People have their pets neutered, but here's something new:

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THE NEUTERING OF GOD

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The latest Hogarthian "progress" (meaning regress): God was **he**, then became **he/she**, then became **she**, & now increasingly in radical feminism is *degendered* into **it**. Today's greatest threat to Christianity is not from outside--secularism, materialism, other religions--but from inside: the radical-feminist challenge to the Bible's way, historic Christianity's way, of speaking about God, viz. as **he**.

1 "God is spirit" (Jn.4.24 NRSV), so what's all the fuss about God's gender? Look at the context: (1) In the same v., God is "he" (God is masculine spirit [or Spirit]); (2) the purchase of "spirit" is to transcend not gender but geography (viz., Jerusalem/Gerazim); (3) three times God is "Father"; (4) Messiah is masculine (v.25); (5) God the "I AM" is masculine in the person of Jesus (v.26: NRSVmg correctly makes this identification)....All that masculinity is in the original: I'm not dependent on translations (which sometimes make a text seem more masculine than it is, & sometimes less)....My point? Even this favorite text of the antimasculinists is thoroughgoingly masculine.

2 But, argue the antimasculinists, let's not be literal: since God hasn't a body, God's masculinity is only a disposable metaphor. I reply: (1) It would be news to Moses, whose thinking of God was concrete though transcendent (& not, as some Greeks, abstract); (2) God once bodied himself forth (the incarnation), & everybody could see which gender; (3) if God's masculinity were not more than metaphor ("Father" & "Son" being names of, not mere metaphors for, God), the Bible would not so singlemindedly, consistently, avoid (1) calling God "she" or even (2) using feminine metaphor(s) for God (though it does permit itself a few similes). Reply the antimasculinists, that consistency only proves how thoroughgoingly patriarchal the Bible is. So it is, say I, & ask Why? & reply Because the biblical God is thoroughgoingly masculine....CAUTION: Philosophy abstracts from the concreteness of life, & I can think of anything, including the divine, in the abstract (i.e., lacking the marks of concreteness, e.g. gender & person). With the personal idealists, I can even straddle, imagining a genderless person, but that would not be the biblical God.

3 A genderless person is an oxymoron most radical feminists ask me to believe in. A god who's both impersonal (persons having gender) & personal (as "speaking," etc.). I'm not to call this emasculated/degendered/neutered God "he," & saying "it" would depersonalize (as does Leander Keck in THE CHURCH CONFIDENT [Abingdon/93], who responded to my objection by saying he did it under pressure & "to communicate"; on p.39, in a chapter on worship, we get the absurdity of praising "it": "If the transcendent God-Reality is praiseworthy, then it is to be praised...."; p.52 praises "non-gender-specific language for God"; next p., "The game is over if this Reality is not free to disclose itself [!] through our language....A deity that is inert and incompetent is not deity at all." Did he say "the church *confident*"? The game is indeed over if "it" surrogates for "he").

4 This feministic neutering of God forms an easy alliance with the much older naturalistic theism of process theology (Whitehead, Wieman, Hartshorne, Cobb), which escaped the scandal of the divine Person by sacralizing universal Process. Add the human female's superior relational perceptions & skills, & we have "relational theology"--e.g., in Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, THE FALL TO VIOLENCE: ORIGINAL SIN IN RELATIONAL THEOLOGY (1994). Says she (38 in Chopp & Taylor, my #2704), "Reality is essentially relational." In Carter Heyward's THE REDEMPTION OF GOD: A THEOLOGY OF MUTUAL RELATION (U.P. of Am./82), God is the power of relationality. Rebecca Chopp's proposal is to replace "Father" with the impersonal word "Word." (Irony: Persons relate, prayer is a relation with the personal God; but when "Word"-words relate, its only syntax!)

5 I recall, in class with Chas. Hartshorne, his dreamily (his usual mood) speculating about the world as God's body, a speculation I spent a bit of time on in highschool reveries. Boil that up with "relational theology," as in Sallie McFague's THE BODY OF GOD: AN ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY (Fortress/93 [follow-up of her

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1987, same press, MODELS OF GOD), & you have a cosmological-relational-narcissist soup, gourmet food for radical feminists & their campfollowers.

