



WHY GOD IS A HE

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One of the criticisms many people make against the Bible is that it depicts God in male terms. The most obvious example is God is referred to as “He.” Why did the Bible do this?

Well, here’s the answer: Because the Bible is preoccupied with making a kinder, less violent, more just world. If you share these goals—and I suspect you do—then you’ll have to agree the Bible made the right decision.

Before I explain, I need to add an obvious caveat: The God of the Bible is neither male nor female. God transcends gender. What I’m talking about here is why God is depicted in male terms in the Bible.

Gender-wise, the Bible had three choices: masculine—“he”; feminine—“she”; or neuter—“it.”

We can readily rule out neuter. For one thing, neuter nouns don’t exist in Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament—which, after all, first introduced this God to us. For another, the biblical God is a personal God to whom we can—and must—relate. And we cannot relate to, let alone obey or love, an “It.”

Aside from the language issue, the Bible depicts God in masculine terms because:

One: The Hebrew Bible’s primary concern is making a good world.

Two: A good world can only be achieved by making good people.

And three: The people who commit nearly all the world’s violence are males.

Therefore, it is in both men’s and women’s interests to depict God in the masculine.

Here’s why:

Without a father or some other male rule-giver, young men are likely to do great harm. If there is no male authority figure to give a growing boy rules, it is very difficult for him to control his wilder impulses.

As President Barack Obama told an audience in 2008, “Children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison.” Commenting on that speech, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a psychiatrist with Harvard Medical School, confirmed these statistics:

“The absence of fathers corresponds with a host of social ills, including dropping out of school and serving time in jail.”

In other words, if one’s primary goal is a good world—specifically, a world with far less murder, child abuse, theft, and rape—a God depicted in masculine terms (a Father in Heaven), not a goddess (a Mother in Heaven), must be the source of moral commands such as “Do not murder” and “Do not steal.”

If the father figure/rule-giver that boys need is not on Earth, a morally authoritative masculine God can serve as an effective substitute. Any discomfort you might feel with a masculine depiction of God is not comparable to the pain we will all feel if boys are not civilized into good men.

To transform a wild boy into a good man, a male role model is as necessary as a male rule-giver. So, when the Bible depicts God as merciful, compassionate, and caring for the poor and the widow, it is not so much interested in describing God as in providing a model for humans, especially males, to emulate.

If God were depicted as female, young men would deem traits such as compassion, mercy, and care for the downtrodden as feminine and would not identify with them. But if God, their Father in Heaven, who is strong—on occasion, even a warrior—cares for the poor and loves justice, mercy, and kindness, then these traits are also masculine and to be emulated.

The argument that girls equally need female role models to avoid violence is objectively not true—because the problem of mayhem and violence is overwhelmingly a male one. Of course, girls need female role models, but not to avoid violence.

And, like boys, girls are more likely to obey a male authority figure. A report released by the Minnesota Psychological Association concluded: “In a study of female inmates, more than half came from a father-absent home.”

It is therefore ironic that some women are attempting to render the God of Western religious morality less masculine. Because if their goal is achieved, it is *women* who will suffer most from lawless males.

We have too many absent fathers on Earth to begin to even entertain the thought of having no Father in Heaven.

I’m Dennis Prager.