

## **Male Authority Posing as Divine Authority**

**by John Shelby Spong**

[http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/john\\_shelby\\_spong/2009/07/are\\_male\\_interpretations\\_of\\_religious\\_texts\\_to\\_blame\\_for\\_the\\_deprivation\\_of\\_womens\\_equal\\_rights.html](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/john_shelby_spong/2009/07/are_male_interpretations_of_religious_texts_to_blame_for_the_deprivation_of_womens_equal_rights.html)

Former president Jimmy Carter and other world leaders issued this statement: "The justification of discrimination against women and girls on grounds of religion or tradition, as if it were prescribed by a Higher Authority, is unacceptable." What's your reaction to these statements? Are 'male interpretations of religious texts' to blame for the 'deprivation of women's equal rights?'

I applaud the effective witness of our former president, Jimmy Carter, and South Africa's undaunted heroes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela. The Christian Church has for far too long attempted to perfume sexist discrimination against women under the name of "Bible-based, Sacred Tradition."

The two largest Christian churches in the world - the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox - still do not count women as fit subjects for ordination. They use strange arguments like Jesus did not choose any women to be his disciples. It seems not to matter that Jesus also chose no Poles, Germans, Irish or Italians, but that has not stopped them from becoming priests. If, as so many church leaders in these two churches assert, a woman is not created in the image of God and is thus not fit to represent God before the altar, then I wonder what part of the male anatomy bears the divine image, since the bodies of males and females are 99.9% identical. I find that among the more absurd religious claims I have ever encountered.

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From Henry:

I remember reading a story about "Father Dennis" who had a sex change surgery and became "Father Denise" and he was no longer considered a priest by the Vatican. So, we know which part of the body the indelible mark is located.