

**Christianity - Not Reformed but Deformed!**

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**Church of Sweden recommend gender neutral pronouns for God**

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By Press Association

The Church of Sweden has urged its clergy to use gender-neutral language when referring to God, refraining from using terms like "Lord" and "He" in favour of the less specific "God".

Feminism is such a difficult thing to define and feminists are by no means agreed on what feminism is. For some, feminism is merely an attempt to redress inequality of opportunity between the sexes in employment and gender roles in the family and community. For others feminism is a battle against the alleged repression of all things feminine by men, the only solution for which is all out gender war until the ground is recovered. There are religious variants of feminism based on the first view which are content to secure interchangeability of function between men and women at all levels of Church life. For these, working towards the first (legitimate) female Pope is a sacred task. Other more militant religious feminists, basing their views on the second model of gender war, regard Christianity as inescapably patriarchal and oppressive. These seek a new religion with some ties to Jesus but essentially rehabilitating the goddess cult of former times.

This talk is not seeking to address every variant of feminism both moderate and radical, secular and faith based. I fear we should then get entangled in a morasse of social comment, half-baked theories and contentious subjectivity. Rather, here, I shall attempt to consider the Person of the Father in relation to feminism as a whole for there are some common themes in the general feminist reaction to this basic tenet of Christianity that God is our Father.

The first person in the modern era to address this issue from a psychoanalytic perspective was, of course, Sigmund Freud. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Freud grappled with the tortured neuroses and psychoses of his repressed Viennese patients. Modern psychiatry no longer doffs its cap to the "Great Master" as once before. Nonetheless, Freud's assessment of Christian

belief in God the Father is pivotal in trying to understand feminism's varying reactions against it.

Freud argued that "Father" was a projection by us humans onto the nature of God. We, some of us that is, have had such lousy fathers on earth, that, it is argued, we seek by way of compensation, an ideal Father in Heaven. This projection is a reaction to a neurosis. Deal with the neurosis, namely our half-concealed hatred for our human fathers, and the need to call God "Father" will vanish away. In fact, for Freud, Jew that he was, much of religion was really a projection of our disappointment and pain onto the canvass of Heaven. Now the reason why Freud's view was so popular was its plausibility at first hearing. Clearly God is not male, (or female). Did not Christ himself teach that:- "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and Truth?" Freud would not even admit that God was LIKE a father. God was the ILLUSION of an ideal Father, made necessary by our anxieties and hurts. The plausibility of this approach then lead many to suggest that since our experience of human fatherhood was sometimes cruel and corrupting we should hesitate before calling God Father for fear of making eternal and immeasurable the pain of knowing the divine in the hearts and lives of those abused by their own fathers. It goes without saying of course that this made Jesus the archetypal neurotic in the eyes of Freud. It was he who started the whole "Father-thing" off!

At this point, along come the religious feminists, who then claim that whereas "Mother" would also be a projection, since all God-talk is symbolic and derived from our human experience, we should offer "Mother" instead as an alternative. "Mother" is warm and kind, deeply imbued with the dark warmth and comfort of the earth, the breast and the womb. These are much the same feminists of course who have no compunction in ripping human life from the womb in abortion and parading their sexuality in the media, (and goading men to do the same), on the grounds that this is empowering! Earth Mother apparently, like the wolf in Little Red Hiding Hood has sharp teeth and claws. We Christians know this of course since it was the matriarchal dominance of paganism which was so besotted with abortion, child abuse and child sacrifice. Not much has changed, has it?

We all shrink of course from such perversions of fatherhood and motherhood and yet the logic of Freud's analysis is inexorable. If paganism is to be resisted, (as a moderate feminist might argue), then God must become "Parent" or perhaps "It", a very unsatisfactory situation, and in Orthodox terms, of course, downright heresy. So, as Orthodox Christians we need to force our culture to be much more radical on this issue than it has hitherto been. We need to reach back behind the feminists' agenda at Freud's basic premise that God as Father is a projection for our pain, ever seeking to recover our ideal Father, eternally beyond our grasp.

