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Countercurrents

THE FEMINIZATION OF THE CHURCH has not gone uncontested. The distortions in spirituality and practice were glaringly obvious to both Catholics and Protestants. Both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation included unsuccessful attempts to shake off the feminine piety of the Middle Ages, return to the spirituality of the New Testament and the Church Fathers, and give greater emphasis to the church militant. The Jesuits represented a new masculine emphasis in the Roman Catholic Church, a return to patristic ideas of the inner life as a spiritual combat. Luther reminded Christians that the chief foe was the devil, who was more and more seen as active in human agents, whether they were papists or witches. In North America, the Penitentes of the Southwest continued or revived Spanish practices to form a vigorous and enduring Christian masculinity; Protestants used revivalist techniques to attract men to a new birth and a final transformation.

These attempts continued when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, business became the religion of the common man. The Men and Religion Forward Movement, for instance, used the techniques of modern advertising to bring men to Christ. Biblical and patristic revivals in the Roman Catholic Church tried to return the

Church to models of spirituality that existed before the feminization and sentimentalization of medieval piety, and the Second Vatican Council made these models official while trying to heal the split between religion and the public world. Recently, a handful of Catholic and mainline Protestant writers have acknowledged the lack of men. A recent movement, which is still developing, is the evangelical Promise Keepers, which has updated the revivalist tradition and has had much initial success.

Medieval Catholic Masculinity

The Middle Ages were not totally feminized in their religious practices. The clergy remained all male, and the cultivation of a combative, agonistic style of scholastic rational theology appealed to men, although this theology was not very fruitful for the life of the Church. Its sterility gave rise to a call for a religion of the heart, in such movements as the Brethren of the Common Life, with its great product, *The Imitation of Christ*, and Lutheranism. Preaching was aimed specifically at men: the Bernard who called himself and his monks *women* and who popularized bridal mysticism was also the preacher of the First Crusade. Men also participated in the eroticism of religion in the chivalric veneration of Mary.

The Crusades

The element common to Bernard of Clairvaux's encouragement of both eros and violence was a humanization of religious emotion. Human emotions, erotic love and anger, were integrated into Christianity through their direction to the Celestial Bridegroom, on the one hand, and the enemies of the Church on the other, in particular heretics and Saracens. Christ often took on the attributes of an earthly bridegroom and was the object of more or less explicit erotic fantasies; the external enemies of the Church took on the attributes of the demons and became the object of a war of annihilation.

In addition to the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Bernard was the author, for the Knights of the Order of the Temple, of *On the New*

Christian Militia.[1] He felt some discomfort in both books, for he realized that he was innovating and that his innovations needed a defense. Bernard insists that "to inflict death or to die for Christ is no sin,"[2] and he defends the Christian knight against charges of manslaughter: "If he kills an evildoer, he is not a mankiller, but, if I may so put it, a killer of evil."[3] Bernard claims he does not mean "that the pagans are to be slaughtered when there is any other way to prevent them from harassing and persecuting the faithful, but only that it now seems better to destroy them."[4] Bernard cites John the Baptist's advice to soldiers to be content with their pay as implying the legitimacy of killing and goes so far as to characterize the knight who dies in warfare against the pagans as "a martyr"[5]—a theme taken up in modern times, when the soldier who dies for his country became the new Christ.

Chivalric Devotion to Mary

Male mystics and religious in the Middle Ages centered their spiritual life not on images of the feminine divine, but on Mary.[6] The problems of regarding God as in some way feminine posed too many emotional and intellectual challenges. Nor did men feel all that comfortable adopting a feminine stance before God. Some had the intellectual and poetic abilities to do it, but most felt an intense male fear of homosexuality, especially of passive homosexuality, of being used like a woman. It was easier to venerate the divine in Mary. The eros implicit in medieval devotion led to this development. Women's devotion to Christ was tinged with eros; that is why "women concentrate especially on the infant or adolescent Christ," while "monks refer more frequently to the virgin Mary."[7] Veneration of the Mother of God has a long history in Christianity, but it took a very odd turn in the Middle Ages at the same time that bridal and maternal mysticism came to dominate the life of women in the Church.

Femininity, because of its passivity, paradoxically opens women to the power of the Holy Spirit. They are like soft wax that more easily takes an imprint. Mary, above all, was passive and receptive

and took the imprint of the Spirit better than anyone else. She took it so well that she sometimes looks very much like God. Hilda Graef in her survey of Marian devotion notes: "This tendency to assimilate Mary increasingly to the transcendence of God himself becomes even more pronounced in later writers."[8] Mary became the Queen of Mercy, the protector of sinners from the justice of Christ.[9] God was attracted by her beauty and became her lover at the Annunciation.[10] She held his hand from punishment; she rescued the impenitent from hell; she knew everything from the first moment of her conception;[11] she was equal to God;[12] she was greater than God.[13] Christian men had a quasi-erotic relationship with her. St. John Eudes in the seventeenth century "saw Mary as the spouse of the priest; indeed at the age of sixty-seven he drew up a formal contract of marriage with her and henceforth wore a ring."[14] After being confronted by Pusey with the beliefs concerning Mary that were propagated by Catholic books of devotion, John Henry Newman, already a Catholic, replied that "I consider them calculated to prejudice inquirers, to frighten the unlearned, to unsettle consciences, to provoke blasphemy, and to work the loss of souls."[15] The Second Vatican Council emphasized the subordination of Mary to Christ and cautioned against "the falsity of exaggeration."[16]

