

Theological Modernity Paves The Way For Divine Maternity

By Alan Morrison

The introduction of the new "Worship Book for the Millennium" by the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom in February 1999 has caused something of a storm in the religious scene and among the media. For example, an article in the Daily Telegraph carried the title "Methodists to Worship 'God the Mother'". The contentious element in this new worship book is a prayer which contains a reference to God as "our Mother". The full prayer reads as follows: "God our Father and our Mother, we give you thanks and praise for all that you have made, for the stars in their splendour and the world in its wonder and for the glorious gift of human life. With the saints and angels in heaven, we praise your holy name."

Although this designation of God as "Mother" is not new among liberals and some new evangelicals, this is the first time that it has actually been enshrined in the official liturgy of a mainstream denomination. Neil Dixon, the secretary of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee, said in defence of this prayer that "it was not an attempt to change the gender of God". At a press conference in the historic Wesley Chapel in the City of London, Mr Dixon said: "God is not a person. God is a spirit and is neither male nor female. He is beyond gender. The fact we have used male imagery for centuries has reinforced the image of God as a man. But if all human beings are created in God's image then feminine as well as masculine attributes must reflect God's nature".

Now this is a very clever but highly disingenuous argument. Although some elements of Mr Dixon's statement about God are true, they should not be used to extrapolate a prayer to God as "Mother".

First, the idea that "feminine as well as masculine attributes must reflect God's nature" does not denote the existence of "God the Mother". It is true that the creation of both man and woman in the image of God must manifest a complementarity which represents the being of God (cf. Gen.1:27c). But this is not at all indicative of an actual "Mother God". In fact, the image of God in Scripture is not so much represented by gender but by the attributes of righteousness, holiness and knowledge (Eph.4:24; Col 3:10). Those aspects of the image of God were lost to humanity through the fall - as the historic Christian confessions universally affirm - but they are renewed in those who become believers. To root the image of God in the notion of gender is a "red herring" and has only become vogue because of political correctness and in the interests of feminism.

Second, it would seem that to address God as "Mother" is being falsely justified on the basis of certain Scriptures which attribute feminine characteristics to God. The secretary of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee is quite correct to say that God is spirit and therefore cannot possibly be either male or female. He is also correct to say that feminine imagery is used metaphorically in Scripture to describe the character of God (e.g. Isa.66:13; Psa.131; Matt.23:37). But while the use of such imagery is perfectly orthodox - our great God being a nurturing God - it is entirely specious to then make the leap into directly addressing God as Mother in prayer. It is important for us to understand what is being confused here? The fact that feminine imagery is used to denote the character of God does not give us leave to address God as a female person. It is not because God happens to have 'fatherly attributes' that we pray to Him as "Father". The reason we pray in this manner is because *He IS the Father!* Let us examine this a little more closely.

Obviously we can have no truly complete conception of God, but we can certainly say that He is neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, since both men and women were originally made in His image. But it is also just as mistaken to speak of God as being androgynous or hermaphroditic - i.e., both masculine and feminine - as some evangelicals do today, in keeping with their Jungian analysis of human psychology. The Lord transcends gender altogether, in spite of the fact that the Bible speaks of God with male pronouns. In this light, it is completely unnecessary for women to become embroiled in tortured debate about whether or not the Bible is offensive to them because of the constant references to God as 'Father' and 'He', or because the Redeemer of the world incarnated in a male body.

However, it is worth asking why it should be that male pronouns are used to speak of God in the Bible. Surely there must be good reasons for this. Let us examine this more closely. Obviously, the Scriptures could never refer to God as "It", for that would remove the essentially *personal* nature of the Godhead. Men and women are not made in the image of an "It"! Regarding the use of "He" or "Him" to refer to the Triune God, Roger Nicole puts this into perspective when he states that it was very necessary for God to be represented as a male in the Bible because "to do otherwise would have undoubtedly severely curtailed the understanding of his majesty; and the licentious developments in religions where female deities are found would manifest the appropriateness of avoiding this representation [of God with female pronouns] in O.T. times".(2) It is no coincidence that many of the people who are clamouring for the removal of male pronouns which refer to Deity in the Bible are those who are avidly worshipping the goddess today, or promoting the Gaia concept, or - at the very least - conspiring to replace male headship with a wholly contrived "equality". There is nothing new under the sun. The Lord's wisdom in ensuring that He is represented as male in Scripture can therefore be seen to be very astute and necessary in a fallen world.

