A RELIGION FOR DO-GOODERS

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A sorrowful smile came over my face today when I read that an arm of my church, the United Church of Christ, has begun to give an annual "Haystack Award" to an outstanding do-gooder. The award's title harks back to 1806, when some Williams College students decided to become missionaries of the gospel among those abroad who'd never heard of the good news of salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They were Congregationalists, of one of the denominations merging in 1957 to form the UCC. The religion of aiming to do good by changing the inhospitable **outward** conditions of human life has, in this award, supplanted the biblical religion of preaching repentance & faith toward a Godward change in the **inner** condition of the human heart, a change expressing itself in praise toward God, preaching the good news toward the neighbor everywhere (the motive of the 1806 "Haystack Prayermeeting"), & living the good news for the sake of the neighbor (including the neighbor's living conditions) & of the good earth.

The **tension** between the two religions appears in the UCC's new hymnal, THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL, of which I've just completed a thorough study. Though overwhelmingly its new hymns express do-gooder religion, it incorporates many old gospel-religion hymns & songs--but even the latter are regularly colored by, rewritten to promote, do-gooder themes such as gender feminism, pacifism, multiculturalism, & globalism. In this Thinksheet, I'm illustrating some of these trendinesses.

1 **Butchering classics** Many of us Americans would like to have Katherine Lee Bates' "America the Beautiful" replace the present unsingable national anthem. It prays for God's "grace" on our land full of natural beauty & in need of humane unity ("brotherhood") as crown on our beautiful habitat. It celebrates the struggle of the 1620 Pilgrims to establish a permanent settlement on this shore. It prays that God will mend our "every flaw" & grant us "self-control," "liberty" under "law." It honors "heroes proved in liberating strife, who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life." It asks God to refine our gold "till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine." It recognizes that without vision the people perish, & so gives thanks "for patriot dream that sees beyond the years...cities...undimmed by human tears."....How much of this survives the the NCH (#594)? **Nothing!** Concern for the "hemisphere" (why not both hemispheres?) replaces love of our country. Bates' elegant English--professor of Eng. at Mt. Holyoke College--is forced to yield to banality (eg, the hymn's beginning "O beautiful for" is dumped for "How beautiful our"; the waves of grain are no longer "amber" & the mountains are no longer "purple" or majestic). There's no longer "liberating strife," but instead we're enjoined to "repent the bloodshed" without which we'd not have the USA but instead British colonies or, sans the Civil War, two countries. "Brotherhood" is permitted, but only when preceded by "sisterhood." "Grace" is replaced by "gracious gifts," which of course are no longer allowed to be "his" (God's).

Can anyone deny that this amounts to the butchering of a classic?

To understand this Thinksheet, you don't need a copy of the new hymnal. But if you have one, check out the following hymns for more butchered classics: 414, 445, 448, 450, 492, 500, 502, 506 (to limit my selections roughly to the 400s & 500s).

2 **Absolute de-"he"-ing** Arithmetically viewed, by far the greatest change in the NCH is the absolute no-no, taboo, on the personal pronouns for God. (This I've remarked somewhere in my previous Thinksheets on the NCH: 2702, -3, -9, -43, -44.) Frequently it's the only excuse for "alt." ("altered") after the hymnist's name, as eg Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," another butchered classic, with all 17 instances of the masculine personal pronouns for God (including 1 for Jesus) deleted. The fatuous assumption is that children will learn to sing this historic song of American patriotism without the 17 offenses against PC--the belief implicit in the title *NEW CENTURY* HYMNAL. Even if the effort fails, the do-gooder editors can congratulate themselves on a righteous try. To me, it's only pathetic....The 17 is as sung (4 stanzas).

The suppression of Jesus' gender, as a PC-embarrassment to the Christian religion, could be illustrated in hundreds of hymns. To take just one, it occurs a half dozen times in #403, which also elides the atonement, a doctrine embarrassing to the human ego: "My hope" is no longer "built on nothing less than Jesus' blood...." The hymnal committee pleads sensitivity "to those who are hurting" (which amounts to about everybody except, in its view, white males), but an unconfessed sensitivity is the committee's own touchiness to attacks on Christianity from "the world."

