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## Our Mother, who art in Heaven. . . .

**MARK  
BONOKOSKI**



It has been written that when Lois Roden first started preaching that the Holy Spirit is a woman, she nearly lost half her flock of Seventh-Day Adventists — the male half.

Blasphemy was all it was. Pure and simple blasphemy, the evil work of the Devil himself — himself, not herself.

Roden, however, does not look like the Devil's hand. She looks more like a little, 64-year-old granny from Waco, Tex. Which she is.

But she is also a grandmother who believes the Holy Trinity — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is actually Father, Son, and Mother.

### Hebrew word for God

She points to "Elohim," the Hebrew word for God. Eloh, she says, is feminine, and the suffix im is both masculine and plural. Elohim, therefore, is a combination of a woman and two men.

It all began one day back in 1977, when at 2 a.m., as she was studying Revelations 18:1, Roden looked out her bedroom window and saw, as she describes, a "vision of a shining, silver angel flying by."

"Nothing was said. But I knew right there the angel represented the Holy Spirit Mother.

"It was feminine in form," she explained. "Until that moment, I had always thought the Holy Spirit was masculine."



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LOIS Roden: Holy Spirit is a woman.

-mark bonokoski, sun

## editorial

# In The Beginning...

**T**HE QUESTION PUT TO JOB, so long ago, might well be asked even today: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty?" (Job 11:7).

The answer to this tantalizing subject could, if given expression, cover the whole gamut of religious thought, both ancient and modern. However, the major portion of western, fundamentalist, Christian theology tends to agree to the proposition that "finite man cannot fathom the deep things of God," that "no human mind can comprehend God," and that none should "indulge in speculation regarding His nature." In fact, they believe "silence is eloquence" on the subject and that the "Omniscient One is above discussion."

This position is, to a degree, enhanced further on in the book of Job by the statement, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out" (Job 37:23). And Paul lends weight to the sentiment in the following words, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

In reference to the problem of whether or not we can comprehend God, the following quotation is worth considering. "The idea that certain portions of the Bible cannot be understood has led to neglect of some of its most important truths. The fact needs to be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not such because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose, but in our capacity. Of those very portions of Scripture often passed by as impossible to be understood, God desires us to understand as much as our minds are capable of understanding."—E.G. White, *Education*, p. 171, 1903.

Moses states, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deut. 29:29). And Amos adds this thought, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). At this point the question might well be asked, What is God doing? If we acknowledge that He is doing something, then we should also be willing to concede that He is revealing what He is up to, through certain chosen ones, known as prophets.

There are some who contend that the era of the prophets ended with John the Baptist. To support their theory they use the Scripture found in Matthew 11:13. This puts a very limited connotation on this verse, for the prophet Daniel clearly states that in the time of the end, knowledge will be increased (Dan. 12:4). We would be doing an injustice to the Scripture to imply that this has reference only to scientific and technological knowledge. Those who are honest with themselves will know that religious knowledge and understanding has developed and progressed far beyond what was accepted and understood during the Dark Ages.

Jesus Himself stated that He had many things to say to His disciples, but that they could not bear them then. He predicted that from His time, the Spirit would be sent to lead His followers into *all* truth (John 16:12,13). For the Spirit to be able to reveal this additional truth to the church, apostles and prophets were placed, by Paul, at the head of the list of officers the church would need to bring its members into perfection (Eph. 4:11-13).

Today we hear much about being "born again" and for those newly come to know the Lord the words of Peter are excellent advice, that "as newborn babes, (they) desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

However, Paul gives us something else to consider: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

Again he says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal" (1 Cor. 3:2,3). This reminds us of what Jesus said, that He had yet many things to say to them, but that they were not able to bear it then (John 16:12).

Paul explains, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11); "Brethren, be not children in understanding. . .but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:10).

Isaiah expresses it this way, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept. . .line upon line . . .here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:9,10).

Now, for those who beginning to mature, let us consider a key Scripture that the Holy Spirit has revealed which will broaden our concept of God perhaps as never before.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). In other words, the invisible God is revealed in the creation story. The whole account of the creation reveals the Godhead. The very first words in Genesis state plainly, "In the beginning God created" (Gen. 1:1). Here we are introduced to God as a creator, but in looking closer we find the word "God" used here is translated from the Hebrew word Elohim, a plural noun, indicating more than one God.

Each day of the creation week reveals a little more about these mysterious Gods. For instance, on the first day, "God

said, Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). Elsewhere in the Bible we are told that "God is light" (1 John 1:5). Again we are informed, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2) revealing in essence that God is spirit (John 4:24). And so, day by day, throughout the creation week, the Godhead reveal a portion of themselves "by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20).

The climax of Their creative power is manifested on the sixth day with these words, "And God (Elohim — plural) said, Let us (plural) make man (Heb. Adham — mankind) in our (plural) image, after our (plural) likeness. . . . So God (plural) created man (mankind) in his own image, in the image of God (plural) created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26,27).

Here we are told that both the man and the woman were created in the image of God. Adam the man in the image of God the Father. Adam (Gen. 5:2) the woman (Eve) created in the image of God the Mother — the Holy Spirit. So the family of man on earth reveals the family of God in heaven, bearing out the law of Hermes Trismegistus, "as above, so below." The same thought is expressed by Paul, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14,15). But, you say, there is no mother figure presented here by Paul. John fills in the gap, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (Son), and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7). He further sees the mother figure in heaven in the book of Revelation, Chapter 12, verses 1 to 5 (see also Galatians 4:26). Although there is a wealth of proof for this truth, time and space are limited in this column.

The Editor-in-Chief of *Shekinah* says, "It is so simple, that you would need help to misunderstand it." Seneca is quoted as saying, "The time will come when our posterity will wonder at our ignorance of things so plain."

All should prayerfully consider these things and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to them the truth of these wonders. One thing we know: that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God (about the Godhead) should be finished (accomplished, made known, revealed), as he hath declared to his servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7). We are living in that time. Praise be to the Gods of heaven and earth!

Until our next issue, I close with a note of advice: "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, believe not because you have been made to believe from your childhood, but reason truth out, and after you have analyzed it, then if you find it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it and help others to live up to it."—Buddha.

*Clive Doyle*

"'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' That is how it has been translated, but the translation is inaccurate. There is no man with a little education who does not know that the text reads, 'In the beginning the gods made heaven and earth.'"

— Voltaire

## Our Mother, who art in Heaven. . .

from page 1 —

Roden, naturally, was ostracized by the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists. In her words, she was "disfellowshipped."

What she did, therefore, was start her own reformist movement in Waco, a church she calls the Living Waters Branch.

The word Branch, ironically, originated with Roden's late husband, Pastor Benjamin Roden, back in 1955 when God — Himself/Herself — spoke to him in an "audible voice."

"All that was said," said the minister's widow, "was that Jesus' new name is Branch."

### Toronto rooming house

At the moment, Roden is temporarily housed at the Toronto headquarters of the Living Waters Branch, a rooming house at 14 Rosemount Ave. in the Oakwood-St. Clair area of the city's west end.

She was brought here to spread the word by Charles Pace, a carpenter and former Roman Catholic who grew up in Collingwood.

"I went to Texas searching for the truth," he said. Apparently, he found it in Waco.

Preaching that "truth," however, is an uphill battle for Roden and her splinter sect of 35 who live on a farm outside Waco, taking prayer breaks twice daily, existing on vegetarian diets and pushing out tons of She-God leaflets from their print shop.

As one preacher told Roden's followers during a recent Seventh-Day Adventist world convention in Dallas: "Women preaching is like a dog walking on two legs. It's interesting, but it's not right."

To established religions, however, "interesting" may be more akin to out-and-out heresy and Roden nothing more than a whacko from Waco.

During an interview yesterday, for example, Roden wore her wristwatch around her neck, attached to a watch fob made from the Jewish Star of David.

"Can't you see the two triangles forming the Star of David?" she asked. "Those two triangles clearly represent the union of the family on earth with the family in heaven."

"The Holy Spirit and the Son of God are being suppressed in Judaism. But they will rise again."

As for the crucifix, the symbol of Christ dying to erase the sins of mankind, the bulwark of Christianity itself, Roden sees little value.

"It's insignificant," she said.

"I believe both Catholics and Jews are ready for my message. I know because I've seen the image of the Holy Spirit Mother."

"Remember, at one time they thought Moses was hallucinating too."

The gospel according to Lois Roden . . .

# GOD AND WOMAN

## THE HIDDEN HISTORY

by Elizabeth Rodgers Dobell

"Reprinted from Redbook Magazine, March 1978."

**F**rom the earliest times, the religious experience of the human race has undergone constant change and modification. Some changes, particularly in the Judaeo - Christian tradition, have been well documented: for instance, those of the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Church. But other changes have not been so well recorded. The article that follows discusses what scholars are beginning to recognize as one such change that seems to have taken place early in history. It contains information that only recently has



surfaced in the academic world of archaeologists and Biblical scholars and may surprise readers, but the subject matter is fascinating and of importance to women. Since some of the ideas and evidence being turned up by the researchers may seem to set on end some conventional religious thought, you may want to discuss them with your priest, your minister or your rabbi. He or she probably will be familiar with the new ideas, and you may be surprised—as we were when we called clergymen and clergywomen—at how widely they are accepted by the religious community. —The Editors

The Greek goddess Athena, who sprang full-grown from the head of her father Zeus. Many ancient images of divine "motherhood" were displaced in classical Greece by images of divine "fatherhood." Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

The quiet sanctuary of St. John's Episcopal Church in Crawfordsville, Indiana, is relatively small, and it normally accommodates comfortably about 125 people; but on Saturday, January 8, 1977, almost 500 people crowded into St. John's to witness a special ceremony. Some of those present had traveled great distances, from as far away as Florida and California, and not surprisingly, they were slightly unprepared for both the exceptionally cold weather in Crawfordsville that day and for the unexpected crush in the church. They were totally unprepared, along with everyone else, for the presence of the sheriff's armed deputies.

There were two deputies. Both were dressed in plain clothes and were reasonably unobtrusive, but it was obvious that they were watching the congregation

**"To speak of God in exclusively male terms distorts and limits our perception of God."  
— Church of the Brethren task force on the problem of nonsexist language in worship and literature**

carefully. That was the unnerving thing. Why should the ordination of a priest—and the children and adults crowded into St. John's had gathered for no purpose other than to witness the ordination of a priest—require the presence of armed men? For no reason, evidently, other than the fact that the priest to be ordained was a woman.

Natalia Vonnegut, the mother of four and the founder of the increasingly well-known Julian Mission, in Indianapolis, Indiana, was to become that afternoon only the second woman Episcopal priest in Indiana, and the fourth regularly or-

**"God is Spirit, neither masculine nor feminine in human terms. We have anthropomorphized God into male and that is the ultimate put-down to women."— Dr. Kenneth Teegarden, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

daind woman Episcopal priest in the United States. But for over a month she had been receiving threatening telephone calls. The last had come just the night before, on January 7th, when still another unidentified male voice had repeated a familiar message to Mrs. Vonnegut: "If you care anything about the welfare of your children, you won't go through with the ordination ceremony."

The idea of a female priest is still that disturbing, in the 1970s, to certain people

living in America. Disturbing enough that they are willing to carry on the old and destructive tradition of threatening those whose vision of the Godhead and whose religious practices are different—as the early Moslems set about converting whole nations by the sword, with the Christian Crusaders soldiering in their wake; as agents of the Inquisition tortured and burned innumerable bodies in the name of the merciful Christ to "save" immortal souls; as Protestants and Catholics killed each other all across Europe, and together murdered Jews. Earlier, according to the Old Testament, the Hebrews themselves killed great numbers of Canaanites—men, women and children—because the Canaanites worshiped "false gods." And even today, groups such as the Ku Klux Klan continue to threaten Catholics and Jews (along with Blacks) from behind giant crosses.

But regardless of how violently human beings have disagreed for the last 3,000 years over the one true way to worship God the Father, they seldom disagreed that the female half of the race could not—indeed, *must* not—serve the Father as priests, ministers or rabbis. It was God's will, men agreed instead, that women should be subordinate to their husbands and fathers in all ways, and in no way more so than in the mosque, the church or the synagogue.

It seems almost unbelievable that there was an earlier age, and one that lasted from at least 30,000 B.C. until about 2000 B.C., and in some few places until as late as almost A.D. 500, when men were subordinate to their wives and mothers. Not in all aspects of life, even then, but most certainly in the confines of the great temples of worship that existed in the cities of the ancient world when the Supreme Being—astounding as it may seem at present—was worshiped as a woman.

The Great Mother was worshiped, furthermore, in her own right—not as the wife or daughter of some superior male god or the muse of poets, as in the familiar myths of the Greeks and Romans. In those myths the ancient Ancestress already had been "married off" to male newcomers like Zeus or Jupiter, or made subservient to them; but then, those myths sprang into being at what was already a relatively late stage in the development of the race.

No—before that age that we now call the Age of the Patriarchs in the Bible and stretching back into the dim recesses of time, the Great Mother ruled supreme and the priests who led all people to Her were female. The archaeological evidence continues to accumulate and modern scholars continue to disentangle the many confused threads of the ancient tapestry, so long hidden from view.

Consequently the reality of God as Mother, in addition to the reality of God as Father, is beginning to sink deep into the consciousness of a growing number

of women and men. Religion as we know it today may never again be the same.

The Reverend Natalia Vonnegut was ordained without incident on January 8, 1977. The threats against her children never materialized. When the officiating priest recited the statement that precedes all Episcopal ordinations—"if any know any impediment or crime because of which we should not proceed, come forward now and make it known"—there was one orderly but totally expected protest. The statement of the single male who stood up to speak on behalf of an Episcopalian organization opposed to female priests was brief: The proceedings, he said, were "sacrilegious"; it was "heresy" to ordain women and it could result only in schism from the "true body of Christ." As the man left the church the ordination of Mrs. Vonnegut continued.

Sacrilege? There is no word spoken by Jesus Christ in the New Testament against women. Even the Vatican's own Biblical Commission concluded, in 1976, that there is nothing in the Bible forbidding women priests. The Pope's decision

Golden serpents, sacred to the Great Mother, coil about the arms of this delicately carved ivory and gold female statue from Crete (about 1700 B.C.). Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Mrs. W. Scott Fitz.



in January, 1977, that the Catholic Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination" relied almost completely on tradition, on the Church's "unbroken tradition" of male priests.

Priests, declared the Pope, must have a "natural resemblance" to Christ. If a woman celebrated Mass, "it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ." The leaders of Eastern Orthodox churches agree. Orthodox Jews, of course, also have a difficult time imagining any "natural resemblance" between a female rabbi and the Lord God of Hosts.

But then, men and women in the ancient world had a difficult time imagining any "natural resemblance" between the Great Mother they revered and worshiped as the creator of all life and civilization and the male of the species.

For many years, archaeologists and scholars dismissed much of the evidence of the Female Deity. Conditioned by 3,000 years of male dominance in history, it simply never occurred to men—or to women, for that matter—that there might have been a time when males in all matters, religious and secular, were not masters but at best only equals. Scholars dismissed the great number of female figures found in the Mediterranean world, in Europe and the Americas, and the single most persistent kind of object found at early archaeological sites, as mere symbols of "fertility cults" created by "primitive" imaginations—just as archaeologists in some far-distant future might dismiss the crucifix as the symbol of primitive "death cults" if they had no understanding of Christianity.

The fact that the Female Deity had many names in different places and at different times in the ancient world also was misinterpreted as proof that goddess worship was only "cult" worship—some localized and much less authentic manifestation of the religious impulse than that found in the "higher religions" of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Only recently have we begun to understand that whether the Goddess was called, among other things, Isis in Egypt, Inanna Ishtar in ancient Sumeria, Tiamat in Babylon, Astarte in Syria, Demeter in Greece, the Magna Mater in Phrygia and Rome, Annapurna in India, Coatlicue in South America—or Asherah, Ashtoreth or the "queen of heaven" in the Old Testament itself—the same religious impulse was

**"I am now persuaded that it is illegitimate to use masculine—or feminine—language about God. What we ought to use is neutral language. This question is not a 'tempest in a teapot.' Language is crucial in the structuring of our conscious-**

**ness."—Rabbi Chaim Stern, editor of three new prayer books published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform)**

being celebrated. The Great Mother, in all her manifestations, was One—as the God of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews and of Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists is One.

To our earliest ancestors the female principle simply was the source of all life. Only a woman could bring forth children, and the creative mystery of woman, the flow of a mother's milk, her menstrual cycle—rhythmically in accord with the waxing and waning of the moon, the birth, increase, decline and "death" of that celestial orb—was linked to the mystery of all creation.

What power but female power, then, in the mind of early humankind, could continually re-create life and death in

**"Whenever a symbol has attached itself to a reality in the minds of people through many centuries, it is unwise and inappropriate to separate the two. For that reason, I resist the idea of changing the male reference to the Deity. But just as strenuously, I do not believe that the Reality we call God, whether Being, Process or Person, is to be conceived of as exclusively masculine. There are rich resources of feminine imagery in the Bible, images that we should isolate and elevate in our minds and hearts.**

**"So God as masculine, si! So God as feminine, si!" — Rev. Martin E. Marty, University of Chicago Divinity School**

the world, dark and light, spirit and flesh? In their desire to be linked to that all-encompassing power the ancients began developing, at least as early as 30,000 B.C., a mythology of the naked goddess. For whereas men in all their rites dressed themselves in special costumes for worship, from magical feathers to prayer shawls to priestly cassocks, the most potent force of woman was made manifest in her completely undorned body:

To modern eyes, some of the earliest female figurines seem fierce and terrifying, even lewd, in their bold nakedness

and the emphasis on breasts and genitalia. Others are more realistic and beautiful, although even these often seemed shocking to the Victorian scholars who first began unraveling, in the 1800s, the secrets of the preclassical ancients.

