

Gaia and God

John 10:1-10

Benjamin Broadbent

May 15, 2011

Gaia.

God.

Gaia and God.

Gaia. Feminine. Divine. Immanent. Organic. Material.

God. Traditionally, masculine. Divine. Transcendent. Hidden. Spiritual.

Gaia and God.

Does Christianity have room for both?

Need we choose?

Are these two or are they one?

Perhaps we have no choice.

Perhaps we've already chosen.

By projecting our own male-centered universe upon the divine, we have chosen the masculine God, wittingly or not.

What have been the results?

Men maintain power and dominance.

Male experience is regarded as normative experience.

Wo-man is a subset of humanity, not an equal expression of it.

Male power is valued as "power over." *That* power is the real world.

"Power *with*" is valued only as an ideal, possible only when "power over" has been secured by military might, clear social roles, gender identities, etc.

The dominance of the masculine,

And the silencing of the feminine,

Leads us to regard our source, the earth, as something to be dominated.

Male-centered biblical interpretation hasn't helped.

That word, "subdue," says go for it to power that is "power over."

We have forgotten how to hear other biblical words like "delight" and "partner" and "gift" and "good."

These are the words of Gaia, who is God, moving over the face of the deep, like a mother bird hovering over her cosmic nest, her breath calling the earth into being.

In naming it good, it becomes good, just like the words of our parents form the basic narrative that becomes our life.

If mom calls us “good,” we believe her.

If dad calls us “gift,” we know it is true.

Gaia is the God of life longing for itself, longing for relationship, longing for intimacy, longing for embodiment, willing to be vulnerable, to accept “what is,” to love not by coercion, for that is not love, but by boldly letting the universe, including earth and all its creatures, by letting them be what they are and what they are becoming.

Gaia is the name for the lost, forgotten, and silenced divine feminine that now, faced with ecological crisis on Earth, we must find again, we must remember anew, and we must strain our ears to hear and to heed her voice, saying once again, “It is good. You are good. They are good.”

Can a man embody the divine feminine?

Is he precluded just because he was a man?

Could Jesus have been a woman?

Could a woman have been the Christ?

Maybe she has been, maybe many times, but the people ignored her story, never wrote it down.

Maybe the Christ is an African woman dying of AIDS.

Maybe she is a prostitute in Bangkok.

Maybe she is in the Sonoran desert heading north.

Maybe she is in this room.

Will we see her? Will we hear her story? Will we know how to tell it to others?

Jesus may have been a man, but let us not hold it against him.

Let us not say that therefore Gaia was not in him.

Let us not be so fixated on his sex and gender that we fail to hear Gaia speaking through his life.

Even as it was, he had such a hard time getting people to understand him.

Mostly, it was his male disciples who had a hard time understanding.

And he could be obtuse and convoluted.

In one instance, he described himself as a shepherd, a gatekeeper, and a gate all at once.

“Which one is it?,” demanded the men, “Can’t you be clear?

Speak to us in a single line of thought.

Use reason.

Be rational.

Make it make sense.

This life has got to stay coherent, you see, manageable, maintained, predictable.”

If they had looked around at the earth, they might have understood.

Look at the shepherd’s fields on the outskirts of Bethlehem.

Look at the rolling meadows broken up by rock cliffs and caves.

Look at the roaming sheep, the growing grass, the occasional wildflower.

Look at the shepherd, the staff, the cloak, the sandals.

Watch how the sheep trust and follow the way sheep do.

Now it is night time, the time of uncertainty, of risk.

What is there to fear? Theives, perhaps? Bandits? A wolf or lion?

How to keep the sheep safe.

Find a place where the meadow meets the rock cliff face.

Build a wall of stones to keep the sheep between the wall and the cliff.

How do the sheep get in an out?

Through the doorway, of course.

But how does the shepherd keep them in, and how will the shepherd let them out?

Sits in the doorway, of course, sleeps there, if possible.

The sheep are safe inside.

The shepherd is the gatekeeper, and also the gate itself.

Jesus learned how to see in this way, how to be in this way, from Gaia herself.

For Gaia, there is something more important than absolute truth.

One thing can embody multiple truths – shepherd, gatekeeper, gate. A Trinity.

Look at the earth itself, at times brutal and unrelenting – earthquake, tsunami, tornado, flood.

Other times, exquisite and graceful, pristine meadow, waves on the shore, lilac breezes, giggling creek.

She is all of this.

Look at the earth itself.

Really *look* at her.

Love her. Pay attention.

Be a part of her. Feed her sheep.

Trust her good shepherds, be they female or male, human or other.

There is no man who is not also woman.

No woman who is not also man.

There is no God who is not also Gaia.

No Gaia who is not also God.