

GOD THE FATHER
Genesis 1:26-27
By Raymond White

It seems ludicrous to most Christians to think of God as an actual person; that is, a person in the sense of a literal corporal being who uses legs to walk with Adam in the “cool of the day” (*Genesis 3:8*), who uses hands to open up Adam’s side to remove a rib (*Genesis 2:21*), and who spars with Jacob in a wrestling match (*Genesis 32:24*). Most Christians, orthodox or cults, prefer to see God in a more “enlightened” way, as energy, thought, spirit, or some other ethereal stuff that we don’t have to bother defining because we can’t. And the Christian term “wholly other” makes God *so* different from everything else that further effort to characterize him is pointless — and therefore less worrisome.

In math there are similar conundrums. For example: what is one divided by zero? The answer is, of course, infinity, or in more purist language, “undefined,” which simply means “we have no idea.” And that is how most Christians deal with God.

Mormons are the single exception in Christendom. To Mormons, God is not wholly other but is wholly the same. They are not afraid to believe that God is a man and that we are gods in embryo. They embrace the early Bible notion that man was created in God’s image (*Genesis 1:26*), and the later Bible notion that Jesus was the express image of God’s person (*Hebrews 1:3*), and say that such things are not hyperbole but are literal.

Opponents insist that Jesus being the express image of God means spiritually, not physically. But a quick thinking Mormon would counter with: Then what is the point of resurrection? All the fuss over redeeming the physical body seems an overkill unless the physical body is God’s image, which is exactly the point of *Genesis 9:6* *Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

Killing the body injures the image of God. If not so, then why not embrace death and stay dead? Who needs a resurrection if the dead *us* is just as much God’s image as the live *us*?

Mormons draw fire for their literalness, but they welcome that fire so long as it doesn’t include bullets as it once did.

Decades ago, some zealous Christians produced an anti-Mormon film called *The God Makers*. They were dismayed however when Mormons, rather than being chagrined by the film, were actually pleased by the characterization. Their attitude was and is: Yes, that is exactly right. Now you understand. We *are* God Makers and have been from the First Vision which revealed that God is a man in every sense, and we are his children.

This is bold stuff to literalize God. But that is the only kind of God that, to a Mormon, is worth worshipping. And for that reason alone, if for no other, I am and will remain a Mormon. God created us. But more than that, he *pro*-created us to be like him.

This is fraught with embarrassing implications that make Christians blush — physical bodies, after all, do things that we don’t like to imagine God doing. But Mormons take it all on and freely discuss those implications. So, let’s begin.

[1] IS GOD MALE?

Genesis 1:26 *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. :27* *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them.*

The Bible presents us with a God that seems to be male. The pronouns — his, he, him — are decidedly male.

But can we assert our postulate (that God is male) from that alone? Maybe we are stranded by the limitations of language. Pronouns are, after all, gender specific. We say “he” and “she” but we have no androgynous variance such as “e” to mean *either* male or female, or neither. (I think we should allow neuter pronouns but let’s not digress.) So maybe biblical references to God are necessarily male just because there is no other way to refer to *him* and we ought not to infer from those pronouns that God is male.

That’s a lazy escape. The issue is not does the Bible *label* God as male with male pronouns, but does the Bible *present* God as male; that is, does he have behaviors and characteristics that are peculiarly male? And if so, what does it mean to believe in a truly male God? But let’s continue with the pronoun argument that maybe we use male pronouns to describe him because we have no neuter pronouns.

Languages evolved from revelation and not the other way around. At the Tower of Babel, we or God created words to describe the realities we face. If God were neuter he could have created neuter words in our language other than the gender specific pronouns *he* and *him* so that we could talk about him accurately. To mislead us to such a false conclusion about his nature would have been unconscionable. And if I am wrong to believe his words so literally, it certainly cannot be a sin that he would condemn me for believing since *he* picked the words that describe *him*. It’s no sin to believe what God said, and God referred to himself as *he*. From the beginning of religion, God or gods have been described as male and female, never neuter.

These male pronouns in that conversation (**Genesis 1:26-27**) and the conversation itself, allow the idea of a male/female God. Also, the “them” that God created male and female is in God’s own image. Either that or God is strictly male, and by creating *him* (Adam) in his own image, he creates Eve as something else, something *not* in God’s image which is chauvinistic, and unacceptable, and unnecessary.