3 **Theological retrenchment** A hymnal guideline seems to have been, on the evidence of the hymns themselves, What that's offensive to post/modern consciousness can we (1) cut or (2) revision without damage to the Christian faith? This negative mentality dulls many a traditional hymn even where it doesn't betray (as in #403, in

§2) authorial intent. Because the committee (really, the staff of the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries, whose say was superior to the committee) was in the business of producing a theological document with a virtually new language of the soul (any hymnal being, for congregants, the source of best-remembered phrases & as such the language of the soul), I thought of Geo. Orwell's "1984" tyrants, who sought to change the public's consciousness by dropping old language down the **memory hole.** The BHM tyrants wanted to drop "Lord" down the memory hole & were stopped by Synod, so grudgingly restored some (a political minimum!) instances.

Why the hatred of "Lord"? It violates a fistful of PC guidelines: (1) It's masculine; (2) It's vertical-hierarchical; (3) It's undemocratic, bespeaking not cooperation but submission, not partnership but obedience, not community but discipleship; (4) Used of Jesus, it's high-christological (in the earliest Christian Bible [OT/NT], meaning both God & Jesus); (5) In addition to being masculine, it's patriarchal (conjoined with "Father," as in the great hymn "Dear Lord and Father of mankind" [both dropped in NCH#502]).

Theological retrenchment on the Bible's pervasive use of "Lord" takes many forms in the NCH, often by substituting the colorless, nondescript "God"--eg #28 ("For the beauty of the earth"), where four times the hymnist asks us to join him in giving praise to the "Lord of all" that he's been describing: the accent is on a doctrine the NCH deemphasizes even when substituting "Sovereign" for "Lord." Here in #28, "Lord of all" (who is *over* all) washes out into "God of all" (who is to be worshiped by all). The same reduction appears in "All things bright and beautiful" (#31). The sovereignty of God clashes with PC **antihierarchicalism**, which avoids the spacial metaphor of verticality: in the NCH, heaven is not "up" or "above," earth is not "below"; God can be "beyond," but not "over."

What the NCH does not seem to notice is that in conforming to secular PC anti-verticality, it's playing the atheist's game. Religious devotion requires the vertical; drop the vertical down the memory hole, & religion goes with it. Max Black says that metaphors, instead of being peripheral (& therefore expungeable/exchangeable), are integral to consciousness/communication & the perception of truth. As Clifford Geertz puts it (in a metaphor), language (including metaphor) is the womb of experience, not merely the expression of experience. As a baby struggles upward to stand on two feet, the human spirit in religion reaches upward: hymns with vertical words encourage that reach. The NCH, in deliberate excising of the vertical, fails to encourage that reach.

More on theological retrenchment, later.

4 **Biblical reductionism** Often a bowdlerized hymn in the NCH will simply wipe out a biblical metaphor, as the church/bride of Christ disappears in "The Church's one foundation" (#386) even though it's the hymn's major metaphor ("foundation" being minor). Why the murder of the major metaphor? Because it's gendered & thus PC-awkward, reminding the singer of Jesus' gender (masculine pronouns for him 4 times in the original, never in the quasiDocetic* version) in his marriage to his bride (in the original, the church referenced a dozen times** by feminine pronouns). Further, the christocentric "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph.4.5) is diminished into mere monotheism ("Lord" becoming "God") & in this term indistinguishable from Judaism & Islam.....*Docetism, an ancient Christian heresy, taught that Jesus only seemed to be fully human ("doc-" means "seem"), the divine illusion being for human good: the new hymnal is docetic in degendering Jesus for the good of those who are to live in "the new century."....**Never in the NCH version.

This quasiDocetic death of the pronominal Jesus could be illustrated in scores of NCH hymns. In "My song is love unknown" (#222), 10 times this killing occurs ("Lord" & "King," each 3 times); & in "Brightest and best" (#156), 5 times the baby Jesus is degendered. But this cover-up on the fully human, fully incarnate really just doesn't "work," & it's pitiful (as well as bad theology) to try it.

To mention just one more of scores of biblical reductionisms, #117, based on Ps.24.7-10, which has "the King of glory" 5 times. How many times in the NCH? Not once! In the original of the hymn, we have "the King of glory...the King of kings...Lord"--all elided in the NCH. This & other royal Psalms of entrance are, in the NCH, not royal. Nowhere in the NCH do we have "King of kings" (from the Persian "Sha 'n sha") even though, in both Testaments, its a solid elative (repetitive

intensive) title for divinity. (A few other evidences of this hymnal's hatred of "King" for God/Jesus: 115,117,144,216,300,303,305.)....Masculine titles for God/Jesus, with very rare exceptions, can't get through the tight screen of feministic scrupulosity. Sunday in worship we sang "Watchman, tell us of the night," ending with "Prince of peace" & "Son of God." Of course if we'd been using the new hymnal, we'd not have sung either title (#103).

