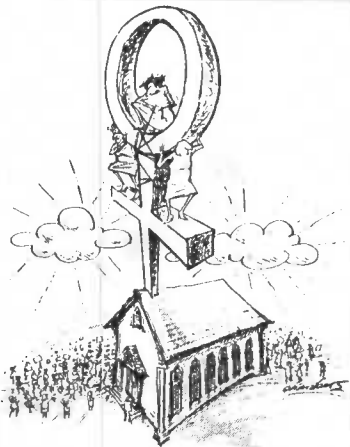


NEWSWEEK correctly quotes me as believing, as many Thinksheets have shown, that a new religion, which I call **Feministicism**, has emerged in society, captured the mainline national offices & theological seminaries, & is pressing its dogmas on the liberal churches & clergy--the more liberal, the more oppressive--an intolerant fundamentalism on the left.

Here, from p.38 of the 14 Nov 94 **CHRISTIANITY TODAY**, is the best visual I've seen to make this analysis: three feminists (a.k.a. radical feminists) are converting the old religion's central symbol into the new religion's, viz the female bio-symbol.

The new religion's invalid syllogism: (1) The Bible's patriarchy is evil. (2) Masculine language (especially God as "he") perpetuates patriarchy. (3) Eliminating "patriarchal language" will eliminate patriarchy.

Not just heresy: *a new religion.*



Hark! The lyric changers sing: Give me that new-time religion

RELIGION

Hymns, Hers and Theirs

Is nothing sacred? A new hymnal keeps the music but changes the words to fit some modern sensibilities.

BY KENNETH L. WOODWARD

FOR MANY AMERICAN PROTESTANTS, the best-loved church book is not the Bible but their hymnal. A sermon may instruct, but a hymn from an inspired writer speaks directly to the soul. At least it used to.

The liberal United Church of Christ, descended partly from the New England Pilgrims, has published a new hymnal in which many of the lyrics have been altered to meet contemporary views on equality, nonviolence and acute social sensitivity. According to the denomination's officials, it is the first to "balance masculine with feminine images of God." The balancing act, however, is getting very mixed reviews. The hymn doctors have left untouched a few well-known oldies like "Amazing Grace," they have added hymns from black, Native American and Hispanic traditions, and they have removed Biblical words like "darkness" and "blindness" as offensive to African-Americans and the visually challenged.

To many of the UCC's own 1.5 million members, the corrective surgery has gone too far; they will air their complaints at a meeting in Boylston, Mass., next April. Some are outraged by what they consider the highhanded rewriting of well-worn favorites. Others see heresy in the new lyrics.

"What we're being asked to celebrate," says critic Willis Elliott, theologian-in-residence at the UCC's retreat center on Cape Cod, "is the advent of a new religion."

Like recent translations of the Bible, the new hymnal avoids using male pronouns for God. Thus, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" no longer resounds with the rep-

America the Beautiful

OLD FINAL STANZA

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

NEW FINAL STANZA

How beautiful, two continents,
and islands in the sea
that dream of peace, nonviolence,
all people living free.
Americas! Americas!
God grant that we may be
a hemisphere where people here
all live in harmony.

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etition of the familiar "He." Frankly masculine hymns like "Praise the Father Giving Life" have been excised altogether. For substitutes, the hymnal offers new and frankly feminist creations like "Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth," based on the writings of the medieval nun and mystic Julian of Norwich. In many other hymns, revisers have changed the original meaning of the lyrics to give God dual gender. "Be Thou My Vision" no longer exclaims "Thou my great father, I thy true son / Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one." The revised lyrics now read like a Valentine verse to an androgynous parent: "Mother and Father, you are both to me / now and forever, your child I will be."

These changes are not merely cosmetic. To Christians, all baptized believers are children of God, but Jesus is unique as God's "only begotten Son." In "Silent Night," however, "Son of God" has been replaced with "Child of God," leaving the infant Jesus neutered. In the same hymn, "Glory" no longer streams "from heaven above" but from heaven "beyond." Why the change? "Because people no longer live in the old three-tiered universe," says Alan Lang, the UCC's public-relations director. But, say the critics, eliminating the vertical is an attack on hierarchical relationships. In "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," the first line concludes, "Glory to the Christ-Child bring," instead of the traditional "Glory to the new-born King." As male hierarchs, kings are doubly dubious to the editors of the new hymnal.

Other changes recast, or even remove, some of the staples of American patriotism. Choirs who take up "America the Beautiful" will discover that little of Kathleen Lee Bates's 19th-century imagery remains beyond the "amber waves of grain." The pilgrims have disappeared; so, too, have "patriot dreams" and any other words that hint of conflict or militancy. In their place appear three new stanzas written in 1993, one of which embraces all the Americas in a burst of hemispheric inclusiveness (excerpt). Such changes were designed, as UCC officials put it, "to bring Christian hymnody and worship into the next century."

Church officials expect their new hymnal to exert "a wide influence on other mainline Protestant denominations." One wonders. What the revisers seem to have forgotten is that good hymns are works of art, not ideology. Their integrity deserves respect, and so do the traditions from which they spring. Some African-Americans are incensed that the hymn doctors have cleaned up the grammar of old Negro spirituals. The words to "Steal Away," have been changed from "I ain't got long to stay here" to "I don't have long to stay here." No one would dare do that to Elvis's hound dog.

1 Evidence that in mainline seminaries, the new religion has a stranglehold on the old religion: Today, a UCC church-&-ministries committee voted to ordain a recent graduate even though, when asked "What is the gospel?", she could manage no coherent response--though for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour some members of the committee tried to help her to do so. But she was lucid & full-voiced on two emphases of that seminary, viz the ordination of homosexuals (with "open & affirming" church-policy) & the demasculinizing of language for God. Any church she pastors will be eating a theopolitical diet. And there are hundreds like her rolling out of these seminaries through those church-&-ministry committees, which are too ignorant or timid or both to fulfil their quality-control duty. Pastorwise in the UCC, things are bad & slated to get worse....I know of this instance because the committee member who asked "What is the gospel?" was chilled out by the other members & phoned me to ask whether I thought there was any point in his continuing on the committee, where "What is the gospel?" is an uncivil, embarrassing question.

2 Currently, PBS/TV is airing three continuous hours on "Women and Spirituality": "Goddess Remembered" (National Film Bd. of Canada/89), "The Burning Times" (same/90), & "Full Circle" (Great Atlantic & Pacific Film Col/92). Three solid hours (+ $\frac{3}{4}$ th-hour of \$-raising!) of new-religion evangelism, with unrelieved **attacks on Christianity**--in spite of commentary from the woman who's associate dean of Harv.Div. School & defrocked Dominican Matthew Fox (both cheering for the new religion). PBS/TV will never air a **pro-Christian** program, most certainly not one showing venom for the new religion: equality is preached, but fairness is not practiced....The underlying myth of the new religion (blandishingly told during the three hours): (1) The Earth Mother & the girls ruled a peaceful earth; (2) The sky father & the boys ruined the earth; (3) The Earth Mother & the girls are back! Yes, the new religion claims to be the older religion; but its base is an origins-myth to which an/epigraphic history provides dubious support....Bring back our **Father in heaven!**

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