Temple caves of the Female Deity dating from 30,000 B.C. have been found in the Soviet Ukraine, northern Spain and southern France, to date. These were the forerunners of all temples and cathedrals, because they clearly were intended as sacred places where the mystery and space of the Deity could be made manifest to the human mind. Over thousands of years thereafter, in many places, the religion of the Goddess grew rich with symbols, signs, rites and rituals that focused the minds of men and women on Her boundless mystery. In much the same way, the cross or the taking of communion focuses Christians on the mystery they celebrate in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.

The Goddess was the creator, the law-giver, the judge, the wise counselor, the bounty of Mother Earth, the dark womb to which humankind returned, the Queen of Heaven, All. And within Her embrace all apparent opposites, even life and death, were to be seen only as part of a

Upper Paleolithic figure of a naked goddess (about 25,000 B.C.) found at Willendorf, Austria, one of many similar figures discovered at sites all across Europe and Asia. Courtesy of the Department of Archeology, University of Cambridge.



single, unified process of creation, rest and re-creation. Both the productive aspect of nature and its negative, killing aspect were only parts of a single thread spun on the loom of Time.

It is fascinating to learn that one of the many symbols associated with the Female Deity was the serpent, often depicted in the ancient world coiled around the mystical Tree of Life in the World Garden. In the Bible the serpent is the embodiment of evil because it enticed Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, whereupon humankind became "aware" of its nakedness and evoked the wrath of God for disobedience. So that "the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden. . . ." (Genesis 3:22-23)

At least 7,000 years before the Hebrew scriptures were compiled, the strange ability of the serpent to renew itself by shedding its skin was seen as symbolic of the higher mystery of both physical and spiritual rebirth—of the way in which all humankind comes into consciousness through birth, may (or may not) be spiritually reborn and continually dies to be continually reborn.

In the days of the Goddess, around 8000 B.C., the arts of agriculture and stock breeding were first developed. Later, in the fertile lands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the fundamentals of high civilization evolved: writing, mathematics, scientific observation, temple architecture and government by kings. Writing, in particular, probably was developed, not by "man," but by priestesses who began keeping temple records. The earliest example of writing yet discovered was found at the temple of the Queen of Heaven in the Sumerian city of Erech.

Kings in that day ruled, furthermore, because they were "loved"—that is, divinely approved—by the Goddess. Sargon of Agade (about 2350 B.C.), for example, was the first important ruler of a true power state in Mesopotamia. "Sargon am I, the mighty king, Monarch of Agade," the ancient records read; "while I was a gardener [one who makes the Earth Mother productive of the fruits of the fields] the Goddess Ishtar loved me. Then I ruled the kingdom."

Long ages before Sargon's rule, however, another crucial development had taken place: Men finally had begun to understand their own essential role in

**"In one sense, speaking of God in male terms does have a limiting aspect, because any human expression about God is limiting. Yet when reference is given to God as male,**

Gold pectoral (about 600 B.C.) of the winged Isis wearing the Egyptian symbol of the throne upon her head, signifying her divine approval of earthly rulers. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



**especially as God the Father, that is certainly both Biblical and traditional. We now realize, however, that many of the earliest Hebrew references to God were not exclusively masculine, but became so in later translations.**

**"We earnestly seek to avoid any sexist language that would relegate women to second-class citizenship in the Church. But there remains a very weighty tradition of God as Father, especially in the sense of the Father looking after us as His children. We cannot say no to that tradition and go in other directions without the most careful study." — Father John Rotelle, Executive Director of the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops**

the creation of new life (although there still exist primitive tribes that do not understand the relationship between sexual intercourse and the birth, nine long months later, of a child). And to the mythology of the Goddess had been added the sacred Son and Consort—since in the mind of the ancients even a husband of the Goddess must first of all have been born of the Goddess.

This sacred Son and Lover, through whose mystical union with the Goddess the continuation of all existence was guaranteed, usually was represented as an eternally dying and resurrected god, as the fields of the earth "die" each year to be reborn in the spring. He too had many names in many places—Tammuz, Damuzi, Attis, Osiris and Baal, among others—but the young male god remained secondary to the Mother. Until, that is, tribes of warrior nomads, herders of

sheep, cattle and goats, began invading the predominantly agricultural Mediterranean world sometime around 3500 B.C.

Sweeping down from Indo-European grasslands or up from the Syro-Arabian deserts, the nomads gradually, over a period of roughly 2,000 years, overran the Mediterranean world. Their religion, from the earliest days, was different from that of the Great Mother. In the myths of the nomads, a young warrior god or even a supreme father god already was equal to or had taken precedence over a mother god.

To oversimplify only slightly, the role of women in nomadic societies simply had ceased to be as important as it was in the Mediterranean world. There, women had played the primary role in developing agriculture and building settled homes; had created, in effect, the most valuable economic resources of their societies. As a result, both family life and property still were conceived of in strictly matrilineal terms. A husband lived in his wife's house, property was handed down from mother to daughter; in many places the right to rule passed through the female line. (Even today one cannot properly be considered Jewish unless one is born of a Jewish mother.)

"In Egypt," the Greek historian Herodotus wrote in the fifth century before Christ, "the women go in the market place, transact affairs and occupy themselves with business, while the husbands stay home and weave." The patriarchal Greeks laughed at the henpecked Egyptians, but even after the Greek Ptolemies had conquered and ruled Egypt for 300 years (323 to 30 B.C.), the historian Diodorus Siculus could observe as late as 50 B.C. that in Egypt, "among private citizens the husband, by the terms of the marriage agreement, appertains to the wife, and it is stipulated between them that the man shall obey the woman in all things."

Generations of Egyptologists scorned poor old Diodorus as an unreliable dolt, until hundreds of actual marriage contracts were found showing that if anything, Diodorus had understated the matter. In these agreements, whereby men also delivered all their possessions to their wives, it was clearly stipulated that even if a wife should divorce her husband, she would continue to feed and clothe him, and see that he was properly

buried.

The matrilineal organization of early societies, it is important to understand, did *not* mean complete female, or matriarchal, control. The extent to which

**"Changing the traditional words we have used in worship creates many problems. To say, for example, 'Source of compassion' rather than 'Father of compassion' abandons the warmth of a personal relationship which the Hebrew text embraces. Saying 'Mother of compassion,' on the other hand, is just as sexist as saying 'Father.' To change the language of prayer also would mean changing the Biblical and Rabbinic texts.**

**"Rather than create new problems, it seems to me, we should retain traditional language, but stress that such language is symbolic and intended to help us relate to God in as powerful and personal a way as possible. The language of liturgy must be influenced by contemporary life; however, it is not a problem-solving social tool."**  
— Rabbi Jules Harlow, editor and translator of prayer books published by the International Association of Conservative Rabbis

women as the heads of families or clans actually ruled is unclear; there is strong evidence in some places but not in others. Still, women had great economic and legal power and enjoyed supreme respect; often they were the chief lawgivers or judges, even generals.

To the patriarchal nomads who gradually gained control of Greece, Asia Minor and the rest of the Near East, however, women were much less important. Property passed not from mother to daughter but from father to son.

A much more profound change in the whole structure of human thought and feeling was on the horizon. For eventually women ceased to be honored for the creation of life with the *help* of men and became instead mere carriers of the male's all-important seed. In the play *The Eumenides*, by the Greek poet Aeschylus, the god Apollo insists that "the mother is no parent of that which is

called her child"; the only parent is "he who mounts." The Old Testament abounds with references to the importance of the male's seed and prohibitions against wasting it.

Thus the seed, or "male spirit," rather than the dark mystery of the womb, or the "flesh," came to be seen as the higher, more truly creative force behind the heavens and the earth. It was a critical turning point in human history. The conscious, rational and divisive side of the human psyche—today identified with "masculine" thinking—was beginning to overwhelm the deeper levels of the intuitive, irrational and associative side, now identified as "feminine."

The consequences for women were very great. Among other things, men developed a need to know without any doubt that the male child who would inherit their name and property was indeed their child and not some other man's. There is only one way a man can have such knowledge, however, and that is by making absolutely sure the woman who receives his seed was not, is not and never will be accessible to any other male. That she is, in short, his sole and exclusive property. Thus the importance of virginity, or "purity," at least for women, and prohibitions against adultery began to take on enormous psychic force in patriarchal societies.

For roughly a thousand years there was a kind of merger of the beliefs of the nomad invaders and the beliefs of those who still worshiped the Goddess, but eventually the male gods conquered all, as their followers conquered on earth, and became not only rulers of the Mother but in many instances Her murderer. In the late-Babylonian epic of Marduk, that young male god overcomes and kills his great-great-great-grandmother Tiamat—the Creator—to become King of the Universe. The theme of Marduk's conquest was repeated in many other late myths, until at long last the tales of creation boldly declared that one or another male god alone was the Creator.

Jewish and Christian women only recently have begun to understand the enormous extent to which the patriarchal world view shaped both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. There is no question the Bible was compiled in the midst of a culture totally male-dominated, so that many Biblical passages were recorded in terms of male prejudices. Unfortunately, those passages, in addition, have been overinterpreted for 2,000 years as *theological* statements of God's will and intention that women should be subordinate to men.

Both the Old and New Testaments clearly affirm that God is spirit, of

**"Certainly the imagery of our religion is too heavily masculine and patriarchal.**

**The mystics, the true teachers of the Church rather than the theologians, always have maintained the mysterious balance between the masculine and the feminine in the Godhead. The question of women in the priesthood, however, is different. Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest and the only priest that Christianity recognizes, wears masculine form, and masculine form alone, for all eternity."**  
— Episcopal Bishop Stanley Atkins, chairman of the Evangelical and Catholic Mission, an organization that refuses to recognize the ordination of women as priests

course, and as such totally transcends the human categories of male and female. Nevertheless, the use of almost exclusively masculine language in the Bible to describe God has led to centuries of imagining the Supreme Reality as a kind of superhuman "male" being, so that men and women alike have believed that if God was male, then to be male was to be more "like" God.

Yet the first passages in the Bible plainly state: "And God said, Let us make man [*'adham*, the Hebrew for "human being," not *'ish* or *Zākār*, the Hebrew for "male human being"] in our image. . . . So God created man [*'adham*] in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

The Hebrew word used for God in the first-creation story, furthermore, is *Elohim*: "In the beginning *Elohim* created the heaven and the earth." Throughout the Old Testament, *Elohim* is also the most commonly used expression for the Supreme Reality (followed by *Yahweh*: "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be"). *Elohim* is translated as "God" or the masculine singular "He." Yet *Elohim* is made up of *Eloh*—the feminine singular for goddess—and the masculine plural ending *im*. The word could be translated as either god or goddess. Or gods or goddesses.

Biblical scholars long explained the plural (if not the feminine) form of *Elohim* as calling to mind the idea that the majesty of God is plural, many-sided, all-encompassing. And so it is. The question is, did the early Hebrews use *Elohim* to reflect their belief that God transcends but nevertheless includes both the masculine and the feminine? If so, why were there later, as scholars have now determined, so many hundreds



of instances in the Hebrew scriptures in which deliberate changes were made from feminine to masculine terminology?

Without doubt it was because by the time the Hebrew scriptures actually were compiled, between roughly 900 and 300 B.C., it had become impossible for Hebrew males to express reverence for the Holy in any feminine terms. How could they, when the position of women in their own society had fallen so low?

Women, according to the Old Testament, were little more than property, first of their fathers and then of their husbands. A father could sell his daughter as a slave if the man buying her intended to make her his concubine. A man's wife was always and clearly his possession, along with the land he owned, his slaves, his ox and his ass. Women had no economic or legal power; even their public vows meant nothing if their fathers or husbands vetoed them. (Small wonder that to this day Orthodox Jewish males pray: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a woman.")

In the days of the Goddess there were laws that said if a man raped a woman, he should be put to death. According to the Old Testament, if a man raped a virgin, he simply was required to pay her father 50 shekels of silver "and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away [divorce her] all his days." (Deuteronomy 22:28-29) If a man raped a betrothed virgin or the wife of another man (that is, violated the property of another male), then he and the woman were to be stoned to death.

Obviously, by 300 B.C. it could in no way have seemed proper to the priestly editors of the Old Testament to describe God in feminine terms—as easily speak of the Most Holy in terms of a man's other possessions!

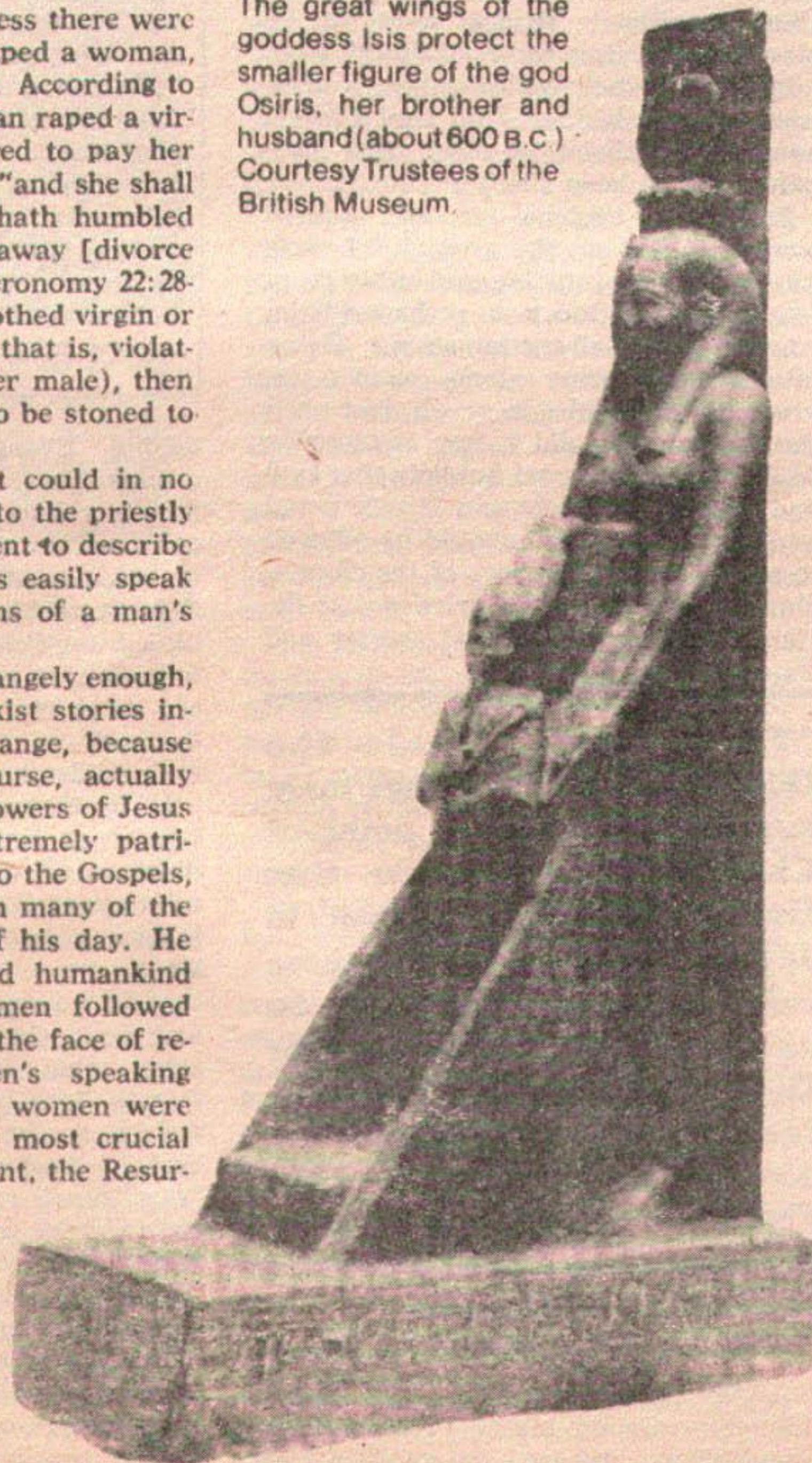
The New Testament, strangely enough, does not transmit any sexist stories involving Jesus Christ. Strange, because the four Gospels, of course, actually were compiled by the followers of Jesus in what was still an extremely patriarchal world. According to the Gospels, however, Jesus broke with many of the anti-female conventions of his day. He stressed that God created humankind "male and female." Women followed Jesus in His ministry (in the face of restrictions against women's speaking with men in public), and women were the first witnesses of the most crucial event in the New Testament, the Resur-

rection—although the witnessing of the women, according to those who wrote the Gospels, had to be "verified" by the male apostles. Women by law were not competent to witness.

Nevertheless, women did play an active role in the early Church. It was only as Christianity became more and more accepted in the patriarchal Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures of that day that the leadership of women was denied or limited to women's groups or organizations. Precisely half of the Almighty's creation, the female principle itself, continued to be ignored for centuries, with only one major exception: the elevation by the early Church of the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin was elevated not as a goddess in her own right, of course, but as "the Mother of God," and as a woman personifying that most prized of patriarchal virtues, virginity. But the devotion to Mary, we are beginning to understand, had much more to do with certain basic religious hungers and impulses on the part of humankind than with the fact that she was the historical

The great wings of the goddess Isis protect the smaller figure of the god Osiris, her brother and husband (about 600 B.C.)  
Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.



mother of Jesus Christ. For around images of the Madonna and the infant Son in her arms were quickly assimilated an absolutely astonishing number of the same symbols and images that once were associated with the first Great Mother.