5 **False sensitivity** Having much worked among African-Americans, I've never encountered racial sensitivity to "dark/ness," yet the NCH avoids such words even when (1) the plain sense is violated (as changing "darkness" to "night") or (2) a biblical-theological concept is abused (as when, in #103, "darkness" becomes "shadows," though the darkness/light opposition is strong in the Bible, eg Jn.1). In #95, "light" is even exchanged for "darkness": "The day thou gavest, Lord [changed to "God"], is ended, the darkness [changed to "light"]"). Supersensitivity: have you ever heard blacks called "darkies"? And inconsistency between the hymns & some following resources: eg, #880 has "darkness" 21 times!

6 **Scrupulous heterolexia** Sorry I must get technical about the psychiatric syndrome driving the degendered God-talk of the new UCC hymnal. Scrupulosity is "excessive [avoidance-] meticulousness...often couched in religious or moral terms" because "most often displayed in relation to questions of right or wrong" (688, PSYCHIATRIC DICTIONARY, Ox/70). Once convinced it's wrong to speak of God genderedly (ie, in masculine nouns & pronouns, esp. the latter), the patient (or PC person) struggles--how often I've seen the struggle in preachers & teachers eyes!--to achieve heterolexia, the habitual word-substitution for proscribed (taboo) terms--the goal being apraxia, the loss of previous speech-patterns (in this case, the Bible's way of addressing, & talking about, God/Jesus). Both from arrogant righteousness & from fear of backsliding, the patient is impatient with God-gendered literature (such as the original, non"inclusive" Bible & the classical hymns) & alienated from those who use gendered God-talk (who include almost all Christians).

The NCH is a perfect case (psychiatric sense of "case") of scrupulous heterolexia. One can observe it in almost all--almost all!--the classical hymns that made it into this curiosum of a hymnal. In addition to the hymns, I point to an instance of deliberate ideological distortion: Though representing itself as the denomination's official hymnal, its liturgical materials do not include the original official, still-Synod-approved form of the UCC Statement of Faith. The Board for Homeland Ministries staff, fearing that the original would pollute the pure PC mind of "the new century" Christian, printed only the latest, most-PC version of the Statement of Faith. (Contrast the absence of such scruple vis-a-vis the Nicene Creed, which appears both in the traditional & in a bowdlerized PC version.) To PC ideologs, this disobedience to Synod, this concealment of the original, does not appear as what it plainly is, viz unethical. The would-be do-gooders have done evil. Their affirmative-action God-language fails to affirm the Faith, & their small island of peculiar practice is doomed to be eroded away by the surrounding world-Christian ocean.

7 **Neo-pelagianism** (Pelagius taught that we, exercising our free will, must be self-starters toward salvation: against Augustine, who taught that we must be jump-started by grace. By "neo-" I mean that the 18th [+] c. Enlightenment intensified this human self-consciousness & added the autonomy which is the heart of present-day superindividualism.) So many NCH hymns display this heresy! In "I sing a song of the saints of God" (#295), the saints become strong not by "his ["their Lord"'s] love" (the original) but "it was loving that made them strong." (And in the original, "Lord" means Jesus, whose will is to be done [not, as in the NCH, "*God's* will"]: in the NCH, submission to God's will is embarrassing enough, without mentioning subjection-subservience-submission under the "Lord" Jesus.)....In the original of #386, we press on in hope "by every grace [gift/help from God] endued," but the revision substitutes "at one in work and prayer."....In the original of #543 ("Where cross the crowded ways of life"), the hope is that all shall learn God's love, but the revision has "till all shall learn compassion's might" (the notion that noble virtues have a self-operating [ex opera operato] power being a characteristic of Enlightenment, & modern secular, ethics)....Very often "Father" (a term of relational dependency [in addition to being masculine]) yields to "Creator," a term +