Catholic Reactions

The changes I have summed up in the word "feminization" were not unnoticed by contemporaries. Eckhart was (probably unfairly) condemned, and mysticism was suspected by the various Inquisitions. Catholics who were already trying to return the Church to its early purity were stung by the accusations of the Reformers, who claimed that the reformed church was closer to the early church. Some medieval innovations made Catholics very uncomfortable. Obvious visual eroticism was an immediate target, and changed attitudes to art can be dated almost to the year. The Jesuits tried to regain the monastic tradition of spiritual militancy. In the Spanish Americas, the traditions of penitential fraternities revived and flourished. In the twentieth century, Vatican II reacted against the sentimental devo-

tions that dominated Catholic life and against the related tendency to exclude the Church from public, that is, masculine, life. Two Jesuits, Walter Ong and Patrick Arnold, have diagnosed the feminization of the church and the consequences of the lack of men.

Suspicion of Eros in Religion

The Counter-Reformation reacted in part against the extreme feminization and eroticization of Catholic piety during the Middle Ages. Leo Steinberg documents both the eroticism and the reaction against it in *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion*.[17] Christ's sexuality was central to much art because art needed a visual manifestation of the eroticism of bridal and maternal mysticism. Consequently, the genitals of the infant and of the crucified Christ were emphasized to an extraordinary degree. What was being emphasized was not so much Christ's sexuality as the human relationship to God, which according to mystics and theologians was essentially feminine. If the Christian was essentially feminine in relationship to a masculine God, the visual counterpart of that masculinity was of course maleness, and maleness centered upon the genitals. Yet the sexual overtones are inescapable, as the official guardians of Catholic art realized.

Reforming Catholics felt that something was wrong with this eroticism, and the change in attitude occurred very quickly. Renaissance nudes were given loincloths and pants. Michelangelo chiseled the leg off of Christ in a *pietá* because Christ's posture was too overtly sexual. In particular, the images that were redolent of homosexuality, in which the Father pointed to the genitals of the son, were abandoned. Mysticism in general came under suspicion, not simply because it provided a path to God apart from the sacramental, hierarchical church, but because the eroticism of mysticism was felt to be somehow offensive.

This reaction was only partial and did not destroy the main currents of popular devotion, though it purged eroticism of some of its most overtly sexual references. Since the eros of mother and child is not explicitly genital, it remained at the heart of Catholic piety. Fur-

thermore, the religion of the heart, which was based upon medieval affective piety, continued to dominate the Catholic laity. The erotic focus on the emotions of the believer tended to identify him as feminine.

The Jesuits and Militant Spirituality

The Jesuits were prominent in Counter-Reformation Catholicism until the twentieth century. They were far more masculine than the medieval orders, all of which, in spite of their resistance, had been feminized in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Jesuits, unlike the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans, never had a female branch. As Robert Harvey notes, "With the exception of one brief episode . . . there was no consideration given to the founding of a female order in connection with the company of Jesus."[18] Although much of Ignatius's initial support came from women—his "efforts met with a greater response among the women than in any other quarter"[19]—he wanted his followers to steer clear of them: "All familiarity with women was to be avoided, and not less with those who are spiritual, or wish to appear so."[20]

Ignatius was a soldier[21] and remained one, although now "the new soldier of Christ."[22] His conversion was brought about by reading a version of the *Legenda aurea* that emphasized the chivalric nature of Christianity. After his conversion he tried to be a better Christian by following both the crusading and chivalric ideals. He nearly killed a Moslem who, by denying that Mary remained a virgin *in partu*, was not sufficiently respectful of Mary for Ignatius's taste: "At this, various emotions came over him and caused discontent in his soul, as it seemed he had not done his duty. They also aroused his indignation against the Moor, for it seemed that he had done wrong in allowing the Moor to say such things about Our Lady, and that he ought to sally forth in defense of her honor. He felt inclined to go in search of the Moor and stab him with his dagger for what he had said."[23] A divine sign spares the Moor, and Ignatius seems to look back upon this incident as a symptom that he was very immature in

the spiritual life, that he did not yet understand what kind of service God demanded of him.

Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, abandoned the tradition of bridal mysticism. He uses "bride" to refer only to the Church, not to the Christian.[24] Even in a passage in which he compares Satan to a "false lover"[25] who seduces the soul, he does not develop the logical parallel of God as a true lover who woos the soul. Instead, Ignatius returns to the older patristic and monastic models of spiritual warfare. He compares the Christian to a knight who is addressed by an earthly king: "It is my will to conquer all the lands of the infidel. Therefore, whoever wishes to join with me in this enterprise must be content with the same food, drink, clothing etc. as mine. So, too, he must work with me by day, and watch with me by night, etc., that as he had a share in the toil with me, afterwards, he may share in the victory with me."[26] This military experience, of being comrades and followers of an earthly prince, is the analogy that Ignatius chooses to help the Christian understand his role in the drama of salvation. Christ speaks to each Christian: "It is my will to conquer the whole world and all my enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with me, that by following me in suffering, he may follow me in glory."[27] The Christian is forced to choose between the two standards, "the one of Christ, our supreme leader and lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature."[28] The Jesuits always felt that life was a struggle, whether a warfare with evil or a contest with self and God. Alonso de Orozco, echoing patristic and monastic language, warned "that he who would see the face of the most powerful Wrestler, our boundless God, must first have wrestled with himself."[29]

The Penitentes

The Penitentes of New Mexico are among the few groups of Catholics that have maintained a vital hold on the male laity for centuries. The Penitentes do not worship Jesus the Bridegroom, but, as they

sing in one of their songs "Jesús confrado,"[30] Jesus the Brother, in whose suffering they participate as brothers. The Penitentes either continue or revive (documentation is lacking) the penitential traditions of medieval Europe.