6 In this Thinksheet's introduction, the neutered God is the fourth stage in the emergent religion of feminism. The third stage is where most radical feminists are: God as **she**, with the human female body as both sacrament & cosmic model, both appearing in the liturgies of the WCC Minneapolis Nov/93 "Re-Imagining" conference: the-world-as-God's-body + woman-as-God's-model (so, Goddess, Sophia) = woman's body as the holy temple. All quite relational-masturbatory-narcissistic, Woodstock redivivus. Throw in Peale's positive thinking & the Glass Cathedral's possibility thinking & you have liberation defined as "the positive power of relationality" (Suchocki, 45 in C. & T.; my underlining).

7 I know how the Jews felt when, in Christianity's first generation, Christians, instead of leaving the synagogues, tried to take them over for Jesus: some radical feminists are now trying to take over the churches. First we got feminized Christians, from too little male influence in the Sunday schools; now we're confronted with **the feminization of the church.** As the early Christians soon developed a theology incompatible with Judaism, feministic theologians in 100+ books have now developed a feministic theology incompatible with canonical Christianity.

8 One of the loci of this new feministic theology is the new situation-definition of sin: not human betrayal of God-neighbor-nature (as in the Bible) but male dominance, "patriarchy": "Feminism is a movement of those women and men who seek to transform patriarchal structures of subordination" (E. S.-Fiorenza, 88 in C. & T.). P.79: Patriarchy is tyranny, feminism is democracy! P.86f: "Feminist liberation theologies...claim the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed and marginalized for reading the Bible in the community of faith...to inspire Christians with the biblical visions of a world freed from the structural sin of patriarchal domination....to promote the radical equality of all." P.88: "Gender roles are socially constructed rather than innate or ordained by God." 92: The Bible-as-archetype needs to be deconstructed, then reconstructed as prototype of human experience. P.95: Down with (her word) "kyriarchy" (Gk., "Lord-rule"; Ger., "Herrschaft" [lord/master/father])! P.95, in rejection of the canonical-Christian principle that the Bible is its own interpreter (its principles of interpretation to be found mainly within Scripture), she has this: "The theological criteria that allow us to test how much biblical texts and symbols perpetrate [the original sin of] patriarchy may be informed by biblical experiences but cannot be extracted from them."

9 To the LOVE-oriented, *betrayal* is the essence of sin, & **repentance** is the way back from the Fall, back to righteousness-justice. That's the Bible's foundational analysis of what's wrong & how things can come right again, & more than right. But to the POWER-oriented, *oppression* (the abuse of power) is the essence of sin, & **liberation** is the way back from the Fall, back to equality.

While in operation, the two are not mutually exclusive, in essence they are two competing religions. In the former, all are sinners (Ps.14.1-3,53:1-4; Ro.1-3, esp.3.23: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"). In practice, this religion may be misogynist (woman-hating). In the latter, men are sinners. In theory, this religion is misandrous (man-hating). It preaches that things were just great before the boys ran a number on the girls (1) in prehistory (the myth of the golden-age-goddess past) & (2) in early church history (before "the Church Fathers").

10 As a POWER religion, radical feminism is allergic to the vertical: nobody's to be submissive to anybody. A favorite text is Gal.3.28, women & men on, as it were, a level playingfield. But how? By their mutual submission to a higher power, they are "one in Christ Jesus"--as under Tito, "Yogo[yoke]slavia" Serbs, Croats, & Bosnians were one. The self-contradiction of radical feminism is in believing (1) in gender equality & (2) that only a male God (e.g., the biblical God) would demand submission. Contrast Christianity's realistic utopianism: (1) realistic in assuming that the girls & the boys can't get along together unless both are "minding" a Third Party, & (2) utopian in believing in the final success of the Third Party in achieving universal submission....None of the above should speak against the ordination of women, which is opposed only by insubordinate-unsubmissive-sinful males & their female dupes.