

Responsive Reading

O our Mother the Earth,
O our Father the Sky,

*Your children are we, and with tired backs we bring you the gifts
you love.*

Then weave for us a garment of brightness;

*May the warp be the white light of morning;
May the weft be the red light of evening,*

May the fringes be the falling rain,

May the border be the standing rainbow.

Thus weave for us a garment of brightness,

That we may walk fittingly where birds sing,

That we may walk fittingly where grass is green,

*O our Mother the Earth,
O our Father the Sky.*

(From the Tewa Indians of North America)

Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Order of Service
September 19, 1993

Welcome Julia Bonser, President

Song Lady of the Season's Laughter, #51

Joys and Concerns

Chalice Lighting

Children's Story Anne Pryor, R.E. Director

Song Mother Spirit, Father Spirit, #8

The God as Archetype: The Great Goddess and the Supreme Being
- Anne Urbanski

Responsive Reading

O Our Mother the Earth, O Our Father the Sky (Tewa Indian
prayer)

Discussion

Introduction of Guests and Visitors

Announcements

Song Down the Ages We Have Trod, #2
(verses 1, 2, 6 and 7)

A serendipitous article...

Concept of God as male has deep meaning

By William R. Wineke

Wisconsin State Journal

The male concept of God has taken a prolonged bashing by Christian circles pushing "inclusive" language in the church.

But one prominent female theologian disagrees.

"God is never called 'Mother' in the Bible and is never addressed or thought of as a female deity," Elizabeth Achtmeier, adjunct professor of Bible and Homiletics at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., wrote in a recent issue of Christianity Today magazine.

So what? Well, the absence of a female deity was unique in the world in which Judaism and Christianity were formed, Achtmeier said.

Only Judaism, Christianity and Islam lacked female deities in that world. Other religions, including those from Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome, Africa and the North American Indians all used feminine symbols for God, Achtmeier continued.

She asserted that the absence of female deities was more than a matter of male chauvinism in those religions.

In feminine religious symbolism, creation comes from the body of the deity and, therefore, "shares the deity's substance," Achtmeier said. "Deity is in, through and under

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Elizabeth Achtmeier

Union Theological Seminary professor

(all things and, therefore, everything is divine."

The male imagery of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam doesn't reflect on God's sex, Achtmeier argued. "Biblical scholars agree universally that the God of the Bible has no sexuality."

Rather, Achtmeier claimed, the male imagery suggests God is separate from his creation, that creation does not share divinity but is, rather, subject to it.

Achtmeier said she makes no apology for the way the church has traditionally treated women.

"In many respects, women have legitimate cause for concern," she said. "They have suffered discrimination in the church

for centuries. They have been denied respect for their learning and persons. They have been labeled the source of sin in the world.

... Discrimination continues today, with the Bible misused as its instrument.

"Such discrimination is a corruption of and a fundamental denial of the Christian gospel."

But one has to be careful with language, she insisted.

"The feminist claim is that all language about God is analogical and metaphorical and that, therefore, it can be changed at will to overcome the church's patriarchalism and foster women's liberation," Achtmeier asserted.

But when one uses language that might suggest the created share divinity with the creator, one moves down a slippery slope toward paganism, she warned. Achtmeier accused some feminists of making just such a mistake.

"The radical feminists, believing themselves to be divine, think that by their own power they can restructure society, restore creation and overcome suffering. But the tortured history of humanity testifies to what human beings do when they think they are a law unto themselves with no responsibility to God," Achtmeier said.

Now, all this may sound like theological

rhetoric, but arguments about religious language are taking on great influence in the church these days.

Hymns that use words like "Lord" tend to be changed. Pastoral prayers refer to "Father/Mother God," and some church rituals have even referred to a character named "Lilith," who supposedly was Adam's first mate but who didn't want to be subject to him.

In religion, anything is fair.

Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of a great teacher. Wiccans pay homage to female deities. People believe what they want to believe.

Achtmeier's point is that words have meaning. If people change the way they refer to God, they also change the way they view God.