The penitential fraternities were the successors to the Crusades, which had begun as a penitential exercise. Penance, and not killing, was their central spiritual value.[31] Those who did not go on crusade could join a confraternity, whose male members often did not get along well with the clergy.[32] Penitents engaged in a close imitation of Jesus, and took upon themselves the sufferings of the world. The Flagellants, making public an old private practice, whipped themselves through the streets "in order to avert God's anger by assimilating themselves with Christ through sharing in his sufferings."[33] These were all male.[34] In Europe these male religious organizations had died out: "The confraternities of penitents were absorbed by the third orders, which recruited their own members primarily among women."[35]

During Holy Week, the Penitentes, more properly the Brothers of the Confraternities of the Holy Blood, strip themselves to the waist, bloody their backs with flint knives or broken glass, beat themselves and each other with cactus whips, carry man-sized wooden crosses in solemn procession through the desert, temporarily crucify themselves, and spend the whole of Good Friday night in darkness, prayer, and sleepless vigil. All of this is to make real the adjurations, "Take up your cross and follow me" and "Put on Christ." They wish to identify and conform themselves more perfectly to the image of the living Christ, to become a version in flesh of the *santos*—the images of the holy ones—like the carved and painted figures the Penitentes' *santeros* (literally "saint-makers") fashion from the recalcitrant materials of the American desert.

The rites of initiation into the lay confraternities of the Penitentes are startlingly like the puberty rituals with which most societies mark the transformation of boys into men. The would-be *hermano*, or penitent brother, presents himself to the novice master, who determines the candidate to be of good character and not a flagrant public sinner. The novice undergoes a period of prayer and

fasting and returns to the master for the solemn rituals of Holy Week. Novices generally strip to the waist and don short white cotton trousers, the *calzones*. The novice master, using the ritual flint knife or perhaps only a jagged piece of glass, makes three or four shallow gashes on the penitent's back. The free flow of blood both symbolizes the shedding of Christ's blood and serves a practical purpose during the next stage of the initiation, the flagellation. A prescribed number of strokes with the cactus-fiber whip follow, though the postulant may ask for more. The gashes prevent welts from forming and keep infection from setting in, so that the penance, though real and painful, does no lasting physical damage.

This stage of the initiation generally takes place within the nearly windowless, candlelit interior of the confraternity's chapel, the *morada*. From there, the brothers march in solemn procession along a route representing the Stations of the Cross, a symbolic journey as well as a physical one. Some of the brothers carry a piece of cactus inside their *calzones*; others carry full-size wooden crosses. Like their counterparts in Spain, many of the flagellants cover their faces with hoods, not to mask their participation in shameful rites (as pioneer Anglos thought), but as a precaution against spiritual pride. The brothers of the confraternity process to the accompaniment of sung, never spoken, prayers and the music of the *pito*, the liturgical flute. Generally the procession follows a nearly life-sized crucifix or figure of the suffering Christ, another of his mother, and sometimes more figures representing soldiers, the crowd, and the sorrowing women.

At the fourth station, where Christ meets his sorrowing mother, the *hermanos* stage the *encuentro*, the dramatic scene of that meeting. The statues of Jesus and Mary (Mary is often carried by women) are brought together and an *alabados* sung, voicing the sadness each of them feels at seeing the other's pain. Farther on, at the climax of the Holy Week paraliturgies, the brothers re-enact the Crucifixion in the same way, creating a drama that they understand both by observing and participating in it. They affix the figure of Christ to a cross and raise it aloft for all to see, life-sized, bloody, crowned with cactus thorns or nails and contrived with moveable arms, legs, jaws that can

open and shut to simulate the last words, and sometimes even a concealed compartment in the side from which blood and water can be made to gush out. At the same time that the painted Christ is crucified, the postulant *hermanos* may be tied to their own crosses in sight of the crucifix, where they hang until their veins distend and their trunks turn blue from near-strangulation.

After they are taken down from their crosses, the brothers re-enact the Deposition: the nails, the crown, the cloth draping the cross are taken down and given into the outstretched hands of the statue of the mourning Virgin, now become *Nuestra Senora de la Soledad*, Our Lady of Solitude. The dead Christ is laid first in her arms, and then in a special cradle and carried back to the *morada*, again, always accompanied by the appropriate songs of sorrow. Behind the solemn procession the brothers drag the figure of Death, a black-robed, skull-faced woman in a cart full of stones.

At the *morada*, the Christ is laid in state before the altar and the brothers sing a version of the office of *Tenebrae*, extinguishing the candles one by one until the *morada* is entirely dark. The forces of Chaos and Old Night are then given full symbolic play: the brothers wail, rattle the ceremonial rattles, and pray until dawn for their dead. Finally, at daybreak, they come out into the early morning light and sing the final hymn of rejoicing: Salvation is accomplished, for in celebrating Christ's death, they celebrate too his Resurrection.