In the Middle Ages the role of Mary grew so great that she often completely overshadowed both the Father and the Son; and an extraordinary amount of money, work and art went into the great cathedrals of Europe to venerate Her. Is it not marvelous that there are statues that depict Mary holding in one hand the entire world and in the other her baby Son, while a door in her body opens to reveal God the Father supporting the crucified Christ as all the saints look on—all within the womb of a virgin, the mother who produced her Son without help from mortal man (as did the ancient Goddess) and became the Mother of God, as the first Great Mother was the ancestor of all gods.

The Protestant Reformation, which swept the Virgin Mary off many of her pedestals, promised a great deal to women in some ways, but in the end, alas, delivered nothing. Martin Luther himself quickly decreed that women were to have nothing to do with "divine service, the priestly offices or God's word."

Whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, women remained children to be protected and controlled by men, children laboring under the old restraints imposed by such teachings as those of St. Augustine (A.D. 354 to A.D. 430): "The woman herself alone is not the image of God; whereas the man alone is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined with him."

Or this from St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 345 to A.D. 407): "The woman [Eve] taught once and ruined all. On this account . . . let her not teach . . . the whole female race transgressed." Five years ago, in 1973, the Bishop of Exeter publicly declared that the ordination of women by the Church of England would be a subtle shift toward the old pagan religions in which priestesses were common. "And we all know," the Bishop warned, "the kinds of religions they were."

Yes, indeed: "fertility cults," according to Victorian scholars, shocked at the overt sexual nature of the Goddess. For those who worshiped the Mother as "the One who walked in terrible Chaos and brought life by the Law of Love, and out of Chaos brought us harmony, and from Chaos has led us by the hand," did believe that the propagation of life was divine. That sex, along with everything else, was Her gift to humanity, and as such was sacred and holy. The ritual "marriages" that took place in ancient temples between priestesses, as representatives of the Goddess, and men, who represented the fertilizing power of the male Son and Lover, were undertaken

as sacred, symbolic unions of the male and female principles, and were meant both to ensure and to show reverence for the ongoing fruitfulness of all life.

In their own languages, priestesses were described as "virgins" (meaning unmarried), "holy," the "sanctified women" or "the undefiled." Yet for years scholars translated those terms to read "prostitutes." Small wonder that scholars also could so often and easily dismiss goddess worship in a sentence or two before moving on to the events of "male" history, could ignore such evidence as these examples of ancient thought:

From Babylon, 1800 B.C.: "Unto Her who renders decision, Goddess of all things; Unto the Lady of Heaven and Earth who receives supplication; Unto Her who entertains prayer; Unto the compassionate Goddess who loves righteousness."

Egypt, 1400 B.C.: "In the beginning there was Isis: Oldest of the Old . . . the Goddess from whom all Becoming arose . . . Mistress of Heaven, Mistress of the House of Life, Mistress of the word of God."

The Old Testament: "Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude

Aphrodite, goddess of love, as she was known in Thapsus, Carthage, during the Roman period. Aphrodite also was revered as the goddess of battle and Mother of All Deities. Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.



. . . answered Jeremiah, saying: As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil." (Jeremiah 44:15-17)

The male prophets in the Old Testament constantly were having to remind Israel that it was folly to worship "other gods," sometimes actually named as Baal or Tammuz (the Son/Lover) or as Asherah, or Ashtoreth (the Goddess). The prophets did at last, however, overcome the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of the House of Life—the feminine aspect of God.

Thereafter women were forbidden to study "male" scriptures, to pray certain prayers, to speak with men in public, or even to touch the hands of their own husbands if they were menstruating and thus "unclean." Brides were to be stoned if the "tokens of virginity" were not found on their wedding day. Women were admonished, as Paul (not Christ) admonished them, to obey their husbands and to keep silent in church.

Forced to become inferior, women were excluded on the grounds of their inferiority for centuries; and either from fear or love of God, now reshaped from transcendent, all-encompassing Being into a male being alone, women repressed any impulse to revolt. Not until the last century did a few courageous women begin to assert publicly that God had created the male and female equal and that women also should be allowed to serve God as members of the clergy—along with such earthly privileges as the right to speak out against slavery and the right to vote.

**"There is no sex in the Godhead. God is neither male nor female (and the point of Christ's Incarnation is that God became fully human in Jesus, not that God became fully male). We need to emphasize other terms for God in addition to 'Father'—terms such as 'Mother' or 'Creator' or 'Lifegiver.'" — Dr. Frederick K. Wentz, Executive Director of the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools**

Today there are roughly 1,500 female ministers among major Protestant denominations and perhaps another 3,000

## A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE

The question stunned the assembled bishops. Only one year earlier, in 1976, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church had voted, after years of controversy, to ordain women. Now, on September 30, 1977, the head of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Presiding Bishop John M. Allin, was addressing the opening session of the annual meeting of the House of Bishops and was asking this question: "Can you accept the service of a presiding bishop who is unable to accept women in the role of priests?"

In effect, Bishop Allin was offering to resign if his fellow bishops believed his opposition to the ordination of women was a serious hindrance to his leadership of the Church. "I have tried to keep an open mind," Bishop Allin explained, "but I have concluded that women can no more be priests than they can become fathers or husbands."

In the end, reaffirming the principle of "freedom of conscience," the House of Bishops supported the right of Bishop Allin to retain office despite his personal opposition to the Church's ruling in favor of women. The controversy continues, both within the Episcopal Church and among other groups.

among Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. There are a growing number of female rabbis among Reform and Reconstructionist Jews; by 1980, it is estimated, one of every 13 newly ordained Reform rabbis will be female. The recent dramatic increases in enrollment in both Jewish and Protestant seminaries are accounted for in large part by the dramatic increase in the number of female students.

Is it, then, all coming together for women at last? Perhaps. But the ordination of women and the nonsexist reinterpretation of the Bible by theologians and scholars are only beginning steps. So are the growing realization that God once was worshiped as female and the fascinating discovery by modern science that *all* human brains, male and female, have two hemispheres—the left (which controls the right side of the body), predominantly involved with "masculine" rational thought, and the right (which controls the left side of the body), predominantly involved with "feminine" intuition, body awareness and creative or artistic expression.

The masculine/feminine duality of life—and of the Almighty—is far from being truly integrated by the major faiths or secular society to date. Women are be-

ing ordained, but only a few are yet heads of synagogues or churches. After her ordination the Reverend Natalia Vonnegut returned by her own choice to the Julian Mission she had founded, but the mission originally was founded because there was no place for Mrs. Vonnegut, as an ordained deacon, at any church in the diocese of Indianapolis.



The goddess on this Egyptian plaque (about 1250 B.C.) combines the symbolism of the Egyptian goddess Hathor and the Canaanite goddess Ashtoreth. Similar plaques have been found in Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Iraq. Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

"Stop looking to the Church to provide new ministry," a male priest and close friend urged Mrs. Vonnegut in 1974. "Get out and do it yourself." So Mrs. Vonnegut did. With almost no money and only three part-time assistants, she created a "ministry of listening" to help troubled women, widows, battered wives, pregnant teen-agers, lonely and aging mothers with no confidence in their ability to function after their children were grown.

In little more than a year the Julian Mission—named for Lady Julian of Norwich, an English mystic of the late 14th and early 15th centuries and an active "listener" who touched the lives of many people—grew into a ministry to seriously troubled women all over Indianapolis, and then to men as well, to social-welfare agencies, even to male business establishments. Today Mrs. Vonnegut is being approached by people across the country eager to establish similar programs.

"I now believe," says Rev. Mrs. Vonnegut, "that in 'the fullness of time,'

women have been called to do this work—to be ordained and to seek out new areas of oppression where the age-old nurturing skills of women—patience, sharing, communal effort, even vulnerability and a willingness to be open and emotional—can make an enormous difference."

Those are, after all, the very skills that male clergymen, permitted to be more aggressive in their young years, often must work to develop in order to be true shepherds to their pastoral flocks. "One thing women in outreach ministries certainly can do," Mrs. Vonnegut adds, "is help teach women historically conditioned to be dependent and passive that theologically the Word of God also means responsibility, here and now, for their own actions."

Dr. Claire Randall, the first woman General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, also sees a need to help women become more "aggressively responsible" as they move into positions of leadership within traditional church structures. "Over and over," Dr. Randall explains, "I've seen women who were natural leaders, intelligent and very articulate within women's groups, simply clam up in larger groups dominated by men. Women are conditioned to the idea that males lead and ladies follow."

During the years she worked for Church Women United, before her election as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in 1974, Dr. Randall set up a number of workshops aimed at helping women learn more "aggressive" skills without losing the "feminine" skills they should be sharing with males. "Women, for instance, have less need, I believe," says Dr. Randall, "for hierarchical Church structures. They are less concerned with personal power than men."

The National Council now has a Commission on Women in Ministry. "It's important that women be involved in regular ministries," Dr. Randall stresses, "to break certain barriers, to help reshape certain of the Church's traditional ways of relating to the world. To help us all think in new ways theologically."

In the late 1960s Dr. Randall developed for Church Women United, in co-operation with a Roman Catholic women's community called Grailville, a series of women's theological conferences that now are annual events. Catholic and Protestant women, both theologians and laywomen, meet each summer at "Women Doing Theology" at Grailville, in Loveland, Ohio, to re-examine the male theological concepts women have accepted for thousands of years and to search for additional truths relevant to the actual experiences and thoughts—even ancient myths—of women.

Among other things, "Women Doing Theology" has raised such questions as these: Is Eve (woman) to be condemned

for eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge? For would humankind, without consciousness, be truly human? More important, is it not somehow idolatrous to describe God in anthropomorphic terms?

"Why indeed must 'God' be a noun?" the theologian Mary Daly asks in her book *Beyond God the Father*. "Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn't the naming of 'God' as a noun been an act of murdering that dynamic Verb? And isn't the Verb infinitely more personal than a mere, static noun? The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing."

Jewish women deeply involved with their faith also are questioning traditional concepts. Basically, women have been "exempt" from the religious study and communal prayer that is the core of traditional Judaism, the means whereby men strengthen their relationship with God. The woman's role centered almost exclusively on the home and—many feminists now say—primarily enabled a woman's husband and male children to fulfill their religious obligations.

"I am deeply Jewish and deeply feminist," says Rabbi Sandy Sasso, of the Manhattan Reconstructionist Havurah, in New York City. "There simply came a time when those two elements had to meet." She did not, she explains carefully, enter rabbinical school because she was a feminist. She became a feminist only during the course of her studies, amid a growing awareness of the way in which much in the Jewish heritage had relegated women to the role of second-class Jews. Women, no less than men, Rabbi Sasso believes, have an obligation to strengthen their relationship with God.

Moreover, Rabbi Sasso, now the mother of a young son, does not believe that redefining traditional roles will weaken family life. On the contrary, she is convinced that just such re-examination and change, in the face of all the other forces now pulling families apart in our society, will strengthen family life. She and her husband, who is also a rabbi, have written a service to celebrate the birth of a daughter, called a Covenant for the Daughters of Israel, to mark the birth of female children as joyously and seriously as the birth of Jewish sons.

Other Jewish women are working to expand their role in synagogues and religious courts. New prayer books are being written. An independent women's magazine has been established, called "Lilith," after the legendary predecessor of Eve who claimed to be Adam's equal and therefore was exiled from the Garden of Eden. One group has created a blessing to be recited upon the onset of every menstrual flow: "Blessed are You, O Lord Our God, and God of our fore-

mothers and forefathers, who have set the moon in its path and have set the order of the cycles of life. Blessed are You, O Lord, who have created me a woman."

There is also the "Ceremony of the New Moon." Created by a group of Jewish feminists to express one unique aspect of women's spirituality, it is a ceremony in which candles are floated on water, prayers are said and crescent-shaped foods that contain sprouts and grains, the seeds of life, are eaten. All to mark the rebirth of life in female and lunar cycles—the same cycles that were celebrated by those who worshiped the Goddess.

The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other and sometimes rests. There is movement toward the center, a new balance for men and women, everywhere. In 1963 an international Catholic women's-rights organization called St. Joan's Alliance first dared to consider publicly the question of female priests in the Roman Catholic Church. The time seemed right; the 67-year-old Alliance, which grew out of the women's struggle for the vote in England, long had been fighting for equality and justice on many fronts. Even so, one long-time feminist who also served for many years as president of the United States Section of St. Joan's, Frances McGillicuddy, recalls that her first reaction to the ordination of women was tentative: Oh that's going a little too far, she remembers thinking, but then—why not!

Today the National Assembly of Women Religious (women in Catholic orders) also is asking "Why not?" So is the fast-growing Women's Ordination Committee (nuns and laywomen), organized in 1974, and Priests for Equality, an unofficial, 1,300-member organization of priests who support the ordination of women. The Women's Ordination Committee received hundreds of new membership inquiries immediately after the Pope's January, 1977, decision against female ordination. Priests for Equality sent an open letter to major women's groups, publicly apologizing for the "pain and frustration" the Pope's decision created.

On any given day Frances McGillicuddy, now retired from teaching school but still extremely active as the United Nations representative for the St. Joan's Alliance, can be seen sporting five or six buttons under the lapel of her suit jacket or coat. She simply flips up a lapel and there they are, all the slogans she's come up with over the years, from "Ordain Women Or Stop Baptizing Them" to "Mary Was a Feminist." The one button that sums up everything, however, is the one that says, simply and eloquently: "Equal Rites for Women."

Equal Rites. God the Father and God the Mother. The Ultimate Reality, ultimately transcending but nevertheless encompassing both the feminine and the masculine. Celebrated not in unfair

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**"Both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures are the literature of patriarchal societies, even though male dominance was radically challenged and, in principle, abolished by Christ. Jesus accepted women as followers and set no sexual qualifications for apostolic ministry.**

**"There are as well clear examples of feminine figurative language for God in both the Old and the New Testaments. Such language does not, of course, mean that God is female, any more than the masculine language means that God is male. But it does mean that, in itself, feminine language is just as apt for talking about God as is masculine language."— Sister Sandra Schneiders, Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, California**

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favor of the feminine, as in the time of the Goddess, or in unfair favor of the masculine, as it has been over the last 3,000 years, but equitably, equally, reverentially, rightly, in favor of the All—the Almighty and the Almighty's sons and daughters, both partners with God in the ongoing cycles of creation, revelation and redemption. THE END

*Elizabeth Rodgers Dobell is a free-lance editor and writer and a student of comparative religions. A Protestant, she was born in Hardy, Arkansas, attended Catholic schools in Arkansas, public schools in Tennessee, and was graduated from a Presbyterian college, Southwestern at Memphis. While in college she served as state president of the Tennessee Christian Youth Fellowship. Her husband, Byron Dobell, is Jewish, and through him, she is related to several rabbis.*

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#### NOTICE

Articles and letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editors. The SHEKINAH explores all sides and all angles, and leaves the reader to choose with the aid of the Spirit.

## BOOK REVIEW

Mother, God, and Mental Health  
by  
Lillian Maki

The author has a scientific approach to God, Religion, and the Bible. She says female and male human beings, and their ideas, reflect three basic universal forces, which she names. Her theory shows it is correct to refer to the Creator as Mother-Father God, and it is also important to do so. Human beings, with proper perceptions, have a conscience and a sense of right and wrong.

But religions have not yet eliminated sinful behavior, and the social problems that it causes. Many difficulties can be blamed on the fact that religions and society give masculinity a much higher rank than femininity. Women have resented the injustices they have endured. Unhappy mothers can and do have an adverse effect on the children they rear. Confucius said, "When there is harmony in the home there will be harmony in the nation; when there is harmony in nations there will be harmony in the world." Human beings with their great intelligence, ought to be able to bring harmony between neighbors and nations, and to drastically reduce crime and warfare.

It is important for parents to set an example of paying respects to the Universal Mother-Father God. When religions and society begin to give equal rank to male and female by precept and example, the education of the young will be much improved. There are situations now where married couples act as pastors of one parish. This seems appropriate in serving and representing Mother-Father God.

Lillian Maki's book contains a unique interpretation of the Garden of Eden legend based on scientific facts. Anthropology, psychology, mythology, history and other social sciences give clues to what has happened. It is necessary to have at least a sketchy knowledge of prehistoric human events in order to understand the present confusions, and to correct them, or the mistakes of history will be repeated, as the philosopher Santayana pointed out.

Society cannot be perfect, but human problems should mostly be little ones—taking proper care of the young. Also the rages of Mother Nature, such as floods, droughts, storms and earthquakes have always been a challenge, and most likely will continue to be.

If interested in Maki's book, please contact Mayatta Company, P.O. Box 6327, Portland, Oregon 97208.

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## Unmanning the Holy Bible

### The sexual-textual revolution comes to Scripture

*What is a human being that you are mindful of him, and a mortal that you care for him?*

Sound familiar but somehow flat? The more famous rendering of *Psalms 8: 4* is rather more ringing: "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" But Christians in the English-speaking world had better get used to the neutered wording, for it may appear in the new edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible due a decade from now. The reworked RSV will include hundreds of such language changes made in the cause of stripping Scripture of "sexism."

The use of "inclusive language," intended to put women on a textual par with men, has long since been accepted in many areas of U.S. publishing, such as school textbooks and children's fables. But its application to the Bible is already stirring an unholy row. The immediate point of contention is the RSV, now being updated by a committee of 25 scholars and translators. Their efforts will have far-reaching importance. With millions of copies sold worldwide since it first appeared in 1952, the RSV is by far the most broadly used Bible translation in modern English.

Precisely because of its influence, the RSV is now a target of Protestant feminists and other critics who want to purge it of the male chauvinism that they find running all through its pages. Says the Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers, a United Methodist mission official: "People are becoming increasingly sensitive to language that renders half the human race invisible." As it happens, such sentiment is strong in the National Council of Churches (N.C.C.), whose education division is overseeing the RSV revision. But the N.C.C.'s leaders have hesitated to alter the RSV radically, partly because the organization gets the royalties. The RSV has been a success largely because of its preservation of much of the evocative language of its antecedent, the King James Bible of 1611. So after the education division decided to prepare a new edition of the RSV, it instructed its translators to get rid of as much "masculine-biased language" as possible while retaining the King James "flavor."

