

A FURTHER NOTE ON "INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE"

24 Apr 85 -- We who've made it into 1985 remember how the Orwellian "1984" lexicon bounced around in our crania for a twelvemonth. As early as my 1966 "First Printing" of the RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY has the base-word of this thinksheet: "an official or semiofficial style...to serve a political or ideological cause while pretending to be objective." The word signals, in George Orwell's off-the-wall way, all "interested" dishonest use of language in the context of dishonest rewriting of history, i.e., "revisionism."

1. I've no objection to "inclusive language" in modern speech, and have used it myself since Betty Friedan's 1964 THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE. What this thinksheet complains of is the essentially, ineluctably dishonest practice of converting the mouths of the dead by modernizing their extant utterances. (I never cease mentioning H.J.Cadbury's 1937 anticipation of this monstrosity: THE PERIL OF MODERNIZING JESUS.)

2. Saturday I bumped into this grotesquerie in, of all sophisticated places, The New York Public Library, which currently has on display 620 astonishing items from its "Treasury" of 27,000,000 items. As the guide let loose her spiel at case after case, and the secularism of what she'd been taught to parrot became more and more apparent (e.g., "I don't know what you personally think about the Bible, but here is...."--a formula used only when the artifact was of biblical religion!), I became impatient. When she said Jn. Eliot (first Bible printed in America--and in Algonquin, which he'd reduced to writing and then written both a lexicon and grammar of) was a "proselytizer," I said "He never called himself one, so why do you? He did not say it in Greek, as you did: he said it in Latin, calling himself a 'missionary'--so why don't you call him what he called himself?" As you might guess, she defended herself by saying "I'm only saying what the Library has told me to say." I was gentle with her, as the FBI should be with small Mafia members.....In the name of what does The NY Public Library abuse history? You know: in the name of hatred of biblical religion; in the name of aggressive secularism such as one can understand in the USSR but such as one should be appalled at in great USA institutions.

3. Wednesday I got hit again: Into my hands came the mailer of a UCC conference minister who thus "modernized" Jn. Robinson ("May he rest in peace," as the Jews and Irish say): "God did not reveal God's (original, 'his') whole will to them....The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of God's (original, 'his') holy Word." An innocent accomodation to the modern feminist conscience? An abuse of truth in the "interest" of love! The parentheses are, of course, mine: the conference minister was not honest enough to admit, in print, that he was abusing an uncontested historical text.

4. But of course my #1 concern in this category of language-abuse-in-the-interest-of-"love" is biblical revisionism, specifically, the INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LECTIONARY (year A, year B, and soon-to-appear year C). Over this evil monstrosity I alternately laugh and cry. I have no doubt that this stupidity will be pushed to the publishing of a whole revisionistic Bible (about 1990). It's not just that such projects embarrass the American liberal church establishment in the eyes of the world Church. The dishonesty of it is a shame and laughingstock in the eyes of all honest folk who know "what's up." And thus it is a betrayal of history and of our Lord and the Church.