As with all initiation rites for men, those who emerge successful, who attain to the fulfillment of manhood, are deemed fit to assume positions of societal leadership. Responsible, self-sacrificing leaders were in urgent demand in the Southwestern desert: The small farmers and landholders of New Mexico lay at the furthest outpost of Hispanic civilization. Their peripheral position, coupled with the various breakdowns of the civil order in Mexico and the gradual retrenchment of the Spanish empire, left the New Mexicans more or less to their own devices. The withdrawal of military support, the dwindling number of available clergy from Durango, and the dearth of rich and powerful landholders who might serve as a stabilizing class, forced the New Mexicans to invent new ways to meet their own liturgical and societal needs. The Brotherhoods filled the gap.

In the absence of priests, or with only occasional visits from clergy riding a long circuit, the confraternities provided the only liturgy available, and kept alive the community's life of prayer. Charitable works, feeding the hungry, clothing and housing the victims of the disasters of a harsh desert environment, protecting the weak, and burying the dead worked not only for the acquisition of virtue but for the stabilizing good of the society as a whole. Indeed, one can hardly distinguish between the two, and Christians might argue that the two goals are inseparable. The *hermanos* assumed a major role, if not the major role, in maintaining the civil order. The *hermano mayor*, the head of the *morada*, settled disputes and administered justice in practice, however much law and jurisdiction may have in theory lain with the King of Spain.

In Spain also, the public processions are one of the few occasions on which men feel they can display their religion. In the town of Monteros, the men never go to church, yet participate with enthusiasm in the procession of the *Señor de Consuelo*, a painting of the Crucifixion. Only boys are allowed the difficult task of carrying the large painting in its heavy frame through the streets. The painting is an emotional one: "One has only to look at the painting of the crucified Christ, his head hung pitifully sideways, his eyes downcast, to recognize that he is a man who has sacrificed greatly."[36] The boys, suffering under the weight, thereby "at once display power and suffering, [and] identify closely with the Son of God."[37] Men, in seeing the image of the crucified see the destiny of all men to be a sacrifice. They honor, in some sense, a "self-portrait, a supernatural image of themselves."[38] In Christ, as in men who fulfill their masculinity, there is a union of power and weakness, because men are strong only so that they may give of themselves to others, even to the point of death.

Twentieth-Century Catholic Outreach to Men

In a quiet way, the most effective Catholic outreach to men, or to be more precise, the most effective work that Catholic men have done with one another, has been through the Knights of Columbus. It

was in some ways modeled after the non-Catholic fraternal orders that had been so successful in nineteenth-century America. Christopher J. Kauffman points out that "traditional notions of the male role permeated every aspect of Columbian fraternalism. The ceremonial 'rite of passage' was intended to imbue the member with a 'manly' sense of pride in his Catholicism and a strong dedication to defend the faith. The insurance program was a medium for expressing the breadwinner's economic responsibility for his family."[39]

On a more theological level, the *ressourcement* that preceded Vatican II was a cultivation of biblical and patristic studies, in an attempt to overcome the bifurcation between theology and piety that had begun with Scholasticism. Basil Pennington, a key figure in the *ressourcement*, set forth the purpose of the program: "There is a great need to reach back to the other side of the 'scholastic parenthesis' and pick up those currents of life which are more integrally and fully human, open to the divine and the divinization of the human."[40] The central thesis of *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* is that Christian life had split into rationalist theology and pietistic devotion because of Scholastic hyper-rationalism, and that the two must be reunited, or, as von Balthasar put it, theology must be done on the knees.

The Church in the West had also become increasingly privatized after the Middle Ages. Religion was a matter of sentiment, and best confined to the home or the individual.[41] It had no relevance in a secular world governed by principles of reason that were accessible to all. The various churches reacted differently to this enforced privatization. The liberal churches, and some not so liberal, took up the Social Gospel. After various experiments with Catholic Action, the Catholic Church in Vatican II called for an *aggiornamento*, which would overcome the relegation of Christianity to the feminine world of the home: "Vatican II was an attempt on the part of the hierarchy to move the Church back over to the masculine, public side of the public/private split."[42] Again, there was an attempt to put a parenthesis around the developments that began in the twelfth century and to resume a relationship with society that had characterized the Church of the first millennium.

But, to date, the attempts of Vatican II to attain an *aggiornamento* by a *ressourcement* have not been successful. The extraordinary pontificate of John Paul II and the union of religious and nationalist fervor in Poland was almost certainly a key factor in the end of Communism in central and Eastern Europe. But the West continues to undergo a process by which religion is further feminized and public life further secularized.

A few Catholic writers, a very few, have noticed the lack of men in the church and have attempted to give both a diagnosis and a remedy. Patrick Arnold, in *Warriors, Wildmen and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible*, has made excellent practical suggestions. On the subject of the liturgy he says, "Butterfly, Banner, and Balloon Extravaganzas severely alienated many men. The most saccharine outbreaks of forced liturgical excitement featured fluttering dancers floating down church aisles like wood-nymphs, goofy pseudo-rites forced on the congregation with almost fascist authoritarianism, and a host of silly *schticks* usually accompanied by inane music." Arnold continues with the observation that a "liturgy that appeals to men possesses a quality the Hebrews called *kabod* ('glory') and the Romans *gravitas* ('gravity'); both words at root mean 'weightiness' and connote a sense of dignified importance and seriousness."[43] Nevertheless, Arnold's perceptions and attempts at prescribing solutions are vitiated by his obvious sympathy for homosexuality. The current attempts, within almost all Christian denominations, to normalize homosexuality will, more than anything else, convince heterosexual men that religion had best be kept at a great distance.

