

FROM The Pastor

A Shot

At Inclusive Language

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Note that Paul uses the word "brethren" or "brothers" in the above verse. We are told by many in our hapless age that today's woman has fits whenever they read the Bible and come across male oriented words used in an inclusive sense. They feel that the language is patriarchal and that it excludes them. There is no lack of pressure being brought to bear to make changes to the Bible and other religious literature so that this so-called exclusive patriarchal language will no longer be able to oppress the women of our churches. Even the conservative Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has fallen victim to this pressure, advocating a cautious adoption of 'inclusive language'. And a number of modern Bible translations have taken to changing "brothers" to "fellow Christians" or the like.

But is this push for inclusive language a grassroots thing? Are women clamoring for it? No. The real truth is that inclusive language is a preoccupation of the politically correct world of academia. The pressure toward politically correct feminist-speak comes from college professors and administrators and has filtered down through undergraduates to the staffs of our public schools, and affects that tiny minority of girls and women who think of themselves as feminists. Most women, with right thinking in their gut, pay no attention to it, and in my experience, the few Christian women who have had problems with 'male oriented language' in the Bible and in other Christian literature, have gotten over it once a few things have been explained to them.

Back in the late seventies, the liberal faux-Lutherans produced the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) the long used and still disliked hymnal of the theologically challenged. One of the main preoccupations of the academics who produced it was the use of 'inclusive language'. Old familiar prayers and hymns were sorely abused in order to make the language acceptable to feminists resulting in an ugly thing that is used in the churches but despised in the homes of the faithful. To be sure, inclusive language wasn't the only thing wrong with the LBW, but its presence was responsible for many of its most glaring deficiencies.

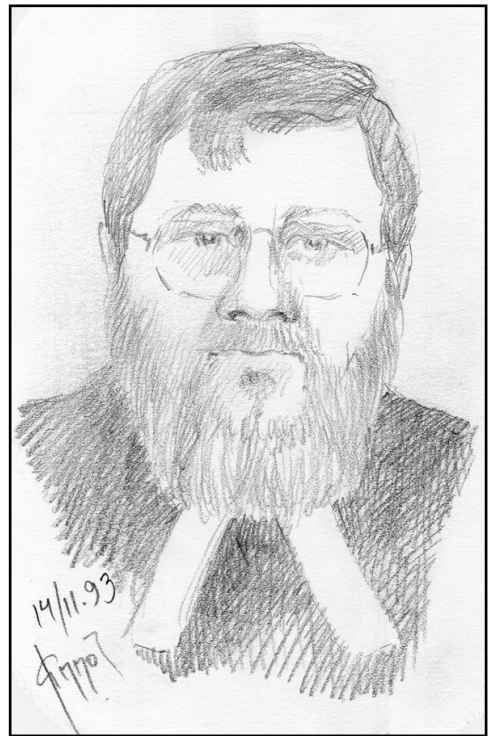
In the light of all this, it's important to note a few things by way of instruction. First, inclusive language is not a natural development of our language, it is a propaganda tool of feminist ideology. The ideologues who first changed male oriented

nouns and pronouns now want us to stop referring to God as Father, and to change Father, Son and Holy Ghost to Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, or some other equally sticky phrase. They want the Lord's Prayer

to say, "Our Father/Mother..."; indeed they want us to avoid the patriarchal word "Lord" altogether. They will not be happy until Christianity is transformed into a cult of the goddess.

Feminism is not the Christian's friend. It is an alien, secular, anti-God, totalitarian ideology which grew out of marxism/socialism. It is not simply about women's rights or the equality of the sexes; that's just the propaganda veneer covering the real agenda of the movement. Feminism is really about seeing the world in a fundamentally different way from what has been called the Christian world view. That's why, in the public square, what orthodox Christianity stands for, and what feminism stands for, are nearly always at odds with each other. The real Christian church, therefore, should be strenuously rejecting and refuting feminism rather than thoughtlessly and weakly adopting one of its propaganda tools. I've never met a 'Christian feminist' who wasn't in some way seriously out of harmony with the doctrine of Christ, and spiritually damaged as a result. Feminism is not something we should be trafficking in; it is something we should be leading people away from.

Second, the Bible is not a 20th century book. It was written between about 1500 B.C., and 100 A.D. It is intellectually bankrupt to expect it to reflect current ideological preoccupations, or to force it to do so. Since the Bible is the primary source for what Christians believe and how they live, great care should be taken in its translation to see that the result gives us what the original gave. If there is any application and explanation needed, let it be done in the writings and sermons, etc., that are based on it. In the text cited at the beginning of our discussion, Paul refers to his readers using the word "brethren", "Brothers". Paul's original Greek has the word "adelphos", which means, "brothers". Now it is certainly true that this word is used in this context to refer to all fellow Christian believers, but to render it that way would not be translation, but commentary. When scholars begin to see it as their duty to interpret and



comment rather than translate, the result will always be Bible translations of dubious value and compromised trustworthiness. Translating and explaining are not the same thing. This is one of the reasons why crummy modern translations are a dime a dozen as we close out the 20th century. The word is "brothers." "Fellow Christians" may be an accurate explanation and application, but it is not accurate translation. Anyone who is so arrogant as to demand that a book written long before modern feminist sensitivities existed, conform to those sensitivities, should be shown his foolishness in the hope that he will forsake it and come to his senses.

Finally, as Christians, we enjoy a spiritual and intellectual inheritance that stretches back way before the 1960's, indeed,

all the way back through the mists of history. To inculcate a negative reaction against 'patriarchal language' and to demand that anything worth our time must speak to us in terms of our own ideological prejudices is to impoverish ourselves. If I make myself angry and defensive every time I read Luther or Augustine or Dante, etc., because their 'patriarchal language' offends me, I am foolishly robbing myself of the treasures that their writings contain. Better by far to get over it and get on with it. There's so much of value for us to discover, especially in the Bible. Why sit and curse the darkness because of unnecessary ideological blinders?