Unfortunately, many professing Christians today have little understanding of the ramifications of the feminist movement in relation to God and the Bible. Its anti-male, anti-patriarchal stance was inevitably destined also to become anti-Christ, because God is represented in Scripture as 'He' or 'Father', and God incarnate, Jesus Christ, is a male. True feminism makes no bones about its real aims and its dedicated opposition to Christianity and the Holy Scriptures. As a leading example of this antichristian heart of feminism, the renowned U.S. feminist 'theologian', Naomi Goldenberg, claims that "Every woman working to improve her own position in society or that of women in general is bringing about the end of God. All feminists are making the world less and less like the one described in the Bible, and are thus helping to lessen the influence of Christ and YAHWEH on society.(3)

Once these occultic aims of Feminism are exposed, it is revealed as a stark declaration of war on the God of the Bible and His eternal world-plan. In fact, Goldenberg unashamedly states that "*The Feminist Movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and YAHWEH*".(4) This may well prove to be an awkward truth to swallow for the many 'Christian' feminists littering the evangelical scene. They will have to decide whether or not they are going to be aligned with those who have declared war on the Lord God of all creation - with those like Goldenberg who assert that

"God is going to change... We women are going to bring an end to God. As we take positions in government, in medicine, in law, in business, in the arts and, finally, in religion, we will be the end of Him. We will change the world so much that He won't fit in anymore".(5) The revival of the religion of the goddess among feminists forms the backdrop to the global movement to establish women priests and ministers in the world's denominations. Feminist historian Rosalind Miles sets out to prove that God was originally a woman and that deity only became male as a male-dominated agriculture took over from women's horticulture.(6) She writes: "In the beginning, as humankind emerged from the darkness of prehistory, God was a woman".(7) As a result of this that, so she claims,

"there arose the belief that woman was divine, not human, gifted with the most sacred and significant power in the world; and so was born the worship of the Great Mother".(8) The feminist movement has brought about a global revival of this religion of the Great Mother. Miriam Simos (also known by her initiate name as "Starhawk"), is a licensed minister of the witchcraft-based group known as the Covenant of the Goddess - a legally-recognised church in the U.S.A., and one of the main sponsors of the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. Simos puts it like this:

"Goddess religion is unimaginably old, but contemporary Witchcraft could just as accurately be called the New Religion. The Craft [witchcraft] today is undergoing more than a revival, it is experiencing a renaissance, a recreation. Women are spurring this renewal, and actively reawakening the Goddess, the image of the legitimacy and beneficence of female power".(9)

Thus we can see that the reason behind the establishment the *idea* of God as "The Mother" is a preparation for the complete removal of the *fact* of God as "The Father". How sad and ironic it is that Protestant denominations should be such willing (although unwitting) assistants in this process. It is therefore surely something of an embarrassment that while Protestant denominations are running helter-skelter to abandon the necessary doctrine of God as "Father", one can find numerous excellent defences of this doctrine in Roman Catholic circles.(10) In the past few years there has been an increasing number of Catholics who - despite their unfortunate blind spots on the Lord's Supper, the Papacy and Mary - appear to be more aware of a number of the deceptions of this present age than many of today's wishy-washy Protestant evangelicals! What a judgement this is on the modern Church. This matter of the nature of God as the Father is not some secondary issue to be idly debated on a wet afternoon in the ivory towers of a theological seminary. This is part of the vital ground on which the faith will be seen to stand or fall in the eyes of the world during the next decade. To take away the use of male pronouns in reference to Deity would do irreparable damage to the doctrine of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - upon which a true understanding of the Godhead of Scripture depends.

Above all, we speak specifically of the Father and the Son because the Lord Jesus Christ did so (Jn.6:40; 10:36; 14:13). Even more to the point, we can wholeheartedly *pray* to God as Father because the Lord Jesus Christ did so (e.g., Matt.11:25; Jn.17:1). Only the most rebellious persons would dare to set themselves against the pattern laid down by the founder of the Christian faith. In truth, the whole Bible and its Gospel message is offensive to every unregenerate human being by nature, and no mere tampering with a few pronouns will remove that offence. The attempted detection of so-called sexism in biblical literature is therefore a vain and superfluous activity. That this is part of the vital ground on which the faith will be seen to stand or fall in the eyes of the world during the next decade can be seen in certain events which are shaping up at this point in history - not only in relation to feminism but also to another aspect of the war against God being waged by the powers of darkness.

For example, how would you respond if a so-called ET or alien (androgynous, of course) was to appear on earth claiming that it is really the "God" whom all have been worshipping under different names for millennia? What if such an entity also claimed that it was the Messiah - the second coming of which has been awaited by Christians for 2000 years? Do you think this is far-fetched? Some very flakey, deceptive global events are going to take place in the next few years. Such things are by no means impossible in the light of Scripture's teaching on the Antichrist and the lying signs and wonders which will surround this mysterious event (2 Thess.2:3-12). Understanding the nature of God, the Manhood of Christ and the need for Divine Fatherhood (and its derivative male leadership) in the face of a pagan world is most necessary as we come to the close of this present evil age. Who could possibly imagine that Christians don't need to get genned up on apologetics?

NOTES & REFERENCES

- 1) *Daily Telegraph* (London), 18th Feb. 1999.
- 2) Walter A. Elwell, Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House, 1985, p.1177.
- 3) Naomi R. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods* (Beacon Books, Boston, 1979), p.10.
- 4) *Ibid.*, p.4.
- 5) *Ibid.* p.3.
- 6) Rosalind Miles, *The Women's History of the World* (Paladin, 1989), p.64.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p.36.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p.39.
- 9) Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: The Rebirth of the Ancient Goddess* (Harper & Row, New York, 1979), p.8.

10) A superb example of this sort of apologetics among the Catholics can be found at the following web address: <http://catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Dossier/mar-apr96/feminist.html> in an article entitled "*Does the Bible Support the Feminist Goddess?*"