

PATRIARCHY IS ONLY THE BIO-FORM OF PATRONARCHY

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ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

A response to a Thinksheet-subscriber's letter, which stated "I can't go all the way with you on opposing 'vertical inclusive language' solely on the grounds of Biblical patriarchal language." (Underlining mine.)

309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone 508.775.8008
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Dear Ted,

1 I thank you for voicing a common misunderstanding of my support-system for preaching that the biblical deity should be pronominally referred to only in the masculine, never in the feminine or neuter. Since "inclusive language" includes nouns as well as pronouns, why have I here spoken only of pronouns? Because in any context, pronouns gender-control nouns. Today someone in my presence slapped a biting mosquito & cried "Go, 'im!" I corrected the biology: "Got her! Male mosquitos don't bite." An animal is referred to as "him" only if the sex is known or unknown (the latter, the generic use). Efforts to defeat Eng. generic by calling "it" any animal who's sex is unknown cannot pass the anthropopathic test, the test of fellow-creaturely feelings now intensified by the animal rightsers (&, always, the writers of children's books). The one relationship in which, I believe, the generic will die is the horizontal human-human: "he or she" is awkward & (because it inappropriately brings up sexuality) diversionary, but generic "he" must go (as, among nouns, generic "sons" must go) in one's speaking & writing.

2 Yes, so far I've picked up in your letter only a side comment qualifying your gratitude for my Thinksheets, esp. for "2786 (Borg's No-Easter Jesus)....Your passion and independence in insisting on **truth**-telling is about as authentically Biblical as anything I've had the privilege of coming across in my experience." And you express distress that "the 'being nice' subculture" (1) protects such as Borg from serious public confrontation (which this subculture reads as personal attack) & (2) damps even private conversation ("Especially with friends, it should be easier to discuss **truth** issues, but it isn't, because of the 'being nice' habits....the artificial, superficial politeness which is the death of so much opportunity. My own sackcloth and ashes runneth me over.").

3 To get a hearing for my conviction that biblical peoples, Jews & Christians, should address/refer to God as masculine--well, it's almost impossible. The objectors are castled behind a moat & a wall. The moat is **liberationist egalitarianism**, the ideology that some folks, being essentially equal with other folks, should be liberated from other folks' oppression, so that all will be existentially equal. To recruit the biblical God as an ally in this battle, it is necessary to equalize the genders--e.g., thus: "We must join God in carrying out Her plans for us on earth. We must join God, become His hands to get the necessary work done for us to survive on this planet" (S.F.'s Grace Cathedral canon pastor in her 22 Feb 92 sermon). The wall is **liberationistic reimagining**, the mythology that story-tells as to how some folks now oppressed once weren't, so shouldn't be now--transcendentalized as that in God, the feminine (portrayed as Sophia--the planner, in that Grace Cathedral sermon), should no longer be oppressed by the masculine (putatively, as in the Bible's theo-patriarchy).

Inside the castle is a printingpress spewing out things such as the UCC Book of Worship & The New Century Hymnal, both designed to re-educate pulpit & pew to the PC ideological-mythological POV (point of view).

4 Suppose **truth** crosses the moat, climbs the wall, & confronts the inmates: how then are the converts to this new religion to defend themselves? They will claim--they do claim--that the moat crossers & wall climbers are "not nice." Well do you, in your letter, conjoin the two issues, viz. **truth** & the current notion that confrontation in the interest of truth is bad manners.

5 What's so sad about both the ideology & the mythology is that **truth** is their first victim, in a pincer squeeze between them. Two weeks ago the Boston GLOBE reported a humorous though sad story. Pushing the black remythologization of civilization, an African-American speaker said that white folks (Greeks, specifically Aristotle) got their wisdom from black folks (black Africans, who built the great Library of Alexandria, where Aristotle went to study). In the audience-response

period, a Wellesley professor of classics said "That library was built after Aristotle died." Did the speaker (a) repent, (b) challenge the datum? No, (c) the speaker said "I don't like your tone of voice." Nothing more. No need to say more than that the objector was not being nice. And apparently the audience didn't cry out against the category error of treating a truth issue as a manners issue. (Was prejudice a factor in the audience's silence? The professor was [1] a woman & [2] a Jew.)

6 *Error uncried-out-against soon functions as truth.* Afrocentrism harbors egregious untruths about illud tempus, the origin-time (to stay with Egypt, the myth [negative sense] that the Pharaohs were black [fact: only two of them had Afro features]). But you're looked on as a racist if you attack this neomythological substitute for history. And a sexist if you object to the radical-feminist neomythology of the Goddess Golden Age.

