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THE SICK, SAD SYMBIOSIS OF ENDOGAMOUS WOMEN AND IRRESPONSIBLE MEN

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone 508.775.8008
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"Wives, be subject [KJV, "submit yourselves"] to your husbands...."
--Eph.5.21, elsewise repeated in v.24; Col.3.18, same wording as Eph.5.21--NRSV.

OCCASION: A liberal-Christian woman complained to me against her conservative-Christian sister, whose church teaches the behavior enjoined in these scriptures. My response? A noncommittal "Hmmmm." Time for her sake, & mine, to Thinksheet where my commitment is.

1 As we all know, if O.J.'s blond wife had been submissive she'd not have gotten beaten, "spouse-abuse"d, by him. As also we all know, women of late have gotten harder to handle, to keep under control, to keep under. And I consider it obscene to use the above scriptures to justify--even sanctify!--the execrable oppression of females by males within the "bonds" of marriage. Such use of the Bible is itself abuse, as any intelligent person dealing honorably with the two contexts will agree. Here I must take no more space than to observe....

2 ....that the passages are about a **third** level of submission. The **first** is the submission (NRSV, as you see, prefers subjection) of both wife & husband to Christ (as is "the church"). And the **second** is the mutual submission of husband & wife. Further, the passages are addressed to wives: they do not authorize husbands to insist on wifely submission. Indeed, the husbands are enjoined to love their wives & "never treat them harshly" (Col.3.19); the husbands' model is to be Christ, who "gave himself up for" the church (Eph.5.25) in self-sacrifice. Husband & wife are bound by the liberating commandment of the Double Love: love God, & your neighbor as yourself. Eph.5.28-33 reinforces this both by reference to the "one flesh" of Gn.2.24 & to the Stoic extension of soma (body) to eros/polis (the body social, both private & public). In return, "a wife should respect her husband" (Eph. 5.33). She should not be submissive by any other standard than (Col.3.18) "in the Lord," ie as Christian with Christian in Christian community (the church having responsibilities vis-a-vis relationships within its families).

If you still don't like all this, you've an out: "Nowhere do the undisputed Pauline Letters call for the subjection of wives" (2199, The HarperCollins Study Bible: NRSV, 1993): all scholars consider Eph. & Col. in the Paul school (or stream) of early Christian literature, but some say Paul did not pen them. Small matter, made large only by modernity's up-tight concern for accurate authorial attribution. But I personally find in Eph. & Col. nothing transverse of Paul's egalitarian concern (eg, Gal.3.28) for women & men "in Christ."

3 The PC (political) question is well put in the bumper sticker, "Feminism is the teaching that women are people": "How change society so men have no prestige-&-power advantages over women?" Freud's question is earlier & parallel: "What do women want?" Farrakhan said it in his 2½-hour Million Men March oration: They want men to be men, women-respectful men, children-responsible men. (The wording is mine, the ideas are his but were mine long, long before he spoke them.)

4 A woman deserves the dignity of having her man take no other relationship as seriously as he takes his relationship with her. Gn.2.24 again: "A man leaves his father and mother [otherwise, his most important relationship] and clings to his wife." (Under Assyrian law, this would mean he'd become part of his wife's family & household, as Laban [31.43] expected of Jacob, who however saw the patriarchy of Abraham-Isaac the 2nd most important relationship for him.)....Hebrew has a shock: Adam is not a male before God makes [common Heb. wd. for "builds"] a female: before the woman (*ishah*), there was only *adam* (from mud [earth], *adamah*), no *ish* (male human being, husband). (The woman had the dignity of being made not out of mud but out of the first human being: this story, earlier than Gn.1.27, can be used on either side of the fraudulent battle of the sexes.) "He is called man only if he has a wife."--Talmud (Yeb.63a). "Woman is more than man's female counterpart; like his rib, she is part of him, part of his structure, and without her he is essentially incomplete."--31, THE TORAH: A MODERN COMMENTARY (UAHC/81): "Man enters a fundamentally new state when he ceases to be alone....Aloneness [ie,