The man in charge of the RSV revision is the Rev. Bruce M. Metzger, 66, a gentlemanly New Testament professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. While Metzger is conservative on matters of doc-

trine, he is willing to avoid male nouns and pronouns—where the original Hebrew and Greek texts allow it. Thus the reference in *Romans 14: 1* to "the man who is weak in faith" will likely become "the one who is weak . . ." In *Psalms*, the first verse will read "Blessed are those who walk not in the counsel of the wicked," rather than "Blessed is the man who walks not . . ." In *Psalms* alone, more than 200 male pronouns will be dropped.

Even these limited word changes are too much for many traditionalists, among them the Rev. E. Earle Ellis of New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New



(Picture not from Time article)

Jersey, who quit Metzger's group in protest. With all the sensitivity over sexism, he complains, the emerging Bible "is taking on the nature of a paraphrase," and the rewrites are sacrificing important nuances in meaning. For instance, Ellis grants that the use of "human being" instead of "man" in the new *Psalms 8: 4* is defensible as a perfectly literal translation from the original Hebrew. But he argues that the change is reckless since in the context of the psalm, "man" could also imply Adam, an ideal king, or some other individual. So could the banished phrase "son of man," a New Testament title associated with Jesus as the Messiah. Declares Ellis: "Whatever we think, the text has a right to be heard. You cannot cover over words just because the meaning is an embarrassment to certain modern movements."

For their part, militants on Bible sex-

ism protest that Metzger's translators are too fastidious in holding to traditional language about God and Christ. An eight-man, five-woman Bible translation "task force" that includes officials and scholars from six N.C.C. denominations has declared that Metzger's committee should "move more boldly." Among suggested changes, they want women to get equal billing in passages where the original text names only males: Sarah should be included along with mentions of Abraham, for example, and Eve ought to appear when Adam does. Moreover, the hard-liners propose that Jesus should be called the "Child of God" instead of the "Son of God." Also, the impersonal pronoun *it* should replace *he* in references to the Spirit of God when the original Greek is neuter, notwithstanding Christian teaching that the Spirit is a person. Finally, since

God has no gender, use of *he*, *him* and *his* should be minimized; a properly de-sexed *Romans 8: 29*, for instance, would say, "Those whom God foreknew, God also predestined to be conformed to the image of God's child . . ."

During a meeting at the N.C.C.'s New York City headquarters last week, leaders of the education division rejected such radical proposals but did agree to add feminists to Metzger's group as vacancies occur. Discussion of how to tackle alleged "racism, classism and anti-Semitism" in the Bible was postponed. Metzger assailed the militants' approach as unscholarly and "intolerable." As for the inclusive-language issue, he said firmly, "I do not find much clamor for this in the churches. Most people find sexist language in regard to persons irrelevant and, concerning God, irreverent."

Nonetheless, the education division did approve a recommendation to work on a different Bible translation that would more fully meet feminist demands. The first step toward what some religious wags are already calling the "Unisex Bible" will be translation of a new lectionary, the series of Bible readings listed for worship each week in many denominations. The N.C.C. expects to show whether a "completely inclusive-language Bible translation" is feasible.

As the skirmishing over Bible bias continues, some church feminists are beginning to voice an argument made by traditionalist foes: at bottom, the ancient texts are what they are. Roman Catholic Sister Ann Patrick Ware, of New York City, a top theology executive at the N.C.C., points out resignedly: "There are parts of Scripture that are sexist, and there is nothing you can do about them." Of course, she adds, "you don't have to read them, either."

—By Richard M. Ostling.  
Reported by John Kohan/New York



### Are You Moving?

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## Personal Perspective

### The God-Language Bind

† THE *London Daily Telegraph* reports that a new book of prayers and hymns published by the British Council of Churches encourages young people to address their prayers to "Parent God."

A pastor sends her congregation out some Sundays with a benediction invoking the Trinity not as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," but as "Creator, Liberator and Sustainer."

The women's advocacy agency of the United Methodist Church calls for that denomination to fund a four-year study of "Language About God."

These are but a few of many evidences of the new stage that seems lately to have been reached in the debate within the churches over the use of "inclusive language" in preference to "sexist language." Perhaps now would be an appropriate time to point out that there are really two campaigns being waged by inclusive-language advocates, and that one of the two appears to be clearly winnable while the other almost surely is not.

Until recently the emphasis of the inclusive-language effort was on the easily remedied matter of the language we use in referring to people; the focus now seems to have shifted to the more difficult problems that arise when our traditional language about God is called into question. Efforts at change on both fronts have sought to alter the language used in hymns, public prayers, liturgies, sermons, theological writings, church periodicals, church school literature, church legislation and everyday speech.

I think there can be no doubt that attitudes have shifted considerably in recent years in regard to sexism in "people-language." Men and women who, five or ten years ago, could use such terms as "man," "mankind," "brothers," "sons," "churchmen," "layman," "he" and "his" on the unquestioned assumption that they applied "generically" to all persons, both male and female, now find that they are both-

ered by such usages; the terms no longer *seem* sexually neutral, whatever their context. Many women never did feel themselves to be included by these terms; now growing numbers of both women and men are coming to find such usages, if not socially offensive, at least ambiguous and imprecise.

I have no statistical data to corroborate my unscientific perceptions, but in the eight years or so I have been editing manuscripts for *The Christian Century*, I have seen a definite shift in the attitudes of writers in regard to inclusive "people-language," and a marked increase in the number of articles that need no "fixing" on this score.

But during this same period, I have seen little indication that the people who write for or edit religious publications — be they professors, pastors or journalists — are approaching any consensus on what, if anything, should be done about traditional masculine God-language. To be sure, some publications have issued style guidelines, telling writers how to clean up their act. So far, however, it is the scholarly journals and not periodicals addressed to the laity that have banned exclusively masculine God-talk.

The way one addresses or refers to God is a function of one's theology. Some find it easy to speak of the deity in ways that do not require third-person-singular pronouns. Others have made intentional decisions to alter their own God-language.

Last June I heard Walter Brueggemann, a respected biblical scholar of the United Church of Christ, preach a sermon at his denomination's General Synod in which he alternately referred to God as "he" and "she," arbitrarily making the shifts in gender every paragraph or so throughout the sermon. Brueggemann's tactic jarred my stereotypes — but for me, at least, it had the unpleasant side effect of calling up the disturbing image of God-Who-Suffers-from-Gender-Confusion.

James F. White, United Methodist worship specialist, dispenses with pronouns entirely, even in the reflexive: "God gives Godself to us."

There are, on the other hand, some writers who obviously experience God as One whom they want to call Father, One who can be referred to as "he." To revise such a writer's language may have the effect of describing a God who is less personal and immediate, more distant and abstract. Let me cite as example a soon-to-be-published Century article in which a seminarian relates a powerful mystical experience of God's reality. That author encountered God as an almost palpable presence, as a "Person," as a "he." To eliminate those "he's" could only serve to distort the particular character of her encounter with the divine.

As a copy editor who has worn down her share of No. 2 pencils changing expressions like "His mercy" to "divine mercy," and in general seeking felicitous and unobtrusive ways to excise masculine God images from magazine prose, I have recently come to doubt that such editing is necessary, or even appropriate. Indeed, it may be an unwarranted act of arrogance on the part of an editor; tampering with the God-language in a manuscript is in some sense messing with the author's theology. I have grave doubts as to whether it is the prerogative of any manuscript editor to impose an Official Stylebook Theology on any author. I repent of that sin of editorial arrogance.

But we are in a bind on God-language — all of us: journalists, theologians, hymn-writers, hymn-revisers, Sunday school curriculum publishers, preachers, choir directors, and yes, even — I will borrow a term coined by a (male) Episcopal priest who was trying, desperately, to be linguistically inclusive — "pew-persons." On the one hand, there is an illogic in insisting that God has no gender, declaring that God embodies both masculine and feminine qualities — and yet continuing to call God "he" exclusively. On the other hand, there are some perfectly valid reasons why perhaps the majority of church people resist the "de-sexing" of God-language and continue to hold the contradictory concept of a God who has no gender but is nonetheless Lord and Father.

1. Many call God "he" not because they think the deity is male, but because God is *Someone* — God has the attribute of personality, God is not impersonal. The English language is so constructed that it is hard to talk about anyone in natural, idiomatic speech without falling back on personal pronouns. Language is stilted, awkward without them. But why not "she" for a change? Perhaps because the notion of God as "she" is still so new to us, so novel as to seem "trendier-than-thou"; it evokes nervous giggles; it has been used too much by ecclesiastical wits, and by those whose purposes are clearly to make a political point rather than a theological one.

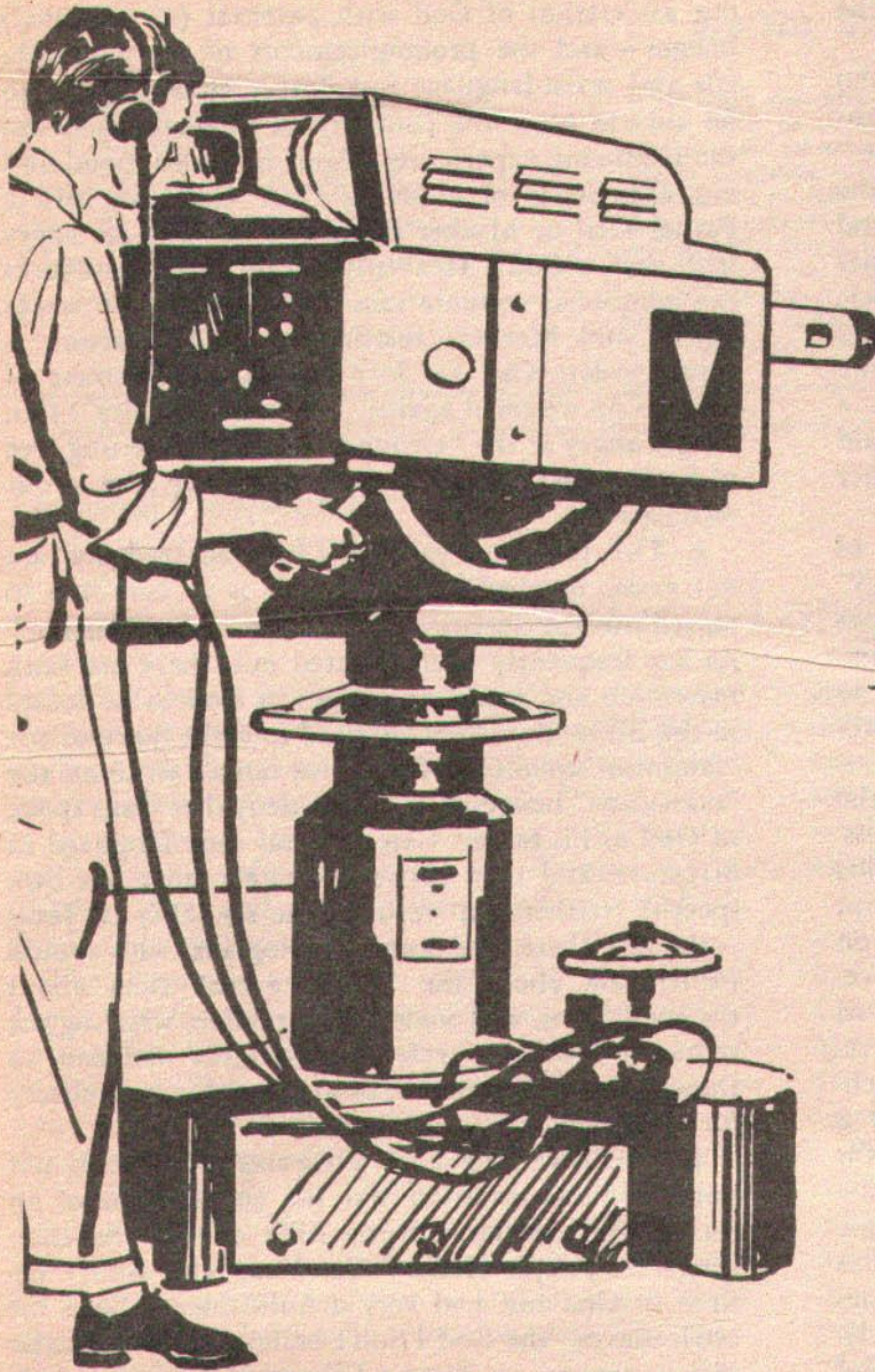
2. There may be deep psychological reasons for our association of God with paternal (or maternal) images — and the pronouncements of church councils and sexist-language task forces are not going to be able to erase the connections we make between the nurturing experiences of our own childhood and our experience of a loving God. One can love a Father God or Mother God; one can also be angry with such a God. "Heavenly Parent" somehow lacks the emotional connotations embodied in the words Father and Mother; relating to an abstraction is even harder: Can we love the "Up-againstness of Life"? Can we rebel against "Ultimate Reality"? Can we get angry at the "Ground of Being"? Getting free of Father God may be as hard as getting free of our own parents.

3. Two thousand years of Christian tradition are not easily ignored, if the church is to continue to regard itself as Christian rather than "post-Christian." As has frequently been pointed out, there are both masculine and feminine images of God to be found in the Bible. But while we need to make more of the "feminine" qualities of God, we cannot write off the "masculine" images, nor can we deny that Jesus spoke of God as his father. Can we read such language in Scripture, and then excise it entirely from our own speech? Neither can we deny the sexuality of Jesus — though there are some theologians who would rather talk about the "Christ event" than about the man Jesus, and some hymn revisers who suggest reducing "excessive" references to Jesus' maleness, as though that might enable us to forget his masculinity for a stanza or two.

4. "Inclusive language" advocates are fighting not only religious tradition but the conventions of an increasingly secular culture. Like one of the characters in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, who didn't believe in God but had very definite ideas about the attributes of "the God I don't believe in," the secular society around us doesn't believe in God, but it is rather convinced that the God it doesn't believe in is male. While ecclesiastical feminists are saying that we've got to change our God-images before we can change the status of women in both church and society, perhaps we've got to change church and society before we cease to associate "God-ness" with maleness.

The sight of a woman pastor breaking the bread or baptizing a baby may do more to shatter the idolatries of a male-dominated church than a year of liturgies with "neutral" God-language. Whatever words our "cleaned-up" hymns and rituals employ, many folk are still going to call upon "the Lord" or "our Father" when they pray alone. A church committed to being inclusive will have compassion not only for those offended by male God-language but also for those distressed by the efforts to alter that language.

JEAN CAFFEY LYLES.



# IN WHOSE IMAGE ?

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JULY 31, 1978

may not even be aware that we have acquired such attitudes. . .let alone know where they originated.

One source is religion.

Today, after centuries of imposed silence, a lot of women are challenging 6000 years of religious tradition and are asserting their equality. . .not only before man. . .(softly). . .but before God.

If woman is not just a rib from Adam, created as an afterthought for the pleasure of man, and in the image of man. . . then,

"In Whose Image?"

## ACT II

**HOSTESS:** Many people today are terrified at the very thought of questioning anything sacred. Perhaps faith itself must first be liberated from fear and ignorance.

**SISTER ELIZABETH THOMAN:** We have to challenge all these years of theology, even though it's been thousands of

## ACT I

**HOSTESS:** My mother always told me never to talk about politics, religion or sex in polite company. . . Isn't that what YOUR mother told YOU?

Well, for the next few minutes, let's not be polite!

**DR. STANLEY GEVIRTZ:** "Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a heathen, a slave, or a woman," states the traditional Jewish prayer book.

**FATHER BRUCE:** Ecclesiasticus says,

"Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die. St. Paul wrote, "The women should keep silence in the churches. . .If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home."

**HOSTESS:** For many people, those are divine words coming directly from God to be obeyed without question. And, for other people, who may have *never* heard these words before, the influence of such scripture is still very powerful.

All of us are deeply influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by ideas and opinions in the world around us which we absorb by just being alive. We



## TV SHOW TRANSCRIPT

years, because the church is not a static institution. It has grown, it's developed, it has changed many of its doctrines over the years.

**HOSTESS:** "Changing doctrines?"  
Wasn't biblical law carved forever in stone by lightning bolts from heaven thousands of years ago?

**RABBI LAURA GELLER:** Jewish law has never been a rigid unchanging system. If it had been, then Jewish life would be the same today as it was in biblical times, and clearly that isn't true.

**HOSTESS:** Could it be that the Bible is now useless? Destined for the scrapheap?

(Insert on the origins of the Bible and of the patriarchal period in which the Bible was first written, etc.)

**HOSTESS:** So...we have the Old Testament, apparently written, compiled, translated and interpreted by men in cultures of male supremacy. Then perhaps we must liberate the Word of God from the words of men.

**SISTER ELIZABETH THOMAN:** The Vatican Council and the Catholic Church said a few years ago that we should examine the signs of our times, look around us in the world and see what's happening, and then see how the gospel is being applied to those very problems. In the 1970's maybe one of the signs of our time is the questions that women have about their role in the church.

**HOSTESS:** And do you suppose that you and I, like the scribes, translators, and interpreters of old, need to liberate the scriptures from OUR OWN layers of prejudice and bias?

**DR. STANLEY GEVIRTZ:** Whatever attitudes of a negative nature we may have, or try to read out of the Bible, very often this is our own reading of the text and not necessarily what the author of the text is really saying.

**HOSTESS:** What DO we find in the Bible about women when we get past all the human frailties?

**ANNE MCGREW BENNETT:** In the First Chapter of Genesis we read...God created man in his own image, in the image of God, God created him. Actually the word "man" in Hebrew is a word that is never used of a male or males, but is always used of male and female... it means humankind.

