

Mothering God You Gave Us Birth

Genesis 1: 1-31 and Psalm 24: 1-2

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“And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so.”

One of the central claims our spiritual tradition makes is that God created the heavens and the earth. All that exists, all who exist, owe their existence to God.

And there were no pre-existing materials that God used to create the cosmos. God commanded creation into existence from nothing.

A related claim is that creation belongs to God. “The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it.”

Our first hymn today, Mother’s Day, offers a different image of God’s relationship to creation. “Mothering God, you gave me birth in the bright morning of the world,” the opening line proclaimed.

For our parting song, the Trio will play a hymn that opens with a similar verse: “Like a mother who has born us, held us close in her delight, fed us freely from her body, God has called is into life.”

The image of Mothering God giving birth is quite different from the image of God commanding creation into existence from nothing. Mothering God doesn’t create from nothing. Mothering God gives birth.

From within herself, she births reality into existence—a cosmos, heaven and earth, each person. Everything and everyone that enters into existence comes from within Mothering God herself. Not from nothing, but from herself, Mothering God.

There’s a far more intimate relationship between a Mothering God and the creation she births into existence, then there is between a God who commands creation into existence from nothing. A mother gives birth to one who is the flesh of her flesh, the blood of her blood, the spirit of her spirit. Her own flesh, and blood, and spirit are constituent elements of the child she has birthed. The child is part of the mother, yet distinct from the mother. At birth, the child is separated from the mother, yet inseparable from the mother.

If we imagine Mothering God giving birth to all that exists, to the heavens and the earth, to you and me, what are the implications when we say, the earth belongs to God?

A child belonging to a mother isn’t the same as property belonging to a property owner. A child—the flesh of her flesh, the blood of her blood, the spirit of her spirit—belongs to a mother in a different way.

For one thing, it’s a mutual belonging. The child belongs to the mother, and the mother belongs to the child. They belong to one another. Their longing for one another is mutual. Their love for one another is mutual.

Seeing the mother and child's mutual belonging to one another so cruelly violated horrified and angered many of us when we learned that our government was separating children from mothers at the border. It was malevolent to punish mothers and children by separating them and forcing them to experience the deep, painful, anxious ache of longing for one another while fearing they may never be reunited.

Many of us knew instinctively, deep within, that it was not only wrong to separate mothers and children, but a far deeper wrong, a far more unholy wrong, than simply taking property that doesn't belong to us.

What if we were to understand the relationship between God and the earth in the same way we understand the relationship between mother and child? What if we were to know instinctively, deep within, that the earth belongs to God in the way a child belongs to a mother? Not as property. Not as something created from nothing. But as a child that has come into existence from within her. Flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood, spirit of her spirit. We would know instinctively, deep within, that the way humans are throwing the earth's climate and biodiversity into crisis is every bit as wrong and unholy as separating children from mothers at the border.

How do you see, or understand, or experience the relationship between God and creation?

How do you see, or understand, or experience the relationship between God and yourself?

Did you come into existence, ultimately, from nothing?

Were you birthed into existence from within God herself?

What kind of story, or image, or metaphor helps you relate yourself, and creation, to God?

What kind of story, or image, or metaphor informs and motivates your response to what humanity is doing to God's creation?

These are some of the questions we will ask ourselves when we gather after worship on May 26 to discuss Jim Antal's book, *Climate Church, Climate World*.