Christianity, Islam and Judaism, she suggested, are all based on the idea that God is separate from creation.

"He orders his creation and sustains it; he constantly cares for it; but he never identifies with it. And it is that holiness, that otherness, that transcendence of creation that also distinguishes the biblical accounts of creation from all others," she wrote.

The danger, she warned, is that in making Christianity fit the needs of the modern world, well-meaning Christians may lose those qualities that make it distinctive.

Wisconsin State Journal 9/11/93

W.R. Wineke 9/11/93

8 Mother Spirit, Father Spirit

♩ = 72 Unison

1. Moth-er Spir-it, Fa-ther Spir-it, where are you?
 2. Man-y drops are in the o-cean, deep and wide.
 3. I am emp-ty, time flies from me; what is time?
 4. Moth-er Spir-it, Fa-ther Spir-it, take our hearts.

In the sky song, in the for-est, sounds your cry.
 Sun-light bounc-es off the rip-les to the sky.
 Dreams e-ter-nal, fears in-fer-nal haunt my heart.
 Take our breath and let our voic-es sing our parts.

What to give you, what to call you, what am I?
 What to give you, what to call you, who am I?
 What to give you, what to call you, O, my God?
 Take our hands and let us work to shape our art.

Words: Norbert F. Čápek, 1870-1942,
 tr. by Paul and Anita Munk, © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association,
 English version by Richard Frederick Boeke, 1931-
 Music: Norbert F. Čápek, 1870-1942,
 harmony by David Dawson, 1939-

MATI SVEĀ
 8.3.8.3.8.3.

2 Down the Ages We Have Trod

♩ = 104

1. Down the a-ges we have trod man-y paths in search of God,
 2. Some have seen e-ter-nal good pic-tured best in Par-ent-hood,
 3. There are oth-ers who pro-claim God and Na-ture are the same,

seek-ing ev-er to de-fine the E-ter-nal and Di-vine.
 and a Be-ing throned a-bove rul-ing o-ver us in love.
 and the pres-ent God-head own where Cre-a-tion's laws are known.

- 4. There are eyes which best can see
 God within humanity,
 and God's countenance there trace
 written in the human face.
- 5. Where compassion is most found
 is for some the hallowed ground,
 and these paths they upward plod
 teaching us that love is God.
- 6. Though the truth we can't perceive
 this at least we must believe,
 what we take most earnestly
 is our living Deity.
- 7. Our true God we there shall find
 in what claims our heart and mind,
 and our hidden thoughts enshrine
 that which for us is Divine.

Words: John Andrew Storey, 1935-
 Music: Thomas Benjamin, 1940- , © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association

WOODLAND
 7.7.7.7.

9-19-93

51 Lady of the Seasons' Laughter

$\text{♩} = 88$

1. La - dy
2. Sis - ter
3. Moth - er
4. God - dess

of the sea - sons' laugh - ter, in the sum - mer's warmth be
of the eve - ning star - light, in the fall - ing shad - ows
of the gen - er - a - tions, in whose love all life is
of all times' pro - gres - sion, stand with us when we en -

near, when the win - ter fol - lows af - ter, teach our
stay here a - mong us till the far light of to -
worth ev - er - last - ing cel - e - bra - tions, bring our
gage hands and hearts to end op - pres - sion, writ - ing

spir - its not to fear. Hold us in your stead - y
- mor - row's dawn - ing ray. Hold us in your stead - y
la - bors safe to birth. Hold us in your stead - y
his - tory's fair - er page. Hold us in your stead - y

mer - cy, La - dy of the turn - ing year.
mer - cy, La - dy of the turn - ing day.
mer - cy, La - dy of the turn - ing earth.
mer - cy, La - dy of the turn - ing age.

Last time

Words: Kendyl L. R. Gibbons, 1955- , © 1990 Unitarian Universalist Association
Music: David Hurd, 1950- , © 1983 G.I.A. Publications, Inc.

UNION
8.7.8.7.8.7.