Little in Catholic circles portends any change in the current situation. Richard Rohr laments that "we seem to have resigned ourselves to church meetings where men are largely absent, to church ministry that is mainly done by women but overseen by a clerical caste, to an often soft devotionalism that attracts only a specific male clientele."[44] The last phrase is an allusion to the weak masculinity of men who tend to be attracted to church. Little in David James's survey *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?* shows promise for revivifying general male interest in Christianity. There is too much Jungianism, too much emphasis on male weakness and

faults, and too few practical suggestions. The ascendancy of the feminist and homosexual agendas in the church blocks the way to any reconnection of men and the church.

Protestant Reactions

The theological concerns of the Reformation are of course more important than its relationship to the feminization of the Church, but the gender question was not absent. Most scholars recognize the rejection of the religious feminine by the Reformation: "The Reformation substantially purged Christianity of its feminine elements, leaving men and women alike faced with a starkly masculine religion."[45] Paul Tillich claims that "the spirit of Judaism with its exclusively male symbolism prevailed in the Reformation."[46] The return to biblical and patristic models of spirituality led once again to a portrayal of the life of the Christian as a battle, a spirituality that was essentially masculine. In part the Reformation counteracted medieval feminization, but in part inadvertantly reinforced it.

The Reformers

Luther, rejecting most of the comforting medieval devotions to saintly intercessors, mediators, and protectors, returned to a stark view of humanity caught between God and the Devil:

> The believer is never at rest, but is in incessant combat against the "flesh," the "world," the "devil." These three powers are opposed to God and his word. It is not always possible to distinguish them at the level of their action on Christians. The evocation of the devil by Luther is something more than a simple medieval heritage. If he spoke of the devil so often (and more deeply than was done in the Middle Ages), it is because he understood the whole of the history of the world as a battle of demonic power against God the creator and redeemer. Evil is not simply moral or a weakness of people, but transpersonal, bound to that mysterious power which Luther called, with the tradition, Satan or devil."[47]

Nor was this confined to Luther's own life; the hymn that became the battle cry of the Reformation, *Ein' Feste Burg*, portrayed the conflict between God and Satan vividly. The war was universal: "Christ and Satan wage a cosmic war for mastery over Church and world. No one can evade involvement in this struggle. Even for the believer there is no refuge—neither monastery nor the seclusion of the wilderness offer him a chance for escape. The Devil is the omnipresent threat, and exactly for this reason the faithful need the proper weapons for survival."[48] The Lutheran branch of the Reformation, because of its emphasis on *agon*, on struggle, led to a Christianity that was far more masculine than medieval Catholicism had been: "The overwhelming image of both God and the believer in Luther's writings is a masculine one. . . . True faith is energetic, active, steadfast, mighty. Industrious, powerful—all archetypally masculine qualities in the sixteenth (or the twentieth) centuries. God is Father, Son, Sovereign, King, Lord, Victor, Begetter, 'the slayer of sin and the devourer of death'—all aggressive, martial, and totally male images. With the home now the center of women's religious vocation, even the imagery of the Church becomes masculine, or at least paternal and fraternal."[49] The medieval preoccupation with Christ as the bridegroom had of course emphasized the masculinity of Christ, but it was the erotic aspect of masculinity that predominated in the Middle Ages. The Church had always been seen as the Bride, but in Lutheranism the Church became more of a fraternity.

But this note in the Reformation was to grow fainter, the tones of *Ein' Feste Burg* gradually replaced by *0, How I Love Jesus*. The feminine voice grew louder, while the masculine voice was muted, because the demographic composition of the church had changed since the patristic era. It was hard to maintain a masculine attitude in a church whose congregations were predominantly, sometimes overwhelmingly, female.

In its original European forms, all varieties of Protestantism emphasized the role of the father in the family. Luther and Calvin and the Anabaptists all agreed on the necessity of patriarchy. Calvin explained that the husband and wife were equal, but that the wife was functionally subordinate to the husband, whose authority was

like that of Christ, an authority of service and sacrifice.[50] Such Christian patriarchalism has largely vanished from Protestantism except in such groups as the Amish, who anchor the identity of males in Christian fatherhood.

Revivalism

Revivalism had roots in Methodism, and it seems that early Methodism appealed about equally to men and women. In East Cheshire, Methodist societies had "about 55 percent female membership," which "closely matches the sex ratio as a whole in textile manufacturing centres."[51] Revivalism did not flourish in England, but became the predominant form of Protestantism after it had been transplanted to the colonies.