Notice how Freud starts. He takes something which is so obviously true, namely, that God is not literally a male person and then proceeds to deny the truth that God is Father, as if one followed the other. God, of course, can be Father without being male but only by recognising that all religious language is refined by the conviction that God is so utterly UNLIKE anything created. Therefore, God is not like a father, He is, in the First Person, the Father, the Source, the Fount of all that is; the Son eternally begotten from Him and the Spirit proceeding forth. There is an "outgoingness in Love" in God which makes "Father" the most singular and apt expression. True there is an analogy in

respect of human fatherhood, but it is an analogy to human fatherhood, not from it. This truth lies at the very heart of the absurdity of feminism's attack on God the Father. The Father is not imaged from our human fathers, (for that would be to make God in our own image, an idol); human fatherhood in its highest expression is imaged or derived from God the Father, (in other words, we are made in the image of God). As St. Paul says in Ephesians 3:14-15:-

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named."

Now, there is one gaping hole in this presentation. If Genesis teaches, (which it does), that the image of God is manifest in men and women as created, then why cannot motherhood as well as fatherhood be derived from God in such a manner as to legitimise God as Mother as well as Father? The answer to this one lies in the nature of God's creative power. God creates without dependency on another for he is sovereign and free and acts in the first instance alone. "Let it be" as He says, and it is. This is not the action of a divine Mother. Mothers, in a human sense, act co-operatively and in a receptive manner. Motherhood is derived from the earth, not from the Godhead. This does not make motherhood any less holy. Orthodox venerate matter as the creative and fecund principle of life, but this life comes in the first instance from the "outside" as it were, from the Father. To derive motherhood from the Godhead rather than the earth would be to give God a womb and to make the Universe "her" Body. This is the very essence of paganism and it has resurfaced again recently in the works of such heretical theologians as Rosemary Radford Ruether. For Orthodox Christians, motherhood is derived from the Theotokos, the Mother of God, the first and highest sanctified creature of the Lord who, being without form, took humanity upon Himself from her. In so doing, the Word and the Spirit worked but never ceased to depart from the Father who remained the Father. When God becomes Mother, however, "she" is revealed a vicious harridan bent upon destruction as well as life, a sort of sub-Christian Durga or Kali, the one who must be appeased at all costs. The Mother of God is such an affront to feminists because her sanctity protests at this abuse of motherhood and the abominable fruit it has generated, sour and bitter to the taste; the infanticide of abortion, the trivialisation and degradation of sex, the rape of the earth.

The only remedy for all these ills is to renounce Freud and his perversion of the Christian gospel and to return to a true biblical notion of God the Father and human fatherhood; the Theotokos, the created earth and human motherhood.

Finally, can this agenda be pursued whilst yet embracing a moderate feminism which would pursue equality of opportunity in all realms of human life and work ... a feminism which is, shall we say, religiously neutral? I'm not sure we can even do that. Consider equality of opportunity. This is a good thing and to be promoted. But what do we make of these opportunities? Do we send women as battle hardened troops into the front line? Do we ask men, similarly, to emasculate themselves by posing as women in Cosmopolitan and other such magazines? Do we promote the idea that gender is irrelevant to function when all the evidence cries out that there are distinctively male and female aspects of our humanity which, if to be honoured, must remain non-interchangeable? Do we rob a woman of her motherhood by making her a "priest?" Do we rob a man of his fatherhood by making

him feel guilty of his strength? I think not. Many have fed from the poisoned wells of Freud and his feminist great grandchildren for long enough and have suffered for it.

Isn't it about time then that we embraced life rather than death? Isn't it about time we worshipped the Father again and implored the Mother? Isn't it about time that we become co-heirs of the Son as children of God? Isn't it about time that the Spirit ruled rather than the bankrupt false prophets of atheism? Feminism is dead and death dealing. The Father remains, and waits for the return of His errant children.