7 Truth is ominously imperiled also by commercial interests' support for the truth-demeaning ideologies & mythologies. While the CAPE COD TIMES has printed many of my letters, not ones that might offend some "minority" (Native American, African-American, female, et al). E.g., here's a recent unpublished letter objecting to the promulgation of the priority-of-the-Goddess myth:

Machiavelli said it, Hitler now gets the credit for it: Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes truth. The same is true of all falsehoods; only those intending to deceive are lies.

In his column today [11May96], Lawrence Brown is not lying. He does not intend to deceive. But he does repeat a falsehood which in recent years has been so often repeated that the public is in danger of accepting it as truth. Indeed, I believe that Mr. Brown has, by this cultural repetition, come to believe it is true.

In "Just try to imagine God the Mother," he says "our first image of the divine was feminine." This bit of ultrafeminist mythic propaganda has no respectable scholarly support. There's no epigraphic (written) evidence, and the anepigraphic (unwritten artifactual) evidence consists of gratuitous speculative projections from the abundance of female-torso paleo-images with exaggerated breasts, abdomens, and thighs.

Paleo-anthropologists' extrapolations from these images reveal, Rorschach-like, their particular-personal "take" on reality--roughly, their religion. All agree that these are fertility images, but there's no agreement on how they functioned in what we call theology (i.e., in narratives of gods/goddesses) and philosophy (i.e., in reality-picturing). Their ritual use may have been mere mimetic magic.

A parallel principle is that any falsehood repeated often enough becomes sacred. The myth of the golden-age-past mother-goddess has become a sacred pillar holding up ultrafeminist hermeneutics (how the past is "seen" and becomes "usable" in the present). The falsehood won't be easy to dislodge from pop religion and the media.

But the civic virtues depend on love of truth and the vigilant willingness to attack falsehood. Hitler and Stalin are horrific examples of what can happen to whole peoples when truth becomes an adiabron, a matter of unimportance. Ideas have consequences not just for scholars but for the common life. (Underlinings added.)

8 You mention continuing resentment on the part of some clergy that I am not nice but speak up at "the only place doctrine and truth are on the line" in the UCC, viz. "at Association 'examinations' for ordination and installation." Thank you for telling two of them that I am "due uncommon debt and respect for carrying the doctrinal torch" & that they should "repent for falling into the *ad hominem* slough." While I could use a little more respect, I'm more interested in paying what you well name "the 'cost' of doing our proper business at such gatherings."

9 Now to your "solely" (small print under this Thinksheet's title, which clues you in to this Thinksheet's main addition to the biblical warrant for my position). In saying yes to my questioning of "journeying" as Borg's leitmotif for religion, you contrast (your words) "the pious journeys of today's radical individualism" ("the spiritual Lone Rangers of our day") with "the faith community" under patriarch Abram, you mention that in a church you were preaching the latter while Borg in the annual meeting of the Mass. conference of the UCC was preaching the former. The point I want to make here about biblical patriarchy is that it is a **social** model with the patriarch as glue, whereas individuals on their "spiritual journeys" are, like marbles in a bag (in contrast to cells in a body), only that: **individuals**. Two sicknesses: Our society at every level demeans fatherhood, & feminist theology downplays or even denies the Father "metaphor" for God. But what glue substitute is there for the father on earth & the Father in heaven? Getting rid of God the Father is sickness; getting rid of fathers in society is sickness. Getting rid of God the Father, by diminishing the father category, worsens our central social disease, viz. the disintegration of the (father-mother-child) bio-family.

I do not, as you think, ground my opposition to "vertical inclusive

language" on "Biblical patriarchal language." But in this § I'm undermining your implied assumption that biblical patriarchy has, because so-called sexist, lost its right to speak to our social & theological situations. Behind your assumption is this false syllogism: (1) Biblical patriarchy was oppressive, especially to women. (2) Sexism is male (& male-institutional) oppression of women & is, because in reality the sexes are equal, evil. (3) Therefore, biblical patriarchy was evil & should be renounced & denounced, as should its mirror reflection above, viz. God the Father.