**DR. JANE DEMPSEY DOUGLASS:** When we turn to the New Testament, we're very conscious of the fact today that Jesus is pictured in the gospels as teaching women publicly, having women among his disciples. He visited in the homes of women. We know now that women did have leadership roles in the early years of the church. We know them as deaconesses, for example, who baptised and had certain liturgical functions.

**NELLE MORTON:** Saint Paul did say at one time that in the new community of faith, there would be no Jew and Greek, and there would be no male and female; which is saying that in the new order which is working, in that he was speaking of, that human values could not be reckoned in terms of sex or race or nationality.

**HOSTESS:** Inspired by a new sense of liberation, self-esteem and responsibility, women ARE participating in churches and synagogues in ways (pause) unheard before.

(Ritual Sequence — Jewish Mixed Minyan)

**GLORIA:** Women have not always participated as we do here in the minyan. They have not as a rule had an equal role. I enjoy the activity, the active part, instead of being a passive participant.

**MARSHA:** I think it just makes you feel a lot more of a person and that our prayers are as good as anybody else's and all of our efforts are the same as everyone else's.

**RABBI RICHARD LEVY:** I think it's very important for men and women to join in equally in prayer and in study and in doing all the commandments that God gave our tradition on Sinai. The Torah says that all of you.— men, women, children — stood at Sinai together. We all learn from each other.

(Ritual Sequence — Catholic Mass)

**FATHER BRUCE:** I'm delighted that women participate in a new way now, both liturgically, worship that is in the church, and in other facets of Christian life. I think it's long overdue.

**SISTER NOELLE:** When I see men and women in roles of ministry working together in the church, it validates my self-image, and it helps me to be more of a minister not only in churchy things but also in social justice areas outside the church building or circle itself. And it also parallels, I think, when you think of the creation process, it takes men and women to create and I think that's very integral to celebrating in the church and praying that way.

(Ritual Sequence — Baptist Ushers)

**SARAH:** Women have not always been ushers in the church. Once upon a time, it was just men. Well, I felt that God is no respecter of persons, and women, as well as men have a right to do the work of the Lord. Christ died for all; and women as well as men have to let the life of Christ be manifested in their lives.

**SISTER ELIZABETH THOMAN:** One very practical way that I try to let the church know how I feel about my not being included in the church is to hit them in the financial pocketbook. What I do with this funny money is I keep them in my purse and when I'm attending a parish where the celebrant constantly uses the word men, where the choir constantly sings about brothers and sons of God, rather than putting real money in the collection, I put a funny money in the collection to say that I do not approve of contributing my money to a church that discriminates against me.

**HOSTESS:** For those women with a dedicated call to the ministry, the way has been even more difficult.

In January of 1977, Victoria Hatch, along with more than 40 other women across the nation, was ordained an Episcopalian priest. The church immediately splintered.

In spite of ridicule, alienation from family and friends, divorce, financial hardships, and even direct threats, many

## TV SHOW TRANSCRIPT

women, including The Reverend Victoria Hatch, have achieved their cherished goal.

(Music: "Sometimes I Wish")

### ACT III

**ANNE McGREW BENNETT:** Over a period of time, if you're not mentioned in history, if there are no ritual celebrations of you, you come to think and absorb the inferior position which the dominant group in society has given you.

**HOSTESS:** Women ARE finding their hidden history and are also creating new rituals which emphasize the unique spiritual experience of being a woman. Each month these women meet to celebrate the female *body* through which flows the mystery of all life.

(Woman's Sequence — Jewish Ritual — New Moon Celebration)

**HOSTESS:** Another group of women have innovated worship services of poetry and dance which speak to the deepest *emotional* needs of a woman's heart.

(Woman's Sequence — Protestant Ritual — Poem and Dance)

**HOSTESS:** To find the beauty of feminine *strength*, a surprisingly large number of women have turned to the older feminine religions and the worship of "The Great Goddess."

(Woman's Sequence — The Great Goddess — Star Goddess Invocation)

**Z BUDAPEST:** Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess, the dust of whose feet encircles the universe. I am the beauty of the green earth and white moon among the stars and the mystery of the waters and the desire of human hearts...

(Sequence — Waterfall, Trees, Flowers)

**Z:** The Star Goddess evocation sums up the philosophy of the craft as being a religion based on love and worshipping the life force. The Goddess included everyone. And every living creature was

sacred. There is much healing needed in the world today -- it can only get better if humanity fuses both the male and female soul. I really hope that women finally give themselves permission to be divine, not just liberated. But I want a lot more than that. I want women to take over the human functions of blessing, of making judgments, deciding over nation's fates, managing the money in a country. Every man on battle fields when they die, they call for their mother. It was always mothers and that's who awaits at the end of all desire, the return to the mother again.

**Z:** For behold, I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

**HOSTESS:** Women artists, who have particularly felt alienated in a man's world, are finding new symbols that reunite them with the *sacred* in woman's experience.

(Women's Sequence — Artists — Chicago/Gelon Conversation)

**NELLE MORTON:** I feel that — that God as a male God needs liberating and that the very image of maleness here limits the shining spirit back of — back of God.

**ANNE McGREW BENNETT:** The core ideas about God in the Hebrew scriptures are words of feminine gender. Torah, the word of God, is feminine gender. Hookma — wisdom, Rua — spirit, Chakina — the indwelling presence of God... all of these are words of feminine gender.

**RABBI LAURA GELLER:** As a woman, I'm created in the image of God, then my role of what it means to be a woman is always in the process of being changed, of becoming, of unfolding.

### ACT IV

**HOSTESS:** The question before us today is quite simply whether we wish to remain shackled to a way of life of a nomadic people who lived in a far-away land — a long, long time ago . . . . . or do we want to "wrestle out" the living truth for a New Age — a more enlight-

ened and human age — in 20th century America.

Recently, Leah and Michael created a new ritual to mark the birth of their daughter, Sivan, to be as serious and joyous an occasion as the birth of a male child.

(Ritual Sequence — Baby Ceremony)

**MOTHER:** . . . Blessed is she who comes in the name of . . .

**RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER:** Feminism has profound consequences for religion. The image that comes to mind is that of the androgen, that Mishnahic assertion that the first Adam was both male and female; that is, as feminists we have a task — we have a task to uncover the maleness and femaleness within each one of us. And if this is true that humans were created in God's image, then as we uncover our own selves, as we become more complete, then the knowledge of God becomes more complete. That is, as humans liberate themselves, they also liberate God as well.

**MOTHER:** Now on the 8th day of our daughter's life, we are here to welcome her into the Covenant of Israel. . . . . Praised are you . . . our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has blessed us with Sivan and has commanded us to initiate our daughter into the Covenant of the People of Israel.

**FATHER:** Our God and God of our ancestors, preserve this child and her mother and father and let her name in Israel be . . . , the daughter of Michael and Leah. Let the father rejoice in his offspring, that the mother be glad with the food of her body. Although we have named her, we recognize that she is not our possession, she is merely entrusted to our care. Just as we rejoice in her birth, so we rejoice in the responsibility of growing with her.

(Music: "Womanchild")

**THE END**



The Sacramento Bee — Saturday, January 17, 1981



## Faithways

by Dr. Mary Giles

# Women's Religious Spirit Rooted In American Soil

We hear that the '80s will be the decade of women. Exactly what that means so far is unclear. As the furor over the Equal Rights Amendment indicates, even we women are not unanimous about the political and social issues that affect us.

Lack of agreement in the socio-political arena extends to that of religion where we see churches struggling with the "women question."

The extent to which women are officially visible varies substantially from one religion to another, from one church to another, and if the men within religious institutions are divided on the subject of leadership roles for women, so too are the women.

We can, however, detect among women a major division between those who elect to stay within the institution to work for reform and those who reject the structure entirely.

The first group may press for the ordination of women, faculty appointments in divinity schools and seminaries, and publication of theology written by women; in this respect Catholic, Protestant and Jewish women in the United States have made impressive progress in the past 15 years.

In the second group we see women who, for a variety of reasons, have renounce the traditional structure and struck out on their own. These seek a spirituality which, they claim, conventional symbols, rituals and structures are unable to mediate.

For them the language of patriarchal religion is indeed dead, and although there is no set of symbols through which all women of this group live spiritually, we can say in a general way that in their rejection of God as Father, King, Lord and Master, they favor symbols that express nurturing, creating, uniting and loving.

For some the Mother Goddess symbolizes these experiences, and they honor a tradition of goddess worship that is said to predate the Jewish patriarchs.

Goddess worship may take a variety of forms, one of which is wicca, or witchcraft, which, contrary to prevailing belief that associates witches with the worship of Satan, is reverence for the forces of life and nature and has nothing whatsoever to do with devils.

Goddess worship may strike God worshippers as bizarre. But to women alienated by the concept of a male deity and a religion controlled by a male-created theology, liturgy and hierarchy, one may find it bizarre that so many women continue in patriarchal churches.

Before we assign words like "crazy" and "uppity" to women who reject the male deity of the Judeo-Christian tradition, let us glance back to the 19th century in the United States at the counterparts of the two groups of women I have mentioned.

The 1800s was a period of exciting religious innovation. Then, as now, women were exploring new paths on their spiritual journey, some seeking reform from within traditional churches, others pushing out from them.

Nineteenth-century Methodism gave birth to what is called the Holiness Movement, a movement that called individuals to inner perfection. Inner perfection was not identified necessarily with observing standard rituals.

It was a matter of the heart — being aware of the Spirit's calling one to holiness; responding to that call; "knowing" in the heart that Jesus Christ truly died for one's sins; dedicating one's life to testifying to this knowledge.

Such testifying was public, and this act alone brought women out of centuries-old imposed silence. Not only did women publicly testify, but they did what women had rarely done — they prayed and preached in public.

Women such as Phoebe Palmer, Sarah Worrall Lankford and Elizabeth Ford Atkinson strode in the vanguard of the great revival movement of that century. In camp meetings across the United States and in Canada and En-

gland, women testified to the working of the Holy Spirit and by their words and example inspired in others, men and women, an openness to the spark within that could leap into the flame of holiness.

Whereas Palmer and her sisters in holiness remained within Methodism, women such as Mary Baker Eddy, Ann Lee and Ellen G. White responded to the inner call by rejecting their parent religious institution. Their conviction and courage attracted followers in such numbers that sects emerged under their leadership.

After a childhood and young adult life marked by physical and nervous disorders, Eddy found relief in the experience of Infinite Spirit, and her belief in the reality of the spiritual mind motivated her writing "Science and Health: With Key to the Scriptures." That was in 1875, the same year that she established her first group of followers in Massachusetts.

In her book she argued that the discovery of Christian Science bares the revelation that God is Mother.

"In divine science," she wrote, "we have not as much authority for considering Him feminine." It should not surprise us that Eddy and her sectarian church strongly supported women's rights.

The concept of God as Mother was not unique to Eddy. Lee, the key figure in the Shaker sect, which grew out of English Quakerism in the mid-18th century, convinced her followers that she was the female messiah. Her teachings were eventually codified in a book by Elder Benjamin S. Young in which he described the Godhead as four persons — Father, Son, Holy Mother Wisdom and Daughter.

White did not share the theology of Lee or Eddy, but she did reject her Methodist upbringing and convert to the adventist message of William Miller who preached that Jesus Christ would return on Oct. 22, 1844.

After the "Great Disappointment," she experienced visions which she interpreted to mean that Christ's return was still imminent, though delayed because the sabbath had not been observed properly. Fortified by her visions, White organized in 1860 a sect called Seventh-day Adventists and served as its leader for over 50 years.

Her sect, like Eddy's, came in the 20th century to grow in membership and structure and gain recognition as an established church.

We should remember that churches of today were the sects of yesterday, and what may seem outlandish today may be standard religious thought and practice tomorrow. A bit of historical sense is a bit of common sense.

# Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?

BERKELEY AND ALVERA MICKELSEN

Should we attempt to "improve" or "clear up" what the Holy Spirit chose to do?

**R**ECENTLY we led a study in a Roman Catholic church on biblical teachings about men-women relationships. We were pleased to find that the church had provided seminar participants copies of *Good News for Modern Man*—a translation now generally approved for Roman Catholics.

In answer to a question, we asked the women to read I Corinthians 11:3-12, which describes in detail how men and women were to pray and prophesy in the church at Corinth.

The passage begins (literal translation from the Greek), "Indeed, I want you [plural] to know that the head of every man is the Christ; and head of every woman is the man; and head of Christ is God."

This is a difficult passage; the sense of some of the rest of the chapter depends on what Paul meant here by the word "head." We explained that "head" in Greek usage (according to the standard Greek-English Lexicon by Liddell, Scott, Jones, McKenzie) does *not* mean "boss" or "final authority." In classical Greek "head" usually meant a person's physical head; as a figure of speech it sometimes stood for the whole person or for life itself (e.g., "I stake my head on that"); or it could also mean the brim or upper part of something, as the "head" of an architectural column. A more common meaning was source, or origin, as we use it in the "head of the Mississippi River." This was the meaning it apparently had for Paul in Colossians 1:18: "He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent."

We began to explain to the women that this meaning of origin or source that Paul used elsewhere made good sense in the phrase "and the head of every woman is the man" in I Corinthians 11:3 because five verses later (I Cor. 11:8) Paul states, "man was not made from woman, but woman from man" (referring to the account of creation in Gen. 2:18-25). It was clear, however that the group had not the slightest idea of what we were talking about. One of them handed us her Bible and we read, "But I want you to understand

*Continued on next page*

*Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 30, 1981

## Is God a He Or a She?

### *Quotation Of The Week*

Is God a He Or a She?

Neither. Let me explain.

There has been much publicity recently concerning the desire to change the Bible and our prayers when they refer to God in the male gender. A congregation in New England has re-written an entire prayer service eliminating all sexist references to God.

From the Jewish point of view, God is pure spirit and has no physical form whatsoever. It must be understood that our language is limited; God is super-human, greater than all His (Its?) creations, and human language cannot express that which is beyond its power of expression. Therefore, we must use words, but with the understanding that our words are limited and necessarily confining. The phrases in the Kaddish prayer puts it well: "Beyond all songs and hymns of exaltation, beyond all praise which man can utter is the glory of the Holy One, praised is He." Man's language is hopefully inadequate when we attempt to express the glory of God. But we must use our language; that's all we have.

To make a "big deal" out of eliminating the sexist references, is "much ado about nothing". I have great confidence that our people understand that the male references in English are merely a language device, and do not eliminate feminine virtues or overtones. I am confident that people understand that when we refer to God as "He" we do not mean a man, and when we refer to "man", in general, we mean "mankind".

I freely admit that due to the force of feminist objections to our male-oriented language, in my public speaking and even in writing sometimes I will make a conscious effort to eliminate sexist overtones. I try to use "mankind" instead of "man", and "people" instead of "he". However, I do not make a fetish out of this. I trust the intelligence of my listeners and readers.

I hope the matter will be cleared up when the Messiah comes, may she arrive soon! — Rabbi Sanford Shanblatt, Temple Israel, Swampscott, Ma.

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that Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ."

"We're sorry," we said, "but that translation is not what the original writing says. The translator, unfortunately, is giving his opinion about how the words should be interpreted, rather than giving you the actual words that Paul wrote, which are 'the head of every man is the Christ; and head of every woman is the man; and head of Christ is God.'"

They were troubled, of course. Only in recent years had they been encouraged to study the Bible for themselves. And now we had to tell them that the Bible in their hands was not faithfully translating what the Greek said—it was instead giving a commentary on what the translator thought it meant and what its application should be.

But then, a few verses later, in I Corinthians 11:10, we came to another passage where interpretation got in the way of the translator's faithful handling of the text. The literal Greek text in this verse is: "Because of this, the woman ought to have authority upon the head because of the angels." That is all it says.

Of the passage's several possible interpretations, we think Paul was saying that the women who were praying and prophesying in the church at Corinth (the subject under discussion here) should have some symbol on their heads (perhaps a veil or a special hair style) to show that they had authority from God to speak.

Now this is *our* interpretation or application of the words that Paul wrote. Bible scholars have the right and responsibility to work hard, weighing and evaluating what they think Bible passages mean and how they should be applied. This is interpretation and it is one of the purposes of Bible commentaries. But this is *not* the responsibility of the translator; his job is to tell us what the passage says.

Note how Good News for Modern Man translates I Corinthians 11:10: "On account of the angels, then, a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under her husband's authority."

The Greek text says nothing about husbands or men. Paul used no words that can be translated husband or man in that passage. The translator, instead of telling us what Paul said, added to the text his personal interpretation and application of Paul's words.

**W**E HATED having to tell this group of women who were eager to study the Bible that their version was not telling them what Paul said, but rather what the translator thought it meant. They were crestfallen. "Then how can we ever know what the Bible actually says?" they asked. We had no easy answers except to urge them to consult several translations, especially committee translations such as

the Jerusalem Bible, Revised Standard Version, and New International Version.

That experience started us on a broader examination of what appear to be traces of male chauvinism in Bible translations we use. Many of our current translations have been the work of committees of biblical scholars, including the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, and the New International Version. We also have several currently popular one-person translations, including Living Letters (Kenneth Taylor); the New Testament in Modern English (J. B. Phillips); and Good News for Modern Man (Robert Bratcher).

We doubt if any of the men on translation committees or who did their own translations are conscious of any male chauvinism. All are honest, godly scholars, dedicated to doing their best work, trying faithfully to bring to today's readers the message of the Bible.

But like all of us, these translators grew up in a society that assumed males should dominate home, church, and society at large. It has been as much a part of our culture (and of most pagan cultures) as the air we breathe. Translators naturally tend to read and interpret the Bible from the framework in which they have lived and thought.

