

## MUSINGS OF AN IRREVERENT HERETIC

When I was young, a child, I was timid and shy. My religious heritage was Polish Roman Catholic. I found the church practices and clergy very intimidating. It was easy for me to affiliate with the United Church when I left home to enter the work world.

Now that I am old, I am still timid and socially inept but I do enjoy being a heretic—which means I am usually thought to be on the wrong side of issues. But there are so many claiming to be Right, I could only find space on the wrong side.

I listen to CBC radio exclusively. One of my favorite programs is TAPESTRY with Mary Hynes on Sunday afternoon. On January 28 her topic was WHEN GOD IS MALE, WHAT HAPPENS TO WOMEN? Her guest, Jewish playwright, Diane Flacks, described religion as a “rarefied world where there are no women.” That inspired me to comb through this chapter (Chapter 2 ‘Divine Humans in Ancient Judaism’) in search of evidence of women.

I thought I was in luck when I came to the segment on angels. When I picture angels, they are winged females dressed in pure virginal white, floating about in space while guiding me to my next challenge or disaster. But to my alarm, in Jewish texts the main angels are Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Abraham sees an angel with “a body like sapphire, a face like chrysolite, hair like snow, a rainbow on his head, royal purple garments, and a golden staff in his hand.” (P59)

My next disappointment occurs in Ehrman’s exposition about the Nephilim (those who have fallen). I suppose that in a divine realm replete with so much masculinity and devoid of femininity, the fallen Sons of God were likely to become enchanted by beautiful earthly females. Which resulted in Enoch being “instructed to pronounce judgment upon them: ‘you used to be holy, spiritual, the living ones, possessing eternal life; but now you have defiled yourselves with women and with the blood of the flesh of begotten children, you have lusted with the blood of the people.’” (P64) (It seems that the God of Israel was okay with judgmental anger, but he was not okay with sexual passion.)

I did get some solace in the femininity of Wisdom. Although I am not quite sure I understand Ehrman’s description of the wisdom hypostasis. (P72) But I was delighted that she participated with God during creation and the exodus.

When I came to logos, I wandered off on a tangent; the conundrum of ‘What is the relationship between Mother Nature and Father God?’ If the divine logos is a “go-between that connects spirit and matter” was that my answer? Mother Nature being matter and Father God being the spirit? Except in this rarefied world, devoid of the feminine, I could find no validation for my theory.

In this chapter, Ehrman tells us that in ancient Judaism gods might become men and men might become gods. But where are all the women? I cannot believe that women are cognitively deficient so they should be excluded from Biblical history. I assume that biblical historians have been purposefully blind to accepting women as integral participants in Creation.

I close, then, with a personal salute to all the brave women who stand up unapologetically before power to claim their space in all realms of society. Especially Peggy and Kelley.

Women who stand up to power are often maligned, even by other women. J.K. Rowling responded to some who disagreed with her opinion of Donald Trump as president and threatened to burn her books and DVDs: “Guess it’s true what they say: you can lead a girl to books about the rise and fall of an autocrat, but you can’t make her think.....the fumes from the DVDs might be toxic and I’ve still got your money, so by all means borrow my lighter.” (Edmonton Sun, February 4, 2017)

Closing presented by Florence Rachansky

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