The feminist-hermeneutical spin on **homosexuality:**

RELATIONALISM IS REVELATION

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It's a good thing the gals are into what's good for human **interrelations.** It acts as at least a brake on, if not always a corrective to, the guys' running off with some damn-fool **idea** like "blood" (Nazism) or "dialectical materialism" (Communism) or "sex" (Freudianism) or "evolution" (Darwinism) or....

The grain-of-sand irritant starting this (?) pearl of a Thinksheet was my reading, last night, of an elaborate, expensively produced feminist diatribe whose subliminal message (whether or not in the consciousness of the woman who wrote it) is that the divine will is most closely approached by our study of human interrelationships, a study whose products should control our reading of the Bible: Mary Jo Osterman, CLAIMING THE PROMISE: An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study Resource on Homosexuality (Reconciling Congregational Program/97 [3801 N.Keeler Av., Chicago IL 60641]).

1 What is "feminist hermeneutics"? It's reading the Bible through what feminists call "women's [as distinct from men's] experience." (Some black feminists, to distinguish themselves from white feminists, speak of "womanist experience.")

2 Who are the feminist hermeneuts (interpreters)? With backup from a few somewhat prominent men, here are the chiefs: Eliz. Schüssler-Fiorenza, Mary Daly, Letty Russell, Elizabeth Johnson, Rosemary Radford Reuther (my short list). They piggyback on, & baptize, the (secular) women's movement (American feminism's third wave, beginning in the early '60s [Betty Friedan+]).

3 What is their spin (angle of vision, point of view) on the Christian religion? This (though not all would put it just this way):

> Men wrote the Bible & created Jewish-&-Christian theology. That is why both are theoandrocentric (God on the model of the human male). Israel (OT) is the Father's wife; the Church (NT) is the Son's bride; the Holy Spirit [in the male sexual role, however construed] impregnated a human female, who gave birth to the Son, who will come again as "this same Jesus" (Ac.1.11). The whole thing is a guy show, with the gals as appendages. The priests of this religion are naturally, normally, male, female priests being at most a rare & fortuitous aberration. (Some feminist hermeneuts would add this bit of [bad sense] mythology:) This whole tilt toward the male in the battle of the sexes is a woeful leftover from the God's prehistoric crushing of the Goddess's Golden Age, & we must now (alternatives) (1) return the power to the Goddess or (2) correct for the historical distortion by (a) banning androcentric language for deity (as, eg, Christianity's pronouns for God nowhere appear in THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL) & (b) rewriting both hermeneutics & theology.

4 Feminist hermeneutics is radically egalitarian. The diatribe this Thinksheet is reviewing takes, as moral baseline, Marie M. Fortune's sexual interrelations guidelines (*over*)*. Notice the "power" emphasis in the first two. In the first, no sex unless the partners have "relatively equal" power (a rule wiping out the Bible's marriages [eg, Boaz/Ruth]: no feminist sweat there, the Bible being "patriarchal" & to that extent irrelevant to sex-&-marriage today). The second repeats "equal power." But what, in sexual relationships, does equal power mean? On the Linda Tripp tapes, Monica claims power superior to Bill's: she seduced him. In Proverbs, a book feminist hermeneuts grind their teeth at, the young man is warned against considering women more fun than dangerous, the essence of Clinton's folly. (No evidence that the President used, against Monica, his superior nonsexual power. The reverse: he saw to it that she got a better job.)

Notice, too, that Fortune's guidelines, having egalitarianism as their minor premise, have relationalism as their major premise. The conclusion of her logic is that the goals of "sexual pleasure and intimacy" (guideline four) transcend the gender identity of the partners. Lesbians couldn't be happier with her (& gays come close, though [not being women] they in general are not all that much into relationalism as revelation). Against "rules-based ethics" & "situation-based ethics," Fortune pushes "discernment [of interrelationships] based ethics," the goal being not (the

* P46 of the diatribe.

