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God as Mother?

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The title of this edition will likely raise some eyebrows. Indeed, it is intentionally provocative to intentionally bring to light a neglected and somewhat controversial subject. No, APTS has not bought into feminist theology. But our intent here is to think of God in ways that perhaps we have never before seen in Scripture. As you will see in the articles that follow, the biblical writers repeatedly ascribed attributes to God that, depending on one's cultural viewpoint, would be normally be the domain of the feminine gender. Does this mean that God is a female? Again, the answer is no. He is, as Tim Bulkeley repeatedly describes in the following articles, *sui generis*, wholly other than anything else in the created order. In other words, he is beyond gender.

All of the articles in this edition were papers presented at the 22nd Annual William W. Menzies Lectureship Series that was held on February 3-7, 2014, on our Baguio campus. The main speaker was Dr. Tim Bulkeley, a freelance instructor in theology from New Zealand. Because these were originally given as lectures, the editors opted to maintain lecture style here in order to ensure that his voice comes through clearly. To accomplish this, we allowed a bit more of the first person usage than we would normally do.

In the first article, Bulkeley sets the stage for the entire series. He roots the idea of God as mother in the theology of creation, giving specific attention to the cultural context of the ancient Near East and moving to the conclusion that while Jesus was incarnated as a Jewish male, the second person of the Trinity and, for that matter, the entire Godhead, are beyond race and gender. In the second article, he goes to great lengths to demonstrate that God is *sui generis*, wholly other. He goes on to deal with many of the biblical passages that reveal God's maternal qualities, normally using picture language to do so, but always keeping in mind that the concepts of God as father and mother connote relationship, not gender.

In the third lecture, he moves on to discuss how Jesus saw God as his "Father" and the tremendous impact it had on those who heard him

use this term. Bulkeley also details the dangers of using picture language and some of the erroneous teachings that can happen as a result of inappropriate usage. The fourth lecture is dedicated to an extensive review of God as mother theology in the first one and a half millenniums of the Christian Church. In the final lecture, Bulkeley comes full circle moving from the theological aspects to challenging us to experience God as mother.

Three other papers were also presented, two of which are published here. The third, given by Dr. Kim Snider, will be published in the next edition of our Journal.

My article was focused on understanding the implications of discipleship in the animistic Philippine context, focusing in on the aspects of supernatural healing. This is particularly relevant as Filipinos tend to give their allegiance to the entity that brings healing, normally without questioning the source of power from which it comes.

The final article is written by the Rev. Saw Tint Sann Oo, an APTS alumnus who is director of a Bible college in his homeland, Myanmar. Here, he traces the positive impact that the Bible schools in that country have had on the growth and development of the Assemblies of God churches in his homeland and demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between training leaders and planting churches.

As always, I'd be delighted to hear from you. You can contact me through our website, www.aps.edu.

In Grace,

David M. Johnson, D-Miss
Managing Editor