Meanwhile, Christians now trying to work through the actual teachings of the Bible on the strategically important issue of men-women relationships are thrown off course by translations that may reflect more of the translator's interpretations and biases than the actual words of the Bible.

As examples of this situation, we have chosen four short passages to show how the individual views of translators may have influenced the way they translated the Bible.

In looking at these passages, we must consider how faithful the translations are to the Greek text—not whether we "like" or agree with what the translator says. The translator's responsibility is to say neither more nor less than the inspired writers of Scripture said.

If we *really* believe in the absolute authority of the Word of God, we dare not add to or subtract from what the text says. If the text itself is ambiguous—the meaning is not clear or is open to several possible interpretations—conscientious translators must leave the material ambiguous and open to several possible interpretations. If they "clear up" the difficult section by choosing which interpretation they like best and incorporate that into their translation, are they not claiming for themselves the divine inspiration that belongs only to the Word of God as it was originally "God-breathed" by the Holy Spirit? If the Holy Spirit inspired words or thoughts that are ambiguous or open to several interpretations, should we attempt to "improve" or "clear up" what the Holy Spirit chose to do?

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Translators may surely choose to footnote certain sections and give possible interpretations and even indicate what their preference is; but their own preference should not influence the text itself.

Let's look at four short verses that may illustrate the problems involved.

1. **I Corinthians 11:3.** The committee translations of this verse are clearly more faithful to the text than the one-man paraphrases. Both Living Letters and Good News for Modern Man have tried to "clarify" the text by giving the translator's interpretation of the meaning of "head"—interpretations not supported by Liddell, Scott, Jones, McKenzie. For Greek-speaking people in New Testament times who had little opportunity to read the Greek translation of the Old Testament, there were many possible meanings for "head" but "supreme over" or "being responsible to" were not among them. If the meaning of "head" in this passage is ambiguous, we are far safer to struggle with the ambiguity and examine all the possibilities than to be misled about what the writer originally said.

2. **I Corinthians 11:10.** This is confessedly difficult. We cannot be sure what "because of the angels" means. The text does not spell out what was the "authority" on the head. "Veil" does not appear anywhere in this chapter but may have been what Paul had in mind. Or it may not have been. Should we second-guess him in the text, or leave the interpretations for the commentaries?

All the translations except King James and RSV add "a sign of" to the text. This probably was what the author had in mind—but he did not say it. Should the translator do so—without indicating that he is adding something?

All the one-man translations—Taylor, Phillips, Bratcher—added man or husband to this passage despite the fact that Paul says nothing about a man or a husband. (The same Greek word *anēr* is used both for man and husband.) The unsophisticated

reader is led to think that Paul wrote about a woman being under a man's or her husband's authority. If that was what Paul had in mind, he did not say it. What Paul wrote is open to several interpretations, but most readers of these paraphrases will never know that; they think they are reading a translation of what Paul said, and are unaware they are only reading commentaries on what individual translators think Paul meant.

3. **Romans 16:1.** This is interesting because *not one* of the translations says what Paul said. Paul said, "I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, a deacon in the church at Cenchrea." There is no such Greek word as deaconess. The text simply says she was a "deacon." The word *diakonos* appears 21 times in the writings of Paul in the New Testament. A literal translation for the word is "servant." Paul, Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphras, and the church leaders in I Timothy 3:8, 12, are all called "deacons." The term is also used of secular leaders in Romans 13:4.

Exactly what the role of "deacons" was in the church of the New Testament is a subject of considerable debate among Bible scholars. Was it technically a church office? If so, at what point in the development of the church did it become one? These are questions for interpreters and church historians to deal with.

The question for translators is: How shall they translate the word *diakonos* when it applies to Phoebe and others such as Paul, Timothy, Apollos and the church leaders in I Timothy 3:8, 12?

Although the King James Version is less chauvinistic than some other versions, this passage is one great exception. Only in reference to Phoebe does the King James translate Paul's word as "servant." In I Timothy 3:8, 12, it is translated "deacon" but in all other places the King James uses the term "minister." Only of Phoebe is Paul's word *diakonos* translated "servant."

The modern translations don't do much better. The Revised Standard Version and Phillips speak

	Literal	King James	RSV	NIV
<b>I Cor. 11:3</b>	Indeed, I want you (plural) to know that the head of every man is the Christ; and head of every woman is the man; and head of Christ is God.	However, I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.	I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.	Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.
<b>I Cor. 11:10</b>	Because of this, a woman ought to have authority upon the head because of the angels.	For this cause ought the woman to have power on (her) head because of the angels.	That is why a woman ought to have a veil <sup>1</sup> on her head because of the angels.  <sup>1</sup> Gr. Authority (the veil being a symbol of this)	For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.
<b>Rom. 16:1</b>	And I commend (or recommend) to you Phoebe our sister, being deacon of the church, the one in Cenchreae.	I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchreae.	I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.	I commend to you our sister, Phoebe, a servant <sup>1</sup> of the church in Cenchreae. <sup>1</sup> or deaconess
<b>I Cor. 14:34</b>	Let the women be silent in the churches. Because [or now] to speak is not allowed to them, but let them subject themselves [or be in subjection] just as also the law says.	Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.	The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says.	Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.

of her as "deaconess" although there is no such word in Greek. The NIV follows King James with "servant" and a footnote saying "deaconess." Good News for Modern Man uses "servant," but in this case cannot be faulted, for it always translates *diakonos* as "servant" or "helper"—never using "deacon" or "minister."

Living Letters does the gravest injustice to Phoebe. It translates *diakonos* as "deacon" in reference to the leaders of the church at Philippi (Phil. 1:1) and of the church leaders in Ephesus (I Tim. 3:8, 12). In reference to Timothy, it translates *diakonos* as "pastor" (I Tim. 4:6). But of Phoebe in Romans 16:1, Living Letters says, "a dear Christian woman from the town of Cenchrea." Reading this, no one would ever guess that Paul called her a "deacon [or servant] of the church at Cenchrea." Although in many passages Living Letters adds material in the effort to clarify the text, in this passage it omits an important idea.

4. **I Corinthians 14:34.** This is familiar to most people. It is Paul's famous command for women to be silent in the church, and here, too, preconceived ideas of the translators sometimes come to the foreground, adding to and interpreting Paul's actual statements.

This is another of Paul's ambiguous statements. He says here that women should "be silent in churches because to speak is not allowed to them, but let them subject themselves [or be in subjection] just as the law says." Yet three chapters earlier in the same book (I Cor. 11) Paul gave instructions about how women were to pray and prophesy in public gatherings.

Careful Bible scholars know that there is no Old Testament law that says women are not permitted to speak in religious gatherings or that they should be subordinate. Some have pointed to Genesis 3:16 as the law of subordination: "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." However, this was the curse that came as the result of sin, and it is certainly questionable to treat

the curse (the effects of sin) as a "law" to intensify these effects and make them worse!

What law was Paul referring to? He may have been speaking of some written or unwritten Roman law, or of civil Greek law about women not speaking in public, or some accepted but unwritten regulation. He may have been thinking about rabbinical teachings that interpreted the Old Testament, or even about the regulations that he himself is giving about activities in the Corinthian church. No one knows for sure what Paul had in mind. But should translators "clear it up" by overlaying it with their own interpretations?

The RSV handles this passage quite literally. The King James gives a fairly literal translation except that "let them subject themselves" is changed to the stronger "they are commanded to be under obedience." The Greek text says nothing about commands or obedience.

The NIV, Phillips, and Good News have added their own interpretations to "the law" by capitalizing it—indicating that it speaks of the Old Testament law. The text does not say that. Good News adds more of the translator's interpretation by saying, "they must not be in charge." The text says nothing like that.

The worst additions are made by Living Letters, which says, "they are not to take part in the discussion, for they are subordinate to men as the Scriptures also declare." But the text says nothing about men. The translator is assuming that Paul meant men. Paul could mean subordinating themselves to a regulation against women speaking in public. Living Letters also assumes "the law" meant the Scriptures. It may; it may not. Where the text permits more than one interpretation, the translator should stay with the text.

**I**T IS OBVIOUS that Christians who are serious about studying the Bible on any subject need to be aware of how easy it is for translators to

**If we really believe in the absolute authority of the Word of God, we dare not add to or subtract from what the text says.**

New English	Living Letters	Phillips	Good News for Modern Man
But I wish you to understand that while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man, as Christ's Head is God.	But there is one matter I want to remind you about; that a wife is responsible to her husband, her husband is responsible to Christ, and Christ is responsible to God.	But I want you know that Christ is the head of every individual man, just as a man is the "head" of the woman and God is the head of Christ.	But I want you to understand that Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ.
Therefore it is a woman's duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels.	So a woman should wear a covering on her head as a sign that she is under man's authority, <sup>1</sup> a fact for all the angels to notice and rejoice in. implied	For this reason a woman ought to bear on her head an outward sign of man's authority for all the angels to see.	On account of the angels, then, a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under her husband's authority.
I commend to you Phoebe, a fellow-Christian who holds office in the congregation at Cenchreae.	Phoebe, a dear Christian woman from the town of Cenchreae will be coming to see you soon. She has worked hard in the church there.	I want this letter to introduce to you Phoebe, our sister a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.	I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who serves the church at Cenchreae.
Women should not address the meetings. They have no licence to speak, but should keep their place as the law directs.	Women should be silent during the church meetings. They are not to take part in the discussion, for they are subordinate to men as the Scriptures also declare.	Let women be silent in church; they are not to be allowed to speak. They must submit to this regulation, as the Law itself instructs.	The women should keep quiet in church meetings. They are not allowed to speak; as the Jewish Law says, they must not be in charge.

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given in this article, there are no serious questions about the original texts.

We all agree that a good translation cannot be word for word. There must be an easy flow of language not possible in word-for-word translations. But a good translator tries to see what the original writer was saying and then express that as accurately as possible in the idiomatic language of the reader. It is at this point that the translator's preconceived ideas sometimes get in the way.

What can the Bible student who does not know Greek or Hebrew do to be sure he is not getting a translator's additions or omissions rather than the Holy Spirit's message?

The answers are not easy, but there are some incorporate their own ideas into their translations. This tendency has certainly confused the issues regarding women and we probably will find, as other issues arise, that other confusions exist.

Certainly we should consider our modern plethora of Bible translations a blessing. Many of them are remarkably easy to read and have a refreshing sense of vitality. But all translations are human products, produced by people who, like all of us, have unconscious sets of blinders. Like all of us, translators work from their own outlooks, their own prejudices. We have all been bent and influenced by the many forces of the society in which we live and by the traditions of the churches of which we are a part. This is true of every translator, every commentator, every preacher, every lay reader and every student of the Bible. Usually we are not even vaguely aware of our blind spots—and we all have many.

But only the original words of the Holy Scriptures can claim unique inspiration. This is why many scholars spend their lives poring over old manuscripts, comparing one with another in the effort to come as close as possible to what was the original text of the writings. It is generally acknowledged that the text is well established in most of the New Testament. Among the examples

precautions the reader can take. (1) Be aware of the possibility of the translation's unconscious biases in the words chosen. (2) If an idea appears in a one-man translation (especially paraphrases such as Living Letters, Good News for Modern Man, or Phillips's Modern English) that does not appear in most committee translations (KJV, RSV, NEB, NIV) it is a tip that the idea may represent the interpretation of the translator. This is one reason we should read more than one translation, especially if we are trying to study any subject in depth. (3) Never read paraphrases by themselves. Always compare them with at least one committee translation such as KJV, RSV, NIV, NEB.

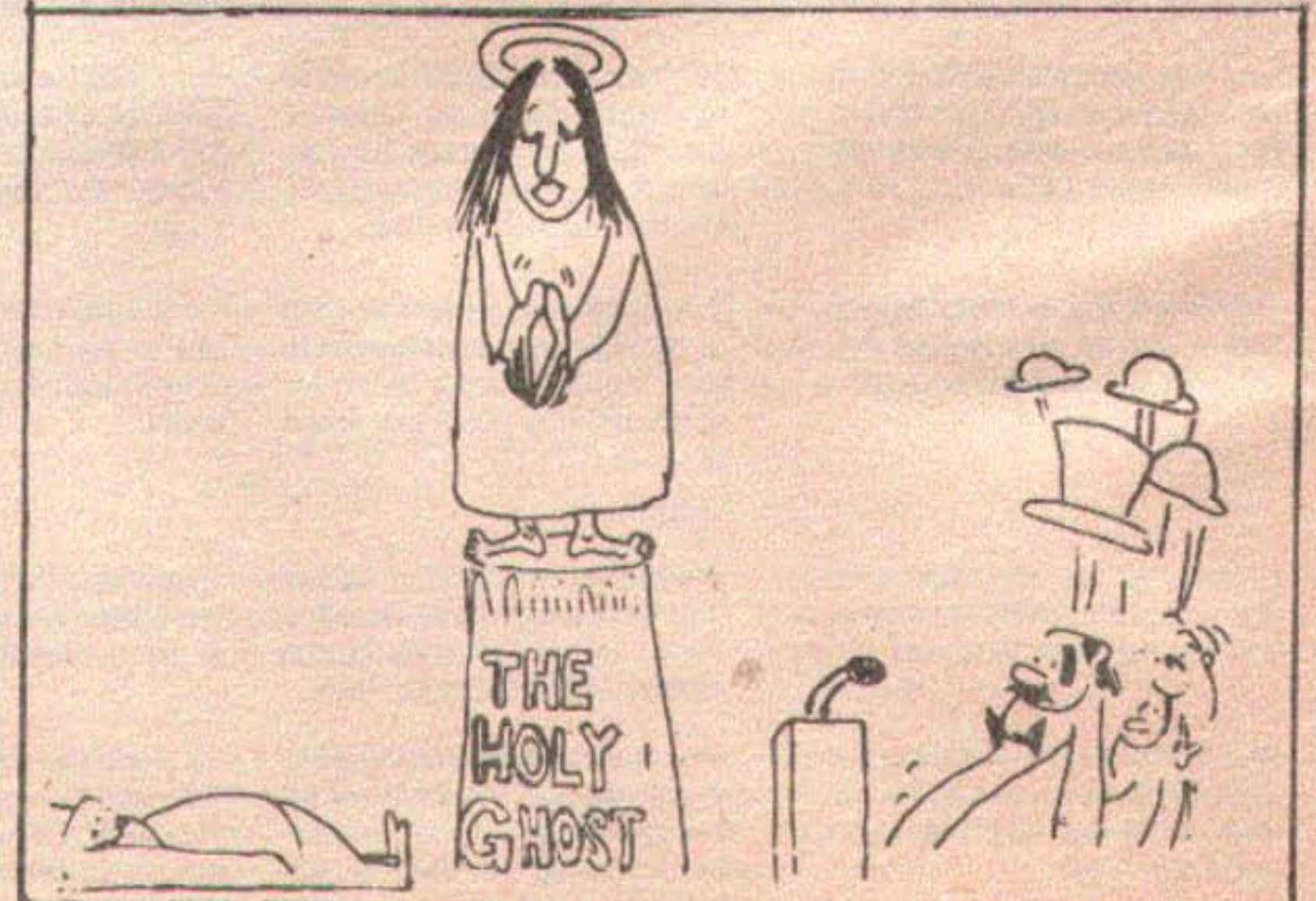
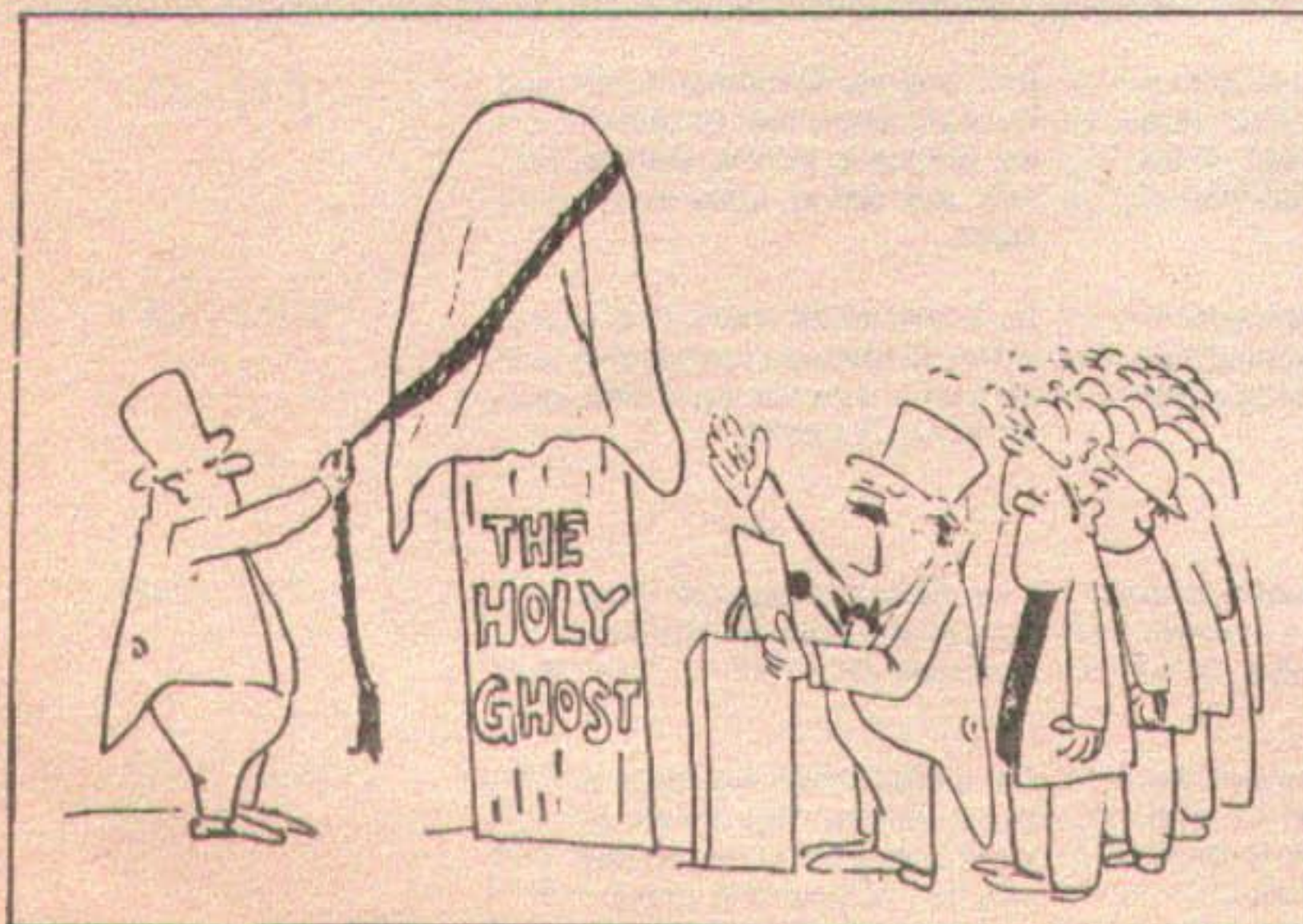
A Greek interlinear translation may help readers who know no Greek to evaluate whether their translation stays close to the actual text.

