

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Religion of Feminism

Last weekend [1989 – GFS] "the Reverend" Barbara Harris was made the first female bishop in the Anglican Communion. Actually, she was made a "suffragan" or assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. I didn't realize this but Anglicans regard their bishops as sacramentally appointed successors of the twelve apostles. This event prompted a special four-page article in Newsweek (213-89). The article basically was about the current state of the feminist-movement in modern religion. Early in the article there was a statement attributed to Margaret McMannus of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. She observes that for women, "the issue is no longer equality, . . . the issue is transformation of our religious institutions."

Feminists argue that Jesus taught mutual authority and involvement but that "his male successors subverted" His plan and created a males-only power structure in the church. In the Bible, God dealt with the heads of the family originally - men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - and this was called "patriarchy." The article I am reviewing says feminist theologians regard patriarchy as ". . . the Original Sin and root of all other social evils: sexism, racism, clericalism, ageism, classism . . . parental subjugation of children and mankind's technological rape of Mother Earth." I didn't realize it was now wrong for parents to have children who were subject to them or who obeyed them (Ephesians 6:1-3). However, the feminists don't seem to have any problem with what the Bible says. They either change it or ignore it.

In the seminaries of the denominations where from 1/3 to 1/2 of the students are women, some radical language changes have occurred. Generic nouns like "mankind" have become "humankind." God "the Father" is acceptable only if twinned with God "the Mother." The article says, "As a fallback, God 'the Parent' will do." No longer is their purpose to put more women in the pulpit. "Rather, their aim is a thorough and comprehensive transformation of the language, symbols and sacred texts of the Christian faith - and therefore, of the faith itself." As an example, ". . . many feminists feel free to adorn their women-church liturgies with replicas of 'Christa,' a crucifix with a nude female body sculpted in 1975 by Edwina Sandys." The article had a side by side picture of the

two crucifixion scenes. One had Jesus with a male body and the other had Jesus with a female body. Sandra Schneiders of Graduate Theological Union, and a Catholic nun says, "the Gospel portrays Jesus as non-aggressive, noncompetitive, meek and humble of heart, a nurturer of the weak and a friend of the outcast - all-feminine traits." Therefore, they would call Jesus a feminist today and they have no problem portraying him with a crucifix with a female body. One has to wonder, when they speak of Jesus as non-aggressive and meek, if they have ever read Matthew 23 and the scathing rebukes Jesus issued to the Jews of his day. Perhaps they were scathing "feminist" rebukes!

Some of the re-interpretations suggested by the feminist movement come as a result of their use of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" - they assume that the Bible's male authors deliberately covered up the role of women in early Christianity. Here are some of the changes and language they are suggesting: Rosemary Ruether of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois suggests using "God/ess" in referring to God. This would replace the "God the Father" references. Her term underscores her belief that divine reality is best understood as an empowering "Primal Matrix," the great womb "in whom we live and move, and have our being." Of course this will really help!

For "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," some feminists substitute "Creator, Redeemer and Comforter." However, in her work, "Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age," theologian Sally McFague of Vanderbilt Divinity School urges a Trinity of "Mother, Lover and Friend." This is profound, isn't it folks? Jesus has to be portrayed as a feminist according to hospital chaplain Christian Reimers who recently graduated from The School of Theology at Claremont in California because she asks: "Can a woman be saved by a male Savior?" I somehow doubt that a woman with this kind of attitude could be saved by a male or a female Savior. According to Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza of Harvard Divinity School, the Women's Movement is now a movement of "self-identified women and women-identified men" from all denominations whose common goal is to re-interpret the Gospel from the perspective of women's liberation. Somehow I doubt that I need apply for membership.

Paul would not fit the mold of the modern women's movement very well either. I suspect he would make them rather uncomfortable, if they still have the ability to be uncomfortable, as he teaches: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, KJV). It is evident that this movement has no regard for the teaching of God's Word. It is precisely because a violation of this injunction produces the mess I have described from the Newsweek article that we must insist that unholy men and women keep their hands off the Divine

Revelation. Leave it as it is and insist that it be followed as a pattern for modern church life. Otherwise, we introduce every evil work imaginable into religion. Modernism says let us make religion relevant to modern circumstances. Faithful people say, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). I shall cast my lot with those who speak what God has taught.

- Lewis Willis, via Guardian of Truth, 04/20/1989

Clippings . . .

MY RULES FOR LIFE

(1) I try never to say anything behind a man's back that would give me the least embarrassment to say to his face. (2) I try never to speak back to personal critics; friends do not need to hear the defense and enemies would not believe it. (3) Every day I greet every person I see with a smile and make a special effort if one is poor or in unfortunate circumstances. (4) The first thing when I awake in the morning I plan what my duty for the day is and try to go beyond it. (5) Every day I read from the Bible and from some other good book - feeding the mind and soul is more important than bodily food. (6) I try to pay every debt I owe on time and always to save something from every paycheck, however small. (7) I like people and never harbor any malice or hatred toward any person in the world. I like places and have yet to be anywhere I do not like. I go there with the intention of liking the place. (8) I am a confirmed optimist, believing that even in this life evil men will be punished by their own unhappiness and good men will be rewarded. "It is better further on." (9) I try to close each day as if it were the last day I'd be on earth, closing the books on all regrets, worries, and annoyances. (10) The last thing I do at night is to count one by one the blessings of the day. This makes me so thankful and happy that I soon drift into pleasant sleep. In this spirit I hope to close life's journey and drift into eternity.

- George W. DeHoff (1913-1993)

Faithful in Little, Faithful in Much!

Luke records that the Lord Jesus said, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10). The NIV has: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." Of course this is a general rule concerning the way people operate. And how we operate reveals the essence of our moral character.

The previous parable of the unrighteous steward (Luke 16:1-9) could easily be misunderstood by someone thinking that the Lord approves of deceitfulness in handling worldly wealth. The Lord is using this parable to teach that His followers should use material resources to prepare for eternity. Recall Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

With regard to handling worldly wealth, commitment to trust and faithfulness in those responsibilities is key as a servant of God. The true servant of God is trustworthy (1 Corinthians 4:2) to handle responsibility honorably, whether dealing with little or much (Luke 19:17; Matthew 25:21, 23). We should be careful not to diminish the importance of right dealing in little things.

Luke 16:11 summarizes this concept: "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?" If we, as stewards, handle this world's goods and possessions having fixed our eyes on the spiritual things which are not seen (2 Corinthians 4:18), we will fare well. The material goods that we have befriended will not be a witness against us in the Judgment (2 Corinthians 9:6-12).

- Gary Smalley

* "The reason a dog is everyone's friend is that he wags his tail and not his tongue!"

* "The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us!"

* "The true test of a saint's life is not successfulness but faithfulness!"

* "The wages of sin is death — shouldn't you quit before payday?"

* "There is never a right way to do wrong!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)