

MASCULINE INITIATIVE: CULTURE-SPECIFIC OR HORMONAL?

Thank God for women's liberation, & we have the devil to thank for its excesses. It's curing us of the **dogma** that men are always to take the lead & women follow: it's cursing us with the **dogma** that women & men are equally "created" to lead (a dogma that has no effect on weddings but is disastrous to marriage & to biblical religion).

As to the latter, feminist egalitarianism aims to give, in the deity, the feminine equal billing with the masculine--an aim hubris sometimes pushes into giving the feminine superior billing. Item: Goddess worship 4 May 95 in the Garrett-Evangelical Seminary "Chapel of the Unnamed Faithful," whose chaplain, Ruth Duck, has 14 hymns in The New Century Hymnal. The Call to Worship identified "the Holy One" with supposed Goddesses Shaddai, Ruach, & Sophia. The Prayer of Guidance was to the "Goddess of Wisdom and Earth and Sky [the Sky-God, "our Father in heaven," thus coopted into the feminine divine]...entrust ourselves to Your grace, that we may follow wherever You lead in the name of Love." This "Psalm in Search of the Goddess" was written by Miriam Therese Winter (of Hartford [UCC] Seminary), who has 6 hymns in TNCH: The "Holy One" is addressed as feminine, beginning with Shekinah (a bogus goddess, based on the mere fact that this Hebrew word for the divine presence is feminine), & continuing with the Prehistoric Goddess, Ishtar, Inanna, Sophia, Isis, Universal Goddess, Hathor, Shaddai (!), Nurturing Mother, Cybele, Great Mother Goddess, Nut, Shalom (!), Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter, Persephone, Anath-Astarte, Asherah, Gaia, Earth Mother, Goddess of Heaven and Earth. Interspersed are "draw us to You," "reveal to us," "we praise," "inhabit our hearts," "show us," "help us," "fill us," "we call upon Your name and long for Your affection," "we pray to You," "forgive us for all we have done to You," "we love you." The preacher for this worship with another Garrett teacher, the radical feminist who coined "Womanchurch," Rosemary Reuther....The suppression of the masculine divine is far advanced in many liberal seminaries. That chapel stands out because it's an example of the total cooptation of gods by the Goddess, as biblical religion is the opposite purity, viz the total cooptation of the goddesses by God (cp. chap.14 of my FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT: "On not taking Mother Nature as seriously as Father God"). What's especially ironic, & tragic, is that the former cooptation occurred in a worship room dedicated to the latter cooptation. The retort of the seminary's president, Neal F. Fisher, was appropriate: "In my view we clearly failed on all counts in this litany. I found it theologically objectionable and completely out of place in our chapel" (GOOD NEWS, Sept/Oct/95). But didn't the seminary ask for it? It's chapel policy says, contradictorily, that Scripture "provides the common language" & that worship leaders should use "inclusive language in referring to God, so that exclusive gender reference is avoided." In that worship, exclusive language was not avoided but indeed was deliberately practiced: no reference to the masculine divine! (Predictably, Reuther countered the president: the goddess litany was "*not* theologically objectionable.")....As surely as first-century Jews had to conclude that a new religion, Christianity, was breeding in their synagogues, Christians are beginning to see that a new religion, Feministicism, is breeding in our liberal churches. The cure will be the recovery of the Bible's way of talking about God, the masculine totally coopting the feminine (so the masculine pronouns can once again be used without embarrassment).

Yes, embarrassment. TNCH #386 is so embarrassed about the hymn's central image, viz the church as the bride of Christ, that the image--though biblical (eg Rev.21&22)--is entirely expunged! "The church's one foundation" is no longer "Jesus Christ *her* Lord": all dozen instances of the feminine pronouns modifying the church are dropped. "Bride," of course, is dropped. The church's "charter of salvation" is no longer "one Lord, one faith, one birth": the four-letter dirty-word "Lord" is changed, as hundreds of times in this hymnal, to the colorless, comparatively impotent "God" (twice substituted). "His new creation" is no longer his, nor is even his "precious blood." It wasn't "he" who "came and sought us" & "bought us." CONCLUSION: The New Century Hymnal is appropriate for the new religion, Feministicism, but not for the old religion, Christianity.