less insulting to the autonomous, grown-up, no-longer-a-child-to-a-parent ego....And in addition to being objectionable as hierarchical & "antiscientific," the biblical vertical diminishes human size: we are "under"lings, in the Bible, to God/heaven/angels. In NCH#542, Christ is to reign not "above" but "among" us. In NCH#503, "lowly" becomes "earthly," which presumbly puts us less low than does "lowly."....In NCH#43, love divine does not come "down" but rather is "found" (so of course Jesus after the resurrection does not go up: in NCH#145, the ascension is elided by implication, which is bad news for churches observing Ascension Day)....And in NCH#80, we are not to be "lowly" at the end of worship, but only "in...silence.".....In NCH#412, we are not to "trust him [God] for his grace" but rather to "trust...grace," grace here serving as a weak holophrase for God-in-action.

8 **Neo-paganism** Some new hymns in the NCH blithly disregard biblical specifics in their rush to make New-Agey points. Consider #398, whose upanishadic goal is "mystical union." It calls the Spirit "nameless," a statement pleasing to some Jews but to no canonical-classical Christians. It calls God the "Soul of the cosmos," substituting for the biblical Creator the Stoic concept (preached also by Sallie McFague, who continues to call herself a Christian "because [she says] I was born that way") of the world/universe as God's body. It speaks of "shadow and substance" with no reference to the biblical book most using that Platonic idea, viz the Letter to the Hebrews. It speaks of "sisters and brothers" (in the NCH, the standard order) rather than the biblical-traditional reverse--which I do usually in beginning to address a gender-mixed audience, but this is a rhetorical politeness: were I a woman, I'd begin "brothers & sisters"). And it blasphemes by calling human beings the image of God ("we are your image"). In the Bible & in Christian theology, only Jesus, God come among us, is God's image (2Cor.4.4[&6], Col.1.15, Heb.1.3; the special exceptions being Wis.7.26 & 1Cor.11.7; otherwise, all references are to "in" God's image [Gn.1.27,5.1, Wis.2.23, Sir.17.3] or "according to" [Col.3.10]). The unqualified, unnuanced "we are your [God's] image" is Stoic, not Christian....Do I expect hymns in a Christian hymnal to promote the biblical vision by use of expressions faithful to the biblical way of speaking of the divine, the human, the earthly, & the cosmic? I most certainly do! The new Unitarian-Universalist hymnal has sections clearly marked unbiblical: that doesn't confuse the saints, as the NCH does, as to what's non/Christian.

9 **Obsequious antitriumphalism** Throughout church history, gospel-faithful Christian thinkers have adopted apologetic strategies to claim the high ground for Jesus in the rhetorical war against deviants (heretics) & in competition with rivals. But the post/modern liberal church, experiencing a loss of nerve about the Faith itself, has gone beyond defensive rheoric to defeatist concessions, letting the heretics & the rivals set the agenda not only for Christian action but also for Christian thought. A particularly useful coign of vantage for observing this sad state of affairs is the NCH, many of whose hymns exhibit it. Eg: (1) Evangelism is downplayed; (2) "Missions" no longer means converting & helping the heathen, but only do-gooding to them; (3) The Christus Victor theme (Jesus as victor [with military imagery] against sin, darkness, the devil, disease, death) is muted. Detailing all this would make a long Thinksheet. Here I must be contented with a few examples....In #558, "dominion" becomes "communion" & "master," "pilgrims."....Many scores of times, the triumphal "Lord" (a relational-subservient-devotional term) is reduced to the colorless "God" or the merely functional "Savior."....Almost always, the Father/Son/Spirit banner is pulled down, Father/Son then being scratched out and replaced with substitutes all of which distort canonical-classical Christian thought and the gospel, its foundation....The estrogens dominate (sic) the androgens (to take three hymns in succession: "women and men," 17; "sisters and brothers," 18; "her or his," 19)--hardly [54] "oblivious to gender"; the caring theme winning over the conquering theme)....And ironically, facing present & "new century" battles, this hymnal disarms us "Christian soldiers," who have no place in the NCH....In the pacified "Lead on, O King eternal" (#573), all these words have been dropped: King, march, conquest, cross, swords, battle, crown, God of might, heavenly kingdom....If we climb Jacob's ladder (#500), it's not as "soldiers of the cross." My faith may still be an oaken staff (#418), but don't look for these original words: soldier (twice), blade, weapon, sword, Lord. Many more instances. An aggressive (!) pacifism has cut the nerve +

