feminists? No way! The mainline seminaries, with no exception I know of, are going with the flow in the general culture, where feminism is becoming ever more radical & strident....Peter Berger, beginning 1/3 c. ago, predicted this mainline-church supineness to the surrounding culture. From THE NOISE OF SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES (1961) through "Different Gospels: The Social Sources of Apostasy" (1989, in AMERICAN APOSTASY: THE TRIUMPH OF "OTHER" GOSPELS, ed. Jn. Rich. Neuhaus) to "Reflections of an Ecclesiastical Expatriate" (1990, Oct.24 CHRISTIAN CENTURY), this eminent social critic has chronicled the mainliners' slide away from the biblical Good News. From the third item, Leslie Zeigler (316 in SPEAKING THE CHRISTIAN GOD, ed. Alvin F. Kimel, Jr.) quotes him as saying that feminism now has become "the prevailing [mainline-church] orthodoxy, which is why 'inclusive language' (which serves to stigmatize and exclude those who dissent from the orthodoxy) is pushed with such vehemence."

2 Can it be that the Rev. Goudey never says "**God**" in her parishioners' ears? I've known some UU churches in which it would be religiously incorrect to say that word--but a UCC church? I don't know whether in her church she practices what this article preaches, which is that the correct word for the deity is "**God/[d]ess**" (a Middle Eng. wd. traceable to the early 14th c. & always, except now by some feminist authors, spelled with two "d"s). When you see the word, it's both masc. & fem.; but when you say it, it's heard as only feminine). Clearly, to this author "God," just plain "God," is a three-letter dirty word. Theologically, this scholarly article is all down hill from there. Don't expect the Trinity or any other classical-traditional theologoumena. Do expect a well-articulated exposition of relatedness, which because of her ideologization of it I'm calling relationalism.

As for "God," it's generic denotatum is for this author consistently obscured by its for-her masculine connotatum: she will use "God" in "discussions that stress a more masculine understanding of the divine." (For "God/ess," she credits Rosemary R. Reuther.)

3 In her 2nd ¶, our author speaks of "a remnant" of women who've opted to stay in the church, but of "many" who've chosen "exodus from the church in search of a God/ess who will heal their wounds and receive them for who they are"

as they "seek healing and well-being for themselves and the children in their care--something they can no longer receive in a religious system that embraces patriarchal, misogynist values [ital. mine]." Unless she's resigned her pastorate, she's personally & professionally involved in a system she says (1) "can't provide healing and well-being" to "many" women & (2) is so male-ridden as to be woman-hating (in Gk., "misogynist"). Her heart seems to be with the exodus, but her action with the remnant. Said U.S.Sup.Ct. Justice Cardoza, "A great principle should grow out of the promise of its logic." In her inner & outer life, Ms. Goudey does not have that triangular integrity. If she does not join the exodus, she will corrupt the church or break her heart, probably both....

....or she may, as one may learn to doubt one's doubts, exercise the hermeneutics of suspicion on radical feminism with its undertow of misandry (Gk., "man-hate"), which more precisely is **testosterone-hate** (as it targets in not only on most men but also on the small minority of high-testosterone women). The fact that in nature, including human nature, the male in most instances has priority (1) should not be read by males as superiority (the truth being that females & males are mutually superior), (2) should not, by lazy gender-stereotyping, relieve society, especially the church, of the duty to find the best person, regardless of gender, for the job (the principle of equality of opportunity), & (3) should not be read by women as curable-culpable (ie, as though testosterone were guilty of being the leader-hormone). As women pull further away from men, their irrational (anti-natural) hatred of the male intensifies. Since the root of this neurotic (anti-reality) hate is hormonal misperception, the cognitive dimension of the cure lies in hormonal education of both sexes.

As for an **estrogen church** with (Ms. Goudey's subtitle) "liturgies of care," such a "religion of relationalism" will have, as the old churches have, high-testosterone leadership, with the difference that women will be the high-testosterone leaders--a bummer, as women would rather be led by high-testosterone men than by high-testosterone women. The prospect for woman-religion is bleak.... Evidence? One piece is numerous recent studies that in business & industry, women prefer male bosses.

God (sic!) bless Ms. Goudey's high testosterone, & God deliver her from her resentment that most testosterone was, is, & will be in male skins; & that the biblical God, having priority, is considered, & addressed as, masculine (God, King, Lord, Father, Son, he-his-him, all as in the New Revised Standard Version).

LANGUAGE NOTE on male priority: The world's languages, with almost no exceptions, are male-priority, male-base. Add *-ah* to "man" in Hebrew (*ish*) & you have "woman." Add *wo-* to "man" in English & you have "woman." Add *-ess* to "God" in English & you have "goddess." And while some languages have separate generic (masculine-feminine) forms, most use the masculine as generic. Noam Chomsky's "grammar of grammar" should warn us against expecting too much of "inclusive language." But the changed social reality, & justice, should train us against the past's overuse of the generic masculine. Language used insensitively or deliberately to put women down is "sexist": normal male-priority language is not. To fail to make this distinction is ignorant or invidious.

NOTE ON RESENTMENTS: Between the genders, level-playing-field **equality** is a demon, **mutuality** (complementarity) is an angel. But machismo resents female superiorities (physical endurance, relational insight-&-orchestration), & radical feminism resents male superiorities (body size-&-strength, single-minded drive). Both rage ridiculously, tragically, against "nature and nature's God." As to the latter, not all "oppression" is dirty tricks the boys play on the girls. Radical feminism is a dirty trick some girls have played on all boys & on the biblical God, &--sadly--Ms. Goudey has bought into it.

4 I can still hear the father (sic) of process theology, Henry Nelson Wieman, say "God is the increase of appreciable awareness." Healthy feminism, because it has increased our awareness of unhealthy patriarchy & of women's potential, can improve-enrich worship. But Ms. Goudey's project does not advance this worthy cause. Rather, it is to abolish classical Christian worship & put in its place an unhealthy gynocentric religion of relationalism.