

# WOMB/ARMS:

## THE BIBLICAL GOD'S FEMALE/MALE MARRIAGE -----ELLIOTT #1826

Religions (1) may, in pure form, e.g., Buddhism, not have a deity or deities, (2) may have equal-status male/female deities, (3) may have female-superior deities, (4) may have male-superior deities, (5) may have female deities inclusive of masculine qualities, (6) may have male deities inclusive of feminine qualities, (7) may be monotheistically feminine, the Goddess including masculine qualities, or (8) may be monotheistically masculine, the God including feminine qualities\*... The Bible's God is type #8. This thinksheet explores some implications of this fact but is primarily an explication of it.

1. I applaud as noble, but can't approve as sensible, the current effort to reconstruct our Jewish and Christian #8-type God into an Unknown God (in the sense of being, sometime-somewhere, worshipped) of, say, type #9: a hermaphroditic-androgynous Monotheos who is, as is the Bible's Monotheos, "a jealous God"--in this case, angry at being addressed as only, or mainly, male. Yet two things exist: (1) The liturgical fact that some of us, including me, are comfortable, in prayer, with at least an occasional "Our Father-Mother God," which I use, though I have to reject "Our Mother-Father God" (which would be an underhanded attempt of the Goddess to regain the upper hand); and (2) The emotional fact that this jealous anger exists, at some level of intensity, in all feminist theology I've ever read. I've worked with a number of counselees angry at having been born female; helping them includes helping them to become happy at, or at least resigned to, having been born female. Likewise, anger at the fact that the biblical God was "born" and "is" male is dysfunctional to authentic feminism and the healthyminded practice of Judaism and of Christianity. As for any hope of theological revisionism toward #9, it's pathetic--even nuttier than a woman trying to change her husband.

2. "Sophisticated genericism" is my phrase for a goal that is faithful both to biblical religion and to feminism. Grammatically, "he" generic is said to "embrace" "she." But when the 3rd pers.s. is indefinite, I prefer (with Shakespeare et al) to go pl., viz., "they." In fact, I consider it inexcusable to prefer the correct number (s.) to verbal behavior unnecessarily tilted toward the male half of the human world. (But I always say "he," rather than the coldimpersonal "it," when a critter is sex-unknown-to-me, say, a squirrel.) Augustine, Buber, et al say we should address God more in the 2nd person (i.e., in prayer and worship), where in Eng. sex does not exist, than in the 3rd. I agree, and also agree with those worthies in using "He" (instead of "God...God...God") in the 3rd person. Now comes the tough part: As we feminists are struggling toward an English that is as nonsexist as it can be without becoming bad English, it's hard to use/think/feel God as "He"--but to manage to do so is what I mean by "sophisticated genericism." What can help here?

3. Well, for one thing, more knowledge of "How We Got Our God" (parallel with books on "How We Got Our Bible"). What other numbers did we run through before we settled down on #8, so much the heart of Judaism and Christianity that to move to some other number would be either to move to some other religion or to try to create a new one? **WARNING:** Beware of anyone laying out programmatically the "development" of the God-idea. Such a person, with the wind of rhetoric, tries to blow away the fog of prehistory; and "their" (pl. for s.!) Rorschach-like readings of archaeological artifacts say more about their intention than about what was going on "back there." E.g., Leonard Swidler, in his generally excellent BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS

\* #1827 is a specific development of this fact.

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OF WOMAN (Westminster/79), uses argumentum e absentio (which is logically weak and scientifically almost worthless) to "prove" the priority of goddess-worship: the earliest hominoid figurines are female: The pre-8,000BC world of the Indus, Nile, Near East, Mediterranean "appears to have had no male God" (22); then emerged "a clearly subordinate male God" (when animal husbandry made obvious the sex role of the male); then male/female equality in the divine; finally, because of the Indo-European southward flow over this whole area, the dominance of the male God--these I-Es being mountain peoples, (23) "perhaps originally worshipping volcanoes" (so YHWH is "a God of mountains and light," as Moses discovered--whose religion was and is "hostile" to the Goddess--24). (The neatness of this reconstruction reminds me of my furrowed brow, almost a half c. ago, on trying to dope out Pater Schmidt's five-vol. effort to put meat on the bones of his notion of original monotheism: Die Ursprung des Gottesidee.) It hurts when someone who's "bought the company," so convinced of this prehistoric-historic fabrication as to believe it fact, treats me as an ignoramus when I've treated it as theoretical. One of the roots of strident feminism is the orthodox dogma of a panmatriarchal human past, which men violated to create "history" (as Schmidt says polytheists violated the original panhuman monotheism). Such a notion backfires horrendously: look what the world was like when the girls were in charge, and now notice that almost everything we value (language, culture, civilization) has developed since the boys took over--so thank God for patriarchy! If that's not bad enough: Doesn't the fact that the boys have controled the girls throughtout history (no matter how it was in prehistory) prove the boys superior in mind as well as muscle? My point is that two can play this game of prehistory. I've never heard a girl say so in public; and everytime a boy has (usually it's been me), he's been tarred and feathered as a "sexist." Speaking truth to power is risky: speaking truth to impotence, to "minorities," risks being called an "antisemite" (if it's in the presence of Jews or pseudo-lovers of Jews), a "racist" (if in the presence of nonwhites), a "sexist" (if in the presence of feminist militants), a "communist" (if in the presence of simon-pure laissez-fairists), a "capitalist" (if in the presence of socialists of any stripe), or a "flagwaver" (if in the presence of antinational globalists). This fear of being named-called helps account for the raging nonsense one hears and, in the media, sees-hears. Throttling honest speech, it threatens to elevate "being nice" to the highest position in the pantheon of public virtues and to denigrate forthright speech as "not nice," a vice. (Timids might elect dogcatcher a "not nice" person, because the timids aren't dogs; but not any other office, because "he might be 'not nice' to me.") Human speech is used to reward/punish as well as to illumine/obscure, and much verbal humor is funny because of being social-context displaced: one feels free to "be honest and open" only with "one's own kind" (sex, race, religion, class, nation). Few Christians will be so in the presence of a Jew (so Groucho wouldn't want to join a club that would let him in); few whites in the presence of a black (so blacks pressured to join white churches only until they could join); few men in the presence of a woman (so the horror of the New Bedford MA multiple rape, the Portuguese culture having first been raped by AngloAmerican law, which permits women to walk into any "men's bar" and to hell with the feelings and lifestyle of its regular customers--a rape that could not be used by the defense in the trials, because this defense would be an offense to the law in the eyes of the law: a nation is thought to have the right to impose its culture on immigrants).