of action. "The devil and all his angels" have nothing to fear from this effete, anti-muscular religion....The great Thanksgiving hymn, "We gather together," written to celebrate a military victory, has twice suffered a loss of triumphant joy. In the #421 version, don't look for Lord, chastens, the wicked, oppressing, distressing, ordaining, maintaining his kingdom, fight, winning, Lord (second occurrence), glory. The note on the hymn just previous says the original had "too much militaristic imagery," & you'll not find any terms on the no-no list for #421. Nor in either pacifism-corrupted text will you find the original's "leader triumphant" or "defender" or "tribulation."....In "O God of strength" (#534), you'll not find Lord of hosts (ie, armies), Son, march, armed, till the world is won, Son (second occurrence), Father, Lord (second occurrence), or even Prince of Peace ("Prince" becoming, as often in ancient gnosticism, "Power")....And the "fight" has gone out of "Christian, rise and act your creed" (#537)....If you wonder how the committee in good conscience could use such a slash-&-burn tactic, consider the ideological mind: only the first person Hitler had murdered was a crime, the millions of others were just a matter of policy.

10 **Savage revisionism of titles/ascriptions of Jesus** More slash-&-burn. My list of instances is long. I'll mention only a few. In #542 you'll not find Lord (twice), Son of God, Son of man, King (twice), Prince of peace, head, throned in glory. In the next hymn, the classic "Where cross the crowded ways of life," we hear "your voice of grace," not the voice of the "Son of man" (the hymnist's central divine ascription!); and the "Master" does not come to "heal these hearts of pain."...."Son" gets reduced to "Child" (eg,116,882,884)...."Christ our brother" disappears from the classic "Joyful, joyful we adore Thee" (#4)....In #158, "David's Son" becomes "the Promised One."....Though a rich title representing 4 Greek titles for Jesus, "Master" (supposedly reminiscent, for some blacks, of "Massa") never appears in the NCH. It was at the heart of Washington Gladden's preaching, but his famous "O Master, let me walk with thee" is transposed to "O Savior..." (this even though "Master" perfectly fits the hymn's whole text, which is not salvific--so "Savior" is inappropriate; but in the minds of the NCH ideologs, the context be damned wherever a word on their censorship blacklist occurs in the original; this explains why so often the "editing" is crude, hamhanded, embarrassing from the standpoints both of religion & of literature). Besides "Savior," "Master" sometimes becomes "Ruler," a thin word poorly representing the Greek (eg #158). I can hear Purd Dietz, a former boss of mine, say "Master," as he did twice in his well-known "We would be building" (#607), but the NCH deflects to "Architect" & "Maker."....And my list is long of places where Jesus is not permitted to be "Lord" even though "Jesus is Lord" was the earliest Christian confession. And the ancient phrase of equal status, "Lord and Savior," is broken up--eg, "Lord and only Savior" in "Savior, like a shepherd lead us" becomes (#252) "Jesus Christ our only Savior."

11 **O, that embarrassing Trinity!** Since both "Father" & "Son" are on the feministic ideologs hit-list of dirty words, the new hymnal writhes in anguish over how to preserve the trinitarian God while dumping the two relational terms. Sometimes the bowlderizer says oh to hell with it & just dumps the Trinity, as in the revision of St. Francis' "All creatures of our God and King": #17 jettisons "Father," "Son," & "Spirit"! Also "King" & "Lord" (& of course St. Francis' dozen uses of masculine pronouns for deity). Imagine the gall of attributing the result to St. Francis! Eberhard Jüngel would rightly say that so radical an abandonment of the Christian language constitutes an invitation to a new piety, a new religion....The p.918 Topical Index's first section, Adoration and Praise, has God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit (no Father/Son, of course). The Index has Father only under "Fatherhood, Motherhood" (under "God"). And in the titles under "Jesus Christ," you won't find "King" or "Lord." And "King," "Lord," "Kingdom of God" are not categories. Just by studying the Topical Index one can list the committee's lexical allegeries....And while I'm on the subject of indexes, I'm reminded of that old traveler's joke, "You can't get to there from here." If you came upon #17 ("To you, O God, all creatures sing") & noted the hymn was by St. Francis but weren't aware that the unbowdlerized original begins "All creatures of our God and King," this hymnal would give you no help to get from here (#17) to there (the original)--though if you knew the original title, the First Line Index would lead you to #17. +