The syllogism itself bristles with questionable assumptions. Is the equality of the sexes ontological (as the syllogism presupposes), or only political & thus by inference legal? As to the placement of the mirror, may it not be argued with at least as much force that it's on earth (thus, earth reflecting the heaven situation)? "Biblical patriarchy was oppressive...to women" in comparison with what alternative systems then & now? Is an "-archy" (patriarchy, patronarchy, matriarchy) inherently oppressive (i.e., is a power-over figure inherently authoritarian)? Would the absence of an authority figure in society (& in heaven) reduce oppression (as liberationistically defined)?

And behind that, notice this childish romantic-idealistic syllogism: (1) Fathers should be perfect. (2) Fathers aren't perfect (which everybody discovers long before puberty). (3) Therefore, phone 911 & claim your child-empowerment over your oppressive, child-abusing male parent....And this coeval syllogism: (1) God is perfect. (2) Fathers aren't perfect. (3) Therefore, God should not be called (as we call him e.g. in the Lord's Prayer) "Father."

And behind all these syllogisms is the IFD disease our civilization caught from the French philosophes of the Enlightenment: (1) Because humanity is good, we should expect people to be good (idealism, the "I" of IFD). (2) But we find human beings behaving good & bad, & this frustrates us (frustration, the "F" of IFD). (3) This disappoints-discourages-disgusts us & we fall into despair & cynicism (despair & death, the "D" of IFD). Garbage in, recycled garbage out.

(ASIDE: By Emerson's law of compensation, we should call our perfect God "Father," because our own earth-fathers aren't perfect. As a pastor & counselor, I have encountered this POV far more often than the feministic reverse [i.e., because our fathers aren't perfect, it's blasphemous as well as oppressive to call God "Father"].)

10 The anarchic (Gk., "un-ruled") personality experiences all authority as oppressive because diametrical to autarchy (Gk., "self-ruled")....Think about the other "-archies": monarchy (rule by "only one"), demarchy (ruled by "the people," who have the power [Gk., demo-cracy]), thearchy (ruled by "God," who has the power [Gk., theo-cracy]). As Thearch, Theocrat, the biblical God is Monarch (thus, mono-theism) & decidedly masculine in his behavior, including in sending his "Son" as "Lord" & finally "Pantocrator" (Gk., "all-power" [often in both Testaments, for Jesus in NT]). Clever hermeneuts can mute the biblical God's masculinity, retailoring him to androgyny in the interest of the regnant egalitarianism; but it's tough (& evil) work. But the pay is good: "out there" among trendy Christians is a huge appetite for the emasculated, demasculinized, neutered, & even (as in Borg's Jesus as "the incarnation of Sophia") feminized deity (a simulacrum mercifully doomed to a short shelf-life).

11 When in highschool, our sons regularly helped to "pattern" a muscular-control-defective child by a program of specific movements. From one of them a few days ago I got a Father's Day card whose face was a compass around which were the words "Father, thank you for giving me direction." God directs his children, fathers are to direct theirs. And "pattern" comes from the Gk. & Lat. for "father." Ted, I'm suggesting to you that my concern for God as "he" (& never "she" or "it") is not "solely" biblical, certainly not scribal (bibliolatrous). I'm talking hormones & history & hope.

12 Please look again at this Thinksheet's title. So far I've broadened from "biblical patriarchy" to "patriarchy" & the other "-archies" except "matriarchy," which ethnographically & historically is an oddity, the exception that "proves" (i.e., "tests and finds true") the rule. Now notice that patriarchy "is only the bio-form" of something larger, viz. patronarchy (Gk., rule by a "patron"), which is the genus of which patriarchy is a species, there being also nonbiological

forms of patron-rule....(Would the dictionary help on "patronarchy"? Nope. Every "patron-" formation in the dictionary [e.g., patroonry & patronage] has a coloration diverting one's attention from the simple patron/client relationship which was the deepest ecosociopolitical structure in the Bible's worlds (& I would argue, in all human worlds): The patron uses his (almost always "his") power benevolently (noblesse oblige) downward to the client, who owes him gratitude, obedience, & imitation (i.e., the client using his power mimetically, as the patron uses his power). In return for gratitude, obedience, & imitation, the client has the right of access, through the patron, to the over-patron (i.e., the patron to whom the patron is a client). Every duty within this structure is "glue" (J.D.Crossan): any duty undone threatens the structure with collapse, anarchy: every member has the remedial duty to help restore order out of the chaos.