The series of revivals that began in the seventeenth century modified the demographic composition of the Church in America, which even in the seventeenth century was largely female. It also affected religious feelings and their expression. Bridal mysticism, although it was common to Puritan and pietist, did not flourish in America, which developed its own form of the religion of the heart: "Revivalism . . . was an emotionalized religion based on inner experience, but of a peculiar American type. Unlike the mystical movements of Europe, it did not center around asceticism and divine love, but rather around sin, repentance, and redemption; instead of stressing the humanity of Christ and the intimate love relationship between God and man, it aroused fear and trembling through hell-fire oratory."[52] Revivals served evangelism. In Hudson's classic definition, evangelism is "a theological emphasis upon the necessity for a conversion experience as the beginning point of a Christian life, while revivalism is a technique developed to induce that experience."[53] Revivalism was a call to change, which could take many forms and was given many names: "salvation, conversion, regeneration, or the new birth."[54] It could be highly emotional, but it could also be a decision based on consideration of the evidence, a business decision, a prudent spiritual fire insurance. But revivalism always involved the ending of one way of life and the beginning of another

and therefore conformed to the pattern of death and rebirth by which men attain masculinity. Conversion is an experience comprehensible to men who follow the ideology of masculinity, who know that the meaning of life can only be found in a test that leads to a kind of death and a rebirth as a new type of being. Charles Grandison Finney, the preacher who began the Second Great Awakening, the wave of revivals that set the evangelical tone of American Protestantism, was a Freemason, and his conversion experience in 1821 closely resembled the fraternal initiation he had gone through when he became a Mason. Mark C. Carnes compares fraternalism and revivalism: "Both revivalism and fraternalism depend upon an agency outside the individual to generate a personal transformation; both depicted man as inherently deficient; and both invoked grim visions of death and hell to precipitate an emotional response that could lead men to an unknowable and distant God."[55] The anguish and the hellfire-and-brimstone sermons of the revivals were a change from the calm rationality, Unitarianism, and Universalism of the older churches.

In the First Great Awakening of the later eighteenth century, the one identified with the Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards, women made up the majority of new church members: "In over half of the churches the proportion of women at admission increased from previous levels or remained in line with the church's historical appeal."[56] But overall, the percentage of men joining the church increased over the low percentage of the prerevival period: "On occasion, however, the Great Awakening did redress the severe imbalance of females over males in new membership, and in several towns even tipped it decidedly in the latter's direction."[57] Revivalist preaching obviously had a special appeal for men.

At the time of the American Revolution, the ratio of new male church members to new female members was at an all time low. Politics and, especially, war were far more attractive to men than the church was. Declension, or a failing off of membership, occurred primarily among men, and fears of male deism and atheism occupied the clergy.[58] During the Second Great Awakening, identified with Finney, the percentage of men who joined the church also increased,

but it was not as high as in the First. Women were the majority of the participants in the revival: "Females were more receptive to the revivalists' message than males."[59] This revival, unlike that of the eighteenth century, appealed to the more mature: "Married adult males were more likely to convert than young unattached males; females were more likely to convert than males; and of any single group (considering gender and marital status), married females were the most likely to convert."[60] That more married men than unmarried converted suggests that wives had more to do with male conversions in this Awakening than in the previous one.[61]

In the brief but intense revival of 1858, brought on by the tensions that led to the Civil War, there was an unusually high percentage of men. The *Christian Advocate* noted that often "the majority of the converts [were] males."[62] Although the revival preached the old gospel, it used new methods: "It relied heavily upon businessmen, business methods, and the business outlook."[63] This was a harbinger of Moody's approach and that of almost all later evangelists. In the revivals of the twentieth century, men also seem to have been attracted to conversion at a rate that has exceeded that of non-revival periods, although women have remained the majority of the converts. This relative success among males was not limited to Protestants, for whom revivals were almost an institution. The Roman Catholic Church had a tradition of mission preaching which was imported to America, and it also seemed to have more success reaching men than regular services.[64]

Nevertheless, the revivals did not reach the completely unchurched; they were most popular among church goers. Revivalists were frustrated that churchgoers occupied the chairs and sometimes asked them to stay away to make room for the unchurched. Those who were not already members of churches often came from families that had church members, or were children and adolescents from Sunday schools. The down-and-outers, the utterly profane, the deists and skeptics, did not go to revivals, and this group was primarily male. Revivalism did not seem to have any long-term impact even on more receptive males. If it added members to the churches in the short run, it led to a falling off as enthusiasms cooled. Among

Catholics, priests who preached the parish missions knew that there was a large group of "mission Catholics" who came to church only for missions and then stayed away until the next mission. Conversion is a peak experience, and even men who want initiation find it impossible to live permanently on the mountaintop.

Muscular Christianity

A vague feeling that religion had become too feminized and a more conscious dislike of high-church foppery led to Victorian muscular Christianity.[65] This variety of Christianity shunned asceticism, especially celibacy and virginity, in which it detected perversion. Charles Kingsley despised Cardinal Newman and wrote *Water Babies* as a popular defense of Christian marriage and progeny and, beyond that, of the unity of church and world, sacred and secular.[66] Kingsley and his like-minded friends wanted men to be Christian without being too religious, because religion, in its ascetical Roman, monastic, Tractarian forms, was identified with femininity. Kingsley preached "godliness and manliness," but not "saintliness," which is "not God's ideal of a man, [but] an effeminate shaveling's ideal."[67] Kingsley disliked the popular images of St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, because "God made man in His image, not in an imaginary Virgin Mary's image."[68] Kingsley's charges, as we have seen, have some historical basis. Nevertheless, the Church of England belonged to Western Christianity, and was also feminized, although perhaps not as much as Roman Catholicism, especially in France.

