> And sometimes I can't help thinking, when we reach the regions blest;
> That men will get the toil and sweat—and the Ladies Aid the rest.

In all seriousness, Shirley Davy offers some suggestions for restructuring and rethinking the role of women in the United Church which are both specific and stimulating. Why not focus groups on particular needs instead of lumping all women into one group? Why not create a women's support structure inside the national church staff? What about a national organization of women with an adminstrative presence and a regular printed voice? These and other suggestions (on pp. 76 to 80) are a gold mine.

But alongside the insights are the flaws. The book is disjointed, when it could have been a readable, integrated study with several important theses carefully fleshed out. It could have been humanistic, its analysis based on a real sympathy with the problems and predicaments of the actors; instead it is feminist, with a sometimes confused focus on the apportionment of power and an embarrassed acknowledgement of the practical accomplishments of women in the church.

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The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. Barbara G. Walker. *San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp.1124.*

Since the re-emergence of feminism in the late '60's and early '70's, there has been a need for a dictionary of myth, ritual, and religion as they relate to and affect women, an inclusive reference compendium along the lines of the usual encyclopedia of religion. *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* obviously seeks to fill that gap, to provide information on almost every mythic and religious subject women might be interested in.

Author Barbara Walker is to be commended on the scope and ambition of her work. She has pulled together an enormous amount of material based on an extensive bibliography (which she appends), and she has organized it alphabetically with cross-referencing as needed. In many of the really important entries (for example, "Eve," "Ishtar," "Isis," "Kali Ma," "Sex," "Theology"), Walker quotes liberally from her sources. In others she summarizes them. At the end of each entry she lists the sources by author. The layout of the book is pleasing to the eye, with easy-to-read marginal glosses taking the place of cramped footnotes. The articles vary in length, but on occasion they are inappropriately long or short. Where appropriate, line drawings accompany the entry, and there are numerous black-and-white illustrations throughout.

Without doubt the book is useful and interesting, for it pulls together a great deal of desparate evidence and presents much previously unavailable material in one easily consulted volume. Particularly interesting to Women's Studies scholars will be the bibliography (with strange lacunae but reasonably complete to 1981/82) and the listed sources of entries. However, it is precisely Walker's sources and her use of them with which I have difficulty.

Any Women's Studies scholar wishing to discover evidence about goddesses, women's myths, rituals, and religions, women's mysteries and such must do, primarily, "marginal" work. She must consult for the most part male-originated translations, histories, archaeological reports and other such source material; she must read between the lines, pay careful attention to notes and other marginalia, assiduously examine textual apparatus, and be on guard for editorial slips, significant omissions, tell-tale explanations. In short, she must become a scholarly detective. Only then may she be ready to present

a woman's account, albeit imperfect, of her topic - such as the Eye Goddess or Inanna or the Golden Bough or the origins of writing.

To some extent Walker appears to have proceeded in this way, but too often she presents material directly and uncritically from her sources, many of whom, like Robert Graves and J.J. Bachofen, though seemingly different, are still essentially patriarchal in their approaches and conclusions. It would be, of course, difficult for a single researcher to "know" every topic in *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* in enough scholarly detail to be able to take an imaginatively critical stance on it. Herein lies the problem in Walker's work.

Grateful as I am to have this information-packed volume to consult, I should have preferred an encyclopedia or dictionary perhaps edited by one woman but composed of entries prepared each by *the* feminist scholar most equipped to deal with it. The entry on "Inanna," the very early and hence very significant Sumerian Goddess, for instance, would then have encompassed several critical pages, not just several paragraphs based on the work of three male writers. It might have pointed out that Inanna's involvement in the "sacred marriage" which conferred kingship was a late and patriarchal use and abuse of a Goddess who was once the Great Goddess, the One and Eternal. Had the most qualified feminist scholars prepared the various entries, there might have been, possibly, clearer indication of the process of division and demotion by which patriarchy diminished, curbed, and controlled the Great Goddess.

Just as it is difficult for one researcher to "know" each topic equally, so it is difficult for one reviewer. However, in examining entries that I do know something about, I find regular obscurities of style, occasional errors of omission (such as not pointing out that "Achamoth" is a Hebrew feminine plural form), and mistakes (such as the assertion in the "Apollo" entry that Apollo "absolved" Orestes of matricide). There are also inconsistencies from one entry to another, mainly the result of Walker's reliance on limited or biased sources.

In conclusion, then, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* demonstrates by what it is not that we urgently need an accurate, comprehensive, critical, multi-volumed, feminist encyclopedia of women's myth, ritual and religion prepared by Women's Studies Scholars. Barbara Walker's book is, however, at least a beginning and for the meantime must suffice. By wishing it were something it is not, I may be doing the book an injustice. Certainly Women's Studies scholars should find it a handy source-book, provided they be aware of its limitations. For women in general it does ask, and try to answer, some exciting, crucial questions. What the author says at the end of her "Introduction" states the aim of her book:

> Through making God in his own image, man has almost forgotten that woman once made the Goddess in hers. This is the deep secret of all mythologies, and the fundamental secret of this book.

Barbara Walker has done her best to make the mystery apparent and to unravel the clue.

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