The verse can be read two ways:

First: I created man (i.e., *the* man Adam) in my image. That might or might not make the woman an afterthought and something else, something other than in God’s image. This is the chauvinistic interpretation.

Second: I created man (i.e., mankind) in my image, thus men and women together *is* in my image. This requires that God (the plural “us”) is male and female. This is not impossible because the word Eloheim is a plural, God is really Gods.

I prefer the second simply because it seems more fair. We can notice that the word “man” can be male and female, speaking generically of mankind and not just of males. Thus the *couple* is in the image of God. So that even though the word “him” is certainly male and Adam is in God’s image, that does not exclude Eve.

But let’s consider the chauvinistic possibility that God is strictly male, Adam is in God’s image, and Eve is not. This is distasteful because the gender ranking makes females inferior. Or maybe not. We can eliminate that gender ranking by allowing the “us” to be a male God and a female Goddess which is what the pronoun implies. Then in whose image is Eve? Answer: Someone’s. If not her father’s than her mother’s.

Consider that the only difference between Adam and Eve is gender. In every other respect they are the same. So if Adam is in God’s image and Eve is not, that necessarily

makes God a male, who necessarily needs a female companion because that's what being male means, and Eve is necessarily in the image of that female Goddess. That is unless someone *wants* to believe that Eve is inferior which is stupid and mean and cannot be true because the only difference between them is a Y chromosome.

So, one or the other is true. Either God is male and female, or God is strictly male and has a female companion. Either way, God has gender, one at least.

The chauvinistic view, then, is not so chauvinistic after all, *if* we allow woman her own divine place in the universe in the image of her goddess mother.

I must hasten to add (lest you brand me as a heretic) that the Bible nowhere forbids either of these possibilities, and there is biblical evidence which I will get to shortly. For now we each have to guess what "let us create" might mean. I insist that the "us" can mean a man and a woman, and that interpretation is as valid as any other.

Actually, that phrase "let us create" can hold both views at once. *First*: "God created man (or mankind) in his own image" is a blanket statement covering everyone, men and women. But how did he do that? "In the image of God created he him" is a chauvinistic statement, but it is not so chauvinistic because it leads us to a heavenly mother. *Second*, "male and female created he them." Thus Adam is in the image of God but so is Eve. Or to be precise, Adam and Eve *is* in the image of God.

So, is God male? Yes. Is God male and female? Yes.

[2] IS GOD A MAN?

But being male doesn't mean a lot if God is not also man. (Well, actually it does, spirits too are male and female. But let's gloss over that and stay on target.) For human males to be in the image of the male God, it is also necessary for God to be not only male but also corporal man. Then men are truly in his image as opposed to women who are in someone else's image. If that is true, God is corporal, then God is male has real meaning.

So let's see if God is a man.

Genesis 32:24 And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. *:28* ...as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed. *:30* ...I have seen God face to face and my life has is preserved.

The *man* that Jacob wrestled with was *God*. The unambiguous word "man" goes beyond the pronouns "he" and "him". We might doubt the maleness of pronouns but we cannot doubt the maleness of "man." Therefore, God is a man.

Joshua 5:13 There stood a man...with his sword drawn *:14* As captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?*:15* And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

This man that Joshua met was God. He was not an angel because angels do not accept worship. Also, the place was holy, and what makes a place holy is that God is there. Conclusion: The captain of the LORD's host is the LORD, and he is a man.

Those who resist God's maleness say he is a man only during a theophony; that is, when he appears as a man. That's doublespeak ("he's a man when he appears as a man"), and the Bible says nothing of the sort. Better is to accept that he is what he appears to be.

But to be fair to both sides of the argument, there is this —

Numbers 23:19 *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent.*

1 Samuel 15:29 ... *he [God] is not a man that he should repent.*

In other words, God is not a man because he doesn't repent, or to flip it, God doesn't repent therefore he is not a man. But there is a flaw; namely, God *does* repent.