Ancient Christian hymns often ended with a stanza naming the Trinity. The new hymnal likes to drop that stanza--eg, #118....Another 4th-c. hymn, #87, of trinitarian structure, illustrates the NCH's tendency to drop "Father," which it does all 3 times; no problem with "Spirit" or with Son, who's represented in the original & the version by metaphors. (The original's "Father of all grace" becomes "the grace which guides" [& "give us grace" is dropped].)....#267 shows a frequent way this hymnal travels to be rid of the Trinity's masculine names: "Creator, Savior, Spirit." Another is Creator/Redeemer/Spirit--eg, #392. Creator/Christ/Spirit--eg, #355--is another. And God/Christ/Spirit--eg, #66. Creator/Redeemer/Sanctifier--p.27. In #79, Brian Wren avoids all three names & comes up with three batches of his own. Occasionally for Father/Son/Spirit, we get the boring God/God/God--eg, #100 (which also elides "King of kings," "Lord," & "Son"). God/Savior/Spirit--eg, #243. In "Holy, holy, holy" (#277), Bp. Heber's name for the "blessed Trinity" (twice) is no longer (twice) "*Lord* God Almighty." In #278, we get Creator/Redeemer/Sustainer. In #279, God/Redeemer/Spirit. In #280, God/Christ/Holy Ghost. In #316, God/Word/Spirit. In #419, Maker/Christ/Spirit. In #115, Father/Child/Spirit mothering. In #754, #754, & #759, Creator/Christ/Spirit. Once, #780, we have Father/Son/Holy Ghost (& Mt.28.19, Father/Son/Holy Spirit, accurately quoted on pp.32 & 36, & in #276: I'm playing fair)....A strong tendency in socalled inclusive language, & so in this hymnal, is to destroy the triune creativity by limiting creation to the First Person: "Creator" (which is, like "God," only mildly masculine) is very often the surrogate for the blatantly masculine "Father" (eg, pp.1,3,11,27). Another dodge to avoid masculine titles for divinity is the biblically rare, but PC frequent, "the Holy One" (very often violating biblical context--eg, pp.12,20)....In this Thinksheet, I mean "eg" (for example) to be taken seriously: I'm being illustrative, not exhaustive.

12 **A preferential-option-for-the-feminine hymnal** We've grown used to the distortive liberationist claim that God has a "preferential option for the poor," a claim based on the Hebraic literary device known as reversal of fortune. While the NCH claims to be nonpreferential, "boldly committed to a spirit of inclusiveness" (as T.E.Dipko, the CEO behind the hymnal, puts it on p.vii), A.C.Throckmorton, the gen. sect. behind the hymnal, unwittingly gives the lie to the claim (next p.): "images of Christ" from the past, she claims, are "retained": "shepherd, sovereign, healer, teacher, liberator, and so on." Cleverly, she does not mention any images tainted with masculinity: Lord, King, Son of God, Son of man, Prince, brother--titles which are *de*included, excluded: this is, from this angle, an exclusive-language hymnal. Well then, isn't it gender-neutral? Theoretically, yes (as committee chair J.W.Crawford, p.x, says "for all God's people, equally"). But actually, this hymnal is pro-feminine to the point of anerphobia (fear of the male) & misandry (hatred, revulsion, toward the male). "Careful scrutiny" was exercised against the "nearly two millenia" "exclusively masculine characterization" of the divine; & the tone of former Christian hymnody was feminized, switching the stress to the gestative, the nurturant, the caring (as in the order "love, justice, and worship of God"--still Crawford, p.ix).

This new hymnal spares no effort to smuggle in the feminine while suppressing the masculine. Like a policedog sniffing out drugs, it catches & cancels every masculine pronoun for God & most of them for Jesus even when the result is barbarous text (eg, on p.28, "God" repeated 5 times in only 38 words; & on p.31, "Jesus" repeated 4 times in only 28 words--the result of the absence of anaphoric pronouns in both cases being intellectually jarring & esthetically repulsive). Julian of Norwich, who consistently uses masculine pronouns for God, is represented (#467, #740) in ways that would make that fact surprising. (Note the heavy feminizing in the second of those hymns: (1) Jesus is being addressed in the historic "O antiphons," but the footnote says "'Sophia' [feminine!] may be substituted for 'O Wisdom.'" (2) Is the "O Dayspring" that begins the second stanza also feminine? By flow, yes. No footnote tells the reader that both stanzas are addressed not to a goddess but to a god, viz Jesus. (3) In the final stanza, the Trinity is feminized: "Trinity,...the Mother of us all." Under a category named "...Ancient Songs," we get this supermodern aggressive butchy feministicism! We should not be surprised,

