

Inquiring Minds, Searching Souls: monthly musings

"Images of the divine are as individual and numerous as each of us." JB #18 Sept. 26, 2012

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CHANGING THE NAME AND IMAGE OF THE ALMIGHTY

Lately some theologians and spiritual leaders have made a point of referring to God as "Source." To me the word "Source" sounds so cold and detached from the father and son images portrayed in the Bible. That was a God with a personality: at first a strict and demanding father (from The Old Testament), and then more loving and merciful Father softened up by the death of his newly created son. And even he, Jesus, could be had by going through his mother, Mary.

YEARNING ONCE MORE FOR THE DEVINE FEMININE

I always thought of Mary as a concession to patriarchal God created and sustained by the patriarchal priests over the last 5,000 years. But, according to anthropologists and historians, God was a [mother image](#) for 25,000 years before that by the majority of the civilizations. The last spiritual community in which I was actively involved referred to God as "Our Father and Mother," an improvement both in gender addition and recognition of the metaphorical non-literal use of the term. (See [Shekhina](#) as Holy Spirit in Nazarine Essenes.) Then there's the Sophia Foundation which is something I've yet to explore. (<http://sophiafoundation.org/>)

MAKING DEUS IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF MAN

However, a believer in God doesn't have to be a scholar or an intellectual to realize that Father, Son, or Mother are only images representing a mystery of some sort of divine



Egyptian goddess.



being as creator. Jews believed that the name of [Yahweh](#) (YHWH) was unspeakable, and later mystics believed the divine being was an indescribable (ineffable) mystery. Yet the image THE LORD (OT) as that of a stern or merciful father and loving son endured through the ages in Christianity. The believers of antiquity anthropomorphized their deities giving them human form and qualities they could understand: a divine father, mother, son, warrior, etc. In that sense people created God in their own image to try to grasp the mysterious nature that being. Some saw and accepted these images as metaphors, others as somehow literal fact.

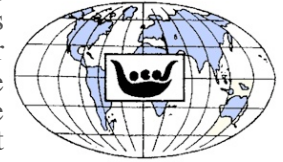
REASONS TO BELIEVE

The Prime Mover of Aristotle and Aquinas helped the logicians answer the mystery of life's origin; others, the awe and wonder of nature, man, and the cosmos, making us feel less alone, explaining our purpose, and telling us where are going ([eschatology](#) and [teleology](#)); helping us search for meaning ([logotherapy](#)); reconciling and transcending suffering and injustice in this world; faith fosters hope and, hopefully, charity. Belief is intensely personal. It can be truly efficacious (fruitful) for many. Problems arise when a person or a group of people tries to impose his/her/its beliefs on others. Fundamentalism is its downfall.

SO WHY THE NAME CHANGE?

Getting back to this new nomenclature of God as Source, what's behind that? 1) Is it an attempt to sidestep all the emotionally charged associations with the word God and religion have accumulated over the ages? 2) Is it an attempt to make God less personally involved in our lives? One has to wonder whether God really changes the course of history

to suit our wishes (prayers). Or does the natural cause and effect (karma) figure in with this distant and



Institute of Logotherapy still alive and practicing.

dispassionate creator? Both sides in all wars pray for victory. 3) Does calling the Father/Mother Source connote an absentee parent who somehow created but left the children to fend for themselves? 4) Is it an attempt to let God off the hook for all that's wrong with the world? Someone said, "If there is a God, he has a lot to answer for." 5) Does all of this put the responsibility for humanity's survival on its own shoulders? Source just got the ball rolling, but what we do with it is up to us. 6) Is this minimalist image of god a retreat from so many attributes assigned to her/him/it?

BECOMING OUR PARENTS: OUR LIFE IS OURS TO LIVE

Regardless, substituting the word Source for God is not free from its own implications. I agree with the less powerful god some have imaged and the responsibilities that come with growing as a species into adulthood--maybe taking on the divine heritage we were intended to have. But I also identify with the many rich and evocative images that Christianity has used to guide me on life's journey. However, as I grow older and nearer to meeting whatever is at the end of life's rainbow, my image of a transcendent force becomes less defined and more and more mysterious. Yet, like it or not, we are all on the same journey, and we must not let our images and ideas of the unknown get in our way. May Goodness guide us all of our days, and Peace be ours.

I humbly stand in wonderment. -Joe