Genesis 6:6 *It repented the LORD that he made man ... :7 ... it repenteth me that I have made them.*

Exodus 32:14 ... *the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*

Judges 2:18 ... *it repented the LORD because of their groanings ...*

1 Samuel 15:11 *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king ...*

The verses in *1 Samuel 15* are particularly striking because of their juxtaposition. God says, I change my mind about Saul being king. Then he immediately says, I won't change my mind about getting rid of Saul because I don't change my mind. I don't want to argue with God, but when God argues with himself, what are we to make of it?

In any case, God's logic disintegrates, and therefore God is not not a man. Forgive the double negative but it's the only correct way to say it.

But there is good logic here, if we take God at his word. The Bible's argument is: God does not repent therefore he is not a man. But that infers that if God *does* repent then he *is* a man. This is not a strict contra-positive argument because it could be true that he is not a man in either case, whether he repents or not. But if that's true, the Bible's argument is pointless — (it would be hollow to say God does not repent therefore he is not a man if he is not a man regardless). Therefore, the Bible's argument (God does not repent therefore he is not a man) does infer that if God *does* repent then he *is* a man which is what the Bible tries to undo but fails because God does in fact repent. Therefore, God is a man! And the Bible's argument to prove that God is not a man proves instead that he is.

[3] IS GOD MARRIED?

Now that we understand that God (that is, the God of the Bible) is male and is a man, let's move to the heart of the matter: Does God have a wife?

First, a quick review of the opening text —

Genesis 1:26 Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. :27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them.

These words are intended to be taken literally. So we should pay attention to observe that “our” is plural, “God” (Eloheim) is plural, and “he” is male. So the male God is recommending to someone that they create male and female humans in their image. That sure sounds like a male God is talking to a female companion.

But that evidence is circumstantial, it only *allows* God to be male and female. Is there better evidence? There is.

[4] ELOHIM

The plural word Elohim has two parts: Eloah and the suffix im. The male singular name for God is El. But that is not this. Elohim is Eloah, not El, plus im. Eloah is the feminine singular which means Goddess and the suffix im is masculine. Thus the plural God of Israel, Elohim, is male and female. We could perhaps call this God Sir Goddess.

[5] ALONE

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone.

Now we see “man” not in the general mankind sense but in the specific male sense. The context demands that we understand “man” to mean male because the context is: man needs woman!

Well, of course! What else could being a “man” mean? There is no sense of man-ness other than gender; that is, sex and reproduction. Without sex and reproduction, to be “man” means nothing. That's obvious and God concurs: *it is not good that the man should be alone*. Men need women. Well, duh!

Now let's shift the argument into overdrive. These words were spoken by the divine being, God, who identifies himself as being man; that is, male. So if, as *he* says, that it is not good for *the man* to be alone, then it must be equally not good for himself to be alone because God is essentially male.

[6] ADAM'S MOTHER

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Yes, that is what “a man” should do. And, Adam, that applies to you too because you are “a man”; in fact, you are the quintessential man whom all men are modeled after.

Therefore, Adam should also “leave his father and his mother.” Well, how can Adam do that if he doesn’t have a mother to leave?

[7] THEIR NAME

Genesis 5:2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

Adam called her *woman* (2:23) and *Eve* (3:20). But God called her *Adam* (5:2). Why is that? When a woman gets married, she will typically take her husband’s name and join her husband’s family. It is optional, not a requirement, but it is typical.

This is true also in the animal kingdom, not all animals but many. A female lion, for example, when she reaches puberty she instinctively knows it’s time to leave the pride, her mother and father and certainly her brothers. The point is to avoid incestuous sexual contact. The brothers stay; they are the next generation of that pride, but the girls leave. They are looking for a new home with new eligible males.

So in similar fashion when a woman marries, she takes her husband’s name. She is leaving her old family and joining her new family, his family.

Now, since God called Adam’s wife *Adam*, then what would God call his own wife? I vote for Elohim, *Mrs. God*. I’m not being flippant, it is quit possible (and I think likely) that the male and female Gods are tangled up together in the plural and mix-gendered name Elohim.

[8] EVE

By the way. Here’s an off-the-subject question: Why did Adam call her Eve?

Genesis 3:20 ...because she was the mother of all living.