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womanlessness] is man's primary helplessness." Gn.2.18&20 NRSV: "a helper as his partner." The HarperCollins Study Bible, 8: "The making of woman from the man's rib suggests their equality and kinship, not her subordination" (though in itself, I must add, this early version, unlike Gn.1.27 [where "man" precedes "woman" only syntactically], does make woman look like an afterthought--of which a male chauvinist, sexist reading makes much)....Gn.2.24 is used in Jesus (Mt.19.5, M.10.7) & in Paul (Gal.5.31): The husband's primary relationship was a fundamental in early Christian ethics.

5 Why does this fundamental need emphasis in & beyond the Bible? Because husbands need help in feeling/being as tied to their wives as their wives are to them. The "bonds" of matrimony are more to tie the man to woman/children than the reverse. So in his "A Prayer for My Daughter," Wm. Butler Yeats hopes the house she goes to will successfully tie male to female: "And may her bridegroom bring her to a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious; / For arrogance and hatred are the wares / Peddled in the thoroughfares. / How but in custom and in ceremony / Are innocence and beauty born? / Ceremony's a name for the rich horn [ie, cornucopia], / And custom for the spreading laurel tree." Pre-pregnant/pregnant spouse has less tendency to wander (both senses: sexually, & away from responsibilities) than has the impregnantable spouse: when it comes to the temptation to let attention & intention wander, biology is destiny....CONCLUSION: Teach family ethics only to the boys, & the girls will go along; only to the girls, & they'll become single parents. To put it another way, girls are easier to house-break, domesticate. Evidence now seemingly to the contrary is only superficial. Mother Nature doesn't "fight fair": the playing field is never level. And understandably, hatred of their bodies/roles is a heavy though unacknowledged factor in radical feminism (what I call "feministicism").

6 Now, who are those "endogamous women" in this Thinksheet's title? They are women who keep tied to their fathers (by keeping their "maiden name") instead of cutting that tie & becoming tied to their husbands (by substituting his patronymic for theirs). The **naming**/marriage question has been thoroughly studied by U. of Chicago sociologists Amy A. & Leon R. Kass & reported, among other places, in this month's FIRST THINGS (14-25). The rest of this Thinksheet details their findings & conclusions, though order & emphasis are mine.

(1) "To name is to identify," as God & Adam do at the Bible's beginning. "God's naming clarifies, delimits, bounds, shapes, and makes intelligible," bringing order out of chaos....Human naming is frequently colored by human passions such as fear, pride, hope, and lust....Eve gets the first genuinely proper name given in the Bible." The name you're given "not only marks but constitutes" your identity. Your 1st name lets you "stand out" as an individual (in risk): your last lets you "stand in" (in safety): our existence is "between distinction and inclusion." In baptism, the Christian is "reborn by being named in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit....Baptism denies the parents' natural tendency to think of the child as property or as an object of pride and power."

(2) Blanket first-naming is bad for everybody & for society. It's "symptomatic of a general breakdown of the boundaries between public and private life"--an American affliction resulting from "the relentless march of the democratic spirit, under the twin banners of equality and individualism." Chn. who don't first-name adults are "courting the greater self-respect that comes with adult accomplishment." Students who want to be first-named are practicing "a tacit but quite definite denial of their origins, of their roots in families" & thus contributing to their excessive individualism (& I add, loneliness & suicide-potential). "Last names are ever-present reminders that we were begotten and that we belong, and, later, that we belong in order to beget." ("Slaves were given only first names.")

(3) The man whose last name overarches his family feels more responsible to & for them: the dominance of his patronymic **compensates** for his biological parent/child inferiority. It's a trade-off: she trades in her patronymic, submitting to being in subjection to his, in exchange for husbandly support for her being the only parent-by-birth (he being "the parent-by-choice" only if he accepts his familial duties, including "legitimizing" offspring by exogamy), freedom from her parental family, children's identity-security, & her generative-generational fulfilment.