In short the Bible is uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit—but the translators are not. Let the reader beware! □

**EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE**

The Mickelsens have made no attempt to be exhaustive in pointing out examples of chauvinistic translations. The King James Version has twisted many a passage to save the male ego—or its chauvinistic theology.

The King James Version, for example, reverses the Greek order to place Aquilla before Priscilla in deference to the husband—in spite of the fact that in the biblical text, Priscilla is clearly the leader (Acts 18:26). In 1 Timothy 2:11, the King James Version translates *hēsychia* "Let the woman learn in silence," but when referring to men (II Thess. 3:16), it renders the same word, "with quietness they work and eat." Psalm 68:11 reads, "great was the company of those that publish the word of the Lord" in spite of the fact that the Hebrew is explicitly feminine: "great was the company of those women who publish the word of the Lord." On the other hand, the KJV correctly notes the feminine Junia in Romans 16:7 in contrast with most contemporary translations that with little or no justification transform *mirabile dictu*, the woman Junia, into the man Junias to avoid the unthinkable—a woman among the apostles!







# what the people are saying



Dear Mrs. Roden,

An article from the newspaper about your church's belief that the Holy Spirit is a woman sparked a discussion in the adult Sunday School Class I attend last Sunday. Since none of us had considered the question before our discussion was quite general. The article mentioned that you have both Scriptural and historical evidence for your belief but did not elaborate. This is to request that evidence. One objection that was raised which I hope you will address specifically is this: Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, but how does this make sense if the Holy Spirit is a woman?

**Kathleen S. McGhehey**  
Topeka, Kansas

Lois Roden,

I read in a newspaper about you preaching that the Holy Trinity is the Father, Mother and Son. I am shocked that you do blasphemy against the Lord. . . . You and your followers are not Christians but you all are followers of satan. So that makes you a cult. . . . You say that your symbol will replace the Christian cross and Jewish Star of David. How dare you say all these things which is against God! My family and I will pray for you and your followers every day till Jesus comes! You are all doomed to eternal hell! Your picture in the newspaper looks like you are possessed of a demon. It's terrible to see this. . . . May God have mercy on you all. My husband and I are born-again Christians.

**Mabel Wagner**  
Sonora, California

Mrs. Lois Roden,

Would you please send me some literature in regards to your theory of the Holy Ghost. I am very interested. Also any Bible reference that you may be aware of relating to your theory.

**Martin Einhorn**  
Westbrook, Connecticut

Dear Mrs. Roden,

There was an article in the Richmond Virginia Newsleader on your ministry. Being a self taught Bible student for about 6 years your theory made a lot of sense. It brought to mind a lot of Scripture which does indeed back your

theory. I am very much interested in finding out more information. Would you please send me some of your literature.

**Madeline Baker**  
Louisa, Virginia

Dear Mrs. Roden:

I would like to receive your newspaper the SHEKINAH on a regular basis. I have read Vol. 1, No. 1 with much interest. I am in favor of ordaining women into the priesthood. I am enclosing an article showing that the early Church had women as priests. Mrs. E. G. White, beloved Seventh-day Adventist leader would have been greatly limited if she had allowed herself to be dictated to by the male membership of her day. Keep up your good work. I am praying for you.

**Bishop Terril D. Littrell, D.D.**  
Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knight of Grace  
Cleveland, Tennessee

SHEKINAH,

Upon reading a back issue of your magazine, I am most interested in subscribing to it. Please put my name on your mailing list and send along any information about subscription fees, etc. Thank you for your inspiration and accessibility.

**Diana Nance**  
Austin, Texas

Dear Sir,

Man was made after God and woman was made after man. The Holy Bible tells that a woman should keep her mouth closed and if she wants to know anything she should ask her husband. SHEKINAH is of the Devil, so my Bible tells me. . . . Please do not send me any more of this junk mail. I felt the Devil near when I saw this paper. All I can say is God help you. Answer refused.

**Orville D. Calkins**  
Long Beach, California

Dear Sirs,

Thank you very much for the copy of SHEKINAH which you sent to the Texas Collection of Baylor University. We would appreciate very much receiving this publication as it comes out. This type of material will be of great value to

future generations of researchers to throw light on the age in which we are now living. . . . Thank you very much.

**Virginia Ming**  
Head of Public Services  
Baylor University  
Waco, Texas

To Lois Roden:

I read in the paper that you believe the Holy Spirit is a woman. I do too, because God revealed it to me when I was in trouble. I think it only makes sense because when you consider the birth of Jesus the Bible says the Holy Spirit shadowed Mary. Now I think overshadow means to look after and help and who would be in a better position to help a woman than another woman. Besides when we consider history, who but the woman is the comforter of the family, of the club, of the nation? I would like to receive your Bible references on this (Holy Spirit is feminine) by return mail as I would like to build my faith on this subject. Sincerely yours. Your brother in Christ.

**Walter J. Johnson**  
St. Petersburg, Florida

Dear Mrs. Roden:

We have received, unsolicited, a copy of the newsletter SHEKINAH. I am not sure how you obtained our corporation's name to be put on your mailing list, but I would request that our name be removed from your mailing list. Coincidentally, I am personally completing masters degree level work at. . . . Seminary in. . . . Ohio. This seminary has quite a number of women who are pursuing masters degrees, either M.A. or Master of Divinity. However, none of them whom I have talked with, while we may disagree about the exact place that a female may have in terms of ordination to the pastorate (etc.). . . . have gone to such extraordinary lengths which you and your paper have in which you say that the Trinity is composed of the Father, the Mother and the Son or that the Holy Spirit is of the feminine gender. I will not attempt to give all of the arguments as to why, linguistically speaking (based on my three years of

## oshawa this weekend LETTER

Saturday November 28, 1980

### 'Satanic decoy'

To the editor:

I read with keen interest the article regarding the Davidians saying the Holy Spirit is female (Oshawa This Weekend, Nov. 22) and I hope you will grant me the same privilege to defend the masculinity of the Holy Spirit.

To begin with, the Davidians did not quote one Bible text in support of their belief. Is this due to lack of knowledge?

I personally view this as a cheap crack at the foundation of the Christian faith and cheaper still, they want to cast a dull slur on the name Seventh-Day Adventist. I know for sure this is not an Adventist doctrine.

This idea has been in circulation for many centuries but there is an explanation.

In the Aramaic and Hebrew languages, the word for spirit or ghost is feminine gender, thus many writers of ancient times project the feminine principle. In the book *The Gospel According to the Hebrews* (cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma IV*, 308 Hervieux, *The New Testament Apocrypha* p. 132, *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* Tabor) The commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John suggests *Feminine*.

There is also a problem with the word 'shekinah' which is feminine in Hebrew. Thus certain non-Biblical writers project the 'shekinah' as the female manifestation of God in man.

In the New Testament sense, the 'shekinah' is the glory emanating from God. Major trends in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic tradition report that the 'shekinah' was sent into exile on Adam's fall and the purpose of the Torah is to lead the 'shekinah' back to God.

In Talmud Shabbath 55B, Bereshitch Rabba 98, 4, the goddess Pertunda is presider over the marriage couch.

As a Christian, I cannot go along with these teachings since they go against the teachings of Christ and his disciples.

I base my belief on the following Bible texts:

The Apostle John clearly stated that it was the spirit of Christ to whom God spoke at creation (Jn. 1:1-3). "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

The same Holy Spirit travelled with the children of Israel through the wilderness "And did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10-4).

The same Holy Spirit was in the prophets "Of which salvation the prophets have

## oshawa this week COLUMN

OSHAWA THIS WEEK, Wednesday December 3, 1980

### Letters to the editor are provocative

It is ironic that at the height of the Christmas season - which, after all, peaks by Dec. 18 as far as the merchandisers are concerned; by then, it's all over but the pouting - that this newspaper stumbled into a small-scale religious controversy.

Far be it from this corner to decry the crass commercial exploitation of the arbitrarily-set anniversary of what is, to Christians, the second-most important event in mankind's history. It's a theme that's been done to death, without the fevered hucksterism showing the slightest ill health.

(It's also unwise to bite the hand which feeds. Without revenue, you can't pay salaries, and without advertising, you don't have a newspaper.

(But the more ads there are, the more pages there are for us to fill. Thanks to the Yuletide fever, September to December is a steady climb in volume at OTW. And we don't have the handy asset of wirecopy to fill those pages - it all has to be done from scratch. Over the next few weeks we'll be scratching pretty hard.

(But I digress. I make the point only to underline the fact that Christmas has become to me a blessed event largely inasmuch as it means the end of this long haul.)

Christmas must, however, have managed to retain its original significance for many Oshawans, judging from the response these last two weeks to an article by reporter Terry Steele. It concerned a small off-shoot of the Seventh-Day Adventists called the Branch Davidians, who believe the Holy Spirit to be female.

That article, floating innocuously in the

inquired and searched diligently, the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," (1 Pet. 1 10-11).

Christ referred to his in-dwelling spirit as the "Father". "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but of the Father that dwelleth in Me" (Jn. 14:10).

Christ always referred to the Holy Spirit as "He" or "Him" and Christ should know for the Holy Spirit was in Him. "Even the spirit of truth Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (Jn. 14:17).

In His departing words of comfort, Jesus



bruce  
annan

usually placid backwaters of the Church Page, has generated as much mail from readers as did the entire municipal election campaign. To say that mail has also been more passionate and better-informed might be to belabor the point.

It's been a cliché that politics, religion and sex are the three topics most likely to create an argument. Newspapers can generally only count on the last one to create any excitement.

The gender of a member of the Holy Trinity, however, is a somewhat arcane point. Chances are it has never crossed the minds of nine of any given 10 Santa Claus Parade-watchers. But the reaction to the Branch Davidians proves there are many readers who've never subconsciously let Christmas become Xmas.

And this illustration of the continuing survival of religious beliefs is not isolated to the female-Spirit brouhaha.

said "Howbeit when He the spirit of truth is come He will guide you into all truth for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come" (Jn. 16-13).

The movement (Branch Davidian) might not be a feminist ploy but it surely is a Satanic decoy.

The Christian ship is heading into rough seas and many so-called Christians will jump ship. But I know for sure that the Holy Spirit, the Number One Captain of the universe, will take the ship safely into port.

Philip Chang,  
Oshawa

## Letters

Greek in the New Testament as well as classical), except to say that I am fully convinced that your approach is not only wrong but borders on blasphemy. I read the article entitled, "Women's Right to Preach the Gospel" by Melody and Keith Green. I would be willing to grant the interpretation made by them with respect to the distinction between a woman having authority to preach as opposed to a woman also being the pastor of a church (i.e., so long as the woman who would occasionally preach is ultimately under the headship of an educationally qualified male. . .). However, I cannot go along at all with redefining the Trinity, especially since God is spirit and the use of the masculine gender for Father and Son in Greek and the use of the neuter gender in New Testament Greek with respect to the Holy Spirit are terms which are not, in their context, indicative of one's sexual equipment or indicative of some alleged weakness of either mentality or disposition that many men have in a bigoted fashion ascribed to women in general. . .

**Marshall J. Pierson III**  
Akron, Ohio

Re: SHEKINAH

Please add our Library to your mailing list. Thank you sincerely,

**Inelda Christianson**  
Periodical Department Supervisor  
Loma Linda University  
Loma Linda, California

Dear Mrs. Roden:

I have been receiving your brochures for several years regularly, but I have not responded but once. I feel that it is time for you to hear from me now. I have vital information of which you may, or may not be interested in. In your April, 1980 brochure, "By His Spirit," it states that you had a fireball of direct revelation that the Holy Spirit is our Heavenly Mother. According to information that I have in my possession, which has taken me twelve years to collect, it was indeed a revelation from our Divine Mother (Binah), the Holy Spirit Herself. Being a woman myself, I am delighted that you are introducing the world to their Mother. For thousands of years we have lived in a Motherless home; or so the majority thought. You have taken a cross-section of the writings of scholars both ancient and modern, from differ-

ent parts of the world, and gathered and compiled for those who are interested to study. I also have followed this path. I have searched for many years, in many writings, including WISDOM of the ages from the "beginning" to the "end;" better known as "AGELESS WISDOM." I have been schooled in ageless wisdom for the last twelve years, and I have fourteen diplomas (certificates). I am now in the middle of the fifteenth grade (course), and I have only scratched the surface of this hidden wisdom. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Cor. 2:7. These secrets will not be hidden forever. See Mark 4:21,22.

(Name Withheld By Request)  
Fairview, Missouri

Greetings, In Jesus' Name.

First let me state that I have ministered for many years that The Holy Spirit was the female portion of God. God being the tri-une Father, Mother, & Son. Second, I first heard this taught by. . .in Waco, Texas, over 25 years ago. . .we learned much from them, and my wife and I, together as one, just as God and The Holy Spirit are together as one, neither being anything without the other, have never ceased to minister THIS Gospel, and we have never been very far from the center of what God is doing today. . .A man is nothing without his wife, and the wife is nothing without her husband, because ONLY together are they MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, male and female. And God is nothing without the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit anything without God. . .God bless you all, IN Jesus' name.

**R. D. Smallridge**  
Brownsville, Kentucky

Dear Editor:

I liked your article, especially the idea that the Truth existed first and was later perverted instead of the idea that the people of God got these perverted ideas from pre-existing heathen customs and practices and wove them into their culture. . .I might make a suggestion: Whenever the feminine aspect of the Godhead is being discussed, it seems to me it should always be in connection with Matthew 17:11—"He shall restore all things" and that includes the restoration of the family and our Eden Home. That it is not just the idea of a feminine aspect of the Godhead, but means a

competed Family in Heaven as well as a type of one on earth. . .Also it agrees with the book I have, printed in 1923, that says the message of the Mighty Angel of Revelation 18:1 is about the feminine aspect of the Godhead. He also brings out the idea of the Father and Mother principles being made manifest in the Son, the medium through which the life force is poured forth to us—the sign of the Son of man in the heavens—the one in which the Son of man is pouring forth from a silver urn the Living Waters—Mother Love—upon mankind. O if only every one could see what a beautiful Truth this is!

**Alice Rhoads**  
Spokane, Washington

Dear Mrs. Roden,

I saw the article on you in which you state the Holy Spirit is a woman. I would love to have some of your literature on this. I am enclosing a couple of dollars. I will be happy to send more if you will tell me what I owe. I joined the 7th Day Adventist Church about 2½ years ago, but I haven't attended church for about 3½ months. One of the reasons is that after the 4th (or 5th or 6th) lecture on rules and regulations for women (none for the men) I got a little discouraged. Anything you can do to convince me the Holy Spirit is a woman (the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as he) will make me feel 100% better. My church makes me feel like an object, a second class citizen rather than a person of worth, a human being. God bless you.

**Margaret Christian**  
Topeka, Kansas

Dear Lois,

I was delighted to receive your letter of December 29th and to hear of your plans for including "In Whose Image" in your magazine. That would please me very much. So much time and work went into that TV program, and although it ran in Southern California several times, I had always hoped for a wider distribution. Your publishing of the script would certainly help accomplish that! . . .I am also happy to hear of the growth of the movement for greater awareness of the feminine aspect of the Godhead. Keep up the good work!

**Beth Mackenzie, Producer**  
KNBC Public Affairs  
Burbank, California

*Continued on next page*

## Letters

Dear Mrs. Roden,  
Someone has just given me the article in the ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL about "The Holy Spirit a Woman?" I am praying, asking the Lord for this letter to reach you even though there was no address in the paper. It has been almost ten years now that the revelation of the third Person being a woman in the Trinity of God has been made known to me. I am preparing to teach and preach full time come springtime and I will be very thankful if you will send me the literature you have on your teachings. The outreach will be evangelistic, reaching out to people of all denominations. Already, I am wanting to meet you, and to say thank you for perseverance in teaching the truth.

Barbara Towner  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Friends,  
We are attempting to make a complete collection of all publications that relate to Seventh-day Adventists, so naturally we would be interested in adding publications from your group to our collection. If you currently have things that you would be willing to share with us, either pamphlets, or back issues of a journal that your group issues, I would really appreciate getting copies. If you would be willing to add our Heritage Room to your mailing list to receive things you may print in the future, we would be most grateful. Thank you.  
Very sincerely,

James R. Nix, Chairman  
Department of Archives  
University Library  
Loma Linda University  
Loma Linda, California

Dear Mrs. Roden,  
I was most interested in reading of your spiritual experience concerning the presence of the Feminine as part of the Godhead. I feel you have found a treasure, and I would like very much to learn more of what was revealed to you. I would be grateful for anything you might send me. My best wishes for your success and life.