Yes, but why Eve? Why not Dawn? Eve is the end of the day and Dawn is the beginning. So if she’s the mother of the human race, then why not Dawn, the beginning?

Here’s my answer, and it may be wrong but still I’ll give it to you.

We typically mark our calendar days from midnight to midnight. The Jews did not. They marked their calendar days from sundown to sundown. When the sun dropped over the horizon, that was the beginning of the new day. What part of the day was that? Evening, not morning, not Dawn. That special lady, Adam’s wife was the beginning of humanity’s new day, and so she was called Eve.

And consider this. Birth is not a bright event (like morning). It’s a dark event (like evening) following nine months of pregnancy, hard labor and pain, and sometimes death. The sun arrives *after* the long night of suffering, which reaches forward finally to birth and new life. New life is precious and brings bright promise, but let us never forget the price paid and risk taken by every mother. Give this lady Eve credit. She entered a dark night of labor that we call the fall so that we could enjoy the bright light of day. I will thank her when I get the chance.

A parable is in order. Imagine that your own mother had been a prostitute. And imagine that you had been conceived by one of her “business” acquaintances. Then later,

when you are old enough to understand the facts of your birth, you are angry with her for bringing you into the world with a sullen origin. That, however, would be ungrateful. The truth is, had she not been what she was and done what she did, you would never have been born. You had only one shot at life, and she gave it to you. You should be grateful.

So, what of Eve? She fell and led Adam to fall. Thank you, Eve. Had you not done that, I would not be here. It is a mistake to point a finger at Eve and accuse her, "You fell, shame on you." Well, shame on our ingratitude. Eve took on God, subjected herself to great personal risk, and produced us. We ought to be grateful for her courage.

Now that is not to say that we shouldn't learn from other's mistakes. But observing and learning are different than judging. We can learn from Adam and Eve but we are not their judge, we are their children and we should hold them in high esteem.

[9] MISSING MOTHER

Genesis 4:25 And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth...

Genesis 5:3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth.

Adam is given credit for having Seth, but Eve is not named in either verse. Her conspicuous absence is glaring. From that we learn about Biblical literature that just because no mother is mentioned doesn't mean there isn't one. Of course Seth had a mother. Therefore, and to the point, just because there is no mention of Adam's mother, doesn't mean there isn't one. Of course Adam had a mother. It is a mistake to infer that Adam had no mother just because none is mentioned just as it would be a mistake to infer that Seth had no mother just because none is named. What scant evidence there is, leads us to believe that we have a mother in heaven.

[10] CHILDREN

Psalms 82:6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? :35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.

That we are God's children and not merely his creation is an astounding claim, if you allow its full implication. And that implication is precisely stated in the Psalms verse: We are God's children *therefore* we are gods.

This goes beyond mere creation but intentionally assigns parentage, and therefore inheritance. We are what our parents are. God created the universe but he *pro*-created us. What is God like? Look at *their* children. We come in two varieties: male and female.

Jeremiah 2:27 [False prophets] *saying to a stock [wooden idol] Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me...*

The point is that idols cannot be “father” but God can be and is “father”. So, in what sense is God “father” and idols not “father”? The issue is not just God’s creative abilities, but his *pro*-creative abilities. Idols cannot “father” anyone; God can and does, and that necessarily makes him male, and that necessarily makes him married.

[11] OFFSPRING

A dissenter might still insist that “children” is merely figurative despite the previous verse. So to cement the literalness, there is this —

Acts 17:28 *For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also as your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. :29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.*

The word “offspring” is fraught with meaning. “Children” goes beyond “created,” but “offspring” goes even beyond “children.” Children, after all, can be adopted. But offspring cannot. Offspring means issued from one’s own body. And thus God is correctly our procreator. Offspring means that God is our biological parent; that is, we were *born* his children. We are the same race and the same family as God.

Not only does the word offspring carry that meaning, the context confirms that meaning. The reason we should not think of God as gold or silver is *because* we are his offspring. That reasoning only works if he is our literal parent. If he is merely our creator, or even an adopting parent, then the argument fails. A parent is like his or her child only if the child is the parent’s actual child. If a child needs a kidney, an adopting parent will not do, the actual parent must be found, because they are alike with matching DNA.