then, to find "O Holy One, mother and father" (p.37) or even (#4) "Mother" (in the series "Spirit, Father, Mother" replacing "Christ our Brother" or (twice in #11) "mother God...father God" or (in baptizing, p.52) "God,...the Mother and Father of us all" or in an ancient Irish hymn (#451) "Father and Mother" reversed to "Mother and Father."

13 **Do-gooder disdain for the Christian-biblical language** Crawford, the new hymnal committee chair, says (p.x) that the hymnal aims to speak "in the common language of the day," meaning "in the next century." Already before the close of this century, "the common language of the day" does not include *any* of what's distinctive in the Christian-biblical language, which--oddly--this hymnal thinks can be wiped out without damage to the Christian faith-order-life-work. An old saying has it that while good judgment comes from experience, experience comes from bad judgment. While the new hymnal makes some advances in hymnbook history, it's bad judgment on language makes me hope it'll be soon forgotten & replaced by a hymnal incorporating its advances but not its bad judgment. (Thus the title of the Thinksheet I wrote & used in a six-hour, meal-in-the-middle dialog with Crawford: "Guidelines for the *next* hymnal committee," #2702.)

The Christian strategy in education should be, now as always, the teaching of the Christian language, so Christians can think-speak-read-worship *as Christians*--as is certainly implied in Ro.12.2: "Do not be conformed to this world [mg, "age"], but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." When in the meeting I asked Crawford how the children should be taught the 23rd Psalm, he replied "As in the Bible" (meaning the New Revised Standard Version). But when you look in his hymnal (p.618), is the NRSV what you find? Hardly. What you get is a way of speaking of divinity ("God" 7 times, including the two responses) that does not occur in the NRSV text (even once!). P.618 explains that the NRSV has been "rendered using the same language standards found throughout the hymnal." Here, in the NRSV of Ps.23, are the words those "language standards" excluded: Lord/he/he/he/he/his/Lord. Does Crawford want the children to learn Ps.23 the NRSV way but sing it his way? The question reveals the lexical **confusion** socalled inclusive language is causing in the liberal churches & their publications. All, of course, with the best of intentions, viz do-gooding for people who (he says) are "hurting" from the way the Bible talks about God. (Not all the liberal churches' intentions vis-a-vis inclusive language, however, can be called the best. Screeching radical feminists have intimidated church leaders into yielding to the feministic "language standards." With the exception of myself, I have never seen a liberal Christian publicly confront a screecher. Rather, liberal leaders put the best face on their timidity: they are complying in true penitence [repenting for the Bible!] out of their bleeding hearts' compassion.)

Further evidence of this do-gooder disdain for the Christian language is the instructions the hymnal committee gave to "contemporary poets and hymn lyricists...to revise language [of course according to the ultrafeminist lexical hit-list called "language standards"], yet maintain the intent and nuance of the original." As one studies the results, it's obvious that the guidelines to those poets did not include sensitivity/faithfulness to the Christian language and its biblical-theological-historical resonances in the hymns they were given to do a hatchet job on. How could poets unlearned in Scripture/theology/tradition be expected to honor "the intent and nuance [!] of the original"? Was the committee naive enough to think the poets could manage that? No, the committee itself was careless of the intent/nuance/resonance. If it be argued that Christians tomorrow ("new century") will be too biblically ignorant to understand the intent/nuance, too intellectually-spiritually deaf to hear the resonances, my answer is, Don't be so defeatist! A militant (sic), muscular Christianity will discipline its children/members in the biblical-Christian language. We should be smartening up our children/adults rather than dumbing down our literature, including our hymnals. That disciplining is on the rise in Christianity, but not in the liberal churches, which therefore may not have a future & so won't need a "new century" hymnal.