Ronald B. Kledzik, M.D.  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Dear Editor,  
Thank you for providing me with Vol. 1, No. 1 of SHEKINAH. I would appreciate your sending me a copy of the following issues of your publication for our files. Thank you. Sincerely yours,

H. J. Flanders, Jr., Chairman  
Department of Religion  
Baylor University  
Waco, Texas

Sirs,  
I was given a most interesting little newspaper, Vol. 1, No. 1, Dec. 1980, of SHEKINAH, to read, and return. Can

you please send me a copy of this pamphlet. . . I am very much interested in this subject. Perhaps you will tell me how to subscribe. Thank you.

Anna B. Fletcher  
Webster, Florida

Dear Friends,  
Will you kindly send me a copy of your paper, SHEKINAH, and put me on your mailing list? Thank you!

James Whitehurst  
Department of Religion  
Illinois Wesleyan University  
Bloomington, Illinois

Daily Mail, Wednesday, December 3, 1980

# An answer to the feminist's prayer..?

NEW YORK, TUESDAY

**THE jargon is numbing, and very American: a style of language which expresses inclusiveness with regard to human beings and which attempts to expand the range of images beyond the masculine.**

What it means is that America's religious leaders are bowing to constant and growing feminist pressure, by experimenting with unisex church services and prayer.

It's an ecumenical drive being generated by both Roman Catholic bishops and the NCC — National Council of Churches. The movement springs from something which many men seldom suspected and others — irked at sexual equality invading every level of life, occasionally in ludicrously niggling ways — still refuse to credit.

## Shocked

The language of prayer and the Bible tests and even erodes some women's faith, by implicitly shutting them out.

One example occurs at one of the most dramatic moments of Communion, when the priest speaks of divine blood shed, 'for you and all men so that sins may be forgiven.'

Archbishop Rembert Weakland, chairman of the Bishops' Liturgical Committee, claims, 'after hearing that, some female Communicants have a vivid sense of being excluded. It's a strong phrase. At the moment when they should be most devotional, they can be shocked and distracted.'

The new phrase evolved in America

and still to gain Vatican sanction, is 'Shed for you and all.'

As for the National Council of Churches, it has just agreed to create a new lectionary—those parts of the Bible read in services—that will 'eliminate sexist references' in the majority of Protestant churches. This new, neutral version will not be ready until 1983, and churchmen try to play down the degree of prose surgery involved. 'It is,' says the committee doing the work, 'possible to minimise the use of 'He' for God and accept a style where one avoids pronouns.'

Of course, shockwaves still echo from non-Latin services for Roman Catholics, and the controversial, workaday modern renderings in the New English Bible. Despite the clamour for unisex worship, the American Council of Churches has refused to tinker with the entire Bible, making it 'non-sexist'.

So unisex alterations, which one preacher has leered at with 'from Miss to Ms. and on to mistakes', affects only those sections used at public services.

All the same, the self-consciously balanced approach is a major shift. Surprisingly, perhaps, hundreds of American clergymen, along with some Rabbis, aren't happy . . . because the new wave will take years to break.

In New York, a minister says bluntly: 'This isn't a trendy revolution—just the righting of a wrong. It is being done timidly, one might say grudgingly, and very late in the day. Christian and Jewish women, not just extreme feminists but thinking, caring people, are well aware of the masculine bias in worship, and it hurts them.'

SHAUN USHER

# THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 8

**WISDOM** reacheth from one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things.

2 I loved her, and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty.

3 In that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility: yea, the Lord of all things himself loved her.

4 For she is privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of God, and a lover of his works.

5 If riches be a possession to be desired in this life; what is richer than wisdom, that worketh all things?

6 And if prudence work; who of all that are is a more cunning workman than she?

7 And if a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues: for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude: which are such things, as men can have nothing more profitable in their life.

8 If a man desire much experience, she knoweth things of old, and conjectureth aright what is to come: she knoweth the subtilties of speeches, and can expound dark sentences: she foreseeeth signs and wonders, and the events of seasons and times.

9 Therefore I purposed to take her to me to live with me, knowing that she would be a counsellor of good things, and a comfort in cares and grief.

10 For her sake I shall have estimation among the multitude, and

nonour with the elders, though I be young.

11 I shall be found of a quick conceit in judgment, and shall be admired in the sight of great men.

12 When I hold my tongue, they shall bide my leisure, and when I speak, they shall give good ear unto me: if I talk much, they shall lay their hands upon their mouth.

13 Moreover by the means of her I shall obtain immortality, and leave behind me an everlasting memorial to them that come after me.

14 I shall set the people in order, and the nations shall be subject unto me.

15 Horrible tyrants shall be afraid, when they do but hear of me; I shall be found good among the multitude, and valiant in war.

16 After I am come into mine house, I will repose myself with her: for her conversation hath no bitterness; and to live with her hath no sorrow, but mirth and joy.

17 Now when I considered these things in myself, and pondered them in my heart, how that to be allied unto wisdom is immortality;

18 And great pleasure it is to have her friendship; and in the works of her hands are infinite riches; and in the exercise of conference with her, prudence; and in talking with her, a good report; I went about seeking how to take her to me.

19 For I was a witty child, and had a good spirit.

20 Yea rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled.

21 Nevertheless, when I perceived that I could not otherwise obtain

her, except God gave her me; and that was a point of wisdom also to know whose gift she was; I prayed unto the Lord, and besought him, and with my whole heart I said,

## CHAPTER 9

**O** GOD of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word,

2 And ordained man through thy wisdom, that he should have dominion over the creatures which thou hast made,

3 And order the world according to equity and righteousness, and execute judgment with an upright heart:

4 Give me wisdom, that sitteth by thy throne; and reject me not from among thy children:

5 For I thy servant and son of thine handmaid am a feeble person, and of a short time, and too young for the understanding of judgment and laws.

6 For though a man be never so perfect among the children of men, yet if thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded.

7 Thou hast chosen me to be a king of thy people, and a judge of thy sons and daughters:

8 Thou hast commanded me to build a temple upon thy holy mount, and an altar in the city wherein thou dwellest, a resemblance of the holy tabernacle, which thou hast prepared from the beginning.

9 And wisdom was with thee: which knoweth thy works, and was present when thou madest the

world, and knew what was acceptable in thy sight, and right in thy commandments.

10 O send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee.

11 For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead me soberly in my doings, and preserve me in her power.

12 So shall my works be acceptable, and then shall I judge thy people righteously, and be worthy to sit in my father's seat.

13 For what man is he that can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of the Lord is?

14 For the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain.

15 For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.

16 And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out?

17 And thy counsel who hath known, except thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above?

18 For so the ways of them which lived on the earth were reformed, and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto thee, and were saved through wisdom.

*Continued on next page*

## Women Seminarians Increase

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The number of women in seminaries in the United States and Canada has tripled since 1972, with females representing one out every five seminary students in 1979, the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* said today.

The 1980 edition of the *Yearbook*, published by Abingdon Press for the National Council of Churches, said there were 10,208 women in theological schools in 1979 — 21.1 percent of total enrollment.

At the same time, the *Yearbook* also reported that general membership trends in American churches remained relatively steady in 1978, the last year for which statistics are available.

Total church membership increased 0.7 percent to 133,748,776 — close enough to the 0.8 percent increase in the U.S. population to render the difference insignificant, the *Yearbook* said.

**MOST MAINLINE PROTESTANT** denominations registered losses of less than 1 percent, suggesting the 15-year-long membership slide of the nation's more liberal denominations may be bottoming out.

The *Yearbook*, in a study on denominational switching written by C. Kirk Hadaway of the Southern Baptist

Convention's Home Mission Board, said that 40 percent of American Protestants indicate a different denominational preference than they had growing up.

By and large, conservative churches benefit the most from switching, Hadaway said. While such denominations suffer "serious attrition of those who were raised in the sects," they more than make up the losses through aggressive evangelization efforts.

But liberal denominations such as the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ, which gain many new members through switching, appear to lose even more who leave religion entirely, Hadaway said.

"SINCE THIS SWITCHING occurs predominantly among younger respondents, it raises the possibility that the more liberal bodies are losing the very members that would normally be expected to produce the next generation of liberal Protestants," Hadaway said.

The *Yearbook* also reported increases in per capita giving by church members outpaced the 1978 inflation rate of 9 percent.

A typical member of the 42 denominations providing statistics in 1978 gave \$176.37, compared to \$159.33 for the 45 denominations reporting in 1977, the *Yearbook* said.

## According To Ancient Mosaic Evidence

# Early Christian Churches Had Female Priests

By GEORGE W. CORNELL

NEW YORK (AP)—A woman archaeologist who teaches at a Roman Catholic college says a collection of photographs she has taken of ancient mosaics, frescoes and inscriptions show there were female priests and bishops in the early Christian church.

Dorothy Irvin of the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minn., says the evidence could undercut what she calls the "respectable" Vatican argument against women's ordination — that it goes against age-old church tradition.

"Although it is not perfectly clear what constituted ordination — at different times — and places in the early centuries of the church, the archaeological evidence shows women as receiving ordination and exercising ministry on a par with men," she says.

A 1977 Vatican declaration says women cannot be ordained priests because they lack a physical resemblance to Jesus, a man, and also because it would be against the continuous tradition of the church.

The difficulty with the first reason, Professor Irvin says, is "our inability to maintain a straight face and credulity when hearing it," and while the second

reason is "more respectable," it doesn't seem to square with the archaeological materials.

In articles in the National Catholic Reporter, an independent Catholic weekly published in Kansas City, and in the Witness, an independent Episcopal monthly published in Ambler, Pa., she says the authenticity of the materials has never been questioned.

However, she adds that the reason few have heard of the old tombstone and votive inscriptions "is that they are published in scholarly books and journals, hidden in seldom visited basements and libraries," often previously unphotographed.

Among the photographs she reports in her collection.

— A first-century fresco in a Roman catacomb depicting a group of seven women celebrating an Eucharist. Several similar scenes from a later date depict groups of seven men, she says.

— A fourth-century catacomb fresco, also in Rome, showing a woman receiving ordination from a bishop.

— Numerous frescoes of women, as well as men, dressed in liturgical vestments and standing in attitudes of liturgical leadership.

— Tombstone inscriptions of women bishops, for example (hono) rabillis femina episcopa, "an honorable woman bishop."

— Inscriptions from the Roman period on tombstones and for legal-financial purposes in which women bore the title of "archisynages" (ruler of the synagogue) and "presbitera" (feminine of presbyter or pastor) — titles used by Jewish, Jewish-Christian and Christian communities.

— A mosaic, dating probably to the ninth century, showing a female head with the superscription also in mosaic, "Episcopa Theodo(ra)" or "Bishop (feminine form) Theodora."

Professor Irvin, who received her doctorate in Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern archaeology from Tubingen University in West Germany, made many of her photographs as a photographer for Tubingen Biblical Archaeological Institute.

She says that in some other copies of the original materials, including copies on tourist post-cards, the sex of the subjects have been changed, sometimes by a beard being incongruously added to the women's faces.

## THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

### CHAPTER 10

**S**HE preserved the first formed father of the world, that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall,

2 And gave him power to rule all things.

3 But when the unrighteous went away from her in his anger, he perished also in the fury wherewith he murdered his brother.

4 For whose cause the earth being drowned with the flood, wisdom again preserved it, and directed the course of the righteous in a piece of wood of small value.

5 Moreover, the nations in their wicked conspiracy being confounded, she found out the righteous, and preserved him blameless unto God, and kept him strong against his tender compassion toward his son.

6 When the ungodly perished, she delivered the righteous man, who fled from the fire which fell down upon the five cities.

7 Of whose wickedness even to this day the waste land that smoketh is a testimony, and plants bearing fruit that never come to ripeness; and a standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul.

8 For regarding not wisdom, they gat not only this hurt, that they knew not the things which were good; but also left behind them to the world a memorial of their foolishness: so that in the things wherein they offended they could not so much as be hid.

9 But wisdom delivered from pain those that attended upon her.

10 When the righteous fled from his brother's wrath, she guided him in right paths, shewed him the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things, made him rich in his travails, and multiplied the fruit of his labours.

11 In the covetousness of such as oppressed him she stood by him, and made him rich.

12 She defended him from his enemies, and kept him safe from those that lay in wait, and in a sore conflict she gave him the victory; that he might know that godliness is stronger than all.

13 When the righteous was sold, she forsook him not, but delivered him from sin: she went down with him into the pit.

14 And left him not in bonds, till she brought him the sceptre of the kingdom, and power against those that oppressed him: as for them that had accused him, she shewed them to be liars, and gave him perpetual glory.

15 She delivered the righteous people and blameless seed from the nation that oppressed them.

16 She entered into the soul of the servant of the Lord, and withstood dreadful kings in wonders and signs;

17 Rendered to the righteous a reward of their labours, guided

them in a marvellous way, and was unto them for a cover by day, and a light of stars in the night season;

18 Brought them through the Red sea, and led them through much water:

19 But she drowned their enemies, and cast them up out of the bottom of the deep.

20 Therefore the righteous spoiled the ungodly, and praised thy holy name, O Lord, and magnified with one accord thine hand, that fought for them.

21 For wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb, and made the tongues of them that cannot speak eloquent.



# Opposition to Clergy Women Declines

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Although women form the backbone of America's churches, they have begun only recently to be accepted for ordination within the Christian community. But times are changing, pollster George Gallup Jr. says. Even within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church, which has adamantly held out against the ordination of women, there has been a steady if slow decline of hardcore opposition.

-- Thomas Wolfe

The acceptance of women for ordination within the Christian community is a growing reality that even the most conservative elements are finding hard to resist. We have noted the steady decline of hardcore opposition within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church — a decline of 10 percent from 1974 to 1977.

Also, during this time frame, the Episcopal Church voted to ordain women to the office of clergy, a significant step when one considers the cautiousness of the Anglican tradition and the risks to its longtime connections with the Orthodox churches. For many years both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic communities have looked upon the Anglicans as the "bridge church" to world Protestantism, with Roman Catholics especially alert to the role Anglicans played in interpreting the "catholic experience."

**FROM NEW TESTAMENT** times to the present, the role of women has been essential to the growth and expansion of global Christianity. In recent Gallup studies, we see the leadership of women in secular assignments to be on the increase.

In fact, one of the most dramatic trends in public opinion in the Gallup Poll's

41-year history is the phenomenal growth in the percent of Americans who say they would have no objection to voting for a woman for president of the United States.

In 1937, only one person in three (31 percent) would accept the presidential candidacy of a female; today that figure is 73 percent. Another survey result shows that seven in 10 Americans believe the nation would be governed as well, or better, if more women held political office.

It could be argued that women have earned a formal, official role in our churches. In many congregations over the years women have been the backbone of organized religion in America. All of our studies, surveys and polls support this fact: Women are more religious than men, hold their beliefs more firmly, practice their faith more consistently and work more vigorously for the church.

It is not illogical to conclude that if women in any given church were to lose interest or become disheartened and drop out, that particular church would not only lose its vitality but be in real danger of losing its future.

By large majorities, women not only make up the bulk of membership in the churches of America but, by far, attend in the greatest numbers. They have the highest confidence in the institutional church, hold religious beliefs to be "very important" and believe, against other trends and attitudes of our society, that "religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life." If that notion, or belief, continues in North America, it may well be that the women in the Christian church have been largely responsible for its

success.

**IT IS** interesting to note that the two Christian bodies resisting the ordination of women, the Orthodox and the Catholic, have continued to have the highest percentage of women in attendance during an average week of any of the denominations, 58 percent female versus 51 percent male in the Catholic Church, and, in the Orthodox, a staggering 71 percent female to 29 percent male.

The society in which we live is dependent on the volunteer efforts of its members, and we note in our surveys that women are the backbone of volunteer activities.

Statistics reveal that women from educated backgrounds, 30 years and older, living in the South and West, residing in cities of a half million or more, married and who consider themselves to be evangelically inclined, lead the way in charity and social service.

**WHEN THIS INFORMATION** is linked to our surveys, which state that some 40 million adults consider themselves to be evangelical, and since this group is the fastest growing in the United States, we feel confident in expecting a new surge for the Christian community — in growth, in social and civic improvement and in a return to the values of home, marriage and public responsibility.

The future of the church will rise or fall on its success with young people, and a continuing flow of information tells us that the following characteristics are prominent among American youth:

—A strong desire to live a good life and an awareness of the need to grow spiritually;

—Sensitivity to injustice and concern over trends

toward immorality in society;

—Eagerness for change and innovation, true characteristics of youth;

—Interest in a life of service;

—Influence of religious faith in terms of providing guidance, comfort and inspiration as well as providing restraint and self-control in personal conduct.

This forward-looking trend is also seen in the attitudes of young adults toward the ordination of women. While the majority of mainline churches endorse female clergy, the conservative wings of Judaism, Lutheranism and Eastern Orthodoxy remain in opposition.

The largest Christian body to resist this change, as we have noted, is the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI issued a declaration in 1977 denying women ordination to the priesthood — a decree supported by the majority of Catholics in the United States. Fifty-seven percent of the national Catholic population voiced disagreement with the proposal that women be ordained.

The response was nearly reversed, however, when those under 30 were sampled. Fifty-four percent stated they would favor the ordination of women to the office of priesthood. Again, college-educated single people living in the West were strongest in their support of this change.

The youthful Protestant counterparts — those under 30 — were overwhelmingly in favor of women's ordination. Those in the 18-24 age group had the highest percentage in favor — 54 percent — of any group save the Presbyterians, who favored women's ordination by 56 percent.