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Doing Least Harm
An Ethical Standard and Five Relational Guidelines

Marie M. Fortune

The basic ethical guideline for making sexual or other relational ethical decisions for Fortune is "doing least harm." Her values for "doing least harm" are reflected in the following five relational guidelines:

Peer Relationships: *Is my choice of intimate partner a peer, i.e. someone whose power is relatively equal to mine? We must limit our sexual interaction to our peers. Some people are off limits for our sexual interests.*

Authentic Consent: *Are both my partner and I authentically consenting to our sexual interaction? Both of us must have information, awareness, equal power, and the option to say "no" without being punished, as well as the option to say "yes."*

Stewardship of Sexuality: *Do I take responsibility for protecting myself and my partner against sexually transmitted diseases and to insure reproductive choice? This is a question of stewardship (the wise care for, and management of, the gift of sexuality) and anticipating the literal consequences of our actions. Taking this responsibility seriously presupposes a relationship: knowing someone over time and sharing a history in which trust can develop.*

Sharing of Pleasure: *Am I committed to sharing sexual pleasure and intimacy in my relationship? My concern should be both for my own needs and those of my partner.*

Faithfulness: *Am I faithful to my promises and commitments? Whatever the nature of a commitment to one's partner and whatever the duration of that commitment, fidelity requires honesty and the keeping of promises. Change in an individual may require a change in the commitment, which hopefully can be achieved through open and honest communication.*

—Marie M. Fortune

Love Does No Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us
New York: Continuum, 1995, based on pp. 33-39
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Bible's) the glory of God but rather (Indic religions') ahimsa (harmlessness).

5 For the rest of this Thinksheet, let's see how all this plays out in the diatribe, which describes hetero/homo-"reconciliation" as up-to-speed biblical knowledge & hetero/homo-inequality (specifically, the societal-legal preferential option for hetero-sex, same-sex unions having inferior status) as troglodyte biblical literalism, with more regard for words & laws than for human beings & "love" (ie, relationalism). (Irony: This puts me in the allegedly lower-class--even though for attacking literalism, I was fired from three biblical-languages-teaching jobs!)

(1) Is it your opinion that the notion of the sexes' complementarity is an insult to women, whose independence is supposedly compromised by the interdependence idea? Lesbian Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (p17) does: God "named us 'humankind.' That is a statement of cohumanity, nothing else [in context, not complementarity]." Note the paradox: radical relationship, yet radical separation of the sexes. Androphobia, if not also andromisia (man-hate)--a common lesbian hubris tarnishing the name of feminism.

(2) As I showed in #2891.7(3) in another case, homosexual hermeneutics corrupts the biblical word "covenant" by including under its umbrella conduct condemned in both Testaments. P8: "In our biblical story God repeatedly forgives us and remakes covenant with us. Can we forgive and make covenant with each other?"

(3) To give respectabiity to the dogma of egalitarian relationalism, feminist-&-prohomosexual hermeneuts must spin (political sense) every anti-homo passage in the Bible. Some biblical scholars have been willing to prostitute their expertise to this cause. Another image: They are Houdinis, escaping out of every such passage. And another image: The bowdlerization is accomplished sometimes by shrinking, & sometimes by expanding, the obvious meaning of the text. Mary Jo Osterman, in her diatribe, takes full advantage of these perversions, & adds some of her own (eg, "new creation" [2Cor.5.17-20] includes, here & now, her prohomo position). By these various shameful strategems, she (p37) sets the Bible aside as a confused source: "Israel was not of one mind" on homosexuality (David & Jonathan being a gay item). "The Bible is not of one mind on it." (On the passages, see #2903.)

(4) Take just one passage, 1Cor.6.9-10. Wm.Countryman so narrows it as to remove it from the table, rule it off limits in the present debate. It's word for "males-going-to-bed-with-males" (how could Paul have been more explicit?) becomes, in W.C.'s perverting hands, males using their sexual attraction to ingratiate themselves with rich elderly lovers *of either sex (!)*. No lexicon credits this deliberate prevarication. But we cannot expect honesty from anyone whose project is to neutralize Scripture's antihomo texts.