Draw a vertical line down the middle of an 8½"x11" sheet. On the left, list all the terms of patronarchy: patron, client, power, duty, benevolence, gratitude, obedience, imitation, noblesse oblige, downward, access, restoration of order. Then, on the right, list the corresponding terms in the Bible's world-view & life-view. Then, if you want to see how this works out in the hands of an excellent biblical scholar, read 91-116 of the Spr./96 JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE. Some of the conclusions you'll doubtless come to are: (1) The Bible's reality-access is **vertical**. (2) To use the biblical materials to make the horizontal axis primary is to mock up for yourself a new religion. (3) Since the horizontal ("relational") is a gal thing & the vertical is a guy thing, the Bible's religion & culture are primarily **masculine** (which obligates the guys to think first not of what's good for them but what's good for the gals). (4) As a great F.W.Robertson sermon put it, "**Obedience** [is] the organ of spiritual knowledge." In reading Hebrew this morning (GP.557), I came across this (here, Eng.): "May it be Your will, O Lord our God, that we obey your precepts this and every day of our lives, that we may merit the blessed happiness of the messianic time and the life of the world to come." (As you know, the whole idea of obedience is repulsive to feminism, which feels it to mean another word beginning with "o": oppression: demanding obedience is a guy thing, a heaven Father thing--which, indeed, it is, Gk. & Lat. for "father" being the stem of "patron.") (5) Patronarchy's normal naming is patronymic (Gk. & Lat., "father-naming"): when the father "gives" his daughter in marriage, he gives up his right to have her continue to bear his family-name (i.e., father-name). That's why you don't know my mother's family-name. I like it that since our wedding 51 years ago, Loree has borne her family-name as her middle name. I'd not like it if there were a hyphen between her middle & last names: that would unglue the patronal system, reversing the lineage (e.g., you couldn't find me in the phonebook by looking under my family-name). (6) **Access**: In reading Greek this morning (Eph.2.18), I came upon this trinitarian affirmation (my tr.): "Through him [Jesus] we [Jews & nonJews] both have access in one Spirit to the Father." Only Jesus has the "mediator" (Heb.8.6, 9.15, 12.24) power to be an effective broker of us clients to the divine Patron (9.1-3, 6-7). The Reformation's *solae* ("onlies") stress this central Christian message: salvation by grace (favor freely granted from Patron to client) alone through faith alone in the mediator Jesus Christ alone on the basis of Scripture alone to the glory of God alone. (7) We're always running a deficit with God & need, personally & in public confession, to tell him so: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance" (the 1st of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses). It's like the owner's store: the migrant farm-workers can never get paid up. (8) The Roman Catholics have it right: Sunday corporate **worship** is a Christian's "weekly obligation" to fulfil client-believers duties to the Patron ("worship" as gratitude, praise, prayer, petition, repentance, recommitment to obedience upward & benevolence downward). (Downward? Any benefit to another is "patronizing" even if the benefactor's deed has in it no whiff of condescension: the autonomous ego feels the gift to be insulting, & resents the functional inferiority. All 97 countries receiving U.S. "foreign aid" hate to say thank you, & many of these express variously their resentment.) (9) **Patriotism** (lit., devotion to one's "father"-land) is the practice of client duties to the nation as patron. "Pay the rent" is a commercial metaphor for this. It was powerful in early New England with its emphasis on the worship of Patron-Father God, obedience to earth-father, & filial-communal obligations. A splendid living example of this is Yankee patrician (yes,

from Gk. & Lat. "father") Elliot Richardson, who throughout his public life has served God and the people, not himself. For him, ethics has been everything, winning nothing (the reverse of the politico multitude!). Holding a long string of public offices as sacred trusts, he has carried out his duties with dedication, decency, honesty, truth, justice, & (in a Founding Fathers' phrase) "sacred honor" (too honorable to be "presidential material"). And he has been "accessible" to the people--not like all those authorities in the Kafka novels to whom K. could never find access.

13 How do we clone Elliot Richardson in our time of mendacious politics? No way, I say, but to begin at the beginning, with the divine Patron "up there," & reconstitute the whole patronarchy. Impossible? Not really: A generation ago, who would have predicted the evangelical revival & the political resurgence of the religious right? Improbable? I think so, which makes me pessimistic about the future of the American Experiment. Obstacles? One of them is the current andromisia, hatred of the masculine on earth & in heaven (down with God as "he"!). Since the vertical-transcendent is masculine, andromisia attacks "hierarchy" (radical feminism's code-word for the masculine-vertical-transcendent, the modish antonyms being "relationalism" & "partnership" & [ugh!] "alongsidedness").