Kingsley was an early proponent of the motto "Be All You Can Be" because manly potential should be fulfilled, not denied.[69] Kingsley advised a friend to preach to men "that Christ is in them, a true and healthy manhood, trying to form Himself in them, and make men of them."[70] Mysticism was abhorrent to Kingsley because it was effeminate. He disliked talk about Christ as the bridegroom of the soul, because it characterized the soul "as feminine by nature, whatever be the sex of its possessor."[71] Beyond these emotional objections to feminized religion lay a broad church emphasis on ethics,

a "liberal religious awareness which crystallized . . . into a vigorously combative Christianity involving urgent ethical and spiritual imperatives."[72] Not the priest or the monk, but the Christian gentleman, was the ideal.[73]

The Men and Religion Forward Movement

In the Church of nineteenth-century America, men remained a distinct minority, even after the Awakening. After the turn of the twentieth century, Christian laymen began a crusade to bring men back into the Church, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, which reached its peak in 1911 and 1912. Gail Bederman, in her study of the movement, notes that

> the messages were often traditional, but the method of presentation was highly unorthodox. As often as possible, organizers bought ads on the sport pages, where Men and Religion messages competed for consumers attention with ads for automobiles, burlesque houses, and whiskey. . . . And the entire revival, from beginning to end, was occasionally depicted as one big advertising campaign. For example, *Collier's* announced that the Movement's experts "have taken hold of religion, and are boosting it with the fervor and publicity skills which a gang of salesman would apply to soap that floats or suits that wear."[74]

It stressed the image of Jesus as the Successful Businessman, the Super Salesman. In the National Cathedral in Washington, I came across a memorial tablet to an Episcopalian worthy, whose life was summed up, not as "Christian," or "Sinner," or "Devoted Father and Husband," but as "Investment Banker." Despite these oddities, the movement to a large extent had effect. All churches experienced an increase in male membership, the Episcopal church most of all.[75]

Like modern revivalism, the Men and Religion Forward Movement used business techniques. Unlike revivalism, it tried to bring men into a mainline Protestantism that did not emphasize emotional peaks, but a slow, steady acceptance of responsibility in the church and society. Its proponents covered a spectrum of orthodoxy.

Some were classic evangelicals, but the search for suitable church work for men led to an alliance of the proponents of the Social Gospel. Urban and political reform under church auspices was the heart of the Social Gospel, which also provided work suitable for men: the protection of the weak and interaction with the world of business and politics.

Bruce Barton, a popular writer of the early twentieth century, was generally favorable to the Men and Religion Forward Movement, but warned about its tendencies to churchiness. More committed to capitalism than orthodoxy, he seems to have had doubts about miracles, but he knew that Jesus was the model businessman. Barton lauds Jesus for the way he handled the apostles: "He believed that the way to get faith out of men is to show that you have faith in them; and from that great principle of executive management he never wavered."[76] Jesus was popular at the best dinner parties: "There was a time when he was quite the favorite in Jerusalem."[77] It is easy to mock Barton; but he had a serious purpose.

Barton noticed the almost total lack of attention to Joseph, who served as Jesus's earthly father, and traced it to the same tendency that leads Christians to portray Jesus as weak and willowy, instead of the strong carpenter he must have been: "The same theology which has painted the son as soft and gentle to the point of weakness, has exalted the feminine influence in its worship, and denied any large place to the masculine."[78] Barton pointed out that the human idea of Father, which Jesus applied analogously to his heavenly Father, was formed by Jesus's experience of Joseph.

Barton constantly attacked holy-card, Sunday-school Christianity for its betrayal of the masculine Jesus: "They have shown us a frail man, undermuscled, with a soft face—a woman's face covered by beard—and a benign but baffled look, as though the problems of living were so grievous that death would be a welcome release."[79] This is precisely how Jesus was shown in the widely-acclaimed *And Jesus Was His Name*: Jesus stands passive while his foes swirl around him. Barton instead delighted in the Jesus who is a warrior and hero, and noted that the way he motivated men was still a valid principle in modern times. Jesus used the "higher type of leadership which calls

forth men's greatest energies by the promise of obstacles rather than pictures of rewards."[80]

Barton also criticized the clericalization of Christian life. Although the reformers had attacked religious life and had tried to convince all Christians they were called to a life of faithful obedience, clericalism crept back into Protestantism. To overcome this, we must "rid ourselves of the idea that there is a difference between *work* and *religious work*."[81] Christians have somehow gotten the idea that only work in or for the Church is pleasing to God, that only the work devoted "to church meetings and social service activities is consecrated."[82] This is a criticism of the Social Gospel and the attempts to make Christianity attractive to men by providing political and social reform work *within the Church*. Barton did not object to reform motivated by Christian faith and charity, but denied that it has to be under official church auspices to be Christian.

Barton proclaimed a message that has been taken up and amplified by both Opus Dei and Pope John Paul II, who would not share his naturalistic theological presuppositions. Barton wanted all Christians to realize that all work is worship; all useful service is prayer: "And whoever works wholeheartedly at any worthy calling is a co-worker with the Almighty in the great enterprise which He has initiated."[83]

More profound than Barton, Harry Emerson Fosdick sought to portray the masculinity of Jesus in *The Manhood of the Master*. Fosdick noticed the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the true sign of the supernatural, in Jesus, in "his heroic and revolutionary fearlessness, his capacity for indignation on the one side, and on the other this deep, friendly tenderness."[84] Jesus's wrath was fearful, especially since it was an expression of his love, the wrath of the Lamb. Remembering the love of Christ was important, Fosdick admitted, but "a man might better call on the mountains to cover him than to stand naked and defenceless before the indignation which that wrath creates."[85] Fosdick sounded a note of the twentieth century when he points out that Jesus was tempted, indeed was "the most tempted of all because he had the greatest powers to control."[86] Modern Christians, raised on an image of an effeminate Jesus, find the idea that he was

tempted, especially in anything to do with sex (even if only by a marriage and children) sacrilegious, as was shown by the reaction to Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

The emphasis upon what Roman Catholics call the spirituality of work may explain the success of the Men and Religion Forward Movement, during which Fosdick wrote his book. The influence of the Men and Religion Forward Movement died out in the 1950s, but it may have led to the social health of the mid-twentieth-century American family. The father of the 1950s was the most family-involved father of American history and probably one of the most family-involved fathers in any modern culture. Religious practice, not coincidentally, also was at a peak in the 1950s.

Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism

One element in evangelicalism and fundamentalism that tends to preserve a masculine flavor is the strong tendency to think in dichotomies, a result of a close attention to Scripture. Parallelism and antithesis are very prominent in Hebrew writing and thought; men also tend to think in dichotomies; and dichotomies are also the raw material for conflict, which is again grounded more in the masculine experience of separateness and in masculine aggression.

Fundamentalism, according to Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, attempted to be self-consciously masculine and reacted against the effeminate liberal churches.[87] Why were the liberal churches effeminate? After all, both fundamentalists and liberals had predominantly female constituencies.[88] They were effeminate, according to the fundamentalists, because they refused to acknowledge the conflict, the battle between good and evil, in the world, and tried to make Christianity a mild religion of progress and enlightenment. Bendroth describes fundamentalism as "a means of separation, a way to declare superiority over the domesticated faith that shunned open conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil."[89] The fundamentalists were more attuned to Scripture, which lays out a scheme of dichotomies whose conflict drives the course of world history, from the temptation in the Garden to Armageddon. Scripture is also a strong

voice for separatism, calling men to come out of Babylon, in whatever incarnation she is present in history.

The evangelical wing of Protestantism is strongly influenced by revivalism and its crisis-spirituality, partially a conscious attempt to reach men. Evangelicals have therefore been in the lead among American Christians in attempts to reach men. Promise Keepers is in the revivalist tradition, with mass meetings to ask for a commitment to the faith. It focuses especially on married men, and among them on those who have some sense of responsibility and are willing to listen to spiritual advice on how to fulfill the responsibilities of marriage. But these men have already made a reconnection to the feminine in marriage, and it is this connection to the feminine that the leadership of Promise Keepers is using to bring men back into a relationship with the Church.

The long-range success of Promise Keepers is, however, not assured. Revivalist attempts to reach men may have some initial success, but they founder in their attempts to develop stable commitments. Men may be attracted by the crisis atmosphere, but they discover it is impossible to live day to day in a crisis. In addition, Promise Keepers faces the problem that the church life to which it is attempting to attract men is feminized. Evangelical church life may be less feminized than Catholicism or mainline Protestantism, but the underlying problem, that men feel that religion is feminine, is still present. Men who wish to connect to women, that is, married men, may submit to a partial immersion in the feminine atmosphere of religion, and it is always necessary to begin with the groups with which success is most likely. But the social and religious problem is not so much with married men as with men who do not have a permanent connection to women, unmarried and divorced men. These men are the locus of social pathologies and anti-Christian movements, and they are the ones it is hardest to reach through already-Christian women.

The faults of these attempts to connect men and Christianity are obvious to the modern reader, who often feels that any manifestation of masculine qualities in religion is offensive. Conflict cannot be removed from Christianity without changing the nature of the reli-

gion, but not all conflict is necessary or desirable. The Crusades poisoned relationships between the West and both Islam and Orthodoxy, provided a rationale for total war, and misled even Christians like G. K. Chesterton. Nor is this distortion confined to the "right" in ecclesiastical circles. Some of the Catholic clergy of Latin America grew weary of their role as chaplains to a women's society. They found themselves conducting devotions while upper-class Catholics ground down the poor. Even worse, a passive, obedient, suffering Christ was used as opiate for the masses. The cruel rich, liberation theologians thought, should feel the wrath of God. Machismo could be harnessed against the evil in society: "If social protest is man's work, they [liberation theologians] believe that the fiery Christ will replace the 'effeminized' version. Did not Christ chase the money changers from the temple?"[90] But such ambitions ended in disaster and an even worse oppression of the poor, as in Cuba and Nicaragua: "No matter how justified, social revolution in Latin America can spawn a new type of machismo, carrying violence, destruction, class hatred, and ultimately one-man or state despotism in its wake."[91]

Softer emotions also have their dangers. The chivalric devotion to Mary was a result of the distorted ideas of gender held by medieval and post-medieval theologians. The distortion is not simply one of language, as Pope John Paul II believes.[92] Scriptural metaphors contain meaning, and when they are so changed as to almost reverse their initial meaning, the preaching of the Gospel suffers. In fact, the focus on inner experiences and emotions, a focus common to early Jesuits, to Puritans, and to revivalists, creates a problem for men, who are taught to ignore and suppress their emotions in the service of the community. This type of inward focus and emotional self-awareness will necessarily strike men as feminine. The natural fear of being swallowed up in a feminine world and losing their masculinity drives men away from church. Revivals, both Catholic and Protestant, have temporarily increased the number of men, but over the long run, they do not stay. Nor will they ever stay as long as religious culture is geared to women and not also to men.