If God is not our parent then he might as well be gold or silver — a gold and silver android could conceivably make a human, but could never father a human. That’s the point. But God is not gold or silver because *we* are not gold or silver; we are his offspring. Therefore he is like us and we are like him because we are parent and child.

[12] SON OF ADAM, SON OF GOD

Luke 3:38 *Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.*

The inference is that in whatever sense Seth was Adam’s son, Adam was also God’s son. And that inference demands that a mother was involved.

[13] FATHER

Matthew 6:9 *...pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven ...*

The Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures frequently call God our Father. The right question to ask is how literal or how figurative do the scriptures really mean that? Is God really our father, or merely our creator pretending to be our father?

This is reminiscent of Geppetto the wood carver who carved a puppet Pinocchio and wanted very much to be his father. But Geppetto wasn't Pinocchio's father, he was just his maker. And although Pinocchio did finally become a real boy, we still doubt his parentage. But Jesus reveals our parentage when he instructs us: *pray ye, Our Father ...*

[14] ABBA, FATHER

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. :15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. :16 The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. :17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...

“Abba” is the most affectionate term in Greek for father. It doesn't really mean Father so much as it means “Daddy!” a word that a small child would use for a loving parent, “Daddy, pick me up!” That's our true relationship with God, he is literally, and not figuratively, our “Daddy.” I am not being flippant, that's what the word means.

[15] FATHER OF SPIRITS

Hebrews 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. :9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

And again we get back to the question, is a text figurative or literal? And that question bares directly on this verse. Just what are we to make of “Father of spirits”? Whatever it means, it is literal. The tone and flow of the text — (we accept God's chastening *because* we really are his sons and not bastards) — demands that we accept “Father of spirits” literally. We can haggle over what that means, but whatever it means, it is actual and not figurative. If it is figurative, then the text is meaningless.

So, what *does* it mean, “Father of spirits”? Well, we mortals are mothers and fathers of human bodies. But where spirits come from, scientists still have no clue.

Is God's fatherhood more than our fatherhood or less than our fatherhood? It's more, because it's more than just making bodies, it's making the very essence of what we are: our spirits. Notice again that he doesn't create our spirits, he fathers them. One day we will understand just what that means. For now, we just accept it, or should.

[16] MOTHER IN HEAVEN

Now we arrive, finally, at this question: Does God have a wife in whose image Eve and all her daughters are? Mormons used to say that we have a mother in heaven.

They don't say that so much anymore, perhaps because they are trying to cozy up with their Evangelical friends, which is a good thing.

But note that the notion of a mother in heaven is absolutely a Mormon doctrine as attested to by their church hymn still in their hymnal, "O My Father" and its courageous lines, "Truth is reason, truth eternal, tells me I've a mother there," and "Father, mother, may I meet you in your royal courts on high."

Ironically, this hymn which documents our mother in heaven is called, "O My Father". But that's the point, isn't it? A father necessarily implies a mother.

Joseph Smith was a courageous prophet to teach such a thing, but teach it he did. If God is our father — and the Bible demands that he is — then what else can we conclude other than that there is also a divine mother? That is, if "father" is to have any meaning at all.

[17] FEMALE GOD

1 Kings 11:33 Because they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess [Elohim] of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god [Elohim] of the Moabites, and Milcom the god [Elohim] of the children of Ammon...

The Hebrew word Elohim is used in this verse three times, once for a female deity and twice for male deities. So the gender of the word depends on the context. But more to the point, the word is not specifically male or female, it is either, or both.

[18] FEMALE ALMIGHTY

Exodus 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (Hebrew: El Shaddai)...

It's not just "Elohim". Shaddai also is feminine, and again El is masculine. The word "shad" means woman's breast. Ouch! That changes things a bit, doesn't it?

Now, this verse —

Job 22:26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty [El Shaddai, feminine], and lift up thy face unto God [not Elohim, but Eloah, feminine].

[19] WHERE HAS SHE BEEN HIDING?

If there is a mother in heaven, where is she hiding? She isn't hiding and never was. She is conspicuously all over the Bible, but somehow she got lost in the translation.

The wizard said, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain." Well, it's time to ignore that advice and start paying attention to the woman behind the curtain.