A few notes toward a lunch-in-the-middle session on (titled something like)

How Can the Church Help Make Men out of Boys?

1   Severe list (tilt) of current Western Christianity <u>womanward</u>. The "feminization of the church" is not an excessive description. Men feel marginal- ized, boys outside the margin.

2   Wide awareness that the problem is <u>societal</u>, not just ecclesial. Last evening I asked the web for "feminist influence on the education of boys" & got 3640pp. E.g., **Christina Hoff Sommers'** 10.24.96 BOSTON GLOBE article & clips from her WHO STOLE FEMINISM? and THE WAR AGAINST BOYS.

3   For his wide experience in education (NYU ed.-psy. prof.) & church (in his 30s, convert from atheism to UCC), I suggest we invite **Paul Vitz** (110 Bleeker St. #23A, NY, NY 10012). A few squibs from his...
        ...PSYCHOLOGY AS RELIGION: The Cult of Self-Worship (Eerdmans/77.97). Narcisstic individualism relativizes all human relationships & dessicates institutions. Sanctions positively & negatively suporting the famile fade. Sex is captive to the pleasure principle--so homosexuality, pedophilia, & even bestiality are arguably on the same level as heterosexual marriage, which itself is made more fragile by permissive adultery. The controlling philosophy he calls **selfism.**
        ...FAITH OF THE FATHERLESS (Spence Pub.Co./99). The antirelational societal mood in selfism is more traumatic to men & boys: females are psychobio- logically more relational, more inclined to initiate & sustain relationships. While for men, God functions 1st as establisher of order & justice & only 2nd as a personal relationship, for women it's the reverse. Both need God as Father, but boys are more damaged than girls when the human father is weak & unprincipled (& men more easily leave a church whose leadership is weak, hypocritical, corrupt). We can't address the problem of how the church can help boys become men without facing the current pathologies of theology (especially embarrassment over God as Father) & church....Vitz studied ex-church atheists for a fresh view on personal-societal-ecclesial health. Hatred of cosmic patriarchy is especially strong in lesbians whose mothers did not help them own their femininity & who are the strongest promoters of goddess religion.
        Some women in black churches encourage their husbands to become Muslims "so they, too, can have a God."
        Boys are in more trouble than girls, in our present culture, in the process of arriving at personal & sexual identity.

4   Some organizations incorporate this concern. E.g., Wade F. Horn's, National Fatherhood Initiative.

The Jan.-Feb./01 issue of TOUCHSTONE has a number of articles on or tangential to our theme. Paul Vitz's contribution (33-39) is titled "The Father Almighty, Maker of Male and Female." E.g., this on p33: "Since modernism was founded largely on hostility to Christianity, it should not be surprising that ideas coming out of it--particularly in extreme forms--are also hostile to the faith. Rationalism, materialism, individualism, nationalism, communism, evolutionism, fascism, and positivism are all examples of modernism movements that created Christian heresies or involved explicit rejection of important Christian beliefs." Though "modernism is dying" from "exhausted worldviews," "feminism, which arose in the mid-nineteenth century," was made possible by the preceding "individualism, egalitarianism, and socialism/communism." But postmodern femin-- ism has shifted from the egalitarian cry to emphasizing sexual difference, radical feminists sanctifying this with goddess worship--& tends to be neo-exploitative (a feminine repetition of the failed masculine exploitative model). "The androgeny or unisex model" didn't work. "The complementary model" revives the Christian emphasis on servant mutuality, a non-macho & non-wimpo model for boys & men.

5   3.29.01 Yesterday the "Confessing Christ in MA" steering committee adopted, for the 10.10.01 meal-in-the-middle conference, the wording of this memo/Think-sheet's title & confirmed the engagement of **Mary Steward VanLeeuwen** as keynoter. Prof. of psy. & phil. at Eastern College (Loree's alma mater), she's famous for publication & conference-participation in feminism from the Christian evangelical viewpoint. Her upcoming book is on masculinity in the new millenium. We are asking her to narrow down to the stated theme, which arises from a crisis on which many social indicators converge & of which the public is fast becoming aware: within one week, both Charle Rose & The Lehrer Show interviewed **Lionel Tiger** on his latest book, THE DECLINE OF MALES. Two additional books I must put on a short list here: **Leon J. Podles'** THE CHURCH IMPOTENT: The Feminization of Christianity, & **David Blankenhorn's** FATHERLESS AMERICA.

6   Two different & conflicting sociomolds for pedagogy (societal models for rearing children) exist within me (probably you, too). I'll give them these descriptive adjectives, & thumbnail them thus:
...the **isomorphic**: gender should not be factored into the shaping ("morph"ing) of family & the larger society; radical egalitarianism (equal everything). The position of Christians for Biblical Equality & of VanLeeuwen's (Eastern College) Center for Christian Women in Leadership. Dynamically, the equality is chrismorphic: church & society should take forms tending to discover & release the gifts ("chris"mata) of each person regardless of gender. Downside: by neglecting gender differences & paying gender confusion as price, it makes gender maturation difficult (girls into women, even moreso boys into men) & unwittingly promotes homosexuality. (To choose just one VanLeeuwen publication: GENDER AND GRACE [IVCF/90].)
...the **genemorphic**: the biblical creation ("gene-") model ("morph") rejects egalitar-ianism (a secular import corrupting the Christian mind) in favor of (Vitz's phrase) "the complementary model." The position of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. (A typical publication: Jn.Piper & Wayne Gruden's CHARITY, CLARITY, AND HOPE--which claims that VanLeeuwen "cancels out crucial [biblical] texts" supporting male headship in home & leadership ["primary responsibility for"] in church--on the model of Christ's headship: Eph.5.25-33; Col.3.18-19; 1P.3.1-7; ITim.3.4,12; Tit.2.5--Christ's headship as model explicit only in the 1st of these texts.) (Extensive details on gender role-complementarity: cbmw.org)

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