14 **Pandering to the minuscule PC public** Evidence abounds that instead of improving the public image of religion, the PCing of religion, as in the NCH, is met

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with indifference or derisive laughter. In a recent Wall St. Journal editorial, the new Oxford Press PC NT, which says its for "those who long for justice," shows that "the theological seminaries aren't immune to the cultural and linguistic extremism that flourishes on many university campuses....The good news amid all this hooey is that the market for Bibles is booming." "It's pretty pathetic to watch theologians waste their time worrying that a left-handed, blind, black woman might somehow think the Bible excludes her, when the main message of the text teaches exactly the opposite."

Why this embarrassing pandering? "Sooner or later," the WSJ editorial notes, "someone was bound to notice that the Word of God isn't politically correct." This uncorrectness overimpressed liberal religionists, who are captive to a **provincialism** born in academia & nurtured in national religion-offices (Jewish as well as Christian). The new hymnal does obeisance to this mentality, eg in its abandonment (1) of OT ("Old Testament") in favor of the nonChristian "the Hebrew scriptures" (eg in the notes of #478 & #500): for four centuries, the Christian Bible had in it no books in the Hebrew language, but it did have the OT; & (2) of Western civilization's time signatures honoring Jesus, viz BC/AD, which the new hymnal replaces with the new secular BCE/CE (before / common era; eg, footnote on #507; I sometimes combine the two systems, but never abondon the Christian designations).

The pandering, again, requires disrespect for historical fact. Eg, ironically--- #259, "We limit not the truth of God," limits God's truth as it comes to us in a classic utterance of (Mayflower congregation) Pastor John Robinson, "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word." The footnote speaks of "the parting words of Pastor John Robinson to the Pilgrim founders in 1620," but the unsuspecting reader/singer will suppose that those words are the bowdlerized "O God, grant yet more light and truth to break forth from your Word." Historical accuracy be damned. Pleading poetic license for the changes won't wash: the revision is not more poetic. ...And speaking of poets, what happens to Milton's great versification of Ps.136? "God" is added 4 times, "Lord" is dumped both times, & the masculine pronouns for God are interdicted (a dozen times, including the refrain-singings). Further, Milton knew the Hebrew, as obviously the bowdlerizer didn't. English classics be damned.

It's worse than just running the radical feminist lexical hit-list over the grand old hymns. Frequently gratuitous changes of meaning occur. Take, eg, just two instances: (1) In #122, a rewrite of Chas. Wesley's "Come, thou long-expected Jesus," we'd expect the dumping of "king" & "kingdom," but why also "rule" & "throne"? And why does "all people" supplant "your people"; & why "earth impart," "thou art"; & why "enter," "joy"; & why "liberty," "rest"; & why "on earth," "in us"? (2) In #607, a rewrite of Sarah Flower Adams' "Nearer, my God, to thee," why do the angels carry down "faith and love" instead of the original's "all that thou sendest me"? And why is the climactic stanza dumped (because of "upward I fly," which violates the NCH's taboo against the vertical)? In stanza 4, why do we no longer wake to "praise"? In stanza 3, why does "heaven" become "sky"? And why does the hymn no longer deal with "darkness," "griefs," & "woes"? I'm reminded of the old collapsed Detroit, which made each year's model of each line of cars visibly different from the year before: is "just to be different" operating in some of the NCH's changes?

15 **Oh, that "Father" horror!** Jesus' favorite way of addressing God is a horror to the PC mentality. Writhing to be rid of it creates, in the NCH, many anomalies. Eg, if you were to come upon #13, "O my soul, bless your Creator," would you not expect the hymn to celebrate God's creative work? You'd be disappointed: nothing on that subject except the substitution of "Creator" & "Maker" for "Father." But if you knew that the original title was "O my soul, bless God, the *Father*," you'd be clued in to the theme & entire original content of the hymn. Why would the reviser mislead you? Because the woodenheaded substitution of "Creator" for "Father" is habitual with PCers. (In the original 6 stanzas, "Father" occurs 4 times, "Lord" once, & masculine pronouns for God 9 times--of course none of all this in NCH#13.)....Once, #423, a footnote tells you that "Creator" was "originally 'my Father.'" Once....In the original of #480, we are to "seek the Father," but PC has us seeking the "Savior." "Sweet hour of prayer" (#505) wants me, remembering the Lord's Prayer, to pray "at my Father's throne," but PC corrupts it to "Maker's."....

More, perhaps, later.