14 IRONY: Andromisia is supposed to further women's "liberation" (as hating a common enemy gives cohesion, even coercive force, to a movement), but what's bad news for men (as is the demeaning of the masculine & the downputting of the father role) is bad news also for women (who are more burdened than ever) & children (who are more abandoned than ever). You, Ted, in your rejection of vertical exclusive language (God as "he" excluding "she"), aren't helpful toward the re-dignifying of masculinity & fatherhood to fight our society's central sickness at its source.

PEANUTS



15 As you can see, evangelical Christian Chas. Schulz has slipped in another of his wry theology-&-culture comments, this one on the feminism-caused **pronominal chaos** in God-language. Another media instance: 12May96 I heard a sports commentator also wryly express this descent into the pronominal pit. Speaking of the deity, he said "He, She, It, or whatever it is." The repeated "it"--

God as impersonal--is, linguistically, the to-be-expected resolution of the he/she controversy. I am puzzled that so many in our liberal churches, even biblical scholars & theologians, are so innocent of language dynamics as to think this resolution avoidable. To cease the exclusive use of masculine pronouns for God, or the use of any pronouns for God, is to vote, though unwittingly, for a new "death of [the personal] God." I don't know how to feel about the genetic redesigning of people: I do know how to feel about the linguistic redesigning of the biblical deity--sorrowful, outraged, disgusted, angry. Angry at you, Ted, that you would participate in this bowdlerizing nasty business.

16 In his LIFE WITHOUT FATHER: FATHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE AS INDISPENSABLE FOR THE GOOD OF CHILDREN AND SOCIETY (Free Press/96), David Popenoe says the bio-father is irreplaceable: shrinking fatherhood does irreparable damage. "Women provide roots [& are nurturing & talkative], men provide wings [& are aggressive, risk-taking, world-oriented]." Of course he allows for transpositions (high-androgenic women & high-estrogenic men), but (again, in this Thinksheet) "the exceptions prove the rule." The theo-Father, Creator Distributor of hormones, is "him"self (judged by his biblical behavior) high-androgenic without sacrificing nurturance & talk, a masculine-feminine homeostasis expressed in many biblical phrases (e.g., 2Cor.1.3 NRSV: "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation"). Plato was sure of something that wasn't so, viz. that planetary orbits are perfect circles: gender feminism is sure of something that isn't so about the biblical deity, that in (?) "it" the feminine & masculine are equal, in perfect balance (a glaring instance of Xenophanes' skeptical maxim that human beings make God in their own

ideal image). Such ideologs are scandalized by the Bible's preferential option for the divine masculine & thus, of course, by the deity's exclusively masculine incarnation. The notion that these scandals can be jettisoned without surrendering biblical religion is fatuous. What comes of this relativizing accomodationism is that it tends "to escalate to the point where the **plausibility** of the tradition collapses" (boldface mine; Peter Berger in his presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion [JSSR Spr/67 13; commenting on what happens when the "officially accredited reality definers" so deviate from the worshiping community's verbal "plausibility structure" that "de-objectification" occurs, knowledge deteriorating first into mere believing, then into mere opinion, then into mere feeling--a condition caused both by erosion & by "contamination"--both at work, we can see, in the current redesigning of the biblical deity, 30 years after Berger's presidential address]).

IRONY: Gender feminism's aim to make the biblical deity more plausible to the world (& in the "new century," as the UCC's new hymnal witnesses), by cutting church folk off from the Bible's God-talk, makes the biblical deity less plausible in the churches whose members are taught to clean up the Bible as they read.

17 During worship last Sunday, I asked "Is there anything for which you personally think a member should be thrown out of this church?" I'd just told the story of a member of our congregation who was ejected in 1833 for failure to move his fence to his lotline (to make an honest fence of it) &, moreso, for failure to keep his promise to the church that he would do so. He was reinstated when he stood before the congregation & repented of both transgressions. The offended member, instead of going to the town court (a shame to Jesus & the church [1Cor.6]), took his case to the church, which set up a three-member ad hoc church court to process the complaint. Now, Ted, use the patronal paradigm to think about this "historical moment" in the 200-year life of our congregation. The congregation, under the Father's discipline & judgment, used its patronarchic power to judge & discipline a member. Are not our churches now too feminized for such action? If the Father Judge is dead among us, who now is "God"? And how domesticate wild males?

LLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville MA 02632

